ALEXANDER POPE: THE CRITICAL HERITAGE
The Critical Heritage series collects together a large body of criticism on major figures in literature. Each volume presents the contemporary responses to a particular writer, enabling the student to follow the formation of critical attitudes to the writer's work and its place within a literary tradition.

The carefully selected sources range from landmark essays in the history of criticism to fragments of contemporary opinion and little published documentary material, such as letters and diaries.

Significant pieces of criticism from later periods are also included in order to demonstrate fluctuations in reputation following the writer's death.
The reception given to a writer by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries is evidence of considerable value to the student of literature. On one side we learn a great deal about the state of criticism at large and in particular about the development of critical attitudes towards a single writer; at the same time, through private comments in letters, journals, or marginalia, we gain an insight upon the tastes and literary thought of individual readers of the period. Evidence of this kind helps us to understand the writer's historical situation, the nature of his immediate reading-public, and his response to these pressures.

The separate volumes in the Critical Heritage Series present a record of this early criticism. Clearly, for many of the highly productive and lengthily reviewed nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, there exists an enormous body of material; and in these cases the volume editors have made a selection of the most important views, significant for their intrinsic critical worth or for their representative quality— perhaps even registering incomprehension!

For earlier writers, notably pre-eighteenth century, the materials are much scarcer and the historical period has been extended, sometimes far beyond the writer's lifetime, in order to show the inception and growth of critical views which were initially slow to appear.

In each volume the documents are headed by an Introduction, discussing the material assembled and relating the early stages of the author's reception to what we have come to identify as the critical tradition. The volumes will make available much material which would otherwise be difficult of access and it is hoped that the modern reader will be thereby helped towards an informed understanding of the ways in which literature has been read and judged.

B.C.S.
Acknowledgments

Like all recent work on Pope, this volume owes a profound debt to George Sherburn and the editors of the Twickenham Pope, without whose foundations the work would hardly have been possible. James M. Osborn's definitive edition of Spence has been a constant source of information, and J. V. Guerinot's *Pamphlet Attacks on Pope* provided a very valuable account of the Dunces' vociferous ridicule.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout:


PMLA: *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*.


Critics of Pope’s work have always found it difficult to separate the man from the poet. It is a confusion most apparent in Pope’s lifetime. His critics, like his own satires, were dominated by the Augustan interest in personality. In England, the often hectic interest in Pope’s character and writings was fed by a rapid accumulation of pamphlets and other trivia. Well over two hundred separate pamphlets for and against Pope were published between 1711 and 1744, the year of his death. To these publications must be added the frequent outbreaks of journalistic warfare, as well as a multiplicity of comments in letters and diaries. On the Continent, a stream of translations quickly spread Pope’s fame, creating further detractors and supporters, who made their own substantial addition to eighteenth-century criticism of Pope.

The great difficulty in selecting from this mass of material was to balance the conflicting demands of criticism, literary history, and biography. Most of Pope’s contemporaries were too close to their subject to see the larger issues clearly, if they could see them at all, and most of them are of little critical stature. In choosing passages from criticism written in Pope’s lifetime, I have attempted to show its effect upon Pope’s development as well as the critical positions taken. Much of this ephemeral material is now hard to come by, even with the publication of J. V. Guerinot’s *Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope 1711–1744* (1969). Consequently, Pope’s own comments on poetry, though throwing more light on his work than any other contemporary critic, have been largely omitted since they are easily available.

A few pamphlets and poems from both sides are given in their entirety, but most of the documents are extracted from larger works. Private letters and informal comments are an important subsidiary source of information. Substantial passages are taken from John Dennis’s frequently shrewd but always one-sided attacks, and from Joseph Spence’s sympathetic critique of *The Odyssey*. The criticism written after Pope’s death is of a much higher standard than the first phase, and gives a valuable index of the development of eighteenth-century critical thinking. The publication of the second volume of Joseph Warton’s *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* in 1782
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provides a convenient stopping-point, since it allows for the inclusion of Johnson’s Life, and much of the significant reassessment given Pope’s work by his younger contemporaries.

This volume, then, falls into two main divisions. Part I (1705-44) covers Pope’s lifetime. It is arranged in three sections, which reflect the main periods apparent in contemporary reactions. The first covers the years 1705-20, spanning Pope’s early career up to the completion of the Iliad: the second runs from 1721 to 1729, when the edition of Shakespeare, the translation of the Odyssey, and the first version of the Dunciad all appeared; the final period, between 1730 and 1744, saw the publication of An Essay on Man, the Horatian satires, and The Dunciad in four books. Each of these sections is headed by a collection of general responses to Pope’s poetry over the period. Within the sections themselves, comments made during Pope’s lifetime on individual poems are placed according to the work’s publication date.

Part II (1745-82) follows a straightforward chronological arrangement, giving an index of the widely divergent assessments of Pope’s work in these years.

Comments on Pope’s physique, sexual proclivities, politics, religion, and morals loom large in the attacks. They are mainly omitted here in favour of directly critical remarks. Nor does the volume give any record of the reactions to Pope’s edition of Shakespeare (1725), his correspondence, the Peri Bathous, the miscellaneous prose pieces, or the plays in which he collaborated. The history of Pope’s foreign reputation has yet to be written: I have given no more here than a brief indication of its nature. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to include any of the portraits of Pope, which are a primary source of information on his contemporary standing. It is an important omission: the interested reader should consult W. K. Wimsatt’s monumental The Portraits of Alexander Pope (1965).
The sharpest outline of Pope's eighteenth-century reputation is given by his portraits. They overwhelmingly present him as a contemporary who had attained classic immortality. Richardson's painting of Pope wearing the 'Critick's Ivy', Kneller's drawing of the 'English Homer' wearing the poet's bays, or his painting showing Pope pensively holding the Greek *Iliad*, Roubiliac's sensitive marble busts of the poet as Roman stoic, or Hayman's engraving of the dying Pope in his grotto surrounded by Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, and the Muse, all sought to show him as the crowning glory of English Augustan poetry. Numerous copies, medallions, prints, and even pieces of garden statuary, popularized this picture. Between 1726 and 1729, Voltaire recorded that 'The picture of the prime minister hangs over the chimney of his own closet, but I have seen that of Mr. Pope in twenty noblemen's houses.' Pope's poetry was the literary equivalent of the extraordinary burst of creative energy which spread the orders of classical architecture throughout eighteenth-century England.

The serene confidence with which Pope stood alongside Homer in the libraries and gardens of great country houses was offset by bitter attacks. Dahl's portrait of the great writer in the act of composition was crudely travestied by a print published in 1729, which depicts Pope as an ape wearing a papal crown, and accompanied by an ass. Michael Rysbrack's bust met with swift abuse in the newspapers:

*To. Mr. REISBRANK, on his Carving A POPE'S Busto*

REISBRANK, no longer let thy Art be shown
In forming Monsters from the *Parian* Stone;
Chuse for this Work a Stump of crooked Thorn,
Or Logg of Poyson-Tree, from *India* born,
There carve a *Pert*, but yet a *Rueful Face*,
Half Man, half Monkey, own'd by neither Race . . .

The frontispiece to *Ingratitude* (1733), abandoning any pretense to satire, showed the diminutive Pope held down by a nobleman, while another stands by laughing, and a third urinates on the poet. With
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more pertinence, a print of 1732 attacking the Palladian taste of the connoisseurs, presents Pope as a workman, splattering passers-by as he plasters the façade of Lord Burlington's town house. The attempts to discredit Pope were, however, coarsely executed: the literary genius celebrated by the painters and sculptors dominated the public imagination.

Criticisms written during Pope's lifetime present the same violent dichotomy, but with a great difference in emphasis. Grub Street's assaults on the deformed poet overshadowed the constant stream of adulation: whereas the artists' likeness of Pope could fuse the actual man with the metaphoric references in a single image, the same idea put into words degenerated into unsubstantiated flattery. Even at its best, criticism in these years is marred either by blind prejudice, as in John Dennis's tirades, or restricted to a limited area of Pope's work, like Spence's Essay on the Odyssey.

If it were not for the particular nature of Pope's genius much of the repetitive and fragmentary comment between 1705 and 1782 could be ignored. Unlike the great Romantics, whose imaginations are intensely subjective, Pope's voice, themes, and structures are public. More than any other major English poet, his work is rooted in the immediate facts, personalities, and literary tastes of his time. A sense of the intellectual and social fabric of early eighteenth-century London is important to an understanding of his work in a way in which a knowledge of Regency London is irrelevant to Keats's major poetry. Pope's profoundest imaginative values and characteristic techniques were conceived within the cross-currents of a period determining its literary standards.

It is more than giving a face and a shape to Pope's targets, though this is important—even at the time Swift complained the satires were obscure to anyone outside London (No. 54). There is a symbiotic relationship between Pope's ambitions, his art, and his public's response. Without his audience's financial support he could not have translated Homer: without the Dunces there would be no Dunciad. His satiric persona, essential to his later poetry, was shaped in the course of the pamphlet wars. If the Dunces' merciless caricature of Pope as a malevolent hunchback, more closely related to an ape than to a human being, forced him to sharpen his role as urbane man of sense, his supporters' flattery encouraged him to assume the mantle of Augustan poet-hero. The development of Pope's youthful idealism into an aristocratic humanism, conservative in its literary preferences and Tory in its
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Pope’s political sympathies, owes much to his opposition to the world typified by Grub Street in which, according to Pope’s analysis, commercialism and a corrupt taste were subverting civilized values. Pope’s poetry sought to annihilate the critical pretensions of his detractors and to fulfil the cultural aspirations of his ‘polite’ audience.

The virulence of the War of the Dunces, inevitable in a society caring excessively for ‘Reputation’, has obscured the substantial issues involved. The early complaints against the facile smoothness of his versification, too-slavish imitation of the ancients in the Pastorals, his lack of invention or sublimity, and the running battle against the topicality and grossness of the satires, were as much issues for Warton as they had been forty years earlier for John Dennis.

On the other side, Pope’s supporters reflect with great fidelity the image which he hoped to leave to posterity. For Swift, Gay, Arbuthnot, Fielding, and later Dr Johnson, Pope stood for an Augustanism opposed to the rising tide of sentimentality and sensibility. Like theirs, Pope’s ideals were embedded in the humane and literary values of the classical world and deeply antipathetic to the venality and political jobbing of Hanoverian England. Those who shared his cultural values saw in his poetry the recrudescence of the virtues of the Augustan age, and thought the variety of his genius no less remarkable than his mastery of the couplet. The heroic simplicity and nervous energy of the Homer translations proved English poetry capable of epic grandeur.

The Rape of the Lock was at once remarkable for its elegant satire and its knowledge of women, the pathos of Eloisa to Abelard explored the extreme reaches of passion, and the ‘sublime’ philosophy of An Essay on Man represented a bold attempt to reconcile religious divisions. The satires, though they inspired unease among otherwise friendly critics like Lord Lyttelton (No. 62), were generally seen as a necessary corrective, written by a man of moral integrity driven to the defence of virtue by the age’s degeneracy.

