THE FICTIVE SPEAKER
IN THE POETRY OF ALEXANDER POPE.

by

E.K. Cameron

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This thesis is the outcome of a feeling that one encounters a complex and an admirable individual when one reads Pope's poems. I have written it as a Graduate Student in the English Department of the Australian National University. I am grateful to the University for its generosity as an employer, and to the Staff and Students of the English Department for particular suggestions and encouragement. In particular, I am indebted to Mr. H. Hardy and Mr. F. H. Langman, to whose criticism and encouragement my understanding of "The Rape of the Lock" is extensively indebted.

Except where acknowledgement is made, this thesis is the result of my original research.

[Signature]

M. Cameron
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genuinely proper. But one can also sense, in particular in An Essay on
Criticism, a desire to discover and develop an individual poetic voice.

There is something brash about the ingenious rhetoric of that poem, but
it also has a speaker who celebrates his art and his own gifts. And in
the Moral Essays Pope's desire to discover himself as a poet reaches its
security in an investigation of the epistemology of poetry, a justification:
of the specific expertise of the poet, and in particular the satirical poet,
on human nature and on moral and political issues.

The fact that Pope is a satirist is crucial in any discussion of the
degree to which his poetry is personal or impersonal. Satirists aspire to
make "personal" attacks on individuals. In the Imitations of Horace it is
devident enough that the fictive speaker sees something to tradition. But
Pope succeeds to a remarkable extent in adapting his original to make his
own utterances in his own time. And in his apologetic poems, like
Neatness to Arboath and the Ensign to the Ensign, he achieves an effect
and complex understanding of the way in which his nature and his experiences
issues in his art—an art of which these poems are masterpieces but the local
impressive examples.
SYNOPSIS

The question of the role and identity of the fictive speaker in poetry, and in Pope's poetry, is one on which twentieth-century critics have tended to differ from nineteenth-century writers. The common twentieth-century view that good poetry is necessarily impersonal has however come to seem flawed in recent years. There is room for an account of Pope's poetry that does justice both to its autonomy as poetry and to the fact that it is at once spoken by, and extensively about, its author.

Pope's letters provide both a general introduction to his nature and concerns, and an insight into his ability to manipulate a conventional style. In his early poetry he generally tries, with varying success, to do what is generically proper. But one can also sense, in particular in An Essay on Criticism, a desire to discover and develop an individual poetic voice. There is something brash about the ingenious rhetoric of that poem, but it also has a speaker who celebrates his art and his own gifts. And in the Moral Essays Pope's desire to discover himself as a poet reaches its maturity in an investigation of the epistemology of poetry, a justification of the specific expertise of the poet, and in particular the satirical poet, on human nature and on moral and political issues.

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The Dunciad is arguably the most impressive example of Pope's art. The approach to Pope's poetry that has been followed applies to this poem only to a limited degree. But this does not, it is in conclusion argued, invalidate that approach. The Dunciad is Pope's personal triumph because it is unequivocally his artistic triumph.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis consists of a reading of some of Pope's poems with two questions in mind. First, in what ways are their fictive speakers,¹ the "I" figures by whom the poems are fictively "uttered", formally and thematically important in them? Second, what are the relationships between these fictive speakers and the author of the poems, Alexander Pope? And in thus reading the poems we will be at once assuming and evaluating three hypotheses. It will be suggested that the best way to answer the second question is through a careful consideration of the first. We shall argue that the fictive speakers of the non-dramatic poems are properly thought of, and spoken of, as Pope. And we shall also show that one must refer to "speakers" and "relationships" (between speakers and author) in the plural, since the poems vary in the degree to which they are personal. It might seem self-evident that one cannot know who the fictive speaker is without looking at how he is used. But in fact, most modern critics have not approached the question in this way. And with a few recent exceptions, they have not been at all willing to think of the speakers of the poems as Pope, and have applied this judgement to his work as a whole, without discriminating particular cases.

The issues involved can be clarified if we set them in the context of the history of Pope's critical reputation. In the nineteenth century, his stock was low. And we can distinguish three assumptions, or, if they were explicitly formulated, propositions, as coming together in the condemnation of his work. These are on different levels of generality, pertaining to poetry as a whole, to Pope's poetry, and to Pope himself. There was first a "romantic" view of poetry as the expression of the self, soul, mind of the poet. It followed from this that the value of poetry was to be

¹. It could be argued that Pope's poems are fictively written rather than spoken. After all, a number of them are epistles. We refer to a fictive speaker and not a fictive writer because our sense of his presence derives primarily from rhetoric and tone. We sense an impassioned or an ironic orator and not a man with a pen.
assessed in terms of the quality of this self. Hazlitt, for example, writes as follows:

The poet of Nature is one who, from the elements of beauty, of power, and of passion in his own breast, sympathises with whatever is beautiful, and grand, and impassioned in Nature...[The poet of Nature, by the truth, and depth, and harmony of his mind, may by said to hold communion with the very soul of Nature.]

Although the value words he uses are applicable to poems as well as the mind of the poet, it is in the quality of the latter that Hazlitt finds poetic excellence. The second assumption, pertaining to Pope's poetry, is an apparent, but not a strict, consequence of the first. It was assumed that Pope like all poets is directly and simply present as the speaker of his work, expressing his feelings and opinions, attacking his enemies, praising himself and his friends. Courthope, for example, comments as follows on lines 334-359 of the Epistle to Arbuthnot:

The reader, marvelling at these passionate protestations, and unable to reconcile them with what he knows of Pope's actual conduct, may be tempted to ascribe the above passage to deliberate hypocrisy.

In fairness to Courthope, who was usually a shrewd and sympathetic critic of Pope, and who defended him against the excesses of Bowles and Wordsworth, it must be said that he is here talking about the way he thinks a nineteenth-century reader will react, and not about his own reaction. But in going on to argue that the apparent hypocrisy is in fact due to a "fanaticism of self-love", he does not abandon the assumption that the poems are simply self-expressive, and are thus to be judged by criteria—such as truth and sincerity—

applicable to the moral judgement of individuals rather than the aesthetic judgement of poems. And it is on this level that we find the third part of the nineteenth-century condemnation of Pope. It was thought that the character and interests thus directly revealed in Pope's poetry, and also apparent in his life and letters, were not appropriate in a good poet. This judgement could take more or less sophisticated forms. Hazlitt, for example, continuing the passage quoted above, writes that Pope:

...saw Nature only dressed by Art; he judged of beauty by fashion; he sought for truth in the opinions of the world; he judged of the feelings of others by his own.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, had a "capacious and mighty soul". But here Pope is only condemned as superficial. Elsewhere he was described as malicious and dishonest. Dilke¹ and Elwin² writing on the letters seem distressed by the realisation that he was no gentleman.

The twentieth-century defense of Pope has depended on the rebuttal of all three nineteenth-century assumptions, and also on an attack on the way they were seen as logically associated. The confusion between judgement of the poet and judgement of the poem was influentially, if not altogether clearly, attacked by Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent".³ And the dethronement by Eliot and others of the kind of "semi-ethical criterion of sublimity"⁴ we found in Hazlitt acted as a starting point for a critical approach that at least aspired to judge poetry by strictly aesthetic criteria. Pope's moral character has also been defended, in particular by George Sherburn in a biography and a definitive edition of the letters.⁵ And the idea that his interests were superficial has gone out of currency, because the

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1. Athenæum, July 8, 1854 and September 1,8,15,1860.
metaphysic of nature that gave rise to it has had its day, and because we now know more about eighteenth-century thought. But it is the second and linking assumption, that Pope's poetry is the (simple) expression of his (deplorable) personality, that is most relevant in the present context.

This assumption has been dealt with through the concept of the persona. The idea is defined, though the word is not used, by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley in a paper that summarises some of the theoretical foundations of a "new criticism". Their general contention is that "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" and they examine the consequences of this principle in a series of propositions "summarized and abstracted to a degree where they seem to us axiomatic".

The fourth of these pertains to the speakers of poems:

The meaning of a poem may certainly be a personal one, in the sense that a poem expresses a personality or a state of soul rather than a physical object like an apple. But even a short lyric poem is dramatic, the response of a speaker (no matter how abstractly conceived) to a situation (no matter how universalized). We ought to impute the thoughts and attitudes of the poem immediately to the dramatic speaker, and if to the author at all, only by an act of biographical inference.

The persona is Wimsatt and Beardsley's dramatic speaker. And some of the best and most influential modern criticism of Pope has been based on the idea that the speakers of his poems should be thought of not as their author, Alexander Pope, but rather as the dramatically appropriate personae for the poems in question.

We can clarify what is meant by this by looking more closely at the idea of dramatic propriety. The governing concepts here are those of genre and of rhetoric. In the poetic tradition of which Pope thought
himself the heir, certain kinds of poem—satires, verse epistles, country-house poems—commonly had certain kinds of speaker—honest and good men, educated and amicable seekers after truth, lovers of retirement who see through the superficiality of urban and courtly life. And it is clearly rhetorically appropriate that this should be so. A speaker who seeks to condemn vice is more persuasive if he presents himself as a lover and practitioner of virtue. It has thus been argued that if we are to read the poems as poems, and not as biographical documents, we should distinguish between their author and their speakers, and treat the latter as dramatic characters whose natures are governed by the genre and rhetorical decorum of the poems in which they appear. If Pope says he is honest, it is not because he necessarily thinks he is honest, and the statement is not to be assessed as true or untrue. It is rather because he knows that the speakers of certain kinds of poem have traditionally said the same thing, and that he will sound more convincing if he follows their example.¹

I do not propose to offer an extended theoretical account of the ways in which my approach to Pope's poetry differs from what has been described as the common twentieth-century view. But some consideration of the issues involved is required. Modern critics and the earlier writers they condemn have it in common that both argue on the basis of a general theory of poetry, and literature, as necessarily personal or impersonal. I would suggest that one needs a more flexible formulation to account for the actual diversities of poems. They may be more or less personal in that their author may be more or less present, as their speaker or their overt theme or

both. They may also be personal in a vaguer sense, in that they may cover matters of personal concern to their author. We are concerned with the second sense only in so far as such concern is warranted by evidence that Pope's poems are personal in the first. And in this connection it is also necessary to discriminate between the issues of impersonality and of intention in Poetry. In arguing that because the author's intentions are not available as criteria for the critic, it follows that the speakers of poems are necessarily dramatic, Wimsatt and Beardsley gravely oversimplify a difficult question. The only authoritative evidence of intention is within poems; and in consequence, the author's intentions are necessarily as complex as his poems, and in otherwise speaking about them, he can be wrong. In this reading of Pope we argue that his poems are not as simple as he sometimes says they are, not as innocent of moral impurity. But we also find evidence in them they are about himself, and on that basis assert that they are intentionally personal. In order to preserve the autonomy of the poems, it is not necessary to eliminate the concept of intention: such an elimination is based on too simple a model of poetry (Wimsatt and Beardsley go on to describe poems as machines), and on too simple a model of the mind.

It is probably because it has been realised that some writers have not done justice to the complexity of the issues involved here that the concept of the persona has in recent years come under attack. There is no doubt that there are cases to which it seems to apply. Gulliver is certainly not Swift. But it is just as illegitimate to set up as paradigmatic their particular relationship as author and speaker as it is to confuse them. There is clear verbal evidence that Gulliver is not Swift: and it is on the basis of that kind of evidence that we shall assess Pope's relationship with those speakers who, on the face of it, have at least a great deal in common with him. They have, in different poems, one or more of the following: the same father, mother, friends, religion, politics, philosophy, house, garden, and career.
The most effective critical discussion of the persona was published by Irvin Ehrenpreis in 1963. He has pointed out that when an author "pretends to be himself but acts a calculated or traditionally sanctioned role" he is not exhibiting a kind of behaviour found only in literature: "this kind of rhetorical pose is absolutely inseparable from all language and communication".¹ When we are talking to someone, we as a rule take him to be responsible for the tones of voice he adopts, the parts he plays, the claims he makes for his own character. We may develop Ehrenpreis's argument. Why, when Pope is speaking to us through his poems, should we not proceed in the same way? The practical case for the idea of the persona is based on the observation that what Pope says about himself resembles what other poets have said about themselves.² This is only to a limited extent true, and it does not have the kind of bearing on the argument a defence of the persona requires.

It is only partly true in that a close look at the poems will reveal that while Pope's speakers have many characteristics in common with Horace's, and Juvenal's, and Boileau's, and Oldham's, and Denham's, they are, in the particular combinations of these characteristics, unique. And that is not merely a debating point. The relationship between the various aspects of a speaker, the masks he puts on and the ways in which he speaks, is not one of simple mutual reinforcement. It is one of mutual qualification. In the Epistle to Arbuthnot, the Horatian imitation "To Fortescue", and the Epilogue to the Satires, the speaker appears both forbearing and aggressive. The effect of this is to qualify the former appearance, which, it has been pointed out, has something in common with that of Horace in his satires.³

². This point is made by Alvin Kernan in The Cankered Muse : Satire of the English Renaissance, New Haven 1959, 22.
Pope's nature is evidently not uniform, and he uses imitation to discover and delineate and come to terms with its inconsistencies. And this line of argument also requires us to make a qualifying comment about the applicability of the concept of genre. All good poems are in the end *sui generis*: they define their own genre. The concept is a good servant but a bad master. We can use it as a guide to what we should expect in poems, but not as a substitute for investigating what is actually there.

Generically, the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* is a satiric apologia, so we can expect Pope to be rhetorically ingenious in defending his character and conduct as a poet. He does this, and more: he also, with a degree of success we shall assess, investigates and illustrates them.

At this point, however, an important qualification needs to be made. It was said that the concepts of the personal and the impersonal define a continuum, and that Pope's poems fall at various points along it. We are not saying that they are all personal to the same degree as the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*. But this does not mean that the nature of their speaker is not worth considering. In the *Essay on Man* and the *Moral Essays*, for example, Pope is present as preacher, philosopher, poet, and satirist. These are not, of course, mutually exclusive alternatives. But they do roughly define modes of discourse found in the poems. And in looking at the relationship between these modes of discourse, we find that the *Moral Essays* do have one thing in common with the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* and the other apologetic poems. Pope is still concerned to investigate and define himself as a poet. Although the autobiographical dimension is absent, there is an investigation into the relationship between poetry (which for Pope of course includes satirical poetry), and philosophy, and the moral teaching which was traditionally considered the function of poetry. And again, we shall have to consider the genre of the poems as it is defined in them. A philosophical or a moral poem is what a philosophical or a moral poet writes. The genre

1. We do not consider *An Essay on Man* in detail, but the kind of analysis applied to the *Moral Essays* can also be used in reading it.
of the Moral Essays is defined through the assessment within the poems of the nature of their speaker as a poet. And from this point of view their philosophical and moral aspects turn out to be "placed" as in a particular way appropriate in poetry as a consequence of the way in which their speaker is defined as a poet.

Thus although Pope's poems differ as to the complexity of the version of the speaker-poet present in them, they are comparable in the way in which his presence is important. And in no case is it very helpful to speak of a persona. But if we are to abandon the concept, we must make some attempt to suggest an alternative.

The concept of the persona was originally designed to eliminate the criterion of sincerity from the judgement of poems. We may define sincerity as referring to a congruence between avowal and actual feeling. Hypocrisy is thus the extreme form of insincerity, and we saw how Courthope found himself defending Pope against a charge of insincerity by arguing that the poet was in fact deluded by self-love. One would not wish to be in Courthope's position. But it is possible to eliminate the admittedly illegitimate comparison between things a poet says in his poetry and his conduct in life without denying that he can talk about and reveal himself. We shall not be arguing that *Eloisa to Abelard* has anything to do with Pope's love life. But in assessing it we shall be using a set of criteria similar to those which are applied to the poems that are about their author. And it is with a brief discussion of these criteria that we conclude these introductory remarks.

Lionel Trilling has offered the following definition of a criterion and a quality which he calls authenticity, and which he considers to be of growing importance in nineteenth and twentieth-century European literature:

'The work of art is itself authentic by virtue of its entire self-definition; it is understood to exist wholly by the laws of its own being, which include the right to embody
painful, ignoble, or socially unacceptable subject-matters. Similarly the artist seeks his personal authenticity in his entire autonomousness—his goal is to be as self-defining as the art-object he creates. As for the audience, its expectation is that through its communication with the work of art, which may be resistant, unpleasant, even hostile, it acquires the authenticity of which the object itself is the model and the artist the personal example.¹

This formulation is far from unassailable. In saying that the work of art "is understood to exist wholly by the laws of its own being", Trilling goes too far in eliminating the concept of genre. For a work of art to be understood, writer and readers must "speak the same language": there must be some common linguistic and generic assumptions: and this is just as applicable to writing whose rule is to break rules as to exercises in a particular genre. Further, the idea that the artist "seeks" a personal authenticity akin to that of art applies in Trilling's context to particular artists, and must not be generalised without caution.

However, with some adjustment the concept of authenticity does fit Pope's case. It covers the autonomy of poems, and also the special moral demands that satire makes on the reader. And Pope was one of those writers who "seek" an authenticity proper in an artist because it is also proper in a work of art. We need only recall his insistence on his social and political independance, or his claim in relation to some eminent friends that "From these the world will judge of Men and Books".² But there are two respects in which Trilling's concept needs to be modified.

We need to improve on the merely verbal and analogical association Trilling makes between authenticity as it applies to works of art and as it applies to the character of the artist. In Pope's case, this is not difficult. He saw himself as essentially a poet, and his poems as the definitive acts of his life. He did, of course, live in other ways: as a friend, a householder,

2. Epistle to Arbuthnot, 145.
an architect and gardener, a political being. But we shall see that his sense of himself in these contexts is governed by the primary datum and commitment of his life, the fact that he was a poet. Consequently, his poems are all to a greater or lesser, but always a significant extent about poetry, and about himself as a poet. Thus we can modify Trilling's formulation. The artist seeks, in and through the art object he creates, to be as self-defining as that art object.

We also need a closer definition of the relationship between personal and artistic authenticity, and social values. Trilling later points out that this relationship is sometimes thought to involve absolute opposition, and, in an extreme form, is defined through the belief that "insanity is a state of human existence which is to be esteemed for its commanding authenticity".¹ The nearest Pope comes to this is in the Epilogue to the Satires, where he twice presents himself as virtually the only sane and good man alive. This is close to the position Trilling defines in that both the madman and the satirist alone in an iniquitous world have no one to talk to. But in general his stance is more moderate. A recent writer has commented as follows on the Dunciad:

The Dunciad, a vision of society as a hell of irrationality, implies that reason, judgement, and knowledge—significantly including knowledge of tradition—are the necessary controlling powers, for poetry as for life.²

And we will see that throughout his poetry Pope insists on the importance of human communication. One of the things wrong with the subjects of his satirical portraits is that their lines of communication are blocked, by

¹ Trilling, op.cit., 167.
pride, or malice, or greed. And as far as his own relationship with society is concerned, there is a constant dialogue with social values conducted through the juxtaposition of a social ideal, based on traditional values and embodied in the poet's own circle of friends, and the society in which he actually lives. He is neither a romantic "outsider" nor the conventional spokesman for his society he has sometimes been considered.

Thus we come round again to the need for a new perspective on the role of the speaker in Pope's poetry. It should be possible to do justice to the autonomy of poems as formal structures, to the importance of tradition as a source of Pope's images of himself, and to the fact that he is the speaker of his poems. Fortunately, there are a number of critics who have begun to develop a perspective that can achieve this. Patricia Meyer Spacks has found in their author's need for control and intelligence a key to the working out of the "argument of images" she finds in the poems, and has also stressed the importance of the image of the poet that is developed throughout them, an image she defines as that of "man using his highest capacities".¹ Maynard Mack and Rachel Trickett have added to our knowledge of the traditions on which Pope drew without denying that he uses tradition to express and discover himself.² And Thomas R. Edwards Jr. has made us aware that Pope does not unequivocally endorse, in complete poems, some of the local versions of himself he uses in them.³ Trilling's notion of authenticity provides a general perspective that allows for all these approaches, and we will revert to it in concluding the ensuing analysis. In conducting it, however, our concern will rather be to develop the specific insights of writers on Pope mentioned above, and those of other writers, into a comprehensive account of Pope's use of, and presence as, the fictive speaker of his poems.

¹ Op.cit., 188
³ Thomas R. Edwards Jr., This Dark Estate: A Reading of Pope, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1963, Ch. 4. (78-111).
We begin this account of the speaker in Pope's poems with a chapter on his letters for two reasons. The first is straightforward. Since the letters are the most important primary source for the biographer of Pope, we can conveniently derive from them a general account of his outlook and his concerns that will serve as a context for the particular versions of himself he works out in his poems. The second reason is more complicated, and will require extended discussion. The letters are an important source not only for the biographer, interested in Pope the man, but also for the critic, interested in the way Pope the writer presents himself. We will see that he often claims that his letters are written with absolute spontaneity and sincerity. It will by no means do to regard these claims merely as evidence that he was often disingenuous. Undoubtedly he was often disingenuous. But the critic will also notice that these claims form one of a range of literary devices, modes of implication and indirection, sometimes even figures of rhetoric, that Pope uses to form the version of himself he presents in the letters as a whole. And the range of such devices to be found in the letters can usefully be looked at as a preliminary to our discussion of the comparable, if more complicated, situation in the poems.

It will be apparent that if we are to deal with the letters in this way, we must begin by saying something about their genre. We need to make it clear that they are works of literature, or perhaps that they are a work of literature, and not merely biographical source material as a will might be or a laundry bill. The issue must be approached historically. We have already pointed out that Pope's nineteenth-century detractors based part of their case on examination

1. All quotations are from *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, edited in five volumes by George Sherburn, Oxford 1956.

of the letters. And they regarded them purely as biographical evidence. This was historically unsound. Writing four years before the turn of the century, John Dennis prefaced his _Letters Upon Several Occasions_ with two pages "To the Reader" in which he supplies a "compendious account" of the critical remarks on letters which, had he not been impeded by publication constraints, he would have developed "more at large". What Dennis makes clear is that the letter was considered a distinct literary genre. He does this by using of letters the same kinds of critical terminology he and other critics used, and continued in the eighteenth century to use, of other genres. He distinguishes an epistolary tradition by mentioning Cicero, Pliny, Longinus, Balzac, Voiture. And he speaks of decorum, nature, reason, elevation, the sublime, style, expression, ease, wit, and other "extraordinary Qualities of these great Men".¹

John Dennis thus gives us the outline of an account of epistolary decorum. He defines the letter as a literary genre by alluding to a tradition and a set of generic characteristics. Modern critics have generally recognised that Pope's letters are, in this sense, part of his literary output.² And they have especially emphasised the point that strict fidelity to historical fact was not required by any of the rules of this genre. George Sherburn says of the letters he has definitively edited that they "became in a sense a part of his [Pope's] works, capable of polish, revision, amalgamation, transfers to


² The Decorum of English Letters in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the place of Pope's letters in this context are examined in Katherine Hornbeak, _The Complete Letter-Writer in English, 1656-1800_, Northampton, Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, XV, nos.3-4; and in William Henry Irving, _The Providence of Wit in the English Letter Writers_, Durham N.C. 1955; and also in Howard Anderson, _et al., eds_, _The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century_, Kansas 1966.
correspondents other than the original recipients, and even ... falsification." And another writer has pointed out that he regarded them as part of his literary output in another sense. He defended his ownership of them in a court case, against the publisher Curll, that was important in establishing the legal precedent that personal letters come within the law of copyright.

It is thus generally recognised that Pope's letters are in the historical senses described above part of his literary output. In this chapter, however, I intend to treat them as being both individually and collectively literature, works and a work, in a further sense. This sense can be at once discriminated and justified by pointing out that no modern critic would wish to approach an eighteenth-century work using only the conceptual apparatus Dennis brings to bear on letters. The concepts of tradition, genre, decorum, are useful, but limited. What we ideally do is to make use of them where they can serve while conducting a close reading as that technique has been developed in twentieth-century criticism. But this has not generally been done with Pope's letters. The conventional epistolary style is commonly regarded not as a way of saying things, as one would normally regard any style, but rather as a way of not saying them, a kind of conventional veil obscuring any real meaning or a genre characteristic that precludes condemnation on the grounds of insincerity or innaccuracy. We will be concerned to show that this is not the case (on the grounds of insincerity or innaccuracy) but that Pope makes his own kind of use of the style, in which both its use and its overt abandonment is eloquent. The style of the letters is a literary style, and can be analysed like any other.

1. Correspondence, I.x.
treated as a work of literature. They have a degree of thematic unity, deriving from the fact that they are about Pope, his concerns and his friends. Thus in spite of the fact that they contain a great deal of unrelated material, that they do not exhibit the degree of formal or thematic coherence one would normally expect of a work of literature, they may nevertheless usefully be treated as if they were one.

Our concern, then, is with the way in which the letters show Pope coming to understand, and defining, and justifying himself and his place in the world. In considering this process, we will look first at the things he says and implies about himself as man, and poet, and citizen, and then at the ways in which he relates to other people. We will thus have to deal with letters to, and about, various kinds of friends: men about town, aristocrats, writers, old friends, catholics, women. It will emerge that friendship was of special importance to Pope, and that it is connection with their contribution to his friendships that he tends to describe the importance of his letters. This point has been made before; but there is room for a closer look at Pope's doctrine of friendship, because we will find it important in the poems.

It is appropriate to begin with Pope as a poet. The nineteenth-century view that he was not a poet, that he was, in Arnold's version, a classic of prose and not of poetry, has long been discredited. But it remains worth pointing out that it is in certain senses diametrically and absolutely wrong. Pope felt himself marked out to be a poet. He worked very hard at being a good one. He thought the job important, and found it demanding. And he made his living at it: he was the first fully

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professional English poet. We find evidence of all these points in the letters, and particularly of the fact that Pope felt himself to be essentially a poet, that he felt it to be the most important thing he was. He talks often about putting off the burden, about retirement, indifference to fame, lack of ambition. But he also testifies to a passionate and an overpowering sense of vocation.

Some early statements illustrate the degree to which poetry possessed him. He writes of it as an exclusive occupation:

... no man can be a true Poet, who writes for diversion only. These authors shou'd be considered as Versifiers and Witty Men, rather than as Poets. (I.110)

This is interesting as an epistolary example of what we will discover to be one of Pope's common poetic strategies, the definition of himself, and his work, by negation. He sets up an implicit contrast between himself and some person or class of people he attacks. It is broadly true to say that he saw himself as set apart from other men. And in this respect he of course had good reason for such a feeling:

I have the greatest proof in nature of the amusing power of poetry in me, for it takes me up so intirely that I scarce see what passes under my nose, and hear nothing that is said about me. To follow poetry as one ought, one must forget father and mother and cleave to it alone. (I. 243)

In this passage, as in the next to be quoted, Pope is certainly being extravagant, exaggerating to amuse; but to conclude on that basis that such passages do not provide an insight into his unique psychology would be to misread the style. The following paragraph is an account of the power in him of a kind of imagination he is not often enough supposed to possess:

Like a witch, whose Carcase lies motionless on the floor, while she keeps her airy Sabbaths & enjoys a thousand Imaginary Entertainments abroad, in this world, & in others, I seem to sleep in the midst of the Hurry,
even as you would swear a Top stands still, when 'tis in the Whirle of its giddy motion. 'Tis no figure, but a serious truth I tell you when I say that my Days and Nights are so much alike, so equally insensible of any moving Power but Fancy, that I have sometimes spoke of things in our family as Truths & real accidents, which I only Dreamt of; & again when some things that actually happened came into my head, have thought (till I enquired) that I had only dreamd of them. (1.163)

Such testimonies of the sheer power of poetry in Pope's life tend to be most common in his earlier letters, and to stand out as exceptional among the material we are considering. Most of it falls into one of two other classes. There are passages indicating that Pope was in fact professionally being a poet, a man of letters working to establish himself. And there are passages considering the nature of this commitment, protesting against its disadvantages, and projecting other idealised styles of life. On the first of these classes, it will do to recall the many letters to Broome and Fenton and others about the struggles of a translator and the practical problems of profitably publishing the translation;¹ or, on a happier note, the easy professional intimacy that is part of the letters to Swift and Gay.² Swift, thought definitely not a professional writer in the financial sense, was as definitely a respected and admiring peer. With him, Pope is able to take for granted the meaning of being a writer, and does not have to explain the peculiar problems and satisfactions of that life.

The second of the two classes, in which Pope reveals and discusses the problems of being a writer, is the more interesting of the two. Often we find his mind working in the context of a tradition, so that he can see himself as other poets saw themselves. In a teasing

¹. See for example Correspondence, II. 102-103.
². Ibid., II. 394 and 453.
letter to the Blount Sisters he comforts himself that although they neglect him, he can promise himself the immortality through reputation that is traditionally the reward of the poet:

Yet he comforts himself to reflect that he shall be remembered when People have forgot what Colours you wore, and when those at whom you dress, shall be dust. This is the pride of a Poet...,(I.515)

Or he ironically denies himself such an apotheosis, claiming only the mere space on a shelf that, as the Dunciad is to make extensively clear, is worth nothing without it:

I shall send you by the Ockingham coach in about a week, a small present of all I am worth, my whole Works, better printed than written: which I desire you to lay up some where with Nicholas de Lyra, and others my dead and forgotten Brethren. (I.403)

In both these passages the problem or the enterprise of being a poet is reduced to its results after Pope's death. Despite the irony, the concern in both cases is with a final judgement on the value of his life as a Poet. We will see in a number of the poems that Pope had imaginatively taken over this particular tradition, and in a letter to Swift he puts it without the disarming effect of a witty and ironical manner:

"Let us write for truth, honour, and posterity". ¹

In another mood, however, he can contradict himself, it seems, and deny any ultimate value to a life devoted to poetry:

Nothing can be more kind than the hint you give me of the vanity of human sciences...To make them the ultimate end of our pursuit is—a miserable and short ambition, which will drop from us at every little disappointment here, and even in the case of no disappointment here will infallibly desert us hereafter. The utmost fame they are capable of bestowing is never worth the pains they cost us....(I.236)

¹ Correspondence, II. 413.
In fact, Pope most commonly adopts a dismissive tone when he talks about being a writer. He says he is tired of it, and that he is going to give it all up: "You must look on me no more as a poet". Elsewhere, he says that he is declining from poet to translator to publisher, and that he is no longer concerned with literary fame, but rather devoted only to retirement, virtue, and friendship:

I have read much, but writ no more. I have small hopes of doing good, no vanity in writing, and little ambition to please a World not very candid or deserving. If I can preserve the good opinion of a few friends, it is all I can expect, considering how little good I can do even to them to merit it. (II. 501)

Much of this is no doubt simply the effect of tiredness. But there is one dimension to it which is of especial interest. Pope's remark that "The life of a Wit is a Warfare upon Earth" will be quoted more often in this thesis than anything else he wrote, and it may be appropriate at this point to refuse, in advance, to apologise for the frequency with which it will recur. It summarises our central concern. One of the ways in which it is important is apparent in the present context. Because he was a writer, Pope found it hard to remain politically neutral. But he thought it important that he should remain so. This was not merely a matter of continuing to appear detached from politics. That could be satisfactorily accounted for simply by pointing out that Pope was a Catholic, and thus politically in a sensitive position. His Catholicism, interesting as we will find his presentation of it to be, is not however relevant here. Pope wants not merely to appear, but also to think of himself as, politically detached, since to be politically committed is incompatible with his idea of how a writer ought to think and

1. Correspondence, I. 396.
2. Ibid., II. 141.
3. Pope wrote this in the preface to the 1717 Edition of his poems. See Poems, I. 6, 1.91.
behave. The story told by the letters, and, we will see, confirmed by the poems, is as follows. Pope does not want to be a party writer, but is to a certain extent forced to become one, both by circumstances and by conviction. He came to share the political philosophy of Bolingbroke to a far greater extent than he did the latter's view on the nature of man. Thus while he can at times simply and proudly assert his independence, one also gets the feeling that the pressure of public opinion, which certainly held him to be a party writer, sometimes made him uneasy about being a writer simply because being politically attacked was one of the hazards of the profession.

It is to Swift in particular, whose views on this matter were close to his own, that he most revealingly writes in this area. Sometimes, as in the remark about writing for "truth, honour, and posterity", he can sound confident enough:

I question not, many men would be of your intimacy, that you might be of their interest: but God forbid an honest or witty man should be of any, but that of his country. They have scoundrels enough to write for their passions and their designs: let us write for truth, for honour, and for posterity. If you must needs write about Politicks at all, (but perhaps 'tis just as wise to play the fool any other way) surely it ought to be to preserve the dignity and integrity of your character with those times to come, which will most impartially judge of them. (II. 413)

Here the problem is solved, not without some degree of disingenuousness—everyone, of course, puts their country first—by reference to a value transcending contemporary squabbles. The judgement of posterity is what matters. But Pope does not always sound so confident that he has solved the problem.

Here is another passage, also to Swift, and on the same subject:

My Friendships are increas'd by new ones, yet no part of the warmth I felt for the old is diminish'd. Aversion
I have none but to Knaves, for Fools I have learn'd to bear with) & those I cannot be commonly civil to:
For I think those are next of Knaves who converse with them. The greatest Man in Power of this sort, shall hardly make me bow to him, unless I had a personal obligation to him & that I will take care not to have.
The Top-pleasure of my life is one I learnt from you both how to gain, & how to use the Freedomes of Friendship with Men much my Superiors. To have please Great men according to Horace is a Praise; but not to have flattered them & yet not to have displeased them is a greater. I have carefully avoided all intercourse with Poets & Scriblers, unless where by great Chance I find a modest one. By these means I have had no quarrels with any personally, & none have been Enemies, but who were also strangers to me. And as there is no great need of Eclairecissements with such. Whatever they writ or said I never retaliated; not only never seeming to know, but often never knowing any thing of the matter. (II. 185-186)

Here we see a much more detailed portrait of the moral decisions Pope has to make in this area. And we also find that the theme is set in a context that relates it to a number of the topics we will be dealing with at a later stage. Pope begins by asserting that he is still sustained by friendships, indeed is gaining strength in that area. Hostility, on the other hand, he does not feel, certainly not to a degree that threatens his equilibrium. He distinguishes between stupidity and criminality, and claims that he is averse only to the latter. He is not, that is, actually averse to stupid people. But he remains sharply conscious that he is not one of them. His aversion to criminals is based on the idea that it is a citizen's duty to ostracize them. The sudden shift to criminals in positions of power, and of high social status, reveals both that his concern in the passage is with political affiliation, and that the political and the social dimensions are not to be dissociated. With such as these, it is difficult to preserve the
social convention of deference to superiors. Then another shift—these social conventions he has indeed transcended with good men socially his superiors; he is on friendly terms with them. The next phrase is ambiguous. It might mean either that Horace claimed it to be a virtue to please great men, or that it is a virtue to please them as Horace in fact did. The distinction is interesting in the light of the opening of the first "Dialogue" of the Epilogue to the Satires, where Pope distinguishes between his own satirical practice, and Horace's. At this point, however, it is enough to point out the implication that Pope's own values are preferable to Horace's in that he (Pope) holds the truth to be more important than the by no means unimportant social convention that one should be respectful to one's superiors.

Pope has also carefully avoided all intercourse with "Poets and Scribblers". We have again that definition by negation that was noticed earlier. Poets and Scribblers may superficially resemble Pope in being writers, but he insists that there can be no question of his "knowing" them socially. To do so would be to involve himself in the risk of personal conflict with them. It follows that any such conflicts he has been involved in have been with people whose opinions are valueless because they lack first-hand knowledge of his character. And besides he has not been at all bothered by such conflicts, often not even noticing them at the time. Presumably, he has discovered them through subsequent research.

We have here a self-definition in relation to a number of other groups of people: other writers, fools, enemies, criminals, powerful criminals, social superiors. And what Pope is essentially trying to assert is that he has not been compromised in his relations with any of

1. See below, pp. 266-7.
2. Cf. An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, 11. 219-20:
   I sought no homage from the Race that write:
   I kept, like Asian Monarchs, from their sight.
them, that he has preserved the "dignity and integrity of character" which he recommended to Swift. Or, to put the matter another way, the passage turns out to be a fairly complicated response to a number of kinds of uneasiness. And its implications evidently go beyond the political.

Pope says, or implies, that he is not, like other writers, a party hack, or actuated by malice. Nor is he an intellectual snob; but he has a deeply felt antipathy to vice, which he has succeeded in properly expressing. And he has succeeded in having himself recognised for what he is worth, taken at his own valuation, by persons high in the social order, without any of that flattery which is one main thing wrong with that social order. Thus he and his friends constitute a social group in which one of the defects of society as a whole is not to be found. And his position in this social group is a totally secure one.

It is impossible to take this assertion of existential security at face value. We will be looking at what we may assume to be some of the problem areas. How did Pope actually relate to his superiors, his equals, his inferiors, in the social order? How does he behave towards people with whom he is in conflict? And what sort of power does he feel in himself? What sense of personal worth and strength is apparent in the way he actually writes to his various correspondents?

On the evidence of the letters, we have to say that Pope did indeed have a clear idea of what he wished to be thought of as the most important feature of his personality. He speaks of himself as a good man. This aspect of the letters has generally been presented as evidence either of immodesty or of dishonesty. But there is more to be said than that.

When we encounter self-praise in the poems, the first point that has to

1. It may at this point be thought in order to allude to the traditions deriving from Quintilian and widespread in European Culture from his time onwards, whereby the good writer should also be a good man. This tradition will be discussed and annotated when we deal with the poems.
be made is that there is a tradition among classical rhetoricians that only the good man can be a good poet, and that Pope may expect his readers to read what he says about himself in the context of this tradition. This observation is also a necessary preliminary to discussion of self-praise in the letters. But it is only a preliminary. It neither explains the insistence with which Pope comes back to this kind of material, nor renders superfluous an analysis of the particular ways in which he uses it. If we pursue such an analysis, we see that Pope is by no means merely doing what he feels to be appropriate.

There are a number of direct assertions. Pope wrote that "it becomes any honest man to speak of himself as such",¹ and he does what is becoming. But the more revealing passages are those in which the virtue of the speaker is implied. And the critically interesting issue is the degree of coherence there is in and between these implications, and the degree of control the author seems in consequence to have over them. One of the most common kinds of implication, or indirection, comes in the form of an implied contract of mutual esteem offered to Pope's correspondent. Because he admires his correspondents, he will write in a certain way, and he will in his turn be admired for it. For example, he often suggests that his style is natural, immediate, unadorned, and that in writing his letters he is not concerned with conventional epistolary decorum:

You see my letters are scribbled with all the carelessness and inattention imaginable: my style, like my soul, appears in its natural undress before my friend. (I. 155)

It is here absolutely taken for granted that the appearing soul is pleasant and estimable. This is the assumption underlying the common assertions that Pope's sincerity is itself deserving of esteem:

I should really think myself no way worthy the honour of a part in your regard, if I was not perfectly sincere in

¹ Correspondence, II. 165.
all my professions to your Lordship, even to small things. (II. 259)

... as long as you let me call you so [i.e. a friend]
(and I dare say you will, till I forfeit what I think I never shall, my veracity and integrity

The contract offered is then of the form: "I will be perfectly sincere, and you will esteem me for it, finding what I thus inadvertently reveal of myself admirable". Pope requests a guarantee that the process of developing intimacy that is friendship will come to a happy conclusion.

One can find the same pattern, of an offered contract of mutual esteem, in taking a broader view of certain of Pope's relationships. Particularly interesting is the long, and for the most part unruffled, friendship with John Caryll. Sherburn's note on Caryll is relevant. Caryll was "a devout Catholic... nephew and heir of John, Earl Caryll (of a Jacobite creation). The Carylls were connected with the Englefields, the Blounts of Mapedurham, the Piggotts, and with Lord Petre of Ingnatestone, hero of the Rape of the Lock". In other words Caryll is an old style catholic gentleman from the circles in which Pope's parents moved, if of slightly higher social status than Pope himself. In fact, Pope seems to have regarded Caryll as a link both with his own actual past, and with a quasi-mythical "Golden" past. Caryll is presented as a model of the old fashioned virtues, which, through the implicit contract, Pope also claims for himself. He says, to Caryll, that he has:

... a certain old-fashioned virtue (and you know virtues that are old fashioned are vices, in the same manner as the richest old wardrobes are the most awkward and ridiculous of dressing to us moderns) — I mean a virtue, once so reputed, called humility. This hinders at least

1. Correspondence, I. 93, note 1.
2. See also Pat Rogers, "Pope and the Social Scene", Chapter 3 of Writers and Their Background: Alexander Pope, ed. Peter Dixon, Ohio 1972.
the half of a well-bred epistle from shining and pleasing. Much good may that virtue do you; but here in town, men, women and children have done with it; and the rest of the obsolete train are going after it. (I. 471-2)

And so he goes on, at considerable length. The old fashioned virtue is also it seems familial, rural, and socially the property of a group who would define themselves as in some respect differing from another group they refer to as the "well-bred". It is of course not that they in any important sense lack breeding; rather that they see through the artificiality of a more public, urban, and fashionable kind of life.

Elsewhere, Pope makes it clear that another aspect of the virtue he ascribes to Caryll is an old-fashioned piety, a grave, and unfashionable, although by no means solemn or earnest, spiritual seriousness. He writes:

I am a little scandalized that you should send so much as a thought after the gains and advantages of this world, who seem to me, and have seemed so long, to be so fairly advanced in the superior prospects of another. For such an one to say he has been always on the loosing side, I think is a great impropriety of expression; and nothing would have taken away my objection, so effectually as what you confess in the next period of your letter, how much you are convinc'd of that faiblesse de l'homme of which there is so fine a treatise among the Essais de Morale. (II.43)

The decorum of this is finely judged, even to the literary allusion. Pierre Nicole's Port-Royal theology would have been conspicuous in the theological landscape of an intelligent Catholic in the early eighteenth century. Pope also manages to avoid seeming priggish. The elegance of his phrasing excludes any suggestion of moral earnestness; there is just a sufficient flavour of wit in the writing. Pope had trouble, as a young

1. Sherburn points out that Nicole was twice translated into English, in 1677 and in 1696. (Correspondence, II. 43, note 1.)
man, reconciling being a Catholic with being a young man about town. Indeed, the main way in which his Catholicism seems to have been a problem to him, at least on the evidence of the letters, lay not so much in the objective political and legal disabilities,\(^1\) inconvenient as they were, but rather in a certain sense that it was intellectually unfashionable. He tends to dissociate himself from superstitious Catholics through the weapon of irony:

> I have very lately read **Jeffery of Monmouth**... in the translation of a Clergyman in my neighbourhood. The poor Man is highly concerned to vindicate Jeffery's veracity as an Historian; and told me he was perfectly astonished, we of the Roman Communion could doubt of the Legends of his Giants, while we believ'd those of our Saints? I am forced to make a fair Composition with him; and, by crediting some of the Wonders of Corinaeus and Gogmagog, have brought him so far already, that he speaks respectfully of St Christopher's carrying Christ, and the Resuscitation of St. Nicholas Tolentine's Chickens. Thus we proceed apace in converting each other from all manner of Infidelity. (I.425)

The effect of irony here seems to me to imply that a difficulty has been mastered. One would hesitate to call it spurious; the passage is, after all, genuinely amusing. But one can also see Pope more openly trying to formulate a position, admitting, to some degree, the problems in being an enlightened Catholic. Speaking of the belief of the besieged Catholics in Barcelona that angels would come to their assistance, he writes:

> May I venture to say, who am a Papist, and to you who are a Papist, that nothing is more astonishing to me, than that people so greatly warm'd with a sense of liberty, should be capable of harbouring such weak Superstition, and that so much bravery and so much folly, can inhabit the same breasts. (I. 246-247)

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1. Pope only occasionally complains about these. See Correspondence, I. 242, I. 344.
That is carefully and neatly put. And it is announced, through the opening "may I venture to say", and the expanded account of the speaker and listener that defers the actual remark and thus raises our expectations of it, as a definitive formulation of its subject. The first thing that defines Pope's position in the controversy is his description of himself and his correspondent as "Papists". It is not that the term is, in the early eighteenth century, always, or necessarily, derogatory.\(^1\) It is simply that it is the term an unfanatical, but convinced, anglican, rather than a comparable Catholic, would use. Pope is linguistically placing himself in an easier position than he actually occupies. Further, he assumes an absolute incompatibility between the admirable quality of a "sense of liberty", and what he calls "superstition". And by superstition he means belief in miracles, a belief for which there is some theological support in the Catholic tradition. I am not suggesting that an orthodox catholic would on pain of a heresy charge have to expect angelic help. The theological position is complicated. It is rather that in making such an assumption, Pope is neglecting the theological complexities, and thus establishing himself as a man of his time. It is the manner in which the prise de position is made that is revealing. He presents the incompatibility of superstition and a sense of liberty as a specially important truth for "Papists" to recognise. They are, it is implied, prone to error in this regard, and he and his correspondent (Blount) are presented as being guarded against this error.

Pope does not, however, neglect the strength of the Catholic position. In a letter to another Catholic, Caryll, he again conducts his definition by the via negativia, but this time suggests that his correspondent, and by implication, himself, are Catholic on a secure

1. Johnson in his Dictionary defines a papist simply as "one that adheres to the communion of the pope and church of Rome".
Common charity of man to man and Goodwill to all, are
the points I have most at heart, and I am sure those
are not to be broken for the sake of any governours or
government... I am sure, if all Whigs and all Tories
had the spirit of one Roman Catholic that I know, it
would be well for all Roman Catholics; and if all Roman
Catholics had ever had that spirit, it had been well
for all others, and we had never been charged with so
wicked a spirit as that of persecution. It is indeed
very unjust to judge of us in this nation by what
other members of our communion have done abroad. Our
Church Triumphant there is very different from our
Church Militant here (if I may call that a church
Militant which is every way disarmed). (1,241)

Pope is keeping a lot of balls in the air. The association of politics
with religion is of course natural. The laws discriminating against
Catholics remained a political issue. Pope appeals to charity to over-
come the problem, and admits that the Catholics had some historical
responsibility for it. But such Catholics are sharply distinguished,
both in spirit and in nationality, from that central "One Roman Catholic
that I know" who is, according to the implicit contract, both Pope and
Caryll. Pope establishes Caryll as kind of mirror in which he can,
not immodestly, discover his own virtues. The implication is once again
that there are a few, among whom the writer and his correspondent are two,
who have solved the problems of being a catholic and also an educated man
of their time. But this time the solution is not only a matter of
achieving the right tone of voice. "It becomes an honest man to speak of
himself as such": charity and goodwill are sound points to have at heart.

The final point to be made about Pope's Catholicism is that its
foundations certainly did seem to be solid. When, on his father's death,

1. Patrick Cruttwell, in "Pope and his Church", Hudson Review, XIII (1960),
292-405, argues that Pope was generally trying to solve this problem.
Francis Beauchesne Thornton, Alexander Pope: Catholic Poet, New York
1952, asserts that he was a Catholic in a more orthodox sense.
Atterbury suggested that he might now decently follow his interest and change his religion, Pope's refusal was immediate and firm. And from another, and critically more pertinent point of view, he also remained close to the faith. It can be argued even of a poem like the Essay on Man that his imagination worked in terms of the Christian tradition. Although he intends in that poem an theodicy independant of revealed truth, a close reading of the poetry will often suggest that he perceives human nature in terms of the Christian doctrine and myth of the fall of man. This does not, of course, make him a Catholic, only a Christian. But we have seen that a feature of his version of Catholicism is that the difference is not important.

We go on to look at Pope in relation to two other classes of friends: aristocrats and women. We saw that relationship to aristocrats was one dimension of Pope's declaration of existential security. And without insisting on the point, one might say that he would also have had to come to terms with women. There was a contemporary rumour to the effect that one of his female correspondents, Martha Blount, was his mistress. And there are grounds for thinking that he would have liked another, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, to occupy that position.

On the topic of aristocrats, one may briefly summarise a lot of material by saying that Pope seems to have been genuinely at ease with some of his Lords, that he liked a Lord for a friend, and that he liked it to be known that he had aristocratic friends. Although we have seen him in some sense dissociating himself from the "well-bred", he in fact took with enthusiasm, as a young man, the opportunities that came his way for making friends in such quarters. Writing to Theresa Blount in 1716, he presents his feelings as ambivalent:

I heartily wish many times, You led the same Course of life I here partly enjoy and partly regret; for I am not a day without what they call Elegant Company.

1. Correspondence, I. 453-454.
2. Correspondence, II. 353, note 3 and III. 40, note 1.
I have not dined but at great Entertainments these ten days, in pleasant Villas about the Thames. (I. 351)

There is no more than a touch of the feeling that there is something superficial about "great entertainments". Pope "partly regret[s]", and goes on later in the letter to say that he is melancholy, "which (to say truth) is all one gets by Pleasures themselves". In part also, however, he is enjoying being able to report to friends at home on the social progress he has made. He does the same sort of thing to impress a new, and rather difficult, acquaintance. Towards the demonstratively amicable end of an epistolary éclairecissement with Aaron Hill, he reminds him of his aristocratic friends while at the same time contractually associating him with a declaration that he (Pope) is not one of those whose judgment is distorted by excessive social deference:

Your Dedication pleases me almost equally with the Poem; our Hearts beat just together, in regard to Men of Power and Quality... I have this day writ to Lord Peterborough a Letter with your Poem. The Familiarity in which we have liv'd some Years, makes it not unusual, in either him or me, to tell each other any thing that pleases us: Otherwise you might think it arrogant in me, to pretend to put so good a Thing into his Hands, in which I have no Merit. (III. 182)

We also not infrequently find impressive lists of titles. The following is from a letter to Caryll:

I have been indispensably obliged to spend some days at every house along the Thames... After some attendance of My Lord Burlington, I have been at the Duke of Shrewsbury's, Duke of Argyle's, Lady Rochester's, Lord Percival's, Mr Stonor's, Lord Winchilsea's, Sir Godfrey Kneller's... and Duchess Hamilton's. All these have indispensable claims on me... (I.417)

Revealingly, this passage is in response to a complaint of Caryll's that Pope has not written to him. One of the tensions their relationship
survived was a feeling on Caryll's part that Pope was neglecting him for newer friends. Generally, there is an assumption of social equality between the two of them. Pope is ironical, as to a social equal, in writing to Caryll about the social and intellectual pretensions of a clockmaker, Mr Hatton, of Duke Street.\footnote{Correspondence, I. 465.} But Pope's social elevation inevitably caused some uneasiness and misunderstanding.

Pope was quick to smooth things over with reassurance. But one cannot say that he was never a snob. It is not simply that he seems in some letters to perform amusingly, to tell stories and work out elaborately witty manner, for the benefit of his aristocratic friends.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, II. 14 and 189-190.} This is innocent enough in itself. But it does point to a special desire to please such people that can on occasion take a more unpleasant form.

It can, for example, lead him to write as follows:

The truth is, the black puppy provoked me, which is more than all the fat woman could do, with all her other dirty gownmen. A dull blockhead sometimes galls me more than a smart cunning rogue, as a blunt knife cuts and mangles more than a keen one. I wonder the Man should be angry at your Lordship of all men, who (by his own account) are the only one of his parish that does not know him to be a Dunce, by never having heard him hold forth. (II. 328)

The context of that passage was an attempt by the widow of Sir Godfrey Kneller to displace the modest memorial Pope had erected to his father in the local parish church with an enormous monument to her dead husband. A local landowner, Lord Strafford, would also be affected, as "his pew abuts on the place". And Pope seeks to enlist his support in the dispute by telling a tale about the minister, who had been so indiscreet as to remark that "of all men, my Lord Strafford's Objections ought to have no
weight, for he never came to church". 1 Pope is thus provoked, and he is fighting in a good cause. These are sound traditional justifications of personal satire. 2 But in spite of all that, one must feel that not the least interesting thing about a richly unpleasant passage is the fact that Pope saw no reason to omit it from his published correspondence. Particularly revealing is his description of the Minister as a Dunce, for it is the context of his own work, in the Dunciad, that establishes the grounds on which this passage is to be condemned. It is a received opinion that in that poem Pope is not simply calling people Dunces out of personal malice. And certainly, a desire to ingratiate himself with men of influence is there no part of his motivation. The passage is evidence for the prosecution of Pope on a charge of petty and squalid behaviour. And the crudity with which he imitates a brutal aristocratic disdain in "black puppy" and "fat woman" likewise places the letter at a literary nadir.

The main component of Pope's attitude to the aristocracy is not, however, a desire to be invited to their parties, or to be regarded as their servant. In a sense, he genuinely did not seek social elevation: he was sought out. He seems to have had a strong sense of the proper, the ideal role of an aristocracy in an hierarchic social system, as examples to their inferiors of culture, courage, and benevolence. The three Moral Essays, to Burlington, Bathurst, and Cobham, are, we will see, the most interesting evidence of this. But it is also apparent in the letters. He writes, for example, that before publishing a book of poems, he will "collect all the objections of the two or three noble judges, and the five of six best poets". 3 There is thus a special, although admittedly not very large, category of "noble judges", who are to serve as practising

1. Correspondence, I. 328.
3. Correspondence, I. 267.
patrons of criticism. Pope is to be increasingly struck through his poetic life with the fact that the actual English social order was not an adequate incarnation of this hierarchic ideal. He had aristocratic enemies, and was seriously threatened by them. But most of his letters are written to his friends, and he sees them as members of the ideal order.

A compliment to Lord Burlington illustrates neatly the way he thought. He congratulates Burlington on being made a Knight of the Garter by saying, among other things, that:

Princes are honour'd for having plac'd Honors justly, & it will be said that King George the Second made the Earl of Burlington Knight of the Garter. (III, 111)

That is neatly turned, and neatly turned compliments were a generic requirement and according to decorum in complimentary letters to aristocrats who had been given the Order of the Garter. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that what Pope does in the compliment is to present a rhetorical proof, of a kind we have seen him use in other contexts, of the existence in England of an ideal aristocracy. Posterity will honour the King for having incarnated it by giving a public honour to one of its members. We may take the epistolary convention of an age to consist of a version of its publicly sanctioned moral and social code. It is a hypothesis supported by the fact that today the only kind of epistolary convention of which most people are aware is a commercial and business convention. It will then appear that Pope is in this passage using the convention to elegantly say something there are other reasons to suppose he does feel. The convention is of course conservative. It does not reflect the social reality of Pope's time. And Pope does not care for that reality.

We have seen that one duty of the ideal aristocracy is literary criticism. In this area too we can see an interesting intersection of
Pope's theoretical view, and his actual behaviour. He complains, for example, that "slander" (that is, attacks on Pope's character), would be kept down if it were not countenanced by members of the aristocracy. Such people do not live up to the duty of their ideal exemplars to protect good Poets. And in fact, Pope did secure a degree of help and protection, from some of his Lords, in the publication of his works, that has been found surprising. He seems to have succeeded, in this respect, in making the real and the ideal coincide; it is a sort of achievement in life of an aesthetic order.

We can make the same point about another common topic in Pope's letters to aristocratic friends, that of Landscape Gardening and Architecture. Pope practised these domestic arts in his own environment, and he took a keen interest in the projects of his friends. Clearly the landed Aristocracy must set the example here. But the essential point, to be made in detail when we consider the Moral Essays, is that Pope is not, when he considers these matters, concerned with any kind of restricted virtue, anything that could be described in terms of mere good taste. The virtue that expresses itself in and through a fine house and garden is shown to include cultivation and charity. The final coincidence of life and ideal, or myth, may be seen in the fact that friends of Pope whom he held to possess this virtue actually gave him a great deal of help with his own house and garden, as he did with theirs. Thus he is, in a sense, a member of the ideal order. And we may go on to look at the ways in which he actually claims to be so in the letters.

One of the most revealing approaches to the letters to aristocrats is indeed to consider those passages in which Pope asserts that he is, in

1. Correspondence, III. 266.
3. Correspondence, II. 233.
spite of the difference in social status, their friend. He often draws attention to the fact that his relationship to them is in some sense a breach of decorum. He describes a letter to Oxford on his father's death as a "breach of decorum", prompted by "warmth of heart", and by his feeling that the deceased Lord Oxford's life had been of exceptional excellence.\(^1\) To Lord Harcourt he writes that their relationship, defined in the phrase "and may I presume to think, friendship" permits him to write in a way described as a "freedom"\(^2\). To Oxford again he writes on decorum in style between Lord and Commoner. The death of his old nurse permits a breach of decorum because "humanity renders men equal".\(^3\) And he says on the fact that his own letters and feelings are in breach of decorum, that "You see, I presume much, but I have some reason, for I love you much"\(^4\). And again, "Other people of my rank may respect you, but I love you so much more, that I forget many degrees of that respect".\(^5\) To a correspondent of his own rank, he says that he has been much blamed for the "formalists" for signing himself, in a letter to Lord Burlington, "your affectionate servant".\(^6\) Finally, he enjoys declaring on paper that he is friendly with his aristocratic friends, and that he would not mind if it were known: "I should be glad the world knew you admitted me to your friendship".\(^7\) He will ensure, through the secular immortality of his work, that they will be known as friends to posterity.

The last point may be expanded. There is a letter to Lord Bathurst, which, though of uncertain date, Sherburn takes to "pretty clearly" fall within the period of composition of the Epistle to Bathurst.\(^8\) Pope begins by speaking of how his life in thought and imagination is much superior to his life in a body "yearly so much worse, and more declining".

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1. Correspondence, I. 233.
2. Ibid., II. 175.
3. Ibid., II. 337.
4. Ibid., III. 49.
5. Ibid., III. 137.
6. Ibid., III. 157.
7. Ibid., III. 168.
8. Ibid., III. 156, note 1.
In consequence, he says:

I begin to resolve upon the whole rather to turn myself back again into myself, and apply to study as the only way I have left to entertain others, though at some expense both of my own health, and time. I really owe you and some few others some little entertainment, if I could give it them; for having received so much from them, in conscience and gratitude I ought not to go to my grave without trying to give them an hour or two's pleasure, which may be as much as half the pains of my remaining life can accomplish. And without flattery my Lord, I hope to show you someday, that I made it one of my first vanities, to be thought your friend, not only while I lived, but when I am gone. (III. 157)

It is important that we give due weight to Pope's assertion that his role, the task to which he must, in spite of sickness, devote "half the pains of [his] remaining life" is to give pleasure. One need not insist that the poems did not, and do not, succeed because they are difficult. It was the central commonplace of all pre-romantic aesthetics that the business of the poet is to please, but in Pope's formulation there is nothing banal, because he has grasped the paradox that a whole life may properly be concentrated on giving this kind of pleasure. And the importance of thus pleasing is once again rhetorically "proved", taken as read, by the implication that it is what posterity will remember of the present age. Thus in commemorating his friendship with Bathurst through the dedication of a poem, Pope is responding to an aristocratic "favour" with the offer of association with something the poet believes in quite as strongly as he does in aristocracy. There is an exchange of gifts. And this, in the end, is the important point to make about Pope's association with the aristocracy. Although Pope would never have written in such terms, the critic, as a representative of that posterity to which the poet implicitly appeals, may rest securely in the conclusion that Pope did quite as many favours as he received. He has honoured Bathurst
and Burlington and Cobham and the rest by naming them his peers.

