

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature

Pope's Poetic Legacy, 1744-1830

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ABSTRACT

Jerome McGann observes that ‘DECEPTIVE apparitions haunt romantic writing’. This thesis investigates one such haunting apparition; it analyses the ways in which selected eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century poets engage with the poetry of Alexander Pope. The received view of “Romantic” anti-Popeanism is expressed in comments such as that of William Hazlitt’s—‘I do not think there is any point of sympathy between Pope and the *Lake School*: on the contrary, I know there is an antipathy between them’. There is plenty of evidence to suggest some Romantic writers had an aversion to the previous literary age. In a letter to his brother and sister-in-law in March 1819, for example, Keats reviews a play by mocking that it ‘was bad even in comparison with...the Augustan age’. Pope had been the pre-eminent figure of Augustan poetry. Hence, the argument runs, Pope was rejected wholesale by Romantic poets.

Such an understanding of literary history is, however, too dogmatic. Rather than accepting the view that the progression from Pope’s era to the Romantic period involved a sudden pivot in taste, I explore how Popean poetic principles filtered into the development of his successors’ literary aesthetics and ideas about poetry. The central questions I ask are how, and in what ways, Pope’s successors used Pope’s poetry to formulate their own poetic visions. I address these questions in four main chapters. In the first, I analyse Joseph Warton’s *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*. I show that Warton’s *Essay on Pope* should not be taken as a denigration of Pope’s poetic achievement, and suggest ways in which Pope’s work permeates his, and his brother Thomas’, poetry. In the second, I examine the response to Pope’s *Iliad*, a text which prompted conflicting reactions among his successors. In particular, I appraise William Cowper’s response to Pope’s translation, not only as contained in his prose discussion of it, but also as revealed by his own translation. My third chapter considers ways in which Wordsworth plays with Pope’s poetic

legacy, and acknowledges Pope's contribution to the formulation of his own ideas of what constitutes good poetry. In the final chapter, I illustrate that even in the poetry of Keats—who, at times, vociferously rejects Pope as a mere handicraftsman—there is a sympathy in song between brother-poets.

Literary criticism has often stressed the prominence of authors such as Lord Byron, Erasmus Darwin and George Crabbe in Pope's poetic reception and legacy. Yet Pope haunts other writers in subtler, but no less compelling, ways. As Samuel Taylor Coleridge observes, in *Biographia Literaria*, 'many...formed...their notions of poetry, from the writings of Mr. Pope'. What I try to give colour to here are some of the ways in which subsequent 'notions of poetry' were 'formed' from 'the writings of Mr. Pope'.

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INTRODUCTION: ‘And Universal Darkness buries All’

What is a Poet?
William Wordsworth¹

the man who cannot enjoy Pope as poetry probably understands no poetry
T. S. Eliot²

the danger now, it seems to me, is not that we will forget the differences between poems of different historical periods, but that we may forget those qualities which they have in common
Cleanth Brooks³

‘*What is a Poet?*’, asks Wordsworth in the 1802 preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, ‘*I ask what is meant by the word Poet?*’.⁴ Fifteen years later in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), in critical response to Wordsworth’s preface, Samuel Taylor Coleridge is still asking ‘What is poetry?...what is a poet?’.⁵ These are questions that all poets, and indeed literary critics, must consider. Attempts to answer them abounded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Leigh Hunt, for example, produced *An Essay in Answer to the Question, ‘What is Poetry?’* in 1845.⁶ Nor was it only poets and literary critics who asked this question. The philosopher John Stuart Mill opens his 1833 essay ‘Thoughts

¹ William Wordsworth, 1802 preface to *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, eds. James Butler and Karen Green, *The Cornell Wordsworth*, gen. eds. Stephen Parrish and Mark L. Reed, 21 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975-2007), p.751. Please note that, throughout this thesis, references to Wordsworth’s poetry (unless otherwise stated) are from *The Cornell Wordsworth*, gen. eds. Stephen Parrish and Mark L. Reed, 21 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975-2007).

² T. S. Eliot, ‘Introduction’ to Ezra Pound’s *Selected Poems*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), p.xxi.

³ Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (London: Dobson, 1949), p.197.

⁴ Wordsworth, 1802 preface to *Lyrical Ballads, The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.751.

⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions’, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, eds. James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), vol.2, p.15.

⁶ Leigh Hunt, *Imagination and Fancy: Or, Selections from the English Poets, Illustrative of those First Requisites of their Art; with Markings of the Best Passages, Critical Notices of the Writers, and An Essay in Answer to the Question, ‘What is Poetry?’* (London, 1845).

on Poetry and Its Varieties' by reminding us that 'IT HAS OFTEN BEEN ASKED, What is Poetry?'.⁷

In addition to contemplating these abstract questions, the literati of the period were debating the creation and criteria of the poet and poetry within their own time. The inescapable long-established traditions of literature mean that the poet of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is not the same creature as the poet of two millennia before. So what does this mean for the poet, and poetry, in the present? In other words, who or what is the poet and poetry in context? The rise in poetical anthologies, literary journals, and elegant extracts reflects the rapidly swelling interest in the charting of poetry. Alexander Pope himself had planned to compose a literary history of English poets.⁸ A corollary of the developing canonisation of English poetry was a prevalent desire to measure contemporary poets against their poetical forefathers. E. P. in an article for the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1819, in what was by then a familiar refrain, writes that 'Our poetical pretensions of equality...with several previous epochs during the long line of our literary history, may be justly a matter of question'.⁹ For writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, one such epoch with which to compare contemporary 'poetical pretensions' was the immediately preceding one, the English Augustan Age; its proximity adding a particular frisson to discussion. Thomas Love Peacock, for instance, in *The Four Ages of Poetry* (originally published in 1820 in *Ollier's Literary Miscellany*), writes deliberately provocatively of 'the egregious confraternity of rhymesters, known by the name of the Lake Poets' who 'gave what is called a new tone to poetry' and thus 'brought the age of brass prematurely to its dotage' at the expense of the

⁷ John Stuart Mill, 'Autobiography and Literary Essays', ed. Jack Stillinger, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume 1*, gen. ed. John Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), pp.341-365, p.343. Again, like Coleridge, this is in part a response to Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

⁸ Thomas Warton read Pope's sketch when preparing his own history of English poetry (*The History of English Poetry: From the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century*, 4 vols. (London, 1774-1781)). See Warton to Richard Hurd, 25 December 1763: *The Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, ed. David Fairer (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 'Letter 135', p.167.

⁹ E. P., 'Remarks Philosophical and Literary', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 89.2, ed. 'Sylvanus Urban' (November, 1819), pp.397-400, p.399.

Augustan age of silver.¹⁰ The preeminent figure of the previous generation had been Pope; in Peacock's words, the previous age had come 'to perfection with Pope'.¹¹ So provoking was Peacock's essay that Percy Bysshe Shelley, as might have been expected, leapt to poetry's defence.¹²

In the eighteenth century, Pope saturated literary culture. The mid-century edition of his *Works* made a net profit of over £5,000, more than those of Milton and Shakespeare combined.¹³ He was taught in schools, and was 'a standard schoolroom aid'.¹⁴ Both Pope's poetry and criticism were foundational texts studied at Eton in the 1760s.¹⁵ Francis Jeffrey comments that in the early 1790s, when he was at his 'studies' in Scotland, 'every young man was set to read Pope' who was 'placed without challenge at the head of our national literature'.¹⁶ Two decades later Pope's presence amongst the young was still going strong: Leigh Hunt remarks that, up until about the age of twenty-five, it was 'Pope, who had been my closest poetical acquaintance'.¹⁷ That Pope was a figure who was used 'to Facilitate the Improvement of Youth in Reading and Speaking' is evident from William Enfield's *The Speaker* (1774), in which Pope's poems, along with the bible, are recommended reading, as they 'will furnish many proper exercises'.¹⁸ And Robert Lowth's *A Short Introduction to English Grammar*, first published in 1762 and reprinted frequently throughout

¹⁰ Thomas Love Peacock, *The Four Ages of Poetry*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), pp.14-15.

¹¹ Peacock, *Four Ages of Poetry*, p.13.

¹² Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* (which was written in 1821 but not published until Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's edition of *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*, 2 vols. (London, 1840), vol.1, pp.1-57).

¹³ Duncan Wu, *30 Great Myths about the Romantics* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), p.29.

¹⁴ Christina Le Prevost, 'More Unacknowledged Verse by Joseph Warton', *Review of English Studies* 37.147 (August, 1986), pp.314-347, p.328, f.14.

¹⁵ Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, ed., *Etoniana* 7 (July, 1906), p.102.

¹⁶ Francis Jeffrey, 'Review of Scott's Edition of Swift', *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* 27.53 (September, 1816), pp.1-58, p.1.

¹⁷ Hunt, *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, 3 vols. (London, 1850), vol.2, p.170.

¹⁸ William Enfield, *The Speaker: Or, Miscellaneous Pieces, Selected from the Best English Writers, and Disposed under Proper Heads, with a View to Facilitate the Improvement of Youth in Reading and Speaking. To Which is Prefixed an Essay on Elocution* (London, 1774), pp.xvi-xvii.

the century, uses Pope repeatedly to explain basic rules of the English language.¹⁹ Lowth's textbook was the most prevalent 'school grammar' of the eighteenth century.²⁰

As an influence on young minds, Pope's dominance is clear. The first extant poem of Wordsworth's, written in 1785 and entitled 'Lines Written as a School Exercise at Hawkshead', is, in his own words, an 'imitation of Pope'.²¹ Similarly, Coleridge was an early appreciator of Pope. Amongst his schoolboy poetry is a teasing mock-heroic from 1789, clearly based on *The Rape of the Lock* (first published in 1712, and expanded in 1714), in which he experiments with typically Popean techniques.²² The zeugma of the final line, 'At once her Lover, and her Lapdog lost' (l.32), is a nod to that most Popean of tropes which appears throughout *The Rape of the Lock*, in lines such as 'Or lose her Heart, or Necklace, at a Ball' (canto 2, l.109).²³ Inevitably as these, and other, school-children grew up the relationship between Pope and those who inherited his legacy matured beyond the classroom one of master-pupil to something more multifaceted. As Samuel Johnson famously wrote in *The Rambler* No. 86, 12 January 1751:

It is, indeed, always dangerous to be placed in a state of unavoidable comparison with excellence, and the danger is still greater when that excellence is consecrated by death...He that succeeds a celebrated writer, has the same difficulties to encounter[.]²⁴

Pope himself no doubt exacerbated the problem of how to deal with his poetic legacy in his aggressively confrontational end to *The Dunciad*, 'And Universal Darkness buries All' ([1742] bk.4, l.656): throwing down the gauntlet to his successors by taunting that poetry would inevitably

¹⁹ Robert Lowth, *A Short Introduction to English Grammar: With Critical Notes* (London, 1762).

²⁰ Celia Millward and Mary Hayes, *A Biography of the English Language*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012), p.239.

²¹ Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), vol.3, p.372.

²² Coleridge, 'De Medio Fonte Leporum Surgit Aliquid Amari', *Poetical Works*, ed. J. C. C. Mays, 6 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), vol.1, pp.11-12.

²³ All quotations of Pope's poetry are from *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, gen. ed. John Butt, 11 vols. (London: Methuen, 1961-1969). For all references to *The Rape of the Lock* in particular, see *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.2, pp.79-212.

²⁴ *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, gen. eds. Herman Liebert, Allen Hazen, John Middendorf, and Robert DeMaria, 23 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958-2010), vol.4, p.87.

succumb to Goddess Dulness after his death.²⁵ ‘Man seldom sets up for a Poet’, remarks Joseph Addison, ‘without attacking the Reputation of all his Brothers in the Art’.²⁶ Pope himself had attacked other writers in *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), *Peri Bathous, Or the Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1728), and *The Dunciad* (originally published in 1728, and then revised in 1729, 1742, and 1743), among other works; in return there are plenty of examples of attacks on the poetical reputation of Pope in the succeeding century. John Keats’ *Sleep and Poetry* (1817) is one such well-known example. It is easy to find ways in which Pope’s poetic descendants rejected his perception of what good poetry is.²⁷ Pope himself had recognised the compulsive need in writers to reject their literary forefathers, asking ‘To write well, lastingly well, Immortally well, must not one leave Father and Mother and cleave unto the Muse?’.²⁸ The allusion to Genesis suggests that the desire to reject parental authority has been passed, ironically, through the generations from time immemorial.²⁹ But the conscious rejection of portions of Pope’s poetic vision (by which I mean thoughts on what poetry ought to be) does not mean that other parts were not inherited and developed by his literary offspring.

Some of Pope’s younger imitators did self-consciously approve of Pope’s poetic vision and therefore attempted to emulate his style. George Crabbe’s first published poem *Inebriety* (1775), for example, in parts imitates Pope’s *Dunciad* and *An Essay on Man* (1734).³⁰ In the preface, Crabbe acknowledges that he has ‘taken such great Liberties with Mr. POPE’.³¹ Crabbe’s contemporaries too categorised him as dedicated to a Popean vision of poetry. In a review of *The*

²⁵ For all quotations of *The Dunciad*, I have used the fifth volume of the *Twickenham Edition*, edited by James Sutherland.

²⁶ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* No. 253, 20 December 1711, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), vol.2, p.482.

²⁷ See, for instance, James Reeves, *The Reputation and Writings of Alexander Pope* (London: Heinemann, 1976); or Robert Griffin, *Wordsworth’s Pope: A Study in Literary Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

²⁸ Pope to Bolingbroke, 9 April 1724: *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), vol.2, p.227.

²⁹ Genesis 2:24: ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh’ (*The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, ed. Robert P. Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)).

³⁰ George Crabbe, *Inebriety, A Poem, In Three Parts* (Ipswich, 1775). For all references to *An Essay on Man*, I have used volume 3.i of the *Twickenham Edition*, edited by Maynard Mack.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.ii.

News-Paper in the *Monthly Review* (November, 1785), for instance, Charles Burney, brother of Fanny Burney, writes that ‘Crabbe seems to have chosen Pope as his model, and many passages of this poem are strongly marked imitations of the great Poet’.³² Elsewhere, an early reviewer of Samuel Rogers’ *The Pleasures of Memory* (1792), in the *Monthly Review* for June of that year, opens the review by praising the ‘Correctness of thought, delicacy of sentiment, variety of imagery, and harmony of versification, [which] are the characteristics which distinguish this beautiful poem, in a degree that cannot fail to ensure its success’, adding later that the poetry is ‘strictly accurate and exquisitely beautiful’.³³ These are characteristics which were predominantly associated with a Popean vision of poetry. Rogers indeed praises these qualities in Pope, declaring ‘that darling man Pope’, who ‘always expresses himself with such admirable clearness’.³⁴ Perhaps little known now, Rogers’ *The Pleasures of Memory* was spectacularly popular at the time—over 22,000 copies had been printed by 1816, the year of its nineteenth edition³⁵—which demonstrates the enduring public popularity of poetry that followed in Pope’s footsteps. Erasmus Darwin wrote *The Botanic Garden* (1791) in polished heroic couplets, merging wit with elaborate epic machinery in a Popean style. Darwin’s poem was also extremely successful: its publisher, Joseph Johnson, set the high price of twenty-one shillings for it in 1791.³⁶ Anna Seward, Darwin’s biographer, noted in her memoirs of his life that ‘The immense price which the bookseller gave for this work, was doubtless owing to considerations which inspired his trust in it’s [*sic*] popularity’.³⁷ These poets’ appreciation and adoption of Pope’s style has repeatedly been represented in criticism as suggesting that they go against the poetical spirit of the age. So much so that the *Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*

³² Charles Burney, ‘Review of *Crabbe’s News-Paper, a Poem*’, *The Monthly Review; Or, Literary Journal* 73 (November, 1785), pp.374-376, p.376. See Crabbe, *The News-Paper: A Poem* (London, 1785).

³³ Anonymous, ‘Review of Rogers’ *Pleasures of Memory*’, *The Monthly Review; Or Literary Journal* 8 (June, 1792) pp.121-124, p.121, p.123. See Samuel Rogers, *The Pleasures of Memory, A Poem* (London, 1792).

³⁴ Samuel Rogers, *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers: To Which is Added Porsoniana*, ed. Alexander Dyce and William Maltby (London, 1856), p.28.

³⁵ Frederick Erastus Pierce, *Currents and Eddies in the English Romantic Generation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918), p.29.

³⁶ Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora’s Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.26.

³⁷ Anna Seward, *Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin: Chiefly During his Residence in Lichfield, With Anecdotes of his Friends, and Criticisms on his Writings* (London, 1804), p.167.

(1999) can suggest that Crabbe's use of 'the style of Pope' is evidence of his position as 'leading anti-Romantic poet of the period'.³⁸ Similarly, Virgil Nemoianu argues in *The Taming of Romanticism* (1984) that Crabbe 'resumed' a Popean 'eighteenth-century tradition' and that Rogers exemplifies 'the determined attempt to bring romantic' poetic vision 'under control'.³⁹ Meanwhile the story of *The Botanic Garden* 'is often told in connection with the irresistible rise of the Romantic Movement, with Erasmus Darwin's absurd efforts the prime specimen of the artificial lumber of "poetic diction" mercifully cleared away for good by Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* and its Preface'.⁴⁰

Pope's legacy has been well recognised in the works of successors such as these.⁴¹ Pope's legacy, understandably, has been less recognised in those who do not proclaim themselves overtly and publicly to follow in Pope's footsteps.⁴² The writers whom I examine primarily in this thesis are those who made public statements that are critical of elements of Pope's poetry, and who are therefore often taken to represent, in Michael J. Tolley's words, 'the Romantic flowering' that left

³⁸ Iain McCalman, gen. ed., *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.470.

³⁹ Virgil Nemoianu, *The Taming of Romanticism: European Literature and the Age of Biedermeier* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp.72-73.

⁴⁰ Martin Priestman, *The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin: Enlightened Spaces, Romantic Times* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p.3. For more on the relationship between Darwin and Romantic writers see Desmond King-Hele, *Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986).

⁴¹ For more on Crabbe and Pope see Caryn Chaden, 'Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, and George Crabbe, *The Village*', *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp.303-315. For more on Pope and Rogers see J. R. Watson, 'Samuel Rogers: The Last Augustan', *Augustan Worlds: New Essays in Eighteenth Century Literature*, ed. J. C. Hilson (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978), pp.281-297; and Morchard Bishop's introduction to his edition of the *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers* (London: Richards Press, 1952). See Priestman's recent work for links between Pope and Darwin (*The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin* (2013), and especially for Darwin's 'debts to Pope' (p.164)).

⁴² Literary historiography has charted the difficulties experienced by Romantic writers of assigning Pope a place in the literary canon: see Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); David Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement* (London: Methuen, 1987); and Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope*. James Chandler has outlined a historicist viewpoint which points to the rise of nationalism during the eighteenth century as a factor in a growing inclination to discredit Pope's French School of Poetry ('The Pope Controversy: Romantic Poetics and the English Canon', *Critical Inquiry* 10.3 (March, 1984), pp.481-509). Others have identified a link between an eighteenth-century growth in commercial culture to a shift in literary tastes and appreciation: see J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Samuel Baker, 'The Maritime Georgic and the Lake Poet Empire of Culture', *ELH* 75.3 (Autumn, 2008), pp.531-563.

‘the British Augustan age behind’.⁴³ Joseph Warton writes in the ‘Dedication’ of *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (the first volume of which was published in 1756, and the second volume in 1782), that he ‘do[es] not think [Pope] at the head of his profession’.⁴⁴ William Cowper, in a letter to the editor of the *Gentleman’s Magazine* (published in August 1785), writes that Pope’s *Iliad* (1715-1720) is ‘often turgid, often tame’.⁴⁵ Wordsworth considers Pope to have been ‘blinded by his own success’.⁴⁶ And Keats’ *Sleep and Poetry* famously criticises the ‘foppery and barbarism’ (l.182) of the Popean ‘school | Of dolts’ (ll.196-197).⁴⁷ These poets’ criticisms, however, do not mean that they reject the whole of Pope’s corpus and poetic vision.

There are two strands to my thinking throughout this thesis: first, how authors in the literary generations after his death use Pope in their formulations of what constitutes good poetry; and second, how these authors actually use Pope’s poetry within their own compositions. Throughout I have found Lucy Newlyn’s and John Hollander’s distinctions between allusions and echoes helpful.⁴⁸ To examine these questions, I have divided the thesis into four chapters.

The first chapter examines Warton’s praise of Pope in his *Essay on Pope*, and how it has been subsequently misinterpreted by those who seek to promote an anti-Pope agenda. Warton has been viewed as a progenitor of ‘Romantic’ sensibilities and style, and concurrently as hostile to and critical of Pope, his poetry, and his poetic achievement.⁴⁹ I argue against this idea and show that Warton is in fact vehemently supportive of Pope. Warton himself was so frustrated by the idea that he had meant to diminish Pope’s reputation in the first volume of the *Essay on Pope* that he wrote,

⁴³ Michael J. Tolley, ‘Preromanticism’, *A Companion to Romanticism*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp.12-22.

⁴⁴ Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (London, 1756), p.iii.

⁴⁵ William Cowper, *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, eds. James King and Charles Ryskamp, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979-1986), vol.5, p.57.

⁴⁶ Wordsworth, ‘Essay, Supplementary to the Preface’ (1815), *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.72.

⁴⁷ Throughout this thesis, all quotations of Keats’ poetry are from *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. Jack Stillinger (London: Heinemann, 1978).

⁴⁸ Newlyn, *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

⁴⁹ See, for example, Geoffrey Hartman, ‘A Project for the Sun’, *The Challenge of Periodization: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, ed. Lawrence Besserman (London: Garland, 1996), pp.147-159, p.159, f.4; or the more recent, David Hopkins and Charles Martindale, eds., *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature. Volume 3: 1660-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.156.

in the 'Advertisement' to the second volume, that only if he was 'perversely misinterpreted' could a reader surmise that he thought 'POPE was not a *great* poet'.⁵⁰

The second chapter examines the Homeric translations of Pope and Cowper. I address the mixed response to and complex position of Pope's Homeric translations at the end of the eighteenth century. There are two separate elements to this: the poem itself, and its impact. Coleridge's thinking embodies the divergence in the way the two were viewed: he praises 'that astonishing product of matchless talent and ingenuity, Pope's Translation of the *Iliad*', but which he does 'not stand alone in regarding as the main source of our pseudo-poetic diction'.⁵¹ I discuss Pope's *Iliad* particularly in relation to Cowper's translation of the same poem. On the one hand Cowper is critical of Pope's mode of translation, and yet on the other he clearly uses Pope's poem at a localised level. I demonstrate some ways in which Pope's and Cowper's renderings of the *Iliad* accord with one another. Even amongst those who disapprove of Pope's style of translation, the poem itself is lauded: Cowper writes in relation to the poem, 'I do not deny that his flowers are beautiful'.⁵² It is others' imitations of Pope's Homer that cause the problem for some; the poison of Pope's Homer is its effect, not the poem itself.

The third chapter closely examines Wordsworth's complex response to Pope, including specific analysis of particular poems, to show how Wordsworth continues to engage with Pope in developing his model of composition. I also investigate how Pope contributed to Wordsworth's language of the heart.

The last chapter moves on to the second-generation Romantics to study Pope's presence in the thinking of poets who do not see Pope as 'our last great poet'.⁵³ It concludes my discussion of eighteenth-century responses and progresses to Pope's legacy in the early nineteenth century. That is, from his poetical children to his grand-children, which Northrop Frye has argued is a

⁵⁰ Warton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 4th ed., 2 vols. (London, 1782), vol.2, p.i.

⁵¹ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, p.18, p.39.

⁵² Cowper, *Letters and Prose of Cowper*, vol.5, p.54.

⁵³ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1782), vol.1, p.2.

relationship that is intrinsically less fraught than the more proximal parental/child dynamic.⁵⁴

Principally I do this by examining Keats' relationship with Pope's poetry, and demonstrating some of the ways in which their poetry and poetic vision is sympathetic.

The Romantic period's considerations of Pope's poetic legacy has usually been discussed in literary criticism with reference to Lord Byron and William Lisle Bowles.⁵⁵ William Hazlitt, for one, was unimpressed with the quality of this dispute. In an article, for the *London Magazine* of June 1821, entitled 'Pope, Lord Byron, and Mr. Bowles' he writes with exasperation of 'All this *pibble-prabble* about Pope', which 'might be talked by any Bond-street loungee of them all, after a last night's debauch, in the intervals between the splashing of the soda-water and the acid taste of the port wine rising in the mouth. It is no better than that'.⁵⁶ Claude Rawson, echoing Hazlitt's weariness with the topic, remarks that 'Byron's famous letters on Pope...are not very interesting or distinguished documents, more preoccupied with a tedious and self-important wrangle with Bowles than with a genuine understanding of Pope'.⁵⁷ In a similar vein, Henry Crabb Robinson noted on 22 October 1832, 'Reading Moore's *Byron*, especially the pamphlets on Pope; Byron's strange judgment about Pope was merely given to the world out of spite and affectation. It is, I think, impossible that his love for Pope could have been genuine. It would have produced fruits'.⁵⁸ One hesitates to say that Byron's contributions show no 'genuine understanding of Pope' or that his appreciation of Pope produced no fruit (*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) springs to mind), but there has been much ink already spilled on the topic of the Bowles/Byron controversy and it is not my aim in this thesis to add to that.

⁵⁴ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

⁵⁵ See Jacob Johan Van Rennes, *Bowles, Byron, and the Pope Controversy* (Amsterdam: HJ Paris, 1927); and Chandler, 'The Pope Controversy', *Critical Inquiry* (1984), pp.481-509. For a useful bibliography of the Pope Controversy 1806-1826, see Appendix 2 in Upali Amarasinghe, *Dryden and Pope in the Early Nineteenth Century: A Study of Changing Literary Taste 1800-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp.222-223.

⁵⁶ William Hazlitt, 'Pope, Lord Byron, and Mr. Bowles', *The London Magazine* 3.18 (June, 1821), pp.593-607, p.593.

⁵⁷ Claude Rawson, 'Byron Augustan: Mutations of the Mock Heroic in *Don Juan* and Shelley's *Peter Bell the Third*', *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp.82-116, pp.82-83.

⁵⁸ Henry Crabb Robinson, *On Books and Their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1938), vol.1, p.415.

I do not wish to suggest that Pope is a pre- or proto-Romantic, or to redefine terms such as Augustanism and Romanticism.⁵⁹ I am not concerned with a Bloomian conception of literary influence being only an anxious experience, neither do I subscribe to the idea that the literary past is only a stifling burden.⁶⁰ Instead, I show that engagement with Pope's poetry does in fact spark creative potential in the authors who follow him, and that the debate surrounding the importance of Pope as a poetic figure was a significant and energising spur to action throughout the succeeding century.

I use the word 'engagement' throughout the thesis because it encapsulates the various ways that I approach examining the relationship between Pope and his successors. 'Engagement' can be both positive and negative, affectionate and adversarial: it means both to charm, to fascinate, to pledge oneself to, as well as to do battle with, to quarrel, and to combat (*OED*). The word 'engage' and its cognates therefore embody the contradictory impulses that I capture in the connection between Pope and later writers. It is a complex relationship, but throughout my thesis I show, from their sympathetic and antagonistic responses to him, what poets appropriate from Pope when considering what they perceive good poetry to be and in developing their own poetry. In addition, 'engagement', in the sense of interlocking, sums up the methodology I employ in investigating this relationship (*OED*). I primarily use close textual analysis to show how poets respond to the minutiae of Pope's poetics, and what these intertextual relations between poets reveal to us about their understandings of what good poetry is. I have found Christopher Ricks' model of analysis helpful and inspiring for passages of close-reading. I have also tried to contextualise textual aspects of the source material to show how individual giants of our canon were engaging in discussion with broader literary culture of the time.

⁵⁹ As does, for example, Cornelis Arnoldus Aldewereld, *Alexander Pope's Contribution Towards the Development of the Romantic Movement* (Erlangen: Copy Print, 1986).

⁶⁰ See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); and Walter Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971).

Overall, I seek to prove that Pope's poetical vision was central to, what we now call, Romantic conceptions of good writing. I show how Pope's contribution to, in Wordsworth's words, 'The Poetic Genius of England' is used by his successors.⁶¹

⁶¹ Wordsworth to Alexander Dyce, 19 April 1830: *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Alan G. Hill, Chester Shaver, and Mary Moorman, 2nd ed., 8 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-1993), vol.5, p.234.

CHAPTER ONE: 'If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?'

*The more I examine my own mind, the more Romantick I find myself...
Let them say I am Romantick
Alexander Pope*⁶²

In 1756 Joseph Warton published the first volume of *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*. Two decades later, as part of his *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with Critical Observations on their Works* (1779-1781), Samuel Johnson produced a 'Life of Pope'. Warton then published the second volume of his *Essay on Pope* in 1782. Within modern critical tradition, these texts have come to represent a quarrel between Warton and Johnson about general literary tastes. They are taken to signify the move from Augustanism towards Romanticism, in which Pope stands for bad poetical taste for the pre-Romantic Warton and good poetical taste for the anti-Romantic Johnson. Warton apparently seeks an 'official declaration of war against the reigning mode', while Johnson embodies quintessentially 'Augustan qualities'.⁶³ Warton subscribes to 'a "romanticism" envisaged as an anti-Pope poetry', while 'Johnson was perhaps Pope's greatest protégé'.⁶⁴ Many critics have assumed a polarisation of Warton's and Johnson's views in determining good poetical principles through their discussions of Pope. For Wallace Jackson, Warton's *Essay on Pope* catalogues 'the inadequacies of Augustan poetry and the Augustan ideal' in general; 'Pope was the best poet the previous age could show, and yet he was only, Warton was to decide, a poet of the second rank'.⁶⁵ Robert Griffin argues that Warton claims 'that the kind of

⁶² Pope to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 10 November 1716: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.365.

⁶³ James Russell Lowell, *My Study Windows*, ed. Richard Garnett (London, 1887), p.336; and Leopold Damrosch, Jr., 'Johnson's *Rasselas*: Limits of Wisdom, Limits of Art', *Augustan Studies: Essays in Honor of Irvin Ehrenpreis*, eds. Douglas Lane Patey and Timothy Keegan (London: Associated University Presses, 1985), pp.205-214, p.210.

⁶⁴ Hartman, 'A Project for the Sun', *The Challenge of Periodization* (1996), p.159, f.4; Anthony Lee, *Dead Masters: Mentoring and Intertextuality in Samuel Johnson* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2011), p.155.

⁶⁵ Wallace Jackson, *The Probable and the Marvellous: Blake, Wordsworth, and the Eighteenth-Century Critical Tradition* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978), pp.3-4.

poetry Pope writes is not really poetry' as 'real poetry...is restricted to the first class only'.⁶⁶ So, Griffin continues, this must mean 'what follows [in other ranks/classes of poetry] are lesser alloys'.⁶⁷ A similar assessment has been made by Paul Leedy in 'Genres Criticism and the Significance of Warton's *Essay on Pope*'.⁶⁸ But these critics push Warton's point far beyond what seems intended by the man himself. Indeed, the modern disregard of Warton's nuance in the *Essay on Pope* is striking. Recent critical companions to eighteenth-century and Romantic poetry take it as read that Warton's *Essay on Pope* 'proclaimed [Pope] to be a second rate poet', and that Pope's 'writing belonged to a second-rate class of poetry'.⁶⁹ It is not only the subtlety of Warton's *Essay on Pope* that has been overlooked. Tony Howe in a more recent article, entitled 'Uncircumscribing Byron: Byron, Johnson, and the Bowles Controversy' (2008), takes it as a given that 'Johnson's riposte', the 'Life of Pope', calls into question Warton's 'entire approach to literary criticism'.⁷⁰

Some have commented that there is a likely biographical dimension to the divergence of their literary tastes, which stemmed from a 'dispute' one night at Sir Joshua Reynolds' house that led to a 'coolness' between the two.⁷¹ Perhaps, at least in part, this explains why Johnson was less hostile in his 'Review' of Warton's *Essay on Pope* in 1756 than in his 'Life of Pope' a quarter of a century later (although Johnson was not wholly critical of Warton's *Essay on Pope* later in life

⁶⁶ Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope*, pp.40-41.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.42.

⁶⁸ Paul F. Leedy, 'Genres Criticism and the Significance of Warton's *Essay on Pope*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 45.2 (April, 1946), pp.140-146.

⁶⁹ Claudia Thomas Kairoff, 'Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Readers', *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. John Sitter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.157-176, p.171; Tolley, 'Preromanticism', *A Companion to Romanticism* (1998), p.13.