Pope’s early ambition to establish neoclassical correctness in English poetry, a task he believed Dryden had left incomplete, was realized with remarkable speed. Only twenty years after publishing his first work he was widely recognized on the Continent. By the mid-eighteenth century his stature seemed obvious to most cultured readers. In 1752 Lord Chesterfield wrote to his son, ‘A gentleman should know those which I call classical works, in every language—such as Boileau, Corneille, Racine, Molière, etc., in French; Milton, Dryden, Pope, Swift, etc., in English...’
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Too schematic an account of Pope's admirers and detractors oversimplifies the picture. They did not form two homogeneous groups. Dennis's position was very close to Pope's own and in many ways opposed to that of Addison's literary group, yet both attacked Pope. Spence, a devoted admirer, nevertheless questioned the appropriateness of heroic couplets in a translation of Homer. Augustanism meant different things to different writers, and the prolonged disagreement over Pope's merits is a forcible reminder that his version did not enjoy a monolithic victory.

As Pope was the only major Augustan whose primary medium was poetry, any debate on the nature of poetry was forced to centre on his work. A prolonged attempt to define the nature, scope and, for some critics, the limitations of neoclassical poetry is the overriding theme of the eighteenth-century criticism of Pope. During his lifetime the issues were discussed, largely ineffectually, within a neoclassical framework. Pope's death ended this unfruitful battle, leaving room for a more balanced approach. Joseph Warton's painstaking *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (1756, 1782) was the first serious challenge to the hegemony of Pope's correctness. The growing emphasis upon the primacy of feeling, originality, and imagination made the ordered control of Pope's work seem constricting or uninspired. Warton, William Cowper, and Edward Young all relegated him to the second rank of poets, and there were some who denied he was a poet at all (No. 126a). This confrontation between the new attitudes of the Age of Sensibility and established neoclassical values was resolved by Johnson's reaffirmation of Pope's genius in his *Life of Pope* (1781). There the greatest Augustan critic encounters the greatest eighteenth-century poet, and until the end of the century the common reader could take Pope's mastery for granted. Indeed, his perfection almost denied the possibility of further development in English poetry. As Goldsmith wrote, 'Mr. Pope has somewhere named himself the last English Muse; and, indeed, since his time, we have scarce seen any production that can justly lay claim to immortality...' (No. 120a).

Throughout his career Pope could rely upon an extraordinary degree of public interest. In 1698 the traveller, Henri Misson, had observed: 'The English have a mighty Value for their Poetry. If they believe that their
Language is the finest in the whole World, tho' spoken no where but in their own Island; they have proportionably a much higher Idea of their Verses.' This cultural chauvinism was as strong in the early eighteenth century as it had been in Dryden's London. It echoed the nation's growing awareness of its economic and military power, and its pride in the international reputation of thinkers like Locke and Newton. In 1724 Bolingbroke urged Pope to write 'what will deserve to be translated three Thousand years hence into Languages as yet perhaps unform'd. Whilst you translate [Homer] therefore you neglect to propagate the English Tongue. . . .' (No. 39). The vociferous response generated by Pope's poetry testifies to English audiences' very real involvement in the achievements of contemporary poetry.

Unfortunately this widespread concern could not be supported by a critical response equal to the sophistication of Pope's art. The practice of criticism had long been in disrepute, and Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), which called for informed responsiveness in place of myopic fault-finding, had little perceptible effect. In 1728 John Oldmixon described the shortcomings of contemporary critics: 'Criticism is so far from being well understood by us Englishmen, that it is generally mistaken to be an Effect of Envy, Jealousy, and Spleen; an invidious Desire to find Faults only to discredit the Author, and build a Reputation on the Ruin of his.' These faults were encouraged and to some extent caused by the publishing conditions of the times. Pope's singular abilities, allied with shrewd business sense, brought him a modest fortune, but he was the exception. Less able writers were forced to fight for their living in the new era of popular journalism. A writer with literary aspirations might hope for a small return from a book or a play, but his livelihood came from hack-work, from pamphlets, or from the growing number of periodicals. In this world Defoe not Pope was the typical figure. Writers were at the mercy of the booksellers or in the pay of government or opposition factions. This sub-literary world was openly commercial, and in addition to older and unsuccessful authors like Dennis and Charles Gildon it attracted a new breed of writers who were characteristically ill-educated with little interest in literature.

By default Pope's early reputation was largely left in their hands. Periodicals like *The Tatler* or *The Spectator* devoted too little space to contemporary literature to establish an alternative forum, while men like Swift or Bolingbroke, who might have provided an Augustan Coleridge to Pope's Wordsworth, were driven by a sense of urgency which precluded the diversion of their energies into criticism. Pope's
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poetry frequently suffered from the envy of second-rate minds, whose native inability was exaggerated by economic or political considerations. Even if, like Dennis, they had pretensions to critical seriousness, their major vehicle, the Grub Street pamphlet, whose literary antecedents were the lampoon and libel, was not conducive to measured evaluation. For many hacks an anti-Pope pamphlet was simply a quick way of turning a dubious penny.

At worst Pope's supporters retaliated with the Dunces' weapons. Others, like Lord Lyttelton (No. 62), ignored the opposition and turned to panegyric. A few like Walter Harte in An Essay upon Satire (No. 59) attempted a genuine critical defence, but efforts to raise the level of discussion were hampered by the pamphlet format and by a predilection for clumsy rhyming couplets. The single exception is Joseph Spence's An Essay on Pope's Odyssey (Nos 49, 50) whose detailed prose analysis proved that the critical tradition exemplified by Dryden's Essay of Dramatic Poesy was not entirely defunct.

Pope's relationship with the booksellers and Grub Street was a complicated one. Although he despised the treatment of literature as a commodity, he was obliged to take an active and often devious part in the publication of his works. A flair for publicity, a jealous concern for his reputation, and an intimate knowledge of the publishing trade, allowed him to turn Grub Street to advantage. The frenetic attacks and counter-attacks on his religion, personality, and poetry kept him constantly in the public eye. With careful management Pope was able to make the appearance of a new work into a public event. When The Dunciad appeared in 1728, '... 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 Dunciad: On the other Side, the Booksellers and Hawkers made as great Efforts to procure it...'

Pope's worldly success was a source of deep irritation to the Dunces. Condemned to poverty and obscurity they were not only satirized by Pope, but their failure was mocked by his success. Professional envy and jealousy were powerful factors in their rejection of Pope.

The criticism which undoubtedly had the greatest effect upon Pope's work was given in private, and little has survived. Even as a youth his translations had benefited from the detailed comments of Sir William Trumbull and Ralph Bridges. The versification and diction of the Pastorals were subjected to the close criticism of William Walsh, a widely admired but unproductive critic, and Pope's own letters to
Walsh and Cromwell gave detailed analyses of his ideas on correctness (Appendix A). Throughout his life Pope paid careful attention to informed criticism of his poetry’s verbal texture, whether the source was Dennis or Bishop Atterbury. Conversation with like-minded friends like Gay, Arbuthnot, Swift, and Bolingbroke must have ranged beyond minute stylistic matters, but unfortunately led to no critical formulation. The nearest thing to a record of this kind of dialogue is Spence’s Essay. Otherwise the exigencies of polemic and the generalizing tendencies of Augustan critics excluded this very important area from the pamphlets.

The conditions which crippled Pope criticism in the first part of the century gradually altered. Literary journalism became an increasingly reputable profession, and the considered essay or book replaced the pamphlet as the main channel of literary criticism. Periodicals like The Rambler (1750–2) and The Adventurer (1752–4) gave Johnson and Warton the opportunity to discuss literature in detail and with independence. It was a form which encouraged the eighteenth-century writer to unite the bare assertions of earlier neoclassical literary discussion with his informal passion for the minute analysis of beauties and faults. The growing respect for criticism was accompanied by the beginnings of literary history, and in the best writers of this period critical argument is joined to a sense of Pope’s place in English literature. Johnson’s progress from Grub Street hack to a widely respected position as moralist and arbiter of taste is symptomatic of the establishment of a cultured middle-class audience, confident of the greatness of English literature. That Johnson’s Lives of the Poets originated in a bookseller’s enterprise is the clearest indication of the profound alteration in the literary climate.

III

EARLY CAREER (1705–20)

In 1705 Pope arrived in London, a precociously brilliant seventeen-year-old. Between his arrival and the publication of the Pastorals in 1709, he cultivated the acquaintance of the group of writers and noblemen surrounding the Kit Kat Club. Wycherley promptly accepted the young man on equal terms (No. 1), and he was further encouraged by the praise of men like Lord Lansdowne and William Walsh. When Pope ventured into print, first with the Pastorals and, more confidently,
with An Essay on Criticism (1711), response was prompt. In 1712 Addison spoke of his 'rising Genius' in The Spectator, while John Gay described him in God-like terms (No. 2). Praise of his Augustan virtues was a major theme, and in 1717 his friend Parnell hailed Pope as a 'Bard triumphant in immortal bays', calling upon Callimachus, Homer, Virgil, and Horace to pay their homage to the English poet.

This chorus of praise was answered by irate condemnation. John Dennis delivered his first attack in 1711 (No. 10) and followed it up in 1716 with the virulent True Character of Mr. Pope and his Writings (No. 3), given here in full as the earliest example of the Dunces' image of Pope. Gildon's 'venal quill' quickly gave Dennis support (Nos 12, 19). Other attacks were less prejudiced. Neither the Pastoral nor the Iliad translation received universal praise, and Leonard Welsted's accusation that Pope's 'numbers smooth' lacked 'the spirit and informing flame, / Which breathes divine, and gives a Poet's name' (No. 4), was echoed through the next two centuries. But the overall reaction was closer to that voiced in Giles Jacob's Poetical Register (No. 6), which claimed Pope's poetry united 'Ease' to 'Strength' and 'sublime' thought, and concluded that his widely applauded work was 'equal to any of this Age'. Only twelve years after reaching London Pope could publish a handsome edition of his Works, including the Pastoral, An Essay on Criticism, Windsor Forest, the 'romantic' poems, and The Rape of the Lock. The completion of the Iliad translation in May 1720 clearly established Pope's rights as the major living Augustan poet.

Early poems

Pope's early poetry is conservative rather than innovative. It worked towards the perfection of the neoclassical art of poetry through well-established forms. The promise of his Pastoral was swiftly discerned by the like-minded Kit Kat group. Congreve, Garth, Lord Halifax, Lord Sheffield, and others all read and approved the poems in manuscript. In 1705 or 1706 Lord Lansdowne prophesied, 'If he goes on as he has begun, in the Pastoral way, as Virgil, first try'd his Strength, we may hope to see English Poetry vie with the Roman, and this Swan of Windsor sing as sweetly as the Mantuan' (No. 7a). Wycherley and William Walsh foresaw the same future, and with the Pastoral's publication in 1709 Wycherley gave public expression to his feelings (No. 8).