So much for the aristocracy. We move on to consider another class of Pope's friends and correspondents in connection with whom there are interesting problems. Pope had many women friends, and two of his best poems are about women. We will concentrate on one particular relationship, one woman. It is fortunate that Pope's correspondence with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu has in large part survived, for these are among the most interesting letters he wrote, and her replies are available in Sherburn's edition of his letters. But before we undertake a detailed examination of the correspondence, there is something to be said about the choice of this particular woman among the many to whom Pope wrote.

It would be absurd to argue that Lady Mary is typical of Pope's female correspondents. The kind of relationship implied by most of his letters to women is best described as comfortable. The letters reveal many years of easy and pleasant friendship with the Blount sisters, and, after Theresa lost favour by taking a lover,^ with Martha Blount in particular. And Pope was also on good and happy terms with such women as the poetess Judith Cowper, and the King's mistress Mrs Howard, later Countess of Suffolk. His relationship with the Blounts was not unclouded even before Theresa fell from grace. There is one letter, dated late in 1717, which shows him coming to terms with the fact that he cannot be in any conventional sense their lover. He writes as follows:

Let me open my whole heart to you: I have some times found myself inclined to be in love with you and as I have reason to know from your Temper and Conduct how miserably I should be used in that circumstance, it is worth my while to avoid it: it is enough to be Disagreeable, without adding Fool to it, by constant Slavery. I have heard indeed of Women that have had a kindness for men of my Make; but it has been after Enjoyment, never before; and I know to

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^1 We have only Pope's word for it that she did (Correspondence, II.40). Elwin did not believe him, but Sherburn points out that Caryll, who knew the Blounts well, apparently did. (Correspondence, loc.cit.,Note 3.)
my Cost you have no Tast of that Talent in me, which most Ladies would not only Like better, but Understand better, than any other I have. (I. 455-6)

This paragraph shows Pope not quite concealing his distress and bitterness behind a controlled and exact style. But the style of his letters to the Blount sisters generally has an easy playfulness, interwoven with a genuine warmth, that suggests his relationship with them was a source of strength, and not a problem. And it would be fair to say that no other women were more consistently important in Pope's life.

We choose rather to consider the relationship with Lady Mary for a number of reasons. It lends itself to an approach based on the close reading of the particular use made of a conventional style. The letters the two of them wrote have the psychological complexity and the stylistic subtlety of an epistolary novel. Both parties are writers, and perform for each other's benefit. And in looking at Pope's style we find him aiming at a special decorum in addressing an aristocratic, educated, and thus presumably in some sense "liberated" woman. And there is another sense in which the relationship itself is literary. Some of its most important developments took place exclusively by letter, when Lady Mary was a long way away from Pope, on her way to and in Constantinople. It will emerge that Pope's perception of the relationship is extensively influenced by this factor. He says more on paper than he would have in person.

It seems to have been the imminence of Lady Mary's departure that provoked Pope into a declaration that the kind of relationship they had been enjoying to that point was not satisfactory to him. He is saying that he has fulfilled his part in their project of a joint letter:

Whether or no you will order me, in recompence, to see you again, I leave to you; for indeed I find I begin to behave myself worse to you than to any other Woman, as I value you more. And yet if I thought I shou'd not see

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1. See for example Correspondence, 11.16.
you again, I would say some things here, which I could not to your Person. For I would not have you dye deceived in me, that is, go to Constantinople without knowing that I am with some degree of Extravagance, as well as with the utmost Reason, Madam, your most faithful & most obedient humble servant. (I. 345)

Now it would be an error to neglect the extent to which this is a deft move in a game the rules of which both players know well. One of the things Pope is doing is being polite by implying that his feelings for her are stronger than he admitted. This was the kind of thing men said to women in letters, and it would be naive to suppose the compliment is any kind of sublimation of sexual passion. This point is made by Robert Halsband, the best of Lady Mary's Biographers. He suggests that Pope's compliments in his letters are not so much the expression of genuine feeling as they are conventional literary homage. We will, however, suggest that a close reading of the letters shows that such a view is only half true.

We may begin by considering Pope's assertion that he is "with some degree of Extravagance" Lady Mary's most faithful servant. The phrase, together with the confession that he begins to behave himself badly, constitutes an allusion to the existence of an epistolary and social decorum which the writer suggests he has to abandon. And what is most interesting about the subsequent letters is the extent to which, and the way in which he does or does not abandon it. Early in the game, and chronically thereafter, he says that he will be sincere: the letters will be "the most impartial Representatives of a true heart, and the truest Copies you ever say, tho' of a very mean original". But the painterly image is not only revealing in the way Pope intended; for what

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2. Correspondence, I. 352-353.
he is doing is not copying from another painting, but copying from nature, and his own nature at that. One need not spell out the point that the canons of realism in the eighteenth century were not intended to produce photographic copies. What he in fact does in the subsequent letters is to assume, with fervor, the role of a literary lover. And he gives that role a special twist by developing a curious sexual fantasy about the more liberated climate of opinion governing sexual behaviour that obtains in the countries through which Lady Mary passes as she moves Eastward.

But before dealing with these, we must look more closely at the opening promise of sincerity. Our reading of what follows will be influenced by the way we take this promise. We have seen that this trope (for it may properly be considered as a rhetorical device) is widespread among Pope's letters to his friends. This example has distinct features. Pope's combination of an ironic dismissal of his own ugliness with this promise is not unique, but deserves mention. It puts sharply in relief the implication noticed earlier that sincerity itself is the sufficient virtue. More interesting is the assertion, following the passage quoted above, that because Pope is being sincere, he must be allowed to change his mind:

You'll no more expect it of me to persevere till Death in every Sentiment or notion I now set down, than you would imagine a man's face should never change after his picture was drawn.

(I. 353)

One notes in passing that Pope has himself abandoned the inadequate image of the letters as copies of an original painting. The important point is the caveat whereby he leaves himself a way out if he should say too much. He does elsewhere say that a consequence of his sincerity is a distracted and inconsistent way of writing; but not, so far as I am

1. Correspondence, II. 431.
aware, that he should not in future be held to sentiments he so sincerely expresses. One might read the sentence as an assertion that he too is subject to the human limitation of being a "chaos of thought and passion all confused". But it also seems possible to argue that he is again indirectly declaring that in writing to Lady Mary he is going to be especially extravagant, and is going to breach that decorum, in the sense encompassing both literary and social standards of behaviour, which he in so many ways puts to the test in both letters and poems.

Sometimes the breach of decorum seems controlled and intended. In the following passage Pope takes advantage of the elaboration that is a feature of the proper style in witty letters between men and women:

Madam, — I no more think I can have too many of your letters, than that I could have too many writings to entitle me to the greatest estate in the world; which I think so valuable a friendship as yours is equal to. I am angry at every Scrap of paper lost, as at something that interrupts the history of my title; and tho' it is but an odd Compliment to compare a fine Lady to Sybill, your leaves methinks, like hers, are too good to be committed to the winds; tho I have no other way of receiving them but by those unfaithful Messengers, I have had but three, & I reckon in that short one from Dort, which was rather a dying Ejaculation than a letter. (I. 382).

The opening two sentences are theme-and-variation, but with the third, Pope achieves an effective juxtaposition of styles. It is short, and plain even in its wit: we suddenly hear a man saying that he has wanted letters, and received three only, and one of those too short.

Such a manipulation of a rhetorically elaborate style adds up to a way of saying that the writer really means what he has elaborately said. In some other passages we receive the same message, but its production seems less calculated. A letter of 3rd Feb. 1716/17 replying to one of Lady Mary's in which she says she has been ill has Pope coming
back again and again to the theme of the letter he is engaged in writing. He comments on its extravagance, its sincerity, its evidential value for unintended readers, even its prospective passage through the postal system:

I don't know if ever this letter will fall into your hands. If it does, what can you infer from it, but how very much I was yours;

If this falls into other hands, it will say nothing I shall be ashamed to own;

I am foolish again, and methinks I am imitating in my ravings the dreams of Spleenatic Enthusiasts and Solitaires;

I am now—I can't tell what—I won't tell what, for it would grieve you—This letter is a piece of madness, that throws me after you in a distracted manner;

This letter takes its chance at Mr Stanhope's office, tho' you direct me to the Merchant Ships bound for Constantinople. (I. 389-390)

Such passages comprise a declaration that the letter is deeply felt, to the extent that the writer considers the form of words he has invented cannot do justice to the feeling that gives rise to them. But at the same time, Pope says that the letter will "if it falls into any other hands", stand to the world as an adequate account of his feelings. The implication that publication has to be thought about in relation to everything he writes, that Curll is lying in wait, is characteristic of Pope. He has a strong feeling that his writing implies, and will find, an audience.¹ Thus a letter which seems primarily an act, a simple expression of feeling, is presented as a literary entity, and the assertion that literary modes of expression are inadequate seem itself to become a literary device.

We conclude that Pope will push at the limits of conventional epistolary decorum in trying to say what he wants to Lady Mary. The degree of deliberation behind all this is impossible to determine. But a hypothesis at least worth considering is that Pope is trying to send a

¹ Cf. Correspondence, II. 419, III. 14.
message that is important to him, but which he has not clarified in his own mind, and which contains elements of feeling he cannot avow to himself. We will see how this explanation fits the passages of sexual fantasy, in which Pope's breach of decorum is clear.

The first case is a letter of the 18th August 1716. Pope's second paragraph begins with elegant variation on the theme of his honesty, on the "the freedom I shall use in this manner of thinking aloud (as somebody calls it) or talking upon paper". Having thus established that the things he is going to say will be extravagant, honest, but not to be taken entirely seriously, he goes on to develop a line of witty compliment by playing variations on a number of images, among them those of drapery and painting. This allows him to say that he does not "...think everybody naked, altogether so fine a sight as yourself and a few more would be", and to conclude on the theme of a day of judgement at which it will be discovered that God does not think prudery a virtue.¹

Now this letter is in itself innocent enough: a certain amount of innuendo is according to decorum in a letter to a woman like Lady Mary. But if we set it in the context of an overview of the relationship it may appear otherwise. The effect of such a context is to make it clear that the two correspondents had different views of their relationship.

We may consider Pope's response to a letter from Lady Mary in which she says she does not "take the fine things you say to me for wit and raillery" but rather "never...was half so well disposed to take you in earnest, as I am at present".² He says that he is glad that she takes him seriously, and comments on his own style of writing as follows:

"It would be the most vexatious of all Tyranny, if you should pretend to take for Raillery, what is the meer disguise of a discontented heart that is unwilling to

1. Correspondence, I. 352-354.
2. Correspondence, I. 361.
make you as melancholy as itself; and for Wit, what is only the natural Overflowing and Warmth of the same Heart, as it is improv'd & awakened by an Esteem for you. But since you tell me you believe me, I fancy my expressions have not at least been entirely unequal to those thoughts, to which I sure they can never be equal. (I. 383)

Now this on its own might be regarded as simply another rhetorical device, a prescribed move in the game. It is the accumulation of such passages that is conclusive. Another factor pointing in the same direction emerges when we compare what the two correspondents have to say about the effects of distance on their relations. They seem to have different views on this point, and on the nature of the relationship itself. Lady Mary says only that parting, an expected enemy to friendship, has in fact nourished it.\(^1\) Pope, on the other hand feels that distance has removed the constraints imposed on the relationship by social convention: "The unhappy distance at which we correspond, removes a great many of those punctilious Restrictions and Decorums, that oftentimes in nearer Conversation prejudice Truth to save Good Breeding".\(^2\)

Pope's indulgence in sexual fantasy then takes place in the context of a divergence in his and his correspondent's view of their relationship. One wonders what Lady Mary made of the letter in which he most freely indulges it:

I doubt not but I shall be told, (when I come to follow you thro' those Countries) in how pretty a manner you accommodated yourself to the Customes of the True-believers. At this town, they will say, She practised to sit on the Sofa; at that village, she learnt to fold the Turbant; here she was bath'd and anointed; & and there she parted with her black Full-bottome. At every Christian virtue you lost, and at every Christian Habit you quitted, it will be decent for me to fetch a holy Sigh, but still I shall proceed to follow you. How happy will it be, for

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1. Correspondence, I. 361.
2. Ibid, I. 354.
a gay young woman, to live in a country where it is a part of Religious worship to be giddy-headed? I shall hear at Belgrade, how the good Basha received the fair Convert with tears and how he was charm'd with her pretty manner of pronouncing the words Allah, and Muhammed, and how earnestly you joind with him in exhorting Mr Wortley to be circumcised. But he satisfies you by demonstrating, how in that condition, he could not properly represent his Brittannick Majesty. Lastly I shall hear how the very first night you lay at Pera, you had a vision of Mahomet's paradise, and happily awaked without a soul. From which blessed instant the beautiful body was left at full liberty to perform all the agreeable functions it was made for. (I. 369)

Probably, she would simply have been amused. For Pope almost pulls it off; the passage is in one dimension an agreeable play of fancy, and it is only innocently odd that he should turn her into an ingénue, or politely bring Mr Wortley in at quite that moment. But there is a clear lapse of tonal control in the eugenic fantasy of the last sentence. And it is only the impression, derived from her letters, that Lady Mary was in some ways a self-centred person, that weighs against the conclusion that she must have had some idea, before there was, that there would be trouble with Pope. His subsequent version of the reason for their quarrel was that "My only fault towards her was, leaving off her conversation when I found it dangerous".¹ In that there is the same kind of self-deceitful priggishness as one finds in the letters he wrote about Theresa Blount when, as a young woman in her prime but without a dowry, she had an affair. To write to Lady Mary as we have seen him do above, or, to give one other example, to speak of her as having "out-traveld the sin of Fornication" and "arrived at the free region of Adultery",² is to converse dangerously.

1. Correspondence, III. 53.
2. Ibid., II. 368.
The conclusion to be derived from this consideration of Pope's relations with women differs substantially from that which followed our examination of his letters to Aristocrats. There, we saw a considerable degree of continuity between the themes of the letters and the themes of the poems. The same is not the case of the letters to women. We will find, in *Eloisa to Abelard*, in the *Essay on Women*, and in *Sober Advice from Horace*, some reason to suggest that Pope has not entirely worked out what he feels about female sexuality. But the theme will be a minor one, and in general it will be a question of a degree of understanding of his subject that implies a finer understanding of himself than Pope achieves in the letters. And the difference is essentially, of course, a difference in literary quality. In the poems, particularly in the second, we will find Pope largely in control of his writing, with the consequence that close reading does not issue, as it does in the letters, in a kind of reading between the lines, a finding in them strong and unacknowledged messages conveyed through the use of an elaborate artificial code. Pope will be using a richer, though still a conventional, language, and his indirections will find his directions out, rather than contradict them.

So much then for the most important groups of Pope's correspondents, or, as he would have it, his friends. We may conclude on a topic we have already touched on by implication: his view of friendship itself. On the basis of what has been said, we may conclude that friendship was of especial importance to Pope in establishing a sense of his own identity and human worth, and that he developed a theory of friendship in consequence of this. It may be emphasised that we are concerned to psychologically analyse Pope only in so far as the evidence warrants it. Thus, since he does not say anything about a connection between his deformity and his need for friendship, we cannot approach the crucial point, the sense in which Pope's need for friendship was special, from that direction.
Nor is one particularly tempted to do so. Such speculation has given biographical criticism a bad name, and Pope is quite as revealingly explicit on the special importance of friendship to himself as one could wish. It is, for a start, like poetry in being something he claims always to have been interested in:

I have all my life from the first years of my reasoning had a disposition to a friendship with some person or other. (I.119)

He has always made "Strong Efforts... to get and deserve a friend";¹ it has been his "one strong desire",² one of his "first vanities",³ and he considers that "the obtaining the love of valuable men is the happiest end I know of this life".⁴ The psychoanalyst might be tempted to speculate by the description of his mother as "such a friend as only Nature can make",⁵ together with the description of the friend he seeks as "some person or other".⁶ But our concern is rather with what we have called a theory of friendship. And Pope's version of this is implicit in what has been quoted.

The key words are "deserve" and "valuable". We have already seen that Pope tends to see particular friendships in terms of a kind of contract, or bargain, of mutual esteem, and that he presents his own sincerity, as what he has to offer in the bargain. One may conjecture in passing that one of the problems with women is that sincerity by itself is not an adequate currency if one wants to go beyond cordiality. Pope claims that he has always chosen his friends for the virtues, and that this choice has proved a wise one:

For many years I have not chosen my companions for any of the qualities in fashion, but almost entirely for that which is the most out of fashion, sincerity; (II. 501)

1. Correspondence, III. 117.
2. Ibid., III. 138.
3. Ibid., III. 157.
4. Ibid., II. 481.
5. Ibid., II. 531.
6. Ibid., I. 119.
Of all those I have thought it the felicity of my life to know, I have ever found the most distinguished in capacity, the most distinguished in Morality: and those the most to be depended on, whom one esteemed so much as to desire they should be so. (II. 138-139)

The particular form the contract here takes is intriguing, and its implications are extensive. "Capacity" and Moral excellence are, it is claimed, found to go hand in hand. We have, however, noticed, in considering what Pope says about himself as a poet, that he sometimes presents himself as being less interested in poetry and more in friendship and virtue as he grows older. There seems to be a contradiction, unless one takes "Capacity" not to cover the gifts a poet needs. The solution lies in recalling that being a poet in the climate of literary life in the eighteenth century meant being embattled, and thus having both one's talent and one's virtue put in question. Virtue seemed to Pope more objectively defensible than talent: this is why we find the troublesome passages of self-praise in the poems, where the two are implicitly associated, as they are explicitly in the passage quoted. It is for the same range of reasons that he will so often claim no longer to be a poet, but rather to be merely a good man. And the relevance of friendship lies in the fact that Pope liked to feel that his circle of friends constituted a kind of citadel of defense against both kinds of attack:

From These the world will judge of Men and Books, Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks. (Epistle to Arbuthnot, 145-6)

Thus when he writes that he has found he can depend on those he esteems, he draws our attention to a central feature in his whole outlook on life. One recalls for a start the extent to which he actually did depend on his friends, and the extent to which he was himself dependable. Later in his life, he found it hard to write to everyone who had claims
on him, and so we find him more and more often ringing the changes on the theme "because I do not write, it does not mean that I no longer love you". A letter to Fortescue of the 8th September 1738 is typical:

I know it is a good while since I ought to have writ to you: I know I also intended it daily, & that it is half an Excuse for my Omission, as Intentions are next a-kin to Actions. My own Conscience is dear, in hearing daily testimony that I love & remember you. A Friend of so many years, has a Title too good, to stand in need of New Deeds & Writings at every turn. (IV.125)

But there are also many letters which reveal him to be deeply interested in the literary, architectural, financial projects of his friends. And he did not lose interest when they will in trouble; we find him insisting on this in the poems and letters alike. A letter to "some worthy but hitherto unappreciated lady" (in Sherburn's phrase) is typical:

I beg you will never cease to think me your friend, that you may not be guilty of that which you never yet knew to commit, an injustice. As I have hitherto been so in spite of the world, so hereafter if it be possible that you should ever be more opposed, and more deserted, I should only be so much the more Your Faithful, &c. (II. 368)

To some degree, the circle of companions so chosen can be regarded as forming a substitute for the family he himself lacked. To Edward Blount he writes: "I have a mixture of envy to you all for loving one another so well", and also, on another occasion, "You are very obliging to say, I have a whole Family on my hands to whom to discharge the part of a friend". But one must discriminate between the Blount circle, who were historically linked in friendship with Pope's own family, and the literary and aristocratic friends he made for himself as his fame increased. Pope's apologies for not writing are most often to such as Blount and Caryll, old familial friends. The later circle had to be explicitly mentioned and sustained. But when Pope does apologise to such as Lord Oxford for not writing, it

1. Correspondence, II. 180.
2. Ibid., II. 86.
generally seems to be for a venial omission.

Pope's sense of the existence and importance of the later circle, of literary and aristocratic friends, is best seen in his presentation of it as something that will be remembered by posterity. He is sure that he and his friends will be remembered, together. Writing about the publication of his letters, he denies any interest in "Epistolary Fame", but promises himself "Fame... from my Friendships". The theme recurs, with a defensive note, in other material on the letters themselves. He feels it to be important that the record be kept straight:

All the work I told you of (That of collecting the letters & Papers of many... Correspondents) advances now to some bulk: I think more & more of it; as finding what a number of facts they will settle the truth of, both relating to history, and criticisme, & parts of private life and Character of the eminent men of my time. (III. 54)

Nor is this commemorative function merely an indirect consequence of his letters, or his writing in general; it is part of what they essentially are for. Writing to Swift about the dedication of the Dunciad, he records his satisfaction that "At all adventures, yours and my name shall stand linked to posterity, both in verse and prose." Thus we have Pope's own word that there is a personal motive other than malice behind the poem which presents most problems for the critic concerned to consider the poet in his poems. And in considering the Dunciad and other poems, we will suggest that the Dunces, and Pope's enemies in general, form a circle essentially antithetical to the circle of friendship we have been considering.

1. Correspondence, III. 101
2. Ibid., II. 480.
Discussion of Pope's early verse may be introduced by a sentence from Maynard Mack's impressive and influential paper "The Muse of Satire." Mack remarks that "The Muse ought to remind us that in any given instance the shadow [that is, the explicit version of the poet in the poem] may not delineate even the whole poet, but only that angle of his sensitivity which best refracts the light from epic, elegy, pastoral, satire, lyric".¹ That is an admirable summary of a view of the role of the speaker in Pope's poetry from which this analysis diverges, at any rate in connection with the later poems. It would be unfair, in the light of later work in which Mack modifies his original point of view,² to suggest that the remark is admirably summary precisely because of its metaphorical unclarity: we have the relationship between persona and poet imaged as a shadow which delineates an angle of sensitivity which refracts the light from a genre. It is perhaps rather a question of a difficulty acknowledged, and deferred.

Moreover, the sentence is not in any way inadequate when applied to much of the earlier verse. Pope's orthodox gradus ad Parnassum includes experiments in a number of genres, and assumption of the manner of a number of poets. It is inevitable that the nature of the speaker of the poems should be largely influenced by Pope's sense of what is proper. The difference between earlier and later verse in respect of the speaker is thus a generic difference. We are not directed to think of the speaker as Alexander Pope the man in the early poems because Pope is not yet writing satire, thus not yet in the public eye. He and his friends have not been abused by any dunce, so he does not have to defend his or their morals or talent. Nor is he imitating Horace, who mentioned himself frequently: Virgil, who did not, is in the ascendant.

² In The Garden and the City, Toronto 1969, Mack allows to a much greater extent the presence of the poet in his work, and the relevance of biographical information in reading it.
However, even in the early verse, one cannot quite say all that needs to be said in the form of an account of Pope as the poet of allusion, however broadly understood. For one thing, what we may call a personal note emerges in the very fact of such deft and proper use of allusion. As he himself often said, Pope was early committed to a literary career. Among his "exemplary images...of his own ideal identity"¹, to borrow a phrase from a later work by Mack, his consciousness of himself as a writer inheriting and carrying on a classical tradition was always prominent. In some of the early work, this prominence may seem too clearly intended by the writer. He is letting us know, sometimes ingenuously, and sometimes with a dexterity which hovers on the edge of seeming disingenuous, that he is a proper poet. But he was also early aware that to play such a role in his own time would involve him in conflict. He knew from the beginning that the life of a wit was to be a warfare upon earth. The question of whether or not he actually fired the first shot in any such battles is one with which we are precisely not concerned. More interesting is the way in which his uneasy awareness of this aspect of the literary life issues in the versions of himself he presents in the poems. We find a similar ambivalence to that we noticed in the letters.

Thus in the early poems Pope is prominently and essentially present as a poet; and we will be primarily concerned with the various ways in which his presence is structurally part of the poems. We also find in them, and we will need to similarly consider in them, more of the lineaments of the man that we saw emerge from the letters. Again, compared to the later poems, Pope is much less explicit about politics, aristocrats, friends and friendship. It is not generically appropriate that he should be explicit. It remains the case, however, that one can look at the poems as prises de position on these and other issues without doing any injustice

¹ Poems, VII. p.ccxxix.
to their richness and independence as poems.

To begin, then, with the Pastorals, the first thing to be said is, of course, that this is the right place to begin, and that the speaker of the poems clearly knows that it is. We find him to be a youthful but confidently ambitious English poet beginning his literary career in a manner guaranteed to be appropriate by the precedent of poets agreed to be great by the cultured audience for whom he is writing, and whose values he shares. The opening lines of "Spring; The First Pastoral, or Damon" are as follows:

First in these Fields I try the Sylvan Strains
Nor blush to sport on Windsor's blissfull Plains:
Fair Thames flow gently from thy sacred Spring,
While on thy Banks Sicilian Muses sing. (I, 1-4)

These lines are the more, and not the less, Pope speaking, for the fact that they imitate the opening of Virgil's sixth pastoral. The opening lines of the other three similarly imitate Spenser, Virgil again, and Theocritus. Pope, as Reuben Brower has definitively said, is recapitulating and taking his own place in a line of succession; for Spenser alludes to both Virgil and Theocritus, and Virgil alludes to Theocritus. The explicitly avowed desire to be the English inheritor of this tradition is thus supported by evidence that he is; he makes the right moves. The audience whose approval he claims is represented within the poems by their dedicatees, all men of undoubted status and achievement, but also all his personal friends. Sir William Trumbull, the retired statesman, has the place of honour in the first Pastoral, and Pope's compliments are appropriately formal:

1. See Pope's own note to line 1, Poems, I. 60:
   "In the beginnings of the other three pastorals, he expressly imitates those which now stand first of the three Chief Poets in this kind, Spenser, Virgil, Theocritus."
You, that too Wise for Pride, too Good for Pow'r,  
Enjoy the Glory to be Great no more,  
And carrying with you all the World can boast,  
To all the World Illustriously are lost! (1, 7-10)

To the amiable Garth, socially successful physician and talented poet,  
he is more easy in his compliments:

Hear what from Love unpractis'd Hearts endure,  
From Love, the sole Disease thou canst not cure! (2, 11-12)

And in praising Wycherley, the surviving literary eminence of an earlier  
age, he stresses the playwright's place in another branch of the classical  
tradition:

Thou, whom the Nine with Plautus' Wit inspire,  
The Art of Terence, and Menander's Fire;  
Whose Sense instructs us, and whose Humour charms,  
Whose Judgement sways us, and whose Spirit warms! (3, 7-10)

These complimentary dedications are of course thoroughly conventional  
elements, found in innumerable other poems, and it will probably seem  
paradoxical to use them as evidence for the argument that there is a personal  
presence of the poet in the poem. It might rather seem that we have here  
a definitive case of a persona, a generically appropriate mask of the poet.  
It is argued, however, that what we have is not just a mask, but rather  
the spectacle of a mask being made and put on, and that this spectacle  
implies, behind the mask, the poet, who has his reasons for choosing to  
put it on.

The crux of the argument clearly lies in establishing the source  
of this implication. There are, it seems to me, two pertinent lines of  
argument. One must first of all consider Pope's own presentation of the  
Pastorals. His introduction and notes to the poems, printed with them in  
the Twickenham edition, first appeared in the 1736 edition of his collected  
Works, twenty-seven years after they were written. The introductory "A  
Discourse on Pastoral Poetry" was, Pope claimed in a note, written at
sixteen years of age, and was thus, according to him, contemporary with the poem. The notes, on the other hand, were written for the collected edition in which they appeared, and they are not explicitly Pope's.

Although it seems likely that he wrote them, he is referred to in them as "our author". The apparatus of the poem thus recalls, through the editorial problems it poses, the apparatus of the Dunciad, and the resemblance may be argued to have a larger scope. If one follows the practice of Aubrey Williams in his book on the Dunciad and treats the notes to the Pastoral as notes towards a supreme fiction, or at any rate, notes towards a fiction, one finds that they suggest, in a manner almost scriblerian, the kind of reading of the presence of the speaker we have indicated.

Pope approvingly describes the way in which, at a remarkably early age, he did the right thing, and was properly rewarded with praise and reputation:

And one notes on the reputation that it is at once social and literary, explicitly literary but awarded by critics most of whom are of high social status:

These Pastoral were written at the age of sixteen, and then past thro' the hands of Mr. Walsh, Mr. Wycherley, G. Granville, afterwards Lord Lansdown, Sir William Trumbail, Dr. Garth, Lord Halifax, Lord Somers, Mr. Mainwaring, and others. All these gave our Author the greatest encouragement, and particularly Mr. Walsh, (whom Mr. Dryden, in his Postscript to Virgil, calls the best critic of his age) "The Author (says he) seems to have a particular genius for this kind of Poetry, and a judgement that much exceeds his years. He has taken very freely from the Ancients. But what he has mixed of his own with theirs is no way inferior to what he has taken from them. It is not flattery to say that Virgil had written nothing so good at his Age. His Preface is very

2. For an extended account of the way in which Pope does the right thing in the Pastoral see Provost Foster, "Pope's Pastoral as an Exercise in Poetical Technique", in Contributions to the Humanities, 1954, Louisiana State University Studies: Humanities Series, No. 5.) Baton Rouge 1954, 25-37.
By thus displaying his performance in the notes, Pope inclines the reader towards a reading of the performance itself as a kind of display. We are made to think of the man behind the poem, who adjusted his appearance to establish the kind of social and literary identity he later claims to have established.

It might be objected that the way Pope later saw the *Pastorals* has no special evidential value, and that one must look at the poems themselves for some reason to sense the poet behind the mask. The second line of argument behind our suggestion that the mask implies a face behind it attempts to deal with what force there is in this objection. It seems to me that one necessarily reads any poem by Pope in the context of his work as a whole, just as, according to Eliot, one reads any poem in the English language in the context of all the other poems written in English. Now in the context of all of Pope's poems, the *Pastorals* are thin and minor work, and this analysis extends, of course, to the role of the speaker in them. But in the case of the speaker, this thinness is tied to the fact that the speaker is absolutely generically determined, that his characteristics are precisely, and no more than, those demanded by his generic role as speaker of pastoral. In a sense, then, all we have in the poem is a persona, and that is one way of describing its limitation. But we are conscious of this as limitation because in other poems the classical notion of the persona is not an adequate concept to account for our sense of the presence of the author. Pope is present, say, in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, not only in his ability to do the right thing, to assume the appearance of a "satirist", but also in something of his human.

complexity and tension. Thus our sense of the poet behind the mask of the pastoral "shadow" is the sense of an absence, or of an unrealised potential. Where we are accustomed to find a difficult and a vital complexity, we find nothing.

By comparison Windsor-Forest, whose relation within the classical pastoral tradition to the *Pastorals* has been lucidly expounded by Brower, is considerably richer and more interesting. The notes, for example, are largely usefully explanatory, with some emphasis on our author's classical learning. Pope's desire to make his works into a text, with appropriate apparatus, is inconspicuous now that all works but the contemporary are texts, and the embalming fluid is prepared for some of the latter so soon after they have been born. But it is worth noticing, because it is an important component of his sense of what it means to be a poet. It is one of the ways in which he sets them, and himself, in the line of poetic tradition. The difference between the notes to the *Pastorals* and to Windsor-Forest is a function of the fact that the later poem is not in need of scaffolding to hold it up. The notes are no more than a proper frame. It is not that the later poem is any less allusive. On the contrary, it is more extensively so. The difference is that *Windsor-Forest* is much more than a performance, because Pope is beginning to discover his mature manner and range of themes.

An early, and revealing allusion is to Milton:

The Groves of Eden, vanished now so long,
Live in Description, and look green in Song:
These, were my Breast inspir'd with equal Flame,
Like them in Beauty, should be like in Fame. (7-10)

2. The question that must come to mind at this point, as to whether *The Dunciad* is "in need of" its notes, will be considered in due course.
Here Pope is doing what Collins was to do at greater length in his "Ode on the Poetical Character": asserting, with the indirection of formal denial, his intention of emulating God's creative power as Milton did. In considering Pope as he appears in the Moral Essays we will see how he moves towards a more explicit, although still by no means fully worked out, aesthetic philosophy that does justice to what he felt to be the special power of the poet in himself. As for Windsor-Forest, Wasserman has pointed out that the poem can be read as achieving a complex and powerful account and image of the divine order. For our purposes the key passages are those in which Pope defines the role of the poet in an England restored to harmony after the chaos of the Civil War. The initial description is of an ideal life of rustic retirement, scholarly rather than specifically poetic, and, as generations of editors have pointed out, extensively indebted to other poems, English and Classical:

Happy the Man whom this bright court approves,
His Sov'reign favours, and his Country loves;
Happy next him who to these Shades retires,
Whom Nature charms, and whom the Muse inspires,
Whom humbler Joys of home-felt Quiet please,
Successive Study, Exercise, and Ease. (235-40)

Brower has pointed out that Pope seems a little uneasy about assigning primacy to the man whom the bright court approves: and indeed, at this stage of his poetic career he is very far from a final definition of that opposition, or rather dialectic, between Garden and City which, as Maynard Mack has demonstrated, is central to so much of his poetry. The lines go on to describe the retired scholar's study of herbal cures, "Chymic Art", Astronomy, Ancient History, and Learning generally, and his cultivation of moral and religious insight:

3. See the note to lines 235-258 in Poems, 1.171.
5. The Garden and the City, passim.
T'observe a Mean, be to himself a Friend,
To follow Nature and regard his End. (251-2)
The passage as a whole is a capable exercise in a well-known genre, and
one is not at all inclined to suggest that the speaker is expressing any
kind of personal aspiration. The pursuits described have an occasional
touch of pedantry and eccentricity that makes the whole passage seem
curiously anachronistic, almost to the point where they are reminiscent of
Pope's later satirical attacks on abstruse and minute scholarship.

What is interesting about the presence of the poet in the poem
is the reflexive and aesthetic nature of the presentation of the ideal of
retirement. Pope is describing a traditional, and specifically, as Brower\(^1\)
has pointed out, Virgilian, mode of human relation to the natural world.
And the latter is, of course, the natural world as presented in the poem:
"Happy the Man whose Raptures fire me, and whose Visions bless,
Bear me, oh bear me to sequester'd Scenes,
The Bow'ry Mazes, and surrounding Greens;
To Thames's Banks which fragrant Breezes fill,
Or where ye Muses sport on Cooper's Hill.
(On Cooper's Hill eternal Wreaths shall grow,
While lasts the Mountain, or while Thames shall flow)
I seem thro' consecrated Walks to rove,
I hear soft Musick dye along the Grove;
Led by the Sound I rove from Shade to Shade,
By God-like Poets Venerable made:
Here his first Lays Majestic Denham sung;
There the last Numbers flowed from Cowley's Tongue. (259-272)

In comparing this, as a declaration of poetic ambition, with the declaration effectively made by the *Pastorals* as a whole, one can only concede that Pope has grown in confidence and rhetorical control. The poets Pope would emulate are God-like in their possession of the kind of creativity defined as Milton's at the beginning of the poem, and their subsisting creation is at once the poetry in which they have described this landscape, and the landscape itself, through which the poet now wishes to pass. Pope takes his place in a more local, and thus more accessible, line of succession than he did in the *Pastorals*, and he does so by placing himself within the landscape of his own poem, within those "...sequester'd Scenes/The Bow'ry Mazes, and surrounding Greens" to which he wishes the Muse would carry him, so that he might "inhabit" them as do Denham and Cowley. And behind the local, and English intersection of imaginative and literal landscape lies, of course, the memory of the Virgilian landscape. It is no longer, as in the *Pastorals*, necessary for Pope to insist that those were his antecedents.

In a subsequent paragraph Pope reverts to the historical context of the poem and "places" himself as its poet-speaker in the wider world of public affairs. Since the deaths of Denham and Cowley the Groves and Walks have lacked a poet. Now they are to find one, not Pope, but rather the aristocratic dedicatee of *Windsor-Forest*, and supposed architect of the peace it celebrates, Granville:

'Tis yours, my Lord, to bless our soft Retreats,  
And call the Muses to their ancient Seats,  
To paint anew the flow'ry Sylvan Scenes,  
To crown the Forests with Immortal Greens,  
Make Windsor Hills in lofty Numbers rise,  
And lift her Turrets nearer to the Skies. (285-288)

1. George Granville, Lord Lansdowne, was in fact no more than a member of the ministry that negotiated the peace. See Poems, 1.130, for the details of Pope's relationship with Granville.
Here again, in the plain sense of the words, is an account of what Pope has actually done in his poem. To classify his assignment of his own achievement to Granville as a common rhetorical device, a modesty topos, is to establish a context for his complimentary dexterity. But we must follow the device through in detail if we are to see how eloquently its use presents a version of a proper social order, and a poet's place in it. Pope goes on to describe Granville's poetic achievement as akin to that of an aristocratic predecessor also associated with Windsor:

Surrey, the Granville of a former Age:
Matchless his Pen, victorious was his Lance;
Bold in the Lists, and graceful in the Dance. (292-4)

The difference between this version of the poet as renaissance courtier, and the earlier image of retiring scholarship, again suggests the dialectic of Garden and City. In the end, it is a question of either avoiding the world, or setting it right, with two provisos: that avoiding it might also be described as setting it right within the walls of one's garden; and that the man who aims to set it right is required to live as harmonious a life as the man who chooses retirement. These are not simple alternatives. The poem goes on to suggest other themes for Granville's pen in a summary of the political vicissitudes of England as they have been associated with Windsor, concluding with the restoration of peace and order with the accession of Queen Anne:

At length great ANNA said—Let Discord cease!
She said, the World obeyed, and all was Peace! (327-8)

The parody of genesis amusingly completes the metaphorical association of different kinds of creators: poet, historian, patron, statesman, soldier, ruler under God, and God: but the lightness of touch should not blind us to Pope's control in juxtaposing them. And in this light the decorum of the figure becomes apparent. It is Granville's social position that makes it appropriate that the dance of meanings should centre on him.
An aristocrat should be universally pre-eminent. But Pope is never again to pay quite that sort of compliment to any aristocrat. We will see that the Moral Essays do not centre on their dedicatees to anything like the same extent.

Through his use of Granville, then, Pope "defines" what it means to be a poet. And it follows that once again our sense of the character of the responsible speaker derives not only from the obvious personae (versions of the poet) adopted, but rather from our awareness that the speaker-poet is responsible for these personae. Pope is thinking, and writing, about what it means to be a poet, and doing so with admirable wit, learning, and control. As in the Pastorals, one feels that he can demonstratively "do the right thing". Thus his ability to appropriately praise Granville places him in the relation poet-patron, and in consequence gives him a defined degree of social and literary identity. And even the apparently personal note in the appeal to the Muses quoted above is appropriate. We are to be convinced in the Essay on Criticism that one cannot in theory be a poet without fire, and we find that "our Author" does not hide his fire under a bushel. The poem differs from the Pastorals in a single and important respect. One feels that Pope's aim and achievement in exhibiting this range of behaviours is investigative. By trying on a range of masks, he is finding out what it is like to be himself, a poet conscious of his power.

In this light the "personal coda" of the poem, to use a phrase of Geoffrey Tillotson's,\(^1\) becomes more than merely an appropriate reversion to the Pastoral convention. The last four lines, the Twickenham editor tells us, contain a double allusion, to the Georgics, and to Pope's own first Pastoral: "Pope's conclusion was modelled on that of the Georgics... As Virgil closed his Georgics with the first line of his Eclogues, so Pope's

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1. From the Introduction to Eloisa to Abelard, Poems, II. 294.
final couplet echoes the opening line of *Spring*. The poem thus ends with a final assertion of its status, a reminder of the company it aspires to keep. But more important, because if one does not notice it one will misread Pope's Virgilian allusion, is the contrast in tone between the last paragraph and what precedes it. The poem moves towards its conclusion with an eloquent expression of the poet's hopes for the universal ascendancy of the Pax Britannica:

Oh stretch thy Reign, far Peace! from Shore to Shore, Till Conquest cease, and Slav'ry be no more. (407-8)

The climax of the penultimate paragraph is impressively sonorous:

There Faction roar, Rebellion bite her Chain, And gasping Furies thirst for Blood in vain. (421-2).

The next paragraph begins with the poet referring to himself in the third person, formally marking his abandonment of the eloquent "voice" of the patriotic poet he had assigned, and now again assigns, to Granville:

Here cease they Flight, nor with unhallow'd Lays Touch the fair Fame of Albion's Golden Days; The Thoughts of Gods let Granville's Verse recite, And bring the Scenes of opening Fate to Light. (423-6)

And then there follows the final paragraph, with its allusion to Virgil, more conventionally pastoral than anything else in the poem:

My humble Muse, in unambitious Strains, Paints the green Forests and the flow'ry Plains, Where Peace descending bids her Olives spring, And scatters Blessings from her Dove-like Wing. Ev'n I more sweetly pass my careless Days, Pleas'd in the silent Shade with empty Praise; Enough for me, that to the listning Swains First in these Fields I sung the Sylvan Strains. (427-434)

This sequence of voices illustrates conveniently what is meant by the assertion that the poet-speaker is present behind his "personae". Pope is demonstrating the range of tones of which his instrument is capable.

1. Poems, I.194.
He makes a transition, marked by a reference to himself in the second person, from a "terrific" manner to an exaggeratedly pastoral one, without in either case sacrificing genuine eloquence and power to the element of hyperbole in each style that sets the two in contrast. Thus he at once acknowledges the limitations of verse, and celebrates and demonstrates its power. As we said, the use of traditional images of the poet becomes a way of discovering, rather than a way of masking, the self.

In the *Pastorals* and *Windsor-Forest*, then, we have found Pope more or less impressively present behind the voices he adopts. Essentially we have been concerned with the way in which the speaker of the poems is integrated into their structure, and in the case of the second poem, this issue has been treated in connection with what may be called the reflexive nature of the poem, the way in which it refers to itself. This theme will be a recurring one in our treatment of Pope's poetry: the extent to which his poems are about themselves has been neglected much as the way in which they are about him has been misunderstood. And on this last question, we have found that these two early poems have been principally about Pope as author. Our sense of the man has largely lacked a historical or a psychological dimension. In discussing a number of other early, and minor, poems, we will first consider one in which the speaker is not integrated into the poem as he is in *Windsor-Forest*, and then glance at a number of others in which we encounter both the poet and the man.

The primary function of the speaker in *The Temple of Fame* is of course that of percipient, required by the narrative technique adopted, of the architecture and events described. But in the personal coda of the poem we find an attempt to involve him thematically in the narrative. The "moral" of the poem, or what is claimed to be its moral, is both enunciated by and brought home to the speaker. Someone whispers in his ear "Art thou, fond Youth, a Candidate for Praise?", to which he replies that he is,
but that he knows how difficult the life of a wit can be, and is not prepared to compromise his integrity to win fame:

But if the Purchase costs so dear a Price,  
As soothing Folly, or exalting Vice:  
Oh! If the Muse must flatter lawless Sway,  
And follow still where Fortune leads the way,  
Or if no Basis bear my rising Name,  
But the fall'n Ruins of Another's Fame:

Then teach me, Heaven! to scorn the guilty Bays;  
Drive from my Breast that wretched Lust of Praise;  
Unblemish'd let me live, or die unknown,  
Oh grant an honest Fame, or grant me none! (515-524)

To say that this seems insincere might seem to involve an appeal to a discredited criterion. But we are pointing to a definable failure of rhetoric, issuing in inauthenticity, incoherence, and not to any hypothetical lack of correspondence between what is said and the speaker's feelings. Out of context the passage is only of less than average quality, flawed by the weak personification of "lawless Sway" the clumsy pathetic fallacy of "guilty Bays" and the slightly shrill tone of "Drive from my Breast that wretched Lust of Praise". But it displays effective syntactic and rhythmical control in the construction of the verse paragraph. And it has been shown that Pope's assessment of the value of fame is of some interest to the historian of literature.¹

The problem is that the passage seems appended to the poem, or, to make the same point another way, that the fond youth seems to have been given, to round things off, a degree of animation he has hitherto shown no sign of possessing. In the body of the poem the speaker is merely the spectator of pictorial marvels: he has not even the rudimentary kind of identity that would be established if he responded to what he saw in any defined way. The point is particularly clear if we read the poem with

its Chaucerian original, The House of Fame, in mind. The character and responses of Chaucer's narrator are intimately bound up with the themes of the poem. The speaker-author's tact, his consciousness of himself in educational and social relation to the audience, his sense of the ridiculous, and his somewhat humiliating relationship with the single and strong minded eagle who transports him, give the poem a dimension lacking in Pope's adaptation, and specifically, serve to question and animate its overt doctrinal content. In contrast, it is striking that Pope's narrator is merely that, a narrative a priori, and the attempt to conclude the poem by bringing it home to him reveals its thinness, its lack of felt and understood experience. A narrative a priori has no business making moral protestations.¹

The point is also enforced by a comparison of the poem with Pope's later work. The stance that he here attempts is that of the poet as honest man in a literary world of vicious conflict. We will see him develop, enrich, and refine it throughout his poetic career. Again, the difference is in part simply generic: in the Epilogue to the Satires it is appropriate that he talk about himself and his world at length. But one may also say that it is a question of his finding the genres that suit him, and that, we will see, in the end involves a movement from simplicity, pastorals, progress poem, heroic epistle, mock-heroic, to such essentially novel kinds of poem as the Epistle to Arbuthnot or the Epilogue to the Satires. I am not suggesting that these latter poems are unprecedented, but simply that they are not members of a class in the same sense as the Pastorals. And I would suggest that the same point might be made of the Dunciad,² particularly if its apparatus be taken into account. It will be argued that

¹ Cf. also A.C. Cawley, "Chaucer, Pope, and Fame", REL, III(1962), 9-19.
² Aubrey L. Williams, Pope's Dunciad, London 1955, covers the generic antecedents of the Dunciad in the course of his discussion, and reveals their diversity. See also the Introduction to Poems, V, pp. ix-xviii.
One way of characterising this change is to say that Pope is discovering and inventing more adequately self-expressive forms.¹

One dimension of the problem we have not yet looked at specifically is the influence of the intended and implied audience of a poem on the nature and role of its speaker. We may consider this, while at the same time looking at the poet as he writes for and about women, in three minor poems, the Epistle to Miss Blount with the Works of Voiture, the Epistle to Miss Blount, on her leaving the Town, after the Coronation, and, apparently at an opposite extreme, yet in fact in an important sense equally decorous, or according to decorum, "Rondeau."

"Rondeau" is brief enough to be quoted in full:

You know where you did despise
(T'other day) my little eyes,
Little legs, and little thighs,
And some things else of little size,
    You know where.

You, 'tis true, have fine black eyes,
Taper legs, and tempting thighs,
Yet what more than all we prize
Is a thing of little size,
    You know where.

This is of course not a very good poem; it was not intended for publication, and in fact its unauthorized publisher, Nathaniel Mist, was punished for that and other offences in the Dunciad.² But it remains in a number of ways interesting and representative. First of all, there is the question of the source and nature of the version of himself the poet presents. The poem is an imitation of a French original,³ personalised by Pope's allusion to "Ou vous savez tromper bien finement" (Poems, V.61).

1. Cf. Austin Warren, Rage for Order: Essays in Criticism, Chicago 1948, Ch. III passim. Warren's view of Pope's presence in his poems is very different to that here advanced, but his assertion (p.41) that Pope's development is "from the elegantly decorative to the richly — even the grotesquely — expressive" applies to a kind of self-expression in the poems that he is unwilling to recognise.
3. The Twickenham editors tell us that the poem is a paraphrase of Voiture's "Ou vous savez tromper bien finement" (Poems, V.61)
to his own physique. The man-of-the-world stance adopted in it has been
touched on in connection with the letters, and so has Pope's ironic-
dismissive style of dealing with his appearance. Pope is able to bring
the two together without falling into the grotesque because the only aspect
of his physique he mentions is its smallness. In the context of English
poetry, the poem fits a tradition commonly described as Restoration because
in that period it came more into the public eye than usual. In fact,
there is no time in the history of English poetry when such poems were
not written. The genre may be defined in terms of the implied roles of
writer and reader: man of the world, or, occasionally, and more often
as reader than writer, "liberated" woman. And the necessary mode of
dissemination is also important. Such poems were privately published,
if they were published at all, and were more often circulated in manuscript.
It is thus a tightly restricted genre, and the interesting point about this
example of it is the way in which Pope, having chosen to talk about himself,
is required to do so in a manner that seems euphemistic. He was not only
small. Thus in a sense, biographical information is distracting: the
implied author of the poem is a perfectly proportioned gentleman of less
than heroic stature, and one's knowledge that Pope was not such a person
intrudes. This observation seems to require one or two alternative con-
clusions. Either one should always assume the speaker of a poem to be
a dramatic character (in this case a small shapely person) not the author,
or one has to condemn Pope for disingenuousness, which is a kind of in-
sincerity. But we have described these very alternatives as conceptually
inadequate. A way out of the dilemma emerges through the observation that
the poem is, after all, a slight one. Part of our response to it may be
an awareness that Pope has spoken the poem in his own (physical) person,
and taken a risk in assuming that the maid of honour to whom it is addres-
sed will accept his selective version of that physical person. She, and
the reader, may, if they are unsympathetic, or preoccupied with the
theory of poetry, not accept the poem in the right spirit. But a juster response would simply be to enjoy its wit.

We can enjoy both wit and a sense of the poet's presence in the two Epistles to Miss Blount... These poems are closer in a number of ways to "Rondeau" than might at first appear. The French poem the latter imitates is by Voiture, while the first of the epistles is not only "...with the Works of Voiture", but is also an overt adaptation of his manner. This clarifies the generic relations of Pope's poems: like "Rondeau," they are exercises in a defined kind of poem by a man to a woman. We have in all three cases a version of Pope adjusted to the "occasion", which includes the nature and taste of the recipient. The difference is that now the versions, fuller of course than what we found in "Rondeau," are also complemented and not put in question by what we know of Pope. The first of the two, the Epistle...with the Works of Voiture, extends the investigation of the social life and role of the artist we saw began in Windsor-Forest.

It begins with a description of Voiture's life as an Artist in society:

Sure to charm all was his peculiar Fate,
Who without Flatt'ry pleased the Fair and Great;
Still with Esteem no less convers'd than read;
With Wit well-natur'd, and with Books well-bred;
His Heart, his Mistress and his Friend did share;
His Time, the Muse, the Witty, and the Fair;
Thus wisely careless, innocently gay,
Chearful, he play'd the Trifle, Life, away,
'Til Fate scarce felt his gentle Breath suppress't,
As smiling Infants sport themselves to Rest. (5-14)

Apparently effortless social grace, and social acceptability without the question of compromise, as raised in the concluding lines of the Temple of Fame, ever arising, are the keynotes of this version of the life of the artist. Authorship is as far from Grub Street as possible.

When the speaker comes to apply this ideal state of affairs to his own life, he does so with a deft indirection consonant with the virtues
he has attributed to Voiture:

Let the strict Life of graver Mortals be
A long, exact, and serious Comedy,
In ev'ry Scene some Moral let it teach,
And, if it can, at once both Please and Preach:
Let mine, an innocent gay Farce appear,
And more Diverting still than Regular,
Have Humour, Wit, a native Ease and Grace;
Tho' not too strictly bound to Time and Place:
Criticks in Wit, or Life, are hard to please,
   Few write to those, and none can live to these. (21-30)

It is of course appropriate that the speaker should talk about his life in images from art, since it is the life of an artist he aspires to. He pretends to devalue his own "innocent gay Farce" of a life by comparison with the "strict Life of Graver Mortals"—implying, of course, the opposite evaluation. He hopes only to divert, while they, if they can, may "at once both Please and Preach". The evaluative connotations of the comparison are delicately poised. Pope would not have disputed the classical commonplace that the business of art is to please and preach at the same time. But here he is talking not about art, nor even about the life of the artist, but about the kind of art, and the life of the kind of artist, which will specially please a young lady. Thus "Preach" might seem to slant the tone in the direction of making strictness and gravity boring, socially maladroit. On the other hand, the possibility of both pleasing and preaching is not eliminated; and a young lady sensitive to the tones of verse might conclude that she had indeed been instructed. That a Comedy should be long is clearly undesirable; that it should be serious, given that it is both long and exact, seems unpromising; and that it should be exact, seriously and at length, suggests misapplied effort. But had it not been initially long, one might have got over the paradox of "serious Comedy", and understood how it could properly have been exact and serious. The verse is a kind of trial of its reader, who
may merely be flattered and amused, or who may be challenged.

Pope is alluding to serious critical standards he does not mean us to reject. But because he is writing to a young woman, and in praise of Voiture, he sets up an opposition between the sound-but-dull and "a native Ease and Grace", the style in life and art he has earlier described as appealing, in Voiture, to young women, and which he himself achieves, but also transcends. He is not totally committed to the opposition. He implies that the sound-but-dull might be otherwise evaluated, and does not insist on the implication.

This analysis might be extended: Pope has no time for the Unities, strictly applied, but does not condemn all kinds of regularity: and so on. We may however move on to consider the function in context of these ambivalent judgements. We, and Miss Blount, are being introduced to a version of the author who will be an appropriate speaker for the second half of the poem. In that second half Pope might be said to be preaching if he had not already both disclaimed the intention of so doing, and established for himself a character in whom the appearance of preaching would have to be misleading. He had, in the account of Voiture, suggested the possibility of pleasing the fair and great without flattery, which opens the way for advice at least. The character of the poet that has been established is that of man of inborn wit and social ease, but who also restrains in favour of these qualities a capacity for sharper analysis. The advice given to Miss Blount is finely adjusted to that character. Female nature and marriage are analysed and advised against (respectively) with a wit that disposes of both acuity and grace, and that always remains well-natured, as was Voiture's. The tone can include the analytical point of these lines on the character-as-destiny of women:

Custom, grown blind with Age, must be your Guide:
Your Pleasure is a Vice, but not your Pride;
By nature yielding, stubborn but for Fame;
Made Slaves by Honour, and made Fools by Shame. (33-6)

This is much sharper than anything it is implied Voiture ever said, but the poem remains consistent, for two reasons. Pope has suggested the possibility of moral severity, gravity and exactitude. And the passage is Ovid moralised, based on pointed analysis, and thus distinct from preaching.

In the same vein, the touch of mock-heroic in:

The Gods, to curse Pamela with her Pray'rs,
Gave the gilt Coach and dappled Flanders Mares (49-50)
confirms the praise of Voiture's cultivated learning, but puts it to a new use that bespeaks Pope. And it is the detachment implied by such passages that gives force to the eventual moral. Pope directly addresses Martha in a tone which is striking and unexpected because although it has wit in common with what has come before, it is also grave and affectionate. Both this new tone and the form of the address, "But Madam...", distinguish her from the mass of young women of whom she had earlier been the representative. Thus the passage has an effectively personal note. Both the speaker and the person he is talking to come into the foreground, and a poem of conventional compliment is seen to rest on affection:

But Madam, if the Fates withstand, and you
Are destin'd Hymen's willing Victim too,
Trust not too much your now resistless Charms,
Those, Age or Sickness, soon or late, disarms;
Good Humour only teaches Charms to last,
Still makes new Conquests and maintains the past:
Love, rais'd on Beauty, will like That decay,
Our Hearts may bear its slender Chain a Day.
As flow'ry bands in Wantonness are worn;
A Morning's Pleasure, and at Evening torn:
This binds in Ties more easie, yet more strong,
The willing Heart, and only holds it long. (57-68)

The poem concludes with an application of the moral to the life
of Voiture, and a compliment to Miss Blount, ingeniously involving Voiture, which blends wit and sincerity to remind us of Charles Lamb's delight in Pope's compliments:

The brightest eyes of France inspir'd his Muse
The brightest Eyes of Britain now peruse,
And dead as living, 'tis our Author's Pride,
Still to charm those who charm the World beside. (77-80)

This is in Voiture's manner, but again one is aware of Pope assuming this particular manner. A speaker capable of the acute analysis, common sense, good humoured sympathy, literary sophistication, we have remarked, will produce such a compliment only when it is deserved. The literary quality of such a verbal artefact is itself an index of its sincerity, because the poet has exercised an art the nature and value of which the poem has implied, not to say defined, in honour of his subject. As was said in connection with The Temple of Fame, sincerity is a feature of the implied state of mind of the revealed speaker of the poem, and not of any correspondence between this and the state of mind of the author when he wrote it, or at any other time.

The final point about the poem may be introduced by pointing to the poem's ease, its fluency. The transitions, from Praise of Voiture, to the speaker's own ambitions, to analysis of the characters of women, to praise of one woman, and so on, both give a generically appropriate appearance of ease, and also cohere with the character and manner of the speaker. Thus we have a combination of coherence and ease that fulfills the promise implied by the opening lines in praise of Voiture's art. The poem is then reflexive: it defines and enacts its own aesthetic standards. And it does so in large part through the establishment of a mature and complex character for its

speaker. Again it becomes apparent that the nature of the speaker is integral to the success of the poem.