⁷⁰ *Liberty and Poetic Licence: New Essays on Byron*, eds. Bernard Beatty, Tony Howe, and Charles E. Robinson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p.208.

⁷¹ John Wooll, ed., *Biographical Memoirs of the Late Revd. Joseph Warton, D.D. To Which are Added, a Selection from his Works; and a Literary Correspondence between Eminent Persons, Reserved by him for Publication* (London, 1806), p.98. According to Wooll's account: 'The disagreement which took place after a long and warm friendship between Johnson and Warton, is much to be lamented; it occurred at the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds, as I am told by one of the company, who only overheard the following conclusion of the dispute. Johnson. "Sir, I am not used to be contradicted." Warton. "Better for yourself and friends, Sir, if you were; our admiration could not be increased, but our love might." The party interfered, and the conversation was stopped. A coolness however from that time took place, and was increased by many trifling circumstances which before this dispute would perhaps not have been attended to' (p.98). For more on the personal relationship between the two see John Vance, 'The Samuel Johnson—Joseph Warton Friendship', *Johnson Society Transactions* (1982), pp.44-55; and Hugh Reid, "'The Want of a Closer Union...': The Friendship of Samuel Johnson and Joseph Warton", *The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual* 9 (New York: AMS Press, 1998), pp.133-143.

either).⁷² It was perhaps this perceived falling out which meant that their contemporaries sought to highlight a difference between their literary perspectives.

This polarised view of Warton and Johnson—that Warton espouses anti-Popean sentiments and that Johnson espouses pro-Popean sentiments—may also derive from some contemporary assessments of Warton’s position. The apparent divergence between Warton’s and Johnson’s views on Pope was stressed even at the time. A review of the second volume of the *Essay on Pope* in 1782 suggested that Warton had been prompted to publish it in retaliation against Johnson’s recent ‘Life’:

...its appearance might have been still farther delayed, had not the opinions which Dr. Warton was supposed to have advanced been indirectly controverted by a critic, whose decisions, though not always free from prejudice or partiality, have deservedly great influence in the literary world; and, consequently, demand the attention of those, at least, against whose opinions they militate.⁷³

This apparent hostility went both ways, and Johnson was held up as the defender of Pope against Warton’s attacks. Percival Stockdale, sometime editor of the *Critical Review*, disagreed with Warton’s conception of Pope in the *Essay on Pope*, and responded with his own defence of Pope in which he attacked ‘the absurdity of the whole performance’ of Warton’s essay.⁷⁴ Stockdale advised Warton against referring to Johnson to support his own arguments as Johnson ‘might prove a dangerous auxiliary’ if the reader was pressed into making ‘a comparison’ between the two writers.⁷⁵ Stockdale’s severe criticism of Warton was unusual compared with the general response of reviewers, however, and might have had more to do with his attempts to ingratiate himself with Johnson than for his own reverence for Pope. The novelist Jane Porter reported that Johnson’s response to Stockdale’s criticism of Warton’s *Essay on Pope* was to say that he was ‘perfectly

⁷² David Fairer has noted the ‘mixed and ambiguous’ but ultimately ‘creatively stimulating’ relationship between the two men (‘Johnson and the Warton Brothers’, *Samuel Johnson: The Arc of the Pendulum*, eds. Freya Johnston and Lynda Mugglestone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.181-194).

⁷³ Edmund Cartwright, ‘Review of An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope’, *The Monthly Review; Or, Literary Journal* 66 (April, 1782), pp.265-271, p.266.

⁷⁴ Percival Stockdale, *An Inquiry into the Nature, and Genuine Laws of Poetry; Including a Particular Defence of the Writings, and Genius of Mr. Pope. By Percival Stockdale.* (London, 1778), p.5. For more on Stockdale’s unfulfilled literary life marked by ‘bitterness and recrimination’ see Adam Rounce, *Fame and Failure 1720-1800: The Unfulfilled Literary Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.154-193, p.155.

⁷⁵ Stockdale, *An Inquiry into the Nature, and Genuine Laws of Poetry*, p.40.

right': 'He has defended the cause of Pope with incontrovertible arguments, and with great eloquence; and he must be supported in his defence of that great Poet'.⁷⁶ Although Porter's account was written long after both Warton and Johnson were dead, the aim was still to highlight the difference between Warton's and Johnson's opinions on Pope. The notion that Warton disparaged Pope continued well into the nineteenth century. The poet Edward Quillinan, for example, who became Wordsworth's son-in-law, wrote to Henry Crabb Robinson, on 25 August 1843, stating that he was 'much dissatisfied with Joseph Warton for his first volume of his Essay' because of Warton's supposed belittling of Pope.⁷⁷

James Boswell, Johnson's biographer, contributed to the idea that Johnson was Pope's most avid advocate. Boswell claimed that Johnson wrote 'Life of Pope' specifically to silence 'all attempts to lessen [Pope's] poetical fame, by demonstrating his excellence'.⁷⁸ Johnson writes:

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 be no more disputed.⁷⁹

Johnson famously asks 'If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?'.⁸⁰ It has frequently been supposed that this is in direct response to Warton, although Warton himself does not in fact deny that Pope is a poet. In reply to Octavius Gilchrist in 1821, for example, Bowles writes that, 'Johnson interrogating Joseph Warton, inquired, "If Pope BE NOT A POET, where is POETRY to be found?'.⁸¹ Bowles then proceeds to defend Warton against Johnson's question: 'Reader, mark the logical consequence...Now suppose Dr. Warton had said, "the song of the lark is not the most excellent; for, melodious as it is, it yields in variety, and compass, and richness, to the song of the

⁷⁶ Jane Porter, 'Biographical Account of the Late Rev. Percival Stockdale', *The Gentleman's Magazine, and Historical Chronical* 81, ed. 'Sylvanus Urban' (October, 1811), pp.384-390, p.388.

⁷⁷ Edward Quillinan to Henry Crabb Robinson, 25 August 1843: *The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle, 1808-1866*, Edith J. Morley, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), vol.1, p.514.

⁷⁸ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson: Comprehending an Account of his Studies and Numerous Works*, 2 vols. (London, 1791), vol.2, p.352.

⁷⁹ Samuel Johnson, 'Life of Pope', *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with Critical Observations on their Works*, ed. Roger Lonsdale, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), vol.4, p.80.

⁸⁰ Johnson, 'Life of Pope', *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, pp.79-80.

⁸¹ Bowles, *Observations on the Poetical Character of Pope: Further Elucidating the 'Invariable Principles of Poetry' &c. With a Sequel, in Reply to Octavius Gilchrist* (London, 1821), [p.3].

nightingale!” would any one, of common sense, think it an answer, to be told, that “if the LARK be not a *singing bird*, where is a *singing bird* to be found?”⁸²

In part, the Bowles/Byron controversy of the 1820s exacerbated perceived differences between Warton and Johnson, and cemented their reputations as anti- and pro-Pope. Bowles had attended Winchester College when Warton was headmaster; Warton had encouraged and fostered Bowles’ poetry. Bowles was later elected a scholar of Trinity College, Oxford, where Thomas Warton, brother of Joseph, was the senior fellow, as well as being Professor of Poetry.⁸³ In 1797 Joseph Warton published a voluminous edition of Pope’s *Works*.⁸⁴ Less than ten years later, in 1806, Bowles followed in his mentor’s footsteps by publishing his own edition of Pope’s *Works* that was one volume larger.⁸⁵ Quillinan, in the same letter to Robinson mentioned above, was even more critical of Bowles than he had been of Warton. Quillinan condemned Bowles as a ‘coxcomb’ for making ‘money of Pope’s brains’ whilst having ‘the face to deny that Pope was a poet of a high order’.⁸⁶ It is a peculiar feature of the history of Pope’s poetical reputation that the two people who are most frequently cited as Pope’s detractors went to such lengths to compile vast editions of his works. Bowles had written in the ‘Advertisement’ that ‘The notes by Warton have been revised, and much which he had admitted has been rejected; though it is hoped that all which is truly valuable has been retained’.⁸⁷ And there is much of Warton that is retained.

Even Bowles, who is often assumed by literary critics to promote an entirely anti-Popean agenda, is in fact one of the first critics to argue that Warton was ‘misunderstood’ if anyone reading

⁸² Ibid, [p.3].

⁸³ J. W. Marston, ‘Bowles, William Lisle (1762–1850)’, rev. Leon Litvack, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2014 [<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/3073>, accessed 8 Sept 2015].

⁸⁴ *The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq. In Nine Volumes, Complete. With Notes and Illustrations*, ed. Joseph Warton, 9 vols. (London, 1797).

⁸⁵ *The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq. In Verse and Prose. Containing the Principal Notes of Drs. Warburton and Warton: Illustrations, and Critical and Explanatory Remarks, By Johnson, Wakefield, A. Chalmers, F.S.A. And Others. To Which are Added, Some Original Letters, with Additional Observations, and Memoirs of the Life of the Author*, ed. William Lisle Bowles, 10 vols. (London, 1806).

⁸⁶ Quillinan to Robinson, 25 August 1843: *Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, vol.1, p.514.

⁸⁷ *The Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. William Lisle Bowles (1806), vol.1, p.vii.

the *Essay on Pope* imagined that it was intended to denigrate Pope's achievement.⁸⁸ In the headnote to his 'Concluding Observations on the Poetic Character of Pope', Bowles informs us of the effect which Warton's *Essay on Pope* had upon contemporary readers; he alleges that it 'raised a sort of literary outcry against [Warton]' because readers misconstrued it as an attempt 'to deny to Pope his fair and just pretensions to the name of Poet'.⁸⁹ In fact Bowles seems to be rather over-egging the pudding here; the contemporary reviews of the *Essay on Pope* were, in the main, apathetically complimentary, as we shall see later in the chapter. Bowles is keen in his edition of Pope's *Works* to defend Warton against what he considers to be Johnson's deliberate misinterpretation of Warton's meaning in the *Essay on Pope*.⁹⁰ Although, elsewhere in this edition, indeed in the very first sentence of volume one, in the 'Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Pope', Bowles stresses that 'this distinguished Poet' has already been written about 'by persons so eminent for literary talents and critical acumen as Johnson and Warton'.⁹¹

Approving of aspects of Bowles' poetry, furthermore, should not be taken as tacit disapproval of Pope's poetry. This tendency in some criticism has been, perhaps, exacerbated by Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. In the opening chapter, Coleridge ascribes to Bowles' poetry the credit of strengthening his perception that he received 'little pleasure' from Pope's poetry.⁹² Coleridge also points out, however, that he 'undervalued' Pope's poetry because of his own 'inexperience of the world, and consequent want of sympathy with the general subjects of [Pope's] poems'.⁹³ He 'was not blind to the merits of this school', and indeed suggested that 'its masters' should have 'the legitimate name of poets'.⁹⁴ David Fairer has argued persuasively for the centrality of Bowles to some Romantic poets' poetic development; he notes that 'To "outgrow"

⁸⁸ Bowles, 'Concluding Observations on the Poetic Character of Pope', *The Works of Alexander Pope* (1806), vol.10, p.362.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, vol.10, p.362.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, vol.10, p.362.

⁹¹ Bowles, 'Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Pope', *The Works of Alexander Pope* (1806), vol.1, p.xv.

⁹² Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, p.18. For a traditional interpretation of Coleridge's appreciation of Bowles' poetry in contrast to Pope's see Henry Beers, 'Coleridge, Bowles, and the Pope Controversy', *A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Kegan Paul, 1902), pp.48-89.

⁹³ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, p.18.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.18.

Bowles was a contradiction if your link with him was an organic one bound up with the continuity of your own history. You did not outgrow Bowles, you grew out of him—a very different idea'.⁹⁵ Throughout this thesis I have kept the distinction between *outgrow* and *growing out of* in mind in considering Pope's contribution towards the development of Romantics' poetic visions.

In the debate with Byron, Bowles self-consciously takes Warton's side and Byron self-consciously takes Johnson's side, amplifying the differences between Warton's and Johnson's positions. Byron wrote, for example, in a letter to his publisher John Murray on Bowles' *Strictures on Pope*, dated 7 February 1821, that although 'Johnson strips many a leaf from every laurel', 'Still Johnson's [*Lives of the Poets*] is the finest critical work extant'.⁹⁶ Byron's point is that Bowles has been dissecting Johnson at too close a proximity, and has not treated Johnson fairly in evaluating his assessments, so that 'If the opinions cited by Mr. Bowles, of Dr. Johnson *against* Pope, are to be taken as decisive authority, they will also hold good against Gray, Milton, Swift, Thomson, and Dryden'.⁹⁷ In which case, 'what becomes...of *English* poetry in general?'.⁹⁸ To use Johnson's words on Dryden, Byron sees Bowles' criticism as 'a rude detection of faults' rather than 'a gay and vigorous dissertation'.⁹⁹ Indeed, Byron echoes Johnson's language. For Johnson, essays of good literary criticism are 'where delight is mingled with instruction'.¹⁰⁰ For Byron, 'the finest critical work...can never be read without instruction and delight'.¹⁰¹ Critics' works should be read as a whole, rather than in parts, in order to get the true gist of what is being said. This should hold true also for Warton, but many critics—both contemporaries of his and modern critics—do not give a fair summary of Warton's overall appreciation of Pope's achievements.

⁹⁵ Fairer, 'Southey's Literary History', *Robert Southey and the Contexts of English Romanticism*, ed. Lynda Pratt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp.1-17, p.15.

⁹⁶ Byron, *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p.150.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.150.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.150.

⁹⁹ Johnson, 'Life of Dryden', *Lives of the Poets*, vol.2, p.120.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, vol.2, p.120.

¹⁰¹ Byron, *Prose of Byron*, p.150.

The debate about Pope becomes, for Byron, almost tribal; with Wartonians on one side, and Johnsonians on the other. Byron scorns and derides ‘the unjustifiable attempts at depreciation begun by Warton—and carried on to & at this day by the new School of Critics and Scribblers who think themselves poets because they do *not* write like Pope’.¹⁰² He claims that ‘As to Johnson and Pope...had they lived now—I would not have published a line of anything I have ever written’.¹⁰³ Byron seems to have been self-consciously replaying the dispute between Johnson and Warton, placing himself in the role of ‘great Moralist’.¹⁰⁴ Howe argues that Byron positions himself ‘in opposition to the inheritor of a cultural cant that had now become fashion’.¹⁰⁵ I think, however, that Howe may be overstating the popularity of Bowles’ view of Pope’s poetry, as the controversy itself shows. From their own time, through the nineteenth century, and into modern criticism, Warton and Johnson have been taken by many to display a straightforward assessment of Pope, being either for or against his poetical abilities. This established position does not do service to the nuance and balance of Warton’s arguments, which I will consider in this chapter.

*In which of these classes POPE deserves to be placed,
the following work is intended to determine*

The subtleties of Warton’s *Essay on Pope* have frequently been overlooked. The implication that Pope heads the ‘second rank’ of poets has been casually converted into suggesting that Warton thought Pope a mere second-rate poet, which is simply not true. In fact, in Warton’s assessment Pope ranks amongst the five greatest English poets ever, which hardly qualifies him as second-rate. Griffin’s interpretation of Warton’s distinctions relies on the premise that ‘Since real poetry,

¹⁰² Byron, *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie Alexis Marchand, 13 vols. (London: John Murray, 1973-1994), v.6, p.31.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, v.9, p.68.

¹⁰⁴ Byron, *Prose of Byron*, p.125.

¹⁰⁵ Howe, ‘Uncircumscribing Byron’, *Liberty and Poetic Licence* (2008), p.210.

however, is restricted to the first class only, whereas what follows are lesser alloys, it would seem not to matter whether one is in the second class or the fourth'.¹⁰⁶ But this is to deny Warton's own careful demarcations in the 'Dedication': the 'second class' of poets must possess 'true poetical genius' and 'noble talents'; while the 'fourth class' are 'mere versifiers'.¹⁰⁷ For many readers 'second rank' might seem interchangeable with 'second-rate', yet to read Warton in such a way is misleadingly selective, and relies on taking his *Essay on Pope* as a polemic. Johnson evaluates Warton's *Essay on Pope* in 1756 as, if nothing else, 'a just specimen of literary moderation'.¹⁰⁸ Warton self-consciously aims at such 'literary moderation'. He considers that 'we have never yet seen a fair and candid criticism on the character and merits of our last great poet, Mr. POPE', and so he intends to accomplish this in the *Essay on Pope*, which he claims he does 'without blind panegyric, or petulant invective'.¹⁰⁹

It has been suggested that in choosing to dedicate his *Essay on Pope* to Edward Young, Warton is holding Young up as a poet with a poetical vision antithetical to Pope's. John Barnard, for example, contends that 'In his dedicatory letter to Edward Young, Warton announces a radical re-orientation' of poetic aesthetics that ushers in 'new critical standards'.¹¹⁰ Young clearly did appreciate Pope's genius, invention, and creative power, however, at least at one time. This is evident from Samuel Richardson's response to reading a draft manuscript version (now sadly lost) of what would later become *Conjectures on Original Composition* (published in 1759).¹¹¹ In a letter of 14 January 1757, Richardson chastises Young for being too liberal in his praise of Pope:

¹⁰⁶ Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope*, p.42.

¹⁰⁷ Warton, 'Dedication', *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.xi, p.xii.

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, 'Review of *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*', *The Literary Magazine; or, Universal Review* 1.1 (April, 1756), pp.35-38, p.38.

¹⁰⁹ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.2.

¹¹⁰ John Barnard, ed., *Pope: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p.24, p.379.

¹¹¹ Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition. In a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison* (London, 1759).

Pope's, sir, I venture to say, was not the genius to *lift our souls to Heaven*....Indeed, sir, I cannot imagine that Pope would have shone in blank verse; and do you really think he had invention enough to make him a great poet? Did he not want the assistance of rhyme, or jingle? What originality is there in the works for which he is most famed? Shall I say, that I wish you would be pleased to reconsider all you say of the creative power of Pope? ¹¹²

Whilst it is true that Young presumably listened to this advice and considered it expedient to expunge much of this praise from the published version, the point here is that it had been up for discussion between Young and Richardson whether Pope's poetry should be considered original or not, and the brilliance of Pope's 'creative power'. The point is that Warton's dedication to Young is not a criticism of Pope's poetry. If some of Young's praise of Pope was tempered only after 1757, then Warton's choice to dedicate the *Essay on Pope* to him in 1756 cannot have been explicitly because Young did not praise Pope. Besides, even in the published version, Young is not wholly critical of Pope's poetical abilities. Like Warton, Young is critical of Pope's poetic choices: 'He chose rather, with his namesake of *Greece*, to triumph in the old world, than look out for a new'. ¹¹³ But the style in which Pope wrote 'blessed him with all her charms'. ¹¹⁴ In fact, in his *Conjectures*, Young avoids considering the 'creative power of Pope' in his original compositions by referring principally to Pope's translations. As an anonymous contributor wrote to the editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, on 6 February 1782, 'I know not why it should be supposed, that because Dr. Warton dedicated his *Essay on the Genius of Pope* to Dr. Young, that therefore he must either have changed his opinion of Pope, or have *bartered* his opinion for a dedication'. ¹¹⁵ The balanced tone of Warton's literary criticism is explained by Warton himself in a letter to William Hayley of 29 December 1795: 'to be always commending is tedious, and almost as bad as always censuring'. ¹¹⁶

¹¹² Richardson to Young, 14 January 1757: *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. John Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp.333-334.

¹¹³ Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*, p.67.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.67.

¹¹⁵ Anonymous letter to 'Sylvanus Urban', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 52 (February, 1782), pp.70-72, p.71.

¹¹⁶ Warton to Hayley, 29 December 1795: *Biographical Memoirs of the Late Revd. Joseph Warton* (1806), p.406.

Warton is sincere in his admiration for the passages of Pope that he praises, just as he is straightforward in his censure of the aspects of Pope he likes less. Warton's fairness was noted, in addition to Johnson's review of the first volume, in a contemporary review of Warton's second volume of the *Essay on Pope*. Writing in the *Monthly Review* (April, 1782), Edmund Cartwright notes that 'Nothing can be fairer or more candid than the manner in which the scrutiny, upon which Dr. Warton has entered, is conducted'.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, 'Each piece is separately and distinctly examined, and its particular beauties and defects are accurately pointed out'.¹¹⁸ Cartwright continues that 'the poetical qualifications of Pope are as candidly examined, as they are judiciously discriminated'.¹¹⁹ Cartwright does have some criticism to make of Warton's *Essay on Pope*, however, which is that he 'favours too much of the pedantry of connoisseurship'.¹²⁰

It has often been noted that Warton places Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton in the first rank of poets.¹²¹ Yet it has been disregarded that Warton also, at times, places Pope above Shakespeare and Milton, and indeed 'any other author'.¹²² In the text Warton compares passages of Pope and Milton whilst 'preserv[ing] impartiality': 'As I before produced a passage of Milton which I thought superior to a similar one of POPE, I shall, in order to preserve impartiality, produce another from Milton, in which I think him inferior'.¹²³

Pope himself had expressed reverence for these same poets. Pope committed many years of his life to producing a six volume edition of Shakespeare's *Works* (1723-1725), and wrote in the preface, 'If ever any Author deserved the name of an *Original*, it was *Shakespear*', he drew his art

¹¹⁷ Cartwright, 'Review of An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope', *The Monthly Review* (April, 1782), p.266.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.266.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.270.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.271.

¹²¹ For example, by Hugh Reid in the *DNB*'s article on Joseph Warton; or in the recent *Encyclopedia of British Literature 1660-1789*, eds. Gary Day and Jack Lynch, 3 vols. (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), vol.1, p.518.

¹²² Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.229.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.26. The preferred passage is of Pope's 'highly picturesque' and 'finely imagined' (*Essay on Pope* (1756), p.25) depictions of the river Thames in *Windsor-Forest* (published in 1713). Milton's quoted passage is an excerpt from 'At a Vacation Exercise' (ll.91-100) in which Milton describes various 'Rivers arise!' (l.91).

‘immediately from the fountains of Nature’ and ‘she speaks thro’ him’.¹²⁴ Pope emphasised the affecting nature of Shakespeare’s writing: ‘The *Power* over our *Passions* was never possess’d in a more eminent degree’.¹²⁵ When one reads Shakespeare ‘the heart swells, and the tears burst out’.¹²⁶ For a thorough discussion of Pope’s relationship with Shakespeare, and the importance of it, see Simon Jarvis’s chapter in *Great Shakespeareans* (2010).¹²⁷ Milton is frequently quoted in the correspondence of Pope’s circle.¹²⁸ Francis Atterbury in a letter to Pope, 10 April 1723, even referred to ‘the old Custom’ they had of parting by quoting Milton.¹²⁹ Pope wrote to Jacob Tonson, Milton’s publisher, on 7 June 1732, that he considered Milton to be ‘above... all criticism’.¹³⁰ Pope articulated his adoration of Spenser in a letter to John Hughes, 7 October 1715, in which he wrote that ‘Spenser has been ever a favourite poet to me: he is like a mistress, whose faults we see, but love her with ’em all’.¹³¹ Elsewhere Pope described Spenser as a ‘considerable Genius’, and Spenser’s *Eclogues* in particular as ‘very beautiful’.¹³²

Critics have argued that Warton’s supposedly anti-Popean taste for Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser is a precursor of Romantic taste. Joan Pittock, for example, argues that it is in Warton’s ‘half-hinted denial of true poetic quality to a particular *type* of poetry of which Pope was the chief representative, that the Dedication [to *Essay on Pope*] associates itself with the taste of a later period’.¹³³ This is true to some extent—he does, for instance, advocate the sublime and

¹²⁴ Pope, ‘Preface to *Shakespear*’, *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, Vol.2: The Major Works, 1725-1744*, ed. Rosemary Cowler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp.13-40, p.13. See *The Works of Shakespear: In Six Volumes. Collated and Corrected by the Former Editions*, ed. Alexander Pope, 6 vols. (London, 1723-1725).

¹²⁵ Pope, ‘Preface to *Shakespear*’, *Prose of Pope, Vol.2*, pp.13-40, p.14.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.14.

¹²⁷ Simon Jarvis, ‘Alexander Pope’, *Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Malone: Great Shakespeareans*, ed. Claude Rawson (London: Continuum, 2010), pp.66-114.

¹²⁸ Pope, for example quoted Milton in letters to Edward Blount, 21 October 1721, vol.2, p.89; William Broome, 25 May 1725, vol.2, p.295; John Knight, 8 November 1729, vol.3, p.68: *Correspondence of Pope*.

¹²⁹ Francis Atterbury to Pope, 10 April 1723: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.2, p.165.

¹³⁰ Pope to Jacob Tonson, 7 June 1732: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.3, p.291.

¹³¹ Pope to John Hughes, 7 October 1715: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.316.

¹³² Pope, ‘A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry’, *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, Vol.1. The Earlier Works, 1711-1720*, ed. Norman Ault (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936), pp.297-302, p.300, p.301.

¹³³ Joan Pittock, *The Ascendancy of Taste: The Achievement of Joseph and Thomas Warton* (London: Routledge, 1973), p.270.

pathetic as the ‘chief nerves of all genuine poetry’¹³⁴—but Pittock misses the ways in which Pope’s poetry was in line ‘with the taste of a later period’. Moreover, this is rather an anachronistic approach; Warton cannot determinedly and deliberately ‘associate’ himself with the culture of a later period.

Pittock notes elsewhere that Warton’s ‘extraordinary’ ‘range of reading and reference’ accounts for his ‘broad sympathy and flexibility of appreciation’.¹³⁵ It is through discussing this ‘extraordinary’ breadth of authors that Warton shows the centrality of Pope to his thinking about poetry. Pope is the conduit through which these other literary thoughts flow. It is ‘From *Pope*’, as Johnson observes, that Warton ‘always takes his hint, and to *Pope*, he returns again’.¹³⁶ That Warton chooses Pope as the inspiration for these disquisitions indicates how integral Pope is to Warton’s thinking on the subject of English literature in general. The *Essay on Pope*’s structure is loose, and the narrative is self-consciously digressive and sprawling. The central thread is that all the poets, novelists, dramatists, moralists, philosophers, orators, painters, musicians, artists, public figures, and so on, that Warton introduces are a means through which to represent the importance of Pope: he is allied to them through his artistry.¹³⁷ The digressive style of Warton’s *Essay on Pope* is intended to show the effect that reading Pope has had on his own contemplation of other works. Warton makes clear that this is part of the point of the *Essay on Pope* as a whole: ‘An apology would be necessary for this digression, if it was not my professed design in this Essay, to expatiate into such occasional disquisitions, as naturally arise from the subject’.¹³⁸ Warton makes comparisons between Pope and other poets, and insists that Pope’s use of other authors is evidence

¹³⁴ Warton, ‘Dedication’, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.x.

¹³⁵ Pittock, *Ascendancy of Taste*, p.147.

¹³⁶ Johnson, ‘Review of *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*’, *The Literary Magazine* (April, 1756), p.35.

¹³⁷ See Adam Rounce, ‘Joseph Warton’s Enthusiasms’, *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 15 (New York: AMS Press, 2008), pp.315-334.

¹³⁸ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), pp.77-78.

of Pope's superiority of expression: Pope 'never works on the same subject with another, without heightening the piece with more masterly strokes, and a more artful pencil'.¹³⁹

Warton addressed the *Essay on Pope* to 'The lovers of poetry, and to such only I write'.¹⁴⁰ This suggests that Warton supposes that 'lovers of poetry' will not only be so *au fait* with Pope's poetry that they will be able to follow what are sometimes only vague hints as to which passage of Pope's poetry he has in mind, but also that they would relish such an in-depth rumination on connections between Pope's and others' poetry. Warton imagines that 'lovers of poetry' would agree that Pope is an apt figure through which to assess whether poetry is good or not.

Warton excited some sympathetic support for his innovative style of literary criticism. Hester Lynch Piozzi was rapturous about Warton's *Essay on Pope*. In her copy of the third edition of volume one dated 1772, she wrote in 1803 on the first flyleaf; remembering her first impressions of the work:

This was the first Book I ever read with that Juvenile Avidity so delicious during the racy Season of Life. I felt its Beauties, repeated its Precepts,—wearied my Parents with Quotations and my Tongue with Praises of this—shall I call it unlucky Volume, which made a Writer & a Critic of H:L:P.¹⁴¹

This suggests that Warton's work was viewed by some contemporary readers less as an explicit critique of Pope than as a pleasurable and enlightening work in its own right.

And bless their critic with a poet's fire

The different ways in which literary critics have interpreted the delay in the production of the second volume of Warton's *Essay on Pope* reflects the divergence of opinions about its

¹³⁹ Ibid, p.97.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p.38.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in James Allison, 'Mrs. Thrale's Marginalia in Joseph Warton's *Essay*', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 19.2 (February, 1956), pp.155-164, p.156.

contemporary reception. Edmund Gosse in 1915 contended that the quarter of a century between the publication of volume one and the second instalment was attributable to the public's disenchantment with Warton's opinions: 'His *Essay on Pope*, though written with such studied moderation that we may, in a hasty reading, regard it almost as a eulogy, was so shocking to the prejudices of the hour that it was received with universal disfavour, and twenty-six years passed before the author had the moral courage to pursue it to a conclusion'.¹⁴² John Vance proffers the more mundane explanation that the delay was due to Warton's domestic concerns; that he 'devoted his energies to his family, Winchester, and his friends'.¹⁴³ William MacClintock argues that Warton had in fact already completed over two hundred pages of the second volume by 1762, in time for the second edition, but chose not to include them.¹⁴⁴ Harry Solomon has argued that this was because Robert Dodsley, Warton's publisher, on reading a draft of it in 1758, 'thought it thin and superficial and candidly told him so... Warton wisely took Dodsley's advice'.¹⁴⁵ Upali Amarasinghe speculates that the length of time that elapsed between publication of the first and second volumes is 'confirmation that it was the unpopularity of Warton's views in his own time, rather than his indolence, which held up publication for so long'.¹⁴⁶ Yet the fact that the *Essay on Pope* went through three editions (printed in London in 1756, 1762, 1772; and additionally in 1764 in Dublin) before he added the second volume suggests some level of popularity, or at least interest. Warton's second volume was keenly anticipated by some: a commentator in 1782 noted that it was

¹⁴² Edmund Gosse, 'Two Pioneers of Romanticism: Joseph and Thomas Warton', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 7 (London: Oxford University Press, 1915-1916), pp.145-163, p.157.

¹⁴³ John Vance, *Joseph and Thomas Warton* (Boston: Twayne, 1983), p.66.

¹⁴⁴ See William D. MacClintock, *Joseph Warton's Essay on Pope: A History of the Five Editions* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1933).

¹⁴⁵ Harry Solomon, *The Rise of Robert Dodsley: Creating the New Age of Print* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), p.151. Dodsley had written to Joseph Warton on 18 January 1755, before the publication of the first volume, warning 'I dare say you will contrive in your Animadversions to allow [Pope] all his due praise; and where you differ from him will do it in such a manner as to render it no impropriety in me to be the Publisher of it' (*The Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, 'Letter 31', p.35, f.1).

¹⁴⁶ Amarasinghe, *Dryden and Pope in the Early Nineteenth Century*, p.38, f.1.

‘the most important publication of the year’ and ‘has been so long and so impatiently expected by the literary world’.¹⁴⁷

My own view on the reason for the delay is that Warton lost enthusiasm for the task. Warton prefers Pope’s earlier poetry, which is covered in the first volume, and is less keen on Pope’s later poetry, which is covered in the second. In the 1756 edition, Warton writes that ‘one may venture to remark, that the reputation of POPE, as a poet, among posterity, will be principally owing to his WINDSOR-FORST, his RAPE OF THE LOCK, and his ELOISA TO ABELARD’.¹⁴⁸ All three of these texts were published in or before 1717. Warton repeats the sentence verbatim in the 1782 edition.¹⁴⁹ He considers, for example, *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717) to be ‘so truly poetical’, but if there be ‘any beauty’ in *An Essay on Man* ‘it is, BREVITY OF DICTION’.¹⁵⁰

In her 1924 article ‘Joseph Warton: A Comparison of his *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* with his Edition of Pope’s *Works*’, Edith J. Morley suggests that some of Warton’s views on Pope underwent modification during his lifetime.¹⁵¹ She argues that Warton moves from being more sympathetic to Pope in the original 1756 first volume to becoming less and less sympathetic in subsequent editions of the first volume, a fortiori with the second volume in the fourth edition of 1782. It is not easy to determine whether these changes resulted from the pressure of contemporary opinion or from modifications in his own opinions (or, as is likely, a combination of the two), but, whatever the cause, she argues that Warton’s later criticism of Pope is increasingly pointed. In his 1756 edition, Warton asks, ‘when just models, from which the rules have necessarily been drawn, have once appeared’, ‘Whether or no...succeeding writers, by ambitiously endeavouring to surpass those just models, and to be original and new, do not become distorted and unnatural, in their

¹⁴⁷ *The New Annual Register, or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1782. To Which is Prefixed, a Short View of the State of Knowledge, Literature, and Taste, in this Country, from the Earliest Times to the Norman Conquest*, ed. George Gregory (London, 1783), p.240.