The heady praise of eminent men, coupled with the naivety of
youthful ambition, led Pope to expect the applause of the whole nation, regardless of political or literary affiliations. He was deeply affronted when Thomas Tickell, writing in *The Guardian*, pointedly ignored his poems in favour of Ambrose Philips's pastorals, which had appeared in the same volume of Tonson's *Miscellanies*. Since both Tickell and Philips were Addison's protégés, Pope suspected a petty conspiracy. In this he was probably wrong. Addison and his sympathizers, with their emphasis upon simplicity and their interest in unsophisticated forms like the ballad, found Pope's strict neoclassical imitations, which imposed an artificial Golden Age upon their English setting, unduly limited. Philips's poetry was flaccid, but his notions of pastoral were more progressive than Pope's: he replaced classical mythology with the superstitions of the English countryside and injected a measure of realism into the genre's stiffly formal conventions. Pope retaliated with an essay giving ironic praise to Philips, which he successfully foisted on Steele who published it as *Guardian* no. 40. Although his *jeu d'esprit* created a legacy of ill-will between Pope and Addison's camp, its mockery of Philips's attempts to achieve rustic artlessness (No. 9) gives a witty account of the issues involved in this minor skirmish between the Ancients and the Moderns.\(^9\)

The disagreement over the *Pastorals* stemmed from the way in which the Augustans, though looking to apparently similar values, could draw very dissimilar conclusions. John Dennis, an irascible critic and friend of Dryden and Congreve, had for years battled with more intelligence than tact for neoclassical standards, for the dignity of criticism, and for the moral imperatives of good taste. Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) argued the same case with moderation and urbanity, but at the same time satirized Dennis as a representative of the bad critic. The response was immediate and virulent (No. 10). Dennis was not only enraged by what he regarded as a pretentious upstart, but his emphasis upon the 'terrific' or Longinian sublime, elements little apparent in the *Pastorals* or the *Essay*, led him to regard Pope as a mere versifier, who did not even understand the ideas he purported to discuss. Dennis quite rightly saw that Pope's use of his key term, 'wit', was elusive, but what Dennis castigated as confused thinking was a supple attempt to synthesize the conflicting elements of neoclassical theory. As so often Dennis had serious points to make, but his chop-logic argumentation and his intemperate lampoon of Pope as a 'hunch-back'd Toad' are more suggestive of paranoia than critical shrewdness. Pope's reaction was dignified. He quietly altered the poem to meet Dennis's occasionally
valid objections. He wrote to Caryll, ‘I will make my enemy do me a kindness where he meant an injury, and so serve instead of a friend.’

In December 1711 Dennis’s assault was offset by Addison’s praise in The Spectator (No. 11), which compared Pope’s Essay with Horace’s Ars Poetica, unhesitatingly placing it in the same rank as the two peaks of ‘polite’ criticism, Sheffield’s Essay on Poetry (1682) and Roscommon’s Essay on Translated Verse (1684). Addison also acclaimed his masterly ability to make ‘the sound an echo to the sense’, initiating what became a favourite topic among Pope’s eighteenth-century critics. Aaron Hill’s prolix corrections in 1738 of Pope’s examples of this art (No. 13) indicate the subject’s absorbing appeal, though Hill’s pedantic solemnity compares poorly with the later discussions of Johnson, Kames, or Campbell. Addison’s recognition of Pope’s achievement, though it echoed public sentiment, could not go unchallenged in the prevailing atmosphere of jealous rivalry. Four days later Charles Gildon made his first appearance among the prospective Dunces, and heaped scorn on the suggestion that Pope and Horace had anything in common (No. 12).

The episodic structure and conversational manner of An Essay on Criticism, though lacking Dryden’s ratiocinative energy, admirably suited Pope’s genius and his audience’s taste. But poems like Windsor Forest (1713) and The Temple of Fame (1715), standing at the end of allegorical traditions going back to the Renaissance, puzzled the Augustan reader. Dennis used the similarity between Windsor Forest and Denham’s Cooper’s Hill to condemn Pope (No. 16), but was blind to the continuity of genre which does much to explain the later poem. William Bond did little more than damn the poem’s versification (No. 17). The Temple of Fame suffered from similar incoherence. Dennis condemned it as ‘one long Chain of Blunders and Boggisms’ (No. 44). Johnson and Joseph Warton thought Pope had ‘improved’ Chaucer, while in 1774 Thomas Warton, reacting strongly in favour of the Gothic, found Pope’s neat Palladian structure betrayed the original (No. 123). Both poems, with their weight of learning and allusion, fell outside the mainstream of eighteenth-century poetry: only recently have their literary origins and intentions been sympathetically explored.

No difficulties of this kind affected The Rape of the Lock (1714). Pope’s most universally admired poem in all periods. Three thousand copies were bought in the four days following publication, and by September 1715 six thousand copies had been sold. Favourable comparisons with Boileau’s mock-heroic Le Lutrin were swift (No. 18),
and in 1726-9 Voltaire ranked Pope above Boileau (No. 42). French readers, like the Abbe Guyot (No. 23), admired Pope’s delicacy and wit, qualities European audiences had found lacking in other English literature, and the same was true of Italian readers (No. 24). The Rape of the Lock’s tightly shaped perfection, its sharp commentary on contemporary manners, and its poise, ensured its popularity. Thomas Blackwell spoke for most eighteenth-century readers when he asked, ‘can anything in its kind surpass the Rape of the Lock?’ 15

Adverse criticism raised no serious issues. Charles Gildon’s New Rehearsal (No. 19), portrays Pope as Sawney Dapper, ‘a young poet of the modern stamp, an easy versifier, and a contemner secretly of all others’, and used the poem’s sexual puns to fabricate a charge of obscenity. Six years later William Bond was still repeating these feeble charges (No. 21). John Dennis, in a series of letters written in 1714 but unpublished till 1728, perversely deployed his learning to argue that the poem disobeys epic rules (No. 20). If The Rape of the Lock showed an intimate knowledge of women in an affectionately satiric vein, Eloisa to Abelard and An Elegy to an Unfortunate Young Lady were, for eighteenth-century readers, deeply moving portrayals of womanly feeling. Although the poems depict extreme emotional situations within a highly artificial form, both were prized for their truth to life. Mrs Thrale reported in 1782: ‘I have heard all the kept Mistresses read Pope’s Eloisa with singular delight—’tis a great Testimony to its Ingenuity; they are commonly very ignorant Women, & can only be pleased with it as it expresses the strong Feelings of Nature & Passion’. 16 The Elegy not only threw the blind poet, Thomas Blacklock, into physical agitation, but served as a touchstone of true feeling for the sceptical David Hume (No. 36). Eloisa to Abelard aroused equally strong feelings. Prior quickly praised its delicate pathos (No. 35a). Some years later James Delacour, author of one of the many imitations of and replies to Pope’s poem, 17 celebrated the ‘gloomy Horrors, and mournful Images...soften’d with [Pope’s] all-tender Expressions’ (No. 35b) which were to excite readers throughout the century, and satisfy Warton’s taste for the ‘Gothic’. Perhaps the oddest example of the Augustan divorce between reality and these poetic surrogates for feeling occurs in the three widely differing versions of Pope’s epitaphs on John Hewet and Sarah Drew, two farmhands struck by lightning. Bishop Atterbury’s solemnity before the sublime version is neatly punctured by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s common-sense awareness of the gap between Pope’s inflated memorial...
and the couple’s prosaic virtues (No. 37). The eighteenth century simul­taneously believed and disbelieved in these ‘ingenious’ fictions. Physical and emotional passion were too dangerous to indulge without the distanc­ing of appropriate theatrical devices.

The *Iliad*

For Pope’s audience the most substantial achievement of his early career was the translation of the *Iliad*. It attracted more comment than any poem before *The Dunciad*, cost six years of Pope’s working life, and was published over five years (June 1715 to May 1720). the *Iliad* and his subsequent translation of the *Odyssey* were central to Pope’s eighteenth-century reputation. Without them Pope is only half the poet read by his contemporaries. When Warton asked ‘What is there very Sublime or very Pathetic in Pope’, earlier readers would have pointed to the ‘romantic’ poems and the ‘sublimity’ of *An Essay on Man*, but above all to the Homer (see Nos 28d and 33 for instance). Spence’s sense of the greatness of the *Odyssey* translation is only equalled by Johnson’s admiration for the *Iliad*, which he thought a ‘poetical wonder’. Pope’s translations expressed the high ideals and passion which Augustan literature found it impossible to realize successfully in any other literary form. The *Iliad*’s intellectual energy, its heroic scope, and its epic grandeur provide the positive scale in Pope’s imaginative world. Warton was to ignore them for the same reason that much later criticism did—namely, that they are not original. It is a comment both on our distance from Pope and upon the limitations of his genius and age.

The ‘English Homer’’s early reception is entangled with the events surrounding its publication in 1715. After Pope had invited the public to subscribe to his translation, a rival version by Thomas Tickell was announced. Tickell’s earlier part in the rivalry between Philips’s and Pope’s pastorals made Pope fearful of an attempt to undermine his venture. Certainly Addison, though later to praise the *Iliad* (No. 28g), was guilty of collusion in the first Homerides pamphlet (No. 26), which attacked Pope’s translation even before its appearance. On the other hand, Richard Fiddes had offered homage as early as 1714 (No. 25), and Pope had powerful and active supporters. As publication approached excitement reached such a pitch that the newspapers reported the rivalry (No. 27). Once books i–iv were in public hands Pope gradually gained the ascendancy (No. 28). For a later reader the passions stimulated by
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this literary fracas seem astonishing, but the Augustan audience felt the honour of the nation involved.