The difference between the latter poem and the *Epistle to Miss Blount*, on her leaving the Town, after the Coronation can best be described in terms of conversational decorum. The first is a more public performance in which Miss Blount appears as a type, the young lady of marriageable age, rather than as an individual, and in which Pope defines and acts out one of the possible "poet" roles. In the second *Epistle* he presents himself as an historical individual at and in a particular time and place:

So when your slave, at some dear, idle time,
(Not plagu'd with headachs, or the want of rhime)
Stands in the streets, abstracted from the crew,
And while he seems to study, thinks of you. (41-4)

Pope is here implying an easy, confirmed friendship by the ironic use of the conventional language of love: "So when your slave...". He is more familiar, in more than one sense of that word, than in the previous poem:

Some Squire, perhaps, you take delight to rack;
Whose game is Whisk, whose treat a toast in sack,
Who visits with a gun, presents you birds,
Then gives a smacking buss, and cries-No words!
Or with his hound comes hollowing from the stable,
Makes love with nods, and knees beneath a table. (23-28)

The publication of such mild improprieties as these implies a community in taste and judgement between the speaker and the woman he is addressing, since unless he were sure of such a community he would be running the risk of her being not amused. Their familiarity is also implied in the way he plays with the language of pastoral and polite compliment in describing her rural exile:

Thus from the world fair Zephalinda flew,
Saw others happy, and with sighs withdrew;
Not that their pleasures caus'd her discontent,
She sigh'd not that They stay'd, but that She went. (7-10)
Pope is as it were making a private joke public, or publicly taking for granted a private confidence that he knows as he is known. At the same time, he is alluding to and juxtaposing conventions of rusticity: the crude squire at one pole, at the other the nymph in a painted landscape:

In some fair evening, in your elbow laid,
You dream of triumphs in the rural shade. (31-2)

Thus the poet is once again present through one's sense that he is putting on a performance in honour of the woman he is addressing. The difference is that the particular performance implies a different relationship, closer, warmer, and easier.

We may conclude with a few diverse remarks about the two poems together under the heading "Pope and Women". Comparison with the letters to the Blount sisters suggests what may seem to be the banal conclusion that language is used more expressively and economically in poetry than in prose. The range of tones we have found in the poems are all present in the letters, and one could find passage in them which imply, imprecisely, the kinds of relationship so subtly yet vividly delineated in the poems. We can, however, refine this version of the relationship between poems and letters. It is in fact best described in terms of an Augustan, or neo-classical, version of the relationship between art and nature: nature—improved and methodized so as to bring together her appearance and reality, so that her essence will announce itself. The poems are the letters methodized. This involves the elimination of Pope's uncertainties. The one striking difference between poems and letters is that the writer of the former is very clearly in the position of superior to inferior. The superiority is ironic-pedagogic in the case of the first poem, and playful-avuncular in the case of the second: but Pope writes most of the letters as an equal. It would however be wrong to deduce from this that the poems are in any way inauthentic or disingenuous. In them, he invents a way of speaking confidently, affectionately, subtlety, and in public, to a woman
who is important to him. And his success depends on the use of the public language of a literary convention. Thus in the end the difference between letters and poems can be seen in terms of adequate form. For we saw that in the letters too Pope was using a public language to say what he wanted to, but there, was struggling. When, in a later chapter, we move on to consider the *Essay on Women* we will notice continuities and disparities of genre and language between it and the shorter poems, with, in the main, a continuing growth in poetic resource.

To recapitulate the argument so far: we have considered the degrees of rhetorical skill with which Pope establishes the character of his fictive speaker, the ways in which this figure is integrated into the structure of poems, and the ways in which we perceive this speaker as Alexander Pope. So far, however, we have been dealing with the uncomplicated speakers of poems in this respect uncontroversial. In our next two chapters we will be looking at *Eloisa to Abelard* and *An Essay on Criticism*, two poems which require more extended treatment.
The feature of *Eloisa to Abelard* that brings it within our purview has been pointed out in a discussion of the poem largely concerned with the rhetoric that establishes our sense of its speaker:

> If we seek for a means of discriminating *Eloisa to Abelard* from the remainder of Pope's poems we will notice that, with one nondecisive exception, it is his only major poem written in the first person in which the speaker is not to be labelled as, in some sense, Alexander Pope the poet. The question, therefore, we are obliged to ask of the poem is whether the fever and the emotion belong to the poet or to the dramatic character of Eloisa. More than one reader has confused Gulliver with Swift.\(^1\)

The point is well made, and it also, conveniently, places the problem of the poem's speaker within the main tradition of criticism of the poem, which has centred on the question of whether it should be seen as a precursor of romanticism in theme or style. Brendon O'Hehir's close reading argues that in fact the fever and the emotion should be attributed to the dramatic character, and thus that the poem is simply an heroic epistle in the Ovidian manner, modified in a way that Reuben Brower\(^2\) has lucidly expounded. For example, O'Hehir says of the lines

> The shrines all trembled, and the lamps grew pale, (112)

and

> Priests, Tapers, Temples, swim before my sight
> In seas of flame my plunging soul is drowned,
> While Alters blaze, and Angels tremble round, (274-6)

that in reading them one needs to recall that:

> Eloisa's vision is private and personal, but completely objective: it need only be remembered that her eyes are

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filled with tears, and that "taking the veil" is a gesture at once as literal as ritually significant.\(^1\)

The point about taking the veil is a little strained, but O'Hehir is right to argue that one cannot read those lines as if Pope is impelled by emotion to lapse into the pathetic fallacy. Other awkward passages are similarly read in the light of his view of the poem's dramatic coherence. The line "A naked Lover bound and bleeding lies" (100), which, as part of the overall treatment of carnality in the poem, has been found so distasteful by F.W. Bateson and others, and has thus been taken as evidence of emotional confusion on Pope's part,\(^2\) is, he says, dramatically indicative of the moral confusion into which Eloisa has fallen through its deliberate ambiguity of reference: to Abelard, or to Christ. Elsewhere, he argues, Eloisa explicitly declares that her lover and her God have fused in her mind. His conclusion is that:

By recognising the deliberate and conscious nature of Pope's handling of hectic, emotional and "romantic" language, we should see the overwrought and hysterical Eloisa as the product of careful craftsmanship.\(^3\)

There is much truth in this conclusion: but it does not provide the last word either on the problem of Pope's presence or absence in the emotion of the poem, or on the nature and success of Eloisa as a dramatic character. Henry Pettit indicates another possible approach when he dissents from what he claims to be the common assumption that "Pope has not identified himself with his personage as Shakespeare, Chaucer and Browning seem to do".\(^4\) Can the poem be read as a dramatic monologue in the same way as the "Wife of Bath's Prologue" or "Bishop Bloughram's Apology"? Pettit's

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4. Henry Pettit, "Pope's Eloisa to Abelard" an Interpretation", in Essential Articles, 300. (This was first published in University of Colorado Studies: Series in Language and Literature, IV (1953), 69-74.)
formulation is a little imprecise: Pope's feelings about his personage are inaccessible, and Pettit would seem to be using "identification" as a metaphor for the general effectiveness of the poem. The problem requires a determination of genre. Pettit neglects this, and asserts that Pope succeeds in the same way as Chaucer and Browning because there is to be found in his poem a philosophical substructure. Eloisa is torn between a limited, material, carnal conception of love, and an adequate, spiritual one. This does not seem to have much to do with Pope's, or his reader's, capacity to identify with a personage. And it neglects a conspicuous aspect of the success of Browning and Chaucer: the way they make us feel that the poem is in some sense spoken by its speaker, by establishing a linguistic imitation of personal style. Such imitations are based on a convention of syntactic, verbal, rhythmic, punctuational signs, stock phrases, modes of irony whereby the audience's sympathy is granted to or withdrawn from the "personage", and not on realistic imitation of the way people talk. People do not talk in verse. Thus the imitation coexists and interacts with the author's personal style, rather as does Pope's assumption of a pastoral manner in the second Epistle to Miss Blount.... Does Pope establish his speaker in this way?

There are a number of things in the poem that do not seem consistent with the notion that he is trying to, things of which we cannot at all imagine Eloisa to be the speaker. There is a quotation from Crashaw, placed in inverted commas in the text, and annotated by Pope at the foot of the poem.¹ Of course, no attempt is made to present Eloisa as a medieval woman: but the quotation nevertheless introduces Pope into the poem as the responsible author, and at least temporarily inhibits the suspension of disbelief, the assent to the fiction that the speaker is the author.

¹. See Poems, [11], 316, note to line 212. The line is "Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep". It is not so much the quotation itself as the drawing attention to it through inverted commas and annotation that is crucial.
that is proper in the genre we have called dramatic monologue. It should be firmly said that the line is not necessarily a fault in the poem: it is mentioned as important in determining genre.

Similarly important is what Geoffrey Tillotson has called the "personal Coda" of the poem. Eloisa refers us reflexively to the poem itself, and to its "real" author, in imagining "some future Bard", who, through "sad similitude of griefs to mine", will be able to do justice to her story:

The well sung Woes will soothe my pensive ghost;
He best can paint 'em, who shall feel 'em most. (365-6)

This remark does not arise out of Eloisa's situation or state of mind. In a sense she is dead when she makes it. The poem comes to a climax in lines 316-336, when she imagines her death. The concluding vision of herself and Abelard united in heaven through death is the resolution of her conflicts. In the final paragraph, it is almost as if the leading lady has been brought back on stage, half out of her part, to speak an epilogue. On the poet's behalf, she makes a claim for the poem, that lovers will be moved to mutual pity when they read it, as Eloisa imagines two lovers moved on visiting the Paraclete. And she also talks, indirectly, about the relationship between the poet's feelings and her own in the poem:

And sure if fate some future Bard shall join
In sad similitude of griefs to mine. (359-360)

Brendan O'Hehir does not consider this passage, but it seems to impose at the least a codicil to his reading. We are explicitly directed to relate the feelings of the dramatic character to those of the poet: "He best can paint 'em, who shall feel 'em most": and "he" will feel them because he will have experienced emotions sadly similar to them.

Of course, "he" is Pope only by implication and at some remove, and these qualifications eliminate certain kinds of misreading. Eloisa's

1. Poems, II. 294.
central grief in the poem is sufficiently unambiguous, but in consequence, the misfortune she imagines for the future bard is unfortunately not so:

Condemn'd whole years in absence to deplore
And image charms he must behold no more. (361-2)

Now we may speculate that there was, at some time, some barrier between Pope and sexual intercourse; and it might be argued that the poet Eloisa imagines must strictly speaking have some such problem; but the connection, though logically quite sound, will not do simply because it is distracting, and it is distracting because it is generically inappropriate. That is, the implied speaker of the poem has not been sufficiently present for one even to look for evidence elsewhere that he has sexual problems. All one may say is that the personal coda is puzzling. The unknown author of *Eloisa in Déshabille*,¹ one of a number of contemporary parodies of the poem, was making the same point when he had Eloisa hoping that the later lovers she imagines visiting her tomb will not be afflicted by a later Fulbert.

Thus there are two passages that raise doubts about the genre of the poem: with them in mind, we may look at the unambiguous evidence that suggests a clearer answer. Strictly, the genre is that of the heroic epistle. This does not mean that the poem imitates a letter. At the beginning there is the suggestion that a letter from Abelard is being answered:

Yet, yet I love! — From Abelard it came,
And Eloisa yet must kiss the name. (7-8)

And there are a few other such passages in the first sixty lines. But soon, what L.P. Wilkinson² says of Ovid, Pope's original, comes to appear true of Pope also: "In general, the letters make little attempt at realism,

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1. Reprinted as an appendix in *Eloisa to Abelard*, ed. James E. Wellington, University of Miami Critical Studies no. 5, Miami 1965. See line 316, p. 149. There is an account of other parodies in Lawrence S. Wright, "Eighteenth Century replies to Pope's Eloisa", SP, XXXI (1934), 519-533.
and the shackles of the fiction are easily cast aside." The generic precedent is thus to suggest a letter as a kind of explanatory prologue, but to abandon that convention at will. And in lines 49-58, Pope seems to bid a formal farewell to the idea of a letter:

Heav'n first taught letters for some wretch's aid,
Some banish'd lover, or some captive maid;
They live, they speak, they breathe what love inspires,
Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires,
The virgin's wish without her fears impart,
Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart,
Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul,
And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole. (51-58)

From this point onwards "the shackles of the fiction are... cast aside". That is, we are not reminded that someone is supposed to be writing to someone else.

The question of what replaces it is best approached through consideration of how Abelard is present in the poem. Initially we have Eloisa recalling how he first seemed to her:

My fancy formed thee of Angelick kind,
Some emanation of th' all-beauteous Mind. (61-2)

Thematically, this begins the confusion between Abelard the man, as she carnally knew him, and Abelard the representative of the religion she is engaged in and with. The antithetical point of the couplet form continually sets Abelard beside and against God, as it brings together shame and desire, or happy and bitter memories, or the present and the past:

Nor wished an Angel whom I lov'd a Man; (70)
Not on the Cross my eyes were fixed, but you; (116)
And Make my soul quit Abelard for God. (128)

Such, it has often been pointed out, is the basic structure of the poem.¹ Abelard is not simply the rival of God. For it is Abelard who has founded the nunnery in which Eloisa is incarcerated, and Abelard is a servant

¹ See p.93, n.1.
of God. Eloisa's problem is that for her it is this man who is the rival of God. But of course all this must take place in imagination, in the course of a presumed single utterance by Eloisa, soliloquy or monologue.

Thus Pope's problem is to make a situation that one would think might require dramatic treatment credible and powerful in the form of a single speech by an individual. He does it by implying, within the framework of the monologue, and through varieties of tense and mood, a variety of spatial and temporal relationships between Eloisa and Abelard. The poem is, we will see, effectively quasi-dramatic: and it follows that its speaker, Eloisa, appears rather as a kind of intermediary dramatist than as a dramatic character, or a speaking individual.

The dominant mode is past tense narrative of situations the lovers have shared, or of Eloisa's past feelings for Abelard:

My Fancy formed thee of Angelick kind, (61)
Can'st thou forget that sad, that solemn day,
When victims at yon' altar's foot we lay? (107-8)

This mode of narrative is consistent with the notion that we are dealing with a monologue, letter, possible utterance by an individual, and so also is Eloisa's present tense narrative of her emotions and situation. The juxtaposition of the two, however, implies that the speaker has some sense of what is aesthetically effective. And the dramatic scope of the action is expanded by pleas addressed to a fictively present Abelard, expansions of an imperative "come thou" or "O come", or else "visions" of Abelard couched in the present or historic present. Thus Eloisa is made to confront the fact that Abelard is no longer capable of being her lover:

I hear thee, view thee, gaze o'er all they charms,
And round thy phantom glue my clasping arms.
I wake-no more I hear, no more I view,
The phantom flies me, as unkind as you,
I call aloud; it hears not what I say;  (233-237)

Come Abelard! for what hast thou to dread?
The torch of Venus burns not for the dead. (257-258)

Here we are moving away from the sense that the poem is simply an utterance by an individual. In theory of course the present tense and the imperative of the lines quoted above are consistent with the notion that Eloisa is thinking and speaking, if not writing, about Abelard. But in fact their effect is also to imply his actual presence. He is constantly being alluded and spoken to as if he were present.

This fact may be better understood if it is set in the context of the poem's genre. One of the things Pope has done to the Ovidian Heroic Epistle is, obviously enough, to use it for a Christian theme. Thus whatever one's views of the quality of his understanding of Christian spirituality in the poem, it does follow that the form needs to allow for a new dimension of psychological change. The possibility is at least raised that Eloisa may be saved, that she may attain at the end a redemptive insight into her experience, and thus be free of it. In this respect she contrasts with Ovid's heroines, whose state of mind, conflicting as it often is, does not involve this kind of outcome or resolution of conflict. It seems to me that Pope needs to push the poem towards the dramatic in the way it has been suggested above that he does if we are to have any sense that Eloisa does have a chance of escaping from her situation, or transcending her conflicts.

We may look at the third to last paragraph. It begins with a present tense "vision" in which the language is clearly an imitation of the language of a participant in an event:

I come, I come! prepare your roseate bow'rs,
Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flow'rs.
Thither, where sinners may have rest, I go,
Where flames refin'd in breasts seraphic glow. (317-320)
Half way through the paragraph we have an imperative:

Thou, Abelard! the last sad office pay,
And smooth my passage to the realms of day. (321-2)

This of course involves an admission that only a fictive, or possible, event is narrated; but it also makes the claim that it is an event, and not a vision; and a few lines later the tense changes to future, and the claim is reinforced:

It will be then no crime to gaze on me. (330)

The next line is again an imperative, with some present tense force, confirming the impression of an event:

See from my cheek the transient roses fly!
See the last sparkle languish in my eye! (331-2)

At this final and crucial moment, Eloisa thus talks about herself as if she were another person. Pope is using her to dramatise the event as well as to participate in it, with the consequence that she is able, at a moment of high emotion, to report on her appearance in a mannered and elegant way.

Generically, then, the poem may be described as a monologue, to and about an individual, in which certain of the events involving either the speaker or her subject, or both, are presented as events. This is necessary, given the particular generic antecedents of the poem, and the resultant and unique mixture. But one is in the end more impressed by the poem's presentation of conflict than by its attempted resolution. And it will be argued that the consequences of this generic structure for our sense of the speaker is that at certain points we are uncertain of the nature of her responsibility for the poem. There is nothing in its deictic structure\(^1\) absolutely inconsistent with the notion that she is responsible for it as the speaker of a dramatic monologue: that is, that she "utters" it, given the suspension of various kinds of disbelief. But in this area appearances are all important, and we are unable to avoid feeling, at

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\(^1\) For a definition of deixis, see John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*, Cambridge 1969, 275-281. The term is used for pronoun, verb, and adverb usage as they determine the poem's narrative manner.
certain points, that the utterance would be an odd one.

These points are those at which we must for various reasons feel someone other than Eloisa to be responsible. The quotation from Crashaw covered one such reason: the most common involves a degree of rhetorical artifice in the narrative that implies an artificer, and thus introduces the poet. A striking and central instance is one in which event and vision are fused, and the convention of first person narrative thus stretched, in a new way. Eloisa is considering Abelard's castration:

Alas, how chang'd! what sullen horrors rise!
A naked Lover bound and bleeding lies!
Where, where was Eloise? Her voice, her hand,
Her ponyard, had oppos'd the dire command.
Barbarian stay! that bloody stroke restrain;
The crime was common, common be the pain.
I can no more; by shame, by rage supprest,
Let tears, and burning blushes speak the rest. (99-106)

What seems curious for Eloisa and also suggests Pope, in this passage is the artful variation of tense in the four couplets. The preceding paragraph is an account of the joy of lovers:

Oh happy state! when souls each other draw,
When love is liberty, and nature, law. (91-2)

Until its last couplet, it maintains the generalising timeless present of those two lines. But the last couplet is equivocal in tense:

This sure is bliss (if bliss on earth there be)
And once the lot of Abelard and me. (97-8)

Strictly, this is incorrect. The omitted verb of the second line should be of the same tense as the verb in the first, and one cannot have "is once" (except in a historic present, which "is bliss" is not). The effect of this error of grammar is to place the reader in a sort of past which is present insofar as it seems immediate and real. And the present tense of the first couplet of the next paragraph (quoted above) confirms this, as Eloisa "sees", in imagination, the narrated event. The next couplet
reverts to a grammatically correct past, restoring deictic consistency. But then follows the same movement within a couplet, with an imperative asserting Eloisa's "presence" in the event, followed by a past restoring her to her literal time: "Barbarian stay.../The crime was common...". Finally we have a new and different mode of present tense, not this time either historic or fictive, but literal, thus bringing us back to Eloisa as speaker, and suggesting that speech is inadequate. It is almost as if she must mime her feelings:

I can no more: by shame, by rage supprest,  
Let tears, and burning blushes speak the rest. (105-6)

This couplet is worth thinking about in some detail. What exactly can Eloisa no longer do? It seems something psychologically peculiar. On the one hand, she has been remembering. The present tenses of "rise", "lies" and "stay" suggest a compelling memory, to the force of which we attribute this narration of a past event as a present vision. But what she cannot go on doing, as the second line of the couplet makes clear, is speaking, narrating. One can overlook the question of why she has to tell Abelard about all this, and say only that the artfulness with which she has narrated the event seems to fit uneasily with the claim that she is prevented from going on doing so by mental distress. We are required to believe that she at the same time feels emotions very powerfully, and narrates them very expertly. Thus again we find her exhibiting her feelings, acting as the dramatist as well as the protagonist: and the effect is to introduce the other author, Pope.

This aspect of the poem has been noticed and briefly explained by an authoritative critic. In his introduction to the Twickenham edition of the poem Geoffrey Tillotson remarks that:

The reader...expects not to be told the story and persuaded of the passions, but to see use made of the known materials, to see as good a story as possible made out of them.¹

¹. Poems, II. 289.
And he goes on to define his point more closely:

Eloisa becomes for him [Pope] the "artist", the intellectual master co-ordinating times, places, and moods, the "artist" of emotion rather than the experiencer of it;

The act of writing [for Eloisa] is a relief, and the relief is an intellectual, as well as an emotional, one.¹

Unfortunately, Tillotson does not develop this extremely suggestive line of argument at any length. One may say that he is concerned with the aspects of the poem that have been treated in this paper. The trouble is that he moves too easily from the reader's expectations to Pope's intentions and to the dramatic character of Eloisa in the poem. The assertion that the reader does not expect to be "persuaded of the passions" overlooks the fact that at some points we are in fact so persuaded: Eloisa is an emotionally as well as intellectually effective "artist of emotion". And the notion that Pope conceives her as such is itself suspect at least to the extent that Tillotson does not seem willing to grant that the presence of artifice in the poem might suggest the presence of the actual artificer, Pope. But Tillotson's basic point is not in conflict with the line we have been pursuing. He is concerned to explain the odd way in which Eloisa can appear both impassioned and detached, and he is right to associate the appearance of detachment with the high degree of rhetorical artifice manifest in "her" poem.

Some further illustration of what is meant by detachment and artifice may advance the argument. We find them in the opening paragraph of the poem:

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
Where heav'ly-pensive, contemplation dwells,
And ever-musing melancholy reigns;
What means this tumult in a Vestal's veins?
Why rove my thoughts beyond this last retreat?
Why feels my heart its long-forgotten heat?
Yet, yet I love!— From Abelard it came,
And Eloisa yet must kiss the name. (1-8)

1. Poems, II. 289. The bracketed words are my insertions.
In the first four lines of this the only word strictly requiring Eloisa to be its speaker is the deictic demonstrative "these". The paragraph is concerned not with introducing an individual, but with setting the scene, in terms of situation, symbolic landscape, and theme. Thus Eloisa asks the odd question "What means this tumult in a Vestal's veins?", referring to herself, as she does on other occasions, with a thematically informative noun: "...in a Vestal's veins". Pope, and thus Eloisa, is concerned to announce the theme of "struggles of grace and nature, virtue and passion" promised in the introductory "argument" of the poem. For the same reason she refers to herself and Abelard by their names, and not as "I" and "you", in the concluding couplet. She is announcing the famous lovers Abelard and Eloisa.

The paragraph on letters, already quoted above, is an example of a slightly different kind. When Eloisa says that letters:

The Virgin's wish without her fears impart,
Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart, (55-6)

she is indirectly justifying her own performance in a way she might psychologically be expected to. But she concludes the paragraph with the observation that they (letters):

Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul,
And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole. (57-8)

This might come under Tillotson's observation that "the act of writing is a relief". It is obviously, and therefore, one must feel, consciously an artful conclusion. But Tillotson's attempt to fit this into a dramatically coherent character for Eloisa fails to convince. The reader familiar with the work of Pope will know that this is the kind of thing Pope is very good at, and, finding it here, will attribute it to him. The reader of Hughes' translation of a French translation of the Latin originals of the letters will find artfulness of a different sort:

1. My italics.
Oh! Whither does the excess of my passion hurry me?
Here love is shocked, and Modesty, joined with Despair,
deprives me of words. 'Tis Eloquence to be silent, where
no expressions can reach the greatness the Misfortune.

This, regrettably, is attributable to both the author and his character.
Hughes' Eloisa appears inane, and does not survive the appearance: the
author is present in, and to, a fault. Pope's Eloisa is certainly an
eighteenth century woman, and quite acceptably so. The anachronism of
"from Indus to the Pole" is not objectionable, or even remarkable, in the
same way as the quotation from Crashaw. We cannot, however, read Eloisa's
literary ability as a consequence of her being thus a woman of Pope's
own time. Pope is in one sense clearly not at fault in the same way
as Hughes. There is nothing crass about the artifice for which Eloisa is
formally responsible. But he is in the same way present; his character
has his literary talent,"her" poem has his literary qualities. The
difference is that they are good ones.

What are the consequences of this aspect of the poem? To recapitulate
briefly, we may say that we have a fictive speaker who is required to
be at once the protagonist and the dramatist of an action formally presented
through the medium of a monologue, but also fictively "dramatised" through
language usages suggesting the literal occurrence of events. It does
not seem to me possible to argue that the resultant fictive speaker is
credible as an independent dramatic character. The style is not
consistently adapted to imitate or suggest a personal style, and there
are some things actively counterproductive in that context. One conse-
quence of this is that we are unable to identify with Eloisa to any great
extent, and in consequence, unable to care about her feelings. The poem
lacks a center of consciousness, and this contributes to a failure in its

conclusion. We are not convinced that Eloisa is any happier or wiser at the end than at the beginning. The feeling that one was encountering an individual would provide a focus for the conflict and for the reader's interest. As it is, the strategy Pope adopts to animate his theme has in the end the effect of distancing it. Although most critics who write about the poem attempt to show that there is some final resolution of Eloisa's carnal and spiritual loves,¹ there remains some doubt as to whether Pope does achieve final coherence through her symbolic discovery of Abelard in acceptance of death. The problem is that if one pursues the question of such meanings one comes up against Eloisa's insubstantiality.

What then of Pope's presence in the poem? He is present as artist, as puppet master, "behind" Eloisa in the way we have seen. The point is important, because a sense of rhetorical dexterity, of sheer poetic cleverness, is, as we will see, an important component of his presence as fictive speaker in most of his poems. But what of Pope the "man", who, as an artist, will be either more or less than a rhetorician? We have seen that the conclusion of the poem seems to invite biographical speculation. Unfortunately, the invitation has been accepted. John Paul Russo suggests that Pope was able to identify himself with Eloisa because of his own unhappy relationship with Lady Mary Wortley Montague.² This may be so. It is a biographical speculation about Pope's state of mind while he was writing the poem for which there is some evidence, although the point would need to be carefully argued. But even if this speculation were accepted, it would cast only the feeblest of lights on the poem. We would simply have an analogy between a literary portrayal of


unhappiness and sexual confusion, and a historical case of not entirely
dissimilar misfortunes. What we have in the poem are some lapses in
taste, and finally a lapse in rhetorical control, with a solitary and
structurally superfluous implication that the author of the poem has been
unhappy in love.

Russo is, however, quite right to draw attention to the fact
that Pope does in a manner of speaking identify himself with Eloisa. But
he does so as a poet and not as a lover. If Pope is to be found in the
poem, it must be in the quality of his imaginative understanding of
Eloisa's predicament. There are some impressive passages, notably the
following:

Ye soft illusions, dear deceits, arise!
Alas no more! — methinks we wandring go
Thro' dreary wastes, and weep each other's woe;
While round some mould'ring tow'r pale ivy creeps,
And low-brow'd rocks hang nodding o'er the deeps.
Sudden you mount! You beckon from the skies;
Clouds interpose, waves roar, and winds arise.
I shriek, start up, the same sad prospect find,
And wake to all the griefs I left behind. (240-248)

This succeeds in being vivid without stretching the convention of monlogue.
The landscape of the poem has often been noticed, but more often for its
historical connection with the gothic revival and Romanticism than for its
contextual and dramatic effectiveness. Here Pope does, through the lands-
cape, make Eloisa substantial; we grasp her emotions through her situation
as she describes it, and are not aware of the other author as puppet-master.
Thus, paradoxically, the other author is effectively present as poet.
He has eliminated himself in a species of imaginative identification
with his protagonist he achieves all too rarely.

At the opposite extreme in terms of poetic merit, we also have
an implied presence of the author. There are a number of passages properly
called pornographic, about Eloisa's sexual feelings.
Come! with thy looks, thy words, relieve my woe;
Those still at least are left thee to bestow.
Still on that breast enamour'd let me lie,
Still drink delicious poison from thy eye,
Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be prest;
Give all thou canst—and let me dream the rest. (119-124)

This, with its disasters, such as "delicious poison" and "thy eye", might just do if Eloisa were a case history in a text book on the psychopathology of sex. It could be part of an account of a woman deranged by frustration. But it would be hard to maintain that she is anything like that: she would have to exist dramatically in an even more sophisticated way than Tillotson's Eloisa if one were to feel that the bad taste in such a passage should be read as a consequence of her situation. (In passing, one may remark that such passages pose a problem for Tillotson's reading. Is Eloisa to be taken as sometimes a bad "'artist' of emotion"?) This sort of passage is reminiscent of Hughes' translation in the lines quoted: Pope is present in a failure of taste, regrettably.

Pope's one dramatic first person poem is then not entirely successful: the fictive speaker is not entirely detached from the poet, and the poem is in the end unsuccessful and personal for the same reasons. The next poem we will look at has a speaker who is identified as Alexander Pope the poet, and it is about criticism and poetry, which are subjects Pope is more at home with than he is with female sexuality. But the Essay on Criticism can be compared with Eloisa to Abelard in one respect at least. In both cases consideration of the congruence of speaker and poem is a critical approach which takes us to the heart of the poem both generically and thematically.
One cannot begin to consider the speaker of An Essay on Criticism without some obeisance to Empson's essay on wit in the poem. Empson is not invulnerable in point of detail, and his approach has been supplemented by other critics more interested in the historical context of Pope's ideas. But his remarks remain exemplary in that they use an interest in ideas as a critical tool, as a means towards the assessment of the poem as a poem. The ensuing analysis attempts to use an interest in some aspects of the poem's rhetoric as a critical tool in the same way, and is in large part a qualified gloss on some observations in which Empson touches on the role and nature of the speaker:

Pope continually plays off different kinds of people so as to make himself look better than either;

Irrelevant problems arise if you do not interpret the poem in the light of its social tone;

It is difficult to analyse this satirist without satirising him, but to say that his tricks are used unfairly does not go very far. The contradictions of his self-contempt and self-justification are erected into a solid and intelligent humility before the triumphs and social usefulness possible to his art.¹

In other words, the poem conducts at once a defense and an investigation of the poet's own nature in terms that are to a significant degree social. And its success is bound up with the degree to which it presents the poet honestly, in his contradictions, and through both his ingenuity and his disingenuousness.

Empson declares or implies three things that will be central to our discussion. First, we take the speaker of the poem to be Pope, and not a persona — although he may be "behind" personae, as we have seen. Second, part of the rhetoric of the poem tends to the establishment of a pattern of

¹. William Empson, "Wit in the Essay on Criticism" in Essential Articles, p.215. This essay was first published in The Hudson Review, 2/1 (1950), 559-577.
judgement in which critical and literary defects are made to seem contemptible by being implicitly set against standards, at once literary and social, incarnated in the speaker. We have already touched on the eighteenth-century fusion of literary and social standards. Empson's essay is concerned with the relationship between the two insofar as the word "wit" provides evidence for it. Third, the tricks, the strategies, by which this judgement is enforced are at times obtrusive, and a contradiction appears to arise between the author these strategies imply, a conjuror if not a confidence man, and the kind of author they are concerned to recommend, an honest, if also clever, gentleman.

A very different critic from Empson would have subscribed to this analysis, excepting only Empson's qualification that "to say that his [Pope's] tricks were often used unfairly does not go very far". John Dennis's Reflections on the Essay on Criticism¹ have been taken seriously by few but his editor, and the crudity of his abuse certainly merits oblivion. But his fury does make him sensitive to aspects of the poem which more respectful critics have neglected. Assuming without question, as all his contemporary critics and readers of course did, that the poem is spoken by Pope, Dennis complains of being abused by "a little affected hypocrite, who had nothing in his mouth at the same time but Truth, Candor, Friendship, Good Nature, Humanity and Magnanimity". That is not an inexact remark.

We will see how Pope does have such things in his mouth, and how there are things in the poem which, harshly judged, could lead to a charge of hypocrisy. And Dennis expands on his point:

He discovers in every page a sufficiency that is far beyond his little ability... This little author struts and affects the dictatorian air... he dictates perpetually, and pretends to give law without the simplicity and majesty of a legislator...

a downright bully of Parnassus, who is at every moment thundering out Fool, Sot, Coxcomb, Blockhead... he arrogates so much sense to himself as he imputes folly to other people... his particular pique seems to be at People Of Quality.¹

These observations are of course massively unjust as a criticism of the poem. But the reason they are unjust is that they are heretical in the strict sense of the word: that is, an exaggeration of part of the truth.

Let us consider Dennis's accusation that Pope is hostile to people of quality. Lines 414-42 might seem to support this accusation:

Of all this Servile Herd the worst is He
That in proud Dulness joins with Quality,
A constant Critick at the Great-man's Board
To fetch and carry Nonsense for my Lord.
What woful stuff this Madrigal would be
In some starv'd Hackny Sonneteer, or me?
But let a Lord once own the happy Lines,
How the Wit brightens! How the Style refines! (414-421)

Pope is of course directly attacking the servile critic, but there is a sideways jab at aristocrats with literary pretensions that might suggest "pique... at People of Quality". And the same is the case in lines 588-9:

Fear most to tax an Honourable Fool,
Whose Right it is, uncensur'd to be dull. (588-9)

Some critics, it is implied, subordinate truth to the desire to please their social superiors, but never "our Author": from him, nothing but the plain truth. One can imagine Dennis's anger fired by confusion at the sheer ingenuity of it all. For it simply will not do to say that the lines suggest their author feels pique at people of quality. He seems to risk that charge, but in fact evades it: he is not nearly so easy to locate as that. For example, in the couplet:

What woful stuff this Madrigal wou'd be
In some starv'd Hackny Sonneteer, or me? (418-419)

there is a degree of ambiguity as to who, the servile critic or Pope, is responsible for the phrase "some starv'd Hackny Sonneteer". The effect is to gain for Pope the credit of both modesty and controversial vigour, while avoiding the imputations that he is in any but an unexceptionable way akin to the sonneteer, and that he is attacking the sonneteer merely for being poor. One may take it that it is the servile critic who conjoins Pope with some Grub street dunces, and who attacks this dunce for his poverty; it is Pope who modestly allows himself to be so conjoined, and who is responsible for the vigour of the phrase.

This sort of ability to have it both ways is also evident on a larger scale. For in fact the instances of apparent hostility to people of quality cited above are exceptional. It is not so much that Pope explicitly praises the aristocracy as that he makes critical and literary quality seem a matter of a kind of savoir vivre, thus fusing literary and social values. The sniping at Honourable Fools then becomes a means of discriminating this attitude, which in a previous chapter we have described as belief in an ideal aristocracy, from mere snobbery. We must look in some detail at the ways in which the literary and the social are associated.

The description of the critic as gentleman covers a number of aspects of gentility. An aristocratic indifference to sectarian squabbles in religion is to be imitated by the critic, who must be ready to see merit in ancient and modern, native and foreign writers alike:

Thus Wit, like Faith, by each Man is apply'd
To one small Sect, and All are damn'd beside. (396-7)

This is clearly "Augustan" as well as aristocratic, and indeed part of our

1. In the sense that sectarian disputes were part of the charge made against religion by its "enlightened" eighteenth-century critics. Pope's own religious position is a matter of controversy, as are the religious implications of his verse. For the background, see Paul Hazard, European Thought in the Eighteenth Century, London 1954, Part One, Chapter Four. (This is a translation of La Pensee Européenne au XVIIIe siècle : de Montesquieu à Lessing, Paris 1946).
intention is to suggest a new perspective on something in the poem that has often been noticed. As a matter of history, it may be said that the class for whom Pope wrote was a small one, and that noble, or good, birth, guaranteed at least a provisional membership in it, and that acceptance by the well-born was felt to be necessary by other candidates. Education and birth overlapped, and Pope, although he was to become more and more disillusioned with the aristocracy, was never disposed to deny this. But we need not lean on historical generalisations: the poem itself is explicit enough.

As well as being above sectarian squabbles, we find that the critic should be above fashion, that he should set it and not follow it:

Some ne'er advance a Judgment of their own,
But catch the spreading Notion of the Town. (408-9)

This, more clearly, has the dimension we have called aristocratic. If you are at the top, you do not have anyone, or anything, to keep up with. We are also told that the critic should have qualities akin to the grace of movement that comes of having been taught to dance, and that a variety of bad critics misuse opinions as they misuse their Mistresses. The relevant sense of the word becomes clearer: there are lines of descent from the aristocratic ideal of The Book of the Courtier as well as from the moral and behavioural a priors of Restoration Comedy. Nor are we simply concerned with the tone of isolated passages, or the question of the degree to which the speaker is and is not a snob. The argument pertains to the critical opinions, and opinions about criticism and the critic, that are central in the poem.

In relation to Pope's attitude to the Rules, a much discussed issue in the poem,¹ we have the most explicit of all the identifications

of social and literary standards:

As Men of Breeding, sometimes Men of Wit,
T'avoid great Errors, must the less commit,
Neglect the Rules each Verbal Critick lays,
For not to know some Trifles, is a Praise. (259-62)

As books of etiquette are not necessary to the well-born, so the ideal
man of wit does not work by studying the books of rules laid down by the
"Verbal Critick". The mark of his superior knowledge, knowledge "by
nature", like Homer's, of how to write, is that he makes the correct choice
when there is a conflict. Certainly, we have:

Learn hence for Ancient Rules a just Esteem;
To copy Nature is to copy Them. (139-40)

And it may seem that Pope does not quite have the courage of his insights
in this area, and sometimes thus gives a misleading expression of his
attitude to the Rules. But even in the couplet above, one may say that
the order of terms is important; not "to copy Them is to copy Nature",
but the other way round. And the context of the couplet provides an
important qualification. Virgil's original intention, of copying nature,
was modified by the discovery of Homer, and not of a work of criticism.
It is legitimate to discover the rules in the original works from which
they are derived. And this procedure is compatible with the poem's
emphasis on original genius and the je ne sais quoi;

Musick resembles Poetry, in each
Are nameless graces which no Methods teach,
And which a Master-Hand alone can reach. (143-5)

The general tendency of the argument is towards a diminution of the
importance of books of Rules in the creative process. The writer
acquires his critical faculty, which Pope will know to be important,
through his education in classical culture, his reading of Homer and Virgil.

It has been argued that Pope's emphasis on "grace" is itself a traditional
idea in literary criticism. But in using this idea, Pope is still
countering what he regards as an excessive emphasis in the criticism
of his own time. Cf. Samuel Holt Monk, "A Grace Beyond the Reach of Art",
Essential Articles, 38-54. This paper was first published in the Journal
of the History of Ideas, V (1944), 131-150.
Some such analysis of Pope's attitude to the Rules is commonplace in criticism of the poem. But we cannot look only at the ideas in the poem. Pope is writing a poem, not a treatise and we cannot assess his position without looking at the particular rhetoric that is used, forcefully, to persuade us of its truth. He is engaged in polemic as well as analysis. His attitude towards the rules is characterised by a feeling that subservience to them is a critical error akin to social ineptitude.

The point can be confirmed by showing a similar rhetoric of savoir-vivre applied to the critic, rather than the writer, in another important context, that in which the proper spirit to approach literature is being defined:

Thus Criticks, of less Judgment than Caprice,
Curious, not Knowing, not exact, but nice,
Form short Ideas; and offend in Arts
(As most in Manners) by a Love to Parts,(285-8)

The same superiority to niggling questions of detail and short views is proper in the critic's attitude to his task as in the writer's to his. The very word critic has taken on a certain pejorative colouring here; it is as if it implies a professionalism repugnant to the educated gentleman, who takes a just and generous critical view of literature as part of his general ability to see things clearly and in proportion. The passage introduces a section devoted to various critical errors classifiable as "Love to Parts", and the association of social and literary judgements is to be found throughout it.

The famous definition of wit is a case in point:

True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest,
What oft was Thought, but ne'er so well Exprest,
Something, whose Truth convinc'd at Sight we find,
That gives us back the Image of our Mind. (297-300)

Much has been written about the background of these ideas, and from a

critical point of view the dress image has been the subject of a controversy between Max Bluestone, Aubrey Williams and F.W. Bateson. But the fact that Pope makes the witty writer into an expert tailor has a bearing on the question of what is meant by wit in the poem. And the critical issue, which bears on the degree to which the dress metaphor is suppressed, "otiose" "half-dead", or alive, also needs to be considered in the light of the fact that the dress metaphor is a mode of Social definition. We may consider one couplet in particular:

Expression is the Dress or Thought, and still
Appears more decent as more suitable. (317-318)

True wit socialises Nature, and apt expression thought, as dress a man. The implications are extensive. Dress makes a man decent because nudity is indecent. This sense is submerged, but important. In the Essay on Criticism Pope appears to feel that poetry can be congruent with the established social order. In later poems he comes to see, angrily, that the actual social order does not correspond with the morally and culturally hierarchical social order he imagined and thought he perceived as a young man. It has been said before that An Essay on Criticism is a young man's poem. Pope's association of the standards of criticism with a moralised version of the social order is, in terms of the values that are investigated and endorsed in the later poetry, a young man's mistake. And this judgement is required if one is to justly assess the couplet quoted. Dress places a man in society, identifies him in terms of status and role. The connection there is through the sufficiently attested social dimension of the stylistic concept of decorum. Finally, there is the equation of knowing how to dress, as a feature of human socialisation, with knowing how to write. The

2. Cf. George Watson, The Literary Critics: a Study of English Descriptive Criticism, New York 1962, 63. —Watson is irritated by the poem, which he describes as "puppyish", in much the same way as Dennis.
implication of that is that there is a defined social place for a writer, a productive and integrated role in his society. In the end, Pope is talking about how to tell the truth. And despite all the verbal complexity and ingenuity, he sees this as a simple matter in this poem. Later he is to realise that it has moral and political and even epistemological dimensions he only touches on incidentally in the Essay on Criticism.

We can make the same point about other passages in the poem. In the next example the connection between the social and the literary is again made through the concept of decorum:

A vile Conceit in pompous Words exprest,
Is like a Clown in regal Purple drest. (319-320)

The passage again needs to be seen in the context of the history of ideas. Disorder in literature and disorder in society are equated, with the idea of the hierarchy of being in the background: "untune that string", and so on. Lovejoy¹ as an historian of ideas and Maynard Mack² as a critic have sufficiently attested that such ideas are active in Pope's work. But once again the particular metaphor used needs to be looked at. Here, bad literature is condemned from the point of view of someone at the top of the social hierarchy, looking down. At the other end of his poetic career, Pope is still concerned with social disharmony, but he no longer sees the problem as one of clowns not knowing their places— not exactly:

Ye Gods! shall Cibber's Son, without rebuke
Swear like a Lord? or Rich out-whore a Duke?
A Fav'rite's Porter with his Master vie,
Be brib'd as often, and as often lie? (Epilogue to the Satires, I.115-118)

That version of things is from a poem in which Pope speaks out in his own voice with none of the rhetorical status seeking which Empson and Dennis noted in the Essay on Criticism.

One must, however, do justice to the ingenuity of the poem. Pope writes:

Unlucky, as Fungoso in the Play,
These Sparks with awkward Vanity display
What the Fine Gentleman wore Yesterday! (328-30)

The phrase "Fine Gentleman" requires annotation. It is not one which Pope
as a Gentleman, would use of his own kind. It is borrowed from the Spark's
vocabulary, or perhaps even insultingly attributed to the Spark. The
latter is described as "A young man of an Elegant or Foppish character;
one who affects smartness" in the OED: thus he might be aware that the
phrase "fine Gentleman" would only be used by someone who definitely was
not a gentleman, and never would be. The phrase is then socially below
the spark, and Pope's implication that it is not has the effect of dis-
tinguishing him, Pope, from such people, by a kind of deliberate misunder-
standing. That kind of verbal dexterity is delightful.

One must also do justice to Pope's achievement in investigating
his art and his own feelings about it, what Empson called his "solid and
intelligent humility". Another area in which the speaker's attitude is
defined through allusion to social status is learning. The antithesis
in the following couplet makes the point neatly:

The Vulgar thus through Imitation err:
As oft the Learn'd by being Singular. (424-5)

In being singular, in differing from the social consensus for, it seems,
no good reason, the learned put themselves on the same level as the vulgar.
One might point out that in the Epilogue to the Satires Pope makes a
different assessment of singularity. 1 But in justice to the Essay one
must also say that it is lucidity, balance, a sense of proportion by impli-
cation that of the gentleman amateur in the best sense, that is being
recommended. A desirable mode of learning is indicated in the couplet:

Such laboured Nothings, in so strange a Style,
Amaze th'Unlearn'd, and make the Learned smile. (326-7)

1. He presents himself as essentially "singular" at the end of both "Dialogues":
Yet may this Verse (if such a Verse remain)
Show there was one who held it in disdain; (1.171-2)
Yes, the last Pen for Freedom let me draw.
When Truth stands trembling on the edge of Law. (II. 249-250).
"Laboured", "strange" and "smile" are the key words. It is implied that one should never have to "labour"; and that what is strange is what is not recognised, approved, by those whose judgement is to be relied upon; and that those who carry their learning properly respond to the singularity of literary archaism with easy amusement. Such learning is at least tolerant and civilised.

The final critical issue Pope adjudicates in terms partly social is the controversy between Ancients and Moderns. Here Dennis, himself more or less a Modern, accused Pope of uncritical adulation of the Ancients. And again, at first sight there seems some evidence for his view:

Nor is it _Homer Nods_, but _We that Dream_; (180)

Still green with Bays each _ancient_ Altar stands,
Above the reach of _Sacrilegious Hands_,
Secure from _Flames_, from _Envy's fiercer Rage_,
_Destructive War, and all-involving Age_; (181-4)

_Moderns, beware! Or if you must offend..._. (163)

But at second sight his point of view turns out to be more complicated. Early in the poem he locates himself in the controversy not so much as one who despises modern literature, but rather as one who is capable of appreciating the greatness of the ancients. This is important in the poem for two reasons. First, and centrally, the enthusiastic praise of classical literature illustrated by the second of the above quotations is an example of the kind of criticism Pope advocates. Thus the poem keeps its own promises: we will consider this theme in more detail later. Second, as in the _Pastorals_, the speaker's ability to appreciate classical literature is presented as a mark of his fitness to criticise and also to

1. This has been pointed out by Alan S. Fisher in "'Cheerful' Noonday, 'Gloomy' Twilight: Pope's Essay on Criticism", _PQ_ 835: "He (the reader) must accept...a primacy of the Ancients as 'naturally' ordained as the system of social caste".
write modern poetry. At the end of the paragraph in praise of the Ancients from which we quoted above, he adds a prayer that he, "the last, the meanest" of their sons may emulate some part of their achievements. Thus although he is capable of a sharp aside devaluing the moderns:

Some by Old Words to Fame have made Pretence; Ancients in Phrase, mere Moderns in their Sense! (324-5)

He will also dissociate himself from those who:

The Ancients only, or the Moderns prize. (395)

The common conclusion drawn from this kind of analysis is that Pope is making an intelligent compromise, a synthesis of what is best in the opposing positions. I would not dispute this point of view, but it also needs to be said that to urge it with too much enthusiasm is to acquiesce in Pope's ingeniously manipulative rhetoric. His intention is not to provide an interesting synthesis for the historian of criticism,¹ although he is thinking shrewdly about his art.

One must also put things a little more cynically. Pope wants to get the best of both worlds, but feels that in terms of class, of status, the ancients have a decided advantage. Here it is not directly a question of socially based praise or condemnation. Pope's reverence for classical literature issues aptly in imagery taken from classical religion. The cynical conclusion is the outcome of the fact that Pope claims to be even handed but makes sharp remarks about the Moderns only. This is enough to remind the reader that elsewhere in the poem its author is far from simple in his style of polemic. And the poem is, it seems to me, interesting precisely because it provokes this ambivalent response. One encounters a speaker with an eye on the rhetorical main chance, and an intelligent, and passionate, interest in literature.

¹. Analysis in these terms is the common critical heresy in relation to An Essay on Criticism. Such analysis is interesting, and useful until it masquerades as critical assessment of the poem.
On that cue, one may come round to consider more directly the character of the speaker that has been established, implicitly, by the judgements we have been considering. Claims which have been implicit in styles of judgement come out into the open in the portrait of the ideal critic with which Pope concludes his section on those who err through love to parts. And one has to confront that other kind of implication: for Pope's ideal critic is of course not presented as a rhetorical confidence trickster. This area, covering the ways in which what is done in the poem reflects or fails to reflect what it says should be done, must be central in any consideration of why it is a poem and not a treatise.

In the following passage, Pope is of course not overtly describing himself. But the expectation has been established that he will practise what he preaches. He has, after all, offered illustrations of how to write. We thus have been invited to apply the passage to him, in the sense that we will decide to what extent he has lived up to these prescriptions:

But where's the Man, who Counsel can bestow,
Still pleas'd to teach, and yet not proud to know?
Unbiass'd, or by Favour or by Spite;
Not dully prepossess'd, nor blindly right;
Tho' Learn'd, well-bred; and tho' well bred, sincere:
Modestly bold, and Humanly severe?
Who to a friend his faults can freely show,
And gladly praise the Merit of a Foe?
Blest with a Taste exact, yet unconfin'd'
A Knowledge both of Books, and Humankind;
Gen'rous Converse; a Soul exempt from Pride;
And Love to Praise, with Reason on his Side? (631-642)

This portrait confirms a great deal of what has been said about the detached moderation of the learned gentleman. And it does so without indirection; in fact, with an admirable openness and moral seriousness. That is, one cannot respond to it in itself with any cynicism. The trouble is that Pope does not always write like that in An Essay on Criticism. The implied writer of these lines is not the same as the writer responsible for
some of the strategies we have been looking at. Thus there is a difference between the critic who wrote the Essay on Criticism and the critic portrayed as ideal in it.

We can conveniently develop the point by comparing the Essay on Criticism with another poem about poetry, Boileau's Art Poétique.¹ We are not here concerned with influences or thematic parallels.² In the discussion to this point we have overlooked the ways in which the sense of a speaker is explicitly established, the overt linguistic indications of an "I" figure as opposed to the tonal qualities of the writing that imply a responsible "character". These overt indications include such subtle linguistic features as the change of language level in the line "What the Fine Gentleman wore Yesterday!" - the phrase "Fine Gentleman" being, as it were, in inverted commas - or as any parenthetical change of direction in discourse, implying someone making the change. But we are mainly concerned with the use of the first persons singular and plural in the poem, the occasional implied "I" and the inclusive and exclusive "We" of the speaker's presence. A comparison conducted in these terms between Pope's presence in his poem and Boileau's in his puts the nervous ingenuity of the former in the spotlight.

This aspect of the rhetoric of the Art Poétique has the forceful simplicity the poem recommends. Always explicitly addressing other French writers, Boileau admits that he is one of them by the occasional use of the first person plural and third person singular:

Évitons ces exces: laissons à l'Italie
De tous ces faux brillants l'éclatante folie; (I. 43-4)

Pour peu qu'on s'en écarte, aussitôt on se noie. (I.47)

But this basic pedagogic stance is in accordance with his belief that

¹. All quotations are from Oeuvres Complètes, Paris 1872.
². For an account of Boileau's influence on Pope see E. Audra, L' Influence Francaise dans l'Oeuvre de Pope, Paris 1931.
literature succeeds when it pleases. He asserts that the defects he
describes must be avoided if an author is to please the public, of which
he is a member, and to please him, in the first person singular:

Voulez-vous du public mériter les amours?
Sans cesse en écrivant variez vos discours,
Un style trop égal, et toujours uniforme,
En vain brille à nos yeux, il faut qu'il nous endorme.
On lit peu ces auteurs, nés pour nous ennuyer,
Qui toujours sur un ton semblent psalmodier. (I.69-74)

Here he conflates his own response with that of the public: "on" becomes
"nous". He appears in the first person as a representative, and authori-
tative, reader in passages of which the following is typical:

Si le sens de vos vers tarde à se faire entendre,
Mon esprit aussitôt commence à se détendre. (I.143-4)

Occasionally we have, as in "laissons à l'Italie", an appeal to French
cultural patriotism, and there is also some allusion to local French literary
warfare:

Et laissons le Burlesque aux plaisants du Pont-Neuf. (I.79)

Nor does Boileau avoid the use of traditional terms conflating literary
and social standards:

Quoi que vous écriviez, évitez la bassesse. (I.126)

But one never feels that such passages are being used to indirectly tell
us something about the writer. The massive simplicity with which the
Legislateur de Parnasse beings his poem is sustained throughout it:

C'est en vain qu'au Parnasse un téméraire auteur
Pense de l'art des vers atteindre la hauteur. (I.1-2)

His ex cathedra pronouncements are explicitly based on his responses as
a reader, and as a writer he quite straightforwardly lives up to the same
standards. The transition from "mon esprit" to "nos yeux" is on the surface
for all to see.

In comparison, Pope's rhetoric is complicated, and may seem
devious, and may also in its complexity express a more adequate, more authentic, image of a writer and his work and his society. The extensive allusion to a status hierarchy offers a compact to the reader. If he accepts the arguments, then he shares the high social and intellectual status established for the speaker.

Let us consider the poem's use of the first person plural. At times, by suggesting that an experience is universal, it claims the agreement of all humanity:

Like Kings we lose the Conquests made before
By vain Ambition still to make them more. (64-5)

And the claim is implicitly made that the speaker's judgements are based on the nature of human consciousness:

In Wit, as Nature, what affects our Hearts
Is not th'Exactness of peculiar Parts; (243-4)
'Tis not a Lip, or Eye, we Beauty call,
But the joint Force and full Result of all. (245-6)

In the definition of True Wit the lines:

Something, whose Truth convinc'd at Sight we find,
That gives us back the Image of our Mind (299-300)
suggests that a critical term with which, as Empson has demonstrated, Pope equivocates to intricate effect, is definable in terms of the structure, almost the physiology, of perception. And in a different, but also slightly dubious, kind of usage, the speaker will gain credit for self-knowledge by the admission of his own involvement in human weakness:

Pride, where Wit fails, steps in to our Defense; (209)
Nor is it Homer Nods, but We that Dream. (180)

This use of the moral epigram has the further effect of flattering the reader by allowing him to take some credit for the insight expressed, if he is willing to agree with it. A neat example comes in the following couplet:
Fondly we think we honour Merit then
When we but praise Ourselves in Other Men. (454-5)

Through his use of the first person plural Pope is inviting us to do something very close to what he is explicitly condemning. Fondly do we feel we have grasped a moral truth when the reason we are willing to do so is that we enjoy the wit with which it is expressed, and are allowed to associate ourselves with this wit.

The important point to notice about the sequence of first person plural usages cited in the paragraph above is that there is a sequence, from the first, which is an inclusive we, meaning all humanity, to the last, which covers only "we who have the self-knowledge to accept this truth". It is at this point that a covert appeal to the reader to include himself in an "in-group" becomes apparent. And the point may be illustrated by continuing the sequence of first person plural usages. The first "we" in the poem comes in under this heading:

'Tis hard to say, if greater Want of Skill
Appear in Writing, or in Judging ill;
But of the two, less dang'rous is th'Offence
To tire our Patience, than mislead our Sense. (1-4)

We have all no doubt had our patience tired and sense mislead, and will thus enjoy the mock judiciousness of the first couplet, and the witty distinction made when it is expanded in the second. A more collusive invitation follows a few lines later:

Yet if we look more closely, we shall find
Most have the Seeds of Judgment in their Mind;
Nature affords at least a glimm'ring Light;
The Lines, tho' touch'd but faintly, are drawn right. (19-22)

Here the strategy becomes transparent: we are invited to accept as something we think, or have found, an extremely disdainful and mock-patronising remark about a large imprecisely defined group of literary critics. Yet the author has only just began his own work of criticism. Despite the wit,
there is something brash about the passage, and the reader is inclined to refuse the offered bait of sharing a wittily unpleasant thought, and suspend his judgement. Such passages remind us that the Essay on Criticism was an early poem, if not in quite the way Pope was inclined to make that point about his poems. The implied speaker sounds very young. That he does not always sound like that, and that he clearly does not wish to sound so, are points to which we will return.

Another passage in which the reader is perhaps unwilling to play along has been brilliantly commented on by Empson, and begins: "Some have at first for Wits, then Poets passed". Of the word "Wit" there, Empson remarks that Pope is "kicking at his own vocabulary, and can hardly avoid kicking at himself". As for the speaker and the first person plural, we have:

Those half-learn'd Witlings, num'rous in our Isle,
As half-form'd Insects on the Banks of Nile;
Unfinish'd Things, one knows not what to call,
Their Generation's so equivocal. (40-43)

Here the phrase "num'rous in our Isle", as well as being vaguely entomological in tone in preparation for the second line of the couplet, involves the reader in a generalisation that is so disdainful in tone that our attention is diverted from his subject back to the author. We have to wonder why he is so disdainful, why the entomological image and the "one" (rather than "I" or "We") of the second couplet, implying as it does that the speaker wishes to detach himself from his perception of something very unpleasant. We do not know who Pope is referring to, although the demonstrative "Those" implies that we should. We expect an elucidating relative clause after the apparently complete parenthesis "num'rous in our Isle", but instead wait until the next couplet for more abuse, in apposition. The final impression is one of confusion. Either there is some powerful but inchoate feeling behind the language, or the language is factitious.

1. Empson, op.cit., 224.
whichever be the case, we are not eager to admit that this Isle is ours.

The word "we" then sometimes means "all of us who are human", sometimes "you who have the sense to agree with me, and I", and sometimes, in effect, simply "I". The word "I" does not in fact occur in the poem, but the poet is present as an individual, with various kinds of explicit and indirect rhetoric. We will conclude on this topic. It completes the sequence we have been considering, from the human race down to the speaker/poet. The importance of this sequence is that it in large part determines what kind of statement, utterance, verbal act, from the poet to the reader, the poem is. Thus we come round again to the problem of genre. In a historical sense, the Essay on Criticism is one of a small group of verse essays on literary topics, in the tradition of Mulgrave's Essay Upon Poetry and Roscommon's An Essay on Translated Verse. But for the critic determination of the genre of the poem requires precise analysis of what kind of statement, utterance, verbal act it is. Thus, as we have seen, the genre of a poem is connected with the role in it of its speaker. And the connection is confirmed in the case of this poem by the fact that Pope's overt presence is always as a poet, thinking about his own art. The genre of a poem is to some extent determined by its theme: we have touched on the fact that so many of Pope's works are poems about poetry.