¹⁴⁸ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.334.

¹⁴⁹ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1782), vol.1, pp.346-347.

¹⁵⁰ Warton, *Essay on Pope*: (1756), p.316; (1782), vol.2, p.59.

¹⁵¹ Edith J. Morley, ‘Joseph Warton: A Comparison of his *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* with his Edition of Pope’s *Works*’, *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, Volume Nine*, ed. W. P. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), pp.98-114.

thoughts and diction'.¹⁵² Warton's own diction and tone themselves alter in the equivalent passage in the second edition of 1762. In this edition, Warton closes section three, on Pope's *An Essay on Criticism*, asking if 'succeeding writers, by vainly and ambitiously striving to surpass those just models, and to shine and surprise, do not become stiff, and forced, and affected in their thoughts and diction'.¹⁵³ This later version is how it remains throughout all the subsequent editions. The motive behind Warton's alterations may have been that, on consideration, the ambition to be 'original and new' is a perfectly proper one for a poet, whereas 'to shine and surprise' has a disparaging tone that suggests superficiality and artifice. The word 'shine' here implies a 'polish' which is sometimes used derisively by his critics to describe Pope's poetic style. Referring to Pope in the *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface* (1815), Wordsworth disparages 'his polished style'; and Hazlitt, in 'On Dryden and Pope' (1818), characterises Pope's poetry as 'smooth and polished verse'.¹⁵⁴ Pope himself had approved of verses which 'shine'. In *The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated* (1737), Pope had praised 'such majesty...in verse have shined | (In polished verse) the manners and the mind. | Oh! could I mount on the Maeonian wing, | Your arms, your actions, your repose to sing!' (ll.392-395); and in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare's *Works*, Pope announced that 'the most shining passages are distinguished'.¹⁵⁵

For 'thoughts and diction' to be 'distorted and unnatural' is not desirable, of course, but these words suggest a problem for the writer in creating good poetry. The later criticism suggests that such writers not only have an effect on themselves with their 'stiff, and forced, and affected' poetry; they are forcing themselves and this poetry onto others in a way that is too forward. After all, a desire to 'surprise' requires a separate individual to experience it. The difference is also evident in the change from poets 'ambitiously endeavouring to surpass those just models' in 1756, to poets 'vainly and ambitiously striving' for the same in 1762: to endeavour to do something has

¹⁵² Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), pp.203-204.

¹⁵³ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 2nd ed. (1762), p.200.

¹⁵⁴ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.72; Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets* (London, 1818), p.141.

¹⁵⁵ 'The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated', in *Imitations of Horace*, ed. John Butt, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.4, pp.189-231; Pope, ed., 'Preface' to *Works of Shakespear* (1723-1725), vol.1, p.xxiii.

connotations of exploration and worthwhile enterprise, whereas to strive to do something still had connotations in the eighteenth century of hostility and quarrelsomeness (*OED*). The addition of ‘vainly’ in 1762 changes the tone of ‘ambitiously’. An ambition to ‘surpass’ your predecessors and ‘be original and new’, as in the 1756 version, cannot be imagined to be much of a fault in poetical genius—if anything it is a requirement. The addition of ‘vainly’, along with the tone of implied affectation and presumption in the later version, means that ‘ambition’ here becomes public rather than personal. It suggests an ambition to be thought by society to surpass your predecessors, rather than an internal and necessary poetic urge to develop beyond what has gone before.

Morley suggests that the change of diction and tone in the later editions is evidence of Warton’s increasingly openly hostile treatment of Pope, but this ignores the fact that this passage considers the poetical state of the nation as a whole. In this paragraph, Warton is not considering Pope in any particular way, he is considering large-scale ‘reflections’ of the poetry of many ‘nation[s]’.¹⁵⁶ ‘I CONCLUDE these reflections with a remarkable fact’, Warton writes, ‘In no polished nation, after criticism has been much studied, and the rules of writing established, has any very extraordinary work ever appeared’.¹⁵⁷ ‘This has visibly been the case’, Warton concludes ‘after Aristotle, Horace, and Boileau, had written their ARTS OF POETRY’.¹⁵⁸ Pope, then, is not amongst the ‘succeeding writers’ who ‘vainly and ambitiously’ try ‘to surpass’ English predecessors.¹⁵⁹ He, in *An Essay on Criticism*, is the one who has created the ‘just model’ who has ‘drawn’ the ‘rules’ of English poets.¹⁶⁰ Pope stands alongside Aristotle, Horace, and Boileau in having ‘written [their nation’s] ARTS OF POETRY’.¹⁶¹ It is those writers succeeding Pope who attempt to surpass him who are ‘stiff, and forced, and affected in their thoughts and diction’.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 2nd ed. (1762), p.201.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.201.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.201.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.200.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.200.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.200.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p.200.

Warton is considering a general ‘rigid regard to the dictates of art’, where a ‘systematical spirit so much in vogue, [and] which has spread itself from the sciences even into polite literature’, has ‘diminished’ poetry.¹⁶³ It is this ‘regard to the dictates of art’, for Warton, that hampers ‘any very extraordinary work ever appear[ing]’ in contemporary literature.¹⁶⁴ Thus ‘by consulting only REASON’, Warton contends, ‘polite literature’ has ‘made our poets write from and to the HEAD rather than the HEART’.¹⁶⁵

Warton’s professed dislike for the ‘systematical spirit’ is rather incongruous with his proposal in the ‘Dedication’ that poets should be categorised and ranked.¹⁶⁶ I do not want to suggest that Warton was trying to determine scientifically an inherently exclusive and reductive poetic hierarchical system, in which poets should be aggressively measured against each other. Only that, perhaps, the whole notion of ranking poets into separate sets in descending order of achievement has something rather limited and limiting about it.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, it seems to go against the tone of the *Essay on Pope* itself, in which, as Warton himself maintained, he attempted ‘impartiality’, even in the second volume which is apparently more hostile to Pope.¹⁶⁸ The dedication’s insistence on classification implies a rigidity that lacks critical sensitivity or appreciation of variety. Coleridge, arguing against the notion of having a single perspective on poetic achievement, wrote to John Thelwall, on 17 December 1796, that he will not ‘introduce an act of Uniformity against Poets’.¹⁶⁹ Coleridge advocates for plurality of poetic appreciation: ‘I have room enough in *my* brain to admire, aye & almost equally, the *head* and fancy of Akenside, and the *heart* and fancy of Bowles, the solemn Lordliness of Milton, & the divine Chit chat of Cowper: and whatever a man’s excellence is, that will be likewise his fault’.¹⁷⁰ Warton was not a

¹⁶³ Ibid, p.201.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p.201, p.200.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p.201. I will return to the discussion of the role of the heart in poetry later in the thesis.

¹⁶⁶ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 2nd ed. (1762), p.201.

¹⁶⁷ We will return to the idea of scientific poetical categorising in chapter four.

¹⁶⁸ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 4th ed. (1782), vol.2, p.408.

¹⁶⁹ Coleridge to Thelwall, 17 December 1796: *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-1971), vol.1, p.279.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, vol.1, p.279.

particularly dogmatic person, and indeed the tone of the text in the body of the *Essay on Pope* does not match the stridency of the ‘Dedication’. Perhaps the difference in tone suggests that we should read the ‘Dedication’ as deliberately provocative?

Warton is in fact echoing, in this closing passage of the section on *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope’s own warnings about paying too much attention to poetical prescriptions in that very poem. Pope had written ‘Some Beauties yet, no Precepts can declare’ (l.141) and that in poetry there ‘Are nameless Graces which no Methods teach’ (l.144).¹⁷¹ Morley is one among many who overlook the subtleties of Warton’s disquisitions, and assume that Warton is being critical of Pope in particular when in fact he is asking questions about and making reflections on the state of poetry in general. He is arguing along the same lines that Pope had done.

In the *Essay on Pope* more generally Warton does not stray far from Pope’s own assertions about feeling being important in poetry. Pope himself had advocated that a poet should write from and to the heart in the ‘Preface’ to his *Iliad*, in which he praises ‘that unequal’d Fire and Rapture, which is so forcible in *Homer*’, so ‘that no Man of a true Poetical Spirit is Master of himself while he reads him’.¹⁷² For Pope, in *Homer*’s writing ‘the Reader is hurry’d out of himself by the Force of the Poet’.¹⁷³ In his appreciation of *Homer*, Pope prioritises the affecting power of the heart over the controlling power of the head.¹⁷⁴ Warton uses identical diction in praising Longinus; he wrote to his father, on 10 April 1739, ‘I shall read Longinus as long as I live: it is impossible not to catch fire and raptures from his glowing style’.¹⁷⁵ Warton is doubly referencing Pope here, as Pope had written of Longinus’ ‘fire’ in *An Essay on Criticism*:

¹⁷¹ All quotation of *An Essay on Criticism* is from Pope, *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, eds. E. Audra and Audrey Williams in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.1, pp.195-326.

¹⁷² Pope, ‘Preface’ to *Iliad*, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.4.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, vol.7, p.4.

¹⁷⁴ For more on the importance of passion for Pope see Steven Shankman, *Pope’s Iliad: Homer in the Age of Passion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). We will return to the importance of ‘the language of the heart’ in chapter three.

¹⁷⁵ John Wooll, ed., *Biographical Memoirs of the Late Revd. Joseph Warton*, p.9.

Thee, bold *Longinus!* all the Nine inspire,
 And bless *their Critick* with a *Poet's Fire*.
 (ll.675-676)

A further brief point can be made about the view of the *Essay on Pope* as an intended denigration of Pope. If Warton's intention was so aggressively simple, then he wasted a significant proportion of his life in producing such a huge, rich and complex critical work that spends most of its time illustrating and explaining Pope's poetic achievement, not to mention the substantial edition of Pope's *Works*. By the time of the *Essay on Pope*'s final appearance in Warton's lifetime, the work amounted to over eight hundred and fifty pages, and was a massive work of explication and appreciation of Pope. Adam Rounce has argued that literary critics have 'over-simplified the important criticism of Joseph Warton', and have 'reduced its purposes to a rather banal message'.¹⁷⁶ Criticism which considers Warton's comments about Pope to be entirely negative ignores the relish with which Warton endeavours to show his regard for Pope, and the enormous range of sources he draws on to do so.

More practically, there would need to be either strong support of, or virulent opposition to, his thesis if it was as revolutionary as it has been posthumously described.¹⁷⁷ Contemporary reviews show mostly support, with very little qualification. The review of Warton's essay in the *Critical Review*, April 1756, commented, 'It breathes the spirit of true criticism, unbiased by sordid prejudice or partiality'.¹⁷⁸ While the *Essay on Pope* 'contains a great number of curious and entertaining anecdotes of literature, and is fraught with a world of erudition', it is 'perhaps too often ostentatiously displayed'.¹⁷⁹ The reviewer also remarked that 'In his dedication to Dr. *Young*, [Warton] seems to undervalue the merit of versification', forget 'the invention, design, character, or

¹⁷⁶ Rounce, 'Joseph Warton's Enthusiasms', *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* (2008), p.315.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. conventional assessments—such as in *Cyclopaedia of Biography, Series of Original Memoirs of the Most Distinguished Persons of all Times*, ed. Elihu Rich (London, 1854)—are that Warton had 'the honour of having given the first perceptible impulse to that revolution in literary taste, which dethroned Pope' (p.819).

¹⁷⁸ Anonymous, 'Review of An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope', *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature* 1.3, ed. Tobias Smollett (April, 1756), pp.226-240, p.227.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, pp.227-228.

expression of the performance’, and consider versification to be ‘a sort of gaudy apparel, by means of which the artist fascinates the eyes of the spectator’.¹⁸⁰ Although, on occasion ‘we think he is singular or severe’, the review concludes with measured praise: ‘On the whole, we pronounce the *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, a work of taste and learning, animated with many strokes of manly criticism, replete with knowledge, and diversified with a number of amusing incidents and observations’.¹⁸¹ The *Monthly Review* (June, 1756), likewise, is equally balanced in its response; it ‘perused his work with no less profit than pleasure’, yet it cannot ‘implicitly subscribe to all his decisions, and illustrations’.¹⁸² In the second half of this review (published a month later in July 1756), ‘Dr. G’ ‘judge[s] that this Essay is partly calculated to sink Mr. Pope’s reputation to a lower degree in the poetical scale than he has hitherto been stationed at’.¹⁸³ Despite this, the reviewer wishes ‘that the ingenious Author will continue his Observations’, as a ‘Gentleman of so fine a taste, and master of so much learning, cannot fail of throwing out many beautiful and interesting particulars’.¹⁸⁴ Johnson’s initial review in the *Literary Magazine*, already mentioned above, ends by giving praise to Warton, although this approval is cool rather than enthusiastic. Johnson calls the *Essay on Pope* ‘a work abounding with curious quotations and pleasing disquisitions’, in which the reader may find ‘many things which he did not know before’.¹⁸⁵ This is neither horrified rejection, nor a call to arms in favour, of any revolutionary ideas; it shows general support along with some fault-finding. For example, that Warton bases his ideas ‘perhaps not always upon convincing arguments’.¹⁸⁶ This balanced approach to reviewing the *Essay on Pope* can be seen too in criticism of the next century. In his 1819 *Specimens of the British Poets*, for example, Thomas Campbell stressed that ‘many truths are scattered over the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p.228.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p.240.

¹⁸² Dr. G., ‘Review of An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope’, *The Monthly Review; Or, Literary Journal* 14 (June, 1756), pp.528-551, p.528.

¹⁸³ Dr. G., ‘Conclusion of the *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*’, *The Monthly Review; Or, Literary Journal* 15 (July, 1756), pp.52-78, pp.77-78.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p.78.

¹⁸⁵ Johnson, ‘Review of *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*’, *The Literary Magazine* (April, 1756), p.38.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p.35.

Essay' and noted 'the popularity with which it continues to be read', but he concluded that 'it is impossible to admire it as an entire theory, solid and consistent in all parts'.¹⁸⁷

Not all reviews were supportive of the *Essay on Pope*. Percival Stockdale, as we have seen, took against it. So too did Arthur Murphy in his edition of the *Works of Henry Fielding* (1762). Murphy censures the 'common assertion which has been in every half-critic's mouth, namely, that Mr. Pope had little invention', with barbs aimed directly at Warton.¹⁸⁸ The general approval of the contemporary reviews, however, supports the idea that it was not until the later nineteenth century that the *Essay on Pope* was seen as being principally controversial in its aims.¹⁸⁹

In his edition of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Roger Lonsdale comments that Warton is a 'silent interlocutor' in the 'Life of Pope'.¹⁹⁰ But the fact that Warton and Johnson engage in a debate of sorts about the relative merits of Pope does not mean that Warton's *Essay on Pope* can therefore be deemed radical. As Lonsdale also notes, Johnson sought Warton's advice whilst writing his *Lives*, so he cannot have thought his literary taste beyond the pale. Not only did he seek Warton's advice, but he acknowledges that advice publicly in his *Lives*' footnotes, so he cannot have wanted to disassociate himself entirely from Warton's literary authority.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, rather than being radical, George Sherburn affirms that Warton's criticism in the *Essay on Pope* 'hardly does more than reaffirm the commonplace of neo-classical criticism that ranks the epic, tragedy and great ode as the higher poetry, and the genres written by Pope as the lesser poetry'.¹⁹² Warton's criticisms of Pope are less about Pope's ability as a poet, and more about his literary choices in relation to conventional literary culture.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Campbell, *Specimens of the British Poets; with Biographical and Critical Notices, and an Essay on English Poetry*, 7 vols. (London, 1819), vol.1, pp.324-325.

¹⁸⁸ Arthur Murphy, ed., *The Works of Henry Fielding. With the Life of the Author*, 4 vols. (London, 1762), vol.1, p.16.

¹⁸⁹ For more on this see Adam Rounce, ed., *Alexander Pope and His Critics: An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Routledge, 2004), vol.1, pp.xxxii-xxxiii.

¹⁹⁰ Johnson, 'Commentary', *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.238.

¹⁹¹ See 'Life of Collins', note 1, 'Dr. Warton has kindly informed me' (Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.120), and 'Life of Pitt', note 1, 'I owe to the kind communication of Dr. Warton' (Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.94).

¹⁹² George Sherburn, *The Early Career of Alexander Pope* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), p.10.

Pope's literary choices, however, are not only a fault of his own. They are also a fault of the age in which he wrote. Dryden had chosen heroic couplets as the form in which he wrote in part because it was different from the previous age. Pope had perfected this art. The only reasonable way to escape endless imitation of this style then is to suggest that poetry ought now to branch out into other styles. Such a sentiment is not a rejection of Pope, rather it is an acknowledgement that with the death of Pope came the end of a poetic epoch.

In the age before Pope, Dryden had written in his *Of Dramatick Poesie, An Essay* (1668) of his contradictory urge both to 'adore' the older poetical generation and to feel 'sullied' by them.¹⁹³ Writing of the poetical forefathers of the previous age (principally the dramatists William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and John Fletcher), Dryden declared, 'they are honour'd, and almost ador'd by us, as they deserve', but that 'we shall never equal them' because 'they have ruin'd their Estates themselves before they came to their children's hands'.¹⁹⁴ Dryden continues, 'There is scarce an Humour, a Character, or any kind of Plot, which they have not blown upon: all comes sullied or wasted to us'.¹⁹⁵ The principal point is that 'There is no bayes to be expected in their Walks', consequently poets of his own generation must 'attempt some other way' or else 'not...write at all'.¹⁹⁶ The struggle for newness that Dryden is here describing is the same for him as it is over a century later for the Romantic poets negotiating their own relationships with their poetical forefathers.

Richard Bradford has argued that 'the basics of a theory' set out in Dryden's essay *Of Dramatick Poesie* 'would be influential for the next hundred years'.¹⁹⁷ Johnson echoes Dryden's imagery in *The Rambler* No. 86, 12 January 1751, which suggests that Dryden's metaphor had taken root. Johnson writes that 'One of the old poets congratulates himself that he has the

¹⁹³ John Dryden, *Of Dramatick Poesie, An Essay* (London, 1668), p.65.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.64-65.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.65.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.65.

¹⁹⁷ Richard Bradford, 'Rhyming Couplets and Blank Verse', *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp.341-355, p.341.

untrodden regions of Parnassus before him, and that his garland will be gathered from plantations which no writer had yet culled'.¹⁹⁸ The succeeding writer 'treads a beaten walk, and with all his diligence can only hope to find a few flowers or branches untouched by his predecessor'.¹⁹⁹

Dryden declared that one way in which he might excel those poets of the Elizabethan age was through the use of heroic couplets, and that this would be his way of making poetry new. Necessarily, of course, what had been liberating for Dryden and, subsequently, Pope in terms of poetic style came to be regarded by his successors as restraining, 'sullied' and 'wasted'. Ultimately, Dryden concludes, 'the Genius of every age is different'.²⁰⁰ David Fairer has noted the inevitability of such evolutions in poetic taste over generations.²⁰¹

Even his greatest supporters were unsure as to what Warton's overall message on Pope's achievement actually was. John Wooll, for example—Warton's student, friend, and biographer—could not understand Warton's logic:

But yet, notwithstanding my love and veneration for his memory...I must presume to hazard an opinion, that he has either placed Pope too high, or in his separate sections has not done him justice. I venture not to say on which side the mistake lies; but, if Pope is just above Dryden, he had more genius than Dr. WARTON allows him; and, vice versa, if he has not more genius than is attributed to him; if he is more the poet of reason than of fancy, that situation is surely above his pretensions.²⁰²

Perhaps it is the fundamental inconsistency between Warton's criteria and evaluations that have made the tone of the *Essay on Pope* hard to gauge; or in Griffin's words, some have 'thought it commonplace, others revolutionary'.²⁰³ But, then again, we should remember that, despite claiming in the 'Dedication' that the aim of the *Essay on Pope* is to 'place' Pope in the 'class' he 'deserves', Warton in fact veers away from making any particular classification of Pope by the end of this volume, only differentiating between particular poems that will mark 'the reputation of

¹⁹⁸ *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol.4, pp.87-88.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, vol.4, p.88.

²⁰⁰ Dryden, *Of Dramatick Poesie*, p.65.

²⁰¹ See David Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century, 1700-1789* (London: Longman, 2003), p.43.

²⁰² John Wooll, ed., *Biographical Memoirs of the Late Revd. Joseph Warton*, p.74.

²⁰³ Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope*, p.44. For more on this see Pittock, *Ascendancy of Taste*, p.128.

POPE, as a poet, amongst posterity' and those which 'will be forgotten and unknown, and...little relished'.²⁰⁴ Warton's unwillingness to commit to an outright opinion has been elsewhere characterised by David Fairer as a Wartonian 'side-step' and 'turn' from dogmatism; but I think it applies here too.²⁰⁵ Warton does not subscribe to Johnson's notion, as elucidated in *The Rambler* No. 176, dated 23 November 1751, that 'The critick's purpose is to conquer'.²⁰⁶ Warton does not want to conquer the reader, but leave space for readers to determine their own evaluations.

I revere the memory of POPE

There are many ways, in fact, in which Warton praises Pope vociferously in the *Essay on Pope*. He even goes so far as to say that Pope surpasses Shakespeare in his representation of the fantastical through the sylphs in *The Rape of the Lock*. Warton writes of Shakespeare: 'With what wildness of imagination, but yet, with what propriety, are the amusements of the fairies pointed out, in the MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'.²⁰⁷ '[Y]et it must be granted', Warton continues, 'that by the addition of the most delicate satire to the most lively fancy, POPE...has excelled any thing in Shakespeare, or in any other author'.²⁰⁸ In the 1762 edition this is amended to 'has excelled any thing in Shakespeare, or perhaps in any other author', but even the 'perhaps' hardly lessens the

²⁰⁴ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.xii, p.334.

²⁰⁵ See David Fairer, 'Johnson and the Warton Brothers', *The Arc of the Pendulum*, pp.181-194.

²⁰⁶ *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol.5, p.165.

²⁰⁷ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), pp.228-229. Warton singles out lines of Titania's for particular praise: Act.2, sc.2, ll.2-7; and Act.3, sc.1, ll.127-137. Pope makes no comment on these passages in his edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; in Pope's edition these are in volume one, Act.2, sc.2, p.101, and Act.3, sc.3, p.112 (*The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Alexander Pope (1723-1725)).

²⁰⁸ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.229. To elucidate his point Warton quotes Pope's lines from *The Rape of the Lock*: 'Our humbler Province is to tend the Fair, | Not a less pleasing, tho' less glorious Care. | To save the Powder from too rude a Gale, | Nor let th' imprison'd Essences exhale, | To draw fresh Colours from the vernal Flow'rs, | To steal from Rainbows ere they drop in Show'rs | A brighter Wash; to curl their waving Hairs, | Assist their Blushes, and inspire their Airs; | Nay oft, in Dreams, Invention we bestow, | To change a Flounce, or add a Furbelo' (canto 2, ll.91-100). Quoted in Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), pp.229-230.

extent of his approbation.²⁰⁹ Collocating Pope and Shakespeare like this is significant, as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is held up as being a source for English 'faery' writing.²¹⁰ Warton's approval of Pope in relation to Shakespeare is continued by later critics. Piozzi echoes Warton in 1794 by stating that Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is 'almost emulative of Shakespeare's creative powers—not servilely imitating him'.²¹¹

Warton's criticism in the *Essay on Pope* is, almost without fail, moderately expressed. His attitude to Pope is made explicit in the 'Dedication'. He is keen to convey that 'I revere the memory of POPE, I respect and honour his abilities'.²¹² Nevertheless, he does 'not think him at the head of his profession'.²¹³ 'In other words', Warton continues, 'in that species of poetry wherein POPE excelled, he is superior to all mankind'.²¹⁴ 'I only say', he remarks, 'that this species of poetry is not the most excellent one of the art'.²¹⁵ This passage remains unchanged in all the editions up to and including the posthumous one in 1806. Even if the poetical genre in which one chooses to write 'is not the most excellent', to say that as a poet of that genre 'he is superior to all mankind' is praise indeed.

Warton, with characteristic enthusiasm, is effusive in some of his praise of Pope's poetry. He extols a section of *Eloisa to Abelard* that 'contains such strong painting'.²¹⁶ The pathos evoked by Pope in this passage is the source of Warton's praise: 'It is impossible to read it without being struck with a pensive pleasure, and a sacred awe, at the solemnity of the scene; so picturesque are

²⁰⁹ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 2nd ed. (1762), p.227.

²¹⁰ For more on Pope's use of 'faery' writing see Pat Rogers, 'Faery Lore and *The Rape of the Lock*', *Essays on Pope* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.70-84.

²¹¹ Hester Lynch Piozzi, *British Synonymy; Or, An Attempt at Regulating the Choice of Words in Familiar Conversation*, 2 vols. (London, 1794), vol.1, p.221.

²¹² Warton, 'Dedication', *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.iii.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p.iii.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.iii-iv.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.iii-iv.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.316. The passage of Pope reads 'In these lone walls (their day's eternal bound) | These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crown'd, | Where awful arches make a noon-day night, | And the dim windows shed a solemn light' (Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, ll.141-144). All quotation of *Eloisa to Abelard* is from *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.2, pp.291-349.

the epithets'.²¹⁷ Perhaps Warton here is responding to how heart-felt the poem feels. Pope had written to Martha Blount, in March 1716, that 'The Epistle of Eloise grows warm, and begins to have some Breathings of the Heart in it, which may make posterity think I was in love'.²¹⁸ Warton praises Pope's description of Black Melancholy as 'beautifully personified' and 'strongly conceived'.²¹⁹ Pope confessed that he had been suffering from melancholy in the months leading up to writing the poem. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, with whom Pope was enormously infatuated, had left for Constantinople on 1 August 1716.²²⁰ Pope wrote to her, on 18 August 1716: 'I never since pass by [her] House, but with the same Sort of Melancholy that we feel upon Seeing the Tomb of a Friend; which only serves to put us in mind of What we have lost'.²²¹ Pope shares Eloisa's predicament. Norman Callan in an essay on 'Pope and the Classics' argues that *Eloisa to Abelard* is 'original' because it is 'personal'.²²² Cornelis Arnoldus Aldewereld has connected this personal element with the poetry of a later literary period: 'Its Romanticism reveals itself in the exploration of Eloisa's inner self and in its depth of sentiment, heightened by Pope's personal identification with the heroine'.²²³ Elsewhere George Fraser has argued that in the poem 'Pope would beat most Romantic and Victorian poets on their own ground of exploration of the inner self'.²²⁴

Like Wordsworth and Coleridge after him, whose first forays into writing poetry, as we saw in the introduction, were consciously Popean, Warton's early works were Popean in flavour too. His first published poem, 'Sappho's Advice', was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1739 while Warton was still at school, and echoes *The Rape of the Lock*.²²⁵ Not only is it written in heroic couplets; but both Warton's heroine '*Semanthe*' (l.2) and Pope's heroine Belinda have a

²¹⁷ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.316.

²¹⁸ Pope to Martha Blount, March 1716: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.338.

²¹⁹ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.317.

²²⁰ Robert Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p.58.

²²¹ Pope, *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.354.

²²² Norman Callan, 'Pope and the Classics' *Alexander Pope: Writers and their Background*, ed. Peter Dixon (London: Bell, 1972), pp.234-235.

²²³ Aldewereld, *Alexander Pope's Contribution Towards the Development of the Romantic Movement*, pp.148-149.

²²⁴ George S. Fraser, *Alexander Pope* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p.46.

²²⁵ Joseph Warton, 'Sappho's Advice', *Gentleman's Magazine* 9 (October, 1739), p.545.

‘*Beau*’ (canto 4, l.122) called ‘*Sir Plume*’ (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 4, l.121; ‘*Sappho’s Advice*’, l.5). Belinda ‘Nourish’d two Locks, which graceful hung behind’ (canto 2, l.20), and Semanthe’s ‘ebon curls hang loose behind’ (l.15). Belinda is lectured to by Clarissa about ‘good Sense preserv[ing] what Beauty gains’ (canto 5, l.16), and a similar homily is delivered to Semanthe by ‘*Sappho*’ (l.18): ‘—It grieves me much, alas! to find | The fair neglect t’ improve her mind!’ (ll.19-20). Both Clarissa and Sappho suggest to the younger women that age will alter their perspective, and they will come to value ‘Merit / merit’ over beauty. Clarissa’s speech ends, ‘Beauties in vain their pretty Eyes may roll; | Charms strike the sight, but Merit wins the Soul’ (canto 5, ll.33-34). Warton is clearly using Pope’s diction and imagery in the close of Sappho’s speech, at which point the poem also ends:

Then sense and merit shall supply
The blushing cheek, the sparkling eye:
For nymphs, regardless of their faces,
Should add *Minerva* to the *Graces*.
(ll.37-40)

Warton’s poem is not terribly good, and certainly not original, but Pope’s centrality to his early poetic development is evident. This centrality of Pope continued into later poems of Warton’s. His first major published work was an heroi-comical satire, entitled *Fashion*, which again imitated Pope.²²⁶ To use David Fairer’s expression, these poets ‘grow out’ of Pope, rather than ‘outgrow’ him.²²⁷

Warton was very far from believing that Pope was devoid of those qualities which he associated with the highest poetical excellence. Warton’s main complaint, in fact, was that Pope had wasted his natural talents, and had failed to exploit the full potentialities of his genius. In a careful appraisal of Pope’s actual achievement as a poet, Warton attempted to analyse the forces which had led Pope to suppress what Warton felt had been his true ‘poetical enthusiasm’.²²⁸

Warton, in the 1782 second volume, writes: ‘*good sense* and *judgment* were [Pope’s]

²²⁶ Joseph Warton, *Fashion: An Epistolary Satire to a Friend* (London, 1742).

²²⁷ Fairer, ‘Southey’s Literary History’, *Robert Southey and the Contexts of English Romanticism*, p.15.

²²⁸ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 4th ed. (1782), vol.2, p.409.

characteristical excellencies, rather than *fancy* and *invention*; not that the author of *the Rape of the Lock*, and *Eloisa*, can be thought to want *imagination*'.²²⁹ Pope's '*imagination* was not his predominant talent', not because he did not possess it, but 'because he indulged it not, and because he gave not so many proofs of *this* talent as of the *other*'.²³⁰ Warton stresses that Pope chooses to perfect the '*uniform, artificial, and polished*' in his poetry, not because it inevitably had to be that way, but because he chooses that style rather than the imaginative style of his earlier poetry (such as *The Rape of the Lock* and *Eloisa to Abelard*).²³¹ Pope 'gradually became one of the most correct, even, and exact poets that ever wrote; polishing his pieces with a care and assiduity'.²³² He 'does not frequently ravish and transport his reader' because 'Whatever poetical enthusiasm he actually possessed, he withheld and stifled'.²³³

Warton quotes lines from Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (1735) as his evidence that Pope deliberately turned away from his innate 'poetical enthusiasm'.²³⁴ Warton interprets Pope's lines, 'That not in Fancy's Maze he wander'd long, | But stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song' (ll.340-341), as being, in 'our author's own declaration, delivered in the most precise and positive terms', proof 'that he early left the *more poetical* provinces of his art, to become a moral, didactic, and satiric poet'.²³⁵ Perhaps Pope's diction here, in the choice of 'stoop', has contributed to the notion that moralising poetry is lesser than the poetry of 'Fancy's Maze'. Byron picked up on this, explaining 'The depreciation of Pope is partly founded upon a false idea of the dignity of his order of poetry, to which he has partly contributed by the ingenious boast'; adding 'He should have written "rose to truth"'.²³⁶ It seems fairly obvious, though, that Pope did not intend his words to convey the idea that his own poetry *sank to truth* in using 'stoop'. Instead he is using the term in its

²²⁹ Ibid, vol.2, p.408.

²³⁰ Ibid, vol.2, p.408.

²³¹ Ibid, vol.2, p.408.

²³² Ibid, vol.2, p.409.

²³³ Ibid, vol.2, p.409.