Those who admired Pope’s *Iliad* easily agreed with one another. Lewis Theobald, later to be numbered among the Dunces, believed Pope had caught the ‘Spirit of Homer’ (No. 29). Lady Mary Wortley Montagu thought he had ‘touched the mantle of the divine Bard, and imbibed his spirit’ (No. 31), as did William Melmoth (No. 33). Its detractors charged that Pope did not know Greek, that he misrepresented Homer, and that he was despicably mercenary, all accusations which pursued Pope for the rest of his career. Dennis’s *Remarks on Mr. Pope’s Homer* (No. 30), published in 1717, offered more substantial criticism. Although marred by hatred of Pope, it demonstrates the distance of Pope’s Homer from the ‘Simplicity and Majesty of the Original’ by examining particular examples, berating Pope for ignorantly magnifying the Greek army from thousands to ‘Millions’ (*Iliad*, ii. 109–10). Pope’s alteration was deliberate, but Dennis pinpoints the way in which Pope’s continuous search for epic scale through multiplication could on occasions result in grandiosity instead of grandeur.20

The most serious threat to the translation was posed by Anne Dacier’s ‘Reflexions’ (No. 32), which argued that Pope’s Homer obscured the regularity and finish of its original. Both Pope and Mme Dacier agreed that the Homeric world was different from the modern world and not merely barbaric, but where she sentimentalized Homer in an attempt to make him a Christian moralist, Pope saw him more accurately as ‘the supreme poet of Manners—that is, nature presented in terms of action’.21

Pope’s translation easily overcame its early opposition, and although the Augustan dress of Pope’s *Iliad* was less neoclassical than Mme Dacier could have wished, it remained the definitive English rendering of Homer for several generations. Its effect on subsequent poetry was less fortunate: though Coleridge recognized it as an ‘astonishing product of matchless talent and ingenuity’, he considered it ‘the main source of our pseudo-poetic diction’.

IV

CONSOLIDATION AND COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

(1721–9)

Between 1720 and 1726 Pope, who had now settled at Twickenham, gave most of his energies to the *Odyssey* and his edition of Shakespeare.
Daunted by memories of unremitting labour on the *Iliad*, he employed Elijah Fenton and William Broome as collaborators in the translation, unwisely keeping this fact private. Both enterprises were in part undertaken for money, and the *Odyssey*, which brought Pope about £5,000, capitalized heavily on the *Iliad*'s success.

Friends and critics began to question whether Pope was writing too little original work. Bolingbroke warned him not to regard the Homer as the 'great Work' of his life—'You owe a great deal more to your self, your Country, to the present Age, and to Posterity' (No. 39). More specifically, Edward Young called on Pope to aid the nation by turning to satire (No. 40). Pope, however, was content to rest on his laurels while consolidating his fortune. In the meantime, his reputation grew. In England the young Walter Harte asserted Pope's greatness (No. 41), while Voltaire called Pope 'the best poet in England, and at present in the world' (No. 42). Readers in Massachusetts eagerly sought his poems and portrait, and Harvard College's library acquired his works (No. 43).

However, the revelation of Broome's and Fenton's part in the *Odyssey* and Lewis Theobald's disclosure of the editorial shortcomings of Pope's Shakespeare, exposed him to the rancour of Grub Street. The exultant Dunces accused Pope of shoddy workmanship, dishonesty, and avarice. His long-delayed decision to reply to his enemies through *The Dunciad* channelled Pope's energies back to original work, and into a form which was to dominate the remainder of his writing life.

The *Odyssey*

The *Odyssey*, with *The Dunciad*, is the centre of critical interest in these years. Inevitably the translation invited a repetition of the charges against the *Iliad* (No. 51), to which were added accusations of fraud (No. 47). Pope's use of his collaborators was defended, probably ironically, by Defoe, who saw him as a kind of master-manufacturer, a more accurate description perhaps than Pope would have wished (No. 48).

Then in the summer of 1726 the first part of Joseph Spence's *An Essay on Pope's Odyssey* appeared, followed by a second part in 1727. Pope had at last found a critic free from personal animus prepared to analyse poetry as poetry. Spence's *Essay* is remarkable for its close verbal criticism, and its picture of 'polite' conversation. The dialogue between Antiphas and Philypsus ranges beyond Pope to discuss the taste of the age, the differences between corrupt and pure diction, and the limita-
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tions and advantages of Pope's employment of rhyme. Always sharply aware of the losses in transposing Homer into a neoclassical idiom, Spence nevertheless argues that in some ways Pope has 'improved' upon Homer. He sees the workings of Pope's imagination with the eyes of a sensitive and sympathetic contemporary, an advantage which allows him to point to effects only rediscovered in this century. Spence highlights the way in which the Odyssey's linguistic energy comes from Pope's epithets, which fix the essential properties of the object described in a single word (p. 203), he is able to demonstrate Pope's use of literary allusion, and his constant concern with Pope's pictorial effects underlines a major resource in the poetry of the period. As Johnson remarked, in Spence 'Pope had his first experience of a critic without malevolence, who thought it as much his duty to display beauties as expose faults; who censured with respect, and praised with alacrity.'

The Dunciad (1728) and the nature of satire

Spence's Essay is a high point in contemporary criticism of Pope, and offered a brief respite before The Dunciad called down a new flood of vitriol. In the eyes of his enemies Pope's misshapen form and his initials, A. P—E, revealed his true nature: he was an animal disguised as a man, his physical deformity an outward sign of moral deformity:

... what Art
Can frame the monst'rous Image of his Heart.
Composed of Malice, Envy, Discontent,
Like his Limbs crooked, like them impotent.

Pope was a Yahoo, with all that creature's love of excrement (No. 66). As a matter of course, this line of abuse was linked with his supposed sexual shortcomings, while his Catholicism proved him a Jacobite and traitor. Obscenity, blasphemy, and malevolence were all that could be expected of such a creature. His poetry was subjected to the same kind of misrepresentation: imitation was labelled plagiarism, metaphor labelled nonsense, and harmonious versification branded as monotonous. This grotesque portrait was as useful in the Battles of the Dunces as it had been to Dennis in 1711 and was to be for Cibber in 1742.

Until 1728 Pope endured this unremitting fusillade in virtual silence, preferring dignity to revenge, despite the obvious gift for personal satire manifested by the 'Atticus' portrait. This attack on Addison, published without Pope's consent in 1722, led Atterbury to write:
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'Since you now therefore know, where you real Strength lyes, I hope you will not suffer that Talent to ly unemploy'd.' Despite continuing provocation, Pope was not yet ready to heed this advice.

Several factors coincided in the years 1725 to 1728 to persuade Pope to write *The Dunciad*. Above all, he was tired of petty attacks. In 1725 he wrote to Swift: 'my Spleen is at the little rogues. . . . It would vexe one more to be knockt o’ the Head by a Pisspot, than by a Thunder-bolt.' Pope was also encouraged by the example of Swift, at work upon *Gulliver’s Travels*, and by the Scriblerus Club, whose most active members were Swift, Gay, Arbuthnot, and Pope himself. In the context of the Scriblerian attacks on ‘False Learning’ and corrupt taste, Pope could conceive of his attack upon the Dunces as a defence of deeply felt cultural values. Lewis Theobald’s *Shakespeare Restored* (1726) provided Pope with an occasion, and *The Dunciad* with its first hero.

Pope organized the publication of *The Dunciad* carefully. The *Peri Bathous* appeared in the Swift–Pope *Miscellanies* in March 1728, and deliberately provoked the hornets' nest by using the writings of the Dunces to illustrate an art of anti-poetry. When the first version of *The Dunciad* appeared in May its Preface claimed, 'every week for these two Months past, the town has been persecuted with Pamphlets, Advertisements, Letters and Weekly Essays, not only against the Wit and Writings, but against the Character and Person of Mr. Pope'. Interest ran high—six editions were published in eleven months—and counter-attacks followed at once (Nos 52-4). In 1729 *The Dunciad Variorum*, with its mock-scholarly annotation, led to a second outburst (Nos 55–60).

One of the earliest replies was written by a ‘Club’ of Dunces (No. 52). They marshalled most of the usual arguments against Pope, and noted the poem’s connection with *MacFlecknoe*. Their main complaint, however, was that Pope ‘reproaches his Enemies as poor and dull; and to prove them poor, he asserts they are dull; and to prove they are dull, he asserts they are poor’. Unfortunately, they were poor because too dull to achieve independence, which in turn forced them to be mercenary. As Pope said, ‘the Poem was not made for these Authors, but these Authors for the Poem’. His enemies showed some awareness of *The Dunciad’s* mock-heroic structure (No. 54), and Dennis, in his last Pope pamphlet, thought the poem deeply flawed by its lack of an epic action (No. 56), an opinion held by Warton (p. 517) and which still finds support.
Among those who had supported Pope earlier there was a rift of opinion. Some were upset by the poem's coarse physical imagery ('obscenity'), its scurrility, and its personal satire. Atterbury ungratefully considered Pope had 'engaged himself in a very improper and troublesome scuffle, not worthy of his pen at all, which was designed for greater purposes' (No. 57). It is a view which has much in common with the 'Club' of Dunces', and both reflect a growing middle-class sense of propriety, whose sensibility was shortly to be typified by Richardson's novels.

The literary issue at stake was the nature of satire. All shades of opinion looked to classical precedent and Renaissance theory to support their sharply divergent views. Those opposed to The Dunciad thought it mere lampoon: satire should chastise the type not the individual. Traditionally too, satire with its 'low' subject matter was regarded as an inferior genre, a belief with important results in Warton's criticism. At root the Dunces misunderstood the nature of satire, but their misunderstanding is common throughout the period. The mistaken notion that 'satire' was derived from 'satyr' encouraged the assumption that the cragged and harsh licentiousness of Juvenal and Persius was its proper style. Satire of the preceding century, especially political satire, further blurred the distinction between lampoon and true satire. These beliefs encouraged them to label all topical satire as lampoon, and to confuse the satirist's persona with the poet himself. As Pope observed,

. . . there is not in the world a greater Error, than that which Fools are so apt to fall into, and Knaves with good reason to incourage, the mistaking a Satyr for a Libeller; whereas to a true Satyr nothing is so odious as a Libeller, for the same reason as to a man truly Virtuous nothing is so hateful as a Hypocrite.

The fullest contemporary attempt to outline a theory sympathetic to Pope's practice was Walter Harte's An Essay upon Satire, Particularly on the Dunciad (No. 59). Harte draws from the tradition embodied in Dryden's Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire. He insists upon the dignity of satire, which must not only blame vice but must exhort its reader to virtue by giving a positive vision, and is aware that Pope uses parody not, as the Dunces argued, to demean epic, but to establish a scale of values. His classification of The Dunciad as 'Epic Satire' builds on Dryden's argument that some satire was a 'species' of heroic poetry. Unlike many eighteenth-century critics Harte shows a grasp of the oblique methods of satire, and by appending to his work a translation of Boileau's Discourse of Satires Arraigning Persons by Name.
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gave authoritative support to Pope’s practice of tying his satire to the
visible facts of society. Other critics, like the author of The Satirist
(No. 64), could see the need for Pope to hunt individuals from the herd,
but Harte’s is the only coherent and developed justification of Pope
written before 1744.

V
LATER CAREER (1730–44)

After The Dunciad Pope turned to his most ambitious poetic enterprise,
the ‘Ethic Epistles’, which he described to Swift as ‘a system of Ethics in
the Horatian way’. From 1729 until 1734 he struggled to realize his
grandiose plan, but by 1736 his interest had slackened. As it is, An Essay
on Man (1733), intended as no more than ‘what a scale is to a book of
maps’, stands on its own, while the four ‘Moral Essays’ (1731–5), meant
at one time as part of the larger work, are really four Horatian satires.
After the Essay Pope tended to depart from his grand plan in favour of
the more manageable Imitations of Horace (1733–8). Finally he returned
to The Dunciad, enlarged it to four books in 1742, and enthroned Cibber
as hero in place of Theobald the following year.