The first appearance of Pope the poet comes by implication early in the poem:

Let such teach others who themselves excell,
And censure freely who have written well. (15-16)

The implied avowal that the critic is a poet too, and that he will demonstrate his fitness to criticise by the quality of his verse, is discreetly recapitulated at several points in the poem, and an impressive confidence that such challenges can be met now and again emerges. The discretion is apparent in the use of the first person plural:
Hear how learn'd Greece her useful Rules indites,
When to repress, and when indulge our Flights. (92-3)

Here the speaker is, like Boileau, an aspirant poet among others, although for Boileau being a poet is more of a profession, a question of earning a living by pleasing the public, than it is for Pope. The difference for Pope is apparent in the next quotation, which begins with another submergence of himself in a class of poets, but changes into something like a personal avowal as it grows in confidence:

Fir'd at first Sight with what the Muse Imparts
In fearless Youth we tempt the Heights of Arts,
While from the bounded Level of our Mind,
Short Views we take, nor see the Lengths behind,
But more advanc'd, behold with strange Surprise
New, distant Scenes of endless Science rise!
So pleas'd at first, the tow'ring Alps we try,
Mount o'er the Vales, and seem to tread the Sky;
Th'Eternal Snows appear already past;
And the first Clouds and Mountains seem the last:
But those attain'd, we tremble to survey
The growing Labours of the lengthen'd Way,
Th'increasing Prospect tires our wandring Eyes,
Hills peep o'er Hills, and Alps on Alps arise! (219-232)

It is the extent and controlled climax of this metaphor that makes it seem like a personal avowal, simply because intense experience tends to be, and suggests, personal experience. But it would of course be naive to take it that Pope is appearing unmasked without the qualification that he is aware of the rhetorical effect of the passage in context.

An illuminating comparison is with the lines in which the speaker refers to himself in relation to the classical poets whose fame he has been celebrating:

O may some Spark of your Coelestial Fire
The last, the meanest of your Sons inspire,
(That on weak Wings, from far, pursues your Flights;
Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes)
To teach vain Wits a Science little known,
T'admirë Superior Sense, and doubt their own! (195-200)

This is the conclusion of an impressive passage in praise of the classical writers, and in relation to them the speaker is properly modest. But the transition from that to a perhaps equally proper scorn of the vain wits is very sudden. Thus although it does, because it is sudden, give a sense of the distance between the ancients and speaker, it also has a less humble implication in relation to him. The superior sense is certainly intended to be that of the ancients, but it is a reading for which the poem is liable to take it as the speaker's. This is more so because we do not know who the vain wits are. The speaker seems once again to be striking out somewhat at random. In consequence, his praise of the Ancients seems like a set piece, designed to establish his own right to strike down the wits. And that is a misleading impression: his admiration is real.

The passage previously quoted has a similar appearance of modesty: the poet is aware of the onerousness of his chosen pursuit. It is however also flawed. The speaker sounds as if he is talking about his own experience. The suggestion is of a properly modest young poet, whose awareness of the difficulty of poetry is an indication that he is fit to write it. But at the same time a certain amount of experience is required in order to have attained his perspective: and the speaker uses the phrase "in fearless Youth", which is not how one refers to one's own age. On a second look, it seems as if the speaker is not himself young, but has a sympathetic understanding of how things look to someone who is. And from that, the implication is that he has made more progress on his climb than it at first seemed. The humility and the confidence are both genuine, in the end. But what happens is that Pope runs the risk of having them seem factitious through lapses in his highly ingenious, perhaps over ingenious, tonal and rhetorical control.
Where then do we find the authentic voice of the speaker in the poem, and what is our final impression of his nature and role? It will not do to lapse into irritation at that so carefully established spokesman of the poem, whose position on all issues is so ingeniously impeccable. Empson's remark that one cannot analyse the satirist without satirising him goes far enough; most of the time one enjoys the strategies, although with a sense that in some of his later poetry Pope is just as clever, but that his cleverness is directed towards understanding himself and his society rather than enforcing an ideal image of them. But Empson also found the poem admirable for a maturely realistic understanding of literature: and we can bring this point too home to the speaker. The poem always recommends that the critic should be more concerned to praise and encourage with generosity. And much of its analysis of bad criticism is in illustration of the failure of critics to do this and in examination of the reasons for their failure.
We discuss the Moral Essays from a point of view similar to that adopted for the Essay on Criticism. We will be concerned with the extent to which these poems attain coherence through the definition within them of their speakers as poets, and through the consequent "placing" of the different kinds of discourse found in them as part of their generic structure as poems of a particular kind. They resemble the Essay on Criticism in containing material that can roughly be classified as argumentative. Pope is seeking to enforce particular opinions, on money, women, taste, as he was seeking to enforce a particular view of criticism in the earlier poem. We will find that he does so with a rhetoric based on epistemological and not on social criteria, and that the versions of himself he introduces as his speakers are more uniform, and less demonstratively clever than the speaker of An Essay on Criticism. But the basic concern remains a definition of his own nature as a poet, and of the nature and value of his art.

In the Moral Essays Pope defines himself as a poet in a sense governed by a particular literary tradition or line of succession, in relation both to his own particular life situation in his time, and to the political, social, and cultural directions his society is taking. Thus the speaker takes up particular positions in relation to such themes and issues as women, friends, aristocrats, politics, money, architecture, city and country. He does so both through general analysis and through judgements and portraits of individuals, living or dead. But by "takes up particular positions" we do not mean anything equivalent either to "expresses opinions" or to "assumes conventional roles". Pope writes as a poet, so

1. F.W. Bateson has argued that these poems should be entitled Epistles to Several Persons, and uses this title for the volume of the Twickenham Edition in which he edits them. His claim that his would be a better title is convincing, but beside the point. There is no evidence that Pope ever thought of this title and these four poems conjointly. He used it for a group of poems including other epistles. Thus we are left with the fact that the
that his engagements are as a poet, and through language. Thus they are only to be discovered through a close reading that examines the interactions of arguments and emotions and allusions and ironies. And the coherence of the poem is based on these interactions. That is the basis of the relationship between the quality of these poems and the degree to which their speaker is present in them. We are not implying or relying on any general theory that personal poems are better than impersonal. We are observing that what Pope does in these particular poems is to achieve a coherence based on his own complex, resourceful, sometimes confused and unpleasant, and in the end authentic presence in them.

THE EPISTLE TO BURLINGTON

The last of the Moral Essays in their published order was the first written, and is also the simplest as far as the role in it of the speaker is concerned. In saying that we will for these reasons discuss it first, we do not mean to imply that the chronological order of the four Epistles and their order in terms of the importance of the speaker in them is the same. We will not find this to be the case. But it is true that to set this poem in the context of Pope's work as a whole it seems natural to compare it with earlier poems, while the other three Epistles require us to look forward to later work. The Epistle to Burlington is less interesting from our point of view than the other three poems because the issue of the speaker is not explicitly raised, and because there is thus no complex relationship between what the speaker says he is doing and what he actually is doing.

poems are known by Warburton's title. John Butt in the one volume Twickenham edition retains the old title, and most critics continue to use it. Moreover, it has the stylistic advantage that one can write "the first Moral Essay", but hardly "the first Epistle to Several Persons": And that argument is more to the point than the attack on Warburton on which Bateson bases his case.
In terms of a distinction we have developed in a previous chapter, the poem is to a large extent simple and not reflexive.

The two most interesting points as far as we are concerned are the use made in the poem of Burlington, the aristocrat and practising connoisseur of architecture to whom it is addressed, and the nature and degree of the poet's own fictive presence in the landscape it describes. In both of these respects the poem recalls Windsor-Forest: and in discussing that poem something has already been said of the way in which the poems are similar. At this point, we may briefly describe this as lying in the fact that Granville, to whom Windsor-Forest is addressed, and Burlington are both complimented by being presented as the potential saviours of English civilisation. And of course, these are not theoretically irrelevant compliments. Through them Pope implies a discriminating faith in the idea of aristocracy as a real political force. In extending the comparison to cover the poet's own presence in the landscape, we must take into account both similarity and contrast. In both poems Pope's presence has the function of defining the poet's and the poem's relationship to the order of an ideal aristocracy. But in the later poem Pope is much more conspicuous, and much less humble. And it will not do to say that the difference is simply generic, a consequence of the fact that one poem is a pastoral and the other an epistolary satire. It is rather that the search for an adequate form to express Pope's growing disenchantment with his age requires him both to speak out more directly, and to define his own role as poet more carefully and originally. We can trace this search through the Moral Essays, and the subsequent Horatian poems: and in this respect, the Epistle to Burlington stands at the beginning of a new sequence, and must be distinguished from Windsor-Forest.

Burlington himself is introduced into the poem with a simple "you" in the third paragraph, after two paragraphs about Taste in architecture,
interior decoration, and other related areas. In fact, as will become apparent, the creation of the kind of country house Pope recommends is more than a matter of architecture, and more than a matter of taste. The effect of this kind of introduction, which we will find and further consider in the other Epistles, is to make the poem seem part of an implied debate between the poet and one whose opinion is to be valued because of his, or her, status and special expertise. Burlington's knowledge has a classical foundation: he "shows us, Rome was glorious, not profuse". He is set against other members of his class as one who lives up to its ideals: he has often "hinted to his brother peer" that expenditure is useless without taste and sense. Thus it appears that Pope is not merely flattering Bolingbroke when he exhorts the peer, both at the beginning and at the end of the poem, to proceed with the restoration of the fallen art of architecture so as to inspire Kings to the good government of which the properly designed and run country house is an example in little.

This last point, that architecture functions as a metaphor in the poem, is crucial. In our chapter on Pope's letters, we touched on the analogy between poetry, architecture and landscape gardening, and government, and related this to Pope's attitude to the aristocracy. Burlington is very far from being simply flattered: he is being complimented, by being placed as an intermediary between the poet and the King. As an artist on a large scale and a ruler on a small, and as one engaged in an enterprise—the creation of a Country House—requiring both talents, he is the metaphorical lynch-pin on which the poem turns.

Moreover, the fact that the poem is addressed to Bolingbroke is also a vital part of its rhetorical structure. Pope's status as judge in the poem is not, we said, explicitly treated. Instead, it is defined by

1. Pope's view is precisely that these areas must be related, if taste is not to degenerate into mere virtuosity.
implication through the renewal in the poem of a powerful traditional version of the poet's social role and status. We may call this the tradition of patronage. G.R. Hibbard gives a lucid account of what is involved when he writes, of the tradition of Country-house poetry that links Pope to Horace, that:

It is truly Augustan in the sense that it voices and defines the values of a society conscious of its own achievement of a civilised way of living, and conscious also of the forces that threaten to undermine and throw away that achievement. The function of the poet in this society was to make it aware of itself; and because the poet had a function the relation between poet and patron in these poems is sound and wholesome. The poet is not a menial or a hanger-on, but an honoured friend and guest, welcomed for himself and for what he has to contribute to the life of the great house.¹

That is well put. But there is in it a transition, from socio-literary generalisation about the function of the poet in society to the way poets present themselves within their poems, that might, in some cases, turn out to have been made a little too easily. The relationship between the way poets are and the way they see themselves is not always going to be one of simple identity.

Certainly, the case is more complex in the Epistle to Burlington. Hibbard's paragraph describes an ideal situation that is like the situation as between Pope and Bolingbroke, and the opposite of the situation as between Pope and Timon. Thus it provides a context against which the passage describing Pope's visit to Timon's Villa may be read.

It is not immediately apparent, although it is retrospectively obvious, that Pope is himself Timon's guest. The persuasive rhetoric of

The poem has him exhorting and instructing an unnamed "you" on how to establish a country house: "To build, to plant, whatever you intend". The visit to Timon's Villa begins "At Timon's Villa let us pass a day", which includes in the invitation "myself and others". But as we move through the visit it is "your" experiences which are described: "And when up ten steep slopes you've dragged your thighs". It is certainly implied that the poet has visited this place, by the fact that the experiences described make up a temporally and spatially sequential day's visit as well as by this particular use of "you". It is nevertheless surprising when Pope shifts to the first person singular and implies that he has hitherto been talking about a particular visit:

In plenty starving, tantaliz'd in state,
And complaisantly help'd to all I hate,
Treated, caress'd, and tir'd, I take my leave,
Sick of his civil Pride from Morn to Eve;
I curse such lavish cost, and little skill,
And swear no Day was ever past so ill. (162-8).

The reason for the concealment is not far to seek. Pope wants to speak out with as much force as he can contrive. His rejection of his reception by Timon is no matter of mere personal distaste. He speaks as a man whose function is to make his society aware of itself, as Hibbard puts it, and whose judgement has the authority provided by this traditional function and role. He can be assured that he has a right to see himself in these terms because of the proper poet-patron relationship he presents in the poem as obtaining between himself and Bolingbroke. The move into the first person, and the fictive introduction of the poet himself into the landscape of the poem that accompanies it, are thus the deliberate putting on of a particular mask, and the acceptance of one of the available modes of self-definition for a poet. This is what we saw Pope doing with confidence in the Pastorals and in Windsor-Forest, and finding a little difficult in the Essay on Criticism.
And there is perhaps one other point to be made about the "Timon" passage. It has been argued that there is enough in common between Timon's Villa and Walpole's house at Houghton to sustain the idea that Pope's poem has a specific political dimension. Kathleen Mahaffey constructs an impressive case, weighing unfavourable as well as favourable evidence. And it would be nice if she were right. We could then argue that Pope attacks not only a general change in the social order, but also the individual who presided over it. The trouble with her case is that Pope has a characteristic attitude to Walpole, one of barbed and sharpened respect, that differs from what he seems to feel about Timon. But then again, Pope actually says very little about Timon himself: the Villa bears the brunt of the attack. This is of course appropriate, given the key place of architecture in the poem's metaphorical structure. And it ties in with the fact that Pope's fiercest attacks on the Minister tend to be indirect. It is for example Walpole's mistress who bears the brunt at the end of the first "Dialogue" of the Epilogue to the Satires. Thus we can incline to accept Kathleen Mahaffey's case, and suggest that Pope excludes his personal feelings about Walpole because they are not relevant to his poetic intentions at this point.

The two paragraphs which follow the passage on Timon's Villa are of interest in connection with the central themes of our discussion of the following three Moral Essays. The first is as follows:

Yet hence the Poor are cloath'd, the Hungry fed;
Health to himself, and to his Infants bread
The Lab'rer bears: What his hard Heart denies,
His charitable Vanity supplies. (169-172).

Pope himself annotates this paragraph as follows:

The Moral of the whole, where PROVIDENCE is justified in giving Wealth to those who squander it in this

manner. A bad Taste employs more hands and diffuses Expence more than a good one.\footnote{1}

And F.W. Bateson comments dismissively:

Savage told Spence that Bolingbroke had sent Pope "a long letter on these heads" before May 1730...

and presumably the theory must be credited, for what it is to him. It is to be found, much more cogently argued, in Mandeville.\footnote{1}

I would suggest that both commentators do less than justice to the verse, with the second perhaps being misled by the first. Without Pope's annotation, no reader would think the passage had anything to do with providence: it would sound like a wry observation of fact. Nor is the knowledge that in other poems Pope makes such observations as supposed evidence for his theories relevant. ——— We shall see that in other poems the trouble is precisely that the relationship between the evidence and the conclusions is not as Pope sees it. One often enough wishes the conclusions away; there is no reason to introduce them into a poem where they are not necessary.

Moreover, the next short paragraph goes rather better with an observation of ironic fact than with an assertion of providential intervention. It is as follows:

Another age shall see the golden Ear
Imbrown the Slope, and nod on the Parterre,
Deep Harvests bury all his pride has plann'd,
And laughing Ceres re-assume the land. (173-6).

This is a locus classicus for modern criticism of Pope, and the comments of Empson and Leavis remain exemplary.\footnote{2} In the present context the important point is that the landscape which will replace Timon's villa and garden

\footnote{1. Poems, III-ii. 148, l. 169 n.
will be a landscape adapted to human use, and not a wild one. The passage may be related to some lines early in the *Epistle to Bathurst*: "'Tis thus we eat the bread another sows", and "'Tis thus we riot, while who sow it, starve".¹ In both cases Pope is juxtaposing two kinds of economic order, two ways in which man deals with the resources offered him by nature. In the *Epistle to Bathurst* the imagery has biblical origins, while in the *Epistle to Burlington* the context is classical: the difference reflects a diversity of emphasis, as between a satirist's concern for moral judgement, and an awareness of the continuity of human life in the natural world proper in a writer of pastoral. And the other halves of the antitheses reflect the difference. Timon's Villa is the corruption of an old but still vital ideal that rises naturally out of a pastoral world, an ordered landscape. But the money economy that replaces such a social order cannot be redeemed by time and the seasons in the same way: it is anathema, and must be driven out of the temple. It follows that the poet who seeks to drive it out feels a special urgency when it comes to defining his own role and purpose. And we will argue that such a discussion is to a greater or lesser degree achieved in the other three *Moral Essays*.

THE EPISTLE TO COBHAM

The poem opens as in the course of a discussion, or with reference to a previous discussion, with Cobham:

Yes, you despise the man to Books confin'd,  
Who from his study rails at human kind; (1-2)  

Tho' many a passenger he rightly call,  
You hold him no Philosopher at all. (7-8)

It is not, in this poem, as it is to varying degrees in the other three, all that important that it is Cobham in particular who is addressed. He is

¹ Poems, III-ii. 83, l. 22, and III-ii. 86, 1.25.
present, and authoritative, simply as a peer to some degree interested in philosophy, but with the realism of a man of the world. Pope does not seem to know him as well as he does Bathurst or Martha Blount, and he is not, as is Burlington, an authority on the matter in hand. But this does not mean that Pope is unable to make good use of him in the poem. He does so from the beginning. Pope himself runs the risk of being described as a man to books confined who from his study rails at human kind. But such an accusation is ruled out of court when the fictive Cobham makes it of some unspecified other: clearly if Pope were like that, he would not be talking with apparent freedom to a man who despised theorists.

Pope's own remarks take off from this ascribed opinion through his advancing an opposing view that makes him the current leader of the discussion without involving him in any real disagreement with Cobham. It is implied that Cobham will agree that the truth does not lie at an extreme, and also that the two men's agreement on that opinion is a guarantee of its truth:

And yet the fate of all extremes is such,
   Men may be read, as well as Books too much. (9-10)

The sense of the context of a discussion with Cobham for the poet's remarks is further effective in making what is said seem considered. It is implicitly acknowledged that these thoughts are not original, and implied that their truth is based on a consensus of reasonable men.

This rhetoric, implying a debate, is continued and fictively expanded to include other participants, other "voices", in the course of the poem. Formally, the speaker is addressing Cobham, but in fact the reader is also the object of the cut and thrust of the debate. This transition is common in Pope's verse: he begins by addressing the person to whom the

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1. I am concerned not with how well Pope actually knew Cobham, but rather with the rhetoric of a poem addressed to him.
poem is addressed, but is able to abandon that fiction whenever it suits him to, and harangue, correct, question, prompt, or support his reader directly. (It is for this reason that Warburton's printing of the Epistle to Bathurst as a dialogue is a mistake.) In the Epistle to Cobham the reader is victim, almost, to Pope's Socrates:

Shall only Man be taken in the gross?
Grant but as many sorts of Mind as Moss.
That each from other differs, first confess:
Next, that he varies from himself no less: (17-20)

The dramatic scope of the poem is expanded by the creation of another fictive participant in the argument, a scapegoat figure, "Sage" or "Sage Historian" who overlaps with the reader in the same way as "Cobham" does. The sage attempts to deduce motives from actions, but the poet requires the reader to consider, or rather to "behold" the way in which one motive may lead to different actions, and suggests that "we find" surprising motives for all actions. But even if it be granted, presumably to one still not convinced, ("But grant that Actions best discover Man"), that actions do reveal character, the reader is conducted through the difficulties of deciding which of a man's actions best discover him, and invited to check the evidence for himself:

Take the most strong, and sort them as you can.
The few that glare each Character must mark,
You balance not the many in the dark.
What will you do with such as disagree? (72-75)

The assertion is that the reader finds the speaker's conclusions to be true, when he thinks about them.

Another rhetorical strategy turns on more or less inclusive uses of the first person plural. The reader may be included in a "we" that, because it occurs in lines about common human nature, means "all men":
All Manners take a tincture from our own,
Or come discolour'd thro' our Passions shown. (25-6)
The appeal is to common sense, and that phrase has an unusually precise
definition. It is a question of what is known because everyone has ex-
perienced it. On Swift, for example, he writes:

While there is one who charms us with his Spleen. (121)
This implies that there is an assured common judgement of Swift's work.
Pope's poem rests on such truths, whose objectivity is offered to the reader
in the form of an implied contract, to which he can assent by using them
(the truths) as accounts of his own experience. Pope invites us to be
shrewd investigators along with him, and to find out that he is right:

But these plain Characters we rarely find. (122)
And at times he goes so far as to use the second person plural, strictly
speaking in the sense in which it is interchangeable with "one", but also
implicitly to address the reader:

Who would not praise Patritio's high desert,
His hand unstain'd, his uncorrupted heart,
His comprehensive head! all Int' rests weigh'd,
All Europe sav'd, yet Britain not betray'd.
He thanks you not, his pride is in Picquette,
New-market-fame, and judgment at a Bett. (140-5).
The poet appears to be acquainted with this interesting character, states-
man about town, and the implication is that the reader may also come to know
him. The appeal is also to experience when Pope moves from the first
to the second person plural:

Judge we by Nature? Habit can efface,
Int'rest o'ercome, or Policy take place:
By Actions? those Uncertainty divides:
By Passions? these Dissimulation hides:
Opinions? they still take a wider range:
Find, if you can, in what you cannot change. (168-173)
Even the "characters" and portraits are integrated into the pattern:
Ask men's Opinions: Scoto now shall tell
How Trade increases, and the World goes well:
Strike off his Pension, by the setting sun,
And Britain, if not Europe, is undone. (158-161)

Again, the implication is that the reader can go out on the town and confirm
the truth of the poet's observations.

The most important portrait in the poem is of Wharton. It is
the opening and most complex illustration of the operation of the ruling
Passion. In terms of persuasive rhetoric, it opens in the same sort of
way as the character of Scoto, with an invitation to the reader to seek the
truth:

Search then the Ruling Passion: There, alone,
The Wild are constant, and the Cunning known;
The Fool consistent, and the False Sincere;
Priests, Princes, Women, no dissemblers here,
This clue once found, unravels all the rest
The prospect clears, and Wharton stands confest. (174-8)

But what follows is new. Pope is presenting what he sees in Wharton
directly and in his own voice. This crucial piece of evidence is his, and
only his. The portrait opens with a series of distinct couplets, senten-
tious in the old sense of the word, exhibiting, as historically the case,
various aspects of the paradox that is Wharton's nature. He is certainly
"the scorn and wonder of our days", but the "our" makes no convert appeal
for agreement. It is rather that the poet is announcing that he is about
to do one of the things it is traditionally a poet's business to do. He
is to pronounce a historical verdict. This is done magisterially, in the
central long sentence (11.192-205) where Pope defines by the via negativa
the standards, at once of private and public behaviour, against which
Wharton is judged and found wanting. And the point to grasp is that as a
moral judgement the portrait is coherent both in itself, and within the
Wharton's ruling passion is "the Lust of Praise". The choice of the second word of that phrase as the right one is itself the judgement that the portrait as a whole expands and validates. Wharton was deserving of praise from "the Wise" and from "wond'ring Senates". The first term stands against the earlier "sage Historians" as well as against its immediate antithesis, "Women and Fools": the standard of judgement is masculine, public, classical. And in the contrast between "wond'ring Senates" and its antithesis, (within the pattern of the couplet)"the Club", we have an explicit version of that contrast between Ancient and Modern Times that Pope generally presents through mock-heroic description and narrative. The portrait is direct, "literal" in moral judgement. Pope speaks of "each gift of nature and of art" and of "an honest heart" and of vice and friendship and marital love and loyalty and eloquence, "an angel tongue". The final couplets are as follows:

A Tyrant to the wife his heart approves;
A Rebel to the very king he loves;
He dies, sad out-cast of each church and state,
And (harder still) flagitious, yet not great!
Ask you why Wharton Broke thro' ev'ry rule?
'Twas all for fear the Knaves should call him Fool. (202-207)

The first two of these couplets make observations that combine as an uniform moral judgement in a world hierarchically ordered. It is only what one might expect that a man who is a tyrant to his wife should be a rebel to his king. One might expect a man to love his wife and approve his king rather than to love his King and approve his wife. The reversal makes it clear that the two loyalties are associated. F.W. Bateson points out that Pope was wrong in asserting that Wharton died cast out from the church:

"Wharton died a member of the Church of Rome, in a Franciscan convent... and attired in the habit of the order". The error is unfortunate, because the rhetoric of the poem lays stress, as we have seen, on its foundation of

1. Poems, III-ii . 31, note to 1.204.
fact. But the portrait of Wharton has the other kind of "truth", that of aesthetic and moral coherence, and from that point of view it is necessary that Wharton should die outside the Church.

In terms of its persuasive rhetoric, then, the poem is presented as based first of all on common experience, and then, as the foundation of the argument, on the poet's own judgements. It remains to be seen to what extent this is congruent with the explicit treatment of the nature and foundations of knowledge, and of the poet-speaker's authority. This is the kind of congruence we found imperfect, but still impressive, in the Essay on Criticism. Pope is relatively direct in the later poem, relatively not prone to rhetorical trickery. But we may take as an opening hypothesis a suspicion that the insistence on sound epistemological foundations, on experience as the basis of the argument, may perhaps mask an argument less impeccably conducted.

[P.T.O.]
The issue of the qualifications required to speak authoritatively on moral and social questions is raised in what one is initially inclined to call epistemological terms at the beginning of the poem. The first 173 lines consist of an extended analysis, largely derived from Montaigne, but also recalling Locke and La Rochefoucauld, of the obstacles which make it impossible to understand another human being. Neither retirement nor active observation guarantee one's conclusions:

And yet the fate of all extremes is such,
Men may be read, as well as Books too much. (9-10)

The differences between individual human beings are matched by (as Pope says: strictly he should say extend to) the differences between observers:

All Manners take a tincture from our own,
Or come discolour'd thro' our Passions shown. (25-26)

Men are too changeable either to be caught by observation from outside or to understand their own motives. The true causes of actions are often petty and surprising, and actions, it follows, are no sure guides to character. And anyway, human action is rarely consistent, the view that it is being attained by looking only at the evidence which is obvious:

The few that glare each character must mark,
You balance not the many in the dark. (73-4)

Objectivity is further impeded by the fact that we give undue credit to mere social status:

Court-virtues bear, like Gems, the highest rate,
Born where Heav'n's influence scarce can penetrate. (93-4)

And so it continues, with the epistemological analysis apparently illustrated by a series of satirical portraits, to the firmly sceptical conclusion:

Judge we by Nature? Habit can efface,
Int'rest o'ercome, or Policy take place;
By Actions? those Uncertainty divides:

1. See Poems, Ill-ii.16, note to 1.141 and 26, note to 1.146.
By Passions? these Dissimulation hides:  
Opinions? they still take a wider range:  
Find, if you can, in what you cannot change. (168-173)

The argument is conducted with an appearance of philosophical rigour, and with a great deal of rhetorical verve. And most of the time, these two qualities cooperate: the portraits of Catius and Patritio fit effectively into the argument. There are, however, a number of points at which a reader concerned to rigorously assess Pope's argument will be uneasy. He allows a few exceptions to his rule, at either moral extreme. The Duke of Chandos, Shylock, Congreve's Manly, "Umbra", and Swift, "...who charms us with his spleen", can be understood "at sight". The reasons for these exceptions come under the heading of rhetoric and not of rigour. In general, they "prove the rule": and in particular, Pope had obvious reasons for complimenting Swift, and may have wanted to counter the popular impression that he had satirised Chandos as Timon in the Epistle to Burlington, and was alluding to the Earl of Selkirk, one of his regular targets, in the figure of Shylock. But strictly speaking, exceptions prove the rule only in the sense that they put it to the test, and Pope's argument fails the test. His exceptions require an observer free of the kinds of bias that have been so forcefully described. And the observer in question—the speaker of the poem—certainly does not come across as objective, or free from bias, in any sense of those terms that would satisfy the epistemologically rigorous expectations the poem sets up. Rather is the argument conducted with a satirical verve, and the illustrative portraits composed with a dramatic power, that suggest in the speaker an intelligent passion proper to a poet writing "Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men". ¹

That is the essential problem: in what way is Pope's weakness in argument a poetic fault? We come round again in the question of genre. What kind of poem is an Epistle? By what criteria should it be judged?

¹. This phrase is a subtitle to the 'argument' of the poem.
The contention that Pope is weak in argument has been made before, and in particular in connection with the function in the poem of the doctrine of the ruling passion. But in discussing this doctrine we will try to bear in mind the larger questions asked above. And in particular, we will be concerned with the extent to which Pope is trying to define and carry out an approach to human character that makes use of the specific strengths of the poet.

One's initial impression, on encountering the doctrine of the ruling passion, is one of simple disappointment. Pope has seemed to understand the strength of the sceptical position, and to advance in refutation of his case the couplet:

Search then the Ruling Passion: There, alone,
The Wild are constant, and the Cunning known  (174-5)
is to fail catastrophically in terms of the intellectual standards he has himself set up by criticising other kinds of thinker. The idea of the ruling passion is not, at least without extended justification, which it does not receive, any answer at all to the sceptical arguments advanced. One might swallow the idea that such a notion does in fact explain human character: but one does not see how it would help an individual to arrive at such an explanation, which has been Pope's primary concern. It would seem likely only to compound the distortion due to "the optics seeing", whose owner would have his own ruling passion. And one may generalise that point by saying that what is missing in Pope's argument is explicit recognition that some people are more perceptive than others. We need a principle of human understanding as well as a principle of character, or rather, perhaps, a version of human character that allows for understanding, as the doctrine of the ruling passion does not.

This point brings us round to the implications of what has been said for the role of the speaker in the poem. Pope has not explicitly
included himself within the scope of his own arguments. In fact, he has rhetorically eluded them. His ability to remark that a King is likely to be thought "More wise, more learn'd, more just, more ev'rything ", absolves him from the charge of being impressed by social status. And his criticism of both "Written Wisdom" and "Observations" implies that he has found a mean. There is thus as it were, space in the argument for the assertion that the speaker does have some special ability to grasp the truth. And at the risk of seeming to talk about a poem Pope might have written, rather than the poem he did write, we can go on to say more specifically that Pope might have defined this special ability as being that of a poet, and as the same gift that gave rise to the satirical verve and dramatic power we have detected in the course of the argument.

The point may be clarified by a reference to the Epistle to Bathurst. In that poem, Pope does seem to suggest that the truth about the issues the poem discusses is finally to be reached only by a poet, and through gifts specific to a poet. The Epistle ends with the tale of Sir Balaam, and the tale is introduced as follows:

- Say, for such worth are other worlds prepar'd?
- Or are they both, in this their own reward?
- A knotty point! to which we now proceed.
- But you are tir'd—I'll tell a tale. "Agreed". (335-338)

Pope is, as we will see in more detail when we come to discuss the poem, explicitly substituting one kind of truth for another. The poem has begun on the unprofitability of pursuing knotty points:

- Who shall decide, when Doctors disagree,
  And soundest Casuists doubt, like you and me? (1-2)

And it concludes with the poet abandoning sequential argument, and standing by his marvellous narrative, at once morally exemplary, satirical, allusive, and dramatic. To respond with argument is crass: something has been definitively understood.
But, it will be objected, Pope does not in fact do anything of that sort in the Epistle to Cobham. The assertion that the ruling Passion explains all is a philosophical claim, of the same kind as the earlier philosophical arguments. It provides no new kind of truth. As far as it goes, the criticism of the poem is irrefutable. One must concede that the question of the authority of the speaker, and thus of the poet, and of poetry, has been inadvertently raised in philosophical terms, and in those terms, not satisfactorily resolved.

However, one can usefully approach the problem from another angle. It will not be controversial to say that Pope's weakness in argument does not make the poem into an unmitigated failure. I would go one step further, and argue that if we look at how the doctrine of the ruling passion exists in the poem other than as a part of the argument, we will find it to be more interesting than it at first appears.

It was mentioned that the initial sceptical arguments were illustrated by dramatic portraits, or, if that phrase seems too grandiose, by illustrative "characters". So too, after it occurs, is the doctrine of the ruling passion. We may enquire as to the relationship between the arguments, for and against scepticism, and the portraits which illustrate them. And we may also compare the two supposedly different kinds of portraits, those illustrating the argument that one cannot understand human character and those illustrating the principle supposedly making it possible to do so.

The two kinds of portraits do not turn out to be as different as one might expect. It seems that the only difference is that with those portraits illustrating the doctrine of scepticism, the doctrine of the ruling passion is not mentioned, only strongly implied. The portrait of Catius is intended to illustrate the way in which puzzling contraries confound the whole:
Catius is ever moral, ever grave,
Thinks who endures a knave, is next a knave,
Save just at dinner—then prefers, no doubt,
A Rogue with Ven'son to a Saint without. (136-9)

Catius' ruling passion is not far to seek. But it would not do to say that Pope is merely anticipating the rabbit he intends to produce out of his hat. The portrait of Catius offers no less of an insight into human character than the later portrait of an old lecher, nor does it offer a different kind of insight. Here is the old lecher:

Behold a rev'rend sire, whom want of grace
Has made the father of a nameless race,
Shov'd from the wall perhaps, or rudely press'd
By his own son, that passes by unbless'd;
Still to his wench he crawls on knocking knees,
And envies ev'ry sparrow that he sees. (228-233).

The structural principle, which is that of paradox, is the same in both cases. The sense that these people are puzzling is the dramatic analogue of the sceptical arguments. The doctrine of the ruling passion finds its dramatic validation in the coherence, the unity and the truth, of the "characters". The origins of Pope's idea have been definitively traced by Maynard Mack in his introduction to the Essay on Man. But Mack's account of the doctrine needs to be supplemented by an awareness that we are dealing with an idea put to artistic use in a poem. And in that context, it may be said that in spite of Pope's pretensions to philosophy, there is a large degree of truth in the proposition that the doctrine of the ruling passion is to the poems in which it is mentioned in the same relation as the doctrine of the humours to the plays of Ben Jonson.

The doctrine of the Ruling Passion is thus in a dual relation, to Pope's philosophy, as a part of his view that all is intelligible if it be

understood that God turns human vices to good ends, and to his practice as a writer, as it seems to describe one aspect of the structure of his portraits or "characters". At his best, he does succeed in bringing his philosophy and his practice together through making the reader respond imaginatively to his own sense of order. What he does not manage, at any rate until the Epilogue to the Satires and the final version of the Dunciad, is to find an adequate intellectual correlative for his sense of disorder. In the Epistle to Cobham we are invited to proceed from arguments — for scepticism and for rule — to examples, standing as evidence for the arguments. But as a "creative writer", Pope invents his evidence, in both the current and the etymologically original senses of the word "invent". He comes upon it, and he imagines it; and as a satirist, he is aware that the two procedures do not always easily fit together. Is he to use the names of his contemporaries, and portray individuals, or are his portraits to be typical? The problem in the Epistle to Cobham is that we have aesthetic coherence and strength in the examples, and confusion in the arguments. As part of the argument, the doctrine of the ruling passion has been enough discussed. But it remains worth pointing out in more detail that the function of the doctrine in the poem is as an aesthetically effective unifying principle for "examples" of human nature in which energy is apprehended in its complexity and power, and not diminished by any theory of universal order.

The central portrait of Wharton begins with what seems like a firm attempt to "explain" in terms of the ruling passion:

Wharton, the scorn and wonder of our days,
Whose ruling Passion was the Lust of Praise. (180-1)

But the answering couplet at the end of the paragraph insists that Wharton is surprising quite as much as it does that he is understood:

Ask you why Wharton Broke thro' ev'ry rule?
'Twas all for fear the Knaves should call him Fool. (206-7)
In this couplet the question and answer structure when we already know the answer to the question, and the uncompromising yet informal manner of the answer, make the ruling passion seem a paradox in the exact sense, surprising yet a truth. And this is the case in the portrait. It is his ruling passion that deprives Wharton of discrimination, morality, the power to act, friends, lovers. It is his ruling passion that bends and forms his nature to a shape language can describe only by going beyond the limitations of its function as a medium of logic:

Grown all to all, from no one vice exempt,
And most contemptible, to shun contempt. (194-5).

The second line of this is pure paradox, and the first phrase of the first can almost be seen as a parody of the categories of logical language. Thus the opening sceptical arguments come to seem an intellectual correlative of something abiding in the poem. Wharton remains the scorn and wonder of his days: his nature is explained, but not in such a manner as to diminish our sense that human nature is prodigious.

The transitional couplet following the portrait is susceptible of a teasing range of emphases. At the two extremes, it can be read as literal, or as ironic:

Nature well known, no prodigies remain,
Comets are regular, and Wharton plain. (207-8)

Literally, this means that all things can be understood. The regularity of comets was coming to be known in Pope's time. But it is not Wharton's plainness that has just been shown. And read as ironic, the couplet casts doubt on the notion, characteristic of the eighteenth century at least in the common understanding of that period, that nature is thoroughly intelligible. It must seem regrettable that a thorough knowledge of nature should make comets merely regular, and Wharton merely plain. After Pope has described him to us, we seem to know Wharton in his essential frustrated brilliance. And this perception is a product of the poetic use of language.
The Twickenham editor tells us that Warburton had persuaded Pope to alter his original version, which had "miracles" for "prodigies", on the ground that miracles imply supernatural effects and are thus not eliminated by a thorough knowledge of nature. Warburton attributes Pope's original version dismissing miracles to the influence of Bolingbroke:

Yet this was one of the speciosa dicta of Bolingbroke, who was fond of the impiety, and yet did not see the blunder.¹

In his disagreement with Bolingbroke, Warburton misses the point, through insensitivity to the implications of the verse. He is quite right to argue that miracles are by definition supernatural: but had the word been left in the poem, the paradox would have been clarified, and justice intellectually done to Pope's actual perception of Wharton. The moral would seem to be that one should trust the verse, and not the author, and certainly not the author's mentors or commentators.

Ultimately, then, the authority of the speaker is based not on his explicit remarks on his right to speak, but on his performance. Still, Pope continues to be concerned, on an intellectual level, with his authority as poet and satirist, and, to come round again to persuasive rhetoric, he continues to exercise his ingenuity in presenting himself as authoritative. And the issue is raised in the poems in terms which require us to go outside the poems for an answer. In the Epistle to Cobham these terms are, as we have seen, epistemological. The poem supposedly rests on the validity of a philosophical argument. Elsewhere, he seems more concerned with his moral right to speak as he does. But in either case, it is at his own insistence that he is present in the poem as more than a persona.

In reading the remaining two Moral Essays we will ultimately be concerned with those moments when, as in the Wharton portrait of the Epistle to Cobham, Pope keeps his implied promise by being most impressively present as a poet.

1. Poems, III-ii. 31, note to 1. 208.
The Epistle to Bathurst

We move on to consider the status and role of the speaker in the Epistle to Bathurst. In his long and learned critical reading of this poem, Earl R. Wasserman describes the role Pope plays in it as that of a "lay theologian, or lay apostle". His position is close to that adopted in relation to later poems by Maresca in his account of Pope's Horatian Poems. Both critics contend that to a generally unappreciated extent Pope is writing in the context of a Christian tradition, at its most vital in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and going out of currency in the eighteenth, but still dominant in the intellectual landscape of a writer with Pope's Catholic and traditional upbringing, and profound sense of tradition. Thus Wasserman's exegesis makes rhetorical use of an ideal contemporary reader with his own knowledge of renaissance and 17th-century theology. And his basic view of the poem is that it opens with a dialogue between Pope and Bathurst in which the poet at first concedes to his interlocutor's cynical and disdainful view of the role of money in human affairs, but then, with admirable rhetorical dexterity, comes to a position where he implicitly disavows his concession and affirms the Christian truth that the spendthrift and the miser are both part of the plan of "That POW'R who bids the Ocean ebb and flow."

The reading attempted in this chapter is at a tangent to that of Wasserman, neither exactly parallel nor in opposition. I see no reason to suppose that the poem was written or read, or that it should be read, with theology as extensively in mind as he has it. I do not think Pope repudiates Bathurst's attitude to the extent that Wasserman supposes. And I would not accept that the speaker of the poem is properly regarded

as a "lay theologian". This last is the crucial point. Wasserman is right in generally emphasising the fact that Pope insists on a moral evaluation of the use of riches, and repudiates the new kind of money economy that was developing under Walpole. But in doing so, the poet makes only incidental use of Christian tradition. His stance is that of a satirical poet, whose values are certainly basically Christian, but whose concern is to define the status of his own judgements, and to make them, in his own medium, that of poetry. Thus the character sketches in the poem are not, as Wasserman argues, exempla of the logical truths. They are self-subsistent verbal constructs in and through which the poet responds, with both wit and passion, to his own time. The difference may seem only one of emphasis. But it is a crucial one all the same. Pope was essentially a poet, and saw himself as essentially a poet.

Our concern is thus with the authority of the speaker-poet as the poem defines and exemplifies it. We saw that in the Epistle to Cobham this question was approached through an analysis of the epistemological difficulties in the way of anyone trying to form an opinion. Here Pope uses a different means to a similar end. It seems that we are being asked to choose between two opposing judgements, the speaker's and Bathurst's. But on a closer look, this debate turns out to be spurious, and to suggest, precisely because it is spurious, that the truth about the use of riches is not to be found through that sort of argument. The poem's superstructure is an argument about the place of wealth in the order of nature. But its excellence is based on Pope's judgements and accounts of the rich men he blames or praises. And it concludes with an explicit abandonment of argument in favour of an extended narrative account of the fate of a man who becomes rich. The "tale" of Sir Balaam considers the effects of a money economy on the order of English society in a way proper to a poet, through an ironic narrative.

The first two paragraphs of the poem are as follows:

Who shall decide, when Doctors disagree,
And soundest Casuists doubt, like you and me?
You hold the word, from Jove to Momus giv'n
That Man was made the standing jest of Heav'n;
And Gold but sent to keep the fools in play,
For some to heap, and some to throw away.

But I, who think more highly of our kind,
(And surely, Heav'n and I are of a mind)
Opine, that Nature, as in duty bound,
Deep hid the shining mischief under ground:
But when by Man's audacious labour won,
Flam'd forth this rival to, its Sire, the Sun,
Then careful Heav'n supply'd two sorts of Men,
To squander these, and those to hide agen. (1-14)

The epistemological issue raised by the opening question, "Who shall decide..." is significant because, given the ironic implications of "when Doctors disagree" and "soundest Casuists", it already makes it difficult to take the question of political economy raised subsequently at all seriously. The economic problem is a superstructure for the poem, but at this point Pope is very far from conducting a simple argument. Both casuists are sound because they have divine authority for their views. Pope's Heaven seems more reputable: it is probably, being "careful", inhabited by a divine artificer, whereas Bathurst has only Jove. Pope's side of the argument is Augustan orthodoxy and quite acceptable to the Christian. But the manner in which he claims divine support is not such as to suggest that Heaven is deeply concerned. Addressing Bathurst, rake as well as philosopher, he parodies the appeal to authority. And the implications of the language he uses about Gold run counter to what he is overtly saying. The latinate syntax, and the latinate periphrasis "shining mischief" give the gold a metaphorical identity and power foreign to its meaning in the laissez-faire

1. For a discussion of the way in which the poem is adjusted to Bathurst's character, see Pat Rogers, "Pope and the Social Scene", in Alexander Pope: (Writers and their Background), ed. Peter Dixon, Athens Ohio 1972, 116-120.
economics Pope is overtly supporting. And in alluding to the myth of Phaeton Pope is also suggesting the necessity of a moral evaluation of the use of riches.

In the end, "after much debate", Pope and Bathurst discover that they agree at least that riches are "no Grace of Heav'n or token of th'elect". This is effectively an abandonment of the original issue. It is part of a new debate, and compatible with both Pope’s and Bathurst's views. Again, it is important that it is Bathurst who is being addressed: with him Pope can come to this shrewd agreement. But he is also suggesting another kind of argument, which he will conduct with a range of tones from this to something more impassioned, angry, involved. Retrospectively we can say that the framework of a Mandevilleian debate on political economy is replaced by a consensus on the importance of moral judgement.¹

The nature and the scope of moral judgement in the poem becomes clearer as we discover that it is concerned not with the use of riches in the abstract, but rather with the state of the nation at the time of writing, with special attention to the evidence provided by the way people use money. The fourth paragraph begins with what appears an economist's point of view on money:

What Nature wants, commodious Gold bestows,
’Tis thus we eat the bread another sows. (21-2).

In fact, the second line makes the economic assertion seem questionable, because its biblical tone suggests an economic system in which it is natural to sow one's own bread, and also suggests the moral connotations of "bread" and "sow" when they are used metaphorically. The next couplet criticises the assertion that gold is part of the order of nature on economic terms:

But how unequal it bestows, observe,
’Tis thus we riot, while who sow it, starve. (23-4)

And it becomes clear that the thrust of the argument is against the abdication of moral responsibility on the spurious grounds that the structure of a money economy ensures that all will turn out for the best. The parallel between lines 22 and 24 makes the point forcefully. The use of the first person plural pronoun in line 24, "'Tis thus we riot...", exposes the reader, and, for the time being, the poet, to the imputation that if he accepts a purely economic viewpoint he does so to justify his own selfishness. The same rhetorical ingenuity is evident in the way Pope takes credit for perceiving the ambiguity in his own phrase, "What Nature wants":

> What Nature wants (a phrase I much distrust)  
> Extends to Luxury, extends to Lust. (25-6).

Thus he dissociates himself from the argument with which he began his paragraph. One must begin to wonder exactly what game he is playing.

It continues to be difficult to locate any authoritative, endorsed point of view in the argument, and even to be sure exactly what argument is being conducted. Pope ironically adopts the voice of a corrupted supporter of a money economy who is asserting the superiority of Paper credit:

> Gold imp'd by thee, can compass hardest things,  
> Can pocket States, can fetch or carry Kings; (71-2)

> Pregnant with thousands flits the Scrap unseen,  
> And silent sells a King, or buys a Queen. (77-8)

It now seems as if the poet is discrediting his own original view and supporting that of Bathurst. So far we have seen more of the "fools in play" than of the workings of "careful Heav'n." At this point Pope comes in to the poem in his own voice and reverts to the discussion with Bathurst:

> Since then, my Lord, on such a World we fall,  
> What say you? "Say? Why take it, Gold and all."

> What Riches give us let us then enquire,  
> Is this too little? would you more than live?  
> Alas! 'tis more than Turner finds they give. (79-84)
The positions of the "adversaries" have altered. Bathurst retains the cynicism implied by his earlier claim that his view was "from Jove to Momus giv'n", but Pope now seems to be arguing that one should not accept riches if offered them, which is to interfere in the workings of providence. Is he then totally rejecting the view that a money economy can be part of the natural order? We notice that the last lines of his and Bathurst's original summaries should be exchanged. Bathurst's view was that gold was given "For some to heap, and some to throw away", Pope's that there are two sorts of men, "To squander these, and those to hide agen". "Squander" and "hide" imply waste and abstraction from the workings of the economy, in the case of the second, while "heap" and "throw away" are, if not honorific, at least consistent with the workings of a morally neutral money economy. It seems as if even in his original statement Pope was undercutting his overt position and insisting on the necessity of moral judgement.

The next few paragraphs suggest more of the limitations of laissez-faire economics. In verse as savagely ironic and as indignant as he ever wrote, Pope illustrates the uselessness of money without judgement:

Can they in gems bid pallid Hippia glow,
In Fulvia's buckle ease the throbs below,
Or heal, old Narses, they obscener ail,
With all th'embroidry plaister'd at thy tail; (89-92)

Perhaps you think the Poor might have their part?
Bond damns the Poor, and hates them from his heart:
The grave Sir Gilbert holds it for a rule,
That "every man in want is knave or fool:"
"God cannot love (says Blunt, with tearless eyes)
"The wretch he starves"—and piously denies. (101-106)

The first of the above passages suggests that it is not about a defence of the workings of careful Heaven that Pope feels strongly. The second, while perfectly compatible with such a defence, does not rhetorically incline us to accept it. The identity of the "you" of the first line of this passage
is worth examining. Strictly, since no other interlocutor has been intro-
duced and since Bathurst has not been dismissed, it ought to be him. But
there is no reason to suppose that the word from Jove to Momus given included
any mention of the poor having their part, and it would be disrespectful
of Pope, even given the easiness of the relationship between them implied
by the poem, to use Bathurst as satiric adversary. He later praises
Bathurst for his proper use of his own fortune, and it is possible that he
means to imply that his friend would give the poor their part himself.
But there is an acerbic note about the line which suggests another reading:
the reader is being tempted into a sentimental misunderstanding, and will be
rebuked for it.

The effect of such rhetoric is again to dissociate the poet from
any simple point of view. His stance is based on an angry clear-sightedness
that questions any easy acceptance of the financial status quo. The state
of England is set against the order of nature in lines that come to a climax
in what "a wizard" says to "much injur'd Blunt", the moving force behind
the South Sea company, and thus an apt representative of a money economy:

'Twas no Court-badge, great Scriv'ner! fir'd thy brain,
Nor lordly Luxury, nor City Gain:
No, 'twas thy righteous end, asham'd to see
Senates degen'rate, Patriots disagree,
And nobly wishing Party-rage to cease,
To buy both sides, and give thy Country peace. (147-52)

Pope's stance here is essentially individual. Although he is being ironic
about Blunt, he equally has no use for those who blamed on him the results
of their own greed, and he concedes that the financier's motives were not
purely mercenary or class based. The intention of the passage is not to
make a satirical example of Blunt. It is rather to enforce the speaker's
judgement of order and of the kind of body politic that would be based on it,

1. On this point in particular I would disagree with Wasserman, who takes it
that Pope is here speaking to Bathurst. (op.cit.,26-7)
and that thus stands in contrast to the actual social order in England. The method adopted can be seen in little in the use of the word "Patriot", which alludes at once to the ideal, the classical humanist virtue, and to the reality, of the squabbling opposition.

In the wake of so complex and informed a judgement, what follows is disappointing. Pope brings the ruling passion in again, and, as in the Epistle to Cobham, seems to regard the idea as a master-key, an open sesame.

"All this is madness," cries a sober sage:
But who, my friend, has reason in his rage?
"The ruling Passion, be it what it will,
"The ruling Passion conquers Reason still."
Less mad the wildest whimsey we can frame,
Than ev'n that Passion, if it has no Aim;
For tho' such motives Folly you may call,
The Folly's greater to have none at all.

Hear then the truth: "'Tis Heav'n each Passion sends,
"And diff'rent men directs to diff'rent ends.
"Extremes in Nature equal good produce,
"Extremes in Man concur to gen'r'al use". (153-164)

This must be followed through in detail, and at risk of seeming to spell out the obvious. The poet distinguishes his point of view from that of the sober sage rather too easily at first. The sage objects, indignantly, that the preceding narrative, about Blunt, exhibits people behaving unreasonably. Pope retorts that in their madness people's behaviour is not governed by the faculty of reason, but that the appearance of incoherence in human behaviour will be diminished if the principle of the ruling passion is grasped. The problem is as to what exactly gives Pope the right to patronise this fictive interlocutor, by calling him alliteratively "the sober sage", and in the next line "my friend". If it is simply that he, Pope, has had the idea of the ruling passion, we may object that there is no reason why the sage should not come to share his insight. On the other hand, if, as seems probable, Pope also implies that he is more capable of dealing with, coming to terms
with, grasping, the apparently incoherent energies in human nature, that these energies simply fluster the sage, naive theorist as he is, we then come up against the problem of the inadequacy of the doctrine of the ruling passion itself. We are likely to feel that so far from doing justice to the complexity of human character, the doctrine is simplified to the point of being reductionist.

On the other hand, it would be wrong to assume that Pope necessarily means the same by the doctrine of the ruling passion in this poem as he does in the others in which it appears. We must see what use he actually makes of it. Lines 157-160 are difficult. It is not surprising that Warburton, so the Twickenham editors tells us, tried to have Pope revise them. Pope's reply was that his intention was to show that those of the extravagant motives of avarice which are real are even crazier than those which are imaginary. This is only some help. Presumably the imaginary motives are those he has ironically attributed to Blunt. The problem about this is that if we accept it, we have to reassess the sage's opening *cri de coeur*, "All this is madness" as an objection to Pope's irony in the preceding passage, and not as an objection to the unreasonableness of human behaviour. The trouble would then be that the next line, "But who, my friend, has reason in his rage?", would have to apply to Pope, and not to human nature in general. The second problem is apparent when we focus on the phrase "Than ev'n that Passion" in line 158: the only way to make sense of it is as meaning something like "that very passion", "that passion itself". The normal sense of "even" would have Pope meaning that the wildest whimsy we can frame is less mad than many other passions, and less mad even than that one, with the ruling the least mad of the passions. The final phrase of the couplet, "if it has no Aim" is what introduces a new dimension into the doctrine of the ruling passion itself. It is not at all clear how the ruling passion as defined in the Essay on Man and the Epistle to Cobham

1. Poems, III-ii. 103, note to 11. 153-60.
can have no aim. As defined there, the passion itself constituted each man's aim, or directly defined it. The next couplet complicates things further. It seems that if the ruling passion has no aim, then people have no motive, and that makes little sense. Perhaps, then, this condition of being without a motive is not something people are but rather a way in which they are perceived by observers unaware of the doctrine of the ruling passion.

We could pursue the matter: perhaps it will be best simply to say that the lines in question are initially disappointing, then a little more interesting than they at first appeared, and then finally, disappointing. A more adequate version of the doctrine of the ruling passion than we have seen elsewhere is made to seem possible, but not in the end provided. And with line 161, "Hear then the truth: 'Tis Heav'n each Passion sends,'" we seem to come back to the doctrine in its classical form. The passage is placed in inverted commas to emphasise what is announced, that we are now hearing the truth. On these ideas we have already commented. But what follows is new. Pope sets economic affairs in the context of nature not through the philosophical suggestion that the ruling passion is the way in which providence enforces its ordinances, but rather through the use of poetic language:

Ask we what makes one keep, and one bestow?
That POW'R who bids the Ocean ebb and flow,
Bids seed-time, harvest, equal course maintain,
Thro' reconcil'd extremes of drought and rain,
Builds Life on Death, on Change Duration founds,
And gives th'eternal wheels to know their rounds. (165-170)

This is a fine passage. But its bearing on the argument needs examination. There has earlier been a suggestion of antithesis between the natural world and human society. In the comic suggestions of bribes offered and bets laid in kind, and in the assertions that all man needs is "Meat, Cloathes, and Fire", we have found the natural used as a measure of human corruption.
course Pope means by nature nothing at all primitive. He alludes to the same order as he seeks to find in human affairs: but while in connection with nature in general, ocean and seasons and life and death, he can confidently appeal to the imagination of the reader, it is the antithesis or order that we are made to feel most powerfully in human affairs. It may be because he is aware that there is a gap to be bridged at this point that Pope gets into difficulties with his opening discussion of the doctrine of the ruling passion. In particular, the idea of "that Passion, if it has no Aim" may be apposite, with the ruling passion frustrated, or aimless, in a money economy:

What can they give? to dying Hopkins Heirs,
To Chartres, Vigour; Japhet, Nose and Ears. (87-8)

But that is conjectural. It remains surprising that Pope should cite the operations of "That POW'R" in the natural world to persuade us that it makes "one keep and one bestow" to any good effect.¹

Nor does he go on with such persuasion. The passage on pale Mammon and his spendthrift son is more or less consistent with the view that providence is operative in what the two did with their money, but it is not to that opinion that we are made to respond imaginatively. Mammon's heir wastes his money, and those who get it do not profit by it:

This year a Reservoir, to keep and spare,
The next a Fountain, spouting thro' his Heir,
In lavish streams to quench a Country's thirst,
And men and dogs shall drink him 'till they burst. (175-8)

That is powerfully said. But when it comes to the feeling that in spite of this appearance of waste, the providential plan is operative, Pope only takes us as far as the antithesis between the son and Mammon, and that leaves too much for us to do. One need not insist on the point. The satirical "characters" of Cotta and his Son, and the lines in praise of Bathurst and

¹. An alternative account of the function of these lines as a key to the poem is given in Thomas R. Edwards, "'Reconcil'd Extremes': Pope's Epistle to Bathurst", EIC, XI (1961), 290-308.
the Man of Ross, enforce the same conclusion. The poet, and the poem, actually make a different kind of judgement to the one overtly recommended. If Bathurst and the Man of Ross were part of some self-correcting system there would be no occasion to praise them. They are praised because the moral judgements they make in the use of their money are, in Pope's view, the foundations of the social order in so far as it has attained, or may attain, the condition of civilisation.

Again, then, we have a gap between the evidence and the conclusions. But we cannot say anything more on that point without considering the poem's conclusion, in the tale of Sir Balaam. It is introduced as follows:

Say, for such worth are other worlds prepar'd?
Or are they both, in this their own reward?
A knotty point, to which we now proceed.
But you are tir'd—I'll tell a tale. "Agreed". (335-338)

We have already mentioned these lines, and the way in which they pertain to the problem of evidence and conclusion. They appear casual, but may profitably be read as otherwise. The first couplet puts a new kind of question, not seriously, that perhaps parodies the kind of abstract issue the poet himself first raised. Theologians and economists may tire Bathurst and the reader with their respective kinds of knotty point. On the other hand, the new question is in fact strictly speaking moral, as the poet's point of view has been, in opposition to that of the economists. It seems possible that a new kind of tone is also being signalled. The tale of Sir Balaam stands out against the rest of the poem in that it is not indignant, not disapproving.

At any rate, the poet is indisputably indicating the abandonment of knotty points, the beginning of a new style, almost a new genre. The transition by way of Bathurst's tiredness is neat, because the off-hand cynicism of the peer at the beginning of the poem makes it credible that he should be
and seem tired. He might be tired of knotty points, and also of the poet’s "rage", the saeva indignatio of his vision of his country's corruption. So he is offered something different from either. And it is explicitly the poet who makes the offer. Pope draws attention to himself at the point where the problem of the nature of his poem comes to a head, and he offers, as its conclusion in the full sense of the word, a kind of poetry new in the poem, and yet as poetry perhaps historically and generically older and more essentially poetic than what has preceded it. A "tale" that turns out to allude to the Book of Job replaces an epistolary argument whose antecedents go back no further than Horace.