²³⁴ All quotation of *Epistle to Arbuthnot* is from: Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, ed. John Butt, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.4, pp.91-127.

²³⁵ Ibid, vol.2, p.262.

²³⁶ Byron, *Letter to **** ****** [John Murray], *On the Rev. W. L. Bowles' Strictures on the Life and Writings of Pope* (London, 1821), p.35.

falconry sense; a bird of prey's 'stoop' is its deadly swooping pounce to catch its target.²³⁷ It is the height of the bird's skill and ability. Pope's image compares himself to a magnificent bird of prey at the peak of its powers, plucking up truths using his highly honed talent.

Pope himself had commented on the need for poetry to transport the reader out of her/himself, but Warton criticises Pope for not indulging in this quality: 'The perusal of him affects not our minds with such strong emotions as we feel from *Homer* and *Milton*; so that no man of a true poetical spirit, *is master of himself while he reads them*'.²³⁸ Warton is using Pope's own words against him.²³⁹ Christina Le Prevost's findings from Warton's early manuscripts support the idea that Warton's literary criticism grew out of his early engagement with Pope. She posits 'that Joseph would scarcely have developed many of the critical ideas he uses against Pope in the *Essay* but for the help of Pope himself. Manuscripts dating from his schooldays (most notably, his "Winchester Gathering Book, 1739") show he was early familiar with Pope's work as a critic both in verse and prose'.²⁴⁰

Before Warton had completed his *Essay on Pope*, he contributed translations of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* to the 1753 collective translation of Virgil.²⁴¹ In this collection, Warton states his inclination for pathos in poetry:

A stroke of passion is worth a hundred of the most lively and glowing descriptions.
Men love to be moved, much better than to be instructed.²⁴²

Throughout Warton's 'Dedication' to the Virgilian translations, he also refers repeatedly and positively to Pope. Warton directly quotes Pope's 'Preface' to the *Iliad*, for example, in support of his argument that Virgil's characters are more 'hidden and undistinguished' and so 'affect us not in

²³⁷ See Samuel Johnson's seventh definition of 'To STOOP' in *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which the Words are Deduced from their Originals, and Illustrated in their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers: to which are Prefixed, a History of the Language, and an English Grammar*, 2 vols. (London, 1755).

²³⁸ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 4th ed. (1782), vol.2, p.409.

²³⁹ Pope, 'Preface' to *Iliad*, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.4.

²⁴⁰ Le Prevost, 'More Unacknowledged Verse by Joseph Warton', *RES* (1986), p.328, f.14.

²⁴¹ Joseph Warton and Christopher Pitt, trans., *The Works of Virgil, in Latin and English, with Essays on Pastoral, Didactic, and Epic Poetry*, 4 vols. (London, 1753).

²⁴² *Ibid*, vol.1, p.400.

proportion to those of Homer'.²⁴³ Warton also agrees with Joseph Spence, who 'entertains the highest opinion of [Dryden's] genius, to whom, says he, our English poetry is more obliged for its improvements than any other writer, excepting only Mr. Pope'.²⁴⁴ In this same 'Dedication' Warton calls Dryden (another poet whom he elsewhere classes as of the second rank) 'so great and true a genius'.²⁴⁵ It is evident that Warton continued to value Dryden's poetic contribution to English literature as late in his life he worked on an edition of Dryden's *Poetical Works*. This was subsequently posthumously published by his son, John, in 1811.²⁴⁶ Despite his evident appreciation of Dryden, in order to excuse the 'gross mistakes', 'careless incorrect lines', and 'wild deviations' of Dryden's 'version of the Eclogues and Georgics', Warton turns to Pope. Perhaps with Johnson in mind, Warton writes that instead 'of the invidious and disagreeable task of pointing out these passages at length' himself, Warton chooses 'rather to say in those generous words of Mr. Pope on a similar occasion, "that nothing could have made Mr. Dryden capable of such mistakes, but extreme haste in writing; which never ought to be imputed as a fault to him, but to those who suffered so noble a genius to lie under the necessity of it"'.²⁴⁷ Warton also approves of Pope's poetic taste in that Pope 'regarded Mr. Pitt's [*Aeneid*] as an excellent translation'.²⁴⁸ These are not the words of a man who merely dismisses Pope's and Dryden's poetic taste and achievement. Warton states publicly that he agrees with many of Pope's assertions about what makes good poetry.

In the 'Advertisement' to the second volume of 1782, Warton is exasperated with the way in which his first volume had been perverted to suggest that he did not think Pope a great poet, and is annoyed that his reverence for Pope might be misconstrued. 'The author begs leave to add',

²⁴³ Ibid, vol.1, p.xiii. Cf. Pope's comments that Virgil's characters 'lie in a great degree hidden and undistinguish'd' and 'affect us not in proportion to those of *Homer*' ('Preface' to *Iliad*, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.8).

²⁴⁴ Warton, *The Works of Virgil*, vol.1, p.xviii.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, vol.1, p.xvi.

²⁴⁶ *The Poetical Works of John Dryden: Containing Original Poems, Tales, and Translations*, eds. Joseph and John Warton, 4 vols. (London, 1811).

²⁴⁷ Warton, 'Dedication', *The Works of Virgil*, vol.1, p.xvi.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, vol.1, p.xvii.

Warton pointedly wrote, ‘that he flatters himself, that no observations in this work can be so perversely misinterpreted and tortured, as to make him insinuate, contrary to his opinion and inclination, that POPE was not a *great* poet: he only says and thinks, he was not the *greatest*’.²⁴⁹ To argue that someone is ‘not the *greatest*’ is not necessarily to say that that person is ‘second-rate’; such a conclusion, in Warton’s own words, is perverse misinterpretation. The tone of the word ‘insinuate’ highlights Warton’s displeasure that his words might have been ‘tortured’ into being used to suggest what he does not mean—as many critics have done since. Clearly Warton thought that even in his own time his argument was not properly understood. Warton continues that ‘He imagined his meaning would have been perceived, and his motives for composing this essay would have been clearly known’, which suggests that Warton thought his meaning was not perceived nor his motives clearly known.²⁵⁰ Even late in life, in a letter to William Hayley, dated 29 December 1795, it is clear that Warton was keen to correct any misunderstanding that he did not appreciate Pope’s poetry. Warton thanks Hayley ‘for the friendly delicacy in which you speak of my Essay on Pope’ but he ‘never thought we disagreed so much as you seem to imagine’.²⁵¹ He sums up his position by reiterating, ‘All I said, and all I think, is comprehended in these words of your *own*, “[Pope] *chose* to be the Poet of reason rather than of fancy”’.²⁵² This shows, as Sherburn has argued, that ‘in spite of what historians have said’ Warton ‘had little, if any, disposition to minimize Pope’s achievement’.²⁵³ In fact, he ‘was genuinely grieved that some critics should regard him as Pope’s enemy’.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ Warton, ‘Advertisement’, *Essay on Pope*, 4th ed. (1782), vol.2, p.i.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, vol.2, p.i.

²⁵¹ Warton to Hayley, 29 December 1795: *Biographical Memoirs of the Late Revd. Joseph Warton* (1806), p.406.

²⁵² *Ibid*, p.406.

²⁵³ Sherburn, *The Early Career of Alexander Pope*, p.9.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp.9-10.

O best of Bards forgive his Praise sincere

Warton's *Fashion* was published in 1742. Christina Le Prevost has established that the published poem was a condensed version of Warton's original plan, which had been 'much more grandly comprehensive'.²⁵⁵ Part of the original plan included a section extolling Pope's ethical poetry. In 1782, Warton still approves of this aspect of Pope's poetry, calling him the 'First of *Ethical* authors in verse'.²⁵⁶ The summary of the projected poem contains a part which explains that 'Pope is the only Poet who boldly lashes our [Vices]—Luxuries'.²⁵⁷

Le Prevost, building on David Fairer's earlier work, has also demonstrated that scraps of Warton's verse that were initially intended to form this longer work eventually contributed to *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748), ostensibly written by his father Thomas Warton the Elder.²⁵⁸ Le Prevost notes that 'all these manuscripts', from which the fragments come, show that Warton 'indulged in extensive imitation of him [Pope]' and was 'an extravagant and open admirer' of his.²⁵⁹ On one manuscript is a personal prayer by the poet for a life of virtuous obscurity:

O let me wander thro' Life's humblest Shade,
Of Care, [& Death, &] 'of' Fortune 'nor of Death' afraid;
With Liberty & Competence content,
Happy, not rich; not great, but innocent.²⁶⁰

This appeal for quiet contentment echoes Pope's sentiments in *Ode on Solitude* (which was first published in the 1736 *Works*).²⁶¹ In it, Pope writes 'HAPPY the man' (l.1) who is 'Content to

²⁵⁵ Le Prevost, 'More Unacknowledged Verse by Joseph Warton', *RES* (1986), p.318.

²⁵⁶ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 4th ed. (1782), vol.2, p.409.

²⁵⁷ Quoted in 'More Unacknowledged Verse by Joseph Warton', *RES* (1986), p.320. NB. When quoting the transcripts, deletions are enclosed in square brackets ([]), interlineations in half-square brackets (´´), and editorial additions in angle brackets (◊).

²⁵⁸ Thomas Warton [the Elder], *Poems on Several Occasions. By the Reverend Mr. Thomas Warton, Batchelor of Divinity, Late Vicar of Basingstoke in Hampshire, and Sometime Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford*, eds. Joseph and Thomas [the Younger] Warton (London, 1748). See David Fairer, 'The Poems of Thomas Warton the Elder?', *Review of English Studies* 26.103 (August, 1975), pp.287-300; 'The Poems of Thomas Warton the Elder? (Concluded)', *Review of English Studies* 26.104 (November, 1975), pp.395-406; and 'The Poems of Thomas Warton the Elder?—A Postscript', *Review of English Studies* 29.113 (February, 1978), pp.61-65.

²⁵⁹ Le Prevost, 'More Unacknowledged Verse by Joseph Warton', *RES* (1986), pp.327-328.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.325.

²⁶¹ 'Ode on Solitude', *Minor Poems*, ed. Norman Ault in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.6, pp.3-5.

breathe his native air' (l.3), who 'live[s], unseen, unknown' (l.17), who dies 'unlamented' (l.18), and who lives in 'innocence' (l.15). Warton approves of the humble aspiration within Pope's lines of one 'whose wish and care | A few paternal acres bound' (ll.1-2). In another fragment, Warton addresses an unnamed living poet, who Le Prevost states is 'almost certain to be Pope', of whom he writes:

[O best of Bards forgive his Praise sincere,
 [Which all]—forgive this honest Praise,
 My heart speaks Truth, tho homely be 'my' lays ²⁶²

When writing these fragments Warton is earnest in his 'sincere' and 'honest' 'Praise' for Pope, the 'best of Bards'; he stresses that he speaks 'Truth', and from his 'heart'. We can determine then that these early fragments contain heartfelt tributes to Pope's poetry as Warton develops his poetic style. Le Prevost contends that at this time Warton considers Pope as a 'poet-hero'. ²⁶³ With shades of *An Essay on Criticism*, Warton defends Pope against his jealous detractors, for whom 'That name [Pope's] recalls a thousand Critics Hate' who are 'From Wrongs triumphant, & by Envy great!'. ²⁶⁴ In reference to Pope's jibes at Lewis Theobald, 'Tibbald', in the *Dunciad* and *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, Warton taunts them to 'Come then, reviving Tibbalds rise around, | And Dennis stare, & write, & shake the ground'. ²⁶⁵ All the while, Warton imagines Pope sitting in virtuous indifference: 'He regardless & Superior, sits,...| Nor [blushes as] 'listens to' the Scoffs of [meaner] 'lyeing' Wits'. ²⁶⁶ In this Warton is echoing Pope's own apparent indifference to critics in *Epistle to Arbuthnot*: in which Pope writes that when '*Gildon* dr[e]w his venal quill' (l.151), he 'wish'd the man a dinner, and sat still' (l.152); or when '*Dennis* rave[d] in furious fret' (l.153), he 'never answer'd' (l.154). Pope's reason for holding back, he claims, is that 'If want provok'd, or madness made them print, | I wag'd no war with *Bedlam* or the *Mint*' (ll.155-156). Pope continues that 'Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence' (l.159), but 'all they want [lack] is spirit, taste, and sense' (l.160). For Pope

²⁶² Ibid, p.327.

²⁶³ Ibid, p.327.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, p.327.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, p.327.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p.327.

‘ne’er one sprig of laurel grac’d’ (l.163) their writing, because they are mere ‘Word-catcher[s] that live...on syllables’ (l.166). Warton alludes to Pope here in support of him against his contemporary critics, to suggest that, unlike them, Pope is with ‘laurel grac’d’ (l.163) and does have ‘spirit, taste, and sense’ (l.160). Warton is here determinedly *not* ‘Damn[ing] with faint praise’ (l.201).

Some Popean elements remain from the fragments in the published, compacted, poem *Fashion*. In *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, Pope had ridiculed those he considered to be ‘Fashion’s Fool’ (l.334); Warton does the same in *Fashion* by deriding ‘the Fool-o’erwhelming Flood’ (l.4) of people whom ‘Fashion guides still’ (l.2). Warton continues to support Pope’s writing in the poem; he writes ‘Dull Critics on best Bards pour harmless Spite’ (l.133). From the fragment above we can conclude that the ‘best Bard’ is Pope, and the ‘Dull Critics’ those that Pope rails against and those who rail against him. Warton is consciously taking Pope’s side of the argument here by setting Pope against Dulness and by affirming that despite the ‘Spite’ such critics ‘pour’ on Pope it is ‘harmless’ because it has no purchase; such critics are like toothless ‘Babes that mumble’ but ‘cannot bite’ (l.134).

In particular, Warton alludes to Pope’s *Epistle to a Lady on the Characters of Women* (which was first published as an eighteen-page folio on 8 February 1735).²⁶⁷ Pope’s poem is an invective against women and their apparent vanity, inanity, and inconstancy: ‘Woman’s at best a Contradiction’ (l.270) Pope declares. In *Fashion*, Warton refers to two women about whom Pope had written. First, Warton refers to ‘*Flavia*’s Fan’ (l.67), her accessory being one of the ‘new minted FASHIONS fresh from *France*’ (l.68), suggesting she is fickle and weak-minded. Pope’s ‘*Flavia*’ (l.87) lives ‘To Toast our wants and wishes, [which] is her way’ (l.88), her motto “‘while we live, to live’” (l.90). Pope asks ‘what can cause such impotence of mind?’ (l.93); is it that her

²⁶⁷ See *Twickenham Edition*, vol.3.ii, p.40. For all quotation of the *Epistle to a Lady* I have used this edition, edited by F. W. Bateson, vol.3.ii, pp.39-74.

brain's 'spark [is] too fickle' (l.94)? Pope then proceeds to outline her contrary, and ultimately self-defeating, state:

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

Pope's Flavia is made out to be absurd, and too stupid to realise her own destruction; she is destroying herself by her own hands, as 'Lucretia' and 'Rosamonda' (l.92) had done. Flavia imagines herself 'all for Death' (l.91) and considers it an 'Opiate of the soul' (l.91), despite in fact having 'a Rage to live', but only if she gets 'her way'. In referring to Lucretia and Rosamonda, and 'Death' as an 'Opiate of the soul', it is as if Flavia views herself hyperbolically as sacrificing herself in a cruel world in which her wishes are thwarted. In fact, she is living a life of 'Dulness', which Pope outlines in *Lines on Dulness* is 'the safe Opiate of the Mind' (l.1).²⁶⁸ Warton alludes to Flavia to suggest that those who are guided by fresh new-minted fashions are as fickle, impotent of mind, and self-contradictory as Pope suggests women can be. Pope's reference to Flavia's 'impotence of mind' is a direct allusion to Milton's *Samson Agonistes*.²⁶⁹ Samson cannot keep his secret 'But weakly to a woman must reveal it' (l.50), which he calls 'impotence of mind' (l.52), and ultimately renders him 'debased | Lower than bond-slave!' (ll.37-38). Pope reverses the genders, so that it is women who, through impotence of mind and weakness, debase themselves.

The second woman that Warton refers to is Pope's 'Papillia' (l.37). In one of the original fragments, Warton wrote 'Papilia dreams of last Night's Ball till ten, | Drinks Chocolate, strokes [Fop,] 'Cupid' [&] sleeps again'.²⁷⁰ In *Fashion*, Papilia's name is converted to 'Muscalia', but the Popean reference remains. In *Epistle to a Lady*, Pope's Papillia:

²⁶⁸ See *Minor Poems*, ed. Norman Ault in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.6, pp.53-54.

²⁶⁹ Pope used Milton's poetry often. For more on Pope's use of Milton see Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, 'On Looking into Pope's Milton', *Études Anglaises* 27.4 (October, 1974), pp.481-500.

²⁷⁰ Le Prevost, 'More Unacknowledged Verse by Joseph Warton', *RES* (1986), p.319.

Sighs for the shades—“How charming is a Park!”
 A Park is purchas’d, but the Fair he sees
 All bath’d in tears—“Oh odious, odious Trees!”
 (ll.38-40)

Pope laconically undermines such behaviour in the ironic statement that ‘Ladies, like variegated Tulips show; | ’Tis to their Changes half their charms we owe’ (ll.41-42). Although Pope’s scene of Papillia’s changeableness is presented as trifling, Warton presents women’s unreliability as detrimental to society. Warton’s Papilia, or ‘*Muscalia*’, at times lets ‘her Babes with some foul Nurse remain’ (l.89) so that she can ‘Drink...Chocolate, stroak...*Fop*, and sleep...again’ (l.84). When her ‘Mother’s Cares’ (l.90) return and she ‘bears to see the Brats’ (l.91), she squeals “‘Oh they stun one’s Ears, like squalling Cats’” (l.92). Warton condemns a society in which ‘lovely Woman’ (l.97) fulfils her role as mother with less ‘protect[ion]’ and ‘nurs[ing]’ (l.93) than ‘Tigers and Pards’ (l.93), ‘Snake[s]’ (l.94), or ‘Vultur[es]’ (l.95). Warton deems this behaviour ‘fashionably cruel’ (l.99).

Although she is a mother, Warton’s Papilia/*Muscalia* can also be seen as ‘an unlovable version of Pope’s Belinda’. ²⁷¹ In *The Rape of the Lock*, Belinda ‘just at Twelve, awake[s]’ (canto 1, l.15), and Papilia/*Muscalia* ‘Perhaps at Twelve dares ope her drowsy Eyes’ (l.85); both women have lapdogs in bed (canto 1, l.116; l.84); and take considerable time over their face and hair—Belinda is proud of ‘the Wonders of her Face’ (canto 1, l.142) and her ‘Nourish’d...Locks’ (canto 2, l.20), while Papilia/*Muscalia* ensures ‘each Curl and Feature [is] justly set’ (l.87). In Warton’s words, such a woman only ‘dines, talks Scandal, visits, plays Picquette’ (l.88). The reference to the card game alludes to *The Rape of the Lock*’s ‘*Ombre*’ (canto 3, l.27), which triggers Belinda’s ruin, implying that this sort of lifestyle will bring about self-ruin as well as corrupt society in general. ²⁷²

In *Epistle to a Lady*, Pope describes himself as unlike the women in the poem. He wants to understand ‘Th’ exactest traits of Body or of Mind’ (l.191) and for this he needs ‘models of an

²⁷¹ Ibid, p.319.

²⁷² I will discuss the influence of Pope’s game of *Ombre* in more detail in chapter three.

humble kind' (l.192), such as 'honest Mah'met, or plain Parson Hale' (l.198), otherwise his poetry will not 'see' 'conceal[ed]' 'Parts of Nature' (l.190). He does not want 'varnish'd' (l.182) poetry, instead he wants 'To draw the Naked' (l.188); he wants to examine what is natural. In *An Essay on Man*, the 'voice of Nature spake' (Ep.3, l.171) that mankind should have "'Laws wise as Nature'" (Ep.3, l.190), and in *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope famously exalts the 'RULES of...Nature' (ll.88-89). *Fashion* ends with an apostrophe to Pope, whom Warton calls his 'Friend':

O teach me, Friend, to know wise *Nature's* Rules,
And laugh, like You, at *Fashion's* hoodwink'd Fools
(ll.169-170)

Warton seeks to emulate Pope; to 'laugh' at 'Fashion's Fool[s]' and convey '*Nature's* Rules' in his poetry. Warton casts Pope as his 'teach[er]', and himself as the pupil learning from the master. Warton chooses to develop his poetic taste, and technique, through engaging with Pope's poetry.

Warton's later poems, worked up for publication in 1748, also retain some Popean inflections. One of the fragmentary lines, originally written with the intention of forming part of Warton's projected long poem, is 'Ev'n Learning ministers to Luxury'.²⁷³ Pope explores this theme in *An Essay on Man*, in which he writes that mankind should 'Deduct what is but Vanity, or Dress, | Or Learning's Luxury, or Idleness' (ep.2, ll.45-46). Warton continues to explore this throughout his contributions to *Poems* (1748). 'On Luxury' considers the unhappiness of idleness; where the 'thoughtless Rich on rosy Beds repose, | With downy-finger'd Sloth their Eyes to close' (ll.29-30), their 'Hand[s] quite unemploy'd, and mute the[ir] Tongue[s]' (l.31). These 'thoughtless Rich' are as pointless as 'idle Lutes in musty Cases hung' (l.32). In *Temple of Fame* (published in 1715), Pope had also condemned those who are 'Slaves to your selves, and ev'n fatigu'd with Ease' (l.397).²⁷⁴ Warton echoes Pope's diction in concurring that 'Man grows fatigu'd with even Paths and plain' (l.33). Warton declares that 'Life sweetest tastes diversify'd with Pain' (l.34); Pope

²⁷³ Le Prevost, 'More Unacknowledged Verse by Joseph Warton', *RES* (1986), p.321.

²⁷⁴ See 'The Temple of Fame', *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.2, pp.213-289.

similarly advocates in *An Essay on Man* that ‘pleasure’ requires ‘pain’ to ‘Make and maintain the balance of the mind’, and it is this mixture which is the ‘colour of our life’ (ep.2, ll.117-122).²⁷⁵

Warton’s famous declaration in the ‘Advertisement’ to the *Odes on Various Subjects* (1746), ‘that the fashion of moralizing in verse has been carried too far’, has often been taken to imply a turn away from the ‘Ethical’ poetry of Pope.²⁷⁶ Yet in poems that he is content to publish only two years later, Warton re-uses moral fragments inspired by Pope that were composed earlier in the decade. There may be too much ‘moralising in verse’, but that does not mean that there cannot be any. Warton’s deliberate use of the word ‘fashion’ for moralizing in verse suggests that he is aligning himself with Pope against those fools who only write moralizing poetry because Pope has made it fashionable and ‘moraliz’d his song’ (*Epistle to Arbuthnot*, l.341).

The middle section of ‘On Luxury’, on the contemporary debilitated state of poetry, also has echoes of the *Dunciad*. Warton laments that ‘the Great’ (l.19) are swayed by ‘modish trifles’ (l.19) and so fail properly to ‘patronize the Muse’ (l.21), and instead only ‘Neglect, or dread, or fetter, or abuse’ (l.22) her. Warton is alluding to Pope to suggest that ‘modish’ poetry only encourages, in Pope’s words, ‘the Kingdom of the Dull upon earth’.²⁷⁷ Pope describes how Goddess Dulness ‘leads captive the Sciences, and silenceth the Muses’.²⁷⁸ Warton alludes to this in his line that ‘Each Science sorrows, [and] all the Muses droop’ (l.20) under the current vogueish generation.

As in *Fashion*, Warton again uses ‘Flavia’ (l.1) in ‘Verses Left on a Lady’s Toilette’. This modish lady is again likened to Belinda. Belinda is frequently referred to as ‘The Fair’ in *The Rape of the Lock* (canto 1, l.140; canto 2, l.91; and canto 2, l.124); and as if to show her vanity, Flavia is described not just as ‘The Fair’, but ‘all-accomplisht Fair’ (l.1). Like Belinda, Flavia takes

²⁷⁵ For more on the concept of ‘Luxury’ in poetry in the eighteenth century see Richard Terry, ‘Mock-Heroic and Luxury: The Heroi-Comical Poem’, *Mock-Heroic from Butler to Cowper: An English Genre and Discourse* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp.83-106.

²⁷⁶ Warton, ‘Advertisement’, *Odes on Various Subjects* (London, 1746), p.4. David Fairer, for example, writes that ‘Warton set out to demote Pope’ which is evident, in part, through the *Odes*’ ‘Advertisement’ (*English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century, 1700-1789*, pp.154-155). Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 4th ed. (1782), vol.2, p.409.

²⁷⁷ *The Dunciad*, ‘Book the Fourth Argument’ [B Text], *Twickenham Edition*, vol.5, p.337.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*, vol.5, p.337.

immense care of and pleasure in her appearance; she ‘Curl[s], powder[s], stick[s] with Gems her jetty Hair’ (1.2) and ‘Swell[s] with a Hoop her painted Peacock-Tail’ (1.3). The link is made explicit in Flavia’s ‘twinkl[ing] Diamonds on that snowy Breast’ (1.5), which recall Belinda’s show-stopping necklace—‘On her white Breast a sparking *Cross* she wore’ (canto 2, 1.7). Both poets, slightly lasciviously, directly connect the women’s ‘white’ / ‘snowy’ ‘Breast’ with the sparkling / twinkling object, as if to suggest a relationship between the two. Warton suggests that women should become more ‘artless’ (1.9), and that purer ‘Beauty strikes the Heart’ (1.8). In order to prove his point he calls on ‘*Titian*’s glowing Tints’ (1.10) and that ‘*Raphael* joins Simplicity with Grace’ (1.17). In choosing to use these examples as admirable painters, Warton demonstrates a similar taste to Pope, who in the ‘Epistle to Mr. Jervas’ (1716) had praised the ‘heav’nly’ (1.35) effect of ‘*Raphael*’s grace’ (1.36) and ‘*Titian*’s warmth divine’ (1.38).²⁷⁹

Throughout ‘Verses Left on A Lady’s Toilette’, Warton argues for modesty in behaviour; just as Pope had advocated in *An Essay on Man* that ‘Modesty [should be] thy guide’ (ep.2, 1.43), and so a woman should ‘First strip off all her equipage of Pride, | [and] Deduct what is but Vanity, or Dress’ (ep.2, ll.44-45).²⁸⁰ Warton proclaims that ideal behaviour is ‘Gay, but not glittering; polite, but plain’ (1.16). In this line, he is echoing not just Pope’s sentiments, but his sentence construction, since Pope advocates in *A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry* that ‘neat, but not florid; easy, and yet lively’ is the ideal ‘expression humble’.²⁸¹ Pope continues that ‘the manners’ should be ‘not too polite nor too rustic’ and ‘thoughts are plain, yet admit a little quickness and passion’.²⁸² The echo of Pope’s *A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry* perhaps suggests on Warton’s part a desire for the ‘notion of quality’ and ‘simplicity’ that a pastoral idyll conveys.²⁸³ We can also see in Warton’s line, however, a development of his poetic technique. Many of Warton’s lines up until

²⁷⁹ ‘Epistle to Mr. Jervas, With Dryden’s Translation of Fresnoy’s Art of Painting’, *Minor Poems*, ed. Norman Ault in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.6, pp.156-160.

²⁸⁰ This passage is in part quoted above in reference to ‘On Luxury’, but it shows how the same themes run through Warton’s contributions to *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748).

²⁸¹ Pope, ‘A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry’, *Prose of Pope, Vol.1*, p.298.

²⁸² *Ibid*, p.298.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, p.298.

this point have been fairly straightforward rhythmically; he had not used a deliberate pause, enforced by the form of the line, to break up the rhythm of the lines, and so control emphasis. Pope excelled in this; it was a technique that Pope was conscious to craft and hone in his own poetry. Pope outlines his ‘Thoughts...on the subject of English Versification’ in a letter to Walsh, dated 22 October 1706:

Every nice Ear, must (I believe) have observ’d, that in any smooth English Verse of ten syllables, there is naturally a Pause at the fourth, fifth, or sixth syllable. It is upon these the Ear rests, and upon the judicious Change and Management of which depends the Variety of Versification.²⁸⁴

Warton is using a Popean technique to improve and develop—to ‘Manage’—his own poetry. It is apparent from Pope’s presence in Warton’s early fragmentary writings, through to the later published renderings of these scribblings, that Warton used Pope extensively, and self-consciously, in the development of his own poetic style.

And breathes a browner horror on the woods

The Enthusiast, or, The Lover of Nature, was published in the year of Pope’s death (1744).²⁸⁵ Hugh Reid, in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, straightforwardly assesses that it is ‘full of love of nature and feeling, going against the prevailing taste for poetry epitomized by Alexander Pope’.²⁸⁶ But it is neither true that Pope’s poetical taste excluded a love for nature and feeling, nor that Warton’s poetry entirely goes against Pope. In *The Enthusiast*, Warton describes how he wants to leave ‘Gardens deckt with Art’s vain Poms’ (l.4) for ‘some Pine-topt Precipice | Abrupt and

²⁸⁴ Pope to Walsh, 22 October 1706: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.23.

²⁸⁵ Joseph Warton, *The Enthusiast: Or, The Lover of Nature. A Poem* (London, 1744).

²⁸⁶ Hugh Reid, ‘Warton, Joseph (bap. 1722, d. 1800)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2010 [<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/28796>, accessed 12 Sept 2015].

shaggy' (ll.28-29).²⁸⁷ Warton's descriptions of the garden here are reminiscent of the imagery of nature in *Eloisa to Abelard*, where 'The darksome pines that o'er yon rocks reclin'd' (l.155) and the 'caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn' (l.20). It is also not dissimilar to the position that Pope advocates in *An Essay on Criticism*, in which he contends that only by following nature will poetry be 'without Pomp' (l.75). 'Life, Force, and Beauty' (l.72) in poetry come from 'Unerring Nature' (l.70):

In Prospects, thus, some Objects please our Eyes,
Which out of Nature's common Order rise,
The shapeless rock, or hanging Precipice.
(*An Essay on Criticism*, ll.158-160)

Both poets agree that sometimes it is an unusual but arresting 'Prospect' (Pope, l.158; Warton, l.32) that is most inspiring. Pope uses half-rhyme here to emphasise the importance of this sentence. These three lines sit between couplets that have a contrasting sound; 'gains' and 'attains' (ll.156-157) and 'invade' and 'made' (ll.161-162) include sharp consonant sounds, which 'Eyes', 'rise', and 'Precipice' do not. 'Precipice' does not quite rhyme with its predecessors, however, and so the word itself is slightly 'out of' the 'common Order' in the poem, just like a jutting precipice in real life.

Warton elsewhere echoes Pope's poetry too. Indeed, Warton actually makes additions to his 'Ode to Fancy' to include references to Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*. In the 1748 version of 'Ode to Fancy' (published in Dodsley's *Collection of Poems*), Warton's 'matron MELANCHOLY' (l.62) alludes to Pope's 'Black Melancholy' (l.165) in *Eloisa to Abelard*, a reference that is absent in the original 1746 version (published in *Odes on Various Subjects*).²⁸⁸ Warton overtly praises Pope's 'IMAGE of the Goddess MELANCHOLY' in the *Essay on Pope*, which 'is truly sublime, and strongly conceived'.²⁸⁹ Before encountering 'Black Melancholy', Eloisa was amongst 'The wandering streams that shine between the hills, | The grotts that eccho to the tinkling rills' (*Eloisa to*

²⁸⁷ Warton, *The Enthusiast*, p.5, p.6.

²⁸⁸ Cf. *Odes on Various Subjects* (1746), p.8, and Robert Dodsley's *A Collection of Poems. By Several Hands. In Three Volumes*, 3 vols. (London, 1748), vol.3, pp.78-84, p.80.

²⁸⁹ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.318.

Abelard, ll.157-158) but now ‘No more these scenes my meditation aid’ (l.161) as ‘Black Melancholy’ (l.165) ‘Shades ev’ry flow’r, and darkens ev’ry green’ (l.168). Before meeting ‘the matron MELANCHOLY’ (l.62), Warton’s narrative voice is:

Where ECHO walks steep hills among,
List’ning to the shepherd’s song:
Yet not these flowery fields of joy,
Can long my pensive mind employ
(ll.57-60) ²⁹⁰

For both poets, the pastoral imagery of Echo wandering amongst the hills and flowers is not enough to keep the melancholy mind at bay.