Over this period three basic attitudes to Pope are apparent. Eulogy of
Pope’s classic stature is the basis of Lord Lyttelton’s Epistle (No. 62),
Thomas Dale’s Epistle from South Carolina (No. 67), and Henry Brooke’s
fusomse letter of 1739 (No. 69). Pope continued to rely heavily upon the
advice of friends like Swift (No. 86). For them Pope’s satire was moti­
vated by what Arbuthnot called a ‘noble Disdain and Abhorrence of
Vice’. Meanwhile Pope’s Continental reputation grew (No. 63).

In sharp contrast, Grub Street’s blind antipathy continued (Nos 65,
66). Pope was increasingly attacked for his friendship with Bolingbroke,
who was cast in the role of the poet’s evil genius (No. 87). The contro­
versy over An Essay on Man gave new force to the charge of irreligion,
and Pope’s growing tendency to widen his satire beyond the literary
world gave an increasingly political bias to the attacks. A measure of his
position in these years is that aristocrats like Lord Hervey and Lady
Mary Wortley Montagu entered the lists against him, adding their
voices to the well-established ranks of hacks. This running battle cul­
minated in an outburst against the final version of The Dunciad in 1742
and 1743. Sauney and Colley (No. 72) provides a vigorous example of
this last phase, summing up the common objections to Pope’s success.

Atterbury’s earlier reaction against The Dunciad marked the begin-
Moral Essays and Imitations of Horace (1731–8)

Taken together, the Imitations of Horace and the 'Moral Essays' are a major expression of Pope's mature satiric power. The contemporary response to this surge of creativity is feeble, partly because the poems appeared sporadically and partly because the imitations were not taken as seriously as his original work. Most writers concentrated on the furores caused by An Essay on Man and The Dunciad of 1742 and 1743.

The artistic power of the Imitations was further obscured by political considerations. Pope's portrait of 'Timon's villa' in the Epistle to Burlington (1731) was, it now seems, a satiric attack upon Walpole himself. Leonard Welsted, a government creature, diverted the shaft by spreading the lie that Lord Chandos was Pope's target, at the same time pretending Chandos to have been one of Pope's benefactors. These fabrications were completely successful. Pope could not openly admit to satirizing Walpole, and Welsted was able to indict the poet for his supposed ingratitude (No. 75). Chandos himself exculpated Pope (No. 74), but Welsted's slander was quickly repeated (No. 77). This politically inspired effort to blunt Pope's satire suggests both the government's sensitivity to his poetry and Pope's increasingly open opposition to Walpole's England. Seven years later the political overtones of Epilogue to the Satires II were to bring him close to punishment by the House of Lords. Only then did Pope muzzle his satire: 'Could he have hoped,' he said of himself, 'to have amended any, he had continued those attacks; but bad men were grown so shameless and so powerful, that Ridicule

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ning of a new attitude, which became stronger in the last decade of his career, though largely confined to private letters and conversation. Samuel Richardson (Nos 61, 93, 95) and the 'blue-stockings', Elizabeth Rowe and the Countess of Hertford (Nos 68, 88a), felt that satire was a betrayal of Pope's genius, and deplored the lack of charity and 'tender sentiments of nature' which allowed Pope to give 'Anguish and Confu­sion to Beings of his own kind. Slander and Invective is an Injury never to be repair'd, & by consequence is an unpardonable sin' (No. 88a). Isaac Watts, though he had no doubts of the magnitude of Pope's genius, objected to The Dunciad's obscurity for the same reasons (No. 68a). These readers' evangelical strain of Christianity, and their strong preference for poetry marked by feeling and pure religion, announce the growth of a view of literature differing radically from neoclassical attitudes.
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was become unsafe as it was ineffectual.36 That the political factors in
the outcry over the Epistle to Burlington were not discovered until very
recently testifies to Pope's mastery of a technique of satiric allusion,
sufficiently oblique to avoid the law but still recognizable to his
contemporaries.

Response to the other 'Moral Essays' and Imitations was equally par-
tial and intermittent. Satire II. i (1733) drew the fire of Lord Hervey and
Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (No. 77), as well as the anonymous An
Epistle to the Little Satyrist of Twickenham (No. 78). Sober Advice from
Horace (1734) was countered by a scurrilous broadside (No. 87) from
Thomas Bentley, nephew of the scholar Richard Bentley. The follow­
ing year, An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot was rejected as mere lampoon
(No. 88). Despite this persecution the satires sold well, and the praise
given by Swift and Aaron Hill to the Epilogue to the Satires II (No. 89) is
proof of the Imitations' effectiveness for at least one part of Pope's
audience.

An Essay on Man (1733)

These intermittent reactions were overshadowed by the controversy
over the supposed heterodoxy of An Essay on Man. The poem was
published anonymously, and at first attracted universal praise (Nos 79,
80), including that of the unsuspecting Welsted. Pope's sublimity and
purity of religion were the main themes of this enthusiastic welcome.
William Somervile wrote:37

Was ever work to such perfection wrought;
How elegant the diction! pure the thought! . . .
So breaks the day upon the shades of night,
Enlivening all with one unbounded light.

Even Mr Bridges's Divine Wisdom (No. 81), published three years
after Pope's poem, does no more than suggest that the poem is capable
of Deistic misinterpretation. The French found its style vigorous and
concise—'never has a poet been more sparing of words and more
generous with meaning. Any paraphrase enervates its vigour, slackens
and, so to speak, dissolves a completely solid and compact body.'38
The Abbé du Resnel made the remarkable claim that the Essay gave 'all
the necessary Rules which Morality lays down for the Practice of our
Duty to God and Man' (No. 82).

This remarkable unanimity was short-lived. French savants were
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worried by the poem's tendencies, and in 1757 a Swiss professor, J. P. de Crousaz, brought the argument into the open. The Protestant theologian's Examen de l'Essai sur l'Homme (No. 83) and his Commentaire (1738) saw the Essay as a dangerously popular version of Spinoza's Deistic notions, and accused Pope of threatening the very basis of Christianity. That Crousaz misrepresented Pope's ideas, since he knew the Essay only through Silhouette's inaccurate translation, was immaterial. Pope's attempt at a grand synthesis of the varying strands in Christian belief immediately became an issue in the struggle raging on the Continent between the Church and the philosophes. Conservative Catholic theologians attacked Pope as a representative of the heretical beliefs emanating from England. With equal energy the philosophes looked for a système in the Essay sympathetic to their own beliefs. Crousaz's ingenuous misunderstanding of the poem is the mirror-image of Voltaire's certainty that the Essay agreed with his ideas, even if Pope did not realize the fact (No. 109). It was left to Lessing and Mendelssohn in their Pope ein Metaphysiker! (1755) to demonstrate that Pope was neither a 'Spinozist' or a 'Leibnizian', and that it was misguided to treat the Essay as philosophy.

Crousaz's attacks were promptly translated. The Dunces, while grateful to Crousaz, found it easier to concentrate on Pope's friendship for Bolingbroke, and the Essay's concluding address was proof for them that Bolingbroke, traitor and atheist, was the real source of Pope's ideas. The true extent of Bolingbroke's influence has never been satisfactorily determined. Pope regarded the ideas in the poem as his own, though he clearly did not appreciate the implications of the conclusions he had reached with the encouragement of the free-thinking Bolingbroke.

Surrounded by an international dispute, Pope was delighted by Warburton's unexpected defence of his orthodoxy which appeared in 1738 and 1739 in The Works of the Learned (No. 84). Warburton had earlier sided with Theobald and is reputed to have called the Essay 'rank atheism'. His Vindication clumsily twists the poem towards a literal pietism and imposes a rigorous orthodoxy upon Pope's attempt to steer a middle passage between conflicting dogmas. Even so, Pope was only too glad to accept the shelter offered—'I know I meant just what you explain, but I did not explain my own meaning so well as you.'

In the heat of the controversy few writers recognized the fallacy of treating Pope as a philosopher. The essential question about the poem is
not its orthodoxy but its artistic unity. It was posed in passing when Lord Hervey, in *A Letter to Mr. C—b—r* (1742), remarked that the wide variety of ‘speculative Books’ drawn on by Pope had produced not a poem but an ‘*Olio, Hodge-Podge Mess of Philosophy*’ (No. 85).

**The Dunciad (1742, 1743)**

The final versions of *The Dunciad* caused a last storm of recrimination. In 1742 Pope added a fourth book, keeping Theobald as his anti-hero. There were some charges of obscurity—the Town thought, according to *The Universal Spectator*, ‘that the *Satire* is too allegorical, and the *Characters* he has drawn are too conceal’d: That *real Names* should have been inserted instead of *fictitious* ones.’ Thomas Gray in part agreed, but admired the final book; Shenstone thought it proved Pope in his dotage (No. 90). As might be expected, Richardson was uneasy, thinking mere lack of taste an insufficient crime to excuse the coarseness of the poem’s satire (No. 93).

Early in 1742 Pope deliberately provoked Colley Cibber, who attacked Pope in *A Letter from Mr. Cibber, to Mr. Pope* (No. 91). More good-humoured than many of Pope’s opponents, he admires the genius but questions the motives of the satirist. Cibber also told for the first time how he had saved the young Pope from catching a clap in a brothel, so saving the English Homer for posterity. This questionable story is given here because it cut Pope to the quick, as well as providing a public excuse for displacing Theobald in Cibber’s favour in *The Dunciad* (1743).

Richardson thought the alteration proof that Pope’s satire was the child of malice (No. 95). Elizabeth Montagu reacted differently, realizing that in the enlarged satiric world of Book Four, Cibber was a more appropriate hero than the scholarly Theobald: ‘... the new Hero is certainly worthy to have the precedency over all foolish Poets. I like the last Dunciad for exposing more sorts of follies than the first did, which was merely upon bad poets and bad criticks.’

The Cibber–Pope pamphlet war continued vigorously, and other Dunces like John Henley (No. 94) replied as best they could. Their ineptitude and violence only lends support to Fielding’s brusque rejection of their claims for sympathy (No. 92). Pope’s death in 1744 brought the years of bitter in-fighting to an abrupt end, leaving the field in the possession of Pope’s admirers. Several elegies were quickly published, one of which is given in full (No. 96). The writer gives a
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comprehensive survey of Pope’s achievement, repeating his well-established claim to greatness, but places the final emphasis (as Pope would have wished) upon the poet’s virtue:

This then our Poet’s Province, this his Art,
T’awake fair Virtue, and instruct the Heart.