The point may be pushed too far. But it is important. The tale of Sir Balaam has been universally praised. But we need to be precise in defining exactly how it is a satisfactory conclusion to a poem that seems to differ from it in style and genre. The first step in the argument that it is a satisfactory conclusion is to suggest that the difference is an intended contrast. And we may go on to point out that the new manner goes along with a gathering together of themes and implications from the body of the poem. The implicit theme of the poem to this point, the state of England, is here treated directly and comprehensively. Balaam moves, in his social ascent, along the same route as that taken literally by the procession that provides the "action" of the Dunciad, from the city through the aristocracy to the court. The new tone of the passage, where a swiftean mock jocularity replaces Pope's own saeva indignatio, gives the speaker the appearance of confidence and authority. Variety of tone in Pope's epistolary verse suggests that a theme has been understood in the intellectual equivalent of a third dimension. And the particular new tone here, with its blend of lightness and savage precision, is especially effective in this way.

The speaker seems to be playing with his theme. The mock-heroic allusion to the book of Job has the chilling, and thematically conclusive, implication that in this case, God is entirely absent, not merely holding his hand, as in the original. The hand of providence is not apparent in the case of Sir Balaam: the question of what makes Balaam keep or dispose is best not put, because if it is, the only possible answer is that it is Satan. It would be inappropriate to suggest that Pope falls into the Manichaean heresy. The tone of the passage is too light to permit implications of that order. On the other hand, one cannot say that the tone is too light for Satan to carry any real menace. In the early part of the tale his wings and horns are glued on, and he is no more than a metaphor for the attractions of money. But in the last six lines he acquires more of his native stature, as the menace always a hidden chord in the tone becomes dominant, and Balaam's fate is shown to be grave:

The House impeach him; Coningsby harangues;
The Court forsake him, and Sir Balaam hangs:
Wife, son, and daughter, Satan, are thy own,
His wealth, yet dearer, forfeit to the Crown:
The Devil and the King divide the prize,
And sad Sir Balaam curses God and dies. (397-402)

Again, the key point is Pope's mastery of tone. Most of the tale makes the reader smile, so that these last couplets have some of their force as a reproach.

One thing that does not change at the end is the narrative manner: it remains brisk and concise. The change is in the nature of the events narrated. The disasters are now real. This note has already been touched, with the deaths of wife and son (lines 384 and 390), but at the end misfortunes come so thick and fast and real and unamusing that the narrative manner seems to suggest how time and the devil have Balaam fast. And the King too is in at the end, as the ultimately responsible centre and
indicative symbol of the corrupt society to which Balaam has succumbed. The last line reminds us of the absence of God in the tale, and thus opens out the meaning of the epic parallel.

There are, then, three voices in the poem, the argumentative, the satiric-moral, and the voice of the tale of Sir Balaam, which we may call narrative-ironic. We have encountered the first two before, and suggested that they do not fit perfectly together. This remains the case in the Epistle to Bathurst, but there is some evidence that Pope is aware of it, and that he is attempting to bring them together. And the poem once again rests not on its speaker's rigour of argument, but on his performance as a poet.

THE EPISTLE TO A LADY

We conclude this chapter by looking at the second of the Moral Essays, the Epistle to a Lady. In this poem the issue of the authority of the satirist is again raised as it was in the Epistle to Cobham, in epistemological terms. But from our point of view the poem has new dimensions of complexity and interest. Pope is now openly concerned with the aesthetic validity of what he writes. He is now explicitly writing a poem, rather than simply conducting an argument. Thus the relationship between aesthetic and philosophical "validity", a difficult problem of which the author did not seem to be aware in the other Epistles, is itself a part of the poem. Nor is this the only way in which the Epistle to a Lady raises new issues. There is a new implicit problem: that of the motives, the personal feelings, of the satirist. This will come into prominence when we discuss poems more extensively satirical than this. Augustan critics of satire regarded it as an important question.1 Pope is, we will argue, within his poems one of

the most penetrating of such critics and this is in part because he reveals his motives as well as excusing them. Here we have a poem addressed to a woman Pope esteems, and about other women he does not esteem. The critic finds himself obliged to assess the maturity and penetration of Pope's understanding of and feelings about women. The common opinion on the poem is that of F.W. Bateson in the Twickenham Edition.¹ He finds it "the... most attractive of the four poems", "in Pope's most accomplished manner", "gayer... more honest and more accurate" than To Bathurst. But there have been dissenting voices. Thomas R. Edwards regards the structurally important conclusion, in which Pope turns a description of the ideal woman into a compliment to the woman he is addressing in his poem, and who was his intimate friend, as a lapse into sentimentality.² We will argue that the feelings of the poem's speaker are confused, and that his shaping and controlling poetic imagination enables him to harmonise them.

Like the other Moral Essays we have considered, this poem opens with the assertion that the truth about the matter in hand is not easily attained. Pope is concerned with the characters of women:

Nothing so true as what you once let fall,
"Most Women have no Characters at all",
Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
And best distinguished by black, brown, or fair. (1-4)

The strategy of attributing this opinion to a woman will be considered later.

On the opinion itself, we first notice the way in which Pope's metaphor in the second couplet turns an abstraction, female nature, into a material object, "Matter" itself. And in the second paragraph the problem is presented as one of portraying this object, with the introduction of a metaphor from painting that is to recur throughout the poem, and which will be central to

² Thomas R.Edwards Jr., This Dark Estate: A Reading of Pope (Perspectives in Criticism, No. 11.) Berkeley and Los Angeles 1963, 76: "... the withdrawal into personal relations at the end of To a Lady seems tenuously private."
our discussion:

How many Pictures of one Nymph we view,
All how unlike each other, all how true! (5-6)

Pope's use of imagery taken from the "sister art" of painting has received no little critical attention. But with only one exception, writers on this topic have not sufficiently recognised the fact that the implied comparison between poetry and painting is always complex, and often derogatory to painting. Although Pope enjoyed paintings and himself painted, he seems very aware that paintings can flatter. And one might associate this awareness with his attitude to his own portraits. W.K. Wimsatt speaks of "the immense fame of Alexander Pope, and the importance to him of having an adequate image of himself made public, and his apparently persistent efforts towards that end."^3

However that may be, it is clear that in the couplet quoted the implication is that an accurate picture of this kind of object is hard to make, and that painters do not generally succeed, but that it may be done. The use of this particular compound metaphor to describe a verbal account of the characters of women itself constitutes a claim that the poem will achieve a special kind of objectivity and truth.

The descriptive examples which follow (of the various pictures, unlike each other but true) primarily illustrate the assertion that in the art of painting it has been found difficult to arrive at the truth about the character of a woman. But there is also the suggestion that the sexuality of women is in some way at the heart of the problem:

Here Fannia, leering on her own good man,
And there, a naked Leda with a Swan.
Let then the Fair one beautifully cry,
In Magdelen's loose hair and lifted eye,
Or drest in smiles of sweet Cecilia shine,
With simp'ring Angels, Palms, and Harps divine. (9-14)

Strictly, Fannia and Leda are alternatives, equidistant from reality. However, in the context of the paragraph, Fannia appears as the reality that painters disguise in mythological or religious trappings. Fannia is out of Hogarth while the others are portraits in the classical style. Moreover, although the painting is supposedly being done by the painter, the implication that the women are disguising themselves is close to the surface. They are syntactically presented in a way that could indicate acting for the painter as well as acting in the painting. And anyway, the painter presumably shows his subjects as they want to appear, which is both his fault and theirs.

In the concluding paragraph the speaker introduces himself in the guise of a painter, and the implication that the problem with the characters of women is that women are lubricious and prone to disguise is confirmed:

Whether the Charmer sinner it, or saint it,
If Folly grows romantic, I must paint it. (15-16)

Pope's claim is that he is compelled to write about women by the pleasing extravagance of their folly. The verbalised noun coinage of "sinner it or saint it" implies that serious moral standards are not really applicable here. The inconsistencies in the characters of women to which Pope draws attention in a superfluous note to the first four lines can be politely allowed to be enthralling because there is no doubt at all that they are a mark of inferiority. Thus the concluding couplet does not take up the potentially complex implications of "leering", "simp'ring", "naked". But this reads as a deliberate abstention. Words like "Nymph" and "Charmer" are out of a language of compliment exaggerated almost to parody: and the flawless placing of the word "beautifully" is only one of the ways in which
Pope seems to be hinting that he could change the paintbrush for the scalpel. This combination of politeness and menace is a development of the tone we found in the Epistle to Miss Blount with the Works of Voiture. The final effect is that Pope seems polite, and that politeness is "placed" as only one of a range of possible attitudes. The range includes moral judgement, and a fierce mysogyny. But the politeness is real.

In the next paragraph the metaphor of painting moves from the themes to the techniques of that art:

Come then, the colours 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)

Syntactically this is an imperative addressed by the poet to himself, and as such, an unusual form, whose implications are not at all clear. There might be the suggestion that the reader is also commanded, and thus becomes a participant in the creative process. But that is not very likely. It seems rather to be a question of spotlighting the technical process itself, as something it is difficult and important to get right, but also impossible to define or describe. The latter point derives from the observation that Pope is parodying a set of instructions to a painter. Thus he may be suggesting that a poet has a special ability to portray the truth, and that in the end this gift is alogical, a je ne sais quoi.

The question is complicated when we look at the portraits which Pope paints using the materials and techniques described. The tone of the later description is wittily complimentary, with only a hint of the possibility of irony. But the first portrait is as follows:

Rufa, whose eye quick-glancing o'er the Park, Attracts each light gay meteor of a Spark, Agrees as ill with Rufa studying Locke, As Sappho's diamonds with her dirty smock,
Lines 17-20 (on the colours and the ground) seem in the light of this, savagely ironic as an account of the poet's technique. But in so far as they suggest that the portrayal of female character is difficult, they properly introduce the subsequent lines. For the "characters" of Rufa and Sappho are complex.

The clear contrariety in Rufa's character is that she both studies Locke and has an eye for men in the park. This antithesis bears examination. Her sexuality is devalued to flirtation in the opening couplet quoted above, (II.21-22) so that the antithesis seems to turn on ideas of substance, solidity, profundity, and also of dependance or independance in relation to fashionable, and thus "light", "quick", social mores. The unanswered question is as to what kind of sexuality in her would be congruent with the study of Locke. The name Rufa means Red-head, and the Rufa in Sober Advice is described as "at either end a Common-Shoar". (I.29) The implication is of a strongly sexed woman. It is thus possible that it is because she wastes herself on sparks in the park that her studies are felt to be incongruous. The studies themselves, it must be noted, are not devalued: Pope does not imply in the way he describes them that they are anything but genuine. We have simply "...Rufa studying Locke", and it would be cheapening the antithesis to argue that her studies must be pretentious because of her sexuality. Pope at his best is not merely a satirist: he has a dramatist's sense of the mystery of human personality. And a Rufa who really does study Locke is a much more interesting character.

We encounter further complexities because the contrariety in Rufa is (syntactically) related to that in Sappho. The Twickenham editor tells us that "In the early editions...Sappho is Flavia, perhaps the same Flavia
as in 1.87. The change to Sappho was from an ideal to a real character. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu... was apparently the Sappho of Pope's lines to Erinna (1722) and of Peterborough's 'I said to my heart' (1723?).

The change complicates matters. If one had Flavia for Sappho, the antithesis would have been between the philosophical, even if often lubricious, Rufa, and the dirty, even if sometimes adorned and scented, Flavia. But as it is, we know Lady Mary was also given to the study of Locke, or to analogous activities: and at this point the implications seem to get out of control.

We are required to associate Sappho's greasy reality, and her evening fragrance, and her unmentioned intellectual pursuits, and Rufa's studies of Locke, and her flirtations in the park. This is too much to handle, and the effect is that Rufa's studies, and Sappho's fragrance, in themselves not linguistically devalued, seem assaulted by a ferocious suppressed disgust.

It is tempting to suggest that Pope has been unbalanced by his complex hostility to Lady Mary. But that conclusion can only be tenable with the strong proviso that the most fiercely disgusted lines in the passage, the last two (11.27-8), were presumably originally intended for Flavia, the ideal character.

Whether or not the above analysis be accepted in detail, it seems clear that Pope has not dipped in any Rainbow in his portraits of Rufa and Sappho. In retrospect, it seems possible that "before it fall" in line 19 has moral as well as meteorological reference. There is a blend of fascination and disgust in the passage, an intensity of feeling, for which Pope either just finds, or just fails to find, a verbal correlative: and the uncertainty gives us a strong sense of his presence as the painter of the picture. We will continue to consider in detail the relationship between the speaker's explicit remarks about the problems of portraiture, and the

2. It is suggested that for the reader familiar with Pope's work, the word "Sappho" functions as an image, one of whose primary and inevitable meanings is "intellectual woman". Cf. Benjamin Boyce, The Character-Sketches in Pope's Poems, Durham N.C. 1962, 15.
nature of his portraits. And the metaphor from painting will continue
to be central.

The portrait of Calypso is introduced with some more ironically
chivalrous compliment. The floral imagery is as conventionally appropriate
to women as it is inappropriate as an introduction to the ensuing portraits:

Ladies, like variegated Tulips, show,
'Tis to their Changes half their charms we owe;
Their happy Spots the nice admirer take,
Fine by defect, and delicately weak. (41-4)

Calypso's "happy Spots" are her lack of virtue, of true wit or wisdom, her strange-
ness and her near approach to ugliness and madness. It seems hardly open
to doubt that Pope is parodying the talk of ladies and their nice admirers.
In the ensuing portrait we find "each heart alarm'd", "Aw'd", "charm'd",
"bewitch'd", "graces", "flights", and other similar words. But just as the
metaphor of painting is at once parodied, and applicable, so this language
is ironic in no simple way. Calypso does, through the passage, in a sense,
awe, charm, bewitch. The concluding couplet goes:

Yet ne'er so sure our passion to create,
As when she touch'd the brink of all we hate. (51-2)

The "we" of this couplet is not ironic. It means "all reasonable men",
and the content of "reasonable" has been and continues to be defined by
the poem, defined by negation as a lack of those things in women that are
arational as well as irrational. One's final impression is that Pope has
been struck by, and has recreated, a genuine paradox, mystery, humanity,
in this woman. And we say "Pope has been struck by..." in spite of the risk
of the phrase's being condemned as biographically fallacious. The point is
not whether Pope had any woman in mind. (The Twickenham editor suggests
that he did, but at one remove: the character in the poem "is not original,
but represents a rewriting of the opening lines of Pope's 'Sylvia, a
Fragment'...".)¹ It is rather that he, Pope, is present in the poem as a

¹ Poems, III-ii. 52, note to 11.45-52.
man who has known, and wondered about, and loved and hated, women. This becomes explicit when he concludes the poem by expressing his feelings for the woman to whom it is addressed. But it is the case throughout that we feel his involvement to be more complex than the metaphor from painting allows.

It is also more complex than the concluding portrait of the ideal woman, and panegyric on Martha allows. For neither of these contains much hint of sexual energy. The ideal woman's role is to "raise the thought and touch the heart"; she shines "serene in Virgin modesty", she is devoid of jealousy and she manages her husband so as to preserve domestic peace. The portrait begins "Ah Friend!", and one's final impression of it is that as well as being a charming compliment to Martha, it represents the kind of woman with whom Pope could have had an easy friendship, the kind of friendship he achieved, after some misunderstanding, with Martha herself. Thus without wishing to devalue it, or to deny its effectiveness as a conclusion to the poem, as a kind of port after stormy seas, one can say that it is less interesting and less powerful than portraits which deal with women more sexually, or otherwise, energetic.

One such portrait is of "Sin in State", or"Philomede", in 11.69-86. Here again we have the antithesis between intellectual pursuits and sexuality of the Rufa "character", and again the antithesis turns out to require scrutiny. This woman is:

Chaste to her Husband, frank to all beside,
A teeming Mistress, but a barren Bride.
What then? let Blood and Body bear the fault,
Her Head's untouch'd, that noble Seat of Thought: (71-4)

This is interesting, and puzzling. It seems almost to make female sexuality

1. It was suggested by J.W. Croker that these lines were intended to describe two women. (The suggestion is recorded in The Works of Alexander Pope, ed. W. Elwin and W.J. Courthope, London 1871-1889, Vol. III. 101.) Croker's suggestion is based on the argument that 11.69-78 and 11.79-86 are incongruous. I would suggest that he is right, but that the incongruosity is caused by Pope's uneasiness in dealing with female sexuality. Had Pope intended to describe two women, he would surely have given them two names. The point is discussed in detail, and a similar conclusion reached, by Benjamin Boyce. (op.cit., 133-5)
essentially antisocial, something incompatible with the social institution of matrimony. It might be objected that Pope, on the contrary, firmly implies the possibility of marital desire and fertility. This is literally the case. But I would suggest that the verse does not strongly project such an "other case", because it does not make it seem unequivocally desirable that a woman should be "frank" and "teeming" to her husband. We saw that the ideal woman is not presented as sexually vital, and we recall that "...ev'ry Woman is at heart a Rake": it may be that "frank" in this context suggests "rank", and that to teem seems too much of a good thing. In the second couplet Philomede is made to claim that her "Blood" and "Body" are to blame. The conjunction of these two terms itself works against the claim, making the distinction she is using as the foundation of her excuse seem vaguely formulated. And her capacity for thought is further derogated. "Head", following the conjunction of "Blood" and "Body", is made to seem very much a material part, and "that noble Seat of Thought" is crudely ironic. Thus Philomede is set up for the poet's response to her fictive excuse:

Such this day's doctrine—in another fit
She sins with Poets thro' pure Love of Wit. (75-6)

Her claim to be able to enjoy poetry, and even to be able to think, are undermined by her sexuality. And the concluding comparison with Helluo, who plays the gourmet abroad but dines at home on pudding, further "places" her nature by means of the common association between sex and eating. There may be some sophistry in this conclusion (II. 79-86). At the beginning of the portrait, Philomede is presented as "contrary" in that she claims the power of independant thought, and at the same time sleeps around. But in the conclusion, she is said to do something different: to talk about subtle relationships while having crude ones. The former contrariety is, we have claimed, complex and interesting. The latter is mere hypocrisy. Again, I would suggest that the problem of judgement is acute. It seems almost in spite of himself that Pope does justice to such natures as Philomede's.
His understanding seems threatened by misogyny and sexual fear, but it never quite succumbs. We saw that Philoméde is allowed, almost, to speak, and that Pope seems to retort. "What then?..." is her excuse, and Pope retorts: "Such this day's doctrine...". The exchange is a summary indication of the extent to which Philoméde lives on the page.

Thus we have the ideal woman and Philoméde at opposite extremes when the focus is on Pope's attitude to female sexuality. It might be objected that the poem is not only about this topic. But in saying that from this point onwards we will be less narrowly concerned with the poem's structure and the portraits which are put together to make up that structure, we are not conceding much force to the objection. Sexuality is important, and has been looked at first because it is what Pope found most difficult. It can perhaps be suggested that Keats' idea of negative capability is applicable, or at least adaptable, to Pope's case. When it comes to women, he is prone to doubt and uncertainty, and there are many things for which he can reach in irritation: there is a tradition of male religious and philosophical denigration of women, there is disgust, there is wit, there is parody. He reaches for all of them, and also succeeds to a remarkable degree in telling the truth about his uncertainties and about his subject.  

The structure of the poem, as Pope expounds it in his preliminary "argument", has the first part as follows: "Of the characters of women... that these are yet more inconsistent and incomprehensible than those of men, of which instances are given". The passages so far discussed are part of this first section. One may take the end of it to come at line 150, the end of the portrait of Atossa. There follows a further paragraph of reflection on the technique and course of the poem, that may be taken to introduce its second half:

Pictures like these, dear Madam, to design,
Asks no firm hand, and no unerring line;
Some wandering touches, some reflected light;

Some flying stroke alone can hit 'em right:
For how should equal Colours do the knack?
Chameleons who can paint in white and black? (151-6)

It would be tempting, after the firm and coherent portrait of Atossa that has preceded these lines, to read them as ironic. It has by now become clear that there is a far from simple relationship between the speaker's accounts of what he is doing and what he is actually doing. But this passage differs from previous accounts of the writer's procedure in that it neither parodies the language of courtly compliment nor suggests that the art of painting produces superficiality and prettiness rather than the truth. We have suggested that part of Pope's attitude to women is a feeling that they are genuinely difficult to understand. He has said that:

Woman and Fool are two hard things to hit,
For true No-meaning puzzles more than Wit. (113-4)

As well as being wittily insulting,—combining, that is, wit and crude insolence,¹ so as to give vent to the latter—, Pope here gives no more than a hint of a metaphysical dimension to the problem. It may be that "true No-meaning" suggests the arational and not the irrational, suggests that a separate reality has been encountered.

And certainly, one could support that idea with the argument that when he writes at his best Pope's language is alogical in the sense that it is beyond logic, and more precisely, that with "contrarieties" expressed as verbal paradox, we have a sense that it (the language) is being stretched to accommodate the complexity of its subject. The "unerring line" of strictly logical language has been abandoned when it is necessary to write:

Wise Wretch! with Pleasures too refin'd to please,
With too much Spirit to be e'er at ease,
With too much Quickness ever to be taught,
With too much Thinking to have common Thought:
You purchase Pain with all that Joy can give,
And die of nothing but a Rage to live. (95-100)

¹. He is, after all, saying that women are fools.
We will see that the basis of the passage is Pope's understanding of how Atossa's powerful instincts and passions disqualify her for life in society instead of fitting her to it as they should. Pope's account of his method of portraying the characters of women is again in a complex relationship to his practice.

That account is followed by a paragraph in which the lady, Martha, is made to speak:

"Yet Cloe sure was form'd without a spot—"
Nature in her then err'd not, but forgot.
"With ev'ry pleasing, ev'ry prudent part,
"Say, what can Cloe want?"—she wants a Heart. (157-160)

The Twickenham editor tells us that "The character of Cloe was probably a last-minute addition...". We will see in discussing the Epistle to Arbuthnot that Pope can compose a structurally coherent poem like a collage, out of passages of different origins. This last minute addition is well placed. Strictly, Cloe is not perfect because she lacks a heart: but there is another possible reading, that makes perfection incompatible with the possession of a heart. This adds a new dimension to Pope's consideration of the difference of female nature, because some doubt is implied as to the value of that consistency, coherence, flawlessness, that has been a part of the male system of values by which women have been judged. And at the same time, the hostility to female sexuality we have detected in previous portraits is absent here. Cloe's lack of sexual responsiveness is part of the inhumanity that is the concomitant of her uniformity:

She, while her Lover pants upon her breast,
Can mark the figures on an Indian chest. (167-8)

The portrait is pleasing because it does project a convincing and attractive alternative case: we have a sense of the woman Cloe might have been. It concludes as follows:
Cloe is prudent—would you too be wise?
Then never break your heart when Cloe dies. (179-80)

Here wit is refined away to precision and economy, and we have a firm and grave assertion of the reasons why Cloe is to be at once condemned and pitied. Pope suggests that sexuality, and affection, and personal human relations, and the social bond, are hierarchically related. And Cloe has shut herself out.

The theme grows in importance as the poem moves to its conclusion.

But first we may recall lines from an earlier portrait:

Strange! by the Means defeated of the Ends,
By Spirit robb'd of Pow'r, by Warmth of Friends,
By Wealth of Follow'rs! without one distress
Sick of herself thro' very selfishness!
Atossa, curs'd with ev'ry granted pray'r,
Childless with all her Children, wants an Heir. (143-8)

Atossa's was the last portrait of the first part of the poem, preceding the passage beginning "Pictures like these, dear Madam, to design,". Its discussion has been deferred because thematically it relates more to later portraits. Atossa's tragedy is that she is deprived of the social constituents of full human identity. The social framework is presented in detail.

The whole network of social relationships defining her identity, with friends, followers, husband, lovers, superiors, inferiors, are presented: and we are shown that she has been gratified in none of them. The common theme is relationship. Atossa is impossible to get on with, whoever you are.

There is even a hint, in the line "Oblige her, and she'll hate you while you live ", that the poet himself has found her so. And Pope did in fact find the Duchess of Marlborough difficult to get on with. But it would be a mistake to see the portrait as a satirical attack. The word "tragedy" was not used loosely at the beginning of our discussion. Pope acknowledges the power of the woman, and there is a note of pity and regret

1. Poems, III-ii. 60, 1.138 and 1.138 n.
throughout the portrait. The final failure of relationship is the lack of an heir. For an age much preoccupied with inheritance, the lack of an heir to a great fortune is an image of social waste. The last line sets the social context in a greater: the human aberration is ultimately, by a seeming accident ("...wanders") resolved: and that too can not inexactely be called tragic.

This insight into the social factors that give substance to individual human identity is one of the main achievements of the Epistle to a Lady. Through it, Pope transcends his initial male inanity, his tendency to sound as if he is saying that women are inconsistent, God Bless 'em, and achieves an insight into why they are not fully realised human beings. The poem is at its most powerful in the passage beginning "Yet mark the fate of a whole Sex of Queens!" (1.219). This is itself followed by the speaker's concluding address to Martha, in which he makes his explicit personal entry into the poem and celebrates his own relationship with a woman. But first the metaphor of painting makes a final, and still difficult, appearance:

One certain Portrait may (I grant) be seen,
WhidiHeav'n has varnish'd out, and made a Queen:
The same for ever! and described by all
With Truth and Goodness, as with Crown and Ball:
Poets heap Virtues, Painters Gems at will,
And show their zeal, and hide their want of skill. (181-6)

Primarily, Pope is firing a shot at Queen Caroline here, but he also is concerned to define the nature of his own art. Poems to the Queen by the kinds of poets who "heap Virtues" define by negation his own intentions in a fairly simple way. He is commonly demonstrative about not being deterred from deserved criticism by the social status of his subject. But more importantly, certain implications of the comparison between poetry and painting are clarified, and its earlier occurrences set in a new light. We noticed that Pope's portraits are, and are not, illustrations of his
assertion that the portrayal of women is a matter of producing some fine subtlety through "happy strokes". Here flattery by poets is presented as the attribution of moral qualities with the ease with which painters can and do "portray" by bestowing symbolic indications of social status: "Truth and Goodness, as...Crown and Ball". An effect of this, if not an intention, is that the art of painting itself seems to be devalued. The intended effect is to discriminate the kind of truth a good poet tells, and to insist that it includes the moral truth.

Admittedly, the next line (after I.186 quoted above) asserts that there is a kind of painting not subject to the limitations of the version of the art hitherto criticised, and thus capable of telling the same kind of truth as poetry:

'Tis well— but, Artists! who can paint or write,
To draw the Naked is your true delight. (187-8)

But there is some confusion beginning here. The nakedness of truth is a known and retrospectively appropriate image. The nakedness of the Queen, unlikely to be pleasing, is clothed in gems and virtues by those who cannot paint, and those who cannot write. In the next couplet clothing is associated with social status, and thus with a variety of untruth that Pope has already rejected:

That Robe of Quality so struts and swells,
None see what Parts of Nature it conceals. (189-190).

Here again the comment is generally appropriate, but it cannot be applied too closely to painting. There is surely a difference between clothing and "Crown and Ball" that makes things difficult. There is no iconographic tradition in painting that associates nakedness with virtue or clothing with vice: for obvious reasons, that image was confined to language. Painters certainly do truly delight to draw the naked, but there is, contrary to Pope's assertion, a sense in which they can quite legitimately delight
to draw the clothed. "Ut Pictura Poesis" was a tag uncritically used in the eighteenth century,\(^1\) and Pope's comparisons get him into some metaphorical confusion. Still, it remains the case that he achieves an effective definition of what he as a writer is trying to do. From this angle, the deficiencies in the analogy indicate the virtues, as he sees them, of his own art, and the failings it must avoid. For the satirist clothing and nakedness have important metaphorical implications, and the confusion between the metaphorical and the literal that arises in the analogy makes us aware of them, and in particular of the social pressures that impede the satirist who would tell the "naked" truth.

We move on to discuss the conclusion of the poem. The passage on the whole Sex of Queens and the lines in praise of the ideal woman are complementary not only as thematic antitheses, but also as to the poet's presence in them. The first of them follows three paragraphs of mildly exceptionable generalisations on the natures of men and women. Men and women sometimes reveal themselves in public, women only in private life. Men have various ruling passions, women only two, the love of pleasure and the love of power. The first of these is natural, and the second arises to protect women's right to indulge the first against "man's oppression". Pope is approaching an explicit account of the social insight that underlies his portraits. The sex of Queens, like Calypso, Atossa, Cloe, are set in their human context. Pope writes:

\[
\text{Beauties, like Tyrants, old and friendless grown,}\\n\text{Yet hate Repose, and dread to be alone. (227-8)}
\]

The tyrant pursues power at the expense of other ways of relating to other people, and these women are driven to do the same. The tyrant's lack of friends is associated with his lack of a proper place in the socio-political order. The comparison of beauties and tyrants is then more than a revival of the Petrarchan association. Both are set in a natural order where

\(^1\) Lessing's *Laocoon*, published in 1766, was the first, and remains the definitive, account of the deficiencies of the idea.
the misuse of power in any sphere brings about a range of consequences. The sexuality of these women is a mode of power, and it is seen as something they must pay the consequences of misusing. As we saw in the case of Atossa and of Philomede, instincts turn to the destruction of the self if they cannot find social expression and gratification:

At last, to follies Youth could scarce defend,
It grows their Age's prudence to pretend;
Asham'd to own they gave delight before,
Reduc'd to feign it, when they give no more. (235-8)

Again, Pope impressively does project the possible other cases: the implication is that beautiful women can give delight, and that they should give it. The Circularity of motion given in the couplet:

Still round and round the Ghosts of Beauty glide,
And haunt the places where their Honour dy'd (241-2)

perhaps suggests a distortion, a parody, of the dance: an image of the order of the heavens is degraded to the social "round". And the fact that they "haunt the places where their Honour died", as ghosts, gives finality to the notion that they have no place in the human world: not having lived, they cannot properly die. Pope's last two couplets are impressively summary:

See how the World its Veterans rewards!
A Youth of frolicks, an old Age of Cards,
Fair to no purpose, artful to no end,
Young without Lovers, old without a Friend,
A Fop their Passion, but their Prize a Sot,
Alive, ridiculous, and dead, forgot! (243-248)

The words "purpose" and "end" have been given meaning by the body of the poem. The purpose and the end are that human fulfilment in social relationship which the poem has defined by negation. But Pope is not simply moralising. The line about Lover and Friend confirms a note of sympathy that informs Pope's verse to an unusual extent in this poem. And it is the language itself that is the final standard and instrument of judgement.
The very lack of antithesis between "Fop" and "Sot" in moral value, and in terms of sound, both points up the women's lack of discrimination and gives a verbal facsimile of the operation of the moral law—which is also a natural law—in their fate. And the final line comes back, as Pope so often does, to reputation, in terms of which these women have lived, entirely, and in terms of which they have entirely failed.

By contrast, what is emphasised in the concluding panegyric of the ideal woman is what may be called her social creativity. As sister, daughter, wife, and woman, she remains both "mistress of herself" and in harmony with others. Pope still asserts that "Woman's at best a Contradiction still", and that:

Heav'n, when it strives to polish all it can
Its last best work, but forms a softer Man. (271-2)

But he contrives to turn all this into a compliment. And the most interesting difference is that verbal contradiction is still present, and still suggests a je ne sais quoi in human personality, beyond reason; but it no longer suggests any moral disharmony:

Reserve with Frankness, Art with Truth ally'd,
Courage with Softness, Modesty with Pride,
Fix'd Principles, with Fancy ever new;
Shakes all together, and produces—You. (277-80)

One may wish that Pope had found it in himself to suggest the possibility of a rather more forceful ideal in womanhood, and this for aesthetic as well as moral and political reasons. Women, he has said, are best revealed in private life. Accepting this, we may think that there might be room for the expression somewhere of such powerful instincts and talents as Atossa's. Certainly, he speaks of women as "by man's oppression curst", but it remains unclear whether he thinks it impossible, or against nature, for a woman to have a strong personality, let alone a high degree of sexuality, without moral and social irregularity.

We may conclude discussion of this poem on the topic with which
we began on the Epistle to Cobham. Pope's presence in the poem is also
determined by the strategies with which he secures agreement for his
opinions and leads the reader to accept his portraits as valid. The
Epistle to a Lady, like the previous poem discussed, begins by allusion to
a fictive earlier conversation with the person addressed. And this person,
initially because she is a woman, whose condemnation of her sex will lack
at least one kind of bias, and later because she turns out to lack the
defects the poem condemns in a fairly precise sense, is a proper ally.
The second of those reasons may be expanded on a little. The fact that the
poem is from Pope to a woman, Martha Blount, is not an incidental aspect
of its structure. It is to a greater or lesser degree true of all the
Epistles that the nature and status of the person addressed is of thematic
importance. Pope does not, as we will see, seem to be talking to Martha
all the time, but she is strongly present at the beginning, middle, and
end of the poem, and the fact that there is a relationship between them
portrayed in it is a part, even a foundation, of its rhetoric. He rests
what he has to say about women on what he feels for a woman.

When Martha is not addressed, the reader is: someone is,
almost all the time. The range of strategies found in the Epistle to Cobham
are also present here. Formally, the person addressed, and effectively,
the reader, is questioned, harangued, invited to see, turn, look, cautioned
against heartbreak. The recruitment of the reader through the use of the
appropriate personal pronoun overlaps with these modes of address. In the
second paragraph there is the "we" that invites the reader to confirm
the truth of what he said out of his personal experience: "How many Pictures
of one Nymph we view". Also common is that "we" that identifies the reader
as a member of the male sex:

Yet ne'er so sure our passion to create,
As when she touch'd the brink of all we hate. (51-2)
This point is an important one, and we may confirm it with another example which strongly implies that a male reader is intended:

Cloe is prudent—would you too be wise?
Then never break your heart when Cloe dies. (179-80)

We have seen already that the norm against which women are discussed is essentially male: rationality, coherence, social harmony, are seen as male qualities. But we have also argued that at his best Pope acknowledges and pays tribute to the separate reality of women, and understands the consequences of their oppression.

Another important point already suggested by implication is that the poet is more prominent in the first person singular than in the other Moral Essays. Generally, this is as the "painter", the responsible artist reflecting, ironically for the most part, on what he is doing:

Whether the Charmer sinner it or saint it,
If Folly grows romantic, I must paint it. (15-16)

We have seen that the poem achieves an interesting investigation of what exactly he (Pope) does in it as a poet. And his first person presence is also necessary given the personal relationship between him and Martha, the importance of which we have considered above. It is thus appropriate that in the last line of the poem he should be present, not in the first person, but with another mode of individual utterance, the use of a suitable noun instead of the pronoun, as both man and poet:

The gen'rous God, who Wit and Gold refines,
And ripens Spirits as he ripens Mines,
Kept Dross for Duchesses, the world shall know it,
To you gave Sense, Good-humour, and a Poet. (289-292).
CHAPTER VII

IMITATIONS OF HORACE

In his Advertisement to The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated, Pope makes a number of points about the intentions and the strategies of all the Imitations. The "Occasion of publishing these Imitations" was "the clamour raised on some of my Epistles". Notice is served that the poems are perceived by their author as part of the extended campaign that his literary life has become. And this particular kind of poem has been chosen because it will help to win the war: "An answer from Horace was both more full, and of more dignity, than any I cou'd have made in my own person." This is nicely calculated, both in what it says and in what it leaves out. At the beginning of the Epilogue to the Satires the "impertinent Censurer" who, under the title of "Friend", takes one part in the debate which makes up the poem, is made to suggest another perspective on the Imitations. Rather than Horace making Pope more dignified, the truth is that Pope makes Horace less so. Horace "was delicate, was nice", and had a "sly, polite, insinuating stile" that could please at Court. But Pope has been offending everyone, so that his "very Friends will soon be sore". We will see in dealing with the poem that the ironies are complex at the beginning of the Epilogue to the Satires: but we may at this point say that this version of things cannot be ignored simply because it is put in the mouth of one described as an "impertinent Censurer". On the question of dignity, we will need to bear in mind both points of view.

On the one hand, we may say that an Imitation of Horace is "full" and "of more dignity" because it enables Pope to define and assert what being a poet means in his own case, and to do so with unusual power and economy. By setting his own character as a poet against that of Horace, he claims to be a poet in a sense defined by a tradition of undisputed authority. We can allude again the Epilogue to the Satires. At the end
of the second "Dialogue", we find Pope objectifying himself as "the poet" in terms of a poet's traditional relationship with secular immortality: it is his own reward, and it is in his power to confer, if he is a real, or a good, poet. The immortality of the poet depends on his being right. Horace's works have survived, and he was, broadly speaking, right in the moral and satirical assertions he made in his poems. Thus in answering from Horace, in adapting his own situation to that of the Roman poet, Pope proves that he is right himself, to the degree that the imitation is successful.

Thus the imitating of Horace is a particularly "full" way of assuming one of Pope's basic masks, or personae: that of the poet in a great tradition. But we have seen in other poems that the assumption of such masks is not simple. And the point has often been made that Pope adapts Horace to suit his own time and his own case. The way in which he does so might unsympathetically but not inaccurately be described as the "Friend" of the Epilogue to the Satires describes it. His adaptations fall under two general headings. First of all, he politicises Horace, altering his originals to poems with a more particular and engaged application to a situation itself more polarised and uncertain. Secondly, he personalises them, altering their speaker to a figure whose nature and concerns derive from his own, and in consequence, altering the poems themselves so as to introduce or bring into prominence themes he has been developing through his own poetic life. In consequence, the Imitations are angrier, more abrasive, and more inimical than their originals.

There is, of course, nothing new about the suggestion that Pope politicises Horace. In his book Something like Horace, John M. Aden showed that Pope was attacking the Court party, the King and his Minister, with an ingenuity and conviction that had not previously been appreciated.

1. It is also worth making the point that Imitation was itself a recognised genre in English Poetry, so that Pope is also placing himself within a more local tradition. See Harold F. Brooks, "The 'Imitation' in English Poetry, Especially in Formal Satire, before the Age of Pope", RES, XXV(1949), 124-140.
The analysis that follows is an extension, rather than a refutation, of Aden's. We may conveniently begin with the antithesis between court and country that Pope uses extensively throughout the *Imitations*. His version of this is shaped not only by its appearance in Horace, but also by its history in the tradition which links the two poets, and by his own development of it in earlier poems. But in the present connection, there is one further context that must be particularly emphasised.

It is a historical commonplace that of the reasons why the opposition to Walpole for so long failed to dislodge him was that it consistently failed to act in concert. Bolingbroke's experience and his brilliance made him a preeminent figure, but there were also such Whig Magnates as Carteret, Chesterfield, and Pulteney, and among the Tories Shippen, an avowed Jacobite, and Wyndham, to contend with. The disadvantages of such disunity were clear to all concerned. Thus in his polemical writings Bolingbroke tried to persuade his supposed allies, and the English people, that the idea of party, of Whig and Tory, which seemed to divide them, was to be deplored. Parties had had some justification before the revolution of 1688, but now that the revolution had accomplished its aims, there was no further occasion for them, and all honest men should unite together against the corrupt ministry of Walpole. The only legitimate parties were those of Court and Country. But in his analysis these were neither factions, nor special interest groups, nor even groups differing in political philosophy. They were large, natural, and permanent interest groups defined in the terms used by eighteenth-century political philosophers to analyse the English Constitution. It was universally agreed that the excellence of the latter lay in the fact it was mixed and balanced in reconciling the interests of King, Aristocracy, and People. Bolingbroke's

Court and Country party were simply King and People in that division. He held that Walpole's system of government by corruption, by extension of and scrupulous attention to the Civil List, had upset the balance by creating a Court party in the discreditable sense of the world, so that a Country party of those loyal to the Constitution was necessary to redress it.¹

Historically, all this is of course of indirect relevance. The actual opposition was divided in political philosophy and in interest. But the connection with Pope's view of the political situation in the Imitations of Horace is clear. Pope takes care not to define himself as a member of any party, and he fires the occasional warning shot at members of the opposition for failing to live up to his high ideal of the role of opposition.² But his antithesis between Court and Country coalesces with that of Bolingbroke. Through his political periodical The Craftsman, Bolingbroke had effectively publicised his view of the state of the nation. What Pope is doing is to give Bolingbroke's version of the antithesis some of the resonance and status of his own. Or, to put the matter another way, he is doing for his view of the political situation what he does for his view of himself: enlisting on its behalf the resources of that realm of poetry in which he felt himself to be master.

So much for the general background to Pope's "political" modifications of Horace. The term needs careful definition. It is not simply that Pope makes the kind of alteration of which the Epistle to Augustus is the clearest example, where the poet's own time is anatomized through

¹ This paragraph is based on Isaac Kramnick, Bolingbroke and his Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole, Cambridge Massachusetts 1968, 137-204, and on Archibald S. Foord, His Majesty's Opposition, 1714-1830, Oxford 1964, Ch. IV. passim.
² These points are made by Hugo M. Reiclad in "The Independence of Pope as a Political Satirist", JEGP, LIV(1955),309-317. But Reiclad goes too far in dissociating Pope's attitudes and those of the Opposition, because he overlooks the fact that the Opposition was itself divided.
a special kind of mock-heroic, or the kind we find in the "Nil admirari" adaptation, addressed to Murray, where a deft and complimentary political turn is given to a poem originally philosophical in application. The point is that neither Pope nor indeed Bolingbroke would have accepted any definition of the notion of politics that restricted it to the opposing or supporting a particular group or a particular man. For Walpole, politics meant the acquisition and the use of power. He did not lack political principles: he favoured peace, prosperity, administrative efficiency. And he succeeded in giving them to England for twenty years. But he was also passionately and openly interested in what one might call the war-game of politics. Bolingbroke certainly also wanted power, but was less prone to admit it, and his opposition to Walpole was conducted as much through criticism in philosophical terms as through the attempt to build a power base. This was partly necessary. After his recall from banishment he could no longer sit in the House of Lords. Nor did he have the temperament to manage people as Walpole did. But although something in Bolingbroke provokes it, one cannot in the end deny him a genuine interest in Philosophy. For Pope, there was of course no question of the actual pursuit of power. He served as a poet, as the "laureate of opposition", and even at that he was reluctant to be publicly identified with the opposition. Thus in one sense his position is one stage further away from Walpole's than Bolingbroke's is. He opposed the King's Minister because he saw Walpole as presiding over the collapse of the traditional, hierarchical order of society he favoured. But there are complicating factors in his case too. We have seen how friendship was of abiding and profound importance to him. He was drawn, reluctantly, into politics by his friends, and we will see that his political position is shaped by his feelings for

2. Ibid., 311-312.
them, and for the group in which he saw himself as united with them.
And of course most important of all to him was his role as a poet. His
sense of the dignity of that role, that office, also shapes his politics.

It will be apparent that Pope "politicises" Horace in no simple
sense. It should also be clear, on the basis of what was said above about
friendship and poetry, that our second category of adaptation, that of
personalisation, overlaps with the political. Pope's mode of involvement
in politics was personal. Under this heading we are concerned with the
alteration of references to Horace so as to make them fit Pope, and with
the introduction of Pope at points where Horace is not present. A point
to be made at this stage is that if the poems can seem effectively personal
with what in the end is not a great deal of alteration, it is for two
reasons. First, Pope did resemble Horace, to some degree; and second,
the assumption of a mask is one of his characteristic aspects or guises.
The mode of presence of the speaker in a poem we have most often discussed
is one in which there is some sort of tension between a mask, an overt and
most often traditionally "given" version of his nature, and tones of voice
which do not seem part of this. And there may at the same time be a
dialogue, in which the poet's claims for himself are questioned by a
fictive interlocutor. In this context it is clear that there is no contra-
diction between saying that Pope's poems are personal and saying that they
are imitative.

One of the most striking examples of Pope's political alteration
of Horace comes in his *The Sixth Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated*
Here Pope turns a philosophical work into an invitation to a talented
young advocate to join the opposition. The neatness, and the persuasive
force, of Pope's adaptation are clear in the opening lines. Horace has the
following:
For this Pope has:

Admire we then what Earth's low entrails hold,
Arabian shores, or Indian seas infold?
All the mad trade of Fools and Slaves for Gold?
Or Popularity, or Stars and Strings?
The Mob's applauses, or the gifts of Kings?
Say with what eyes we ought at Courts to gaze,
And pay the Great our homage of Amaze? (11-17)

It was convenient for Pope that the East India Company was on the side of the Government. Walpole maintained its monopoly, and it held a large part of the National Debt, a symbol to Bolingbroke and the Tories of all that was wrong with the new order that was growing up under Walpole. Thus in a line added to his original, "All the mad trade of Fools and Slaves for Gold", he anticipates the answer to his question to a greater degree than Horace does. And in what follows, it becomes clear that Pope is not really asking Murray or the reader to marvel at nothing, "Nil admirari", in the same way as Horace is. Horace describes money and esteem neutrally, with "munera terrae" and "plausus et amici dona Quiritis", where Pope has "what Earth's low entrails hold", and "popularity" immediately glossed as

1. All Latin quotations are taken from the Twickenham Edition, except that "et" is substituted for the ampersand, and that roman and italic type faces are exchanged. This latter change is made to avoid the inconvenience of long italicised passages.
2. Cf. Isaac Kramnick, *op. cit.* 43: "In the eighteenth century many Englishmen were convinced that the national debt portended imminent doom for the nation."
something that sounds discreditable: "...or stars and strings/The Mob's applauses, or the gifts of Kings". Stars and strings are of course in the gift of the King, and this, together with the mention of Courts, makes it quite clear that Pope is talking about the rewards that would fall to Murray if he were to align himself with Walpole and the Court Party. It is not that "Nil admirari" comes to mean "do not be impressed by Walpole and easy advancement". Since the Latin and the English texts are printed on facing pages, "do not be impressed by Walpole..." seems to be a consequence of the Horatian position, a particular instance of it. But it remains true that Pope is not only more impassioned that Horace. He is also inevitably more impassioned than Horace recommends.

It is in this way that the poem comes to work as a dialogue with Horace, in which Pope's own distinct poetic character is defined. We can best illustrate the point by a detailed comparison: the passages chosen are lines 31-40 in Horace, and 63-82 in Pope. We will see that the difference in the number of lines is not merely a consequence of the brevity possible in the Latin language. One of the basic ways Pope adapts the passage is to make it more detailed.

The Latin poem goes as follows:

Virtutem verba putas, ut
Lucum ligna? cave ne portus occupet alter,
Ne Cybiratica, ne Bithyna negotia perdas.
Mille talenta rotundentur, totidem altera: porro
Tertia succedant, et quae pars quadret acervum.
Scilicet Uxorem cum dote, fidemque, et Amicos,
Et genus et formam regina Pecunia donat,
Ac bene nummatum decorat Suadela, Venusque.
Mancupiis locuples eget aeris Cappadocum rex:
ne fueris hic tu— .

(31-39)

We will take Pope's imitation in short passages. His version of "Virtutem verba putas ut/lucum ligna" is set in a contemporary and a political context, where Horace's lines are atemporal:
But art thou one, whom new opinions sway,
One, who believes as Tindal leads the way,
Who Virtue and a Church alike disowns,
Thinks that but words, and this but brick and stones? (63-66)

Pope is not accusing his opponents of atheism (a debating strategy still not quite moribund). Tindal, the Twickenham editor tells us, "wrote several pamphlets of Whig and Low Church colour"; and Bolingbroke's philosophy of opposition held to a conservative position on the relation of church and government. The basic point of disagreement was that the Whigs tended to follow Locke in arguing that because religious and civil societies are widely different in their nature and purposes, they should be kept independent of one another, and the civil magistrate should be concerned only with the protection of temporal natural rights. Now as a Catholic, Pope would perhaps not be expected to go all the way with his allies on this matter. The intimate association of Church and State as expressed in the laws of the State gave him and his co-religionists constant uneasiness. But in practice, the situation was more complicated. The context in which the Whigs argued for the separation of church and state is defined by Isaac Kramnick:

The Daily Gazeteer, one of Walpole's newspapers, had articulated this liberal idea in an attack on the opposition in 1735. It rejected the opposition demand for governmental action to end luxury and corruption by asserting that such action was outside the legitimate sphere of the magistrate's power.  

Moreover, although Walpole was not by disposition given to religious persecution, his biographer tells us that:

The only sect that Walpole was prepared to persecute, whether through ancient prejudice, intellectual conviction, or their lack of influence, was the Roman Catholic.

The context of controversy behind the passage is thus complicated, and Pope comes out with a passage that politicises Horace to a general, not over-precise attack on new-fangled ideas which, it is implied, the Whigs entertain.

At this point Pope expands on Horace considerably. The prose sense of the latter's poem can be paraphrased as follows: "If you think virtue a mere name, you will need to take pains to enrich yourself. Then you will be able to find a rich and well-born wife. Aim to be like Lucullus, who did not know how rich he was, rather than like the Cappadocian King, who had slaves but no ready money." Pope expands the section "then you will need to take pains to enrich yourself". Horace had merely hinted at the worry and hazard involved in mercantile dealings:

... cave ne portus occupet alter,
     Ne Cibyratica, ne Bithyna negotia perdas. (32-33)

Pope has the following:

Fly then, on all the wings of wild desire!
Admire what'er the maddest can admire.
Is Wealth thy passion? Hence! from Pole to Pole,
What winds can carry, or where waves can roll,
For Indian spices, for Peruvian gold,
Prevent the greedy, and out-bid the bold. (67-72)

The exact contemporary reference of these lines is intriguing. Wealth was not the passion of such literary merchants as Crusoe or Gulliver, who are alike in a sober desire for a good percentage return on their money. And the large mercantile companies in the eighteenth century were conducted by businessmen and not by impassioned adventurers on the Elizabethan pattern. What seems to have happened is that Pope has portrayed those who conducted the business of overseas trade on the pattern of those who invested in the South Sea Company before the bubble burst. There is ample contemporary evidence that investors were driven by a passion that had the moral dimension
of flying on all the wings of wild desire. Even Walpole would have lost heavily, according to Dr. Plumb, but for a slow post and a cautious banker.  

Pope continues:

Advance thy golden Mountain to the skies;  
On the broad base of fifty thousand rise,  
Add one round hundred, and (if that's not fair)  
Add fifty more, and bring it to a square.  

This translates Horace's:

Mille talenta rotendentur, totidem altera: porro  
Tertia succedunt et quae pars quadret acervum.  

The translation is close, except that Pope introduces a suggestion of fabulous South American riches in the first line, and, because of a difference in currency values together with some numerical inflation, increases the actual figure involved from one to fifty thousand. In the end the kind of profits he is talking about are more suggestive of being seduced by an imaginative prospectus to play the money market than of actually going away to India and trading. And anyway, the latter was impossible, given the monopolies of the trading companies.

Pope's adaptation of the final section of the Horatian passage is more straightforward. Horace has:

Scilicet Uxorem cum dote, fidemque, et amicos  
Et genus et formam regina Pecunia donat:  
Ac bene nummatum decorat Suadela, Venusque.  

For this Pope has:

For mark th' advantage: just so many score  
Will gain a Wife with half as many more,  
Procure her beauty, make that beauty chaste,  
And then such Friends — as cannot fail to last.  
A Man of wealth is dubb'd a Man of worth,  
Venus shall give him Form, and Anstis Birth.  
(Believe me, many a German Prince is worse,  
Who proud of Pedigree, is poor of Purse).  

Here Pope amplifies to locate what in Horace is a general truth about human

nature firmly in his own time. The allusion to the Prince of Wales in the last couplet is of no particular thematic relevance. Pope is not flattering the Prince, or even deploring his predicament, as the opposition would have wished him to do. Its effect is simply to give us the sense that Horace's poem applies to Pope's time. But one kind of alteration is required. In substituting Anstis, the Garter King of Arms, for Suadela, the goddess of persuasion, Pope finds a perfect equivalent in his own society for the Horatian image. In Roman society eloquence was a legitimate avenue to power and status. In England, a title should have been the mark of personal distinction. Commanding an audience, and a reputation for eloquence, through money, and being able to buy a title, both indicate a radical subversion of the moral order of society.

Further, the passage also must be set in the context of an earlier insertion of Pope's:

Shall One whom Nature, Learning, Birth, conspir'd
To form, not to admire, but be admir'd,
Sigh, while his Chloé, blind to Wit and Worth,
Weds the rich Dulness of some Son of earth? (40-43)

The Twickenham editor quotes contemporary conjectures to the effect that those lines refer to an "unsuccessful address made to a young lady by Murray, in his penniless youth". Since the seventeenth century one important aspect of the economic life of the gentry had been their need to negotiate in the marriage market with the rising mercantile class. Often there were no dowries for their daughters, and their sons had neither birth nor money to offer in exchange for such dowries. Murray, as the younger son of a good but not wealthy family, was in just such a position. Thus Pope's lines on money and marriage spoke to the particular individual who occasioned the poem. He finds an aspect of his general theme, the dis-

2. Poems, IV. 238, note to 1.42.
-ruption of a traditional social order by a new money economy, that touches Murray.

Pope's version of the sixth Epistle of the first Book of Horace thus gives us a clear example of the way in which he puts Horace to political service. But we have suggested that the political and the personal commonly overlap. And in considering the next poem to be dealt with, Pope's version of The First Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated, we will be concerned with clarifying the ways in which they do so.

One of the most accessible ways in which Pope at once politicises and personalises his Horatian originals lies in the different way in which, and the different extent to which, he uses names in satirical writing. We may cite again the version of the difference between Pope and Horace that is presented by the "Friend" of the Epilogue to the Satires:

Horace would say, Sir Billy Serv'd the Crown,
Blunt cou'd do Bus'ness, H—gins knew the Town,
In Sappho touch the Failings of the Sex,
In rev'rend Bishops note some small Neglects. (I, 14-17)

In one respect the Friend is definitely wrong. Horace would not have mentioned Sir Billy, Blunt, Higgins, or Sappho in the way Pope does.

Dryden's observation that Horace had written many of the Odes and Epodes against his private enemies, but had "purged himself of this choler, before he entered on those discourses, which are more properly called the Roman satire" has been echoed, in modified form, by modern critics of Horace. In his study of Horatian satire, Niall Rudd points out that although Horace does use the names of living people in his satires, and probably also uses pseudonyms, the number of names that fall into these categories is not larger than the number in the other categories: names of dead people, names of Lucilian characters, "significant names" and names of other "type"

And in the Epistles Horace according to Rudd rarely if at all uses the names of living people.  

By contrast, personal satire is part of the fabric of Pope's verse. We may look at the opening hundred lines of Pope's The First Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated, and at their Horatian original. Early in the poem Horace refers to the gladiator Veianius:

Herculis ad postem fixis, latet abditus agro,
Ne populum extrema, toties, exoret arena. (5-6)

There is nothing satirical about this. Horace is being ironical about himself, comparing himself with a gladiator, but Veianius would have no reason to smart. Pope on the other hand writes as follows:

See modest Gibber now has left the Stage:
Our Gen'ral's now, retir'd to their Estates,
Hang their old Trophies o'er the Garden gates,
In Life's cool evening satiate of applause,
Nor fond of bleeding, ev'n in BRUNSWICK's cause. (6-10)

The jibe at Gibber is personal, while the allusion to "Our Gen'rals" is political, touching with relative mildness on a common opposition complaint, the King's military ambition. And it follows that we deduce a different implied speaker. Pope is not the same kind of writer as Gibber, and he has no more use for military vanity than for any other kind, and he seems, on the evidence of his tone, to be ironically detached from but well acquainted with the public life of his time. The familiar strategy of definition by implied contrast emerges.

In the next few lines, Horace continues to be gently ironic about his own supposed senile incapacity for poetry:

Est mihi, purgatam crebro qui personet aurem;
"Solve senescentem mature sanus equum, ne
Pecchet ad extremum ridendus, et ilia ducat". (7-9)

2. Ibid., 157-8.
Pope on the other hand only turns the joke against himself to a limited degree, and ends by directing his satire outward again:

A Voice there is, that whispers in my ear,
('Tis Reason's voice, which sometimes one can hear)
"Friend Pope! be prudent, let your Muse take breath,
"And never gallop Pegasus to death;
"Lest stiff, and stately, void of fire, or force,
"You limp, like Blackmore, on a Lord Mayor's horse." (11-16)

Here the allusion is to a dead man, punished primarily for being a bad poet but also associated with—political error. Blackmore had been laureate of the City, and the City, in the persons of the wealthier merchants who supplied its Mayor, later—supported Walpole. Bolingbroke, and with him Pope, deplored the increasing power of such new men. Thus Pope is again defining by negation his own kind of poetry.

In the next paragraph Horace is defining his own kind of dedication to a life occupied with philosophy:

Ac ne forte roges, quo me duce, quo Lare tuter?
Nullius addictus jurare in verba Magistri,
Quo me cumque rapit tempestas, deferor Hospes,
Nunc agilis fio, et morsor civilibus undis,
Virtutis verae Custos rigidusque satelles.
Nunc in Aristippi furtim praecepta relabor
Et mihi res, non me rebus, submittere conor. (13-19)

In Pope's version the striking difference in the number of proper names used is associated with important thematic divergences:

But ask not, to what Doctors I apply?
Sworn to no Master, of no Sect am I:
As drives the storm, at any door I knock,
And house with Montagne now, or now with Lock.
Sometimes a Patriot, active in debate,
Mix with the World, and battle for the State,
Free as young Lyttleton, her cause pursue,
Still true to Virtue, and as warm as true:

Sometimes, with Aristippus, or St. Paul,
Indulge my Candor, and grow all to all;
Back to my native Moderation slide,
And win my way by yielding to the tyde. (23-34)

One immediately notices that Pope rather exaggerates his active participation in political life. "Young Lyttleton" was an active member of parliament, and would have been involved in politics to a degree far beyond Pope, even if one takes into account the variety and force of the political references in the poems. Why does Pope go so far as to imply that he took part in public debate on political affairs? Horace is citing the stoic doctrine that the virtuous man should take an active part in public life, and reflecting ironically on its application to himself, in line 17: "virtutis verae custos rigidusque satelles". The difference would then have to be the consequence of Pope either overlooking Horace's irony or being unwilling to apply it to himself. However that may be, the outcome is that Pope presents himself as more immediately involved in the life of his time. He does not detach himself from it by a self-directed irony.