Warton uses other passages of Pope’s as explicit inspiration for potential passages in ‘Ode to Fancy’. In the *Essay on Pope* Warton describes a passage in *Windsor-Forest* in which a pheasant is shot (ll.115-118) as ‘PATHETIC’ and where the ‘exquisite picture heightens the distress, and powerfully excites the consideration, of the reader’. ²⁹¹ So affected is Warton himself with the pathos of Pope’s description that he ‘may add a passage’ to his own ‘Ode to Fancy’ in response, which he has ‘heard commended for a similar stroke of a pathetic nature’. ²⁹²

Joseph’s brother Thomas had given advice on, and assisted with the publishing of, the *Essay on Pope*. ²⁹³ Like Joseph, Thomas is often seen as explicitly turning away from Pope; his poem *The Pleasures of Melancholy* is often cited as a particular example. ²⁹⁴ It had been written in 1745, although it was not published until 1747. Sixty years later, in 1807, in his *Censura Literaria*, Samuel Egerton Brydges claims, perhaps because of Pope’s recent death, that Warton wrote the poem at a time when ‘the school of Pope was giving way’. ²⁹⁵ David Fairer has stated that in the

²⁹⁰ Warton, ‘Ode to Fancy’ in Dodsley’s *Collection of Poems* (1748), vol.3, p.80.

²⁹¹ For the poem *Windsor-Forest* see Pope, *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, eds. E. Audra and Audrey Williams in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.1, pp.123-194. Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.33.

²⁹² Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.33.

²⁹³ See Joseph to Thomas Warton, 9 November 1755: *The Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, ‘Letter 54’, p.61.

²⁹⁴ Thomas Warton, *The Pleasures of Melancholy. A Poem* (London, 1747).

²⁹⁵ Samuel Egerton Brydges, *Censura Literaria, Containing Titles, Extracts and Opinions of Old English Books, Especially those which are Scarce. To which are added Necrographia Authorum, of Memoirs of Deceased Authors; And The Ruminator, consisting of Original, Moral, and Critical Essays, with other Literary Disquisitions*, 10 vols. (London, 1805-1809), vol.4, p.280.

poem ‘Warton specifically rejects even the “happiest art” of Pope.’²⁹⁶ Like Joseph, however, Thomas Warton also alludes to Pope’s ‘Black Melancholy’ in *The Pleasures of Melancholy*.²⁹⁷ In the poem, Thomas Warton does turn away from the ‘splendors’ (l.160) and ‘gay description’ (l.161) of *The Rape of the Lock* in favour of ‘magic SPENSER’S wildly-warbled song’ (l.154), but this is because the mock-heroic satirical tone of Pope’s poem is fantastically inappropriate for a melancholic mood:

Thro’ POPE’S soft song tho’ all the Graces breath,
 And happiest art adorn his Attic page;
 Yet does my mind with sweeter transport glow,
 As at the foot of some hoar oak reclin’d,
 In magic SPENSER’S wildly-warbled song
 I see deserted Una wander wide
 Thro’ wasteful solitudes, and lurid heaths,
 Weary, forlorn, than when the fated Fair,
 Upon the bosom bright of silver Thames,
 Launches in all the lustre of Brocade,
 Amid the splendors of the laughing Sun.
 The gay description palls upon the sense,
 And coldly strikes the mind with feeble bliss.
 O wrap me then in shades of darksome pine,
 Bear me to caves by desolation brown,
 To dusky vales, and hermit-haunted rocks!
 (ll.150-165)²⁹⁸

Warton is not rejecting all of Pope’s ‘soft song...[and]...Graces’ (l.150), and this passage should not be taken as criticising Pope in general, because what he wants to be wrapped in come the next verse paragraph is another of Pope’s poems: *Eloisa to Abelard*. Warton makes deliberate and playful use of Pope’s diction and imagery: ‘darksome pine’ (l.163) is a direct quotation of Pope’s

²⁹⁶ David Fairer, ‘The Fairie Queene and Eighteenth-Century Spenserianism’, *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp.197-215, p.210.

²⁹⁷ It has been argued that Keats later used Thomas Warton’s poem as inspiration for ‘Ode on Melancholy’ (see Oliver Ferguson, ‘Warton and Keats: Two Views of Melancholy’, *Keats-Shelley Journal* 18 (1969), pp.12-15; and Nathaniel Teich, ‘A Comparative Approach to Periodization: Forms of Self-Consciousness in Warton’s *The Pleasures of Melancholy* and Keats’s *Ode on Melancholy*’, *Proceedings of the Xth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, Volume One, General Problems of Literary History*, ed. Douwe Fokkema (New York: Garland, 1982), pp.158-163). In some ways, Pope in *Epistle to Arbuthnot* writes of melancholy with a foreshadowing of a Keatsian sort of double-negative paradox: ‘Be no unpleasing Melancholy mine’ (l.407). Keats’ melancholy gives him ‘aching Pleasure’ (l.23); and his responses to ‘the melancholy fit’ (l.11) in the second stanza are not unpleasant: ‘glut thy sorrow on a morning rose, | Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave | Or on the wealth of globed peonies’ (ll.15-17). We will return to Pope and Keats in chapter four.

²⁹⁸ Warton, *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, pp.13-14.

‘darksom pines’ (l.155); and ‘caves by desolation brown’ (l.164) echoes Pope’s ‘breathes a browner horror’ (l.170). In the *Essay on Pope*, Joseph Warton had lauded Pope’s language here especially: ‘The figurative expressions, *throws*, and *breathes*, and *browner* horror, are I verily believe the strongest and boldest in the English language’.²⁹⁹ Joseph Warton echoes this imagery in the ‘Forests brown’ (l.2) in the opening to *The Enthusiast*.³⁰⁰

Thomas Warton uses many words and images from Pope’s passage on ‘Black Melancholy’ throughout his poem:

Beneath yon’ ruin’d Abbey’s moss-grown piles
Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of Eve,
Where thro’ some western window the pale moon
Pours her long-levell’d rule of streaming light;
While sullen sacred silence reigns around
(l.30-34)³⁰¹

This passage is reminiscent of Pope’s scene of ‘death-like silence’ (l.166) where:

These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crown’d,
Where awful arches make a noon-day night,
And the dim windows shed a solemn light
(*Eloisa to Abelard*, ll.142-144)

The connection is made explicit in Warton’s quotation of the compound ‘moss-grown’, and subsequent image of light through a window. The compound ‘moss-grown’ must have made a lasting impression on Thomas Warton, as he had used it previously in ‘moss-grown cottage’ (l.83) in ‘Mycon and Philanthes’ from *Eclogue the Fourth* and again in ‘moss-grown cross’ (l.94) in ‘Corin and Calistan’ from *Eclogue the Fifth*, in *Five Pastoral Eclogues* (1745).³⁰² Joseph Warton had also used the image ‘moss-grown caves’ (l.117) in *The Enthusiast*.³⁰³ I have not come across an example in poetry before Pope of the hyphenated ‘moss-grown’ to create a new compound. This allusion to Pope is made stronger as both of the Wartons then use the compound as an adjective,

²⁹⁹ Warton, *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.318.

³⁰⁰ Warton, *The Enthusiast*, p.5.

³⁰¹ Warton, *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, pp.13-14.

³⁰² Thomas Warton, *Five Pastoral Eclogues: the Scenes of which are Suppos’d to Lie Among the Shepherds, Oppress’d by the War in Germany* (London, 1745), p.25, p.31.

³⁰³ Warton, *The Enthusiast*, p.11.

just as Pope had done. In fact, the coinage definitely seems to be associated with Pope as Thomas Parnell's poem 'To Mr. Pope', which was part of the prefatory material of the first volume of the 1736 *Works*, mentions 'moss-grown trees' (l.81).³⁰⁴ It is clear then that Thomas Warton's quotation of 'moss-grown' is deliberately intended to invoke Pope's melancholy scene. In using this compound, moreover, the Wartons are celebrating Pope's originality.³⁰⁵

Thomas Warton uses other eye-catching phrases from *Eloisa to Abelard*. Both describe being enveloped in 'dread repose': in Pope, Melancholy 'round her throws...a dread repose' (ll.165-166), and in Warton 'horror wraps | My soul in dread repose' (ll.43-44).³⁰⁶ Both use the image of 'intermingled graves' (Pope, l.164; Warton, l.102).³⁰⁷ I have been unable to find either of these phrases in any other poetry before Pope and Warton, which again suggests that in *The Pleasures of Melancholy* Warton is deliberately drawing on the original elements of Pope's poem.

Thomas Warton also uses 'dread repose' (l.50) in a poem on the loss he feels at Joseph visiting abroad. 'ODE VII. Sent to a Friend, on leaving a favourite village in HAMPSHIRE' written in 1750, and published in *Poems of 1777*.³⁰⁸ Thomas is bereft and melancholy, left in 'sad sequester'd glooms' (l.49) where 'dread repose resumes!' (l.50), at the loss of his brother. At the loss of Abelard, Eloisa is 'Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!' (l.38) where melancholy's 'gloomy presence saddens all the scene' (l.167) and casts 'a dread repose' (l.166). In alluding to *Eloisa to Abelard*, Warton is comparing her loss with his. It is not only in Pope's choice of words that Warton is struck by Pope's poem, he is affected by and identifies with the emotion conveyed. Perhaps, also, he is recalling his brother's connection with Pope's poem.

³⁰⁴ Thomas Parnell, 'To Mr. Pope', *The Works of Alexander Pope*, 4 vols. (London, 1736), vol.1, pp.xxv-xxix, p.xxviii.

³⁰⁵ The originality of Pope's phrase must have been known to the extremely well-read Wartons. An example of Thomas Warton's commitment to reading is evident from the fact that in 1753 he single-handedly accounted for one-ninth of the book requests at the Bodleian Library (Deidre Lynch, *Loving Literature: A Cultural History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), p.70).

³⁰⁶ Warton, *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, p.6.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.10.

³⁰⁸ Thomas Warton, 'ODE VII. Sent to a Friend, on leaving a favourite village in HAMPSHIRE', *Poems. A New Edition, with Additions* (London, 1777), pp.48-52, p.50.

Warton also echoes less explicitly imaginative parts of *Eloisa to Abelard*. In using ‘many-sounding organ’ (l.203), for example, Warton is echoing Pope’s novel use of a hyphenated ‘sounding’ used as an adjective in ‘Long-sounding isles’ (l.164).³⁰⁹ The unusual form makes it striking and other-worldly. Similarly, Warton echoes Pope’s construction of ‘low-brow’d rocks’ (l.244) and ‘Black Melancholy’ (l.165) in his image of melancholy as ‘black-brow’d Queen’ (l.19).³¹⁰ Warton twice makes use of Pope’s image of ‘murmur to the hollow wind’ (l.156) in ‘murmurs’ of ‘hoarse and hollow sounds’ (l.12, l.14) and ‘hollow murmurs’ (l.210).³¹¹ Pope’s image, ‘round some mould’ring tow’r pale ivy creeps’ (l.243), might now appear to be rather conventionally and unoriginally Gothic, but I have been unable to find an example of a ‘mouldering tower’ [with any variant spelling] appearing before Pope’s use of it, although many appear after *Eloisa to Abelard*, perhaps indicating its impact.

In some sense, *Eloisa to Abelard* might be viewed as a contributing factor in the taste for the Gothic which developed in the eighteenth century. In *Epistle to Augustus* (1737), Pope had written that a great ‘Poet’ makes the reader ‘feel each Passion’ and ‘With Pity, and with Terror, tear my heart’ (ll.341-345).³¹² The essential elements of poetry described here as heightening the emotional impact are also characteristic of the Gothic, as well as of *Eloisa to Abelard* itself.³¹³ ‘Pity’, of course, is also essential for pathos—that quality that Warton values so highly—which is another feature of Gothic literature.

Pope’s gothic image obviously captured the Wartons’ attention. Joseph Warton, for example, adds a reference ‘to some Abby’s mould’ring tow’rs’ (l.71) in the 1748 ‘Ode to Fancy’

³⁰⁹ Warton, *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, p.16.

³¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.4.

³¹¹ *Ibid*, p.4, p.17.

³¹² The *Epistle to Augustus* is also known as *The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated*: see *Twickenham Edition*, vol.4, pp.189-231.

³¹³ See Aldewereld, *Alexander Pope’s Contribution Towards the Development of the Romantic Movement*, p.141.

that is not present in the first edition of 1746.³¹⁴ Thomas Warton also echoes Pope in the image of ‘mould’ring caverns’ (l.36) and ‘flaunting Ivy’ (l.38) covering ‘some sacred tow’r’ (l.39):

...bow’r is built
Amid the mould’ring caverns dark and damp,
And the calm breeze, that rustles in the leaves
Of flaunting Ivy, that with mantle green
Invests some sacred tow’r.
(ll.35-39)³¹⁵

The references to Pope’s poem throughout *The Pleasures of Melancholy* suggest that Pope’s imagery struck Warton, and that he uses Pope in the composition of his own poetry.

Few know that Elegance of soul refin’d,
Whose soft sensation feels a quicker joy
From Melancholy’s scenes, than the dull pride
Of tasteless splendor and magnificence
Can e’er afford. Thus Eloise, whose mind
Had languish’d to the pangs of melting love,
More secret transport found
(ll.93-99)³¹⁶

In *Eloisa to Abelard*, Pope demonstrates ‘that Elegance of soul refin’d, | Whose soft sensation feels a quicker joy | From Melancholy’s scenes’ (ll.93-95) that Warton praises in his poem. Pope’s ‘soft sensation’ is mirrored in his ‘soft song’ (l.150). Griffin has argued that in this poem Warton rejects the Pope of *The Rape of the Lock* in favour of *Eloisa to Abelard*, which is removed from Pope and given to ‘Spenser-Milton’.³¹⁷ The ‘splendors’ (l.160) of *The Rape of the Lock*, however, are not the ‘tasteless splendor and magnificence’ (l.96) opposed to ‘Eloise’ (l.97). Warton does not think that Pope is ‘tasteless’. In fact, in using the word ‘dull’ (l.95), Warton is aligning himself with Pope against ‘tasteless splendor and magnificence’. As Warton asks in ‘Ode to Taste’, ‘since *Pope* is fled...What Bard shall dare resume | His various-sounding Harp?’ (ll.1-4).³¹⁸ In ‘various-

³¹⁴ Cf. *Odes on Various Subjects* (1746), p.8, and Dodsley’s *Collection of Poems* (1748), vol.3, p.81.

³¹⁵ Warton, *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, pp.5-6.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

³¹⁷ Robert Griffin, ‘The Eighteenth-Century Construction of Romanticism: Thomas Warton and the *Pleasures of Melancholy*’, *ELH* 59.4 (Winter, 1992), pp.799-815, pp.807-809.

³¹⁸ ‘Ode to Taste’, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748), pp.180-183, p.180. David Fairer has proved that Thomas Warton the Younger wrote and contributed ‘Ode to Taste’ to the posthumous collection of poems, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748) ostensibly by Thomas Warton the Elder, edited and added to by Joseph and Thomas (Jr). See Fairer’s three articles on ‘The Poems of Thomas Warton the Elder?’ in *RES* (August, 1975; November, 1975; February,

sounding Harp', Warton again echoes Pope's use of hyphenated 'sounding' as an adjective in *Eloisa to Abelard* (l.164). In 'Ode to Taste', Warton expresses anxiety that, following the death of Pope, a *Dunciad*-like 'Dulness' (l.5) will descend upon Britain as the Goths once descended upon Rome.³¹⁹ Warton's worry that poetry will become a 'ruin'd Temple' (l.21) and a 'Temple...deform'd' (l.46) is reminiscent of the 'usurp[ers]' (l.407) that Pope describes in the *Temple of Fame* 'who their Glory's dire Foundation laid, | On Sovereigns ruin'd' (ll.408-409).³²⁰ Warton's reference to 'Heav'n born Arts | That harmonize the Mind' (ll.38-39) is a nod to Pope's playful assertion in *The Second Epistle of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated* (1737) that 'There is a time when Poets will grow dull' (l.200) and so he will 'learn to smooth and harmonize my Mind' (l.203).³²¹ Warton's reference to the poet who 'taught the moral Song' (l.19) is another echo, this time of Pope's playful assertion in *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, that the poet who completely abandons 'Fancy' (l.340) and so 'moraliz'd his song' (l.341) has a 'Dulness not his own' (l.351).³²² The use of 'raise the Dome | Well-archit' (l.36) and 'beauteous Domes' (l.47) in the penultimate line has shades of Pope's 'moss-grown domes' (l.142) again.³²³ Warton's image of man 'from his native Wilds' (l.33) is reminiscent of Pope's image of 'wilds' (l.132) opposed to 'the false world' (l.131) in *Eloisa to Abelard*. It is worth noting that in the opening of *The Enthusiast*, Joseph Warton also compares the 'Wilds...with Art's vain Pumps' (ll.3-4).

The reason I mention these references to Pope in 'Ode to Taste' is to suggest that Warton does not think Pope's poetry is 'tasteless', and so it is not Pope's other poetry—such as *The Rape of the Lock*—that he is criticising in *The Pleasures of Melancholy* but poetic tastelessness in other writers. The explicit reference in *The Pleasures of Melancholy* to 'Eloise' (l.97) and the 'More

1978). Jane Warton, their sister, also added a poem entitled 'ODE ON THE DEATH of the AUTHOR. By a LADY' to the collection, pp.223-225. Her lines 'He must not lie in his cold Grave...unprais'd, unwept, unsung' (ll.5-6) go against Pope's renowned lines in *Ode on Solitude*, 'unseen, unknown...unlamented let me dye' (ll.17-18).

³¹⁹ *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748), p.180.

³²⁰ *Ibid*, p.181, p.183.

³²¹ Warton, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748), p.182; Pope, 'The Second Epistle of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated', in *Imitations of Horace*, ed. John Butt, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.4, pp.161-187.

³²² *Ibid*, p.181.

³²³ *Ibid* p.182, p.183.

secret transport found' (1.99) there, moreover, suggests that Warton too is transported by *Eloisa to Abelard*.³²⁴

Jane Warton, Joseph's and Thomas' sister, in a review in April 1803 of Richard Mant's recent edition of Thomas' *Works*, wrote of *The Pleasures of Melancholy* that:

...at the time that beautiful poem was first published, an author of elegant taste, well known in the literary world, wrote thus, in a letter to Dr. Warton I have often seen, "What an amazing genius is your young brother, of Trinity College, Oxford; who, only a boy of 16 years, has written a poem, which would not disgrace the latter years of Pope himself".³²⁵

The fact that this letter was 'often' shown suggests the Warton family's pride in the comparison with Pope.

Griffin argues that Thomas Warton's engagement with *Eloisa to Abelard* is in fact a rejection of Pope.³²⁶ I disagree. I think that Warton is sincere in his appreciation of Pope's poem, and uses the parts of it which he finds truly affecting. Griffin states that 'nowhere is the genesis of romanticism better studied than in Warton's poem'.³²⁷ Given Warton's conscious and deliberate references to Pope's poetry, then, we can say in Griffin's terms, that Pope's poetry positively contributed to the genesis of Romanticism.

³²⁴ Warton, *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, pp.9-10.

³²⁵ Jane Warton, 'Review of Mant's Publication of Warton's *Works*', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 73 (April, 1803), pp.329-332, p.331.

³²⁶ Griffin, 'The Eighteenth-Century Construction of Romanticism', *ELH* (1992), p.807.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, p.803.

CHAPTER TWO: ‘the poison of Pope’s Homer’

It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope; but you must not call it Homer
Richard Bentley ³²⁸

Pope’s translations of Homer (*Iliad* 1715-1720, and *Odyssey* 1725-1726) were phenomenally successful, during his lifetime and throughout the eighteenth century. ³²⁹ Their popularity ensured Pope’s financial independence. As he declared, perhaps rather boastfully, in *The Second Epistle of the Second Book of Horace*, ‘But (thanks to *Homer*) since I live and thrive, | Indebted to no Prince or Peer alive’ (ll.68-69). Not only were Pope’s translations a commercial triumph, his *Iliad* has been lauded as one of the most brilliant displays of poetic talent in English literary history. ³³⁰ Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria*, refers to that ‘astonishing product of matchless talent and ingenuity, Pope’s Translation of the *Iliad*’. ³³¹ With similar applause, Johnson was full of praise for ‘that poetical wonder, the translation of the *Iliad*; a performance which no age or nation can pretend to equal’. ³³²

There were, however, those who were critical of Pope’s Homeric translations. Perhaps the best known is William Cowper. An early-twentieth-century editor of Cowper’s letters, for instance, notes that ‘Cowper himself decidedly disapproved’ of Pope’s Homer. ³³³ There is ample evidence of such disapproval in Cowper’s letters. In a letter to Clotworthy Rowley, dated 21 February 1788, Cowper writes, having ‘compared Pope with his original all the way’, of his ‘discovery, that there is

³²⁸ *The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.: Together with his Life, and Notes on his Lives of the Poets*, ed. John Hawkins, 11 vols. (London, 1787), vol.4, p.126.

³²⁹ All quotations of Pope’s Homeric translations are from: *The Iliad*, ed. Maynard Mack, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vols.7-8; and *The Odyssey*, ed. Maynard Mack, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vols.9-10.

³³⁰ During the eighteenth century people generally preferred Pope’s *Iliad* to his *Odyssey*. I refer principally to the *Iliad* throughout this chapter.

³³¹ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, p.18.

³³² Johnson, ‘Life of Pope’, *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, pp.72-73.

³³³ James George Frazer, ed., ‘Introduction’, *Letters of William Cowper*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1912), vol.1, p.lxx.

hardly the thing in the world of which Pope was so entirely destitute, as a taste for Homer'.³³⁴ Instead of 'simplicity and majesty', Cowper found 'Homer in his English representative' full of 'puerile conceits, extravagant metaphors, and the tinsel of modern embellishment in every possible position'.³³⁵ In fact, he was so disgusted that he recalls being 'often...on the point of burning Pope'.³³⁶ This letter was written at a time when Cowper was working on his own translations, and so, in John Barnard's words, 'had cause to recall his poor opinion of Pope's work'.³³⁷

It has frequently been argued that Cowper's distaste for Pope's version prompted him to undertake his own Homeric translations (which were published in 1791).³³⁸ At times, Cowper is scathing of Pope: 'Pope resembles Homer just as Homer resembled himself when he was dead'.³³⁹ In the same article, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in August 1785, Cowper announced his own plans to translate Homer. According to Cowper, Pope's translation of Homer degrades the reputation of Homer for many English readers, so much so that this impelled him to undertake his own translation in order to rescue Homer from the 'disappointment' he thought readers might feel at Pope's translation.³⁴⁰ 'For my own part', Cowper continued, 'I have ever been among the warmest admirers of the Grecian, whose works, in my mind, in point of variety and sublimity of conception, and dignity of expression, remain to this day unrivalled'.³⁴¹ He is therefore 'piqued' by an 'acquaintance' of his, who 'was sufficiently aware of the estimation in which the original has always and universally been held among the learned', that having 'amused herself with Pope's translation', she 'gave...a broad hint of her suspicions that prejudice had operated not a little in favour' of Homer.³⁴² Cowper's horror at what he saw as the diminishment of Homer's reputation

³³⁴ Cowper, *Letters and Prose of Cowper*, vol.3, p.110.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, vol.3, p.111.

³³⁶ *Ibid*, vol.3, p.111.

³³⁷ Barnard, ed., *Pope: The Critical Heritage*, p.367.

³³⁸ In the recent *Encyclopedia of British Literature 1660-1789*, Gary Day and Jack Lynch comment that 'Later readers were to react against Pope's translation, and Cowper's was an 'attempt to recast Homer' (vol.1, p.902). William Cowper, trans., *The Iliad and Odyssey of Homer*, 2 vols. (London, 1791).

³³⁹ Cowper, *Letters and Prose of Cowper*, vol.5, p.58.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid*, vol.5, p.51.

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, vol.5, p.51.

³⁴² *Ibid*, vol.5, p.51.

resulting from Pope's translation was one reason why 'with more confidence, [he] addressed [him]self to the task of [Homer's] vindication'.³⁴³

Even though it was partly dislike of Pope's version of Homer that prompted Cowper to produce his own translation of the *Iliad*, Cowper also commented that he did not dislike Pope's poetry as a whole. Cowper was willing to concede that 'To Pope, as a poet, I give praise, and grudge not. In his original works I find every species of poetical merit'.³⁴⁴ Cowper can even acknowledge that Pope's translations do have 'merit':

[I] NUMBER myself among the warmest admirers of Mr. Pope as an original writer, and I allow him all the merit he can justly claim as the translator of this chief of poets.³⁴⁵

Cowper will allow Pope 'all the merit he can justly claim' given Pope's chosen mode of translation.³⁴⁶ His problem with Pope's translation is the use of rhyme, which Cowper thinks is utterly inconsistent with Homer's style. So insistent is he on differentiating his translation from Pope's that he titles his own version *The Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, Translated into English Blank Verse*.³⁴⁷ In choosing blank verse, Cowper is also distinguishing himself from those who chose prose as the form in which to translate Homer. James Macpherson's prose translation of the *Iliad* was published in 1773.³⁴⁸ Macpherson's translation received mixed reviews, and did not usurp Pope's as the most popular translation in the British Isles. One ambivalent reviewer wrote that 'Its effect, we believe, will not be great: it will neither increase the admirers of Homer, nor diminish those of Pope'.³⁴⁹

Cowper sees his own translation as an entirely different enterprise from that of Pope:

³⁴³ Ibid, vol.5, p.51.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, vol.5, p.51.

³⁴⁵ Cowper, *Translations of Homer* (1791), vol.1, p.vi.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, vol.1, p.vi.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, vol.1, p.i.

³⁴⁸ James Macpherson, trans., *The Iliad of Homer*, 2 vols. (London, 1773).

³⁴⁹ Anonymous, 'Review of Macpherson's *Iliad*', *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature* 35.3, ed. Tobias Smollett (March, 1773), pp.161-176, p.176.

I HAVE no contest with my predecessor. None is supposable between performers on different instruments. Mr. Pope has surmounted all difficulties in his version of HOMER that was possible to surmount in rhyme.³⁵⁰

Cowper compliments Pope that in his ‘mode of writing’ he ‘had excelled every body’, but is slightly less polite about Pope’s choice of a rhyming form for Homeric translation.³⁵¹ For Cowper, because Pope was ‘Accustomed always to rhyme, he had formed to himself an ear which probably could not be much gratified by verse that wanted it’.³⁵² So much so that Pope was ‘determined to encounter even impossibilities, rather than abandon a mode of writing in which he had excelled every body’, regardless of how suitable or otherwise it was for the task.³⁵³ This makes an amusing contrast with Johnson’s assessment of Milton, that ‘finding blank verse easier than rhyme, [Milton] was desirous of persuading himself that it is better’.³⁵⁴

Ultimately, for Cowper, Pope ‘was fettered, and his fetters were his choice’.³⁵⁵ In using the word ‘fettters’, Cowper is setting up Miltonic blank verse as a rival model. The word ‘fettters’ to consider rhyme is reminiscent of Milton in the prefatory material to *Paradise Lost*, where he describes ‘the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming’.³⁵⁶ Cowper echoes Milton’s language in the preface to align himself with Milton—definitely one of the first rank of English poets in the Wartonian typology of the English canon, and for Cowper, as for many others, the pinnacle of English epic. Cowper had intended to publish an edition of *Paradise Lost*, along with his own commentary; he considered the poem to be one of the finest in the language.³⁵⁷ In a letter to William Unwin, dated 31 October 1779, Cowper called Milton ‘that great Poet’, and asked ‘Was

³⁵⁰ Cowper, *Translations of Homer*, vol.1, pp.v-vi.

³⁵¹ Ibid, vol.1, p.vi.

³⁵² Ibid vol.1, p.vi.

³⁵³ Ibid, vol.1, p.vi.

³⁵⁴ Johnson, ‘Life of Milton’, *Lives of the Poets*, vol.1, p.294.

³⁵⁵ Cowper, *Translations of Homer*, vol.1, p.vi.

³⁵⁶ John Milton, note on ‘THE VERSE’, added in 1668, to the 4th issue of 1st ed., *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, rev 2nd ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2007), p.55.

³⁵⁷ See William Hayley, ed., *Latin and Italian Poems of Milton: Translated into English Verse, and a Fragment of a Commentary on Paradise Lost, by the Late William Cowper, Esqr. With a Preface by the Editor, and Notes of Various Authors* (Chichester, 1808).

there ever any thing so delightfull [*sic*] as the Music of the Paradise Lost?'.³⁵⁸ For Cowper, *Paradise Lost* 'has the fullest & deepest tones of Majesty', while also exhibiting 'Softness & Elegance'.³⁵⁹ It is so brilliant, that it was 'never equal'd unless perhaps by Virgil'.³⁶⁰ Milton had condemned the modern vogue for rhyme, which he considered to be constricting and limiting. Milton defended the choice of blank verse form for his original compositions on the ground that it best reflected Homer's natural idiom in the Greek language; 'The measure is English heroic verse without rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek'.³⁶¹

Milton described rhyme 'as a thing of it self, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another'.³⁶² The 'jingling sound of like endings' was 'a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory'.³⁶³ Milton also defends his use of blank verse, rather than rhyme, in *Paradise Lost* because it is 'the first [epic] in English' which embodies 'ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem'.³⁶⁴ 'This neglect then of rhyme', according to Milton, 'so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set'.³⁶⁵ Cowper is one among many who does take it as an 'example set'.

Cowper is not the first to translate Homer into blank verse after the 'example set' by Milton. John Ozell, an adversary of Pope, had translated *The Iliad of Homer, with Notes* into blank verse in 1712.³⁶⁶ In his preface, Ozell had written of his choice of form:

³⁵⁸ Cowper, *Letters and Prose of Cowper*, vol.1, p.307.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.307.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.307.

³⁶¹ Milton, note on 'THE VERSE' (1668), *Paradise Lost* (2007), p.54.

³⁶² *Ibid*, p.55.

³⁶³ *Ibid*, p.55.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.55.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.55.

³⁶⁶ John Ozell, trans., *The Iliad of Homer, with Notes. To which are Prefix'd, a Large Preface, and The Life of Homer, by Madam Dacier. Done from the French by Mr. Ozell; To which will be made some Farther Notes, by Mr. Johnson, Illustrated with 26 Cuts, Design'd by Coypel*, 5 vols. (London, 1712).

I doubt whether an English Translation of Homer, any otherwise than in Verse, can be made so as to please an English Reader. By Verse I do not mean Rhyme; for I always thought That too Effeminate to express the Masculine Spirit of Homer. The affected Finery of Rhyme can never sute with that divine Simplicity, which is the peculiar Character of this Poet, who, if he had been an English-man, and liv'd in our Days, wou'd most certainly have chosen the same Sort of Verse, which our English Homer, Milton, did.³⁶⁷

Two particular aspects of Milton's exegesis in his note on verse in *Paradise Lost* were frequently used against admirers of Pope in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The first is that rhyme creates a 'jingling sound'. George Colman, with whom Cowper formed the Nonsense Club, wrote to Cowper on 2 May 1786; Cowper subsequently transcribed Colman's words in a letter to Lady Hesketh of 8 May 1786. Colman wrote to 'deliver [his] sentiments on the Specimen of [Cowper's] Translation', and declared 'that I think Blank Verse infinitely more congenial to the magnificent simplicity of Homer' than 'the jingle of Rhyme'.³⁶⁸ Similarly, Edmund Cartwright, in 'Review of Cowper, *Poems*' in the *Monthly Review* of October 1782, praises Cowper as being unlike common 'pack-horse' rhymesters who 'go jingling along in uninterrupted unison with each other'.³⁶⁹ The second motif is that only 'vulgar readers' would think rhyme suitable for Homeric poetry. Johnson wrote of Pope's *Iliad* that it 'took possession of the publick ear' and 'the vulgar was enamoured of the poem'.³⁷⁰ In his manifesto on this subject, as embodied in *Paradise Lost*, Milton sets the tone for literary criticism which sees blank verse as recovering 'liberty' to heroic poetry.³⁷¹ There are notable exceptions, like Johnson, who considered that rhyme was necessary to English heroic poetry: 'The musick of the English heroick line strikes the ear so faintly that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together; this co-operation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another as a distinct system of sounds,

³⁶⁷ Ibid, [pp.iv-v]. In suggesting that he chose the form he used to translate Homer because that form is what Homer himself would use if he were writing contemporaneously, Ozell's thinking is in line with Dryden's ideas of translation (see *Sylvæ, or, The Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (London, 1685), [p.iii]). I will return to Dryden's ideas of translation later in the chapter.