VI

CRITICISM OF POPE (1745-82)

‘No authors ever had so much fame in their own life-time as Pope and Voltaire; and Pope’s poetry has been as much admired since his death as during his life. . . .’ Johnson’s remark in 1778 indicates the slight impact of the Dunces’ attacks upon Pope’s widely acknowledged claims to greatness. The seven months following his death saw the publication of no fewer than three biographies, though only the third, William Ayre’s Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Alexander Pope, Esq. (1745, No. 97), which faithfully reflects the general admiration, deserves any attention. In 1751 Warburton’s edition elevated Pope to the same category as Milton and Shakespeare, the only other native writers paid the honour of properly edited and annotated texts. The critical notes sought to provide a definitive interpretation of Pope’s poetry (No. 100), but Warburton’s authoritarian arrogance frequently led him to impose his own meaning on the poems. Johnson said that his analysis of An Essay on Criticism discloses ‘such order and connection as was not perceived by Addison, nor, as is said, intended by the author’.

Warburton’s edition is a symptom of the growth of literary scholarship and history in the mid-eighteenth century. This, together with the establishment of biography as an important form, created an atmosphere in which Pope’s work could be seen with a degree of objectivity impossible previously. The work of Ayre and Warburton, and the subsequent biographies of Robert Shiel (1753), W. H. Dilworth (1759) and Owen Ruffhead (1769), gradually built up an outline of Pope’s life and career which, though perpetuating many errors, attempted to clear away the myths and counter-myths created by the pamphlet wars and by Pope’s own intrigues.

Joseph Warton’s Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope allied this interest in biography and literary history with a new stress on the importance of originality, sublimity, and feeling in poetry. Warton’s
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*Essay*, whose first volume was published in 1756 (No. 106), quickly became a rallying point for the Age of Sensibility. Earlier criticism of Pope had contained intimations of new attitudes to literature. Tickell, Philips, Addison, and the Dunces had reacted against Pope's deep traditionalism, and in the 1740s Richardson, the 'blue-stockings', and younger writers like Shenstone and Gray began to place feeling above judgment. It remained for Warton to develop a critical position from these doubts.

Before publishing his first volume Warton had uncovered new information about Pope, and consulted the manuscript of Spence’s *Anecdotes*. He had also written on Pope’s poetry. In *The Adventurer*, no. 51 (1753), he used the Bible's sublime style to show the artificiality of Pope’s Homer, and in no. 63 (No. 105) he somewhat gingerly opened discussion of Pope’s originality. Presenting an impressive list of sources for passages in the poetry, he commented, ‘it may appear difficult, to distinguish imitation and plagiarism from necessary resemblance and unavoidable analogy’. Neither Johnson nor Pope, working within neoclassical habits of allusion and imitation, would have found the distinction hard to make.

Warton’s *Essay* appeared, significantly, in the same year as Burke’s treatise on the sublime. In his dedicatory letter to Edward Young, Warton announces a radical re-orientation of neoclassical ideas, though his tone is moderate:

I revere the memory of POPE, I respect and honour his abilities; but I do not think him at the head of his profession. In other words, in that species of poetry wherein POPE excelled, he is superior to all mankind: and I would only say, that this species of poetry is not the most excellent one of the art.

In Warton’s view, 'The Sublime and the Pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poetry'. Pope, as the poet of reason and wit, belongs to the second rank of poets. This subversive conclusion relies in part on an appeal to the traditional neoclassical hierarchy of genres. Pope’s major successes were within an inferior genre, satire: he was, therefore, a lesser writer than Milton or Shakespeare. The author of ‘The Ballance of the Poets’ (Appendix B) would have found agreement easy, and Johnson’s review (No. 107) shows that in the context of neoclassical criticism Warton’s views could, as yet, be regarded as less than revolutionary.

One of the most remarkable features of Warton’s *Essay* is the detail of its attention to Pope’s poetry. Although Johnson’s 'Dissertation' on
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Pope's epitaphs is more vigorous, its subject is confined, and the Essay is the only example of a sustained close reading of Pope's major poems by a sensitive eighteenth-century mind. Warton's other great strength is his sense of Pope's place in the tradition of English literature. Johnson, like Pope, considered English poetry prior to Dryden immature, and looked to established classical standards for his norms. Warton was more catholic, measuring Pope not merely against Greek and Roman authors, but against his English forerunners and European rivals. His widening of critical horizons is a refreshing change from the closed world of earlier criticism. Warton claimed that Pope had modelled himself upon French neoclassicism 'as Milton formed himself upon the Greek and Italian sons of Fancy', and insists that Pope be measured against the sublimity of Milton, and the achievements of contemporaries like Thomson and Gray. Pope, if taken at his own valuation, would deprive the reader of the full riches of English poetry. 'He who would think Palamon and Arcite, the Tempest or Comus, childish and romantic, might relish Pope.' His eclectic attitude questions the very basis of Augustan taste.

Warton's search through Pope's poetry revealed little that earned him a place in the first rank of poets. Again and again he finds Pope lacking in originality. The Pastorals contain not a 'single rural image that is new', and they confuse Greek scenery with English. Although The Rape of the Lock displays 'more imagination than in all his other works taken together', Warton points out that Pope did not invent the sylphs but only 'employed them with singular judgement and art'. He gives high praise to Eloisa to Abelard and the Elegy to an Unfortunate Young Lady as examples of the pathetic, but discovers Pope's characteristic strength in the 'Didactic and the Moral' modes of An Essay on Criticism and The Rape of the Lock. At this point the first volume breaks off.

Warton's search for vividness, his preference for originality over imitation, and for feeling above artifice, is linked to the belief that poetry should particularize. Foreshadowing the Romantics (the poetry of his pupil Bowles influenced Coleridge's early verse), Warton writes, 'Homer and Shakespeare do not give their readers general ideas; every image is the particular and unalienable property of the person who uses it. . . . ' From this standpoint, a 'close and faithful representation of nature' can only be achieved through 'minute and particular enumeration of circumstances'. Pope's generalized description could not meet Warton's criteria for true poetry.

Between 1756 and 1782, when Warton's second volume appeared,
the dialogue stirred up by his revaluation continued. Warton himself,
judging by the alterations made to the successive editions of the first
volume and the much later notes to his edition of Pope's Works (1797),
constantly reappraised his ideas. Particularly striking is the difficulty he
had in ranking the poets into their various classes. The second volume
of his Essay (No. 128) completed Warton's survey of Pope's canon, and
exhibits greater sympathy with Pope than the earlier volume. He
finds An Essay on Man remarkable for its 'Brevity of Diction';
less expectedly, he thought that at some points it almost reached the
'transcendently sublime'. Of the Imitations of Horace Warton says, 'No
part of our author's works have been more admired than these imita­
tions', and immediately undertakes a long and sensitive comparison
with the originals. When he comes to The Dunciad, however, Warton
is unwilling to praise Pope. The fourth book's subject is 'foreign and
heterogeneous, and the addition of it . . . injudicious, ill-placed, and
incongruous'. A more radical charge, and one which articulates clearly
the root objection of the Dunces, is that the poem misrepresents the
figures and institutions it satirizes. Warton defends Cibber, Bentley,
and the universities by arguing that Pope told lies. If The Dunciad is
guilty of fundamental misrepresentation, then the satire fails because it
lacks the basis of truth to fact.

Warton's final position is that 'imagination was not [Pope's] pre­
dominant talent, because he indulged it not': Pope's 'poetical enthu­
siasm' is continually reined in by the dictates of correctness, reason, and
harmony. Warton's admiration for Pope was real, but his literary
sympathies lay with the future.

The first volume of the Essay was quickly supported in 1759 by
Edward Young's Conjectures on Original Composition (No. 112). In his
earlier manuscript version the Conjectures originally paid tribute to
Pope's imaginative powers, but, at Richardson's suggestion, the praise
was omitted (No. 110). The published text shows no sign of Young's
earlier admiration for Pope. Nature not imitation is the source of
originality for Young, 'Imitation is inferiority confessed . . . though
we stand much obliged for his giving us an Homer, yet had he doubled
our obligation, by giving us—a Pope.' Young's dogmatic ideas are
simplistic, and his impercipient is nowhere more evident than when he
pronounces: 'Swift is a singular wit, Pope a correct poet, Addison a
great author.'

The influence of Young's and Warton's ideas is apparent in the
popular lectures which Hugh Blair delivered at Edinburgh (No. 116).
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Blair's admiration of the *Imitations of Horace* is circumscribed by his preference for original verse over imitation, and his belief that Pope lacked sublimity. Practising poets often reacted against Pope more strongly: Cowper characterized him as a mere 'mechanical maker of verses' (No. 126). For all these readers Shakespeare and Milton were the touchstones of genius: neoclassicism like Pope's no longer dominated creative imagination.

These signs of changing taste were simply ignored by critics like Goldsmith (No. 120) and Lord Lyttelton (No. 115), who remained faithful to the established Augustan case for Pope's poetry. Others replied directly. Dilworth's *Life* (1759, No. 111) attacked Warton by name, but did little more than repeat earlier eulogies of Pope. Owen Ruffhead's 'official' biography (1769, No. 121) does a little better. It makes a few minor hits, but otherwise limits itself to praising those poems praised by Warton. Percival Stockdale's excitable *An Inquiry into the Nature, and Genuine Laws of Poetry* (1778, No. 125), which concludes with a particularly far-fetched example of hagiolatry, persuasively argues the necessity and artistry of Pope's verbal control, shrewdly characterizing Warton as a critic with a 'vitiating' taste for 'Gothick' sublimity.

The most convincing among the early replies to Warton was made by Arthur Murphy in 1762 (No. 118). Identifying himself firmly with Augustan values, Murphy undertakes to show that Warton misunderstood the nature of genius and originality. Pope's handling of the sylphs in *The Rape of the Lock*, Murphy argues, went far beyond its source in *Le Comte de Gabalis*. Pope gave them 'such a ministry, such interests, affections and employments as carried with them sufficient poetical probability, and made very beautiful machinery in his poem, enlarging the main action, and ennobling the trifles, which it celebrates'. The mere fact that a poet borrows material does not deny his originality. As Murphy points out, Warton's argument would reduce Homer, who uses Greek fables, to the rank of a secondary genius. He also claimed that Lucretius had allowed philosophy to be a proper subject for poetry, and that *An Essay on Man* supplies the sublimity which Warton had failed to find in Pope's work. Murphy's ability to perceive the complexities of the subject from within the critical vocabulary of neoclassicism allows him to uncover an essential flaw in Warton's and Young's over-enthusiastic development of their argument. The first is not necessarily the best: tradition and the individual talent are interdependent.

27
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Dr Johnson's *Life of Pope* (No. 127), published in 1781, is the definitive expression of the conservative attitude to Pope. Johnson's magisterial certainty of Pope's genius was united to a conviction, perhaps too complacent, that he spoke for the majority of his contemporaries. When asked why Warton's second volume was so slow in appearing, he answered: 'Why, Sir, I suppose he finds himself a little disappointed, in not having been able to persuade the world to be of his opinion as to Pope.'