Pope's adaptation of Horace's allusion to the Cyrenaic philosopher Aristippus is also interesting for his removal of a Horatian irony. Aristippus held, among other things, that only the present can be experienced, and that present sensation is thus the chief good. Horace presents himself as "slipping back stealthily" into these precepts: "nunc in Aristippi furtim praecepta relabor". Pope on the other hand activates another potential interpretation of the Cyrenaic philosophy in coupling Aristippus with St. Paul, whose "candor" (impartiality) was in the service of his commitment to converting people to the Christian faith. Although he picks up "relabor" in "slide", he ends by speaking of winning his way, which is not the same thing as Horace's "mihi res...submittere conor", "seek to bend the world to myself". Thus Horace presents the alternatives as a fierce participation in civic life, or the control of circumstances.
so as to keep the present agreeable, and his own position as an amused and uninvolved oscillation between the two. Pope on the other hand specially emphasises Horace's assertion of his independence: "Nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri", "Sworn to no Master, of no Sect am I". And he uses it as a prelude to presentation of himself as eclectic in his use of philosophical sources but constant in his principles. The key divergence is that Pope does not translate "furtim", ("stealthily"), and translates "et mihi res, non me rebus, submittere conor" by "And win my way by yielding to the tyde". And it is a political as well as a personal divergence. The introduction of a party political dimension, through the mention of Patriots and Lyttleton, provides a fixed point from which Pope is no more willing to swerve than he is from his claim to independence. In the end, he appears freely engaged on the side of the opposition, while Horace, amusingly inconsistent, sometimes participates in public life, but not on the side of any particular party.

The difference extends throughout the poem. An example from much later confirms the point. Horace writes:

Est animus tibi, sunt mores, est lingua, fidesque—
Si quadringentis sex septem milia desunt;
Plebs eris. (53-5)

Pope imitates this as follows:

BARNARD in spirit, sense, and truth abounds.
"Pray then what wants he?" fourscore thousand pounds,
A Pension, or such Harnass for a slave
As Bug now has, and Dorimant would have.
BARNARD, thou art a Cit, with all thy worth;
But wretched Bug, his Honour, and so forth. (85-90)

Horace, arguing that the wise man should not desire money, condemns his society for valuing men on their wealth: "400,000 sesterces...was the rating necessary to rank among the equites." ¹ Pope is also primarily concerned to condemn money-based values, but he gives what is in Horace a

philosophical and moral position a deft political turn. Sir John Barnard was the leader of the middling and lesser London Merchants, who tended to oppose the government because it maintained the monopolistic power of the large chartered companies. "Bug" was the Duke of Kent, one of the rich Whig Lords whose adherence Walpole had secured. In making his choice between them, complimenting one and spurning the other, Pope inserts himself as a man into the poem, and implies that he is similarly "in" his own time, admiring and despising according to his judgement of the men he encounters. In comparison, Horace judges his world from a distance, and presents himself with a controlled ironic reserve.

Thus the political and the personal overlap: and in moving on to concentrate on the ways in which Pope inserts himself into his adaptations, and alters Horace's self-portraits to suit himself, we will see that his doing so is always bound up with the political applications of the poems. We may begin with a passage we have already touched on in its political dimension. In his version of The First Epistle of the First Book, Pope writes:

Sometimes, with Aristippus, or St. Paul,
Indulge my Candor, and grow all to all;
Back to my native Moderation slide,
And win my way by yielding to the tyde (31-34)

for Horace's

Nunc in Aristippi furtim praecepta relabor
Et mihi res, non me rebus, submittere conor. (18-19)

We have pointed out that Horace is being ironic about himself ([futim]... relabor) while Pope is not, and that in the section as a whole, Pope is not saying that he inconsistently changes philosophies, but rather that he uses different means for a constant end. The change is paradigmatic in the way in which it has extensive thematic ramifications in spite of
being apparently small.

As small and as important an alteration comes at the end of Pope's mock-heroic version of the Epistle to Augustus (The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace Imitated). Both poets end with reference to themselves and their poems; we have seen such endings to be something of a specialty of Pope's. Horace begins his conclusion with the modest assertion that he knows he has not the ability to worthily praise Augustus' military achievement. Here the context of irony on which his version of the poem is founded allows Pope to take over this rhetorical commonplace to biting effect:

Oh! could I mount on the Maeonian wing,
Your Arms, your Actions, your Repose to sing! (394-5)

And of course one cannot be biting and modest at the same time: self-deprecation is a Horatian posture for which Pope finds only occasional use.

The irony becomes more complex as well as sharper in Pope's version of the last seven lines of Horace. The Latin is as follows:

Nil moror officium quod me gravat; ac neque facto
In peius volto proponi cereus usquam,
Nec prave factis decorari versibus, opto:
Ne rubeam pingui donatus munere; et una
Cum scriptore meo, caps a porrectus aperta,
Deferar in vicum vendentem thus et odores,
Et piper, et quicquid chartis amicitur ineptis. (264-270)

The equivalent passage in Pope is not all adopted from Horace:

The Zeal of Fools offends at any time,
But most of all, the Zeal of Fools in ryme.
Besides, a fate attends on all I write,
That when I aim at praise, they say I bite.
A vile Encomium doubly ridicules;
There's nothing blackens like the ink of fools;
If true, a woeful likeness, and if lyes,
"Praise undeserv'd is scandal in disguise:"
Well may he blush, who gives it, or receives:
And when I flatter, let my dirty leaves
(Like Journals, Odes, and such forgotten things
As Eusden, Philips, Settle, writ of Kings)
Cloath spice, line trunks, or flutt'ring in a row,
Befringe the rails of Bedlam and Sohoe. (406-419)

Both poets are talking about themselves as poets, as the authors of these particular poems, and about the poems; and the differences between them in these respects, and between the poems, all come into focus in the concluding passages. Broadly speaking, what Pope does is to use all of the elements of Horace's conclusion, but to give them a different turn, and to introduce several couplets with no equivalent in the original. The first of these is the second quoted above, a final and exquisite piece of irony that puts a seal on the irony sustained throughout the poem. Moving on, the "ink of fools" that blackens was in Horace "prave factis versibus", when applied to such as Augustus: he praises the emperor by devaluing himself. The "dirty leaves", "chartis ineptis", are again his own poem, with an indirection that saves him from debasing himself: literally, they are the works of some foolish poet praising him. The dirty leaves in Pope are his own if he had written the kind of poem he has been pretending to write, and those of the poets who do write that kind of poem. The point at which both poets come together is in a strong sense of the value of their poems, and the importance of poetry: and the precise expression of this sense is determined by the nature of the poems.

The difference between what the conclusions contain of their speakers can best be approached through the differences in tone. The word "dirty", which as we saw translates "ineptis", "useless", and the line in which it appears,"And when I flatter, let my dirty leaves...", are points at which the difference is clear. Horace has been sincerely praising Augustus, and then concludes by ironically dispraising himself. Pope has been ironically praising his Augustus, and concludes by speaking
sincerely of himself and his poetry. The line is almost shocking because it is the first in the poem that is entirely without irony. And in the context of Pope's work as a whole, the shock has extensive ramifications. The scorn and anger in the last few lines of the poem suggests the importance to him of the antithesis between flattery, with the kind of social and literary relationship of which it is the essence, and friendship, as expressed in the praise Pope gives his friends in the poems. We will look at this again in the Epistle to Arbuthnot. Pope is again defining his own kind of poetry, and himself as a poet, by negation.

And there is one final point to be made about the way in which the last lines of the poem are conclusive. Pope has been appearing to praise the King, whom he did not admire. There is a kind of inauthenticity about so sustained a piece of irony, about seeming for so long to say what one does not mean. Of course Pope is doing it because there is no other way to say what he has to say without legal penalty: and the effect of the irony is that it is said more forcefully. But the point still stands: there is a sense in which he lays himself open to the "vile Encomium" the "Friend" of the Epilogue to the Satires makes on Horace:

Horace would say, Sir Billy serv'd the Crown,
Blunt could do Bus'ness, H—gins knew the Town. (13-14)

It seems to me that in this context the outburst of the final lines is psychologically appropriate. After assuming so carefully constructed a mask for so long, Pope seems to need to speak out in his own voice. And the word "seems" is essential. We are talking not about Pope's hypothetical state of mind when he was writing, but about the psychological dynamics of the poem. The suggestion must be made tentatively, but it is supported by the fact that we find something similar in other poems. We find that in

1. For an account of the ferocity of the attack Pope is making, see Manuel Schoenhorn, "The Audacious Contemporaneity of Pope's Epistle to Augustus", SEL, VIII (1968), 431-483.
the Epistle to Arbuthnot, Pope puts off his masks with an appearance of relief. And a comparable point will be made of The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated, the dialogue with Fortescue. In that poem too Pope moves from restraint to angry outspokenness.

It is apparent, then, that Pope's alterations of the "personal" passages in Horace are not merely local. The nature of the speaker and structure of the poem are congruent. With The Second Satire of the Second Book of Horace Paraphrased, we have to consider insertion and not merely alteration: and to understand the effects of the insertion, we have to look at how Pope alters the poem as a whole.

We should begin with the fact that the poem is referred to in its Title as a paraphrase and not as an imitation. In his introduction to his version of Ovid's Epistles, Dryden distinguishes between three kinds of translation. There is "metaphrase, or turning an author word by word, or line by line", and "paraphrase, or translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense", and "imitation, where the translator... assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both, as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original, to run division on the groundwork, as he pleases". ¹ It would seem that Pope cannot have Dryden's distinction in mind. He does in a sense keep close to the sense, but he also "runs division off the groundwork, as he pleases" in altering the structure of the original poem. Dryden's distinctions are not applicable because Pope uses the presence, on the opposite page, of the Latin text, in a way that

¹ Dryden, Of Dramatic Poesy and other Critical Essays, I, 268.
involves his varying the closeness of his translation. By sometimes
following Horace closely, and sometimes moving away from him, he makes
his Latin original serve as evidence for his own conclusion.

The general alteration Pope makes in this poem is as follows.
Pope presents the first part of his poem as the direct speech of his
satiric prolocutor, Bethel, and speaks its conclusion in his own voice,
and in this conclusion, speaks about himself. Horace also presents the
first part of his poem as spoken by his satiric prolocutor, Ofellus. The
trouble is that Ofellus the peasant farmer, although "abnormis sapiens
crassaque Minerva" would have to display a surprising dexterity with
literary allusions, and familiarity with the culinary fashions of the capital,
if he were to be taken as the first person speaker of the first part of the
poem. There is some controversy on the point among classicists, but the
"technical uncertainty" spoken of by Niall Rudd in his book on Horace's
Satires is generally recognized.¹ The last twenty lines of the poem are
clearly spoken by Ofellus in his own voice, and he speaks about himself.
It is fair to say that Pope has eliminated any technical uncertainty
from his version of the poem. As Aden says, Bethel, Pope's Ofellus, was a
part-time and gentleman farmer, "one acquainted with the simple life more
from choice than from necessity or hard experience".² Thus he is properly
made to condemn the luxury of a court and whig aristocracy whose style of
life would have been within his ken.

Aden perceptively analyses the linguistic decorum of Pope's
Bethel, pointing out of his verbal style that

Pope applies to it, not only the artistically necessary
selection of language really spoken by men, but also that
variety which his prolocutor himself (the real Bethel)
oblighed him to apply. In Bethel's case, however, unlike
that of Ofellus, the variation is more nearly witty than

¹. The Satires of Horace, 172.
². Something like Horace.
eloquent. In place of literary flourish, Bethel's sermon is seasoned with epigram, satiric vignette and epithet, play on words and irony. Such embellishment is modest, however, and kept entirely consonant with the essentially forthright decorum of his discourse.¹

Why do Pope, and Horace, make use of a satiric prolocutor in making an attack on luxury? Their reasons are similar most of the way along the line. Horace supposedly felt that a sermon on temperance might have seemed inappropriate in his own voice. Rudd says of Ofellus that "clearly he is meant to have some sort of independent existence that will prevent the reader from ascribing all the sentiments in the poem to Horace".² Pope follows the phrase in which Horace at the beginning of the poem dissociates himself from his prolocutor's praise of frugal living: for "nec meus hic sermo est" we have "A Doctrine sage, but truly none of mine". But in fact the versions of himself we find in his poetry never include that touch of the gourmet that in Horace's case requires this particular rhetoric.

The point is rather than the virtues Pope praises are politically appropriate in Bethel. The latter is one of the lesser gentry, whose social status was in decline in comparison with that of the richer merchants and financiers supporting the Government, who naturally resented the use Walpole made of the civil list to buy support, and whose spokesman Bolingbroke tried to make himself.

Why then does Pope abandon Bethel and substitute himself at the end of the poem? Aden suggests that "Bethel's station in life [as a gentleman farmer, comfortably off] would not lend itself to such an account of his experience as Ofellus gives" and that "Pope, though not so much a farmer as either, could find circumstances in his life readily adaptable to the Ofellian posture".³ This is not wrong, but the emphasis needs to be

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¹ Aden, op.cit., 36.
² Rudd, op.cit., 171-2.
³ Aden, op.cit., 34.
adjusted to do justice to the way in which it is broadly appropriate that Pope should do what he so often does, and end the poem in his own voice and with his own presence.

It is worth comparing the relevant passages in some detail.

Ofellus' first person narration begins as follows:

Non ego, narrantem, temere edi luce profesta
Quidquam praeter olus, fumosae cum pede pernae.
At mihi seu longum post tempus venerat hospes,
Sive operum vacuo, &c.—bene erit, non piscibus urbe petitis
Sed pullo atque haedo; tum —pensilis uva secundas
Et nux ornabit mensas, cum duplice ficu. (97-102)

For this Pope has:

Content with little, I can piddle here
On Broccoli and mutton, round the year;
But ancient friends, (tho' poor, or out of play)
That touch my Bell, I cannot turn away.
'Tis true, no Turbots dignify my boards,
But gudgeons, flounders, what my Thames affords,
To Hounslow-heath I point, and Bansted-down,
Thence comes your mutton, and these chicks my own:
From yon old wallnut-tree a show'r shall fall;
And grapes, long-lingring on my only wall,
And figs, from standard and Espalier join:
The dev'l is in you if you cannot dine. (136-148)

The difference is that Ofellus cannot afford to eat more, on ordinary days, than his shank of smoked ham and greens, while Pope is "content" to "piddle here/On broccoli and mutton". To "piddle" with food, according to the Twickenham Edition and the OED, means to toy with it. Likewise, Ofellus celebrates the occasional visit of a neighbour when work is impossible, while Pope's door is always open to his friends, and they presumably come through it often. For Ofellus, temperance is a virtue of necessity, while Pope's is largely an assumed style of moderation proper in the literary country, in the garden as opposed to the city. And what Aden calls the "Ofellian posture" is in fact modified to fit Pope. The fact that, as a
writer on Horace points out, Ofellus could not have afforded fresh fish, "urbe petitis", and would have had to make do with salt fish,\(^1\) casts light on the difference. Pope chooses not to serve the fashionable and thus expensive Turbot, but has the freedom of what the "Thames affords".

Pope also turns his style of rural moderation into a political matter. As Aden points out, the parenthetical "tho' poor, or out of play" suggests that Pope's friends are out of political office.\(^2\) And he (Pope) goes on to augment his original with lines on what friendship means to him:

My lands are sold, my Father's house is gone;  
I'll hire another's, is not that my own,  
And yours my friends? thro' whose free-opening gate  
None comes too early, none departs too late;  
(For I, whose hold sage Homer's rule the best,  
Welcome the coming, speed the going guest.)  

(155-160)

The familiar antithesis between the Court and its circle of pensioned flatterers, and Pope and his circle of friends, is established. And in what follows it is given an economic turn which confirms our assertion of the importance of a political philosophy akin to Bolingbroke's in these poems. Ofellus had been turned out of his farm to make room for one of Octavian's returned ex-servicemen. And Horace concludes his poem with a philosophical and metaphorical expansion of the legal distinction between "usus" and "usufructus", the right to use and enjoy property and "dominium", the actual ownership of it:

O pueri nituistis, ut huc novus Incola venit?  
Nam propriae telluris herum natura neque illum  
Nec me, aut quamquam statuit: nos expulit ille;  
Illum aut Nequities, aut vafri inscitia juris,  
Postremo expellet certe vivacio haeres,  
Nunc ager Umbreni sub nomine, nuper Ofelli  
Dictus, erit nulli proprius, sed cedet in usum  
Nunc mihi, nunc alii. Quocirca vivite fortes!  
Fortiae adversis opponite pectora rebus.  

(108-116)

1. Rudd, \textit{op.cit.}, 161  
Pope politicises and personalises this theme. That is, he sets it in the context of what he and Bolingbroke felt was happening to land in his time, and he also sets it in the context of his particular situation and circle of friends:

"Pray heav'n it last! (cries Swift) as you go on;
"I wish to God this house had been your own;
"Pity! to build, without a son or wife;
"Why, you'll enjoy it only all your life."

Well, if the Use is mine, can it concern one
Whether the name belong to Pope or Vernon?
What's Property? dear Swift, you see it alter
From you to me, from me to Peter Walter,
Or, in a mortgage, prove a Lawyer's share,
Or, in a jointure, vanish from the Heir,
Or in pure Equity (the Case not clear)
The Chanc'ry takes your rents for twenty year:
At best, it falls to some ungracious Son
Who cries, my father's damn'd and all's my own.
Shades, that to Bacon could retreat afford,
Become the portion of a Booby Lord;
And Hemsley once proud Buckingham's delight,
Slides to a Scriv'ner or a City Knight.
Let Lands and Houses have what Lords they will.
Let us be fix'd, and our own Masters still. (161-180)

Swift was not altogether pleased with the part he is made to play in this passage. In a letter to Oxford of the 30th August 1734 he wrote:

In his last translation of Horace, I could willingly have excused his placing me not in that light which I would appear, and others are of my opinion, but it gives me not the least offence, because I am sure he had not the least ill intention, and how much I have always loved him, the world as well as your Lordship is convinced.

Pope probably put Swift in that position because of some lines of Swift's Imit. Hor., Sat. II. vi 1-10,¹ and because in his letters from Ireland Swift had spoken much of his financial situation. In the early 1730s

¹ Poems, IV.68, note to 1.164.
he had had some financial difficulties with his Irish business affairs, and he had gone into these difficulties, particularly in letters to Gay, who was a kind of London agent to him in matters of business, and the Duchess of Queensbury, Gay's patroness and employer.¹ Pope often saw these letters, and he is not doing Swift any injustice in presenting him in this way.

But Swift's annoyance at being made the spokesman for the view here expressed is understandable. Pope is developing Horace's distinction between "dominium" and "usufructus", the ownership of land and the right to its fruits, or, as Aden puts it, "the claims of property...and of stewardship".² In Horace, the point of the distinction is moral: the wise man understands the fragility of possessions, and is content with all that he or anyone can enjoy. Pope's concern is of course also basically moral, but the political and social context is more prominent than in Horace. Ofellus happened to have been displaced by one of Octavian's soldiers: he might have been displaced some other way, and the new owner, one Umbrenus, does not seem to be resented. Pope on the other hand makes it clear that his contentment with the use of his house and land is a political matter. Peter Walter, the Twickenham editor tells us, was a money scrivener, "one who received money to place out at interest, and who supplied those who wanted to raise money on security".³ With the proceeds of this kind of manipulation of the increasingly important money market, Peter Walter bought land, the traditional source of the political power of the gentry. The alteration in political and economic power against which the opposition fought is neatly encapsulated in the mention of Walter, and in a subsequent couplet:

And Hemsley once proud Buckingham's delight
Slides to a Scriv'ner or a City Knight. (177-178)

¹ Cf. Correspondence, III.151,161, 192,202-203,220.
² Aden, op.cit., 42.
³ Poems, IV. 392.
Thus while on the surface Swift might seem to be saying no more than that he wished Pope owned his land, he is by implication made to seem indifferent to the system of values in which Pope's contentment with not owning his land is upheld. And it might even seem that he is excluded from the circle of those who are to be "fix'd, and our own masters still".

On the other hand, there is a certain amount to be said for the attitude attributed to Swift. Pope lost his father's estate, he tells us elsewhere, through laws "by suff'rers thought unjust" that proscribed the ownership of land by catholics, but thanks to Homer he secured his financial security and independance. He might have bought the property he rented at Twickenham, but chose not to. This was a sound decision, and on a personal level the distinction between "usus" and "dominium" is a relevant one. But when he generalises the point, Pope begins to talk about the losses suffered by a whole class. And in doing so, his note is elegaic:

Shades, that to Bacon could retreat afford
Become the portion of a booby Lord;
And Hemsley once proud Buckingham's delight,
Slides to a Scriv'ner or a City Knight. (175-178)

From a political point of view, this might be called defeatist, and the commonsensical attitude attributed to Swift would have much to recommend it.\(^1\)

On the other hand, in retrospect it seems a more historically realistic point of view than one commonly finds in Pope's work. And as far as the particular poem is concerned, it certainly is congruent with what has gone before. Bethel may, as we have said, be a typical member of a class, but his narrative gave us a sense of an individual living within a traditional style of rural life. In his conclusion, Pope evokes this same tradition, and responds to it as an individual.

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Once again then we find that Pope's own appearance in a Horatian imitation is a crucial part of his adaptation of the poem. The next poem to be considered, briefly, is *Sober Advice from Horace*. We will be concerned only with the conclusions of the two poems, where their speakers come to the forefront and draw what can in fact not inexactely be called the morals of the poems by describing their own sexual preferences. Pope does this less successfully than Horace, and we will argue that he does so because of that uneasiness about female sexuality that we discussed in the Epistle to a Lady.

Horace's Serm. I ii, from which *Sober Advice* is imitated, concludes as follows:

> Candida rectaque sit; munda hactenus, ut neque longa, 
> Nec magis alba velit, quam dat natura, videri. 
> Haec, ubi supposuit dextro corpus mihi laevum, 
> Ilia et Egeria est; do nomen quodlibet illi, 
> Nec vereor, ne, dum futu, vir rure recurrat; 
> Janua frangatur; latret canis; undique magno 
> Pulsa domus strepitu resonet: ne pallida lecto 
> Desiliat mulier; miseram se conscia clamet; 
> Cruribus haec metuat, doti haec deprensa, egomet mi. 
> Distincta tunica fugiendum est, ac pede nudo; 
> Ne nummi pereant, aut puga, aut denique fama. 
> Deprendi miserum est: Fabio vel judice vincam. (123-134)

Pope's version of the above is as follows:

> Give me a willing Nymph! 'tis all I care, 
> Extremely clean, and tolerably fair, 
> Her shape her own, whatever Shape she have, 
> And just that White and Red which Nature gave, 
> Her I transported touch, transported view, 
> And call her Angel! Goddess! Montague! 
> No furious Husband thunders at the Door; 
> No barking Dog, no Household in a Roar; 
> From gleaming Swords no shrieking Women run; 
> No wretched Wife cries out Undone! Undone! 
> Seiz'd in the Fact, and in her Cuckold's Pow'r,
She kneels, she weeps, and worse! resigns her Dow'r.
Me, naked me, to Posts, to Pumps they draw,
To Shame eternal, or eternal Law.
Oh Love! be deep Tranquillity my Luck!
No Mistress H—ysh—m near, no Lady B—ck
For, to be taken, is the Dev'11 in Hell;
This Truth, let L—1, J—ys, O—w tell. (161-178)

Sober Advice as a whole is certainly very far from being an out and out failure. One cannot ignore its comic vigour, and Aden convincingly denies that it should be set apart, as it generally is, from the mainstream of Pope's verse. But the conclusion is not as effective as Horace's. The translation of "candida rectaque sit" as "extremely clean, and tolerably fair", and the use of the phrase "willing Nymph", both strike an odd note. Horace's concern is with satisfying sexual desire in the most convenient possible way, but to specify extreme cleanliness is to imply some distaste for sexuality itself: the line seems to fit an ideal nurse better than an ideal sexual partner. As for "willing Nymph", the word "Nymph" would have suggested either a character in pastoral, or an accessible girl, with an obvious ironic connection between the two meanings. But by speaking of a willing Nymph, Pope deprives the word of its capacity for carrying that irony. Nymphs in the second sense are willing by definition. The effect of this is that the experience described does not seem to be the experience of the speaker: Pope does not imaginatively project himself into the narrative. Thus Horace's "dum futuo", which leaves no doubt as to his presence, is translated only indirectly as "siez'd in the fact". Similarly, Horace has a prescription for the avoidance of erotic disappointment with "munda hactenus, ut neque longa/nec magis alba velit quam dat naturae, videri". A girl may wish to adorn herself, but not to the extent

2. Aden, op.cit., 47-68.
3. Aden's suggestion (op.cit. 33, note 10) that Pope makes it possible for us to read the conclusion as the utterance of Bathurst only compounds the difficulty. What sounds odd in Pope would sound even odder in Bathurst.
that when stripped she will prove disappointing. Pope on the other hand with his:

Her Shape her own, whatever Shape she have,  
And just that White and Red which Nature gave (163-164)

again ends up sounding odd. His hostility to cosmetics seems moral rather than (as in Horace's case) pragmatic, which, given his intentions, is curious. And "whatever shape she have" seems unintentionally comical in suggesting that her shape may turn out to be horrible. One has to wonder what exactly is transporting him, even before one notices the order of the terms in "...transported touch, transported view". And the allusion to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the next line is only a little more certainly a lapse in control than in taste. For this Horace has "haec ubi supposuit dextro corpus mihi laevum/Ilia et Egeria est", which is more erotic realism. He (fictively) excites himself by imagining that he is sleeping with aristocratic, and thus normally inaccessible women. Pope is not imagining any such thing. Instead, he is jibing at Lady Mary. And it becomes clear that he is at home in a more detached and aggressive satirical posture than that of Horace.

Pope then fails to achieve the convincing conclusion to the poem that Horace does in his. He keeps to the original structural framework, with the poem's speaker coming into prominence at the end of it. But the things the speaker says when he does appear require analysis in terms that are inappropriate in relation to the rest of the poem. It will thus not do to suggest, as Leonard Moskovit does, that in _Sober Advice:

More than likely, Pope was taking pleasure in a quickly written jeu d'esprit, in which he could blissfully forget about his painfully created public persona in order to amuse himself, his close friends, and his readers.¹

Moskovit's paper makes some useful points; and one would not wish to deny

¹ Leonard Moskovit, "Pope's Purposes in _Sober Advice_", _PQ_, XLIV (1965), 199.
that Sober Advice is amusing. But in the sentence quoted above he combines biographical speculation with the use of an inadequate concept designed to eliminate it. The problem at the end of Pope's poem is that there is conflict between the way the speaker is thematically and generically required to appear, and the way Pope is able to see himself. One could hardly wish for a neater demonstration of the fact that the Imitations of Horace have Pope, and not Horace, as their fictive speaker.

The final poem to be considered in this chapter is Pope's The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated. We specify Pope's poem because we will not, except in the occasional aside, be any longer concerned with the fact that he is imitating Horace. It has been adequately demonstrated that Pope is the speaker of the Imitations and in discussing "To Mr Fortescue" (a subtitle added in the 1751 edition) we will be concentrating on the fact that this, like the Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot and the Epilogue to the Satires, to which we will relate it, is a reflexive poem, about the poet himself and about the kind of poetry he writes, and thus about itself.

The poem evidently begins with a version of the poet. Pope knows very well that his satire seems too bold to some, and that no one will suppose him to be timorous by nature, or in awe of the rich. This has some simple consequences. The assertion that "The Lines are weak" is put out of court, and Pope's contempt for Hervey ("Lord Fanny") is expressed for him by a naive critic resembling, at least in one of his functions, the "Friend" of the Epilogue to the Satires. But more interesting is the fact that the poem begins with a version of the poet, a persona, that is evidently inadequate. This is a strategy we will see Pope use in a less obvious way in the Epistle to Arbuthnot, where the inadequate version of the poet will be the traditional image of the good man driven to satire. In both cases, what Pope is doing is to direct our attention to the question
of his own identity and nature as poet. And what both poems do is to provide complex and interesting answers to this question.

Initially, then, we are made to think about the identity of the poet. In the next few paragraphs we begin to think about the nature and value of his life's activity, that of satire. And Pope uses a similar strategy. He sets up a number of different and sometimes contrasting points of view from which satire can be considered, and thus a number of different versions of satire. Some of these versions are traditional in criticism.

In his study of eighteenth-century attitudes to Satire, P.K. Elkin, in a chapter entitled "Core of the Defence: the Moral Function of Satire", shows in detail that Augustan satirists and critics defending satire did so by stressing its moral and social utility. In this respect satire was not differentiated from other kinds of poetry:

In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as for that matter throughout the Renaissance and in classical Roman and Greek times, poetry like all art was expected to profit as well as please. Its capacity to instruct was upheld as its raison d'etre: it had to be manifestly useful to individuals and to society as a whole, to church and government, God and the commonweal.

In later chapters we will argue that to do justice to the Epistle to Arbuthnot and the Epilogue to the Satires we require a different emphasis to Elkin's when he writes that "Of all the major writers, only Swift entertained serious doubts about the reformative effects of satire". Pope expressed no explicit doubts on this question. But we will argue that although he made extensive use both of this and of the associated defense of the satirist's motives and character as those of a good man and citizen, he does not in the final analysis rest his case on either. And in "To Mr Fortescue", the effect of the use of contrasting points of view mentioned above is that although he does in the end insist on the moral utility of satire, this insistence is itself qualified by the context of the poem.

2. Ibid, 86.
as a whole.

The first of these points of view, and one which is to serve as a kind of scapegoat throughout the poem, is the legal. Fortescue, like Horace's Trebatius, was a lawyer, and by using him as his satiric adversary, Pope raises the issue of the legal status of his life's activity. For Pope, beleaguered by dunces and hostile to the court, this is potentially a serious question. But in fact the legal point of view is undermined both immediately and extensively in the poem. It is satire that judges the law, and not the law satire. The status of the law is implicitly questioned in the aside that Fortescue will give his advice "...as you use, without a fee...". This effectively suggests the dubious literary reputation of the law—it is discredited by association with lawyers. This might seem hard on Fortescue, but in fact, as their letters made clear, he did give Pope free legal advice, and would see the joke. For he is also—crucially—Pope's friend, explicitly named as such. At the end of the poem Pope, as he so often does, alludes to his circle of friends as a touchstone of his own worth. We will see that the passage in which he does so is richly suggestive in its allusions to other points of view, frames of reference, for the judgement of satire. This initial mention of Fortescue, the rather ill-used satiric adversary of the poem, as friend, is thus part of its thematic structure.

The assault on the legal point of view, and the general pattern of antithetical judgements, are continued in the subsequent paragraphs. Fortescue's advice is blunt: "I'd write no more". Pope replies, not that he will not comply, but that he can not:

P. Not write? but then I think,
And for my Soul I cannot sleep a wink,
I nod in Company, I wake at Night,

1. Cf. Correspondence, II. 322, IV. 216.
2. For an interesting account of the poem in the context of Pope's attitude to lawyers, and the professional classes generally, see Pat Rogers, "Pope and the Social Scene" in Alexander Pope (Writers and their Background).
Fools rush into my Head, and so I write. (11-14)

To be noted here is the poet's passivity, his lack of initiative. He has no choice in the matter, he must write, as a consequence of his sleeping habits. This is another point of view that is transformed by the end of the poem, where Pope asserts that he will write, whatever the consequences. At this point, it is a joking rebuttal of Fortescue's legal advice; your honour, I can't help it. But as we would expect, given the context for the other idea provided by Pope's other poems, a great deal more is made of it before the end.

In fact it is immediately picked up and given a new turn by Fortescue. If Pope cannot sleep at night, let him take a wife, or an anaphrodisiac. Satire is a medical problem that is to be cured by the appropriate preparation. Or if he must write, let him at least write in a socially acceptable way. The implication is that writing may be compared to a disease because as Pope practises it, it is socially unacceptable, and thus the writer is sick to the men he attacks. (As the friend in the second Dialogue of the Epilogue to the Satires says, "Peter thinks you mad"). To avoid such charges, let Pope praise the king, either in his warlike aspect or as family man. Pope's assertion that the first is impossible is the first piece of direct personal satire in the poem, and it is significantly cheerful and good-humoured. The parody of Blackmore is not the work of a "sick" man. His refusal to write "courtly" verse is a less direct but more suggestive piece of satirical work. Fortescue has requested it in the following terms:

F. Then all your Muse's softer Art display,
   Let Carolina smooth the tuneful Lay.
   Lull with Amelia's liquid Name the Nine,
   And sweetly flow through all the Royal line. (29-32)

We will have occasion to refer back to this passage when we discuss the Epilogue to the Satires. In that poem Pope approaches a defense of Satire

whose core is aesthetic. He does so by a condemnation of flattering court
depoty, which he sees as the antithesis of satire, as aesthetically offensive.
I would suggest that the same thing is being done here. Fortescue
describes poetry so fluent and mellifluous as to be offensive. And Pope's
retort scorns both that kind of poetry, and the political and social order,
represented by the court, in which it is admired:

P. Alas! few Verses touch their nicer Ear:
They scarce can bear their Laureate twice a Year:
And justly CAESAR scorns the poet's lays
It is to History he trusts for Praise. (33-36)

The point is that in such a political and social order nobody is capable
of reading poetry. Thus it is appropriate for this poem to attack it.

And there is one other point to be made about the retort.
Pope is not merely jibing at the laureate, or at the King's indifference
to poetry, when he writes that Caesar scorns the poet's lays and trusts
to history. The antithesis between poetry and history is absolutely
false. Part of the role of poetry as Pope sees it is to do historical
justice to good men and bad.1 Thus his own treatment of the monarch is
an important contribution to the history the latter will be judged by.
And the assertion that the monarch is indifferent to poetry is a substan-
tial attack on him. For the Augustan reader, it would still have been
inappropriate for a monarch to be indifferent to poetry. In this area
the coalescence between mediaeval images of the King, themselves in part of
classical origin, and the classical ideal of imperial and aristocratic
partronage, that flowered in Spencer's Faerie Queen and in Elizabethan
literature generally, still had life in it. Pope's Epistle to Augustus
confirms that point. His poetry is founded on a sense of the value of
poetry that is at once passionate and nourished by tradition. The retort
quoted above at first seems no more than ruefully ironic. But behind the

almost prosaic plainness of the last line there is a juxtaposition of European culture as Pope saw it, and the controlling values of the society he lived in. And this is of course the basic technique of the *Dunciad*. Fortescue's next two speeches are designed to provide a transition to Pope's first long passage in his own defence. We are reminded of some of the work that has given offense, and that this poem is concerned to defend. It is significant that all the allusions are to the *Moral Essays*, which Pope himself considered his best work, and which are of course almost irrefutably defensible, in terms of the Augustan defence of satire, since they are only intermittently satirical.

Pope begins in his defense with the couplet:

> Each Mortal has his Pleasure: none deny
> Scarsdale his Bottle, Darty his Ham-Pye; (45-6)

It is clear that a "Pleasure" in this context is something between a vice and a habit, a not quite innocent compulsion. Such, he claims, is his poetry to him:

> I love to pour out all myself, as plain
> As downright Shippen, or as old Montaigne. (51-2)

It is soon apparent that in his case the compulsion is not really of a kind with Ridotta's taste for the bottle. Pope innocently, not to say commendably, loves the honest revelation of himself, spots and all. Pope must have known perfectly well that Montaigne did not "pour himself out" in anything like the same way as "downright Shippen", a forthright parliamentarian. Like Pope, Montaigne may speak of his ingenuous honesty, but he is at the same time fully aware that he is engaged in an enterprise of self discovery, that it is no easy matter to find out and reveal on paper what kind of a man he is. Pope never admits to such awareness, except perhaps in saying that his character is inconsistent. Certainly Montaigne was honest; perhaps it is more accurate to say he achieved honesty. And Pope may legitimately cite him because he did so. The
question is whether Pope is also reminding us of a work of literature in which the complexity and difficulty of being honest are fully revealed. One is puzzled as to what to make of his apparent disingenuousness. The parenthetical admission "for Spots I have" is certainly, whatever one decides its tone to be, a simplification of the enterprize of self discovery that any authentic self revelation must include. The passage may be quoted in full:

In them, as certain to be lov'd as seen,
The Soul stood forth, nor kept a Thought within;
In me what Spots (for Spots I have) appear,
Will prove at least the Medium must be clear,
In this impartial Glass, my Muse intends,
Fair to expose myself, my Foes, my Friends;
Publish the present Age, but where my Text
Is Vice too high, reserve it to the next:
My Foes shall wish my Life a longer date,
And ev'ry Friend the less lament my Fate. (53-62)

The couplet about spots does allow of the interpretation that the self the poet is concerned to justify and to reveal is not merely a version of himself adjusted to the poetic and public occasion. Pope is perhaps being courageous in exposing himself to the imputation of disingenousness. Any weakness we might find in the passage is supposedly allowed for as a "spot". If that seems unprofitably ingenious, we can confidently say that the allusion to the Muse is effective. Pope has throughout his poetry made more than conventional use of the idea of the Muse, and the suggestion here of Poetic truth as something above the poet's personality and private ends, something that may in fact be painful to him as an individual, is an impressive one. We have quoted Empson's remark, in connection with the Essay on Criticism, that it sometimes seems "difficult to analyse this satirist without satirising him", and also his warning that the critic must get beyond this attitude and perceive Pope's genuine humility before, and understanding of, his art. The remark is called to mind by this paragraph, and by much in Pope's late work.
In the next paragraph Pope amplifies his portrait of himself as an "impartial Glass" to his age, but leads the reader firmly away from any idea that there may be spots in the glass. We meet again the idea that Pope cannot help being a satirist, that this is the natural expression of his "Head and Heart". But the claim that these two "flow" through his "Quill" brings an interesting implication of that idea to the surface. Pope's account of how his satire happens seems to eliminate any conscious and responsible act of choice, any decision to attack an individual or an aspect of society. And the paragraph confirms this both thematically and syntactically. Thematically, Pope seems to understand "Moderation" as meaning something rather too close to "holding no opinions on religion and politics."\(^1\) Admittedly, what he actually says is that he identifies himself with Erasmus, who did not lack opinions, but wanted to initiate a more profitable debate than his intellectual predecessors engaged in. We will see that in later poems Pope abandons moderation, while the idea that conventional political, religious, even philosophical argument is beside the point is one that we have met already, in the Moral Essays, and that Pope does not abandon. But despite this qualification, it was disingenuous for him to claim, in 1733, that Tories called him Whig and Whigs a Tory.\(^1\)

And the syntax of the paragraph brings into play, as a corollary of his neutrality, a feeling that he is not the initiator of action, the holder of opinion. He makes what are in fact claims about his position—"Papist or Protestant, or both between"—into facts to which he alludes. This is done through the participial syntax. These things are true of an "I" who is syntactically elided, and the whole paragraph is strictly

\(^1\) Guerinot's bibliography Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope, 1711-1744 does not list one attack that accuses Pope of being both Whig and Tory. This is notorious A True Character of Mr Pope, And His Writings, accepted as being by Dennis. But Dennis published it in 1716; and Guerinot says that in general "the dunces were...decidedly Whiggish". (J.V. Guerinot, Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope, 1711-1744, London 1969, xiv)
speaking an adjectival expansion of an absent main clause such as "Here I am". And it will not do to object that we find "me" and "my": these are object pronouns making Pope only passively present.

And this strategy is continued in the next paragraph. Despite the apparently aggressive note of "Satire's my Weapon", Pope seems to be still holding his hand. He uses his weapon only defensively: and even at that, it seems that offenders slide into verse and hitch in a rhyme, when they touch him, without his explicit intervention. The effect of the strategy is a complex one. On the one hand, it serves as an ironic defense against the fictive legal threat introduced at the beginning of the poem. If Pope loves Peace and does nothing, he can hardly be condemned. But more interestingly, it serves to present another of the versions of satire that compose the poem. The legal perspective has been superseded. The new version is more adequate, in that it lays stress on the fact that satire is the natural expression of the satirist, the proper utterance of his head and heart. In later Poems Pope is to develop and enrich the idea that he is essentially a satirist. But the new version is itself in one respect to be superseded, in that Pope will at the end of the poem no longer appear passive: he will be speaking out forcefully, in his own voice.

And between the two points there is an audacious and brilliant transition. The next paragraph begins with three lines of direct and ferocious personal satire:

Slander or Poyson, dread from Delia's Rage,
Hard Words or Hanging, if your Judge be Page
From furious Sappho scarce a milder fate
P—x'd by her Love, or libell'd by her Hate. (81-84)

This attack seems totally detached from any general morally or socially redemptive purpose, and thus seems hard to defend in terms of the Augustan, or any other but perhaps an aesthetic, defence of Satire. Further, what Pope goes on to say (that "It's proper Pow'r to hurt each Creature feels") is obviously, given that he has just said, at least potentially applicable
to himself. The reader can hardly avoid the reflection that perhaps satire
is a manifestation of the satirist's power to hurt just as a bull's but,
an asses kick, or Sappho's gift of disease or libel, are natural expressions
of their nature. This reflection is not based on any hostility to Pope:
it emerges from even a moderately alert reading of the verse. But of course
a moderately alert reading will not do. Pope deliberately echoes one of
the common accusations against him, that he is of malice all composed;
and one may conjecture that he does so as a kind of test for his readers.
For the context of the poem turns this apparent comparison between the poet
and others into a definition of the poet by a complex implicit contrast
with the others. There is still some truth in the comparison. Satire is
Pope's weapon. But there is more to him than that. His role as satirist
is determined by his constitution: he cannot otherwise sleep. It is
willed by the Muse, a power beyond him: he is to be an impartial mirror
to his age. It is his pleasure: he loves to pour himself all out.
And there is one final and crucial ingredient that distinguishes him from
Sappho and Delia and asses and bears. He uses his power to hurt discrimin-
atingly, after having made a rational and moral judgement that it is proper
to do so.

And this is the point Pope insists on in the next, and final,
paragraph of his first long speech. Early in the poem we saw Pope saying
that he could not help writing. Now he says that in spite of all obstacles
he will continue to write. And again, it is the syntax of the passage
that gives us our sense of the way in which the poet is present in the poem.
The main clause is deferred by nine lines of adverbial clauses describing
the obstacles that will not impede the fulfilment of its firm assertion:
"I will Rhyme and Print".

And this new note, transitive and energetic, is sustained in the
opening lines of the poet's second long speech. "Fortescue" has been made
to come in with a rather weakly ironic assertion that his enemies will
"club their Testers" to eliminate him. And the idea that he should be in conflict with such as these seems to arouse his saeva indignatio and launch him into attack:

What? arm'd for Virtue when I point the Pen, 
Brand the bold Front of shameless, guilty Men, 
Dash the proud Gamester in his gilded Car, 
Bare the mean Heart that lurks beneath a Star; 
Can there be wanting to defend her Cause, 
Lights of the Church, or Guardians of the Laws? 
Could pension'd Boileau lash in honest Strain 
Flatt'ers and Bigots ev'n in Louis' Reign? 
Could Laureate Dryden Pimp and Fry'r engage, 
Yet neither Charles nor James be in a Rage? (105-114)

No longer do offenders slide into verse or hitch in a rhyme. The poet now points the pen to brand and dash and bare them, while his satirical predecessors lash and engage. So far from satire being any kind of sickness or involuntary activity, it is now seen as a human vocation whose social utility is a matter of tradition. And its essence is moral: but in saying that, we must discriminate carefully. Pope presents himself as a soldier in the cause of virtue, using an image he will develop in other poems. He does not suggest either that his writing will reform individuals, or that it will reform his society. His mode of social engagement and his understanding of how as a writer he relates to individuals are more complex, and also more intelligent, than that.

What he does is to oppose to "The World beside...", the world of greed and malice he has been describing, the image of himself and his friends:

Know, all the distant Din that World can keep 
Rolls o'er my Grotto, and but sooths my sleep. 
There, my Retreat the best Companions grace, 
Chiefs, out of War, and Statesmen, out of Place. 
There St John mingles with my friendly Bowl, 
The Feast of Reason and the Flow of Soul:
And He, whole Lightning pierc'd th' Iberian Lines, 
Now, forms my Quincunx, and now ranks my Vines, 
Or tames the Genius of the stubborn Plain, 
Almost as quickly, as he conquer'd Spain. (123-132)

This is one of the most effective of the passages in which Pope makes thematic use of the image of himself in his circle of friends. The line "Chiefs out of War, and Statesmen out of Place" suggests a restrained, a disciplined power, and a capacity to govern too fine for the actual processes of power-seeking. This adds a new dimension to Pope's earlier assertion that he places all his glory in moderation. We can no longer identify indifference to political labels with weakness. The description of Lord Peterborough as both soldier and landscape gardener adds a further dimension to the implicit definition of the poet that is emerging.

Peterborough is not a soldier out of aggression. His "lightning", his "proper Pow'r", issues in both destruction and creation. The poet too is capable of both war and peace, war with the enemies of virtue and peace in the company of such friends as these. Thus again, something earlier said with apparent disingenuousness, "Peace is my dear Delight", is seen in a new light. And the connotative richness of "forms my Quincunx", "ranks my Vines", and "tames the Genius of the stubborn Plain" allows room for the idea that there may be a poetic creativity that is other than satirical or destructive. As in the Essay on Man, we see what the poet does set in the context of what men do: being a poet is much more than a matter of technique or learning. And the lines on St John are equally resonant. With "The Feast of Reason and the Flow of Soul" Pope either invents or borrows a line that economically defines the humanist ideal he opposes to the world of "Thieves, Supercargoes, Sharpers and Directors". "Reason" and "Soul" are as necessary, sustaining, stimulating, and enjoyable as Food and Drink. To observe that this is a humanist version of the Christian "man cannot live by bread alone" is to suggest one of the defining limits of Pope's stance. Whatever may be the case elsewhere,

he is here presenting himself as a poet for a small and select group, and not for God and mankind. But this is a limit, not a limitation. Unfortunately, we will also need to use the latter word, as we move on to the end of the poem.

In the next paragraph Pope moves from a symbolic account of his social circle to a public, quasi-legal account of himself. And in doing so, he intermittently loses control. The paragraph is a final summary for the defence so it is appropriate that Pope should insist on the authority of his witnesses: "This, all who know me know". He lives an honest man, "No Pimp of Pleasure, and no Spy of State", among "the Great". There is some uncertainty about the identity of "the Great". If they are his particular aristocratic friends, then why the apparent implication that he is exceptional in being an honest man in such company? The self-praise seems clumsy. If on the other hand they are aristocrats in general, then why, given that he thinks some Peers are no better than the mob, does he live among them? What Pope is trying to do is to suggest that in the persons of his friends there is a coincidence of the actual social order, to which he is generally not subservient, and the ideal hierarchy he has suggested in the previous paragraph. The snobbish claim that "Envy must own" him to keep high company, and the inept lines of self-praise, get in the way. And this is most unfortunate, because what he is approaching is a thematically necessary definition of his social "stance" as a satirist, that would improve on the improbable claim that Tories thought him a Whig, and Whigs a Tory. And the self-praise is also deplorable in that it represents a retreat from the forthright acceptance of the fact that he is a satirist, and the considered decision to speak out as one, we have seen Pope develop in the poem.

Still, we need not make too much of one uncertain paragraph. We will see that Pope falls down in the same way in the Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot,
but that he still achieves an honest and complex understanding of himself and his art. And this poem also ends well. The definition of his social stance mentioned above involves the image of a small group of outstanding men, aristocrats for the most part, and the poet's friends, and the inheritors of a cultural and moral tradition which it is the poet's special role to sustain, in and through his art. It is not coincidental that these men are aristocrats, nor that they are members of the Opposition. But it is not because they are these things that Pope admires them. This is an interesting stance for the poet and satirist to adopt, but one could hardly suggest that it solves all his problems. And it is clear in the last few lines of the poem that Pope is aware of this.

Fortescue allows that "Your Plea is good", but also warns Pope to take care:

Laws are explain'd by Men—so have a care.
It stands on record that in Richard's Times
A Man was hanged for very honest Rhymes.
Consult the Statute: quart, I think it is,
Edwardi Sext, or prim. & quint Eliz:
See, Libels, Satires—here you have it—read. (144-149)

This brings the poem back to the quasi-legal point of view with which it began, and it also brings the poet down to earth. He may be honest, and eloquent, and have splendid friends, but "Laws are explain'd by Men", and a satirist was once hanged. The legal language does not only serve to satirise the law. It also makes the hanging a matter of history. Thus one might argue that Pope's retort, although ingenious, and effective in securing the rhetorical victory over "Fortescue", is legally something of a quibble:

P. Libels and Satires! lawless Things indeed!
But grave Epistles, bringing Vice to light,
Such as a King might read, a Bishop write,
Such as Sir Robert would approve — . (150-154)
Legally, of course, the distinction between Libels and Satires, and grave Epistles, would also have to be explained by men. Pope covers this by claiming that his version of the distinction would be supported by a King, a Bishop, and even Sir Robert himself. Certainly the irony in this seems an effective counter to the legal threat, since Pope does not seem to be at all bothered by the law. But he is also being ironical about the moral defence of satire. However grave his Epistles may be, however effectively they may bring vice to light, it does not alter the fact that he remains at the mercy of the powers that be.

Thus Pope is walking something of a tightrope as regards the legal status and the moral defence of satire. And I would suggest that in fact he rests his case neither on a legal nor on the moral defence. The distinction between Satires and Libels, and grave Epistles, is finally an aesthetic one. And one can make the same point about the legal opinion Fortescue offers in the last two lines:

In such a Cause the Plaintiff will be hiss'd,
My Lords the Judges laugh, and you're dismiss'd. (155-156)

This may be an allusion to that judgement of history which Pope makes much of in later poems as the ultimate standard for the poet. He is claiming that his poems are in fact not "lawless things indeed", and that this will in time be seen to be the case.
The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot is, for the reading of Pope's poetry here undertaken, his most important poem. It seems to be about its speaker, and its speaker seems to be the poet Alexander Pope. Its speaker shares Pope's family, friends, enemies, and his poetic career. The poem has thus not surprisingly attracted the attention of those critics who have been concerned to discriminate between the author and the speaker in Pope's verse. Elder Olson and Maynard Mack are among the best known of those who have had the poem in mind while arguing a general case about those features of Pope's verse which make it misleading to regard it as autobiographical in any direct or simple way.

The issue is forthrightly put in relation to this particular poem by Rebecca Price Parkin. She writes as follows:

More than any other of Pope's poems the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot highlights the issue of the relationship between the poet and the speaker. Not only in Pope's poetry, but in poetry in general, there are admittedly situations in which the identity of the speaker and the identity of the actual poet approach each other. When this is the case, there is a particular temptation to overlook the boundary separating poetry and biography and to treat the poet's persona as if he were the actual poet. Ms. Parkin goes on to acknowledge that Pope and the speaker have much in common. As well as the points of identity mentioned above, she notices that "The very title of the epistle is testimony to an actual personal relationship of Pope's". But the concession is illusory. She has already implicitly compared Pope and the speaker of An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot

with Sydney and Drayton and the speakers of *Astrophel* and *Stella* and *Ideas Mirrour*:

Both Sydney and Drayton conform to the Pertrarchan pose. Any similarities between aspects of that pose and the biography of either poet are as irrelevant as are points of similarity between Hamlet— or Iago— and Shakespeare.¹

And her conclusions are as follows:

...the protagonist of this poem is dramatically, not autobiographically conceived. The coincidence of certain traits and circumstances of the dramatic character with Pope's biography has nothing to do with the success of the poem as a poem. These traits are used dramatically, as an objective element in the work to create a well-defined genre pose. The Horatian pose of the injured but superior poet is as fixed and objective as the pose of the Pertrarchan sonneteer.²

Parkin's analysis seems to me to be theoretically confused, and practically much too simple. It may at one time have been useful to point out that there was something in common between the relationship of Pope to the speaker of *Arbuthnot*, those of Sydney and Drayton to their speakers, and that of Shakespeare to Hamlet.³ Parkin, however, glosses over the differences when dealing with a generically unusual poem which requires them to be kept clear, and while stressing those features of the poem which make it essential to tread carefully. Her basic theoretical error lies in basing her case on a distinction between "the poet's persona" and "the actual poet". "The actual poet" is a metaphysical abstraction or entity. All we can ever encounter are versions of the poet. Ultimately these versions must be our own, but we can derive them both directly from any evidence as to his nature we

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3. It was undoubtedly necessary in 1919, when Eliot published "Tradition and the Individual Talent". But by 1955, when Parkin's book was published, this point of view had hardened into dogma.
find, and indirectly from other people's accounts of the poet or his
own self-portraits. These remarks are just as applicable to living
poets as to dead. It is traditionally God's prerogative to know the
"actual" form of any person, although it is interesting to note that
Pope, and other poets, claim a secular version of this prerogative in
describing one of their functions as that of recording for posterity
the good or bad reputation of their contemporaries. I would not deny
that the range of possible versions of the poet is enormous. And
Parkin is quite right to insist that there is a "boundary separating poetry
and biography": versions of the poet found in his poetry form a specially
interesting and complicated class. But I have already cited Ehrenpreis's
argument that the concept of the persona does not do justice to this
complexity. And it is almost absurd to suggest that the speaker of
An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot is a dramatic character in the same sense as
Hamlet.

So much for the theoretical deficiencies of Parkin's approach.
In practice, it is not substantiated by a close reading of the poem.
She asserts that we find a very simple version of the poet. He presents
himself in a "fixed and objective" form, derived from Horace, as "the
injured but superior poet". We will try to show that although Pope
does assume this mask, he does not use it in a fixed or objective manner.¹
Further, Pope also uses other masks. He uses the image of the poet as
defender of the faithful and the innocent, the image of the poet as recorder
of good and evil fame, the image of the poet as the friend of men of taste
and virtue, and the image of the poet as the inheritor of a poetic tradition.

¹. Nor is this mask simply derived from Horation or even classical
To say that Pope is in these ways concerned to present himself in a
generically appropriate guise is true enough: and that, essentially, is
what Parkin is saying. Generically the poem is a defense of its author's
moral character and poetic career.¹ It is thus in order for him to find
favourable images where he can. But there is more to it than that.
We will argue that these images are not presented unequivocally: the
extent to which they are not adequate, given the poet's actual situation
in his time, is made clear by and in the poem. It is thus aesthetically
in order to perceive them as of qualified validity, since in doing so
one is not concerned with biographical evidence from outside the poem.
And there is one other, and crucial point to be made. Generically
the poem is not simply a defense of satire and the satirist. It is also
a satire, and it is presented as an act, or an utterance, of the satirist.
Thus the speaker is present not only in what he says about himself, but
also in what he says, as himself. We will investigate the relationship
between these two modes of presence, and will find, as we found in
discussing An Essay on Criticism, that it is complex and interesting.

We may begin with the observation that the people attacked, at
any rate at the beginning of the poem, are the poet's soi-disant friends
and not his enemies. And if we think of false friends, the remark can
be stretched to cover some of those mentioned in the body of the poem:
Addison certainly, and perhaps even Hervey, with whom Pope had earlier
been on at least cordial terms.² Why is Pope so uniformly hostile to
people whose attitudes to him would seem to include admiration as well as

¹. P.K. Elkin describes the classical apologies which originated the genre
in The Augustan Defence of Satire, Oxford _________1973,
---100-109. My reading of Arbuthnot differs from Elkin's
². Hervey went over from the Opposition to the Court Party in about 1729.
Sporus/Hervey's hatred? It would seem poor tactics in a poem one of whose aims is to show that as a satirist he is not actuated by mere personal hostility.

The question is of course a rhetorical one in that answers are not far to seek. Pope is being pestered; and the demonstration that he has no use for undiscriminating admiration is of obvious apologetic value; and his strategy in the poem as a whole is to show how he is driven into satire in spite of the forbearance he claims to have shown people who, like these, make a nuisance of themselves. All these points are of undoubted validity. But it remains worth putting the question in the form adopted above, because by doing so we can suggest a further and less obvious range of answers that make Pope seem less the rhetorical master of ceremonies and more the poet concerned to discover for himself the nature and use of his talent.

It has been pointed out how the poetasters and indeed all the targets of the poem are described through imagery that makes them less than human.¹ They are, variously, animal, insectile, diseased, mechanical, mentally ill. To say that in thus attacking his enemies, Pope is defining himself by negation might, on the face of it, seem ridiculous. We can surely take it for granted that Pope thinks he lacks these qualities. But the situation is in fact not quite so simple as it appears. We need to remember that the poetasters, and, again, most of the other butts of the poem, are writers, as Pope himself is, and that they seem, either openly, or in the case of the ones who hate him, implicitly, to consider him at the head of their common profession. In this light, it appears that by complaining that he is pestered with requests for comments and dedications and so on,

Pope is indirectly telling us that he is a famous poet, that he has attained a publicly acknowledged status in the literary and also in the wider social world. He is an "identity", a man of whose nature and behaviour his contemporaries have a common view: and because he has attained this status as a poet, it is natural that all other would-be poets should appeal to him to confirm them in their views of themselves. In this light, both the hostility Pope expresses for people who admire him, and the imagery he uses to specifically describe them, take on a new appearance. For of course he is not at all willing to be "defined" as a poet, either by his enemies or by the common run of his admirers. The people whose opinions of himself he is prepared to take into account are, we have seen, and will see again, a select few. In connection with his work, he once described them as "the two or three noble judges, and the five or six best poets".¹ In the case of lesser admirers, particularly those who have the impudence to pretend that they too are poets, it is crucial that he repudiate their versions of his nature and talent, and distinguish himself from them. Thus the hostility, and the imagery: Pope is in danger of being compromised in a matter centrally important to him.

The problem of course is that Pope is not entirely a recluse, that he does have a public reputation, and that he does not really want to lose it. Thus there is a measure of equivocation in his rejection of the admiration with which he is assailed:

All fly to Twit'nam, and in humble strain
Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain. (21-2)

It is going to be important that the ways in which Pope as poet is other than mad or vain be clearly defined. And one is also curious as to exactly what his position in relation to the social consensus is. How far, for example, does he sympathise with Arthur and Cornus?

¹. Correspondence, I.267.
Arthur, whose giddy son neglects the Laws,
Imputes to me and my damn'd works the cause:
Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,
And curses Wit, and Poetry, and Pope. (23-6)

The clearest, if by no means the only, thing these lines do is to make Pope synonymous with wit and poetry. In the perspective and practice of a critical tradition that extends from romanticism to existentialism, the poet is commonly seen as the outsider, the clown, the rebel against the social order. To locate Pope in relation to this tradition is a more complex matter than one suspects has generally been assumed. At first sight he here seems to be directly and simply rejecting such an identity. On the other hand, he does not seem overly sympathetic to Arthur and Cornus: they are made to seem ridiculous.