³⁶⁸ George Colman in a letter to William Cowper, 2 May 1786, transcribed by Cowper in a letter to Lady Hesketh, 8 May 1786: Cowper, *Letters and Prose of Cowper*, vol.2, p.536.

³⁶⁹ Cartwright, 'Review of Cowper, *Poems*', *The Monthly Review; Or, Literary Journal* 67 (October, 1782), pp.262-265, p.262. Cartwright's review is of Cowper's *Poems* (London, 1782).

³⁷⁰ Johnson, 'Life of Pope', *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.73.

³⁷¹ Milton, note on 'THE VERSE' (1668), *Paradise Lost* (2007), p.55.

and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme'.³⁷² Johnson quotes an 'ingenious critick' who scoffs that "'Blank verse...seems to be verse only to the eye"'.³⁷³ Still, 'whatever be the advantage of rhyme', Johnson 'cannot prevail on [him]self to wish that Milton had been a rhymer, for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is'.³⁷⁴ Johnson considered that Milton was a hero, but that veneration for him had gone too far. '[L]ike other heroes', Johnson warns, Milton 'is to be admired rather than imitated'; only a person who 'thinks himself capable of [producing something] astonishing may write blank verse'.³⁷⁵ Johnson's words on Milton, that he should 'be admired rather than imitated', might also hold true for Pope, as we shall see in this chapter.

Why was Cowper so keen to distinguish his translation from Pope's on the ground that his own version was in blank verse?³⁷⁶ As well as wishing to differentiate his edition in the marketplace, he was perhaps also eager to align himself with Milton and against Johnson. Cowper's translations were published in the same year as Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791); and there had been a long and 'well-orchestrated campaign in the press' promoting Boswell's work.³⁷⁷ Boswell supports Johnson's views on Milton, blank verse, and English poetry expressed in Johnson's 'Life of Milton', and adds that the 'ingenious critick' Johnson had quoted is a person 'whose knowledge and taste in the fine arts is universally celebrated'.³⁷⁸ Although Cowper's keenness to distinguish his translation from Pope's does not necessarily imply an acrimonious attitude, it is an attempt to stress that classical translations ought to be in blank verse. Throughout the preface, Cowper is at

³⁷² Johnson, 'Life of Milton', *Lives of the Poets*, vol.1, p.294.

³⁷³ Ibid, vol.1, p.294.

³⁷⁴ Ibid, vol.1, p.294.

³⁷⁵ Ibid, vol.1, p.294. For more on Johnson and Milton, see Christine Rees, *Johnson's Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³⁷⁶ Cowper is keen to stress that his edition of Homer's *Iliad* is 'Translated into English Blank Verse'. This is written on the title pages of both volumes. Also, it appears on the introductory page of the *Iliad* in volume one, the introductory page of the *Odyssey* in volume two, and the introductory page for *The Battle of the Frogs and Mice* in volume two.

³⁷⁷ Pat Rogers, 'Introduction', *James Boswell: Life of Johnson*, rev. ed. J. D. Fleeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.xix.

³⁷⁸ Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), vol.2, p.349. NB. The 'ingenious critick' is William Lock[e] (1732-1810), an art connoisseur and patron, who bought Norbury Park in 1774 (*DNB*).

pains to suggest that blank verse is the correct form for epic poetry, and he uses Milton and Homer as the authorities for this. Cowper ‘cannot but add an observation on the similitude of [Milton’s] manner to that of Homer’; so strong is this similitude ‘that no person, familiar with both, can read either without being reminded of the other’.³⁷⁹ Cowper continues that Milton ‘chiefly copies the Grecian’ in the ‘breaks and pauses’, and it is these ‘to which the numbers of the English poet are so much indebted both for their dignity and variety’.³⁸⁰ For Cowper, ‘breaks and pauses’ ‘are graces to which rhyme is not competent’.³⁸¹ Cowper is here defending Milton directly against Johnson’s charge that ‘The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few skilful and happy readers of Milton who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin’.³⁸² Cowper is at pains to counter Johnson’s insistence that rhyme is the proper English heroic mode; Cowper’s criticism of Pope’s poem is in part a by-product of this separate, but related, discussion. In fact, in describing Milton as reminiscent of Homer, Cowper is reasserting a connection already made by Pope. In his preface to the *Iliad*, Pope writes ‘*Milton* above all the Moderns’ is most comparable with the ‘Poetical Character’ of Homer.³⁸³ And indeed in the postscript to the *Odyssey*, Pope remarked that he had had ‘Some use...of the style of *Milton*’ in his translation.³⁸⁴

Moreover, while Cowper is keen to stress the rightness of blank verse as a vehicle for Homeric epic, this does not mean that he dismisses Pope’s poetry entirely. As Cowper makes clear, there is a distinction between Pope as a poet and Pope as a translator. Pope the poet of original compositions can be admired and revered, even as Pope the translator is condemned:

THERE is indisputably a wide difference between the case of an original writer in rhyme and a translator.³⁸⁵

³⁷⁹ Cowper, *Translations of Homer*, vol.1, p.xi.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.xi.

³⁸¹ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.xi.

³⁸² Johnson, ‘Life of Milton’, *Lives of the Poets*, vol.1, p.294.

³⁸³ Pope, ‘Preface to the *Iliad*’, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.23, p.22.

³⁸⁴ Pope, ‘Postscript to the *Odyssey*’, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.10, p.390.

³⁸⁵ Cowper, *Translations of Homer*, vol.1, p.vii.

A number of critics have examined the ways in which the theory and practice of translation underwent radical change during the long eighteenth century.³⁸⁶ Generally, the aim of translators in the first half of the long eighteenth century was not simply to adapt the original to the target language, but also to meet then-prevailing expectations of stylistic form and aesthetic appeal. In his 1684 *Essay on Translated Verse*, the Earl of Roscommon had advocated that English translators convert classical texts into English idiom: ‘The choicest Books, that *Rome*, or *Greece* have known, | Her excellent *Translators* made [England’s] own’.³⁸⁷ Dryden referred to Roscommon’s *Essay* and discussed whether he was himself ‘capable of following [Roscommon’s] Rules’ a year later, in his preface to *Sylvæ* (1685), a miscellany of classical translations by a number of authors.³⁸⁸ In this preface, Dryden explained his style of translation; he had ‘both added and omitted’ material, and ‘even sometimes very boldly made such expositions of my Authors’ that no ‘false Criticks’ ‘will forgive’ him.³⁸⁹ He had done this because, for Dryden, poetry outweighs literal accuracy: ‘in such particular passages, I have thought that I discover’d some beauty yet undiscover’d by those Pedants, which none but a Poet cou’d have found’.³⁹⁰ Dryden also explains that because Greek and Latin and English are different languages they cannot convey beauty identically; ‘what was beautiful in the Greek or Latin, wou’d not appear so shining in the English’.³⁹¹ In considering the original poet and himself, Dryden thought it imperative that the spirit of the two writers be in harmony: ‘my own is of a piece with his’.³⁹² A sense of converting what the original author meant

³⁸⁶ For more on this see Stuart Gillespie, *English Translation and Classical Reception: Towards a New Literary History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), especially ‘Classical Translation and the Formation of the English Literary Canon’, pp.93-103; David Hopkins and Charles Martindale, eds., *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature. Volume 3: 1660-1790* (2012), especially ‘Homer’, pp.165-196; and Norman Vance and Jennifer Wallace, ed., *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature. Volume 4, 1790-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), especially ‘Classical Authors, 1790-1880’, pp.29-56.

³⁸⁷ Earl of Roscommon, *An Essay on Translated Verse* (London, 1684), p.3.

³⁸⁸ Dryden, *Sylvæ, or, The Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (London, 1685), [p.ii].

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, [pp.ii-iii].

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, [pp.ii-iii].

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, [p.iii]. Dryden approved of ‘shining’ beauty as Pope did subsequently. See previous chapter for discussion of Warton’s dislike of ‘shining’ poetry.

³⁹² Dryden, *Sylvæ*, (1685), [p.iii].

to make it ‘charming’ to modern readers justifies a freedom with exact ‘Expressions’.³⁹³ Instead, the expressions should be those that if the original poet ‘were living, and an Englishman, they are such, as he wou’d probably have written’.³⁹⁴ For Dryden the most important thing is ‘the Spirit which animates the whole’ work.³⁹⁵ The French referred to this kind of translation as *Les Belles Infidèles*—the unfaithful beauties.³⁹⁶

Pope approved of Dryden’s ‘Version’ of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, describing it, in his preface to Homer, as ‘the most noble and spirited Translation I know in any Language.’³⁹⁷ Johnson defends Pope’s translation using the same reasoning with which Dryden had defended his own. For Johnson, ‘the purpose of a writer is to be read’.³⁹⁸ In order to find a reception among contemporary readers, English idioms must be adopted: ‘Pope wrote for his own age and his own nation: he knew that it was necessary to colour the images and point the sentiments of his author’.³⁹⁹ When translating, one must not forget ‘the change which two thousand years have made in the modes of life and the habits of thought’.⁴⁰⁰ For all Johnson’s understanding here, however, he adroitly conceded that it ‘cannot be totally denied’ that ‘Pope’s version of Homer is not Homerial’.⁴⁰¹

³⁹³ Ibid, [p.iii].

³⁹⁴ Ibid, [p.iii].

³⁹⁵ Ibid, [p.iv].

³⁹⁶ Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, eds., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), p.406.

³⁹⁷ Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.22.

³⁹⁸ Johnson, ‘Life of Pope’, *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.74.

³⁹⁹ Ibid, vol.4, p.74.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, vol.4, p.74.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, vol.4, p.73.

his Homer is not Homer, but Pope

The approval of poetic freedom within translation lessened as the eighteenth century progressed, and a more literal notion of translation became fashionable.⁴⁰² Cowper discussed different theories of translation in the preface to his Homeric translations, and admitted that ‘discordant opinions prevail even among good judges’ on the subject of the correct method of translation; whether ‘Fidelity is indeed...the very essence of translation’ or if, contrariwise, translators ought to have a freedom within their translation to infuse it with their own spirit.⁴⁰³ ‘THE free and the close translation have, each, their advocates’.⁴⁰⁴ Cowper acknowledges that there are limitations to both approaches: the ‘free’ translation ‘can hardly be true to the original author’s style and manner’, while the ‘close’ translation ‘is apt to be servile’.⁴⁰⁵ Both lose something of the original poet, since ‘one loses his peculiarities, and the other his spirit’.⁴⁰⁶

Cowper is here commenting on what Maria Filippakopoulou has dubbed ‘the double bind inherent in translation’, which is ‘often formulated in expressions along the lines “translation is service, poetry is autonomy”’.⁴⁰⁷ Pope himself makes a distinction between the translator who is apt to be ‘servile’ and the translator who transmits ‘the Spirit of the Original’.⁴⁰⁸ Pope, like Dryden, prioritised ‘the Poetical Style of the Translation’, and claimed that it ‘is not to be doubted that the *Fire* of the Poem is what a Translator should principally regard’.⁴⁰⁹ For Pope, translators were ‘misled in former times by a servile dull Adherence to the Letter’.⁴¹⁰ Pope proposes that he is being true to the spirit of Homer by rendering him in the way that he himself conceives Homer’s

⁴⁰² See Frederick Burwick, ‘Romantic Theories of Translation’, *The Wordsworth Circle* 39.3 (Summer, 2008), pp.68-75.

⁴⁰³ Cowper, *Translations of Homer*, vol.1, p.vii.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.viii.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.viii.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.viii.

⁴⁰⁷ Maria Filippakopoulou, ‘Readings in Romantic Translation’, *Translation & Literature* 20.1 (March, 2011), pp.1-5, p.4.

⁴⁰⁸ Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.17.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, vol.7, p.17.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.7, p.17.

poetic vision, and by embracing inventiveness, as ‘HOMER is universally allow’d to have had the greatest Invention of any Writer whatever’.⁴¹¹ Indeed, Pope comments in his own footnotes to his *Iliad* that ‘Imitation does not hinder Invention’.⁴¹² In this way, Pope’s translations subscribe to John Denham’s idea of translation in his preface to *The Destruction of Troy* (1656), where he writes of the translator that ‘it is not his business alone to translate Language into Language, but Poesie into Poesie’.⁴¹³ ‘Poesie is of so subtle a spirit’, Denham continues, ‘that, in pouring out of one Language into another, it will all evaporate; and if a new spirit be not added in the transfusion, there will remain nothing but a *Caput mortuum*’.⁴¹⁴ Denham prefigures Dryden in suggesting that translation must be adapted to the beauties of a particular language as there are ‘certain Graces and Happinesses peculiar to every Language, which gives life and energy to the words’.⁴¹⁵ This is in keeping with Horace’s famous recommendation in *Ars Poetica*; ‘*Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus Interpres*’, that is do not strive to render word for word like a faithful translator. In fretting about translators being ‘servile’, both Pope and Cowper are pondering the same question Dryden had done: are translators, as he worried in his dedication to the *Aeneid* (1697), merely ‘Slaves’?⁴¹⁶

When discussing Pope’s *Iliad*, many Romantic authors stressed their admiration for his original poetry. To some extent, however, this stress on his original pieces serves as a way of disparaging his translation. One of the principal reproaches against Pope’s translation is that it is too Popean and not Homeric enough. This criticism is reflected in one of the earliest appraisals of the poem, attributed to Richard Bentley: ‘It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope; but you must not call it Homer’.⁴¹⁷ Cowper ‘do[es] not deny that [Pope’s] flowers are beautiful’, but they are ‘of English

⁴¹¹ Ibid, vol.7, p.3.

⁴¹² Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.83.

⁴¹³ John Denham, preface to *The Destruction of Troy, an Essay upon the Second Book of Virgil’s Aeneis. Written in the Year, 1636* (London, 1656), p.ii.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, pp.ii-iii.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, pp.ii-iii.

⁴¹⁶ *Works of John Dryden*, gen. eds. A. B. Chambers and William Frost, 20 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956-2000), vol.5, p.334. For more on how Dryden revalued the traditional abusive figuration of the translator as a slave, see Paul Davis, ‘Dryden and the Bounds of Liberty’, *Translation and the Poet’s Life: The Ethics of Translating in English Culture, 1646-1726* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.128-233.

⁴¹⁷ *The Works of Samuel Johnson* (1787), vol.4, p.126.

growth', and 'have no more of the air of antiquity than if he had himself invented them'.⁴¹⁸ For Cowper, 'Pope is no where more figurative in his own pieces, than in his translation of Homer'.⁴¹⁹

The complaint that Pope's translations are, as it were, too original is reiterated by Wordsworth in his comment that 'As far as Pope goes, he succeeds; but his Homer is not Homer, but Pope'.⁴²⁰ Byron turns this common complaint against Pope's *Iliad* around on to Cowper; 'Cowper's is not Homer either, it is not even Cowper', suggesting that Cowper has failed to produce a poem matching his usual high standards.⁴²¹ Wordsworth felt the same way about Pope's translations of Chaucer as he had about his translations of Homer. He wrote to Henry Crabb Robinson, on 23 January 1840, 'My love and reverence for Chaucer are unbounded...Dryden and Pope have treated these originals admirably in a manner of their own, which tho' good in itself is not Chaucers [*sic*]'.⁴²² Wordsworth himself had found translation challenging. A portion of his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* (bk.1, ll.657 to the end) was published in 1832 in the *Philological Museum*. The translation was prefaced by a letter in which Wordsworth acknowledged that 'Having been displeased in modern translations with the additions of incongruous matter, I began to translate with a resolve to keep clear of that fault, by adding nothing'.⁴²³ Despite these principles, during the actual process of translating, he 'became convinced that a spirited translation can scarcely be accomplished in the English language without admitting a principle of compensation'.⁴²⁴ One must compensate for fidelity with poetry.

⁴¹⁸ Cowper, *Letters and Prose of Cowper*, vol.5, p.54.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, vol.5, p.54.

⁴²⁰ Wordsworth, *The Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth*, ed. Markham L. Peacock (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1950), p.323. We will return to Wordsworth's poetic response to Pope's *Iliad* in the next chapter.

⁴²¹ Byron, *Letter to **** * [John Murray]*, p.42.

⁴²² Wordsworth to Henry Crabb Robinson, 23 January 1840: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.7, p.11.

⁴²³ Wordsworth, 'Notes to Appendix A', *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940-1949), vol.4, p.470.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid*, vol.4, p.470.

*Pope's extensive genius shone,
And made immortal Homer all our own*

Matthew Prior's poem 'Down-Hall: A Ballad' (1725) caricatures a contemporary attitude that translations into English are preferable to the originals:

Hang HOMER and VIRGIL, their Meaning to seek,
A Man must go poke in the LATIN and GREEK;
They who love their own Tongue, we have reason to hope,
Have read them translated by DRYDEN and POPE.
(ll.10-13)⁴²⁵

Prior is being playful here, his deliberate doggerel suggesting, rather snobbishly, that only those who have a lower-grade appreciation of poetry might think like this. While Prior's tone is light, there were others later in the century for whom the vulgarising, as they saw it, of classical literature was a serious concern. Again, we might think here of Milton's worry about 'vulgar readers'.⁴²⁶ For some, the idea that Pope's English poem might be preferred to Homer's original was concerning, because the original author, rather than the translator, should shine. In Thomas Francklin's *Translation: A Poem* (1753), Pope's originality is seen to be at work through Homer rather than the other way around.⁴²⁷ Even worse, for those who disapproved of such treatments, it is exactly this, Pope's own 'extensive genius', that allows Homer to be 'made immortal':

Such as in Pope's extensive genius shone,
And made immortal Homer all our own.
(ll.161-162)⁴²⁸

Similarly, Robert Wood contends in *An Essay on the Original Genius of Homer* (1769) that in English it is Pope's translation 'to which the Iliad and Odyssey have the greatest obligations', and, moreover that 'it is in English alone that he [Homer] continues to be a Poet'.⁴²⁹ Whilst this is in full praise of Pope's poetical abilities, it is also an opaque criticism of Anne Dacier's French

⁴²⁵ *The Literary Works of Matthew Prior*, eds. Harold Bunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), vol.1, p.551.

⁴²⁶ Milton, note on 'THE VERSE' (1668), *Paradise Lost* (2007), p.55.

⁴²⁷ Francklin, *Translation: A Poem* (London, 1753).

⁴²⁸ *Ibid*, p.11.

⁴²⁹ Robert Wood, *An Essay on the Original Genius of Homer* (London, 1769), p.xxii.

translations in prose.⁴³⁰ Pope's 'very poetical translation' is for Wood 'so great an ornament of our country', and 'it must be acknowledged that Mr. Pope is the only translator who has, in a certain degree, kept alive that divine spirit of the Poet, which has almost expired in other hands'.⁴³¹ Wood even goes so far as to suggest that Pope has made 'improvements of the original'.⁴³²

Edward Young, on the other hand, writing only a few years after Francklin, in *Conjectures on Original Composition*, is uncompromising in his conception of originality and translation, and his rejection of Pope's translation as a superior poem. For Young, a translation, however faultless, inherently cannot be original: even 'supposing Pope's *Iliad* to have been perfect in its kind; yet it is a *Translation* still; which differs as much from an *Original*, as the moon from the sun'.⁴³³ The sun illuminates and shines its own light, the moon can only reflect the sun's light and splendour.

In a letter to Walter Scott, dated 18 January 1808, prior to his own attempts to translate Virgil, Wordsworth had warned of 'the poison of Pope's Homer', which he feared 'will require yet half a century completely to carry off'.⁴³⁴ In the same letter, Wordsworth qualifies his censure by stating, 'I have a very high admiration of...Pope, and ultimately, as from all good writers of whatever kind, [his] Country will be benefited greatly by [his] labours'.⁴³⁵ 'But thus far' Wordsworth considered Pope's 'writings [to] have done more harm than good'.⁴³⁶ Robert Southey goes so far as to pronounce that 'Pope's Homer has done more than any, or all other books, towards the corruption of our poetry'.⁴³⁷ The 'poison' is that Pope's own genius shines through his translation as though it were an original poem. By making 'Homer all our own' through converting the *Iliad* into such a distinctive style, Pope had, arguably, brought Homer to his many readers more in his own image than that of Homer himself. According to Peter France, 'most readers, whether or

⁴³⁰ Anne Dacier, *L'Iliade d'Homere: Traduite en François, avec des Remarques* (Paris, 1699); and *L'Odyssée d'Homere: Traduite en François, avec des Remarques* (Paris, 1708).

⁴³¹ Wood, *Essay on the Original Genius of Homer*, p.xxiii.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p.xxiii.

⁴³³ Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*, p.60.

⁴³⁴ Wordsworth to Scott, 18 January 1808: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.2, p.191.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.2, p.191.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol.2, p.191.

⁴³⁷ Southey to Caroline Bowles, 26 March 1831: *The Correspondence of Robert Southey with Caroline Bowles*, ed. Edward Dowden (Dublin, 1881), p.224.

not they knew classical languages, were enthralled by the sheer poetic force of Pope's writing'.⁴³⁸ Francklin's and Southey's use of 'all', albeit in different senses, implies, in each case, how far Pope's reach extends. The legacy of Pope's Homeric translations was profound. As France notes, Pope's *Iliad* 'set the standard for verse translations of classical poetry. And the subscription lists indicate that his audience crossed class and party lines, including aristocrats and bourgeois, landowners and lawyers, scholars and merchants, Tories and Whigs'.⁴³⁹

This ubiquity was a problem for some authors at the turn of the nineteenth century when considering the place of Pope's translation, and its effect on poetry of the middle- to late-eighteenth century. Coleridge, in 1817, declared of his contemporaries that there were 'very many who had formed their taste, and their notions of poetry, from the writings of Mr. Pope and his followers...which had predominated from the last century'.⁴⁴⁰ Coleridge 'was not blind to the merits of this school', but he did not value the form in which Pope wrote.⁴⁴¹ Even in the *Iliad*, which displayed 'matchless talent and ingenuity', 'still a *point* was looked for at the end of each second line, and the whole was as it were a sorites [a heap or pile]...of epigrams'.⁴⁴² Coleridge's concern is for the effect that rhyming couplets have on what can be thought or expressed given the limitations of the form. For Coleridge, the couplet form can mean that each pair of lines is too self-contained, and bear little relation to each other, meaning that the whole poem becomes too *staccato* and fragmented. Unlike blank verse, rhyming couplets, for Coleridge, drive us towards looking for the '*point*', the break, the local conclusion. Heroic couplets deal in small units, whereas blank verse is more expansive, and can therefore encompass grander prospects, more befitting to epic and narrative.⁴⁴³

⁴³⁸ Peter France, ed., *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.57.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, pp.57-58.

⁴⁴⁰ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, pp.18-19.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.18.

⁴⁴² *Ibid*, vol.1, pp.18-19.

⁴⁴³ For more on heroic couplets and blank verse in the period see Bradford, 'Rhyming Couplets and Blank Verse', *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, pp.341-355.

Coleridge has further concerns about the influence that Pope's poetry has had over literary culture: 'now, partly by the labours of successive poets, and in part by the more artificial state of society and social intercourse, language, mechanized as it were into a barrel-organ, supplies at once both instrument and tune'.⁴⁴⁴ So common is the 'mechanized...tune' of poetry churned out by 'successive poets' that even those who have no talent can turn out a few rhymes to the applause of others; 'Thus even the deaf may play, so as to delight the many'.⁴⁴⁵ Coleridge objects to the way in which successive poets have copied Pope's style even though they have no talent for it. Pope's legacy is to have left a form of literature which subsequent poets feel the need to reproduce repeatedly, like 'larger and smaller stereotype pieces'.⁴⁴⁶ Also evident here is Coleridge's anxiety, in which he was not alone, about literature and the mass market.⁴⁴⁷ The endless imitation of Pope's style in effect meant that poetry had reached an *impasse*; it had deteriorated into a sophisticated game, which permitted only a repetition and infinite variation of stereotyped forms, and discouraged originality and creativity.⁴⁴⁸

Southey has a similar complaint to Coleridge. 'He so familiarised his countrymen with the mechanism of verse', Southey declares of Pope in *Specimens of the Later English Poets* (1807), 'that the very facility of his versification seems to have prevented the effusions of genius, and the redundancy of poetical phrases to have superseded all originality of language'.⁴⁴⁹ For Southey, Pope's legacy is oppressive, and suppresses other forms of 'genius' from emerging. Even so, seven years later, in his article for the *Quarterly Review*, Southey is happy to acknowledge that 'Of Pope's Homer we are, as Englishmen, proud to acknowledge the great and general merits'.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁴ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, pp.38-39.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.39.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.39.

⁴⁴⁷ For more on this see Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁴⁸ Amarasinghe, *Dryden and Pope in the Early Nineteenth Century*, p.150.

⁴⁴⁹ Robert Southey, *Specimens of the Later English Poets: With Preliminary Notices*, 3 vols. (London, 1807), vol.1, p.xxx.

⁴⁵⁰ Southey, 'Review of *The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper; including the Series Edited, with Prefaces Biographical and Critical, by Dr Samuel Johnson; and the Most Approved Translations*', *The Quarterly Review* 12.23 (October, 1814), pp.60-90, p.85.

Southey quotes Thomas Hobbes when he writes ‘of the corruption of poetry’ owing to ‘the number of words in use which, “though of magnifique sound, yet, like the windy blisters of a troubled water, have no sense at all;” and yet are hardly to be avoided, because having been obtruded upon our youth, they have grown up with us, and “gaining reputation with the ignorant, are not easily shaken off”’.⁴⁵¹ And ‘there have been writers who were ambitious of composing poems wholly in strong lines!’, who ‘Taking Pope for their master...culled every thing that was vicious in his style for imitation, and what was good they spoilt by misapplying it’.⁴⁵² Thus such a ‘poet is happy’ if ‘he has produced a strong line, and whether it be sense or syntax is a question which neither he nor his admirers think of asking themselves’.⁴⁵³ Southey noted that Pope’s achievement could not be surpassed by those who imitate him: ‘It is worthy of remark, that notwithstanding the poetical supremacy which Pope so long enjoyed, no one poet of eminence has arisen in his school’.⁴⁵⁴ Southey uses language reminiscent of Wordsworth’s to describe the effect of Pope’s Homer; he contends that poets who follow Pope too closely are ‘infected with many of the faults of the age’.⁴⁵⁵ Wordsworth’s *poison* and Southey’s *infection* imply that the influence of Pope’s Homer on poetry is a disease that needs to be cured and remedied. Again, Southey stressed, co-opting Dennis into his argument, the problem is not Pope’s poem itself; the problem is that poetry has been reduced “so miserably” “by the extravagance of its professors, and by the unskillfulness of its admirers!”.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵¹ Southey, ‘Review of *The Works of the English Poets*’, *Quarterly Review* (October, 1814), pp.87-88. The quotation is of Thomas Hobbes’ ‘Letter Concerning Sir William Davenant’s Preface to *Gondibert*’ (1650); see William Davenant, *The Preface to Gondibert. With an Answer to the Preface by Mr. Hobbes* (Paris, 1650), pp.150-151: ‘There be so many words in use at this day in the English tongue, that, though of magnifique sound, yet (like the windy blisters of a troubled water) have no sense at all; and so many others that loose their meaning, by being ill coupled, that it is a hard matter to avoyd them; for having bene obtruded upon youth in the Schooles...they grow up with them, and gaining reputation with the ignorant, are not easily shaken of’.

⁴⁵² Southey, ‘Review of *The Works of the English Poets*’, *Quarterly Review* (October, 1814), p.88.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.88-89.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.89. Southey is quoting from John Dennis’ *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, Contain’d in Some New Discoveries Never Made Before, Requisite for the Writing and Judging of Poems Surely. Being a Preliminary to a Larger Work Design’d to be Publish’d in Folio, and Entituled [sic], A Criticism Upon our Most Celebrated English Poets Deceas’d* (London, 1704).

Joseph Farington, writing in his diary on 28 March 1809, recalled that Lady Beaumont ‘afterwards sd. to me, that Coleridge and Wordsworth thought the bad taste in writing which now prevails, is owing to works of two celebrated authors, *Popes [sic] translation of Homer, & the Odyssey*, and *Johnson’s Lives of the Poets*’.⁴⁵⁷ ‘These models of art and an inflated style’, moreover, ‘have been imitated to the destroying of all simplicity’.⁴⁵⁸ Not only has Pope’s translation itself resulted in ‘the bad taste in writing which now prevails’; Johnson’s lionising and praising of Pope’s poem is also objectionable—as are Johnson’s style and taste more generally. In the *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface*, for example, Wordsworth criticises the choices Johnson made in which poets he included in the *Lives of the Poets*: ‘metrical writers utterly worthless and useless, except for occasions like the present, when their productions are referred to as evidence what a small quantity of brain is necessary to procure a considerable stock of admiration, provided the aspirant will accommodate himself to the likings and fashions of his day’.⁴⁵⁹

Coleridge held Pope’s translation of Homer, in particular, accountable for the false poetic language so often used in contemporary poetry: ‘his translation of Homer...I do not stand alone in regarding as the main source of our pseudo-poetic diction’.⁴⁶⁰ Despite this scathing indictment of the poetical legacy of Pope’s Homer, in the same passage Coleridge is at pains to point out that he approves of and applauds Pope’s original poetry, ‘In the course of my lectures, I had occasion to point out the almost faultless position and choice of words; in Mr. Pope’s *original* compositions, particularly in his satires and moral essays’.⁴⁶¹ Ironically, Pope himself had commented on the prevalence of his poetic style in *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, lamenting that ‘ev’ry coxcomb knows me by my *Style*’ (1.282).

One poet who was self-consciously influenced by Pope’s Homer was Elizabeth Barrett Browning, as she later became. On her fourteenth birthday in 1820, fifty copies of her Homeric

⁴⁵⁷ Joseph Farington, *The Farington Diary*, ed. James Greig, 8 vols. (London: Hutchinson, 1922-1928), vol.5, p.132.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vol.5, p.132.

⁴⁵⁹ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.79.

⁴⁶⁰ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, p.39.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.39.

epic, *The Battle of Marathon*, were privately printed by her father as a birthday present for her.⁴⁶² The main inspiration for the poem came from Barrett's reading of Pope's *Iliad*.⁴⁶³ The preface to *The Battle of Marathon* states that through Pope's translation she came to consider Homer 'the sublime Poet of antiquity' and Pope the 'magnificent translator' who combined 'elegance with strength, and sublimity with beauty'.⁴⁶⁴ Later, in 1843, she wrote to Richard Hengist Horne that Pope's *Iliad* had caught her imagination so much that she was 'haunted' by it, and she 'dreamt oftener of Agamemnon than of Moses [her] black poney'.⁴⁶⁵ It was only later that she began to lament that Pope's *Iliad* had overpowered her own poetry; so much so that she considered *The Battle of Marathon* to be little more than 'a Pope's Homer done over again'.⁴⁶⁶

Coleridge and Johnson agree, to some extent, about the legacy of Pope's translations. For Johnson, Pope 'cultivated our language with so much diligence and art, that he has left in his *Homer* a treasure of poetical elegancies to posterity'.⁴⁶⁷ 'His version maybe said to have tuned the English tongue...[and] took possession of the publick ear, the vulgar was enamoured of the poem, and the learned wondered at the translation'.⁴⁶⁸ Johnson exalts Pope for having 'cultivated our language'; but the fact that Pope had 'tuned the English tongue' and 'publick ear' is precisely what worried Coleridge, among others. The legacy of Pope's poem had been to confine subsequent poets to a Popean style with an over-reliance on limp, predictable, and uninspired heroic couplets. This is ironic, given that Pope himself, in *An Essay on Criticism*, disparaged such poetry; he condemned poets who 'ring round the same *unvary'd Chimes*, | With sure *Returns* of still *expected Rhymes*' (ll.348-349).

⁴⁶² Marjorie Stone, 'Browning, Elizabeth Barrett (1806–1861)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, October 2008 [<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/3711>, accessed 16 Dec 2015].

⁴⁶³ Simon Avery and Rebecca Stott, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (London: Longman, 2003), p.45.

⁴⁶⁴ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Complete Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, orig. pub. 1900, eds. Charlotte Porter and Helen A Clarke, 6 vols. (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell, 1973), vol.14, p.4, p.8.

⁴⁶⁵ Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Hengist Horne, 1843: *The Brownings' Correspondence*, eds. Philip Kelley, Ronald Hudson and Scott Lewis, 14 vols. (London: Athlone Press, 1984-1998), vol.7, p.353.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol.7, p.353.