Johnson, though more deeply moved by Dryden's vitality, was overwhelmed by the perfection of Pope's art: 'New sentiments and new images others may produce; but to attempt any further improvement of versification will be dangerous. Art and diligence have now done their best, and what shall be added will be the effort of tedious toil and needless curiosity.' His answer to critics like Warton and Young is a twin appeal to tradition and to his reader's experience:

If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found? To circumscribe poetry by a definition will only show the narrowness of the definer, though a definition which shall exclude Pope will not easily be made. Let us look round upon the present time, and back upon the past; let us enquire to whom the voice of mankind has decreed the wreath of poetry; let their productions be examined and their claims stated, and the pretensions of Pope will no more be disputed.

Johnson's firm adherence to neoclassical values is filled out by his wide experience of books and men. He invigorates a critical vocabulary, whose prescriptive generalities had blinkered lesser writers, with an alertness and trenchancy unequalled elsewhere in the eighteenth century.

Johnson approached the composition of the *Life* with great advantages. His sympathy with Pope's literary aims was backed by an intimate knowledge of Pope's life and works, and by an interest going back to his translation of Crousaz's *Commentaire* in 1738. His discussion of the relationship of sound and sense in Pope's poetry in 1751 (No. 99) had laid the foundations for subsequent analyses of Lord Kames (No. 117) and George Campbell (No. 124), and his vigorous 'Dissertation on the Epitaphs of Pope' (1756, No. 108) gives the kind of close attention to the words on the page not always associated with eighteenth-century criticism. In *The Idler* no. 77 (No. 114) his discussion of 'easy poetry' based on an examination of examples drawn from Pope's work showed his alertness to lapses in Pope's standards, and he reviewed both Warton's *Essay* (No. 107) and Ruffhead's biography (No. 122). While preparing to write the *Life* itself he consulted Pope's friends and, like Warton, used Spence's record of his conversations with the poet.
Finally, between November 1780 and March 1781, Johnson wrote the *Life of Pope*. When read, as here, separated from the *Life*, his critical remarks show a surprising dependence on earlier writers. Johnson was content to reply to first one and then another of his predecessors, to condense others, and to develop material drawn from his own earlier essays. Dennis, Spence, Warton, Shiels, Murphy, Ruffhead, Kames, and Campbell all contribute to the *Life*, and the argument of Warton's first volume provides the first part of Johnson's analysis with a theme against which he can put his own disagreements and modifications.

To some extent this pattern is a sign of haste and exhaustion. It is, more importantly, part of Johnson's critical strategy in replying to Warton's scepticism. The *Life*, though it assumes aloofness from literary squabbles, attempts to resolve the years of debate over Pope's genius. Johnson's Pope is in essence the poet pictured by his contemporary admirers—the poet who had wrought English versification to its highest pitch, whose *Iliad* was a living proof of his genius and that of the English language, and whose success in widely varied neoclassical idioms placed him above all poets since Milton. Retrospectively, it is clear that Johnson does not deal with Warton's central question. He avoids any open discussion of Pope's relative position among English poets, arguing instead what Warton had never denied, that Pope is unquestionably a poet of genius. Johnson's own 'partial fondness' for Dryden, which might have qualified his acceptance of 'correctness' as an absolute good, is simply thrown at the reader as a self-evident truth. What Johnson gained from his encounter with Warton and other writers on Pope was a sharpened sense of Pope's Augustan virtues. The constant need to test his own experience of Pope's poetry against earlier critics, gives his criticism a notable toughness and incision.

Johnson's pragmatic approach saved him from the excesses of Warton's attachment to theory. Faced, for instance, with Warton's lengthy attack on the *Pastorals* lack of originality, Johnson briskly replied: 'To charge these Pastorals with want of invention, is to require what was never intended.' He then points out their true importance: they demonstrate Pope's precocious technical gifts and his early grasp of what the classics offered him. In his admiration of *The Rape of the Lock*, Johnson was happy to concur with the common judgment, but the brilliance of *An Essay on Man* did not prevent him from damning its 'penury of knowledge and vulgarity of sentiment'. Nor could *The Dunciad* 'beauties' overcome his conviction that Pope took 'an unnatural delight in ideas physically impure'.
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The overwhelming superiority of Johnson's *Life* is apparent in an independent vigour of mind which allows him to create a comprehensive account of Pope from the discord of earlier responses. But the foundations of its strength lie in the biographical structure. Recent scholarship may have corrected many points of fact, but the *Life* still has no serious rival as a critical biography. Where the conventionally neoclassical view made Pope into a lifeless paragon of abstractions, Johnson's own experience of Grub Street and his long wait for recognition, placed him in an ideal position to understand the contradictions of Pope's character and career, while perceiving the essential continuity of his development. Johnson's assessment, though often stringent, is shot through with a sympathetic understanding of the literary and social pressures which shaped Pope's poetry. Both as a man and as a poet, Pope is an elusive figure: Johnson's greatest achievement is to make the life and the poetry mutually illuminating.

VII
FOREIGN REPUTATION

Pope was the first English poet to have a substantial foreign audience during his own lifetime. His work was read throughout Europe and in the New World. French translations of his poetry outnumbered even those of the works of Locke or Newton. *An Essay on Man* was translated into at least seventeen languages, including Czech and Icelandic, in the hundred years following its publication: the German versions alone numbered twenty-four. Pope's Continental reputation began with *An Essay on Criticism*, a manuscript translation of which was in circulation only a couple of years after the poem's first appearance. Of all his works, *The Rape of the Lock* met with most constant approbation, while *An Essay on Man* stirred up the most controversy. In Italy and France his translations of Homer found readers eager to take the measure of the 'English Homer'. The *Dunciad*'s coarseness and topicality made it less acceptable to Enlightenment tastes, though German translations began to appear before Pope's death, and in 1764 Palissot felt able to imitate it for a French audience (No. 119). Even the *Pastorals* eventually found a French translator (No. 103).

The swift establishment of Pope's fame abroad is a symptom of the cosmopolitanism of the early Enlightenment. Both Pope and his
CONTINENTAL READER FELT THE ATTRACTION OF THE IDEA OF A LITERATURE, COMMON TO ALL EUROPE, REACHING FROM HOMER TO THE PRESENT DAY. PRIOR TO POPE’S APPEARANCE, FOREIGN READERS’ ADMIRATION FOR THE CLOSE THINKING OF Locke OR NEWTON HAD BEEN BALANCED BY A CONVICTION THAT ENGLAND’S LITERATURE WAS IN A STATE OF CULTURAL DARKNESS AND GOTHIC BARBARITY. POPE CHANGED THIS AT A STROKE. HIS POETRY EXHIBITED THE TERCED REASONING TYPICAL OF THE ENGLISH IN AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM AND AN ESSAY ON MAN, BUT JOINED THIS VIRTUE TO WIT, ELEGANCE, AND NEOCLASSICAL CORRECTNESS, HITHERTO REGARDED AS THE PRESERVE OF EUROPEAN WRITERS. BY 1724, WHEN BOLINGBROKE URGED POPE TO WRITE AN ORIGINAL WORK TO MAKE ENGLISH LITERATURE KNOWN TO THE WORLD (NO. 39), HIS EARLY POETRY HAD ALREADY GONE A LONG WAY TOWARDS ESTABLISHING ENGLISH AUGUSTAN POETRY AS EQUAL TO THAT IN ANY LANGUAGE.

AS THE CENTURY DEVELOPED, ESTIMATES OF POPE BEGAN TO SHIFT. BY 1759 COUNT ALGAROTTI, A WEATHERVANE OF EUROPEAN TASTE, FOUND POPE’S COMPRESSION A SIGN OF HARSHNESS (NO. 113). HE COULD GIVE WHOLEHEARTED APPROVAL ONLY TO THE RAPe OF THE LOCK. ALGAROTTI REFLECTS THE GENERAL TURNING AWAY FROM NEOCLASSICAL STANDARDS WHICH MARKS THE MIDDLE YEARS OF THE CENTURY.

VIII


THE FULL-SCALE ASSAULT UPON AUGUSTAN POETIC DICTION IN THE PREFACE TO THE LYRICAL BALLADS (1798) HAD LITTLE IMMEDIATE IMPACT UPON THIS
entrenched position—the first edition of five hundred copies had to be
disposed of at a loss. Pope's poetry, however, soon became a major
issue in the upheavals caused by the growth of Romanticism. In 1806
Warton's disciple, William Lisle Bowles, published an edition of Pope's
Collected Works, and precipitated a controversy which lasted until 1826.
Bowles entirely lacked his old schoolmaster's moderation. Where
Warton thought Pope a great poet who had chosen to exploit only the
lesser side of his genius, Bowles regarded him as inherently second-rate,
deficient in sensibility, and ignorant of nature. This aggressively
Romantic interpretation threw Pope's poetry into the midst of an urgent
dispute in which it was only the ostensible subject. The Lake Poets, and
later Keats and Shelley, were fighting for the overthrow of beliefs
which threatened their freedom as writers. Their emphasis upon sub­
jectivity and the visionary world of the imagination, made Pope's
conscious artistry, and his public frame of reference, seem the antithesis
of poetry. Wordsworth wrote:

To this day I believe I could repeat, with a little previous rummaging of my
memory, several thousand lines of Pope. But if the beautiful, the pathetic, and
the sublime be what a poet should chiefly aim at, how absurd it is to place those
men among the first of poets of this country! Admirable are they in treading
their way, but that way lies almost at the foot of Parnassus.

It was inevitable that Pope's reputation should suffer in the reaction
against the previous age. Yet it remained possible for writers less
committed than Wordsworth and more intelligent than Bowles, to
perceive Pope's worth. Byron, Rogers, Campbell, Hazlitt, and De
Quincey all came to Pope's defence. Their firm sense of his virtues is
tempered by a realization of his limitations. Hazlitt is representative:
'I believe I may date my insight into the mysteries of poetry from the
commencement of my acquaintance with the authors of the Lyrical
Ballads; at least, my discrimination of the higher sorts—not my pre­
dilection for writers such as Goldsmith or Pope.'

Throughout the Romantic period the question of Pope's genius was a
live conflict. For the Victorians the great Romantic discoveries were
established truisms: Pope and Augustanism appeared a temporary
aberration in the course of English poetry. By 1880 Matthew Arnold
could confidently dispose of Augustan pretensions to greatness: 'Dry­
den and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our
prose.' The low rank assigned to Pope's poetry was enforced by a dis­
like of his satire: he once more became the malicious hunchback
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portrayed by the Dunces. At best he was regarded as a master of filigree work, written for the complacent world of Queen Anne.