Part of the reason they seem ridiculous is that their values, and thus their nature, seem middle class. Arthur is concerned that his son should get on in a sound profession, while to have one's wife elope is generally the fate of the bon bourgeo. And in this respect, Arthur and Cornus are in fact associated with the aspirant writers they no doubt deplore. One way in which Pope dissociates himself from other writers, and rejects the dunces' version of the life of a poet, lies in his rejection of the commercial side of authorship. The people Pope despises are concerned to find a patron, find a publisher, have their plays acted. The implication is that such concerns are utterly foreign to Pope. In both cases, what is implied is a kind of aristocratic disdain, a fastidiousness, controlled by an awareness of the importance of urbanity. On the surface, Pope seems detached and humorous. He presents himself as in ruefully amused flight, attempting to lock his admirers out, forced to comment on their work but unable to satisfy either himself or the authors because of the contradictory

1. His letters, of course, reveal that they were not. He was a capable businessman (See for example Correspondence, I.192). But we are not concerned with the fidelity to historical fact of the poem.
demands of honesty and politeness. His problem seems simply a practical one: his quiet is being disturbed. And his response is presented in terms of savoir vivre. How is one to deal with these people? But it is already implied that this stance, this way of presenting oneself as a poet in relation to other people, may not represent the last word to be said on that subject. Other versions of the self, and other tones of voice, may be required.

One dunce Pope describes, surprisingly in the context of a paragraph otherwise urbane in tone, as a "dull rogue". And the suggestion of concealed literary and financial collaboration makes him "glad of a quarrel":

All my demurrs but double his attacks,  
At last he whispers "Do, and we go snacks".  
Glad of a quarrel, straight I clap the door,  
Sir, let me see your works and you no more. (65-8)

Edwards rightly sees this passage, in the context of the picture of Pope torn between honesty and good manners that has preceded it, as a variation on the traditional theme of the good man driven to satire. He points out that at this, and at other similar points, we feel that Pope is genuinely angry, so that as he puts it, the man himself seems to be breaking out of the traditional satiric role.¹ One might equally well put it that the role seems to be animated because at least at this moment of anger its requirements fit Pope's case.

The point may be developed. Pope makes distinct uses of this stance, of the good man driven to satire, in his various poems. We have seen that in The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated Pope adopts such a passive stance as an ironic defense against an attack presented in legal terms. In this case, when he finds himself "seiz'd and tied down to judge" he is in fact allowing himself to be defined and thus compromised by other men's versions of himself. He is acquiescing in their definition

¹ Thomas R. Edwards Jr., This Dark Estate: A Reading of Pope, Perspectives in Criticism, No. 11, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1963, 104-5.
of himself as the great poet. And we have argued that his attitude to such definitions is ambivalent. Thus his acquiescence is in fact dishonest, an offense against his own integrity, against the opinion of himself he holds and seeks, through his behaviour, to sustain. The good man is then driven to satire not out of mere irritation, however natural he may make it appear that he should feel irritation. It is rather that the anger, expressed in satirical attack, is necessary if the goodness is to be sustained, if Pope is to feel confident in his integrity. In the opening passages we have discussed, he has presented himself as wanting only to be left alone. It will later become clear that the kind of independence and retirement he needs is more than a matter of being left alone. The poem proceeds through the progressive refinement and enrichment of the terms in which its theme and its hero are originally presented. Pope's anger at this point marks the first step in such a movement. It will simply not do to put up with the attentions of dunces out of politeness.

The poem continues with an abrupt transition:

Sir, let me see your works and you no more.
'Tis sung, when Midas' Ears began to spring,
(Midas, a sacred Person and a King)
His very Minister who saw them first,
(Some say his Queen) was forced to speak or burst. (69-72).

Before discussing the content of the ensuing passage, it is appropriate to consider the effect of the transition itself. Pope is capable of the utmost smoothness in his transitions, and when, as at this and a number of other points in the poem, they are abrupt, it is not the effect of negligence. The poem has an appearance of being something the poet is impelled to say: and in the light of the version of it we have been presenting, we might

1. Patrick Cruttwell, in "Alexander Pope in the Augustan World". The Centennial Review of Arts and Science, X(1966), 13-26, makes an analogous point about Pope's work as a whole, arguing that Pope is torn between involvement in and revulsion against social conflict.
alternatively say that it seems an act necessary to him if he is to retain his self-esteem. The rapid opening:

Shut, shut the door, good John, fatigued I said,
Tye up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead

begins this impression, and the abrupt transitions sustain it. By writing in this way, Pope develops a powerful sense of urgency. We feel that some compelling motive leads him to neglect an Augustan criterion of poetic excellence. And to say that this motive is personal is to say that the poem is about its author.

The motive in question is, it seems to me, the discovery and enactment of the poet's integrity we are concerned with. And the passage on Midas continues that process with a repetition of the pattern we detected in the opening of the poem. A version of the poet's motives for satire is presented, only to be almost immediately qualified and enriched by what follows. Initially, Pope says that he absolutely must speak out, that behind this major work of satire is a compulsion so immediate as to be presented as physical. Midas' Minister, or Queen, had to speak or burst.

Pope must write if he is to sleep:

Out with it, Dunciad! let the secret pass,
That Secret to each Fool, that he's an Ass:
The truth once told, (And wherefore should we lie?)
The Queen of Midas slept, and so may I. (79-82)

This apparently puts out of court the question of the satirist's moral responsibility for what he writes. It seems, again, to be a question of irritation at the spectacle of folly. But Pope sets the matter in a wider perspective. "Arbuthnot" is introduced to warn the speaker that he is putting himself in danger:

"Good friend forbear! you deal in dang'rous things,
"I'd never name Queens, Ministers, or Kings;
"Keep close to ears, and those let Asses prick,
"'Tis nothing"—Nothing? if they bite and kick?
Out with it, Dunciad! (75-9)
This is lightly put, so that a modern reader might overlook the real danger involved. We will see that later in the poem Pope is to claim that he has suffered for speaking out, if not yet at the hands of "Queens, Ministers, or Kings". Properly read, the passage will indicate a danger sufficiently real to call in question the idea that the poet speaks out merely because he is bursting to. It seems surprising that he should run the risk of being, for example, summoned before the bar of the House of Lords, as on another occasion he was, simply in order to be cheeky, as he here is, to Walpole and the Royal Family. Again, it seems as if Pope is presenting a provisional version of the situation, rhetorically effective in suggesting that he is not actuated by malice, but not to be taken as final. In assuming an insouciance that is not all he feels, he is putting on a mask. But the reader is intended to be aware that he is doing so, and to be aware that before the performance is over he will change it for others, less stylish and graceful and easy.

An implied comment from Arbuthnot carries us on to the next paragraph with the sense that an argument is being continued:

You think this cruel? take it for a rule,
No creature smarts so little as a Fool.
Let Peals of Laughter, Codrus! round thee break,
Thou unconcern'd canst hear the mighty Crack. (83-86)

The implied interjection suggests the inadequacy, or provisional nature, of the stance Pope adopted in the Midas paragraph, raising the question of moral responsibility he avoided. It would be cruel to berate fools merely to satisfy some sort of private itch. Pope's immediate response is still not entirely adequate. Alerted by the hectoring tone of "take it for a rule" we may well object that some of Pope's fools seem to have smarted a great deal. Dennis comes to mind. It remains to be seen whether Pope will answer

1. In 1723, as a witness at Atterbury's trial.
the objection more adequately than by a further insulting witticism. However, having said that, one must understand that Pope is also continuing the process of self-definition as a good poet by contrast with the deficiencies of bad ones we saw in the opening of the poem.

This becomes apparent as the poem continues with another of those apparent explosions of anger we saw concluding the first section of the poem:

Who shames a Scribler? break one cobweb thro'
He spins the slight, self-pleasing thread anew;
Destroy his Fib, or Sophistry; in vain,
The Creature's at his dirty work again;
Thron'd in the Centre of his thin designs;
Proud of a vast Extent of flimzy lines. (89-94)

It is now becoming clearer that the animal imagery which Pope uses to express his anger can also have the function of defining him as a poet through the implied contrast between the good and the bad poet. Again the suggestion is that bad writers are less than fully human. They have already been presented as "mad or vain" people who abandon their proper place in the social order under the illusion that they are poets. Here this notion is given a moral and psychological dimension. In their vanity, the scriblers are insensitive to criticism, unaware of how they really appear to others. Thus they are cut off from human community in one of the ways in which it shapes the individual personality. The only company left them is that of their own kind, with whom they form a kind of anti-society through a compact of mutual flattery:

And has not Colly still his Lord, and Whore?
His Butchers Henley, his Free-masons Moor?
Does not one Table Bavius still admit?
Still to one Bishop Philips seem a Wit? (97-100)

And the satirist's role is in consequence ingeniously defined as harmless and innocent:
Whom have I hurt? has Poet yet, or Peer, 
Lost the arch'd eye-brow, or Parnassian sneer? (95-96)

He is a kind of midwife to the truth. He places these people beyond the pale, and among their own kind, where they belong.

It will not become fully apparent till later in the poem how consistently the antithetical self-definition operates through all this. We have seen already how Pope is concerned with what other people think of him, how he feels he has to reject, yet cannot unequivocally reject, the flattering esteem of those who apply to him. The point is now reaffirmed:

"But Foes like these!"—One Flatt'rer's worse than all;
Of all mad Creatures, if the Learn'd are right,
It is the Slaver kills, and not the Bite.
A Fool quite angry is quite innocent;
Alas! 'tis then times worse when they repent. (104-108)

Again, the animal imagery suggests more than hostility. The poison he would die of if he acquiesced in the flattery of the dunces is vanity. And he goes on to define and reject the social circle in which the dunces move specifically in so far as they are writers.  

One dedicates, in high Heroic prose,
And ridicules beyond a hundred foes;
One from all Grubstreet will my fame defend,
And, more abusive, calls himself my friend. (109-112)

One may at this point begin to feel that Pope is beginning to insist too much. The last line bespeaks a degree of disdain that Pope has not quite integrated into the thematic pattern of the poem: he is revealed as feeling more strongly than he has confessed or explained. Again, we may read this as a part of the equivocal nature of his attitude. He has shown us that a man exists both in terms of what he feels himself to be and in terms of the ways others see him. Pope obviously feels himself to be a poet in a totally different sense of the term to any which he would be willing to

1. For a historical analysis of this group, see Pat Rogers, Grub Street: Studies in a Subculture, London—1972. Rogers makes it clear that Pope is talking about an actual social group.
apply to the dunces. But this public identity of a poet rests in part on their opinion.

Pope turns out to have another ace up his sleeve. His last word on the subject of unwanted admirers is said through the following passage, in which he presents them as ascribing to him the defects of the classical poets:

There are, who to my Person pay their court,  
I cough like Horace, and tho' lean, am short,  
Ammon's great Son one shoulder had too high,  
Such Ovid's nose, and "Sir! you have an Eye—"  
Go on, obliging Creatures, make me see  
All that disgrac'd my Betters, met in me:  
Say for my comfort, languishing in bed,  
"Just so immortal Maro held his head:"  
And when I die, be sure you let me know  
Great Homer dy'd three thousand years ago. (115-124)

This paragraph is a remarkable achievement. Pope may be once again imitating another poet. Ben Jonson begins a poem with two comparable lines:

Let me be what I am, as Virgil cold;  
As Horace fat; or as Anacreon old. 1

But he is not alluding to Jonson, in whose poem self-deprecation plays no further part, and if he is imitating he has once again made imitation into a mode of self-discovery. Pope's person and physical condition were known to his contemporaries. He was often ill, deformed, 2 and his enemies did not scruple to mention it in their attacks on him. 3 The paragraph thus touches on sensitive areas; and it does so with marvellous ingenuity. The enemies who attacked Pope's deformity are silenced because Pope mentions it himself and also because the fact that other and unassailable poets

shared it shows the weakness of the argument that it has some bearing on the quality of his verse. If however it were Pope in his own voice who directly made these points, in direct rebuttal, he would seem to be smarting, and would seem to be vain. But he does not do so, for he is also ridiculing those who do: his *soi-disant* friends are also silenced, because they attempt to placate him in so ridiculous a manner. The whole manoeuvre is certainly ingenious, but one is in the end willing to take it as a *tour de force* redeemed from the danger of being over-ingenious by the courage that is as much a requirement for such perfection of tonal control as Pope's undoubted rhetorical dexterity.  

And in context, the passage has a further thematic implication. It is not only for his enemies that Pope's illness and deformity comes to have metaphorical implications. His enemies speak of the mark of Cain: and clearly, to be always ill and deformed will make a man feel that he is in some sense set apart, not as other men, if only because it will be evident to him that he is perceived as such. Pope goes on in the next paragraph to acknowledge that he is set apart as a poet, and to associate his poetry and his illness:

> Why did I write? what sin to me unknown  
> Dipt me in Ink, my Parents', or my own?  
> As yet a Child, nor yet a Fool to Fame,  
> I lisp'd in Numbers, for the Numbers came.  
> I left no Calling for this idle trade,  
> No Duty broke, no Father dis-obey'd.  
> The Muse but serv'd to ease some Friend, not Wife,  
> To help me thro' this long Disease, my Life,  
> To second, ARBUTHNOT! thy Art and Care,  
> And teach, the Being you preserv'd, to bear. (125-134)

The first couplet of this admits that the writer is a man set apart. One sense in which it does so has been considered by Thomas E. Maresca in his book on Pope's Horatian poems. Maresca points out that Pope is baptized a
poet, and that the way in which he presents himself here and elsewhere in the poems is shaped by the idea that the satirist is a Christian engaged in a battle against evil. The historical foundation of his case is the idea that Pope saw Horace through the eyes of Renaissance commentators who tried to make the Roman poet into a precursor of Christianity. Maresca makes too much of an interesting idea. Both the Essay on Criticism and the Dunciad make it clear that Pope has a shrewd and moderate attitude to learned commentary. While Maresca is right to draw attention to the passage as a crucial one as regards what being a poet means to Pope, he directly contradicts the text when he claims that the poet "writes, not because of any sin, but that the works of God may be made manifest in him". He overlooks the fact that ink, in which the poet is baptised, is black; it is a black baptism. These are more than ironic allusions to the inconveniences of the literary life. We must read them in context.

In the rest of the paragraph, Pope is concerned to deny that he is set apart in any of the senses the poems has already used to describe fools. Unlike the giddy son who neglected the laws, he has not abandoned his proper social role in being a poet. And in the lines associating the Muse and disease, one of the implications is that his illness and deformity do not have the kind of bearing on the quality of his poetry his enemies suggested. His devotion to poetry has sustained him and reconciled him to himself.

Thus Pope seems to be denying that he is, as a poet, either socially or psychologically a man set apart. On the contrary, it is through the Muse that he achieved the self-assurance, the confirmation of his identity and value, that is the foundation of the integrity of any sane man. Why then, the question arises, is he in any sense an outsider? Why is the calling of a poet something to be apologised for, as the passage apologises for it,

2. Ibid., Ch. 1. passim.
3. Ibid., 95.
any more than would be the profession of a lawyer? The answer, of course, lies in the fact that Pope is a satirist: and in the remainder of the poem, it is the nature and meaning of satire that is considered and exemplified. This, transposed, is the sin that has blackened him.

It is not, however, until later that this question is directly approached. Initially Pope overlooks the special nature of his practice of poetry, and presents his problem as a consequence of his having decided to publish his work, to enter into the public arena. It seems he had good reason to do so:

But why then publish? Granville the polite,
And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;
Well-natured Garth inflamed with early praise,
And Congreve lov'd, and Swift endur'd my Lays;
The Courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,
Ev'n mitred Rochester would nod the head,
And St John's self (great Dryden's friend before)
With open arms receiv'd one Poet more.
Happy my Studies, when by these approv'd!
Happier their Author, when by these belov'd!
From these the world will judge of Men and Books,
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixon's, and Cooks. (135-146)

We have already encountered a list of names similar to this in purpose, and overlapping in content, in the notes to the first Pastoral. These notes were written for publication in 1736, and are thus roughly contemporary with the Epistle to Arbuthnot, which was written between 1731 and 1734. What is interesting is the way in which Pope's name-dropping is structurally integrated into the poem. First of all, the circle of friends described have the function of giving the poet an assured social identity, an unequivocal existence in terms of what other men think of him, to set against the uncertainty that obtains in this area in the opening of the poem. Further, the list covers social and literary eminence. And we saw in considering the the letters and the Essay on Criticism how those two are associated in Pope's
value system.¹

In this context, the list has a further thematic integration into the poem. A major part of Pope's apologetic strategy is the claim that he is a good man, charitable, a dutiful son, and given to turning the other cheek. These passages are often embarrassing, and critical accounts of them have not often gone further than the literary-historical observation that Pope is making use of the traditional commonplace of the *vir bonus.*² There is more to be said. In the last part of the paragraph quoted above, Pope repudiates any distinction between himself as man and himself as poet. He is unwilling to be considered as a mere professional poet. In summing up what his friends think of him, he gives equal emphasis to the affection and esteem they felt for him as a man, and to their judgments of his poetry: "From these the world will judge of Men and Books". And Pope is of course inviting his readers to make a similarly comprehensive judgement when he makes claims for his own virtue. We are thus invited to associated ourselves with the eminent admirers he names, and read the poem as they will.

Pope moves on to recall and justify in more detail the poetic career he has the friends of Dryden approving. Again, we may notice that the thematic coherence of the poem is being maintained as it is enriched. Thus far we have seen the poet defending his integrity by repudiating the version of his nature held and made public by his enemies and soi-disant friends. And we have seen him working toward his own version of himself, in general by the indirect method of presenting his enemies as the opposite of what he himself would be. But his own opinion of himself, and his public identity in other men's eyes, are both a product of his career as a poet,

¹ On this passage, see also Peter Dixon, "The Theme of Friendship in the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot", English Studies, XLIV (1963), 191-197.
² The idea is that the good poet must necessarily be a good man. The original version of the idea was formulated by Quintilian, who argued that the good orator must be a good man. (*Institutio Oratoria*, XII.i.)
of the actions and decisions he has made and the responses they have provoked. The poem goes on to discuss these actions and decisions. And the poem itself is one of them, thus being, in a sense we have defined, reflexive.

Pope begins by accusing himself of an uncommitted, "aesthetic" approach to poetry at the beginning of his career:

Soft were my Numbers, who could take offence
When pure Description held the place of Sense?
Like gentle Fanny's was my flow'ry Theme,
A painted Mistress, or a purling Stream.
Yet then did Gildon draw his venal quill;
I wish'd the man a dinner, and sate still. (147-152)

To observe that this is not a fair judgement on Pope's early verse, as one is tempted to do, is to miss not only the point of the remark, but also the degree of penetration in what Pope says. He is making a commitment to a different kind of poetry now (a kind which the poem as a whole defines and exemplifies). And he is also pointing to a degree of inauthenticity in his earlier verse. The last couplet quoted is the crucial one. "Yet then", in spite of the harmlessness of his verse, he was attacked. The reason he condemns his early verse is precisely that it did not defend him against attack. To fail to respond was to acquiesce in the publication of a false version of himself, and thus to be guilty of an offense against his own integrity. Now, he is as it were making up for his earlier forbearance by describing it in a very unforbearing way:

Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret;
I never answer'd, I was not in debt:
If want provok'd, or madness made them print,
I wag'd no war with Bedlam or the Mint. (153-156)

And the same anger issues in a condemnation of his earlier verse that is based on a precise understanding of its quality. "Soft" applied to verse suggests the Latin "mollis", which is an interesting word. It has two
meanings relevant to Pope's lines. In Ovid and Propertius it is used in
the phrase "mollis versus", to mean an elegaic or amatory poem, as against
"durus versus", or heroic poem. Although the distinction does not exactly
fit Pope's case, it does cast some light on it. More closely relevant is
another Latin use of the word, to describe a gentle or unaggressive answer
in debate. In the light of these meanings, and of the pejorative tone
value anyway implicit in the English word, it would be misleading to see
in the passage a simple continuation of the "good man driven to satire"
version of the motives of the satirist Pope makes some use of early in the
poem. If this were the case, the objection that attacked Dennis first would have more force than it does. As it is,
that objection is in the end beside the point, for what Pope is approaching
is an acceptance that his genius is that of a satirist, that his pen as
well as Gildon's should be a sword. So far from Pope's forbearance being
presented as a virtue, it comes to seem no more than an unsuccessful stratagem.
A man who is attacked, in respect of his morals or of his talent, has, if
he is to avoid being compromised, only the option of what means he is to
adopt in imposing his own version of himself. Silence is one such
means: it implies that the attacks are so worthless as not even to require an
answer. But it is only a means, and when it turns out not to work, it may
be repudiated or transcended.

And at the same time as it is repudiated, Pope is taking the
offensive, through the aggressive distinction between himself and his
enemies, the definition of himself by negation, which we have seen to be
a part of the poem from the beginning. In what he says about Gildon and
Dennis, he is once again denying his enemies the integrity and coherence of
human beings. The accusation that he is sneering at people for being poor

has some force, but one must also say what, in context, is wrong with
correcting because one is poor. With such a motive, one is not going to
properly pursue an activity which should spring from broader and deeper
social and cultural roots. Pope's attack is a denial that his enemies
possess important aspects of that integrity he is trying to define and claim
for himself. Thus they do not attack him because of any considered judg-
ment of his works. They lack the human freedom to attack responsibly,
being either mad or compelled by an animal need.

We find the same pattern, of an unsubmissive assertion that the
speaker was formerly submissive, in the next paragraph:

Did some more sober Critic come abroad?
If wrong I smil'd, if right, I kiss'd the rod.
Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence,
And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense. (157-160)

Kissing the rod can hardly seem an unequivocally admirable thing to do
when the rod is wielded by someone lacking spirit, taste, and sense. The
phrase "just pretence" is of course taken from Milton. Satan speaks of
"Spirits in our just pretences arm'd!"^ Thus even here Pope is hardly
defending his past behaviour. And in what follows, the submissive note
is abandoned, and replaced by a manner in which detachment is made to
bespeak disdain:

Pretty! in Amber to observe the forms
Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms;
The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the Devil they got there? (169-172)

The syntax of this, and some of the phrasing, and the use of a "we" that
means "all men of distinction" give the impression of detachment. But
it is a detachment so aristocratic as to seem like a slap in the face. And
the imagery has the same effect. The insects are repulsive, certainly, but
it is as if the verse itself preserves them in amber so they have no power

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1. Paradise Lost, 2.285.
to sting, to offend. Once again, the passage is allusive: it is a variation on a theme from some lines by William Walsh. But at the same time Pope makes it entirely his own: the way in which he combines offensive imagery with patterned syntax to give an impression of controlled anger is at this precise point in the poem just what is needed. And the performance is, I would suggest, consciously perfect. By the allusion, Pope is selecting the tradition in which his own verse is to be placed. He does the same in the earlier mention of Dryden. In the end he answers his enemies by writing well.

In the next paragraph there is still an apparent claim to have been forbearing, and it is combined with yet another change of tone. Pope now speaks out in direct moral condemnation of his enemies:

A man's true merit 'tis not hard to find,
But each man's secret standard in his mind,
That Casting-weight Pride adds to Emptiness,
This, who can gratify? for who can guess? (175-178)

And along with their depravity goes a lack of creative energy:

The Bard whom pilf'red Pastorals renown,
Who turns a Persian Tale for half a crown,
Just writes to make his barrenness appear,
And strains from hard-bound brains eight lines a-year. (179-182)

The frenetic animal energies of gliding and pressing earlier attributed to the poetasters, the buzzing of Sporus who needs to be flapped away, find an echo in the undirected movement of the thought of a bad writer:

And he, who now to sense, now nonsense leaning,
Means not, but blunders round about a meaning. (185-186)

And both are implicitly contrasted with the controlled and directed creative energy of the good poet. This latter may perhaps be mimed in the syntactic "energy" of the passage from which we have been quoting. Pope sustains with ease a twelve line sentence with a compound subject composed of a series

1. The comparison was first noticed by Gilbert Wakefield, Observations on Pope, London 1876, p.233.
of relative clauses depending on pronouns.

The passage on Addison which follows might seem to run counter to our claim that Pope is now speaking out more forcibly and directly. Edwards\(^1\) for example sees it as "the finest example in this poem of the controlled, man of good will role", and speaks of its "judicious coolness". And the history of the passage might also seem to tell against our claim that the poem has a high degree of formal coherence. It was written many years earlier, and modified for insertion into this poem.\(^2\) In fact neither of these points has any weight. We have already seen that it is not possible to take the "man of good will role" at face value. Pope makes two sorts of use of it. He has shown himself remaining artificially polite despite the pestering of his *soi-disant* friends, and he has shown himself unprovoked by the undeserved attacks on his early poems. Edwards himself points out that the first "role" alternates with outbursts of anger, and we have seen that the second is apparent defense used aggressively.

The Atticus passage is something different. Pope is for a start not talking about his past behaviour, he is presently behaving, through the passage. And what he is doing is not what he has disparagingly described himself as doing earlier in his life. He is not being defensively quiescent, or holding his hand to avoid controversy. The passage is an instance of controlled power, and of a discriminating, considered, response to maltreatment.

The use of the subjunctive serves to suggest that Pope could have put it otherwise, could have spoken more strongly, had he wished to. And he does not wish to because of his judgement of the man in question, and not because of any desire to keep the peace or his peace of mind. Edwards is right to speak of control, but the phrase "judicious coolness" seems slightly off the mark when applied to such lines as the following:

1. *This Dark Estate*, 106.

2. See below, p 247 note 1.
Shou'd such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for Arts that caus'd himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer; (197-202)

"Judicious anger" is a better phrase. Pope is speaking out, but with judgement. And this kind of response to poor treatment is precisely what Pope's condemnation of his earlier quiescence has prepared us for. When he wrote "If wrong, I smil'd; if right, I kiss'd the rod", he was, as we saw, at once justifying and abandoning his own earlier attitude. Now he has abandoned such equivocation, and is responding directly, but with the discrimination, the control, his enemies have been shown to lack.

On the question of the origin of the passage, the fact that it was written some years earlier, and inserted into the Epistle to Arbuthnot, turns out on examination to have a certain formal appropriateness. What was said above about Pope abandoning such equivocation applied to the fictive present of the poem. But as a matter of history, it may be argued that Pope did behave in the way he advocates in the passage. It seems that he wrote it and showed it to Addison when they fell out over the latter's support of Thomas Tickell's version of the Iliad against Pope's. His republishing it now is thus a vindication of an act he is able to approve. But since Addison is dead, and the dispute long forgotten, he changes Addison to Atticus and thus generalises the portrait to an exemplary condemnation of the kind of intellectual pride and dishonesty he defines and attacks throughout his poetic career.¹

And in that connection, it is clear that through the portrait Pope is once again defining his own characteristics by an implied contrast. It has often been pointed out that he syntactically "mimes" Atticus'¹

¹ For the bibliographical history of the passage see Arthur E. Case, "Pope, Addison, and the Atticus lines", MP, XXIII(1935), 187-93; and Norman Ault, "Pope and Addison", RES, XVII(1941), 428-451. (This paper was reprinted as Ch. VI of Norman Ault, New Light on Pope, London 1949.)
dishonest reserve in the way in which he reserves his own final judgement to the end of the passage. But in fact to say no more than that is misleading. He is in the end quite forthright. We have characterised the passage as being judiciously angry. There is thus an antithesis between Pope's attitude, of a reserve that is not dishonest because it does not hide what he feels, and Atticus', of a reserve that is the disguise and the weapon of malice. We will see that in the other portraits in the poem, and in particular in that of Sporus, Pope is similarly able to establish an antithesis between the weakness of the man he criticises and his own strengths as poet.1

Pope has then moved to speak out directly and in his own voice about his enemies. In the next sections of the poem he is to speak as directly about himself, to give his own version of his character and social role. It should be clear that it is formally appropriate for him to do this. He has sufficiently rejected other people's ideas of him, and in doing so indirectly suggested his own evaluation of himself. He now goes on to speak of himself openly, considering first the relationship between his sense of himself and his reputation:

What tho' my Name stood rubric on the walls?  
Or plaister'd posts, with Claps in capitals?  
Or smoaking forth, a hundred Hawkers load,  
On Wings of Winds came flying all abroad?  
I sought no homage from the Race that write;  
I kept, like Asia Monarchs, from their sight. (215-220)

At the beginning of the poem it was a question of keeping out of sight of the race that write, but the disdain manifest in the simile of the last line quoted was suppressed. And he goes on to condemn the undignified vanities of a literary world he had previously presented as amusing and irritating:

1. This point is developed by J.P. Hardy, Reinterpretations : Essays on Poems by Milton, Pope and Johnson, London ——— 1971. Hardy sees the structure of the poem as founded on the contrast between Pope's virtues and the vices of Bufo, Sporus, and Atticus. See pp. 81-2.
I ne'er with Wits or Witlings past my days, 
To spread about the Itch of Verse and Praise; 
Nor like a Puppy dangled thro' the Town, 
To fetch and carry Sing-song up and down. (223-226)

There is, in this dissociation of himself from his fellow writers, a danger that Pope will seem ridiculous. This is a danger which continues to be a feature of the ways in which he chooses to present himself in his verse, and it is one of which he clearly seems to be conscious in at least one poem, the Epilogue to the Satires. The choice as he sees it is between being ridiculous in his angry scorn for his fellow men, and being dishonest. He tends to choose the former.

His condemnation of the literary world of his day comes to a climax in, and effectively serves to integrate into the poem, the portrait of Bufo. While the portrait of Atticus had clearly, despite the change of name, applied to an individual, and had properly so applied, since Pope offers it as an exemplary response to an attack on himself, the portrait of Bufo is equally appropriately not taken from any individual patron. Pope may well have Bubb Dodington somewhere in mind, but since Dodington also appears as Bubo at line 280, the portrait should be taken as a Theophrastian character and not an allusion to any individual. Pope's concern is rather with the institution of patronage, which we have seen to be of importance in Windsor-Forest and in the Epistle to Burlington.

We can trace a sequence through the three poems. In the Epistle to Burlington he alludes effectively to the traditional ideal of the relationship between poet and patron when he rejects his own reception at Timon's "villa". And the function of the persons to whom the Epistles to Several Persons are addressed is strikingly different to that of Granville in Windsor-Forest, where Pope is prepared to present himself in part through allusion to the tradition of patronage. In the later poem, Pope is the judge of the aristocracy, approving his friends and condemning others. And in the Epistle to
Arbuthnot, he presents in Bufo the kind of patron whose vanity had destroyed the institution. Mutual flattery, and not mutual esteem, is the basis of the relationship between Bufo and his bards; and there is not even any honest financial support. Pope's conclusive rejection, for himself, of that kind of literary life comes through the assertion that Dryden was rejected by Bufo:

Dryden alone (what wonder) came not nigh,
Dryden alone escaped this judging eye;
But still the great have kindness in reserve,
He helped to bury whom he help'd to starve. (245-248)

We have seen that Pope has already used Dryden to define what being a poet means in his own case. In fact, the claim that the tradition in which he claims that he is Dryden's successor had nothing to do with patronage is dubious. Dryden's dedications can be as obsequious as anyone's. But Pope's reasons for making the point are clear.

In the next paragraph Pope goes on to extend the definition of the social identity he chooses for himself and asserts to be proper for the poet. The central characteristic of this self-definition is the desire not to be confined to the identity, or the role, of a professional poet. Pope insists on being fully human in freedom and dignity:

Oh let me live my own! and die so too!
("To live and die is all I have to do:"
Maintain a Poet's Dignity and Ease,
And see what friends, and read what books I please.
Above a Patron, tho' I condescend
Sometimes to call a Minister my Friend. (261-266)

And at the thought of being considered only as a poet, Pope's tone becomes robustly indignant:

Why am I ask'd, what next shall see the light?
Heav'n's! was I born for nothing but to write?
Has Life no joys for me? or (to be grave)
Have I no Friend to serve, no Soul to save? (271-4)
There is of course some equivocation about all this. Pope concludes the paragraph:

Poor guiltless I! and can I chuse but smile,
When ev'ry Coxcomb knows me by my Style? (281-282)

He might well smile. He had effectively concealed his authorship of the Essay on Man so as to save it from the attack it would be subject to if it were known to be his.¹ The version of himself he presents in the poem is not adequate in every detail. Our contention is simply that the poem represents an achievement in self knowledge, that as a whole it is authentic, and that it is progressively so.

This insistence on the poet as a human being in the round can be seen as part of the ethical defense of satire that is certainly part of Pope's achievement in the poem. The most sophisticated version of this approach is Maresca's treatment of the poem as Christian mythopoetic. We have already indicated a qualified acceptance of this point of view. But the qualifications are important. Pope's insistence that he does not harm the innocent by his verse, but rather uses the "lash" of his satire against their enemies is a case in point:

Curst be the Verse, how well so'er it flow,
That tends to make one worthy Man my foe,
Give Virtue scandal, Innocence a fear,
Or from the soft-ey'd Virgin steal a tear!
But he, who hurts a harmless neighbour's peace,
Insults fall'n Worth, or Beauty in distress. (283-287)

Here what in Maresca's analysis is a covert pattern comes to the surface, with disastrous results. These pious sentiments show up the practical advantages of defining oneself implicitly, by negation. After the lines

¹ Correspondence, III. 327, 351, 352, 356.
quoted, Pope's paragraph gathers strength and becomes more effectively personal as he attacks people who have pretended to be his friends while libelling him and propagating misunderstandings of his verse:

But he, who hurts a harmless neighbour's peace,  
Insult's fal'n Worth, or Beauty in distress,  
Who loves a Lye, lame slander helps about,  
Who writes a Libel, or who copies out:  
That Fop whose pride affects a Patron's name,  
Yet absent, wounds an Author's honest fame;  
Who can your Merit selfishly approve,  
And show the Sense of it, without the Love. (287-294)

And Pope goes on in the same vein for another ten lines, sustaining a sentence that in the hands of a lesser author would collapse under its own weight. The fact that part of the passage is adapted from Horace does not make it any the less personal.¹ And the fact that it is, as Benjamin Boyce points out, a formal Theophrastan "Character" that was published separately before it was incorporated into the Epistle to Arbuthnot does not make it any the less a structurally coherent part of Pope's most personal poem.² Its anger, and the pain that anger reveals, define Pope as one who needs and values friends. In speaking out as a satirist, he is being his essential self. His lapse into the bathetic in aligning himself with the party of the soft-ey'd Virgins is understandable as a defensive response to the strain of a literary life that is a warfare upon earth. But whatever the cost, he is engaged in that battle, and can only find himself in it.

There is a sense in which the portrait of Sporus which follows, and is in a sense introduced by, the passage from which we quoted above, is the climax of the poem. The Sporus portrait is introduced in that the

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previous paragraph is about a false friend described as "he", and attacked in a series of relative clauses dependant on the pronoun. And the connection is made explicit:

A lash like mine no honest man shall dread,
But all such babbling blockheads in his stead.
Let Sporus tremble...

(303-305)

Thus the passage comes as the expression of the anger implied by the previous paragraph. In it, and in the portrait of Addison, the satirist who has elsewhere been talking about himself and his art now is himself, and practices his art: he speaks out. The passage is also conclusive in that, as Elias F. Mengel has pointed out, it acts as a summary and conclusion of the line of imagery Pope has been using to describe his enemies (and unwanted friends). Thus it completes the poet's self-definition by implied contrast with those he condemns.

It seems hardly necessary, or illuminating, to say that Sporus lacks authenticity. But he clearly is described as lacking particular kinds of human coherence and wholeness. His impotence is one key theme. He is incapable of wit and beauty. Pope had earlier presented himself as passive under attack, but he made it clear in the Atticus portrait that the kind of restraint he was prepared to countenance was not to be confused with impotence. We have seen his own kind of masculine persuasive force, manifested as the syntactic energy which sustains extended sentences. Sporus is also compulsive, and directionless. He lacks the human power to decide on and take responsibility for his behaviour:

Or at the ear of Eve, familiar Toad,
Half Froth, half Venom, spits himself abroad,
In Puns, or Politics, or Tales, or Lyes,
Or Spite, or Smut, or Rymes, or Blasphemies.
His Wit all see-saw between that and this
And he himself one vile Antithesis.

(319-325)

We may further point out that Sporus lacks the kind of vitality that Pope generally allows his enemies in his dramatic portraits. This observation arises out of the allusion to antithesis, quoted above. We have seen in connection with the Essay on Man that antithesis is a thematic and structural feature central to Pope's verse. The point has been made often enough. What exactly then does Pope mean by saying that Sporus is a "vile Antithesis"? We notice that the sequence of words strung together by the word "or" are not antithetical alternatives. Nor is a see-saw antithetical in the sense the word must bear to account for Pope's best verse. His use of the figure is dialectical, as the foundation of a third insight. When Pope uses antithesis as part of his characterisation of his enemies, he is at his best delineating the vitality, the working out of the ruling passion through life, of the character. The third term of the dialectic is a sense of the strange distorted energy in human nature. Antithesis is the syntactical form of paradox:

Who breaks with her, provokes Revenge from Hell,
But he's a bolder man that dares be well:
Her ev'ry turn with Violence pursu'd,
No more a storm her Hate than Gratitude.
To that each Passion turns, or soon or late;
Love, if it makes her yield, must make her hate. (Epistle to a Lady, 129-134)

Sporus, on the other hand, is a false as well as a vile antithesis. J.P. Hardy speaks of him as a "grotesque malformation of the human". It is not only the animal imagery, but also a pattern of syntax that promises antitheses that are not provided, that generates this impression of singular deformity:

The trifling Head, or the corrupted Heart!
Fop at the Toilet, Flatt'rer at the Board. (327-8)

1. Reinterpretations, 95.
He might just as well have been fop at the board, and self-flatterer at the toilet, or have had a trifling heart and a corrupted head. He has no ruling passion, no spring of action, generating paradoxical behaviour that is expressed through the figure of antithesis. The sense in which Sporus/Hervey is a false antithesis is most clear in the imputations on Hervey's sexuality. The antithesis between man and woman is falsified by any middle term. The contradiction in Sporus between master and miss is primarily a way of showing his impotence. But the meaning of the idea of impotence is extended, both thematically and through syntactic and linguistic patterns, from the area of sexuality to that of humanity.

The explicit assertion and pervading suggestion comparing Sporus to the devil puts the seal on this reading. As we saw in the Epistle to Bathurst, Pope saves the devil for important moments. There it was Mephistopheles, a tempter comical when Balaam was rising in the world, but grim at the last. Here it is the Miltonic Satan, as Pope himself tells us in a note,¹ and the passage in which the comparison is made is the only one in which Sporus seems dangerous:

Whether in florid Impotence he speaks,
And, as the Prompter breathes, the Puppet squeaks;
Or at the Ear of Eve, familiar Toad,
Half Froth, half Venom, spits himself abroad,
In Puns, or Politicks, or Tales, or Lyes,
Or Spite, or Smut, or Rymes, or Blasphemies. (317-322)

Sporus is thus the essentially anti-human, the essentially negative and compulsive, the type of all the satirist denies himself to be. Pope's attack on him takes on some of the feeling of a crusade, a battle of champions. But the battle is not only mythopoetic. Pope gives it a psychological dimension. Sporus totally lacks integrity, authenticity. He is incapable of shaping his own life by his own decisions. And the satirist's attack

¹ Poems, IV.118, note to 1.319.
on him is thus the conclusive assertion and demonstration of his own integrity and authenticity.

It can be argued that it would have been as well if the poet had left it at that. The poem ends with a final summary and defence of Pope's life and work, and with an assertion that his parents were good people and that he has been and will be a good son. We are required, that is, to admire the poet, to assent to the proposition that he has been the innocent party in his literary warfare, and to respect him as a son. This is not the sort of response normally required by poetry. Yet the line of argument we have been pursuing does permit this conclusion to be thematically integrated into the rest of the poem, and it will be discussed in these terms.

The syntax of the paragraph (lines 334-359) in which Pope defends his record as a poet is immediately noticeable:

Not proud, nor servile, be one Poet's praise
That, if he pleas'd, he pleas'd by manly ways. (336-337)

We note first of all the recurring insistence that man and poet be taken together. Equally important is the way in which Pope signals his presentation of his public identity as he would have it be, "one poet's praise". The reference to himself in the third person and impersonally as "he" and "one poet" is the syntactic form of the idea "myself as others see me". We saw how at the beginning of the poem Pope was unwilling to consider himself as a poet in the same way as most of his contemporaries so considered him. In the course of the poem we have suggested that he works out his own version, becoming himself as he writes. Now he attempts to present this self he has been building up in the historical dimension as something achieved, and of whose historical survival in "praise" he is assured. The life of "one poet" is presented with a syntactic claim to objectivity through the use of the third person and the simple past tense: "he stood...laugh'd...". And at the end of the paragraph Pope claims this identity for himself with a reversion to the first person:
Welcome for thee, fair Virtue! all the past:
For thee, fair Virtue! welcome ev'n the last! (358-359)

The syntax of the passage also has the effect of making Pope seem entitled to associate himself with the party of virtue. Lines 347-356 consist of a series of noun phrase objects, governed by "laugh'd at", of the form "The + Noun + participial or relative clause modifier". Pope's use of the indefinite article is most effective; it makes him seem to be referring to a series of facts, and also suggests that these facts are typical and relevant. And it is the accumulation of the noun phrases in this structure that rhetorically substantiates the claim to virtue. The list, presented as factual in the way described, is a long one, so that it appears as if "one Poet" has endured and overcome a great deal of adversity. Pope's claim is thus to an embattled virtue, and the virtue emerges as a historical fact, the outcome of what he has endured.

"The last" thing he claims to have endured is as follows:

The Whisper that to Greatness still too near,
Perhaps, yet vibrates on his SOVEREIGN's Ear—. (356-357)

This provides a transition to the next paragraph, in which Pope makes a final statement on another theme we have traced through the poem, the question of the extent to which being a satirist makes him socially an outsider. "Arbuthnot", who has seemed more and more to agree with the poet up to this point, makes his final appearance with a pertinent objection:

"But why insult the Poor, affront the Great?"¹ (360)

Had Pope done this — and he has given the appearance of doing it — he would deservedly be a social outcast, and it would be proper for his sovereign to take action against him. The appeal is a specious one, suggesting an "augustan" application of common sense to social life. If he wants to live in peace, all Pope need do is be charitable and prudent.

¹. It is at this point particularly clear that, as U.C. Knoepflmacher argues in "The Poet as Physician: Pope's Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot", MLQ.XXII (1970), 440-449, the "Arbuthnot" figure in the poem is fictional and dramatic.
The intervening voice is that of an average successful man, who is generally in harmony with the society which has accorded him success. Thus Pope is pushed into defining exactly what it is that sets him as a poet apart from other men.

What he says is that he is committed to his own moral insights, and that the value systems suggested by "Arbuthnot", those of prudential common sense and of the existing social order, must be superseded by these insights. The verse itself is the authority for his claims:

A Knave's a Knave, to me, in ev'ry State,
Alike my scorn, if he succeed or fail,
Sporus at Court, or Japhet in a Jayl,
A hireling Scribler, or a hireling Peer,
Knight of the Post corrupt, or of the Shire,
If on a Pillory, or near a Throne,
He gain his Prince's Ear, or lose his own. (361-367)

Pope here picks up and subverts the neat and sensible antithetical structure of Arbuthnot's objection. The need for deference to the great implied by the difference between "insult" and "affront" is denied as the poet directly asserts his own scale of valuation through syntactic parallelism: "Sporus at Court, or Japhet in a Jayl", "A hireling Scribler, or a hireling Peer". Pope's point of view is defined by the fact that he does not feel the same about the two sorts of criminals. It may be taken that Knaves in Jayls are reprehensible: the attack is aimed at people who do not live up to their rank. Pope may seem a little too aggressive in answering the question about the poor. They are easily condemned as knaves, failed and degraded, rather than in relation to any positive ideal of how they ought to behave. The at least arguable notion that they are deserving of some sort of sympathy just because they are poor is brushed aside as a sentimentality—at least until the next paragraph, where Pope claims that as a man, he has done all that charity, and not mere prudent decency, has required of him:
Yet soft by Nature, more a Dupe than Wit,
Sapho can tell you how this Man was bit
This dreaded Sat'rist Dennis will confess
Foe to his Pride, but Friend to his Distress. (368-371)

That is self-indulgent in tone, and worse, it runs counter to much of the rest of the poem.

The trouble is that in making the kind of distinction he does between himself as man and satirist, he is implying that he is only a part-time satirist, as it were an executioner who loves children. One must discriminate carefully here. One implication is that to be a satirist is to hold a kind of judicial office in which he is necessarily and professionally foe to pride and vice. This notion is one which Pope is to develop in later poems: but he does not there juxtapose it with the assertion, however true, that he has a heart. And in fact, as Pope goes on to give more examples of his kindness, the tone seems to gravitate—and the word is used advisedly—back to something much more acceptable. The lines:

So humble, he has knock'd at Tibbald's door,
Has drunk with Cibber, nay has rhymed for Moor (372-373)
bring us back to satirical attack. And Welsted is firmly accused of being a liar. One is tempted to suggest that Pope is disowning his softness by Nature, and so on. But of course historically one can say a certain amount in support of his claims. The important point is that Pope's tone falters when he starts telling us he has been a nice person, and at the same time, the way in which he does so turns out to be thematically incongruous with the rest of the poem.

There is a comparable problem about the rest of the poem's conclusion. Pope's remarks on his parents can to a certain extent be defended as congruous with the rest of the poem.¹ His portrait of his father is

¹. They are also, of course, part of the "good man" defense—we take that for granted, and go on to consider whether they are aesthetically defensible.
explicitly presented as an ideal for himself: "Oh grant me thus to live, and thus to die!" But his father was not a poet, and not a sick man, and the passage lives because we are always conscious of a contrast between the father and the son which serves to define the latter's particular fate as a poet. Thus Pope cannot exactly walk innoxious through his age, and he is learned, and knows more language than the language of his heart, and even if he were given to temperance or exercise, his health would remain as poor as ever. We thus have a definition by negation, by contrast, with the contrast the other way round, the contrast being with someone happier, and conventionally more admirable, than Pope. And this is a neat conclusion. Unfortunately, it is far from clear that Pope intends the passage to be read as we have read it. His concluding couplet suggests that he may be claiming he has used no language but the language of his heart. There is no reason to extend the application of "Oh grant me thus to live" only to those features of his father's life we may agree to resemble his own.

The problem comes to a head in the concluding paragraph. Pope's self-dedication to caring for his mother in her age and sickness does have some degree of metaphorical fitness. As satirist, he is a surgeon to the ills of the body politic. As a man, he cares for the health of those close to him.¹ We may remember that his doctor, Arbuthnot, was presented as "preserving" his being, while his Muse taught him to bear it. There is thus some sort of metaphorical coherence in the poem, particularising the vir bonus commonplace, that encompasses the last paragraphs. And the final line, "Thus far was right, the rest belongs to Heav'n", as well as concluding Pope's presentation of himself as Christian Soldier, is, on the psychological plane, an effective broadening of the context. "Thus far was right" implies that the poem has gone well, and the poet has gone well, so

¹ This point is developed by Knoepflmacher in "The Poet as Physician: Pope's Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot", 440-449.
far, and the last phrase, as well as being suitably pious, suggests how important Pope thinks the whole enterprise is. Poetry is his life. It follows that the final judgement belongs to Heaven.

It will be argued that the two dialogues of the poet are more serious and interesting than has been noticed, predominantly as regards the varieties of the poet presented in them, not that into conversation in long form turns on the character of the "Friend" with whom the poet engages, implies as debating. It has generally been assumed that as companion the same "Friend" in the two dialogues, and that each character is at once realistic and corrupt. It will be argued that we are not dealing with exactly the same character, and that in neither case will it do to describe him as easily foolish. Pope scores a number of easy debating points over his fictive "Friend", and certainly leaves us with the impression that he has meant the day for the truth in countering the latter's arguments. But he also uses his interlocutor to point out the points at which his own position, his "Stance" as man and poet, is most vulnerable. This is a development of a technique we found in the Eloist to Aristophanes and in the necessary imitations. The effect is that Pope is able to combine polemic, through the defeat in argument of his opponent, with self-discovery, forcing the need to respond to exposure of the weaknesses in his position.

One exception to the contention that critics have not done justice to the function of the "Friend" is H. A. Shapiro, who suggests, among other things, that this figure represents Pope's disinterested inclination to compromise, and that the debate in the poems is the process of diminishing. The long and complex opening speech of the Friend towards the acceptance of this point, he tells Pope near the beginning with the poet's explicit permission! Imitations of Homer is that "wherever, Sir, was Delphi, that near..."

1. Now, for example, describes him as "somewhat detached, sometimes a cool, mild wit..." and not a little stupid. However, the main point is that the poet's second dialogue of Pope, 1713, and 1714, and it was by far the greater discriminating between the Friend in the first and second dialogues.
2. T.R. Boothe, This Dark Balance: A Reading of Pope, Berkhamsted
The Epilogue to the Satires is Pope's final version of himself as man, poet, and satirist. It is final both chronologically and thematically. It will be argued that the two dialogues of the poem are more subtle and interesting than has been noticed, particularly as regards the version of the poet presented in them, and that this complexity in large part turns on the character of the "Friend" with whom the poet presents himself as debating. It has generally been assumed that we encounter the same "Friend" in the two dialogues, and that this character is at once foolish and corrupt.¹ It will be argued that we are not dealing with exactly the same character, and that in neither case will it do to describe him as merely foolish. Pope scores a number of sharp debating points over his fictive "Friend", and certainly leaves us with the impression that he has saved the day for the truth in countering the latter's arguments. But he also uses his interlocutor to point out the points at which his own position, his "stance" as man and poet, is most vulnerable. This is a development of a technique we found in the Epistle to Arbuthnot and in the Horatian Imitations. The effect is that Pope is able to combine polemic, through the defeat in argument of his opponent, with self-discovery, through the need to respond to exposure of the weaknesses in his position.

One exception to the contention that critics have not done justice to the function of the Friend is T.R. Edwards, who suggests, among other things, that this figure represents Pope's disowned inclination to temporise, and that the debate in the poems is the process of disowning.² The long and complex opening speech of the Friend reveals the importance of this point. He tells Pope that the trouble with the poet's recently published Imitations of Horace is that "Horace, Sir, was delicate, was nice", and

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¹ Aden, for example, describes him as "somewhat foppish ... and presumptuous, a good deal vicious, and not a little stupid." (Something Like Horace, Kingsport Tennessee 1969, 19). But he does (p.24) usefully discriminate between the Friend in the first and second dialogues.

that Horace's style "Could please at Court, and make AUGUSTUS smile",
while Pope with his intransigence only irritates his friends, and damages
his own poetic reputation:

And where's the Glory? 'twill be only thought
The Great man never offer'd you a Groat. (I,25-6)

The implications that Pope writes for popularity or for money are of course
easily repudiated. But the suggestion that Pope's resistance to bribery,
that solitary and conspicuous honesty he makes so much of in this poem
and in others, will only be misinterpreted as the result of pique, is not
so easy to counter. Throughout the poem, and particularly at the end,
Pope presents himself in the guise of the poet as moral hero:

Yet may this Verse (if such a Verse remain)
Show there was one who held it in disdain. (I,171-2)

The Friend's suggestion undermines this stance by making it seem ridiculous.
And, as Edwards has argued, Pope's tone at the end of both of the "Dialogues"
of the Epilogue to the Satires does appear ridiculous to some degree.¹
It is generally only the insane who claim to be the only virtuous men
living.

The point may caution the reader against a too easy dismissal
of the Friend. We are not denying that much of what the latter says, both
at the beginning of the poem and throughout it, at times makes him seem
both foolish and corrupt. It is rather that Pope's argumentative victory
is not over a contemptible opponent. Some points are made that he has to
answer. And one may go further. There are moments at which the Friend
says things with which we must agree as readers, and with which we must
presume Pope to in some sense agree. We have already considered, in
connection with the Imitations of Horace, the remark that "...Horace, Sir,
was delicate, was nice". It is most accurately described as heretical, an

exaggeration of an important truth. To sort things out we must look in some detail at the opening of the poem.

The first ten lines are as follows:

Fr. Not twice a twelvemonth you appear in Print,
And when it comes, the Court see nothing in't.
You grow correct that once with Rapture writ,
And are, besides, too Moral for a Wit.
Decay of Parts, alas! we all must feel—
Why now, this moment, don't I see you steal?
'Tis all from Horace: Horace long before ye
Said, "Tories call'd him Whig, and Whigs a Tory."
And taught his Romans, in much better metre
"To laugh at Fools who put their trust in Peter." (I,1-10)

This does anatomize, in the person of the Friend, a kind of folly. The antitheses between correctness and rapture, and between morality and wit, indicate that the Friend does not understand the nature of these important literary virtues. And his comments on plagiarism indicate that he has totally missed the point of the *Imitations of Horace*. On the other hand, one may say that there is an old and eminent aesthetic tradition according to which it is a poet's business not to seem too moral for a wit, to teach only at the same time as he pleases, and another tradition, developed by Pope himself in the *Essay on Criticism*, according to which it is no use being merely correct. Further, part of the point of the *Imitations of Horace* is precisely that Pope and Horace should seem to be really similar, that Pope's political independence should be sustained and made to seem admirable by the precedent of Horace's. The Friend's remarks suggest that as a matter of fact, this rhetorical strategy has not worked. Of course we do not primarily read it this way, because the Friend is no exemplary judge. But the reading is latent.

We can clarify what Pope is doing by recalling the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, which is thematically and generically the closest of Pope's
poems to the Epilogue to the Satires. We saw that one of the concerns of that poem was to bring together what other people thought of Pope and what he thought of himself. This is the function of the Friend in the later poem, with the difference that the case for the opposition is allowed to be made much more strongly.

The Friend's comparison of Pope and Horace is even more nicely handled by Pope. The opinion is gives as that of "Bubo", and Pope's note to this reads "Some guilty person very fond of making such an observation". This would seem to discredit the opinion that "...Horace, Sir, was delicate, was nice". But in a later note Pope also quotes Persius:

Omne vafer vitium ridenti Flaccus amico
Tangit, & admissus circum praecordia ludit

as the origin of his own couplet:

An artful Manager, that crept between
His Friend and Shame, an was a kind of Screen. (I,21-2)

And the Twickenham editor points out that Pope has borrowed from Dryden's translation of Persius in translating the line. The view that Horace was not the most forthright of satirists had some traditional sanction. It emerges in the comparison between Horace and Juvenal which Dryden makes in his Discourse concerning Satire. There are then some grounds for suspecting that Pope may be using the Friend as a stalking horse rather than as a scapegoat. He would not wish to directly praise himself at Horace's expense, so he puts an exaggerated version of the attack on Horace in the mouth of one already discredited as an "Impertinent Censurer". The point is a difficult one. As we said in another context, the differences between Pope and Horace as the Friend sees it does not quite correspond to the difference for the modern critic. Horace would not have been likely to mention Sir Billy, Blunt, Higgins, Sappho, and so on. But Pope

1. Poems, IV.299, note to 1.22, 2. Dryden, Of Dramatic Poesy and other Critical Essays, ed. George Watson, London 1962, II.132. Dryden goes so far as to describe Horace as "a temporizing poet, a well mannered court slave, and a man who is often afraid of laughing in the right place; who is ever decent, because he is naturally servile."
may not have known this. Niall Rudd says of traditional commentators on Horace that "in their treatment of Horace's names they usually assumed that they were dealing with real individuals", and he goes on to show that "this like other simple theories, is far from adequate". And it has recently been argued that Pope's view of Horace was very much influenced by the accretion of glosses and commentaries the text had gathered over the centuries. However that may be, one can confidently say that while seeming to intend a criticism of Pope for not writing as artfully as Horace, the Friend is made to suggest a perspective in which Horace appears less honest than Pope.

The suggestion that the Friend is in some sense a mouthpiece, or stalking horse, of the poet, thus arises out of his comparison of Pope and Horace. A further point is that the Friend seems not only to agree with Pope's evaluations of the individuals mentioned, but to be in some sense responsible for the shrewd irony with which they are expressed. Consider the couplet:

An artful Manager, that crept between
His Friend and Shame, and was a kind of Screen. (I.21-2)

This applies both to Horace and to Walpole. Pope himself underlines the second application in a note. But it is hardly possible to suppose the Friend responsible only for the first of the two, and Pope exclusively for the second. The Friend who spoke the previous couplet seems too alert for any such reading:

His sly, polite, insinuating stile
Could please at Court, and make AUGUSTUS smile. (19-20)

He does not seem to have too much actual respect for Kings. His essential position is simply that one should not say what one thinks. But even he

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3. Cf. also Rachel Trickett, The Honest Muse: A Study in Augustan Verse, Oxford 1967, 97-98: "Pope's use of Horace... has always been something of a red herring... the spirit behind his satire was at one more personal, more indignant and passionate than the Latin poet's".
does, very indirectly, say what he thinks.

How then is one going to pull all this together? The Friend's remarks require three sorts of interpretation. He says things that undermine claims for poetry that Pope makes elsewhere in the poem. He also says things that make it apparent that his understanding of aesthetics and the morality of poetry are inadequate. Finally, he seems to share Pope's views on the moral character of some of their contemporaries, deploring only the poet's way of expressing these views. As a dramatic character, he is thus complicated to a point not far short of incoherence. But his function in the poem is to cooperate with the other speaker, "P.", in a definition of the identity and role as a poet of the responsible author, Pope. Things become clearer if we understand that while "P." is in general identical with Pope, we do not always and simply identify with and agree with the things that "P." says. Pope is behind both participants in the dialogue: both in the end are the masks of the poet, and it is the poem as a whole that is his statement.¹

Let us consider P's first answer to the Friend. It goes as follows:

P. See Sir ROBERT! —hum—
And never laugh—for all my life to come?
Seen him I have, but in his happier hour
Of Social Pleasure, ill-exchang'd for Pow'r;
Seen him, uncumber'd with the Venal tribe,
Smile without Art, and win without a Bribe.
Would he oblige me? let me only find,
He does not think me what he thinks mankind.
Come, come, at all I laugh He laughs, no doubt,
The only diff'rence is, I dare laugh out. (I,27-36)

The Twickenham editor glosses this passage as follows:

According to Warburton, Walpole owed this back-handed compliment to his having used his influence with Fleury to procure an Abbey at Avignon for Southcote, who had been the means of saving Pope's life when he was a young man.