⁴⁶⁷ Johnson, 'Life of Pope', *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.73.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol.4, p.73.

Cowper's position, in the preface to his translation, prefigures that of Coleridge. Cowper disparaged the fashion for rhyming by the incompetent 'multitudes' who rhyme only because they think that is all in which poetry consists:

To rhyme, in our language, demands no great exertion of ingenuity, but is always easy to a person exercised in the practice. Witness the multitudes who rhyme, but have no other poetical pretensions.⁴⁶⁹

Because of this rhyming, which Cowper thinks is fundamentally and necessarily incompatible with an accurate translation of Homer, he believes 'that most English readers must of necessity have conceived of [Homer] infinitely below his worth'.⁴⁷⁰ The prevalence of Pope's legacy in forming readers' views of what good poetry is, through the cultural veneration of Homer as a classical poet to admire and aspire to, even for those who cannot read him in the original Greek, is acknowledged by Cowper in his comment that 'most English readers' will have experienced Homer through Pope.

Cowper was by no means the first to outline his worries about the impact of Pope's Homer. Hugh Blair in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (published in 1783), for example, while acknowledging what 'An excellent poetical performance that Translation is' and indeed that 'In some places, it may be thought to have even improved Homer', had worried that readers 'can have no conception of his [Homer's] manner, who are acquainted with him in Mr. Pope's Translation only'.⁴⁷¹ Ultimately, Blair declares, the poem 'is no other than Homer modernised'.⁴⁷²

Cowper wrote in 'Table Talk', published in 1782 in *Poems* (ll.646-655):

Then Pope, as harmony itself exact,
In verse well disciplin'd, complete, compact,
Gave virtue and morality a grace
That, quite eclipsing pleasure's painted face,
Levied a tax of wonder and applause,
Ev'n on the fools that traml'd on their laws.
But he (his musical finesse was such,
So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)
Made poetry a mere mechanic art,
And ev'ry warbler has his tune by heart.

⁴⁶⁹ Cowper, *Translations of Homer*, vol.1, pp.xi-xii.

⁴⁷⁰ Cowper, *Letters and Prose of Cowper*, vol.5, p.51.

⁴⁷¹ Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 2 vols. (London, 1783), vol.2, p.438.

⁴⁷² *Ibid*, vol.2, p.438.

Again, Cowper here compliments Pope himself ('complete', 'musical finesse', 'nice...ear', 'delicate his touch'), but laments the effect that Pope's poetry has had on all those 'fools' and 'warbler[s]' who attempt to mimic him. Again, there is an echo here of Pope's own frustration with and condemnation of mere 'tuneful Fools' (l.340) who write 'their own dull Rhimes' (l.358) in *An Essay on Criticism*. Pope's legacy 'Made' poetry a mere mechanic art; it was not itself merely mechanical. Cowper, in a letter to Joseph Johnson (c.15 January 1781), contends that 'unless we could imitate [Pope] in the closeness and compactness of his expression, as well as in the smoothness of his numbers, we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to emasculate and weaken all we write'.⁴⁷³ It is the imitation that emasculates and weakens, for Pope himself 'managed the bells of rhyme with more dexterity than any man'.⁴⁷⁴

Yet did I never breathe its pure serene

Chapman's translations of Homer, *The Whole Works of Homer*, were published in 1616, almost exactly a century before Pope's.⁴⁷⁵ Chapman's poetry is perhaps best known now for prompting Keats' glorious sonnet 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' (1816):

Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
 That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold
 (ll.5-8)

Keats' characterisation of Chapman's Homer as 'loud and bold' is in keeping with how many of his contemporaries would have conceived of Homer's own poetry. Cowper agrees, calling Homer's

⁴⁷³ Cowper, *Letters and Prose of Cowper*, vol.1, p.433.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid*, vol.5, p.53.

⁴⁷⁵ George Chapman, *The Whole Works of Homer; Prince of Poets in his Iliads, and Odysses. Translated according to the Greeke* (London, 1616).

style ‘plain and unelevated’.⁴⁷⁶ Describing Chapman’s language as ‘loud and bold’, permitting Keats to ‘breathe [Homer’s] pure serene’, might be thought to contrast with Pope’s style of poetry, sometimes considered to be ‘jingling’ (harking back to Milton’s phrase) or to convey chiming ‘bells’ (Cowper’s estimation). And yet Chapman also uses couplets that rhyme, so any preference for his *Iliad* over Pope’s cannot be wholly to do with rhyme. Perhaps some critics have preferred Chapman’s translation because its form is looser than Pope’s; Chapman uses enjambement frequently, for example, so that the emphasis is much less on the ends of the lines, and therefore the rhyme. The ‘wide expanse’ of Chapman’s Homer contrasts with the limiting and ‘over-worn finery of the meretricious muse’, as Coleridge defines the Popean style poetry.⁴⁷⁷ This ‘wide expanse’ might also be because Chapman’s lines generally have fourteen syllables, which creates an impression of expansiveness for ears more familiar with ten syllable lines. By placing Chapman’s name in the title of his poem, Keats emphasises the pleasure he found in discovering this different way of experiencing Homer.⁴⁷⁸ Given the contemporary prevalence of Pope’s translation, Keats appears deliberately to be snubbing Pope as a poet unable to capture Homer’s ‘realms of gold’ (l.1). Charles Cowden Clarke’s *Recollections of Writers* (1878) report that he and Keats spent the evening that inspired Keats’ sonnet ‘turning to some of the “famoussest” passages, as we had scrappily known them in Pope’s version’, and contrasting them, unfavourably, with Chapman’s.⁴⁷⁹

It is ironic that Keats is praising Chapman over Pope in giving him access to Homer, allowing him to ‘breathe’ Homer’s ‘pure serene’ through reading Homer’s poetry, as this line’s construction mirrors a line of Pope in the ‘celebrated moonlight scene in the *Iliad*’.⁴⁸⁰ Keats’ line reads:

⁴⁷⁶ Cowper, *Translations of Homer*, vol.1, p.x.

⁴⁷⁷ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.2, pp.29-30.

⁴⁷⁸ For more on the paradoxical relationship between the development of Romanticism and its isolated engagement with the Renaissance see Stuart Curran, ‘The Second Renaissance’, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.14-28.

⁴⁷⁹ Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, *Recollections of Writers by Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke; with Letters of Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Douglas Jerrold, and Charles Dickens; and a Preface by Mary Cowden Clarke* (London, 1878), p.131.

⁴⁸⁰ Wordsworth, *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface, Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.73.

Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
(1.7)

Pope's line reads:

When not a Breath disturbs the deep Serene
(*Iliad*, bk.8, ll.689)

In the line, Pope had unusually rendered 'the...Serene' as a noun, in the same way that Keats does. Pope had also described an image of 'not...Breath[ing]', while Keats had 'never breathe[d]' Homer before. While Keats might be eschewing Pope's translations in 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer', as we have seen in fact he actually echoes a line of one the "famous" passages of Pope's *Iliad*.⁴⁸¹

Chapman's translations were evidently an important source for Keats' circle. Benjamin Robert Haydon wrote to Keats on 14 July 1820, asking for Keats to return a copy of Chapman's Homer he had borrowed: 'Have you done with Chapman's Homer? as I want it very badly at this moment'.⁴⁸² Unfortunately for Keats, however, he had misplaced the book, and had to rush out to purchase another copy.⁴⁸³ Keats' poem has often been taken as evidence of a preference among the Romantics for Chapman over Pope. This may be true insofar as their respective translations of Homer were concerned, but Cowden Clarke went on in 1872-1873, not long before he died, to edit a collection of Pope's poetical works (in which he chose not to include any of Pope's translations of Homer).⁴⁸⁴

Others, however, do not approve of Chapman's translation. Francklin wrote in 1753, for example, that 'Homer dy'd by Chapman' (1.22).⁴⁸⁵ Nor was Cowper an admirer of Chapman's translation. He wrote to Thomas Park, on 15 July 1793, to thank Park for his 'present of

⁴⁸¹ We will return to Pope's 'celebrated moonlight scene in the Iliad' in chapter three.

⁴⁸² Haydon to Keats, 14 July 1820: *The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), vol.2, p.308.

⁴⁸³ See Keats' letter to John Taylor, 14 August 1820: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, pp.318-319.

⁴⁸⁴ *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope. With Memoir, Critical Dissertation, and Explanatory Notes*, ed. Charles Cowden Clarke, 2 vols. (London, 1872-1873).

⁴⁸⁵ Francklin, *Translation: A Poem*, p.2.

Chapman's translation of the Iliad'.⁴⁸⁶ Cowper expressed 'wonder that any man, with so little taste for Homer, or appreciation of his manner, should think it worth while to undertake the laborious task of translating him'.⁴⁸⁷ Chapman's 'information' is 'not much better than his verse', and Cowper 'find[s] him giving a sense of his own not at all warranted by the words of Homer'.⁴⁸⁸ Cowper can only conclude that 'precuniary [*sic*] advantage may perhaps account for it'.⁴⁸⁹

he is grand and lofty and always in the right place

At the end of the eighteenth century, Pope's translation still had numerous supporters. In his ground-breaking *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (1790), Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, wrote that Pope's translation in places surpasses its original: 'But even the highest beauties of the original receive additional lustre from this admirable translator'.⁴⁹⁰ On the whole, Tytler's assessment of Pope's translation is balanced; he praises those elements he thinks show Homer in his best light, and criticises those passages in which he thinks deserves censure for omitting detail, among other things.

Others preferred Cowper's translation to Pope's. Southey wrote to Horace Walpole Bedford, on 30-31 December 1793, that Cowper's translation was preferable because it was closer to Homer:

⁴⁸⁶ Cowper, *Letters and Prose of Cowper*, vol.4, p.368. In a previous letter to Park, 17 May 1793, Cowper had written 'I have never seen Chapman's translation of Homer, and will not refuse your offer of it' (vol.4, p.339).

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid*, vol.4, p.368.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid*, vol.4, p.368.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid*, vol.4, p.368.

⁴⁹⁰ Alexander Fraser Tytler [Lord Woodhouselee], *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, 1790, 2nd ed. Corrected, and Considerably Enlarged (London, 1797), p.94.

I have been reading Cowpers [*sic*] Homer & much satisfaction has the perusal afforded me. a quotation I had occasion to make gave me an opportunity of discovering how unlike Homer is Popes [*sic*] version.⁴⁹¹

Southey goes so far as to ask, ‘can there be a more licentious paraphrase than Popes’.⁴⁹² Despite this vehement criticism of Pope’s Homer, Southey recommends elsewhere, as a positive example, that Pope should be studied for his ‘versification’, suggesting that there are elements of Pope’s poetry that Southey considers others can learn from. In a letter to Grosvenor Charles Bedford of 1-10 October 1795, having been presented with some poetry of Bedford’s and asked for a response, Southey exhorts: ‘it may be made excellent’ but ‘you should study Pope & Dryden more for your versification’.⁴⁹³ For Southey, as he wrote to John Aiken, the editor of the *Monthly Magazine*, in November 1796, Cowper’s translation is ultimately preferable, since, ‘in a translation, we ought to find a faithful copy of the original’.⁴⁹⁴

Not all reviews of Cowper’s translation were as favourable as Southey’s. A review in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (1792), the same magazine in which Cowper had enthusiastically announced his intention of publishing his translation, concluded with reference to its inherent ‘defects’.⁴⁹⁵ Its author opined that ‘Mr. Cowper’s idea of a translation differs materially from our own’.⁴⁹⁶ The reviewer again echoes Dryden’s notion that ‘The genius and rhythm of the Greek and English languages differ so materially, that a literal interpretation will often be inconsistent, and almost always inharmonious’.⁴⁹⁷ Consequently, reading Cowper, the reviewer found that ‘The noble and lofty epithets, which we have been accustomed to admire in the Iliad, we have often found, in the translation before us, insipid and impertinent’.⁴⁹⁸ ‘If the Greek poem was to be rendered an English poem’, the reviewer asserts, then ‘the constituent parts of a poetical

⁴⁹¹ Southey to Horace Walpole Bedford, 30-31 December 1793: ‘Letter 78’, *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey*, gen. eds. Linda Pratt, Tim Fulford, and Ian Packer (Romantic Circles Electronic Edition).

⁴⁹² Southey to Horace Walpole Bedford, 30-31 December 1793, ‘Letter 78’, *Collected Letters of Southey*.

⁴⁹³ Southey to Grosvenor Charles Bedford, 1-10 October 1795: ‘Letter 136’, *Collected Letters of Southey*.

⁴⁹⁴ Southey to John Aiken, November 1796, ‘Letter 183’, *Collected Letters of Southey*.

⁴⁹⁵ Anonymous, ‘Review of *The Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, Translated into Blank Verse*, by W. Cowper’, *The Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 62 (June, 1792), pp.537-539, p.539.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.539.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.539.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.539.

composition were surely indispensable'.⁴⁹⁹ The reviewer does not approve of 'the melody and structure of his verse', implying that English rhyme would be required to make Cowper's translation 'poetical'.⁵⁰⁰ The review closes, damning with faint praise, by remarking that 'to many it will doubtless be useful'; 'but', nevertheless, 'we cannot help intimating our suspicions that it will never rival Mr. Pope's as to the popularity of its general circulation'.⁵⁰¹

The appreciation, in these reviews, of Pope's and Cowper's translations is coloured by their respective authors' conceptions of *proper* translation. In some sense, Pope's poem becomes representative of *free* translation, and Cowper's illustrative of *close* translation. But the two poems are not in fact polar opposites on a scale of translation.

There are similarities between the two poets; both praise similar features of the original text. Pope and Cowper both extol Homer's ability to be 'lofty' when needed and simple when required.

Pope writes in the preface to his translation:

'Tis a great Secret in Writing to know when to be plain, and when poetical and figurative; and it is what *Homer* will teach us if we will but follow modestly in his Footsteps. Where his Diction is bold and lofty, let us raise ours as high as we can; but where his is plain and humble, we ought not to be deterr'd from imitating him by the fear of incurring the Censure of a meer *English Critick*.⁵⁰²

Cowper's language, in his own preface, echoes Pope's:

...it is one of his numberless excellencies, and a point in which his judgment never fails him, that he is grand and lofty and always in the right place, and knows infallibly how to rise and fall with his subject.⁵⁰³

In this recognition that a translator should rise and fall with his subject, both Pope and Cowper echo Roscommon's lines in *An Essay on Translated Verse* that 'your Author will the best advise, | *Fall* when *He falls*, and when *He Rises*, *Rise*'.⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, p.539.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid, p.539.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid, p.539.

⁵⁰² Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.18.

⁵⁰³ Cowper, *Translations of Homer*, vol.1, p.x.

⁵⁰⁴ Roscommon, *Essay on Translated Verse*, p.15.

Aurora, Daughter of the Dawn

For all Cowper's dislike of the overall style and impact of Pope's *Iliad*, his translation has some similarities with Pope's. In this section, I compare particular parts of the two poems to show some of these parallels. I also refer to Augustus Murray's rendering of Homer's *Iliad*, from the Loeb Classical Library series, to show an alternative construction.⁵⁰⁵ Murray's twentieth century version is in prose, and, as he outlines in the introduction, aims to give 'due regard to the emphasis attaching to the arrangements of words in the original'.⁵⁰⁶ Both Pope's and Cowper's translations retain the form of poetry, and employ ten syllables per line, which renders the rhythm of their versions alike to a greater extent than either is to the rhythm of Murray's words. In order to situate Pope's and Cowper's translations in a broader literary context, I also compare them with other seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century translations. In particular, since Thomas Tickell's translation of the first book of the *Iliad* was published only two days after Pope's translation of books one to four appeared, I have made use of Tickell's version.⁵⁰⁷ I have done this not only to show a poetical, rather than a prose, comparison, but also to provide a version contemporaneous to Pope's.

The first word of the first line of Pope's and Cowper's translations is the same: 'Achilles' (Pope, bk.1, l.1; Cowper, bk.1, l.1). It is the character, the principal protagonist in the story, who is the immediate focus of attention. In Murray's translation, it is not until the fourth clause of the opening sentence that Achilles is mentioned by name. Instead the initial focus is on the 'wrath' that

⁵⁰⁵ *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, trans. Augustus Taber Murray, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1924).

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.vii.

⁵⁰⁷ Thomas Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated* (London, 1715). Pope's translation of books one to four appeared on 6 June 1715, and Tickell's version of the first book was published on 8 June 1715 (*Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.xxvi).

is being sung: ‘The wrath do thou sing, O goddess, of Peleus’ son, Achilles’.⁵⁰⁸ In this respect, Murray’s version is more in line with Dryden’s translation of the first book of the *Iliad*, published in *Fables Ancient and Modern* in the year of his death (1700): ‘The Wrath of *Peleu*’s Son, O Muse, resound’.⁵⁰⁹ (In Dryden’s version, in fact, Achilles is not mentioned by name until the seventy-ninth line.) Pope’s focus on Achilles in the opening of his poem is clearly a conscious poetical choice; in his commentary upon Homer—which runs throughout his translation in the form of footnotes, and whose ‘principal Design is to illustrate the Poetical Beauties of the Author’—Pope renders this sentence in prose and leaves the direct mention of Achilles’ name until after ‘Sing’, ‘Goddess’, and ‘Wrath’, just as Murray does over two centuries later: ‘What is there more in this Passage? “Sing, O Goddess, that Wrath of *Achilles*, which prov’d so pernicious to the *Greeks*”’.⁵¹⁰

A few lines subsequently, Pope refers to ‘Great *Achilles*’ (bk.1, 1.7) and Cowper to ‘The noble Chief Achilles’ (bk.1, 1.8), in each case evidencing an aggrandisement of Achilles’ social status and position in their opening passages. Murray’s description in the poem’s opening paragraph of ‘goodly Achilles’, on the other hand, seems to promote an idea of Achilles’ moral goodness over his social position.⁵¹¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the adjectival form of ‘goodly’ as ‘Of good, noble, or valiant character; virtuous, honourable’ and ‘Gracious, courteous; friendly; gentle, kind’. One of the illustrative quotations that the *OED* then cites is a description of Achilles from a text composed in the second half of the fourteenth century, Guido delle Colonne’s *Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy*, which describes Achilles’ character as ‘Godely of giftes grettist in expense’ (1.3766).⁵¹² Murray clearly continues to associate the term ‘goodly’ with

⁵⁰⁸ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.3.

⁵⁰⁹ John Dryden, *Fables Ancient and Modern* (London, 1700), p.189.

⁵¹⁰ Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.82, p.84.

⁵¹¹ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.3.

⁵¹² Guido delle Colonne, *The ‘Gest Hystoriale’ of the Destruction of Troy: An Alliterative Romance translated from Guido de Colonna’s Hystoria Troiana*, eds. George Panton and David Donaldson (London: Published for the Early English Text Society by N. Trübner, 1869-1874), p.120.

Achilles, as ‘goodly Achilles’ appears a further seven times throughout his translation.⁵¹³ Neither Pope nor Cowper uses this epithet once in his translation.

In the opening book, both Pope and Cowper use exactly the same diction to describe Apollo in the same prayer: ‘God of the Silver Bow’ (Pope, bk.1, l.59) and ‘God of the silver bow’ (Cowper, bk.1, l.45). In the same apostrophe to Apollo, Murray’s translation does not explicitly refer to Apollo as a god, but instead to ‘thou of the silver bow’.⁵¹⁴ In fact, Apollo is not referred to by Murray as a god at all in this passage; he is described as ‘the prince, Apollo’.⁵¹⁵ Contemporary eighteenth century translations do not use exactly the same phrase that both Pope and Cowper do either. Dryden’s (1700) version is not too dissimilar in terms of diction: ‘God with the Silver Bow’.⁵¹⁶ The meaning of these two phrases, however, is different. In Pope’s and Cowper’s metaphor, Apollo is connected inherently with the silver bow; he is the God ‘of’ it; in Dryden’s description, the God and bow are more separated; the same character merely carries the bow. Other eighteenth century translations render this phrase differently to an even greater extent: John Ozell (1712) refers to Apollo as ‘great God, whose shining Arrows are so dreadful’; Tickell (1715) renders the same image as ‘Dread Warriour with the Silver Bow’; and Macpherson (1773) writes of Apollo as the ‘bearer of the splendid bow’.⁵¹⁷

Pope and Cowper describe Apollo’s descent to Earth as ‘gloomy/Gloomy’ as night-time darkness: ‘a sudden Night he spread, | And gloomy Darkness roll’d around his Head’ (Pope, bk.1, ll.65-66); ‘Gloomy he came as night’ (Cowper, bk.1, l.58). In his *Dictionary of the English Language* (first published in 1755), Johnson has, as his third definition of ‘gloomy’, ‘Sullen, melancholy...[and]...heavy of heart’. The addition of the word ‘gloomy’ in Pope’s and Cowper’s descriptions of Apollo’s descent, then, implies the feelings that Apollo has internally in this

⁵¹³ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.13; vol.1, p.25; vol.1, p.101; vol.1; p.253; vol.1; p.293; and twice in vol.1, p.397.

⁵¹⁴ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.5.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.5.

⁵¹⁶ Dryden, *Fables Ancient and Modern*, p.191.

⁵¹⁷ Ozell, *The Iliad of Homer*, vol.1, p.7; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer’s Iliad. Translated*, p.4; Macpherson, *The Iliad of Homer*, vol.1, p.3.

moment, rather than being just an external description of the narrative. This is particularly strong in Pope's translation, which plays on the dual image of the night's darkness descriptively rolling around the outside of 'his Head' and metaphorically rolling around inside 'his Head'. This dual imagery is less strong in Cowper's version, but it is still present: Apollo's 'gloomy' internal mind is juxtaposed with the external scene. Murray's translation, on the other hand, does not include the adjective; instead 'his coming was like the night'.⁵¹⁸ Murray does not emphasise the internal feelings of Apollo, and instead focusses on the effect that Apollo's presence has on others: it is the fact of 'his coming' that 'was like the night' to those who experienced it. These interpretations are noticeably different from, for instance, Tickell's translation, which reads 'Down rush'd the vengeful Warriour from the Sky'.⁵¹⁹ Tickell's version straightforwardly describes the narrative, without the added connotations of Apollo's gloomy feelings and impression.

Achilles wonders at the 'Cause of great *Apollo's* Rage' (Pope, bk.1, l.84), and speculates if it is because of some 'broken Vows' / 'broken vow' (Pope, bk.1, ll.87-88; Cowper, bk.1, l.78): Pope and Cowper choose the same diction here in using 'broken', which neither Murray nor Tickell does. Murray, for example, renders this 'whether it be because of a vow that he blames in us'; and Tickell asks 'What Vow with-held'.⁵²⁰ Moreover, Pope and Cowper ask what 'broken vow' has occurred and what hecatombs remain 'unpaid' / 'paid': Pope's diction, 'If broken Vows his heavy Curse have laid, | Let Altars smoke, and Hecatombs be paid' (bk.1, ll.87-88), is echoed in Cowper's 'What broken vow, what hecatomb unpaid' (bk.1, l.78). Murray does not mention anything being 'paid'—'because of a vow, or of a hecatomb'—and neither does Tickell who asks 'What Vow with-held, what Hecatomb un-slain'.⁵²¹ The similarity between Pope's and Cowper's image of a 'vow' being 'paid' is further enhanced in a later speech of Calchas'. Calchas, having been assured

⁵¹⁸ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.7.

⁵¹⁹ Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.5.

⁵²⁰ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.7; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.6.

⁵²¹ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.7; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.6.

that he can speak freely without worry of retribution, announces the reason for Apollo's wrath. In Pope's version, Calchas' speech begins, and on a new line, with 'Nor Vows unpaid' (bk.1, 1.117); this is echoed in Cowper's version which begins, again at the head of a new line, 'Nor vow nor hecatomb unpaid' (bk.1, 1.112). The form and diction together of these two versions is more alike than the same passage is rendered in either Murray or Tickell. Murray's version reads, 'It is not then because of a vow that he blames us, nor a hecatomb', and Tickell's 'Nor does the God complain | Of Vows with-held, or Hecatombs un-slain'.⁵²² In choosing the same terms—'broken vow' and 'un/paid'—Cowper thus twice echoes Pope's translation.

After Achilles has finished his speech wondering at Apollo's rage, he sits down again: the form of Pope's 'He said and sate' (Pope, bk.1, 1.91) is identical to Cowper's 'He spake and sat' (Cowper, bk.1, 1.82). Murray's translation is wordier: 'When he had thus spoken he sate him down'.⁵²³ One might explain this by noting that Murray is writing prose, as opposed to poetry, but the fact that both Pope and Cowper are writing poetry does not account wholly for their similar choice in rendering this section of Homer's text. Tickell's text, for example, is even sparser with simply 'Thus He' as a whole, two-word sentence, with no mention of Achilles sitting.⁵²⁴

Both Pope and Cowper then proceed to refer to Calchas, the priest, as prudent: 'Prudence' (Pope, bk.1, 1.96) and 'prudent' (Cowper, bk.1, 1.88). Neither Murray nor Tickell do this. Pope and Cowper describe Calchas' omniscience in the following terms: 'The past, the present, and the future knew' (Pope, bk.1, 1.94) and 'Who all things, present, past, and future knew' (Cowper, bk.1, 1.84). In these lines, both here echo Milton's description of God in the opening of Book III of *Paradise Lost*, which is itself an echo of Homer's original text: God, sitting 'above all height' (1.58), surveys Heaven, Eden, and Hell, 'Wherein past, present, future he beholds' (1.78).⁵²⁵ Pope and Cowper employ a Miltonic inversion in placing the verb 'knew' at the end of the clause, as Milton himself

⁵²² Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, pp.7-9; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.7.

⁵²³ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.9.

⁵²⁴ Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.6.

⁵²⁵ Milton, *Paradise Lost* (2007), pp.170-171.

does in his line with ‘beholds’. Pope’s and Cowper’s translations of Homer in this line are similar when contrasted with Murray’s translation: ‘who had knowledge of all things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before’.⁵²⁶ Again, Pope’s and Cowper’s similarity in contrast with Murray’s prose version cannot simply be put down to form. Tickell’s poetical translation, for instance, renders this line as ‘Could Things past, present, and to come, descry’.⁵²⁷ Pope’s and Cowper’s diction is more similar in using ‘knew’ and ‘future’—as opposed to ‘descry’ and ‘to come’—than it could have been; Cowper chooses to render his translation as Pope had done.

Furthermore, Calchas’ opening words in his following speech are similar in diction and form in Pope’s and Cowper’s translations in ways which are unlike either Murray’s or Tickell’s: Pope writes ‘Belov’d of *Jove*, *Achilles!*’ (bk.1, l.97), while Cowper writes ‘*Jove-lov’d Achilles!*’ (bk.1, l.89); Murray writes ‘*Achilles, dear to Zeus*’, and Tickell writes ‘*Me then command’st though, Lov’d of Jove*’.⁵²⁸ Meanwhile Ozell, in the same passage, describes Achilles as ‘*Favourite of Jove*’.⁵²⁹ Pope and Cowper use the same three words ‘lov’d’, ‘*Jove*’, and ‘*Achilles*’ as the whole substance of this expostulation, which is, furthermore, separated off from the rest of Calchas’ speech by an exclamation mark. None of Murray, Tickell, or Ozell uses an exclamation mark, nor does any of them separate this outcry off from the rest of Calchas’ speech. Moreover, Murray uses the Greek ‘*Zeus*’ as opposed to ‘*Jove*’; his and Ozell’s diction is different in their choice of ‘*dear*’ and ‘*Favourite*’, rather than ‘lov’d’; and Tickell does not refer here again to ‘*Achilles*’ by name.

In Pope and Cowper, Calchas continues by explicitly asking a question about why Apollo / Phœbus is so angry: ‘wou’dst thou know | Why angry *Phæbus* bends his fatal Bow?’ (Pope, bk.1, ll.97-98); ‘Would’st thou learn from me | What cause hath mov’d Apollo to this wrath, | The shaft-arm’d King?’ (Cowper, bk.1, ll.89-91). Murray does not translate Calchas’ words here as a

⁵²⁶ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.9.

⁵²⁷ Tickell, *The First Book of Homer’s Iliad. Translated*, p.6.

⁵²⁸ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.9; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer’s Iliad. Translated*, p.6.

⁵²⁹ Ozell, *The Iliad of Homer*, vol.1, p.11.

question; instead Calchas declares ‘though biddest me declare the wrath of Apollo’.⁵³⁰ Tickell, on the other hand, does couch this section of text as a question: ‘Me then command’st thou, Lov’d of *Jove*, to show | What moves the God, that bends the dreadful Bow?’.⁵³¹ But there is a sympathy of perspective in Murray and Tickell which is different from Pope and Cowper. In Murray and Tickell, Calchas outlines the cause of Apollo’s wrath expressly because he has been commanded to do so—‘biddest’ and ‘command’st’—by Achilles. Pope and Cowper, however, both couch their translations of this passage in terms of Calchas proffering an explanation: ‘wou’dst thou know’ and ‘Would’st thou learn from me’.

Describing how to bring about the end of Apollo’s plague, Calchas advises Agamemnon to return Chryseis, whom he has captured: ‘send the black-ey’d Maid’ (Pope, bk.1, l.124); and ‘The black-eyed maid be to her father sent’ (Cowper, bk.1, l.120). In Murray, Calchas’ speech advises Agamemnon to ‘give back...the bright-eyed maiden’; while Tickell renders it quite differently, with no mention here of her eyes: ‘Till...the Damsel is bestow’d’.⁵³² Cowper uses exactly same phrase as Pope in ‘black-eyed maid’; which is different in tone from Murray’s similarly constructed ‘bright-eyed maiden’, given the almost opposite connotations of ‘black-eyed’ and ‘bright-eyed’.

Cowper’s description of Agamemnon’s response to Calchas, ‘Prophet of mischief! from whose tongue no note | Of grateful sound to me, was ever heard’ (Cowper, bk.1, ll.128-129), is not unlike Pope’s ‘denouncing Mischief still, | Prophet of Plagues, for ever boding Ill! | Still must that Tongue some wounding Message bring’ (Pope, bk.1, ll.131-133). In both, Agamemnon mentions the ‘mischief’ that he feels Calchas brings him, and imagines that it is Calchas’ ‘tongue’ that is continually the harbinger of words that Agamemnon does not want to hear. Neither Murray nor Tickell mention either ‘mischief’ or ‘tongue’ here: Murray’s Agamemnon declares ‘Prophet of evil, never yet hast thou spoken to me the thing that is good’, and Tickell’s announces ‘Augur of Ills,

⁵³⁰ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.9.

⁵³¹ Tickell, *The First Book of Homer’s Iliad. Translated*, p.6.

⁵³² Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.11; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer’s Iliad. Translated*, p.8.

(for never Good to Me | Did that most inauspicious Voice decree)'.⁵³³ The emphasis of Murray's and Tickell's translations here is also slightly different from Pope's and Cowper's: Murray's and Tickell's Agamemnons mention the 'good' that Calchas' 'never' brings; Pope's and Cowper's, on the other hand, describe the bad that Calchas 'ever' brings.

Pope and Cowper use similar imagery in the passage in which Agamemnon evaluates the value of Chryseis to him: 'Not half so dear were *Clytemnestra*'s Charms' (Pope, bk.1, l.143) and 'she charms me more | Than Clytemnestra' (Cowper, bk1. ll.137-138). Murray does not translate the 'charms' of either Chryseis or Clytemnestra, instead he has Agamemnon make a straightforward rating of the two women: 'I prefer her before Clytemnestra'.⁵³⁴ Tickell, however, does couch Agamemnon's preference in terms of Chryseis' 'charm': 'Fond of the Maid, my Queen, in Beauty's Pride; | Ne'er charm'd me more, a Virgin and a Bride; | Not *Clytemnestra* boasts a nobler Grace'.⁵³⁵ Interestingly, Dryden's translation of 1700 also couches Agamemnon's preference in terms of relative 'charm': 'Not *Clytemnestra*'s self in Beauties Bloom | More charm'd'.⁵³⁶ This is also true of Macpherson's 1773 prose edition: 'For her I hold more dear to my soul,—than Clytemnestra's glowing charms'.⁵³⁷ The use of 'charm' to describe Chryseis' effect on Agamemnon is thus a common motif in eighteenth century translations of this scene; and this differs from the choice of diction made by translators in other periods. In James Morrice's early nineteenth century translation of 1809, entitled *The Iliad of Homer, Translated into English Blank Verse*—which was the first full translation to be published after Cowper's—the word 'charm' is not used here; instead it is rendered 'Not Clytemnestra, partner of my bed, | With her may be compar'd'.⁵³⁸ Similarly, 'charm' is not used here in seventeenth century translations either.