This view was not seriously challenged until 1930, when William Empson’s seminal remarks in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* revealed the witty and complex profundity of Pope’s verse. Four years later, F. R. Leavis, provoked by T. S. Eliot’s *Homage to John Dryden*, sought to reinstate Pope’s poetry by demonstrating the continuity of its wit with that of Metaphysical poetry. These critical insights mark the start of a complete revaluation of Pope. This new attention to the texture of the poetry and to the richness of Pope’s imaginative world was supported by the scholarly work in eighteenth-century studies which had been in progress for some years, especially in America. George Sherburn’s account of Pope’s early career, also published in 1934, cleared away many of the slanders surrounding the poet. The subsequent exploration of Pope’s mind and art has depended upon an interchange between the literary awareness represented by Empson and Leavis, and the insights which have come from labours of humane scholars like Sherburn. Geoffrey Tillotson’s *On the Poetry of Pope* (1938) combined both virtues. His sensitive exposition of Pope’s ideals of ‘correctness’ showed that wit, decorum, and artifice do not disguise feeling, but enable him to achieve an ordered and powerful expression of specific and deeply felt emotions.

This resurgence of interest found its centre from 1939 to 1967 in the Twickenham edition, whose exploration of the way Pope’s greatest poetry is deeply embedded in its age is balanced by a sense of its intrinsic merits. Its editors demonstrate conclusively the central place of imitation and allusion in the texture of Pope’s poetry, his skill in working within established genres, and the vitality with which he creates a symbolic and moral order from traditional and classical values. In this rehabilitation of Pope the satires, including the Horatian imitations, have formed the foundation of his claims to greatness. At the same time, the serious intellectual ambitions of *An Essay on Man* had been recognized, and the Homer translations once more seen as a crucial part of his Augustan achievement.

Cleanth Brooks, W. K. Wimsatt, and Maynard Mack have shown that Pope’s stylistic and metaphoric structures could yield as much to the ‘New Criticism’ as the Metaphysicals or modern poetry, and Donald Davie has argued that, like Eliot or Pound, Pope’s poetry renovates the language of the tribe. This somewhat belated admission of Pope to the ranks of genuine poetry has encouraged discussion of his
poems' dominant images and symbolic patterns, enabling a work like Aubrey Williams's thematic analysis (1955) of *The Dunciad* to offer a convincing reply to the long-standing objections to the poem's structure.

The most tireless promoter of Pope's reputation has been Maynard Mack. Like his earlier work on Pope's wit, his analysis of *An Essay on Man*'s Christian framework, or his exhumation of the grandeur of the Homer, Mack's *The Garden and the City* (1969) is a vindication of the union of scholarly and critical intelligence. It explores Pope's growing political motivation in the later satires, and brilliantly reveals how the poet's house and grotto at Twickenham became an integral part of his symbolic world. In all, recent criticism has encouraged a more complete reading of Pope's poetry than any since Johnson's *Life*. Although the relative importance assigned to the various areas of poetry differs radically from that of the eighteenth-century reader, a sympathy with Pope's intentions has disclosed a poet whose artistic mastery is the expression of a coherent attitude to life. Despite a deviousness in his life often approaching downright dishonesty, Pope's embodiment of a humane and conservative 'virtue' in his poetry is now clearly recognizable.

The eighteenth-century reading of Pope obviously supports the historicist elements in this rediscovery. Contemporary emphasis upon the Homer and Pope's classical heritage shows the accuracy of scholarly excavation of these strata in his work, while a reading of the Dunces forces a recognition of the essential truth of Pope's portraits: *The Dunciad* and its apparatus tell us all we need to know. But the variety of reactions between 1705 and 1782 serves as a warning against too easily taking Pope at his own valuation. The inertness of emotion lying behind the clichés which assert his Augustan greatness takes one back to Warton's basic questions with a sense of relief. Translation is not after all original poetry: it is important that Pope failed to write an epic of his own. Satire may not be an inherently inferior genre, but neoclassical praise for Pope's successes in other genres, praise we can no longer endorse, points to a certain narrowness in Pope's range. The kind of excitement stimulated by *Eloisa to Abelard* underlines a straitened responsiveness in Pope's approach to sexuality. The ease with which Crousaz, Voltaire, or Warburton twisted *An Essay on Man* to suit their own interpretations asks whether the poem, though containing passages of Pope's most eloquently fervent poetry, lacks an important measure of intellectual coherence. Dr Johnson, speaking as a strong-minded
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Christian, certainly found its 'philosophy' pretentious. So too, Johnson's awe before Pope's versification is a reminder that for Pope, and the eighteenth century in general, 'correctness' often dwindled to a matter of style. Nor is it easy to brush aside the recurrent complaints against the satire's obscurity, while the embarrassment of Pope's admirers before his satiric verve stresses the way in which his poetry is often most powerful when its real motives are not fully admitted. Johnson's blunt admission that malice and an attraction to the 'physically impure' are elements in *The Dunciad* would offend some of Pope's modern apologists, but they are undoubtedly present. While they may make judgment difficult, they are a powerful source of the poem's energy.

Pope's idealizing Augustan vision, which dominated his early work and sustained friendly critics throughout his career, has given a framework for much twentieth-century criticism. The Augustan myth was a necessary fiction for Pope and his audience, but how far is its resonance factitious? Now that the recovery work is more or less complete, criticism should perhaps pose the basic issues once more, and the wholeness of Pope's world be measured against the fuller worlds of Swift, Fielding, or Hogarth.

NOTES


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8 See Twickenham, i. 353-6.
9 See especially Nos 13, 15, 53, and 86.
10 Further, see Twickenham, i. 15-20.
12 25 June 1711, Corresp., i. 121. However, in 1713 Pope satirized Dennis in The Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris.
13 On Windsor Forest see Earl Wasserman, The Subter Language (Baltimore, 1959), chap. iv, and Twickenham, i. 131-44. On The Temple of Fame see Twickenham, ii. 215-42.
14 Publication of the five-canto version is treated here as the poem's first appearance. The two-canto version in Lintot's Miscellany (1712) was virtually ignored.
15 An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer (1735), reprinted in Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays, ed. S. Elledge (New York, 1961), i. 446.
16 Thraliana, ed. K. C. Balderston (1942), i. 536.
18 Further, see Maynard Mack's illuminating Introduction, Twickenham, vol. vii.
19 An unjustified charge: see Twickenham, vii, pp. lxxxi-cvii.
20 Pope altered the line to meet Dennis's objection.
21 Norman Callan, Twickenham, vii, p. lxxix. See Callan's discussion for a fuller account of the exchange.
22 For recent discussions of this area see Twickenham, vii, pp. liv-lv, and J. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts (Chicago, 1958), pp. 229ff.
23 Lives of the Poets, ed. G. B. Hill (1905), iii. 143.
24 20 March 1729, The Weekly Journal or the British Gazetteer. For the first lines of this, see p. 1 above. It was reprinted in Pope Alexander's Supremacy and Infallibility Examind (1729), p. vi.
25 Corresp., ii. 104-5.
26 Corresp., ii. 349-50.
27 For a detailed account of the poem's genesis, see Twickenham, v, pp. xiii-xv.
29 See No. 95 for Richardson's reaction to The Dunciad's final version.
31 Advertisement to Imitations of Horace, Sat. II. i (quoted Twickenham, III. i, p. xl).
33 See Twickenham, III. i, pp. xii-xiv, III. ii, pp. xiv-xxv, and Spence, Anecdotes, i. 131-4.
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34 Corresp., iii. 417.
36 Twickenham, iv, p. xl. Further, see ibid., pp. xxxvi-xlii.
39 See Du Rensel’s remarks (No. 82), and J. de La Harpe, Le Journal des Savants et la renommée de Pope en France au xviiième siècle, University of California Publications in Modern Philology, xvi (1933), 173-216.
40 As Johnson pointed out in his translation of the Commentaire (1739, reissued 1742).
41 See Twickenham, III. i, note p. xlii.
43 Corresp., iv. 171.
44 3 April 1742, quoted Twickenham, v, p. xxxi.
45 Twickenham, v, pp. xxxii-iv, and Spence, Anecdotes, i. 111-12.
47 To the Duchess of Portland, 4 December 1743, Elizabeth Montagu: The Queen of the Bluestockings, ed. E. J. Climenson (1960), i. 172.
49 W. L. Macdonald, Pope and his Critics (1951), pp. 251ff.
51 For his significant alterations, see p. 382 below; also H. Trowbridge, ‘Joseph Warton’s Classification of English Poets’, Modern Language Notes, li (1936), 515-18.
52 Essay, ii. 337ff.
54 In 1743 he wrote a brief account of the controversy, Gentleman’s Magazine, xliii (1743), 152, 587-8.
56 Pope’s foreign reputation has not been systematically explored. See Bibliography for a list of the studies made to date.
57 See Twickenham, III. i, note p. xlii.
58 Twickenham, i. 208-9. For examples of French reaction, see Nos 42, 82.
59 Corresp., i. 447.
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62 Letters of the Wordsworth Family, ed. W. Knight (1907), iii. 122.
64 Scrutiny, ii (1934); reprinted in Revaluation (1935), chap. iii.
65 Ian Jack's Augustan Satire (1952), R. Brower's Pope: the Poetry of Allusion (1959), Thomas Edward's This Dark Estate (Berkeley, 1963), and Peter Dixon's The World of Pope's Satires (1968) all illuminate Pope's imaginative world.
68 See the Introduction to Twickenham, Ill. i; and the collaborative essay to vol. vii. Mack has also edited Essential Articles for the Study of Pope (Hamden, Conn., 1968 enlarged ed.).
69 See Emrys Jones's 'Pope and Dulness', British Academy Chatterton Lecture (1968), for a fresh approach to these (and other) problems.
Note on the Text

The text is normally taken from the first edition when available, or from a definitive modern text. Where a text presents complications, the headnote preceding the item describes the situation. Editorial interference has been kept to a minimum. In some details the text has been normalized to follow modern practice. Texts originally printed in italic are here given in roman, but otherwise contemporary capitalization, punctuation, and italics are retained. Typographical errors are silently corrected, as are quotations and line references, except where the misquotation affects the writer's remarks. The form of footnotes and references has been adapted to suit modern conventions where the original is misleading or obscure. Footnotes added by the editor are in square brackets, as are alterations or explanatory additions to the text. Latin and Greek quotations are given in English, the translation usually being that of the Loeb editions. As far as possible, translations from the French originals are given from eighteenth-century versions; despite their freedom, contemporary translators share their authors' critical vocabulary.

In the case of short excerpts from longer works, page references to the original are given in the headnote; where the selection is more substantial, page references are given in square brackets in the text itself. Long quotations from Pope's poetry used for illustrative rather than critical purposes, are replaced by line references to the Twickenham edition.

The dates of attacks on Pope are normally taken from J. V. Guerinot, Pamphlet Attacks on Pope 1711–1744 (1969).