¹ There is a comparable problem in Swift's Tale of a Tub. Swift uses, for most of the time, a fictive speaker who supports the abuses Swift is attacking, but on at least two occasions, in the Preface and the "Digression concerning madness", seems to drop the mask and speak out in his own voice.
And he also quotes the opinion of a contemporary political opponent that "never was a man in private life more beloved". These points are of critical relevance, and not merely of extraneous biographical interest. The poem is concerned with discrimination in the area of morals and politics. The Friend's opening speech assumes that satire is simply a matter of abusing people and thus offending them. Pope's first appearance proves that this is not so. What he says of Walpole appears a considered response to what he knows of the Minister: "Seen him I have, but in his happier hour/Of Social Pleasure...". And the point he uses to distinguish between himself and Walpole also pertains to discrimination. In a broad sense he and the Minister agree: "Come, come, at all I laugh He laughs, no doubt". But his kind of laughter is at once more discriminating and more honest. He does not think that all men have their price, and he says what he thinks. The implication is that his judgement is the finer and the more free. At the same time, Pope does not fall into the trap of saying about Sir Robert the kinds of thing the Friend has urged him to say about lesser courtiers. He does attack the Minister, just as far as he feels it appropriate. The last couplet is characteristic of Pope on the attack in its pleasing ingenuity. The only person at whom Walpole might have felt inclined but unable to laugh was the King. His power of course depended entirely on the King's favour. The suggestion that he would find the King amusing is thus a shrewd blow: had there been any likelihood of the King reading and understanding the poem, it might have really, if not permanently, inconvenienced the Minister.

In the next paragraph the attack continues, but again, it is an attack very much on Pope's own terms. The fact that the Twickenham editor feels it necessary to say that "Pope is undoubtedly tilting at Walpole

1. Poems, IV.300, note to 1.29.
throughout this paragraph suggests the degree of indirection in the passage. The Friend is speaking again:

F. Why yes: with Scripture still you may be free;
A Horse-laugh, if you please, at Honesty;
A joke on JEKYL, or some odd Old Whig,
Who never chang'd his Principle, or Wig:
A Patriot is a Fool in ev'ry age,
When all Lord Chamberlains allow the Stage:
These nothing hurts; they keep their Fashion still,
And wear their strange old Virtue as they will. (1,37-44)

Again the implications of the tone of the passage are hard to define. It does not seem to me that one can take the Friend to be speaking innocently, recommending this course of action to Pope in the honest if corrupt conviction that it is the best. In other words, the irony is not dramatic, the consequence of a difference between what the speaker knows and what the reader knows. On the other hand, if one assumes that the speaker is being ironical, he comes very close to being a direct "voice" of the poet. There seems little reason why Pope should not speak the passage, ironically. And to see what reason there is, we have to consider the poem as a whole. The tone with which Pope as "P." ends it is one of passionate earnestness, approaching "enthusiasm" in a sense derogatory in the eighteenth century. The crucial difference between this and the knowing irony of the Friend is that the latter is in essence without hope as well as being without illusion.

The point becomes clearer if we look at the next two distinct paragraphs, also attributable to the Friend. The paragraph beginning "If any ask you, 'Who's the Man, so near/His Prince' " is neutral and

1. Poems, IV.300, note to 1.137.
2. Rachel Trickett indirectly supports this point by making a most uncharacteristic error: she says that Pope puts the passage in question into Fortescue's mouth. (op.cit., 220-221) The "Fortescue" of Imit.Hor.Sat. II.1 might very well have spoken the passage, but undoubtedly did not.
analytical in tone, but cynical in its implications. It is apparently suggested that Pope should mislead people as to the person alluded to in a couplet from the Epistle to Arbuthnot by saying that it is Lyttleton, described by Pope in a note as "distinguished both for his writings and speeches in the spirit of Liberty". If he does this, there will be no trouble, because Lyttleton is confident of his virtue. If, like Lord Fanny, he were not virtuous, he would protest. From this point of view, the passage is a rather clumsy combination of a compliment to Lyttleton and an assertion that those who protest at being attacked in Pope's satires prove by the very fact that they protest that they deserve to be attacked. This might seem to be something Pope might say, but that has nothing to do with the character of the Friend. The point that attaches the speech to the Friend is the implication that Pope should mislead people in the way described. The Friend is here very clearly an alter ego for the Poet, expressing a cynicism Pope ultimately disowns, but that he has to express and deal with.

In the next paragraph the mood of cynicism is even sharper. The first paragraph asserts that direct and engaged satirical poetry is both dangerous and ineffective. Once again the Friend is circumscribing the possible justifications of Satire. "Mending" fools and taking revenge on foes had been the two justifications of personal satire allowed by Dryden in his Discourse Concerning Satire. To laugh at one's friends is safe, and their disillusionment will add to the amusement. And he goes on to half-mockingly advocate the total elimination from satirical writing of a moral judgement whose reality is nevertheless not denied:

Laugh then at any, but at Fools or Foes;
These you but anger, and you mend not those:
Laugh at your Friends, and if your Friends are sore,

1. Poems, IV. 301, note to I.47.
2. Of Dramatic Poesy and other Critical Essays, II.126.
So much the better, you may laugh the more.
To Vice and Folly to confine the jest,
Sets half the World, God knows, against the rest;
Did not the Sneer of more impartial men
At Sense and Virtue, balance all agen.
Judicious Wits spread wide the Ridicule,
And charitably comfort Knave and Fool. (I, 53-62)

This is at once a parody of the notion of *discordia concors* and a suggestion that Satire is entirely inspired by malice. On the first point we recall that Pope has himself argued that both misers and spendthrifts are part of the order of nature. The Friend is not denying the existence or the reality of Vice and Folly, Sense and Virtue. His suggestion is that in attacking only the first pair the Satirist disrupts the social order, so that it is fortunate there are "more impartial men" to redress the balance.

We can take this as a revelation of the folly of the Friend only with a special meaning for the word "folly". What he says is absurd, but we cannot suppose it to be unknowingly so. It is a parody of something Pope often says. And the other side of the attack is equally effective. It is simply assumed that all the satirist wants is to laugh at people, and that it does not matter to him who he laughs at and why he laughs.

The opening of Pope's response is nicely calculated, and confirms the view of the poem, and the friend, which we have been advancing:

P. Dear Sir, forgive the Prejudice of Youth:

Adieu Distinction, Satire, Warmth, and Truth! (1,63-4)

The tendency of the Friend's line of attack to make "P." seem naive is here made explicit and thus countered. Pope is willing to seem naive. And in his retort he achieves a tone as strong as the Friend's without lapsing into cynicism or the defensive insistence that he is a good person that marred the Epistle to Arbuthnot. He does this by being intelligently selective in his use of the traditional arguments in defence of personal satire. In rebutting the implied suggestion that he produce "harmless
Characters that no one hit", the main thrust of his argument is not that to write like that would be ineffectual in the amendment of vice. Such a claim consists of an appeal to an extra-poetic, non-aesthetic criterion, that of social utility, just as the claim to be a good man requires a biographical and not an aesthetic response. In this poem, however, Pope's assertion is rather than the kind of poetry that contains "harmless Characters..." is aesthetically unpleasing. The imagery is particularly interesting. Pope is once again defining his own kind of poetry by negation, and he does so by asking us to respond negatively to such things as "Honey", "Flow'rs", "Flow", "gracious Dew", "well-whipt Cream". There is, for this reader, an undercurrent of sexual implication in that sequence of imagery that is the source of its power. Pope is approaching an admission that the Muse of Satire is a Cankered Muse,¹ an acceptance that scorn and anger are of the essence of the genre. He is no longer disposed to apologise for being a satirist, and he openly admits that his poems will offend, and that they will not express any social consensus:

O come, that easy Ciceronian stile,  
So Latin, yet so English all the while,  
As, tho' the Pride of Middleton and Bland,  
All Boys may read, and Girls may understand!  
Then might I sing without the least Offence,  
And all I sung should be the Nation's Sense: (I, 73-8)

The point that this is a new note in Pope can be made by comparing the fourth line quoted above, about Boys and Girls, with that unfortunate malediction, in the Epistle to Arbuthnot, on verse that will "...from the soft-ey'd Virgin steal a tear". Nor is there any easy use of the status of the classics. Pope is writing in his own style, and he is fully entitled to imply that he understands the classics better than the people he is attacking. Not even in the Dunciad is there any better use of names as puns than in "...the pride of Middleton and Bland": these are certainly

1. The phrase is borrowed from the title of Alvin Kernan's The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance, New Haven 1959.
dunces made for the poem. And the passage concludes with an overt po- litical attack, on the poets who flattered the Queen on her death and failed to tell the truth about it. Thus Pope defines for himself the relation of poetry and politics.

But the poem is not over yet. The Friend's response is very much to the point. In his opening couplet he misinterprets what Pope has said with his usual dexterity.

(P.) And let, a God's - name, ev'ry Fool and Knave
Be grac'd thro' Life, and flatter'd in his Grave.

F. Why so? if Satire know its Time and Place,
You still may lash the Greatest— in Disgrace. (I, 85-8)

This again is heretical, a slight distortion of the important truth we saw emerging in the previous paragraph. Pope was saying that satire must be the open expression of the poet's feelings and judgements, that anger and scorn may be part of it, and that it must admit no social barriers. The Friend takes him to have said that satire is attacking great men. And the next couplet is an ironic act of deference to the poet's claim to moral insight:

For Merit will by turns forsake them all;
Would you know when? exactly when they fall. (I,89-90)

The word "merit" is exactly the right one in context. It implies that the speaker is making an objective assessment of the situation. And that implication is picked up again by "exactly". Pope need not worry: the truth is accessible, and the proper way to behave is clear.

In what follows, the Friend becomes once again a stalking horse for the poet. The tone is one which is not compatible with the "stance", of the poet as moral hero, that concludes the poem, so the speech is given to the Friend. But the theme is one we have frequently touched on, and it is given a new turn:
But let all Satire in all Changes spare
Immortal S—k, and grave De—re!
Silent and soft, as Saints remove to Heav'n,
All Tyes dissolv'd, and ev'ry Sin forgiv'n,
These, may some gentle, ministerial Wing
Receive, and place for ever near a King!
There, where no Passion, Pride, or Shame transport,
Lull'd with the sweet Nepenthe of a Court;
There, where no Father's Brother's, Friend's Disgrace
Once break their Rest, or stir them from their Place;
But past the Sense of human Miseries,
All Tears are wip'd for ever from all Eyes;
No Cheek is known to blush, no Heart to throb,
Save when they lose a Question, or a Job. (I, 91-104)

Courtiers, those who are part of the network of flattery and interest that is the court party, lose the capacity for human feeling and communication, as they sacrifice the power of moral discrimination. To the Friend this seems a wonderfully comical spectacle: but the indulgent irony with which he describes it is in stark contrast with the "Passion, Pride, and Shame" that come into the tone of the poem as "P.", or Pope, concludes it. The passage has the same note of effeminate softness and sweetness Pope was so scornful about in his previous speech; it is as if the kind of verse suggested by:

Hang the sad Verse on CAROLINA's Urn
And hail her passage to the Realm's of Rest, (I, 80-81)
is being parodied. And its irony is ultimately dishonest, and repulsive in its dishonesty. The point about the Friend is that like Walpole he laughs at all Pope laughs at, but in the end does not think it matters, and Pope does. His (the Friend's) vision of the infantile bliss that is the ideal state of being of a courtier is coherent with the kinds of things Pope has all the way through his career been claiming are wrong with his victims. But he has himself no sense of human misery, no capacity for shame or passion; and his function in the poem is to circumscribe and under-
line these qualities as they appear in Pope's conclusion. He is one kind of satirist, and Pope another.

The conclusion begins with an ironic and provisional acceptance of the Friend's point of view: "Virtue, I grant you, is an empty boast". And Pope also seems to withdraw from political contention:

P. Good Heav'n forbid, that I shou'd blast their Glory,
Who know how like Whig-Ministers to Tory,
And when three Sov'reigns dy'd, could scarce be vext,
Consid'ring what a Gracious Prince was next. (I, 105-108).

Pope's argumentative strategy is that of the *reductio ad absurdum*. He seems to accept both the Friend's caution and also the class values that underpin the suggestion that he should abstain from attacking the great and the powerful. Putting the two together, he comes up with a masterpiece both of wit and of moral analysis. He asserts that it is the spread of vice from men of high degree, in whom it is, by the Friend's implicit admission, natural, to the lower orders, whose lowness the Friend also takes for granted, that he cannot tolerate:

Ye Gods, shall Cibber's Son, without rebuke
Swear like a Lord? or Rich out-whore a Duke; (I, 115-116)

Is it for Bond or Peter (paltry Things!)
To pay their Debts or keep their Faith like Kings? (I, 121-122)

The Friend is thus rhetorically routed, and by a strategy, that of logical misunderstanding, that has been his speciality. But Pope's use of rhetorical ingenuity is radically different from the Friend's, in that it is now a means of achieving, and not of avoiding, direct personal satire. The King and the aristocracy are unequivocally attacked. And the thematic implications are grave, and clear. The moral health of the nation is in the hands of the King and the aristocracy: they should be examples of virtue, judgement, taste. If it can be said that they are examples of iniquity, then the state of the nation is precisely the opposite of what it should be.
Unfortunately Pope rather loses touch in the beginning of the next paragraph. We have ten lines informing us that certain members of the lower orders are more virtuous than their betters. Unfortunately, their virtue is described patronisingly, and seems to be so mild and unaggressive that one wonders how its practitioners stay alive in the world of energetic villainy Pope has just described. And there are rather too many unintended implications in the verse. Consider the following couplet:

A simple Quaker, or a Quaker's Wife,
Out-do_Landaffe, in Doctrine—yea, in Life. (I, 133-134)

This implies that it is more surprising to find a Quaker outdoing a Bishop in Life than in Doctrine: one does not see why one should expect Quakers to be stronger in theology than in behaviour. And Pope's own note, to the effect that the Bishoprick of Llandaffe was a poor one, is no help: he can hardly be praising the Quaker for living more prosperously than the Bishop. In fact, the note gives the game away, since he also says that the poor Bishoprick was "as poorly supplied". He has forgotten about the Quaker, and is attacking an enemy. Similarly, the line "Let modest Foster, if he will, excell" reveals the slackness of Pope's verse when he is praising humble virtue. The phrase "if he will" merely fills out the line. We do not need to be told that modest Foster must want to preach well before he can. By contrast, Pope makes a neat distinction in "Dwell in a Monk, or light upon a King", where his mind is on the ways of Kings.

Most of what needs to be said about the poems' conclusion has already been said in our discussion of the body of the poem. Our concern has been with the ways in which the tone of Pope's last speech is congruent with the debate between "Fr." and "P." that precedes it. Pope's achievement is to explain and justify the passionate eloquence of his assertion, through allusion to Walpole's mistress as a figure in the mould of the
Empress Theodora,¹ that Vice is enthroned in England and that the Aristocracy, the Law, and the Church all worship it. Pope uses the Friend, the satiric adversary, to conduct a discussion with himself about satire and to illustrate, with perfect control of tone, a wide range of the ways in which satire can be written. The poem is thus reflexive: it is about itself, and about its speaker. And its final couplet asserts that it is an utterance, or an act, which reveals the essential human stance of this speaker, and which will reveal it for all time.

Yet may this Verse (such such a Verse remain)
Show there was one who held it in disdain. (I,171-2)

Dialogue II
The view that the "Friend" of the Epilogue to the Satires is a manifest fool is more plausibly advanced of the second "Dialogue" than of the first. In the first 100 lines of the second poem Pope scores over his opponent so effectively that it is difficult to feel that anything the latter says can have any force. But on a closer look his function turns out to be similar to that of the "Friend" of the first "Dialogue." And the two poems are also generally similar in that both recapitulate themes that have been important throughout Pope's poetic career. The second is focussed on the question of whether it is possible for the poet to be fully integrated into the society in which he lives. Is his choice of a life devoted to satire compatible with civic respectability and normality in terms of the values of the established order? The Friends tries to pursuade Pope to write inoffensive satire, and Pope shows us why, given his judgements of himself, and of poetry, and of his own times, this is not possible. And he combines this rejection of a definition in social terms with an assertion that the order in which he does have his being is the timeless realm of artistic achievement.² He is a servant of the Muse. That is a high and

1. The allusions are explicated in James M. Osborn, "Pope, the Byzantine Empress, and Walpole's Whore," RES, VI(1955), 372-382.
2. Howard D. Weinbrot has argued that the emphasis on the dignity of satire and poetry in the Epilogue should be regarded as "a function of Pope's later Juvenalian pose rather than a function of his particular genius." (PQ, XLIV (1970), 368). The antithesis is false. Pope has been developing his own view of satire, in the light of traditional views, throughout his poetic career.
a difficult calling, and to attain the secular apotheosis that is the reward of living up to its demands, Pope is willing to reject the social order in which he lives.

In the context of this pattern, Pope makes two kinds of use of the Friend. On the one hand he is apparently unaware of what is wrong with the society the poet rejects. He totally accepts the status quo: thus he is representatively anatomized. On the other hand, he is not stupid. He has no illusions about the moral natures of the important people he advises not to offend. And his function, as in the previous "Dialogue", is to push Pope into precisely defining his position. This he does in two ways: by direct opposition, and by offered concession. He argues with Pope, and he also says things that parody what Pope says, or turn out to be heretical, similar but essentially deficient versions of it. What Pope actually does say, at the end of the poem, is, as in the first dialogue, characterised by its passionate energy and its elevated tone. Once again the poet thinks things are very bad, and seems to think he is the only person who knows it. This opinion is almost absurd, as Pope is aware. Our concern is with the way in which the poem as a whole makes it also seem necessary.

In the opening 100 lines of the poem we find a number of familiar themes. The Friend opens with a warning of legal danger reminiscent in particular of The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated. Pope's answer is a brilliant piece of rhetorical ju-jitsu:

Fr. Tis all a Libel—Paxton (Sir) will say.
P. Not yet, my Friend! tomorrow 'faith it may;
And for that very cause I print to day.
How shou'd I fret, to mangle ev'ry line,
In rev'rence to the Sins of Thirty-nine!
Vice with such Giant-strides comes on amain,
Invention strives to be before in vain;
Feign what I will, and paint it e'er so strong,
Some rising Genius sins up to my Song. (II, 1-9)
The tone of easy mastery is at one extreme of the range of tones in the poem. Pope comes to sound much less at ease than he does with this at once playful and thematically penetrating wit. We are not seriously intended to think that the passage of the playhouse act, believed by the Opposition to be leading towards a restraint on the liberty of the press, would have any effect on how Pope writes. In saying that it expedites his having the poem printed, he ironically accepts his opponent's quasi-legal frame of reference, only to turn it inside out with the claim that he cannot be inaccurate however hard he may try. The Friend is wrong in wishing art to submit to law: and Pope's ironic inversion also suggests that the reason for his error is that he divorces art from truth, thinking it to be merely a matter of invention, feigning, painting.

The Friend's retort introduces another important critical issue, that of the satirist's practise of naming his victims:

F. Yet none but you by Name the Guilty lash;
   Ev'n Guthry saves half Newgate by a Dash. (II, 10-11)

Pope's response to this is again rhetorically brilliant. The Friend is routed by being made to admit that he wants to know who the poet is talking about. And the rationale of his objection to personal satire, that it disrupts the social order, is made clear when he allows Pope to attack only a criminal who has already been hanged. In making the first of these points Pope reveals an awareness that the elevated terms in which the Augustan defense of Satire was sometimes conducted may sometimes miss the point.1 We saw in the first dialogue that he responded to a similar attack by expressing aesthetic distaste for flattery in poetry. Here he traps the Friend into admitting that he finds personal satire much more

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   "From a strictly literary point of view, what we now consider important is not whether the satirist has drawn living persons, but whether he has made them live in his satires". This is true enough, if rather more applicable to the Dunciad than the Dunciad Minor. Pope is aware that the presence of living persons makes satire more entertaining to an author's contemporaries.
interesting:

Ye Rev'rend Atheists!—F. Scandal! name them, Who?
P. Why that's the thing you bid me not to do.
Who starv'd a Sister, who forswore a Debt,
I never nam'd—The Town's enquiring yet. (II, 17-20)

It is not exactly that Pope has abandoned the idea that satire may be morally efficacious. It is rather that he has in these late poems a sharp notion of who his readers are, or at least of who some of them are, and of why his poems sell. We are reminded of Baudelaire's "Hypocrite Lecteur"—and then must think that Pope precisely does not accept Baudelaire's gloss, "mon semblable, mon frère". The development of this poem, and of the first Dialogue, leaves the poet without "semblable" in the fierceness of his anger with his times. The nearest Pope comes to the Baudelairean mode of self-knowledge is in some implication of complicity between himself and his readers in connection with the naming of names, an implication that in naming them he is pandering to a curiosity he understands, but cannot esteem.

The Friend's second line of argument is that in which he ends up claiming that Pope would be doing the right thing if he attacked only the dead thief Jonathan Wild. Rhetorically, Pope again has the advantage in that, as the Twickenham editors tells us, "Wild had become synonymous with Walpole in political journalism". But the argument has more serious implications. The Friend's point of view would, if accepted, deprive Satire of all moral and political efficacy. The Friend is made spokesman for a view of the relationship between the satirist and society in which the existing social hierarchy should be respected, the great not attacked, the very low not condescended to, and, above all, the man on the way up not impeded. The man who wants to better himself, who is "rising in the trade", is the Friend's special concern. In replying, Pope picks up the Friend's implication that it is uncharitable to attack such people, and

argues that it is surely most charitable to attack those who are the very highest, because the attack will do them the least harm:

Alas! the small Discredit of a Bribe
Scarce hurts the Lawyer, but undoes the Scribe.
Then better sure it Charity becomes
To tax directors, who (thank God) have Plums;
Still, better, Ministers; or if the thing
May pinch ev'n there—why lay it on a King. (II, 46-51)

Again, this is a neat rhetorical victory, with thematic implications.

The Friend's view of things is essentially that of a supporter of the kind of social order over which Walpole presided, and which allowed money and status and power to be acquired, through financial manipulation or the Civil List, by new men. Pope's rejection of this involves the assertion that it would be best to attack the very highest, and suggests a traditional ideal of the social order in which all are virtuous in their station, with the greatest demands being made on those at the top. We recall, from the first "Dialogue", "But shall the Dignity of Vice be lost?", here altered to "But Sir, I beg you, for the Love of Vice".

So far, then, Pope has scored a number of easy rhetorical victories over the Friend, and has also found time to begin a definition by implication of his view of the nature of satire. The Friend's next point has more force. He directly denies the moral efficacy of Satire:

Fr. What always Peter? Peter thinks you mad,
You make men desp'rate if they once are bad:
Else might he take to Virtue some years hence—
P. As S—k, if he lives, will love the PRINCE.
F. Strange spleen to S—k!
P. Do I wrong the Man?
God knows, I praise a Courtier where I can. (II, 58-63)

To the first of the Friend's points, that "You make men desp'rate if they once are bad" Pope makes no direct answer; he is able to retort as he does only because he has the Friend spoil what might be an interesting
point with the ridiculous "Else might he take to virtue some years hence...". But then he has the Friend pick up one of the implications of his suggestion that satirical assault makes the vicious desperate with "Strange spleen to S—k". Pope writes as he does out of a malice that is effectively described as eccentric: he is thus socially an outsider with, the Friend implies, the kind of public reputation of an Alceste. The point is a familiar one, and Pope counters it in a familiar way, with a demonstration that he is not like that. He praises courtiers when he can:

when I confess, there is, who feels for Fame,
And melts to Goodness, need I SCARBROW name? (II, 64-5)

And in the ensuing passage, the Earl of Scarbrow has no less than nineteen companions in the poet's esteem.

As a prelude to considering the passage, we may recall that we had occasion to regret a similar passage in the first Dialogue, where Pope praised "Modest Foster" and others. It was pointed out that Pope's verse was weak, and that he seemed to be retreating from an impressive acceptance that he was a satirist, and that being a satirist involved attacking people. Pope may be alluding to the earlier lines when he here writes "Or round a Quaker's Beaver cast a Glory". But he is also writing much more forcefully and effectively throughout most of the passage.

He begins with the image of friendship in a Country-house setting:

Pleas'd let me own, in Esher's peaceful Grove
(Where Kent and Nature vye for PELHAM'S Love)
The Scene, the Master, opening to my view,
I sit and dream I see my CRAGS anew! (II, 66-9)

These lines work as Pope intends. We do not feel that he is handing out random bouquets to prove that he is a nice person. He is describing a scene in which human beings have created an environment in harmony with human nature. And this scene also recalls, in the person of an old friend, the
continuity in his life of the values the situation symbolises: friendship, beauty, civilisation. The thematic resonances of this imagery are extensive. And before they are developed, Pope has a four-line paragraph in praise of certain Bishops which seems an intrusion, and which points up by contrast the effectiveness of what precedes and follows it:

Ev'n in a Bishop I can spy Desert;
Secker is decent, Rundel has a Heart,
Manners with Candour are to Benson giv'n,
To Berkley, ev'ry Virtue under Heav'n. (II, 70-73)

That does sound like the distribution of compliments to prove one can, in uneasy combination with the waspish note of the first line. Happily, Pope reverts to the note struck in the passage on Pelham and Crags:

But does the Court a Worthy Man remove?
That instant, I declare, he has my Love; (II, 74-75)

Oft in the clear, still Mirrour of Retreat,
I study'd SHREWSBURY, the wise and great;
CARLETON's calm Sense, and STANHOPE's noble Flame,
Compar'd, and knew their gen'rous End the same. (II, 78-81)

Pope tended to congratulate himself on his loyalty to those who were not in power. But the list of "Statesmen out of Place" of which lines 78-81 are part is made more than a list of dropped names by the discreet but firm implications it carries about the poet's view of himself and his relation to the social order. Like Shrewsbury and Carleton and Stanhope, he is the fitter for action, of his own literary kind, because he knows how to value "Retreat". In supporting, and in now praising, Atterbury, he acts with some of the courage he attributes to the Bishop. The allusion to the "Roman Spirit...and Attic Wit" of Pulteney and Chesterfield suggests that the values on which his and his friends' view of man and society depend have a classical foundation. And the lines on military and political action help to contrast these values with those the Friend represents. Argyle and Wyndham are born to lead, and can do so through both eloquence and
military talent, and are fit to do so because they are not enslaved by their passions. In the last case, there may be a subdued implication that one should as a poet combine eloquence and forcefulness, and arouse men's passions to good ends, in the same way as such men. Certainly, Pope would hope to resemble Wyndham in being "just to Freedom and the Throne": for an opposition always fending off the accusation that they were jacobites, and fighting a government entirely dependent on Royal support, this was a difficult path to walk, and a necessary one. But Pope's political affiliation with these men is not the point he chooses to mention. It is of course his friendship:

Names, which I long have lov'd, nor lov'd in vain,
Rank'd with their Friends, not number'd with their Train;
And if yet higher the proud List should end,
Still let me say! No Follower, but a Friend. (II, 90-94)

The thematic importance of this emphasis on Friendship is that this group of eminent, politically creative, classically educated people do not see him the way the Friend does, as an eccentric and malicious disturber of the public peace. They provide an endorsing, supportive social circle whose esteem compensates for, and suggests the unimportance of, the hostility of his enemies and the world. We discussed a functionally identical passage towards the end of "To Fortescue," Pope's Imitation of Horace's Sat. II i. Unfortunately, Pope will not leave it at that. The allusion in the last couplet above to the Prince of Wales, and the whole of the next paragraph, which illustrates the point that it is not only Friendship which prompts his lays, represent a reversion to the uncertainty of the lines in praise of Bishops. Pope here insists too much.

But even these passages are to some degree integrated into the poem in the way Pope's lines on his friends are. To see the thematic coherence of the poem we must digress for a moment to consider the peculiar resources of the poem about poetry, the reflexive poem. Pope, as we have
said, writes a number of these: he writes satirical poems about satirical poetry. He has refined his techniques in this area. We find in the later poems passages roughly classifiable into two groups. There is direct satirical poetry, and a kind of meta-poetry, poetry about poetry, designed to direct or modify our responses to the poems as a whole. There has been a meta-poetry that requires Pope to praise his friends, suggest what they mean to him, and even to praise other kinds of people, to show that there are people who meet his standards outside the circle of his friends. The problem is that he does not always do this very well. He can praise his friends, but he also sometimes comes under his own condemnation. The Friend's next assertion is "Then why so few commended", and Pope answers "Not so fierce;/Find you the Virtue, and I'll find the Verse". It is unfortunate that we sometimes feel that he is looking around for the virtue and producing unconvincing verse.

But there are other and more impressive examples of the interaction of what we have called meta-poetry and direct poetry in this poem. We have already touched on one: when the Friend remarked that "...none but you by Name the Guilty lash" Pope tricks him into changing his meta-poetic requirements, into asking for personal satire, by offering a passage of general satire of the sort the Friend has thought he wanted: "Ye Rev'rend Atheists!—F. Scandal! name them, Who?". The device has the effect of making the reader think clearly about his own responses to the poetry. This effect is particularly clear in a subsequent and notorious example:

Fr. This filthy Simile, this beastly Line,
Quite turns my Stomach—P. So does Flatt'ry mine;
And all your Courtly Civet-Cats can vent,
Perfume to you, to me is Excrement. (II, 181-184)

Pope here as it were refuses to be diverted into meta-poetry. His writing has in the preceding paragraph used the powerful but difficult resource of
disgusting the reader: he has spoken of pigs eating each other's excrement. The Friend objects to this. And it is notable that he does so in a way that does not involve any pretense that he and Pope are conversing: the words "Simile" and in particular "Line" refer to the written language. Pope, however, not only rejects the objection on a meta-poetic level, he immediately repeats the offense, finding another disgusting image.

The structure, and the genre, of the poem thus begin to emerge. And in the next passage to be considered, in which Pope answers the Friend's objection "But why so few commended", the structure is extended when he takes the offensive on a meta-poetic level and begins to speak directly about his view of the nature of poetry. Here we meet another important and familiar theme, that of the judicial status of the poet as historian, the man whose verdict on his contemporaries will determine how they will be remembered:

Enough for half the Greatest of these days
To 'scape my Censure, not expect my Praise:
Are they not rich? what more can they pretend?
Dare they to hope a Poet for their Friend?
What RICHELIEU wanted, LOUIS scarce could gain,
And what young AMMON wish'd, but wish'd in vain.
No Pow'r the Muse's Friendship can command;
No Pow'r, when Virtue claims it, can withstand:
To Cato, Virgil pay'd one honest line;
O let my Country's Friends illumine mine!
—What are you thinking? (II, 112-122)

In its elevated tone the passage is an opening chord to the passionately eloquent conclusion of the poem. But the Friend's responses are a crucial part of this climax. Pope is pushed into his final position, both logically and emotionally: the Friend is made to require exactitude of the poet, and also to anger him. Thus he gives voice to the poet's own uncertainty, to the attitudes and feelings rejected along the way to the conclusion. In general, Pope is trying to objectify himself as poet, to find an
assured identity as a poet. According to Professor Edwards, this identity is that of the satirist as hero.\(^1\) The Friend, on the other hand, claims that Pope's work is the product not of any such high calling, but rather of personal and political bias towards his friends, and an unmotivated malice towards those he attacks. And the reader's understanding of the poet and his poem is the outcome of the dialogue.

To do justice to this point, we need to stress the force there is in the Friend's objections. This is dramatically apparent in the way they are made to anger Pope, or rather, "P.". The phrase "—What are you thinking?" in the passage quoted above implies a questioning smile on the face of the Friend, and his opening words, "Faith, the thought's no Sin", suggest that Pope's question was aggressively put:

—What are you thinking? Fr. Faith, the thought's no Sin, I think your Friends are out, and would be in.

P. If merely to come in, Sir, they go out, The way they take is strangely round about.

Fr. They too may be corrupted, you'll allow?

P. I only call those Knaves who are so now. Is that too little? Come then, I'll comply--

Spirit of Arnall! aid me while I lye.
COBHAM's a Coward, POLWARTH is a Slave, And LYTTLleton a dark, designing Knave, St. JOHN has ever been a wealthy Fool—. (II, 122-132)

The Friend's first remark here echoes a doubt that must arise in the mind of the reader. And Pope's retort does not conclusively answer it. He implies that all his Friends had voluntarily quitted positions of power, or that they had refused offers from Walpole. It is hard to accept that the opposition to the government of those mentioned was always as disinterested as that. In a footnote Pope quite rightly said of one of them, the Duke of Shrewsbury, that he "several times quitted his employments, and was often recalled" But then he also tells us rightly, that Shrewsbury

died in 1718.\textsuperscript{1} And we can call on no less an authority than Bolingbroke himself in contending that Pope's living friends were not always as disinterested:

Whilst the minister was not hard pushed, nor the prospect of succeeding him near, they appeared to have but one end, the reformation of government. The destruction of the minister was pursued only as a preliminary but of essential and indispensable necessity to that end. But when his destruction seemed to approach, the object of his succession interposed to the sight of many, and the reformation of the government was no longer their point of view. They divided the skin, at least in their thoughts, before they had taken the beast: and the common fear of hunting him down for others made them all faint in the chase.\textsuperscript{2}

Pope makes too many ironic asides about Patriots for us to suppose him unaware of this. He does not directly deny the Friend's assertion that "They too may be corrupted, you'll allow?". And the core of his subsequent remarks is that since he does not crudely abuse Walpole, and thus is clearly no opposition hack, he should be allowed to praise his friends. This represents a diversion of the argument from the political to the personal. The imagery Pope uses to describe his relations with his friends is that of a man entertaining his guests. And the relationship with Walpole implied by the way he speaks of him is also in a sense a personal and not a political one. His compliment to the Minister is no less a compliment for being double-edged:

\begin{quote}
But let me add, Sir ROBERT's mighty dull,
Has never made a Friend in private life,
And was, besides, a Tyrant to his Wife. (II, 133-5).
\end{quote}

And he concludes his speech with a passage on Turenne (II, 150-156) that is an ironic appeal to Walpole. Pope implies that he and the minister are

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Poems, IV. 317, note to 1.79.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, Letters on the Spirit of Patriotism, ed. A. Hassan, Oxford 1926, 25.
\end{itemize}
in the end peers, and that Walpole will be as contemptuous of the behaviour of his hirelings as Pope is. The speech is effective because of its dramatic ingenuity. We see the speaker recover from his original anger, shift the ground of the argument, and achieve a tone that sets him apart from political squabbling. This makes him seem to be the kind of person he says his friends are: disinterested, capable of eloquent anger when it is appropriate, but above mere abuse.

The Friend does return to the attack. But there is a note of desperation in his tone that suggests the ingenuity of Pope's speech. And by the end of his answer he seems to have been withdrawn from the firing line and to be serving, as he did in the first dialogue, in the capacity of a stalking horse rather than that of an antagonist:

Fr. Hold Sir! for God's-sake, where's th'Affront to you?
Against your worship when had S—k writ?
Or P—ge pour'd forth the Torrent of his Wit?
Or grant, the Bard whose Distich all commend,
(In Pow'r a Servant, out of Pow'r a Friend)
To W—le guilty of some venial Sin,
What's that to you, who ne'er was out or in?
The Priest whose Flattery be-dropt the Crown,
How hurt he you? he only stain'd the Gown.
And how did, pray, the Florid Youth offend.
Whose Speech you took, and gave it to a Friend? (II. 157-167)

The strategy here is to make the reader anticipate the retort Pope eventually produces:

Ask you what Provocation I have had?
The strong Antipathy of Good to Bad. (II, 197-8)

He asks how certain people have offended Pope, but describes them and their activities in such a way as to make them seem offensive to the reader. Florid youths are ipso facto offensive, and the idea that the satirist might have some sort of public duty to castigate priests who "stain the Gown" is one that arises naturally: the Friend himself has after all found
"Rev'rend Atheists" to be scandalous.

Pope's next speech makes fully explicit the notion that some kinds of behaviour are naturally offensive, and that personal malice is not required as an explanation of his motives for satire. We have already considered the way in which the "Hog to Hog in Huts of Westphaly" image juxtaposes ideas about poetry with the immediate poetic power of the image so as to direct the reader's responses. It is also important to realise that Pope is not slapping us in the face with such an image simply out of a wish to display himself scoring a rhetorical victory over the friend. The key to the passage's thematic importance is given in the first half-line of Pope's answer to the Friend's objection:

Fr. This filthy Simile, this beastly Line,
Quite turns my Stomach—P. So does Flatt'ry mine. (II, 181-182)

It is crucial to notice that flattery is what Pope finds offensive. He has presented his own circle of friends as an image of the kind of human society he endorses, and in which he is able to be most fully himself. The antithetical image is of the kind of people he does not like personally, and of whose political views, and literary theories and practice, he disapproves. The intensity of the imagery is in the service of a considered judgement coherently made in the poem as a whole.¹

Pope's final speech is provoked by the Friend's brief interjection: "You're strangely proud". The truth there is in the phrase is amplified by T.R. Edwards. He is talking, as the Friend is, about the stance taken up by Pope at the end of the poem:

The grand assurance of tone cannot disguise the fact that this assertion of the artist's unique moral function is a virtual confession of defeat. Heroism is a function of alienation... Pope's satirist would not need to glorify his role so insistently

if every other kind of virtue had not disappeared from his world. He simply has no one to talk to.¹

That is a very helpful, but not quite exact. Pope talks to, and not only about, his friends, and his enemies, in the poem. And Edwards does not sufficiently stress the fact that Pope is not in the end attempting to disguise anything: it is the poem itself, through the points made in it by the friend, that clarifies the nature and limitations of the artist's function. The final tone is grandly, even grandiosely assured, but it is only one of a range of tones in the poem, and beyond the stance assumed by the poet in the last paragraph is the stance implied by the poem itself as an act of the poet. In the context of this larger stance, the conclusion is a kind of credo quia incredibile, a statement of faith made in spite of a full awareness of all the evidence to the contrary. The conclusive observation is that Pope gives the Friend the last word:

Fr. Alas! alas! pray end what you began,

And write next winter more Essays on Man. (254-255)

The Friend is probably supposed to mean by this no more than that Pope should write innocuous and philosophical poetry. But the reader must also think that the Essay on Man is an expression of its speaker's conviction that the world, and human society, are coherent. At least, that is its overt meaning. That seems to be what Pope wants to say. But it can seem in this poem that the speaker is less interesting in what he thinks he knows than in what he perceives as a poet. In the Epilogue to the Satires there is no confidence that things are coherent, and Pope seems to perceive such darkness around him that he is thrown back on his central resource, his art. It is the only thing in which he has faith, and the poem itself is the act of that faith. In the final analysis, that is the source of its status as art, its structural and thematic and rhetorical and imagistic coherence. It cannot be justly assessed in terms of an antithesis between

the personal and the objective. Such objectivity, such an achieved artefact was what Pope in his passion and his power personally required.
CONCLUSION: THE DUNCIAD

To end a reading of Pope's poetry by saying that detailed attention will not be given to the Dunciad might seem to put in question the value of the approach adopted. And to so end this particular reading must seem odd, given that the poem is in one indisputable sense personal. It is full of what are now called personal remarks, derogatory or ironical remarks about individuals. This conclusion seeks to provide a critical context in which justice can be done to two propositions: that these personal remarks are irreducibly personal, and must be responded to as such, however much their place in a poetic context generates other modes of response: and that the poem has a power and order in itself that is what we primarily notice when we look at it. Or— to rephrase that in the terms we have been using to discuss particular poems—that it has a speaker, and we are conscious of him, but most of the time we are more interested in what he says. And we will evidently also have to explain why this last remark does not apply to the poems we have discussed, and thus retrospectively preclude the entire thesis.

We may begin with a general consideration of the Dunciad. Most critics would agree that a case can be made out for its being Pope's best poem. And one also finds that it is regarded as his essential poem, some sort of crucial point in his poetic career in terms of the particular version of his development the critic is concerned with. Thus John Jones finds the most extended use of the resources of the couplet in the various versions of this poem.1 Thus Patricia Meyer Spacks finds in its final version the subtlest and most powerful presence of that dialectic of images of energy and control she exposes throughout the poems.2 We must set these judgements in context by looking at the poem generically.

The Dunciad is the epic, the generically major poem Pope actually wrote, even if it is not the epic he planned, that major survey of human life and nature of which the Essay on Man and the Moral Essays were to be no more than parts. It is also the evident culmination of one strand in his poetic life—the satirical. But one of the achievements of modern Pope criticism is that we now at least all agree on one point: that if Pope is to be regarded as a satirist, we cannot go on to assume that the satirist simply avenges wrongs and attacks political opponents. Pope is a poet, with a vital sense of the possibilities of his own medium. He has a sense of the complex continuities of its history, and of the actual life and power of this history as part of the language he uses to speak to his contemporaries. Technically, he was master of particular poetic forms—couplets, portraits, satires. But he also had a sense of the verbal and imaginative "grace beyond the reach of art" in poetry that all critics must somehow incorporate into their systems, or else devalue poetry.

The Dunciad is thus either more than a satire, or satire is more than castigation. We make a terminological choice, to say one or the other. To say either is to point to the fact that the poem achieves that generic uniqueness, that self-defining quality we have taken to be characteristic of the poems as a whole. We notice first of all that the Dunciad is generically self-defining in relation to other poems, by allusion or imitation or parody. But we also have to point out that critics have not only compared it with its immediate generic progenitors, Mac Flecknoe, mock epic, progress poems, classical epic: they have also adduced other major works in the English poetic tradition since Pope's time: The Prelude, The Waste Land.

1. For an account of this plan, see Poems, III-ii, pp.xxvii-xxxv, where Spence's notes of an oral version of it are reprinted.

2. Unless it is specified otherwise, by the Dunciad we mean the poem collectively, in all its versions. Allusion, imitation, and parody are annotated in the Twickenham edition (Poems, V, ed. James Sutherland).

As well as being generically unique, the poem was of especial importance to Pope, and has been of special importance to critics since. In its extended bibliographical history, in terms of the effort Pope devoted to having it published right, to revising and extending and reissuing it, it is the work he took most trouble to present to the public, and of which he had the keenest sense of the probable and ideal public impact. He was not, in his own time, proved wrong. But the poem diminished somewhat for later readers. Poems entirely other than the satirical were to the taste of Pope's nineteenth-century readers. Eloisa to Abelard then had its day. In the twentieth century a new criticism approached literature with a new apparatus and a new system, and the Dunciad came back into prominence. In a bibliography of work on Pope between 1945 and 1967 it stands with the Essay on Man and The Rape of the Lock among the three single poems under which most items are classified.¹

Its special interest in these poems tells us something about modern criticism. Under each (as a heading) we find items classifiable as answering one of two questions. How does the poem fit into its own time? And how is it formally a poem, in what dimensions does it formally cohere? There is a sense in which the Rape of the Lock is a poem in which one can ask the second question without previously doing one's duty on the first. Although scholarship has played its part in illuminating it—through research on Pope's mythology, for example—it can be more immediately approached than anything else Pope wrote. It is not, as is the Essay on Man, so extensively embedded in an intellectual context that one has to research it before reading it as a poem. With the Essay on Man, there has been much explication in the context of the history of ideas, and some attempts to see the poem as a work of art in terms of particular aesthetic approaches—through imagery, rhetoric, tone. With the Dunciad, there has also been much explication, but also a more

coherent and convincing demonstration that the poem is a complex work of art, that it does generate interesting answers if we put to it a wide range of the questions criticism has taught us to put to poems. Ideally, of course, the critic and the scholar cooperate: and in the best work on the Dunciad this has been the case.

The approach to the speaker we have been following in this thesis can be placed within the context we have outlined above. From the historical point of view, it has been shown that Pope extensively alludes and imitates, and it has been concluded that his speakers are imitations. They are, of course: but imitations of himself, and not only of Horace. Imitation is something Pope does, and it goes with the other things he does to determine our response to his poems. From the critical point of view, it has been shown through close reading that the poems are extensively coherent and self-subsistent as poems. However, in one dimension, they have not been read closely enough. Lionel Trilling makes the point:

In its dealings with personality this [new] criticism played an elaborate, ambiguous, and arbitrary game. While seeking to make us ever more sensitive to the implications of the poet's voice in its unique quality, including inevitably those implications that are personal before they are moral and social, it was at the same time very strict in its insistence that the poet is not a person at all, only a persona, and that to impute to him a personal existence is a breach of literary decorum.¹

Thus in relation to the speaker there has not been a proper coherence of historical and critical approaches. A critical error has been compounded by the misappropriation of a historical observation.

What, then, of the speaker in the Dunciad? Has he been misunderstood? We contend that he has, but that he has—also been understood, definitively. Patricia Meyer Spacks has written of the Dunciad that:

...Unlike classical epic, which reflects an agreed-upon notion
of external reality, the Dunciad challenges the external
reality of cultural decay by the internal reality of the
poet's ordering mind. That mind includes the energy of
action: one feels it forming meanings, declaring the
significance of individual perception and judgement. The
figure of Pope-the-poet becomes the true epic hero, the
"action" of his psyche the action of the poem.  

We can generalise this point. The Dunciad as a whole is the final self-
defining utterance of the poet. In its linguistic, imagistic, allusive richness it is the definitive exercise of his art, and in its scope, its grasp
of madness and reason, energy and control, the rational and the grotesque, it is the most powerful product of his imagination. And because it is
these things, it is also his definitive political and critical utterance:
it is through his art that he defines his relationship to his own time and
its art. Thus one is in a sense dealing with the speaker whatever one says
about the Dunciad. Considering the poem from his point of view, one is
immediately involved in a general critical reading. And what Professor Spacks
does when she writes about the poem herself is to consider it as a structure
of images, of energy and control, that finds its keystone in the reader's
sense of the poet's command over energy, a command that she describes in
the lines quoted as his "energy of action".  

That is a proper critical approach to the speaker doing justice
to his authenticity, to the authenticity of his poem, and to the relationship
between them as we defined these terms in our Introduction. But it is
not quite the approach we have been adopting in reading the other poems. We
have paid special attention to the points at which in other poems the medium
is not clear, the points at which some incoherence or some special complexity
in the nature of the speaker  is important in our response. We have for

1. Patricia Meyer Spacks, reviewing a study of the Dunciad in PQ,  
LI (1972),  748.  
2. Cf. P.M. Spacks, op.cit., 84-133.
example found in the Moral Essays some generic incoherence based on conflicting "voices" in the poems, and an attempt to define and achieve a specifically and authoritatively poetic voice. In the Horatian poems we have stressed the subtlety of Pope's use of Imitation, a use that does not involve any disappearance on his part: he remains himself the responsible poet-speaker. In the apologetic poems we have discovered a special relationship among the things Pope says as himself and about himself, a relationship that enables the poems to achieve considerable power and authority as personal statements.

None of these approaches are extensively rewarding with the Dunciad. Pope speaks with a coherent, uniform voice; he uses a language that derives some of its resources from imitation, but that certainly does not involve his assuming the guise of some one other poet. And his presence is in an exact sense uniform. Only rarely in the poem itself is there an explicit "I" figure or a "we" including the speaker. This, like the Rape of the Lock, is a narrative poem about fictive events. And it is these events we directly perceive. We are not aware of the mediating presence of an individual either explicit or implicit. The point can be clarified if we consider the case of Eloisa to Abelard. This is also in a sense a poem concerned with events, but these events are at one remove, remembered or imagined by the speaker, and consequently our perception of them is clouded by confusion as to the nature of that speaker. In the Dunciad Pope is simply and unequivocally present as poet and satirist. There is no confusion about what he is doing, and he is simply doing it, without any sense that he needs simultaneously to define it. The poem is personal in that it is the utterance of a personality, but impersonal in that it is not to any great extent mediated by one. And we have been concerned with poems mediated by a 'personality' present in them.

Within the scope of our enquiry, then, we are limited to considering

1. We do not consider The Rape of the Lock for the same reasons as we treat Dunciad only briefly. To discuss its speaker would be to discuss the poem itself.
to what extent, if any, the Dunciad is mediated by a personality, and if it is, to what effect? And we thus come back to the questions with which this thesis was introduced. In what ways are the speakers of the poems present and used? And what is the relationship between the speakers and Pope? The simple answer is that the speaker is used to speak the poem, and that he is Pope. But that answer does require to be amplified and qualified in two respects: and it is with these, and their implications, that we will conclude.

There is first of all the fact that the poem in all its versions does begin with an allusion to the speaker, and the climactic fourth book also so begins. At the beginning of the poem we have:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The Mighty Mother, and her Son who brings} \\
\text{The Smithfield Muses to the ear of Kings,} \\
\text{I sing. Say you, her instruments...} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(I, 1-4)

And this is followed a few lines later by a dedication of the poem to Swift, where the dedicator is also implicitly present:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mourn not, my SWIFT, at ought our Realm acquires,} \\
\text{Here pleas'd behold her mighty wings outspread} \\
\text{To hatch a new Saturnian age of lead.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(I, 26-28)

The fourth book also begins with the speaker:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ye Pow'rs! whose Mysteries restor'd I sing} \\
\text{To whom Time bears me on his rapid wing,} \\
\text{Suspend a while your Force inertly strong} \\
\text{Then take at once the Poet and the Song.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(IV, 5-8)

1. These quotations are from the final, 1742 version of the poem.

These allusions to the speaker are in passages about the nature and theme of the poem itself. The speaker is present in generally defining the nature and context of what he has done. The opening lines set the poem in the contexts of other epics and their dignity, and the indignity of London life. The dedication to Swift is at once a compliment to Swift, and a manipulation of him. It is also both an assertion that the poem is at home in good company, and a guide to its nature and excellence. The good company...
is that of Swift, of course, but also that of Rabelais and Cervantes, who, it is said, Swift resembles. Pope is using Swift to talk about himself just as he used Granville in *Windsor Forest*. And what he says is that his poem is spiritually akin to those of Rabelais and Cervantes, that it castigates the court and human presumption, that it is politically somehow involved with the cause of liberty. At the beginning of the fourth book, he stresses a religious and a personal dimension. Dullness is identified with devils and with Pope's own death, and seems a mortal and invincible enemy whom the poem, but not the poet, may somehow overcome. The three passages all guide our responses to the poem accurately. What they suggest we should look for, we find. Pope is using, with powerful simplicity, the second level material about poetry that is so extensive in the apologetic poems.

So much for the poem itself. Our second point about the speaker in the *Dunciad* pertains largely to its apparatus, prolegomena, notes, and appendices—to mention but three of its categories of editorial material. The relationship between these and the poem is a complex question that has been and needs to be discussed in connection with the speaker. There is a great deal of biographical material in the notes, about Pope, his friends, his relationships with dunces. And this to a certain extent overlaps with material in the poem where Pope is defending and describing his own conduct. In the 1729 edition of the poem he wrote:

Hibernian Politicks, O Swift, thy doom,
And Pope's, translating three whole years with Broome. (111,327-8)

Later, he responded to Broome's resentment by writing "fate" for "doom" and changing the second line to "And Pope's, ten years to comment and translate".

He had to change the poem when Broome objected, but he later perhaps reintroduces his colleague by a change of name elsewhere in the poem.¹ The case is paradigmatic. By such means, in the poem itself and in the notes, the

**Dunciad** is tied to the poet's biography and to his own time. And because such material is prominent in the notes, we tend to notice it in the poem. Does this mean that its authenticity, its self-subsistent coherence as a poem, is impaired? We must exactly define how the notes shape our response to the poem.

The most extensive and authoritative attempt to do this is by Aubrey Williams in his book on the **Dunciad**. Williams makes two points, one historical and one critical, and both tending to preserve the poem's independence. He points out that the notes are imitative, and that in writing them Pope is producing an example of a particular literary genre, that of the parody of false learning. And he suggests that in doing this as he does, effectively, through the parody of other scholars alive and dead, through multiple ironies, through fictive history, Pope is achieving the integration of his notes and his poem into one "supreme fiction". Notes and poem cooperate rhetorically: they are part of the same utterance. And the notes only seem biographically personal. By the literary control that is exerted over biographical material, and the literary pattern of which it is a part, limiting biographical considerations are transcended, and the poem asserts its independence.

Williams makes a cogent and interesting case, and what he says about the notes will remain one of the definitive critical accounts of them. But his point of view is not entirely adequate. To see why not, we can come back to Trilling's analysis of the deficiency of the new criticism, his assertion that it makes us attentive to the implications of the poet's voice but arbitrarily proscribes "those implications that are personal". If we read the apparatus to the **Dunciad**, one of the things we observe is that something is said, and much is implied, about Pope in his own time and place. We are of course dealing with a complex ironic procedure. Pope uses Scriblerus, the fictive speaker of the notes, in two ways. First he parodies, in

2. Ibid., 60.
Scriblerus's person, bad critics and their defects. But he also uses his
dim-witted hero as a kind of stalking horse. He has Scriblerus accept as
historically the case versions of the relations between Pope and his enemies
that are highly prejudicial to them and highly favourable to him. It is
as if a simple moral tale is being told, of the victory of "our author"
over legions and heroes of the dunces. He overcomes such people as "virulent
party-writers" and "minor poets at Tunbridge", "a writer in vogue", a "country
gentleman famous for his own bad poetry", "the famour Dr. Richard Bentley",
"one Thom. Bentley, a small critic". Thus although this simple moral tale
is told with an irony that dissociates the author's point of view and that
of Scriblerus, told it nevertheless is. And the truth, the historical
truth Scriblerus painstakingly disinters, is on Pope's side: "our author"
fights under its banner.

Thus the notes introduce into the poem a new dimension of the
author, the author as a quixotic knight-errant scattering the dunces on the
fields of history. To set this version of Pope in context, we have to
have some sense of the impact of the poem in its time. Many of the dunces
were obscure. But we have seen how Pope presents the poem as an event of
considerable importance in the intellectual life of his time. And we can
affirm that it was such an event.\(^1\) Thus to adequately read it, we must
consider the personal implications of its language. The point being made
can be clarified if we associate it with the commonly accepted proposition
that to understand Pope's poems you also have to understand their literary
and philosophical and religious contexts. You must also have in mind personal and
interpersonal contexts. Pope was attacking Cibber and Bentley and Theobald,
he was defending Swift and Gay. It is the notes that remind us of this. They
do so by setting up an image, itself complex, of the poet in his world. This

\(^1\) Cf. Poems, V.p.xxii. The Twickenham editor quotes Savage : "On the Day
the Book was first vended, a Crowd of Authors besieg'd the Shop.
Entreaties, Advices, Threats of Law, and Battery, nay Cries of Treason were
all employ'd, to hinder the coming out of the \textit{Dunciad}"
image is of a man at once in his time and not in it, a cunning rhetorician who pretends to be a moral knight-errant in its wilderness. And the relationship between this image out of the notes and the image of the poet that emerges when we look at the poem requires careful discrimination.

There is obvious congruence between the author implied by the irony of the notes and the author implied by the poem. We find a similar hand in Scriblerus and in the poem. But what of the knight-errant? I would suggest that he is not a distraction, because his presence answers for a sense we have that satire is not an academic exercise, that there is behind it a primitive reaction of hostile fear, and in its forms perhaps the trace of a curse or ritual of malediction. We have seen Pope himself discover this, when in the Epilogue to the Satires he uses his lash with controlled ferocity. In the Dunciad there is a less frenetic tone, because our sense of Pope's controlling imagination is stronger. The ugly and the grotesque are present, but "placed", carefully named. But in both cases the response is based on something simple, and, I would suggest, personal: an intense actual situation composed of the poet's life, among his friends and enemies, and in his time. It is to this situation that the moral fable in the notes directs our attention: and thus the knight-errant is congruent with the responsible poet in that he is part of him. Pope's verse wins both simple and complex battles in the poem. Sometimes people are crudely condemned, with a pun or an obscenity. We fail to notice this because we prefer to notice that he is doing more complicated things. But it must be admitted that he is doing both.

The issue may be clarified by considering it in the context of satire in general, satire ancient and modern. The new-critical approach to classical satires would not do justice to our actual response to modern satires. The poet Roy Campbell was a satirical defender of fascism and the nationalist side in the spanish civil war. His poems are powerfully
eccentric, and challenge, if we are inclined to the left, our moral and political beliefs.¹ A.D. Hope's *Dunciad Minor* is a controversial work of criticism that can make us wonder about the value of what we, or our colleagues, are writing. We cannot avoid some personal engagement with good contemporary satire. We even sense that the situation would be different for anyone named: they would be personally involved, like it or not.

Augustan critics were of course well aware of this. According to P.K. Elkin the best writers agreed that satire should be personal and not general, and also agreed that one should write satire and not lampoon.² The apparent contradiction defines a flexible critical system in which justice can be done both to the fact that good satire is personal and to the fact that has a self-subsistent aesthetic coherence. We observe the concern with the personal and the general in Augustan critics, but do not go on to consider whether our own criticism of satire has done well to abandon this kind of debate, and the perceptions on which it is based. Of course, something is lost. We cannot react to Pope's satires as if we were a particular contemporary of Pope's. And this is in some respects a good thing: party political prejudice need not obscure our perception of the poems. But we must still engage them politically, as we must the satire of our own age. They present a powerful vision of social order and disorder that must engage our own perception of these things. And it is to the personal quality of this vision that the fable and the historical detail in the notes direct our attention.

But of course, the personal quality is only part of the vision. And the function of the notes that we have not sufficiently mentioned is that they direct our attention to the poem's art and excellence. Again,

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¹ See for example *Flowering Rifle*, a curious mixture of satire, diatribe, and epic, in Roy Campbell, *Collected Poems*, London 1957, II.134-256.
Scriblerus is both a scapegoat and a stalking horse. Pedantic learning is parodied in his person, but he can also cite Homer, Virgil, Milton, and many others, at appropriate moments, or point to key lines by making the wrong comment about them. The understanding of the poem possessed by the implied creator of Scriblerus is established as an ideal point of view, and Pope gains the approval of a shrewd critic. But he has also had the benefit of Scriblerus's sound-but-dull editorial donkey work. This is ingenious in a way that recalls the Essay on Criticism. But in that poem Pope seemed very pleased with his own cleverness. He does not seem so in the Dunciad because the poem does unequivocally live up to the standards implied in the fictive person of the author of the notes. We come round again to the fact that the speaker in the poem is the poem, its richness and conscious power as a work of art: the dominant function of the notes is to turn our attention to this. An attempt has been made to give some idea of the nature of this power: but to consider it in detail is outside the scope of this enquiry. We have tried to point out that it is in a sense a personal power, and that the power in the other poems we have considered is more extensively personal. The speaker is the poet, whether finding and defining himself, or writing in his strength: and the degree to which he, and his poems, achieve authenticity are usefully considered together.
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