Thomas Hobbes' translation of 1676, *Homer's Iliads in English*, for instance, translates this passage

⁵³³ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.11; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.8.

⁵³⁴ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.11.

⁵³⁵ Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.9.

⁵³⁶ Dryden, *Fables Ancient and Modern*, p.195.

⁵³⁷ Macpherson, *The Iliad of Homer*, vol.1, p.7.

⁵³⁸ James Morrice, trans., *The Iliad of Homer, Translated into English Blank Verse*, 2 vols. (London, 1809), vol.1, p.6.

as ‘With *Clytemnestra* she may well contend | For Person, or for Beauty, or for Art’.⁵³⁹ John Ogilby in his 1660 version, *Homer his Iliads*, renders this as ‘above | Faire *Clytemnestra* plac’t her in my Love’.⁵⁴⁰ George Chapman, in his early seventeenth century translation, published in *The Whole Works of Homer* (1616), has Agamemnon say ‘my rate of her selfe; which moves, my vowes to have her home, | Past *Clytemnestra*’.⁵⁴¹ The twentieth century Loeb translation in fact echoes, and is more in line with, Chapman’s version in this image than with the eighteenth century ones: Murray’s Agamemnon declares ‘I am minded far rather to keep her in my home’.⁵⁴² In choosing to use the word ‘charms’ to describe beauty, then, Cowper adheres to a contemporary depiction of a beautiful woman couched in that particular term; this is the same depiction that Pope plays with, and also cements in the collective imagination, in Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock*, ‘Now awful Beauty puts on all its Arms; | The Fair each moment rises in her Charms’ (canto 1, ll.139-140).

Pope and Cowper continue to use similar imagery when talking about the potential voyage of Chryseis: both will launch a ‘bark’ into the water to transport Chryseis the ‘sacrifice’; whereas in Murray they will ‘launch a black ship’ and ‘place on board a hecatomb’, and in Tickell they will ‘Launch now a well-trim’d Galley’ and ‘Enclose the Hecatomb’.⁵⁴³ Pope’s and Cowper’s Achilles both then ‘frown’ at Agamemnon in response to him (Pope, bk.1, l.193; Cowper, bk.1, l.183); Murray’s Agamemnon, on the other hand, has ‘an angry glance from beneath his brows’, while Tickell’s ‘Monarch casts his scornful Eyes’.⁵⁴⁴

The diction Agamemnon uses in his initial response to Achilles’ derogatory speech about his ‘shamelessness’ is similar in Pope and Cowper.⁵⁴⁵ The formulation of the king’s initial exclamation in Pope is ‘Fly, mighty Warriour! fly’ (bk.1, l.225) and in Cowper is ‘Fly, and fly now’

⁵³⁹ Thomas Hobbes, trans., *Homer’s Iliads in English* (London, 1676), p.4.

⁵⁴⁰ John Ogilby, trans., *Homer his Iliads: Translated, Adorn’d with Sculpture, and Illustrated with Annotations by John Ogilby* (London, 1660), p.7.

⁵⁴¹ Chapman, *The Whole Works of Homer*, p.3.

⁵⁴² Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.11.

⁵⁴³ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.13; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer’s Iliad. Translated*, p.11.

⁵⁴⁴ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.15; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer’s Iliad. Translated*, p.11.

⁵⁴⁵ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.15.

(bk.1, l.215); the use of the same diction, ‘fly’, is twice repeated. This construction occurs in neither Murray nor Tickell: in Murray’s rendering, Agamemnon exclaims ‘Yea, flee, if they heart bids thee’.⁵⁴⁶ Although ‘fly’ and ‘flee’ are similar in meaning, they have a slightly different connotation: in choosing ‘fly’, Pope’s and Cowper’s Agamemnons’ words retain a sense of recognition of Achilles’ previous noble achievements as a ‘Warrior’; the word ‘flee’, on the other hand, suggests an ignominious form of retreat. Tickell’s rendering, ‘Hence! cry’d the Monarch, hence!’, has the repetition contained in Pope’s and Cowper’s versions, although the word itself is different.⁵⁴⁷ Furthermore, Tickell includes explicit mention of the ‘cry’ of ‘the Monarch’, rather than simply the direct speech of the other three. Pope’s and Cowper’s translations depict Agamemnon defiantly saying that he does not ‘need’ Achilles: Pope’s Agamemnon claims ‘Thy Aid we need not’ (bk.1, l.226) and a few lines later reiterates ‘I heed thee not’ (Pope, bk.1, l.237); Cowper’s Agamemnon bellows ‘I need not thee’ (bk.1, l.226). Cowper’s diction here, in the use of ‘need’, ‘not’, and ‘thee’, particularly echoes Pope’s formation of lines of Agamemnon’s. Murray’s translation has a different tone in ‘for thee I care not’; and Tickell omits this thought entirely from Agamemnon’s speech.⁵⁴⁸

Both Pope and Cowper characterise Agamemnon as aggressively taunting Achilles for his apparent egotism; he is deemed to be vain and boastful for his seeming pride in his warrior physiognomy: Pope’s Agamemnon jeers, ‘If thou hast Strength, ’twas Heav’n that Strength bestow’d, | For know, vain Man! thy Valour is from God’ (bk.1, ll.233-234), while Cowper’s scoffs ‘yet valour is no ground | Whereon to boast, it is the gift of Heav’n’ (bk.1, ll.223-224). Neither Murray’s nor Tickell’s renderings have Agamemnon gibe Achilles in the same way in this passage: Murray’s Agamemnon calmly accepts Achilles’ valour, and only remarks ‘Though thou be very valiant, a god, I ween, gave thee this’; and Tickell writes this sentence as ‘But learn to know, | If

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid, vol.1, p.17.

⁵⁴⁷ Tickell, *The First Book of Homer’s Iliad. Translated*, p.13.

⁵⁴⁸ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.17; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer’s Iliad. Translated*, p.13.

thou art strong, 'tis *Jove* hath made thee so'.⁵⁴⁹ Within the same speech, Pope's Agamemnon speaks of Achilles' 'restless Soul' (bk.1, l.231), and Cowper's Agamemnon appeals to Achilles' 'soul' thus: 'if in thy soul thou feel | Such ardour of desire to go—begone!' (bk.1, ll.215-216). Neither Murray nor Tickell mention Achilles' 'soul' in this passage at all.⁵⁵⁰ Instead, Tickell moves the mention of Achilles' 'soul' to the next verse paragraph, which describes Achilles' response to Agamemnon's speech, and records that Achilles was 'Stung to the Soul' by Agamemnon's words.⁵⁵¹

When Agamemnon is talking about taking Chryseis back to her native land, both Pope's and Cowper's Agamemnons claim that they will do so in their own 'bark', which echoes their earlier uses of 'bark': 'Know, if the God the beauteous Dame demand, | My Bark shall waft her to her native Land' (Pope, bk.1, ll.241-242) and 'Apollo takes my lovely prize | Chrysëis, and I shall return her home | In mine own bark' (Cowper, bk.1, ll.228-230). Murray and Tickell, alternatively, both choose to use the word 'ship' instead: 'her with a ship of mine and men of mine will I send back'; and 'A Ship shall waft her to th' offended Pow'r'.⁵⁵² At the close of his speech, Agamemnon declaims that, as a punishment for impudence, Achilles will have to give him Briseis, and that this will teach Achilles that he (Agamemnon) is more powerful than him (Achilles). Both Pope and Cowper explicitly state that Agamemnon is prepared to fetch Briseis 'even' from Achilles' 'tent' if needs be: 'Ev'n in thy Tent' and 'even at thy tent' (Pope, bk.1, l.245; Cowper, bk.1, l.232). Murray's diction is different, with Agamemnon stating 'I will myself come to thy hut'; and Tickell's distinct again, 'My self will seize, and seize before thy Eyes'.⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.17; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, pp.13-14.

⁵⁵¹ Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.14.

⁵⁵² Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.17; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.14.

⁵⁵³ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.17; Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.14.

Pope's and Cowper's translations then use similar diction to detail Achilles' response to Agamemnon's threats and the state of indecision in which he finds himself. Both, for example, use the words 'blade' and 'unsheathed': 'half unsheath'd appear'd the glitt'ring Blade' (Pope, bk.1, l.260); and 'with his blade unsheathed' (Cowper, bk.1, l.239). Tickell's translation of this line is remarkably close to Pope's: 'half un-sheath'd he held the glitt'ring Blade'.⁵⁵⁴ Both Pope's and Tickell's lines owe something to Dryden's earlier translation of the same line: 'Half shone his Faulchion, and half sheath'd it stood'.⁵⁵⁵ Achilles' indecision in this moment is hinted at through the balance of Dryden's two uses of 'half'; which both Pope and Tickell pick up on, and amend to one use of 'half' and one negation in 'un'. Dryden's use of 'shone' is echoed in the later use of 'glitt'ring'. Although Cowper does not retain the shining description of the sword, he does echo Dryden's earlier translation later in the passage when he describes 'undecided' (bk.1, l.242) Achilles as standing with 'his falchion huge' (bk.1, l.243). Murray's translation, on the other hand, has a 'sword' instead of 'blade', and uses 'sheath' as a noun—'drawing from its sheath his great sword'⁵⁵⁶—and not as Pope, Tickell, and Cowper had done, as an adjective to describe the blade, 'unsheathed', as Dryden had done, 'sheath'd'.

Not only is Pope's and Cowper's diction comparable in many particular instances, the structure of larger portions of the narrative also bears comparison. The passages in the first book, where each character takes her or his turn to speak, are structured similarly: each new verse paragraph begins either with a brief description of the person who is about to respond, or of that person's emotions; for example, of Agamemnon (a), Achilles (b), Agamemnon (c), Achilles' thoughts (d), Achilles' question (e), Minerva's response (f), Achilles' response (g) [a randomly selected series in the first book]:

⁵⁵⁴ Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.14.

⁵⁵⁵ Dryden, *Fables Ancient and Modern*, p.200.

⁵⁵⁶ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.17.

Pope, bk.1:

- a) 'Then thus the King.' (l.167)
- b) 'At this, *Pelides* frowning stern, reply'd:' (l.193)
- c) 'To this the King:' (l.225)
- d) '*Achilles* heard, with Grief and Rage opprest, | His heart swell'd high, and labour'd in his Breast.' (ll.251-252)
- e) 'Descends *Minerva*, in her guardian Care, | A heav'nly Witness of the Wrongs I bear | From *Atreus*' Son?' (ll.269-271)
- f) 'Forbear! (the Progeny of *Jove* replies)' (l.273)
- g) 'To her *Pelides*.' (l.287)

Cowper, bk.1, same sequence:

- a) 'To whom the Sov'reign of the host replied.' (l.160)
- b) 'Achilles eyed him with a frown, and spake.' (l.183)
- c) 'He ceased, and Agamemnon thus replied.' (l.214)
- d) 'He ended, and the big disdainful heart | Throbb'd of Achilles;' (ll.236-237)
- e) 'Daughter of Jove, why com'st thou? that thyself | Mayst witness these affronts which I endure | From Agamemnon?' (ll.252-254)
- f) 'To whom the blue-eyed Deity.' (l.256)
- g) 'To whom Achilles.' (l.265)

The form of these two sequences is also similar. The verse paragraph openings that have a short clause simply introducing the next speaker or thought are kept short and to one line only.

Meanwhile, the more complex verse paragraph openings tend to be spread over more lines. In fact, the number of lines over which the opening statements and thoughts occur (in 'a'-'g' above) is exactly the same in Cowper's translation as it had been in Pope's: 1, 1, 1, 2, 3, 1, 1. The same is not true of Tickell's form; for example, (b) runs over two lines, and includes direct speech:

'Shameless, and poor of Soul, the Prince replies, | And on the Monarch casts his scornful Eyes'.⁵⁵⁷

Although there are obvious formal differences between Pope's and Cowper's poetical versions and Murray's prose layout, the demarcations of paragraphs and verse paragraphs are generally concurrent. There are exceptions, however. In the example (e) above, for instance, Murray does not place Achilles' speech in a new paragraph, as both Pope and Cowper do; instead Murray has continuous prose:

⁵⁵⁷ Tickell, *The First Book of Homer's Iliad. Translated*, p.11.

Achilles was seized with wonder, and turned him about, and forthwith knew Pallas Athene; and terribly did her eyes flash. Then he spake to her with winged words, and said: ‘Why art thou come again, daughter of Zeus’ ...⁵⁵⁸

By choosing to start a new verse paragraph directly with the speech of a character, as they do here, Pope and Cowper are each departing from their standard practice, which is to make a brief prior comment about who is speaking. Compare Tickell’s translation of the same passage: ‘Then thus with hasty Words. “O! heavenly-born”’.⁵⁵⁹ Perhaps Pope and Cowper make the same exception to their usual rules here because they both want particularly to highlight Achilles’ words to Minerva, and have them stand apart from the rest of the text.

Similarly, the form of Achilles’ later response to Minerva (g) is similar in Pope’s and Cowper’s translations:

To her *Pelides*. With regardful Ear
 ’Tis just, O Goddess! I thy Dictates hear.
 Hard as it is, my Vengeance I suppress:
 Those who revere the Gods, the Gods will bless.
 (Pope, bk.1, ll.287-290)

To whom Achilles. Goddess, although much
 Exasperate, I dare not disregard
 Thy word, which to obey is always best.
 Who hears the Gods, the Gods hear also him.
 (Cowper, bk.1, ll.265-268)

Both passages consist of four entire lines, comprising a discrete thought. This is in contrast, for example, to Tickell’s poetical version, which comprises a mere couplet: ‘Then He. “I yield; though with reluctant Mind. | Who yields to Heav’n shall Heav’n propitious find”’.⁵⁶⁰ Pope and Cowper elaborate far more on Achilles’ mixed feelings in this moment. Furthermore, the final clause is formulated to be more alike in Pope’s and Cowper’s than it is in either Tickell’s or Murray’s. Both Pope and Cowper use chiasmus and a caesura with each side conveying one half of this belief to show the reciprocal relationship between humans and Gods; humans to ‘the Gods’, ‘the Gods’ to humans. This balanced, reciprocal relationship between humans and Gods, which is depicted

⁵⁵⁸ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, pp.17-19.

⁵⁵⁹ Tickell, *The First Book of Homer’s Iliad. Translated*, p.15.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

formally in the use of the comma, is less overtly displayed in Tickell's version which is not punctuated in the middle. Although he does have a comma in his equivalent sentence, the balanced "AB, BA" form is not employed by Murray; his version reads, 'Whoso obeys the gods, to him do they gladly give ear'.⁵⁶¹ Tickell also chooses to use the word 'Heav'n' rather than 'Gods'. The word 'Gods' implies individuals, in a way that the place 'Heav'n' does not, and suggests a more personal relationship between Achilles and Minerva because they are both individuals 'hear[ing]' each other.

Although there is not enough space in this thesis to go through all the books of the *Iliad* to make a direct comparison between these different versions, the similarities do continue into the final passage of the poem. Cowper renders his translation similarly to Pope's, in both form and diction. Pope's lines are:

Soon as *Aurora*, Daughter of the Dawn,
With rosy Lustre streak'd...
(Pope, bk.24, ll.999-1000)

Cowper's lines read:

But when *Aurora*, daughter of the Dawn,
Redden'd the east...
(bk.24, ll.993-994)

Both poets refer directly to 'Aurora', who is the goddess of the dawn in Roman mythology, and use exactly the same phrase to describe her, 'daughter of the Dawn'. Pope's and Cowper's personification here is in contrast to Murray's translation, which reads 'But soon as early Dawn appeared, the rosy-fingered, then gathered the folk'.⁵⁶² In 1773, however, Macpherson had used the same image as Pope, 'But when the daughter of the dawn,—the rosy fingered *Aurora* appeared'.⁵⁶³ An earlier eighteenth century writer, Ozell, in his 1712 translation, had also used the figure of 'Aurora' in this image, but he did not describe her as 'Daughter of the Dawn': 'Soon as

⁵⁶¹ Murray, *The Iliad, With an English Translation*, vol.1, p.19.

⁵⁶² *Ibid*, vol.2, pp.621-623.

⁵⁶³ Macpherson, *The Iliad of Homer*, vol.2, p.442.

Aurora usher'd in the Day, All to the Pile return'd'.⁵⁶⁴ I cannot find a similar construction of this image from English translations of the previous century. Hobbes, for example, in his 1676 translation wrote, 'When morning was displai'd, | Again the *Trojans* to the Pile returned'.⁵⁶⁵ In his earlier 1660 translation Ogilby had written, 'Next Morne about the washed Pyle They prest'.⁵⁶⁶ While Chapman, writing about a century before Pope, had written, 'But when th' eleventh morne let on earth, her rosie fingers shone'.⁵⁶⁷ The introduction of 'Aurora' into this image seems to have come into English translations from Anne Dacier's French translation (originally published in 1699, with a new edition published in 1712). In French, 'aurore' means 'dawn'; and Dacier plays on this in her version to personify the image, 'Le lendemain, dès que l'Aurore vient ramener le jour'.⁵⁶⁸ Dacier's phrase roughly translates as 'The next day, as soon as Dawn brings back the daylight'. This personification of the dawn as Aurora then filters into English translations of the *Iliad* through Ozell's 1712 edition, which self-consciously announces in its title that it uses the translation 'by Madam Dacier' and is 'Done from the French by Mr. Ozell'. This is not to say that the personification of Aurora as symbolic of the dawn was exclusive to Dacier, or indeed French writers in general. Chapman, for example, in his translation of Homer's *Odyssey*, in the fourth book, had used the image: 'Of night fell on vs; and to sleepe we fell. | Rosie Aurora rose; we rose as well'.⁵⁶⁹ It was also used repeatedly in original English poetry, in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, Robin warns Oberon, 'My fairy lord, this must be done with haste, | For night-swift dragons cut the clouds full fast, | And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger'.⁵⁷⁰ While Pope may have appropriated the use of 'Aurora' fairly directly, then, the image of her as 'daughter of the dawn' is less straightforward—Aurora is generally conceived of as the goddess of the dawn,

⁵⁶⁴ Ozell, *The Iliad of Homer*, vol.5, p.134.

⁵⁶⁵ Hobbes, *Homer's Iliads in English*, p.384.

⁵⁶⁶ Ogilby, *Homer his Iliads*, p.518.

⁵⁶⁷ Chapman, *The Whole Works of Homer*, p.341.

⁵⁶⁸ Anne Dacier, *L'Iliade d'Homere, Traduite en François, avec des Remarques. Nouvelle Edition: Revûe & Corrigée, où l'on a mis les Remarques Sous le Texte*, 3 vols. (Compagnie d'Amsterdam, 1712), vol.3, p.371.

⁵⁶⁹ Chapman, *The Whole Works of Homer*, p.58.

⁵⁷⁰ Act III, sc.ii, ll.391-393 (*Royal Shakespeare Company Complete Works*, p.396).

rather than its ‘daughter’, so the phrase is rather peculiar, and appears to be original to Pope (I have been unable to find a use of the phrase prior to Pope’s use of it). The image ‘*Aurora*, daughter of the dawn’, furthermore, clearly struck Pope and his associates, as the precise phrase is used no fewer than three times in his subsequent collaborative translation of Homer’s *Odyssey*, which was completed in 1720 (bk.3, 1.516; bk.3, 1.623; and bk.17, 1.1).⁵⁷¹ The fact that both Macpherson and Cowper—who are the only two eighteenth-century writers after Pope, yet discovered, to have published translations of the *Iliad* which continue to the twenty-fourth book—use this unusual image identically to Pope, whether unconsciously or not, implies a decided sympathy with Pope’s vision of the closing passage of the *Iliad*. The allusion to Pope, evident in Macpherson and Cowper, fades from later translations. In the early nineteenth century, for example, in his *Iliad* of 1809, Morrice omits the mention of ‘Aurora’ and ‘dawn’ entirely, and renders the passage, ‘When now the rosy-fing’red Morn arose’.⁵⁷²

It is clear, when one compares Cowper’s translation with Pope’s, that there are numerous similarities of form and diction common to both. The foregoing textual references indicate, moreover, that there is a stronger relationship between Cowper’s translation and Pope’s than the mere fact that they derive from the same underlying source. What these parallels demonstrate, in my submission, is that, notwithstanding his ostensible disparagement of Pope’s translation, Cowper nonetheless borrowed from it in constructing his own. Despite Cowper’s declared distaste for heroic couplets and espousal of blank verse, other elements of Cowper’s translation make evident his sympathy with Pope’s. My aim in comparing Pope’s and Cowper’s translations of Homer’s *Iliad* is not to suggest that Pope is necessarily the only source that Cowper used for his translation. Instead I have shown that, despite Cowper’s apparent hostility to Pope’s translation, there are local instances in both of their texts that demonstrate a sympathy in their interpretations of Homer. In

⁵⁷¹ Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.9, p.112; vol.9, p.118; vol.10, p.132.

⁵⁷² Morrice, *The Iliad of Homer*, vol.2, p.343.

that sense, we can take Cowper at face value when he speaks of the ‘merit [Pope] can justly claim as the translator of this chief of poets’.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷³ Cowper, *Translations of Homer*, vol.1, p.vi.

CHAPTER THREE: ‘a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition’

Unluckily he took the Plain, when the Heights were within his reach
 William Wordsworth ⁵⁷⁴

*When a man writes to the world...he takes himself to be inform'd in what he writes,
 as well as any that writ before him*
 John Milton ⁵⁷⁵

James Sutherland has argued, with a playful nod to the religious implications of Pope’s name, that ‘Wordsworth chose to see Pope as a sort of anti-Christ of poetry’. ⁵⁷⁶ Wordsworth may have worried about the poisonous elements of some of Pope’s poetic legacy during the latter half of the eighteenth century, but he stressed his belief that ultimately this poisoning would pass. In a letter to Walter Scott, dated 18 January 1808, alongside his worry about ‘the poison of Pope’s Homer’, he notes his ‘very high admiration of the talent’ of Pope, whom, along with Dryden, he classes as a ‘good writer’, and a writer by whom the ‘Country will be benefited greatly’ in the long run. ⁵⁷⁷ It is only ‘thus far’ in literary history that Wordsworth thinks their writing has ‘done more harm than good’. ⁵⁷⁸ The implication is that once the negative influence of unthinking imitators and closed-minded critic-admirers can be countered—‘completely...carr[ied] off’ ⁵⁷⁹—the talent reflected in Pope’s and Dryden’s poetry will be what shines through. At this time, Scott was putting the final

⁵⁷⁴ Wordsworth to Dyce, 12 January 1829: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.5, p.3.

⁵⁷⁵ Milton, *Areopagitica: A Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicens’d Printing, to the Parliament of England* (London, 1644), p.21.

⁵⁷⁶ James Sutherland, *Wordsworth and Pope* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1944), p.5.

⁵⁷⁷ Wordsworth to Scott, 18 January 1808: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.2, p.191.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, vol.2, p.191.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, vol.2, p.191.

touches to his compendious edition of Dryden's *Works*, which would be published later that year.⁵⁸⁰ Unless we surmise that Wordsworth is being extremely rude to his friend, and questioning the value of Scott's endeavour in compiling eighteen volumes of Dryden's *Works*, we should not suppose that Wordsworth means that neither Pope nor Dryden deserves to be read, when he writes that 'thus far' their poetry has 'done more harm than good'. On the contrary, he proclaims himself 'curious' to read Scott's edition of Dryden.⁵⁸¹

Wordsworth argues as proof against his supposed indifference to Pope's and Dryden's poetry, that he has much of it off pat. In a conversation with his biographer nephew, Christopher, Wordsworth remarks, 'I have been charged by some with disparaging Pope and Dryden. This is not so. I have committed much of both to memory'.⁵⁸² Wordsworth implies that the very fact that he has chosen to learn large parts of Pope and Dryden should be treated as evidence of his approval of their poetry. Indeed, so outraged is Wordsworth by Hazlitt's criticism of his apparent denigration of Pope and Dryden that he is again impelled to proclaim how much Pope he knows by heart. Hazlitt had written in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825): 'It is mortifying to hear him speak of Pope and Dryden, whom, because they have been supposed to have all the possible excellencies of poetry, he will allow to have none'.⁵⁸³ When Wordsworth read this passage in 1839, in Barron Field's manuscript of his *Memoirs of the Life and Poetry of William Wordsworth*, he indignantly scribbled in the margin:

Monstrous again—I have ten times the knowledge of Pope's writings & of Dryden's also, that ever this writer had—to this day I believe I could repeat with a little previous rummaging of my memory several 1000 lines of Pope—⁵⁸⁴

Wordsworth also underlines Hazlitt's words 'It is mortifying to hear him speak of Pope and Dryden' and 'he will allow to have none', which suggests that, contrary to Hazlitt's opinion, he

⁵⁸⁰ *The Works of John Dryden: Now First Collected*, ed. Walter Scott, 18 vols. (London, 1808).

⁵⁸¹ Wordsworth to Scott, 18 January 1808: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.2, p.191.

⁵⁸² Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, 2 vols. (London, 1851), vol.2, p.470.

⁵⁸³ Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age, or, Contemporary Portraits* (London, 1825), p.245.

⁵⁸⁴ Barron Field, *Barron Field's Memoirs of Wordsworth*, ed. Geoffrey Little (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1975), p.37, f.43.

does appreciate their ‘excellencies of poetry’.⁵⁸⁵ Wordsworth had a strained literary relationship with Hazlitt, which had begun as a result of Hazlitt’s series of reviews in *The Examiner* on the subject of Wordsworth’s *The Excursion*.⁵⁸⁶ David Bromwich has argued, indeed, that Wordsworth’s personal ‘resentment’ for Hazlitt ‘outweighed’ all other feelings about him.⁵⁸⁷ Whatever Wordsworth may have felt about Hazlitt though, there was something particularly offensive to Wordsworth in Hazlitt’s questioning his treatment of Pope. In the same passage quoted in Field’s manuscript, Hazlitt had asserted that ‘Our critic has a great dislike to Gray’, but Wordsworth does not leap to defend his appreciation of Gray as he does to make clear his liking for Pope.⁵⁸⁸

Wordsworth does not praise Pope very frequently, but we should not take this absence to imply indifference or ambivalence. In another outburst against Hazlitt’s *Spirit of the Age* quoted in Field’s *Memoirs*, next to a remark of Hazlitt’s about Shakespeare—‘We do not think our author has any cordial sympathy with Shakespeare’⁵⁸⁹—Wordsworth writes:

This is monstrous! I extol Chaucer & others because the world at large knows little or nothing of their merits. Modesty & deep feeling how superfluous a thing it is to praise Shakespere [*sic*] have kept me often & almost habitually silent upon that subject. Who thinks it necessary to praise the Sun?⁵⁹⁰

The extent to which Wordsworth explicitly praises a poet is, accordingly, not necessarily a reliable guide as to his true appreciation of the ‘merits’ of that poet. Pope’s is among the ‘great names’ of poetry, Wordsworth writes to William Mathews, on 21 March 1796.⁵⁹¹ We might use the same

⁵⁸⁵ Field, *Barron Field’s Memoirs of Wordsworth*, p.37, f.43.

⁵⁸⁶ See ‘Character of Mr. Wordsworth’s New Poem, The Excursion’, *The Examiner* 347 (21 August 1814), pp.541-542; ‘On Mr. Wordsworth’s Excursion’, *The Examiner* 348 (28 August 1814), pp.555-558; and ‘On Mr. Wordsworth’s Excursion (Continued)’, *The Examiner* 353 (2 October 1814), pp.636-638. For the poem itself, see Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, eds. Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁵⁸⁷ Bromwich, *Hazlitt: The Mind of A Critic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p.159.

⁵⁸⁸ Field, *Barron Field’s Memoirs of Wordsworth*, p.37. See Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age*, p.200.

⁵⁸⁹ In fact Field slightly misquotes Hazlitt by omitting a ‘very’. Hazlitt had written ‘We do not think our author has any very cordial sympathy with Shakespear’ (*The Spirit of the Age*, p.245). Field’s omission makes the complaint sound harsher than Hazlitt intended it to be.

⁵⁹⁰ Field, *Barron Field’s Memoirs of Wordsworth*, p.36, f.40.

⁵⁹¹ Wordsworth to Mathews, 21 March 1796: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.1, p.169.

logic Wordsworth uses against praising Shakespeare to explain why he does not 'extol' Pope; he assumes that his appreciation for and knowledge of Pope's poetry will be taken as read.

Reading Pope seems to have been a common practice in the Wordsworth family from an early age. When Dorothy writes to her friend, Jane Pollard, on 30 April 1790, among gossip about marriage and inquires after health, she casually reveals 'I am at present reading Pope's works'.⁵⁹² Wordsworth frequently quotes Pope in his letters. He writes humorously of his aversion to letter-writing in a letter to 'My dear Wrangham', dated 18 January 1816:

I am painfully conscious how poor a genius I possess for epistolary communications; and if I had any native flow of this kind, my miserable penmanship would at once check it. How can such matters, and in such a garb, be worth any body's acceptance? This is the interrogation which now and always stares me in the face when I would converse with my friends by means of paper and ink. — 'Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid' [.]⁵⁹³

Wordsworth is playfully quoting a line from Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* (l.51), itself an epistolary poem. Wordsworth's penchant throughout his letters for including quotations from Pope's writings demonstrates his familiarity with and affinity for the latter author.

On occasion Wordsworth makes explicit his approval of Pope's poetry. In April 1842, when Wordsworth was in his seventies, he wrote to Viscount Mahon, that Pope's were 'of the best works in Poetry'; 'especially the Rape of the Lock', but also 'the Windsor Forest' and 'the Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard', he argued, were 'most poetical works'.⁵⁹⁴ Indeed, he categorises Pope, along with Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, and Dryden, as the five poets who comprise the 'Poetic Genius of England' (Wordsworth's categorisation does not include writers of drama).⁵⁹⁵ Just as Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope* has been misunderstood, so Wordsworth's attitude to Pope has been misconstrued and simplified: to classify a poet amongst the top five poetic geniuses of the country's whole history is hardly to denounce him or her as worthless.

⁵⁹² Dorothy Wordsworth to Pollard, 30 April 1790: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.1, p.30.

⁵⁹³ Wordsworth to Wrangham, 18 January 1816: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.3, p.275.

⁵⁹⁴ Wordsworth to Mahon, 11 April 1842: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.7, p.324.

⁵⁹⁵ Wordsworth to Dyce, 19 April 1830: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.5, p.234.

The belief that Wordsworth had contempt for Pope's poetry pervades much literary criticism. In Michael Mason's recent edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, for example, he suggests that the epigraph on the title page of the 1802 version, '*Quam nihil ad genium, Papiniane, tuum!*' means something akin, in Wordsworth's circle, to 'worthless and insignificant according to your taste, Papinian!'.⁵⁹⁶ Papinian was a celebrated jurist of classical Rome. Mason then refers to Heathcote Garrod's inference that 'Papinian' is a playful misunderstanding of 'Popean'.⁵⁹⁷ Thus, Mason then implies, Pope's poetry is considered by Wordsworth to be worthless and insignificant. The epigraph could alternatively be translated, however, as 'How absolutely *not* after your liking, O learned jurist!'.⁵⁹⁸ This translation is playfully defiant but respectful, which casts a different light on how Wordsworth might view his relationship with Pope.

We can allow that, in claiming to be able to recite thousands of lines of Pope, Wordsworth's indignation may have inclined him to hyperbole; what is not in doubt is that Wordsworth was unashamedly well-versed in the poetry of Pope, and that these remembered lines percolated through his mind. Wordsworth's inveterate borrowings from the poetry of others has long been recognised.⁵⁹⁹ In this chapter, I am going to examine ways in which Pope's lines filter into Wordsworth's poetry; how Wordsworth uses Pope's poetry to construct his own independent poetic vision; and how Pope's poetry contributed to the development of Wordsworth's conception of what good poetry might be.

⁵⁹⁶ Michael Mason, ed., *Lyrical Ballads*, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), p.95.

⁵⁹⁷ Heathcote Garrod, *Wordsworth: Lectures and Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), p.152.

⁵⁹⁸ Nicola Trott, 'Wordsworth's Career Prospects: "peculiar language" and Public Epigraphs', *Classical Literary Careers and their Reception*, eds. Philip Hardie and Helen Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.275-286, p.282.

⁵⁹⁹ See, for example, Edwin Stein, who refers to Wordsworth's 'habitual allusiveness' in *Wordsworth's Art of Allusion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), p.vii.

Was it for this?

During the period in which he first began to write *The Prelude*, ‘Wordsworth increasingly came to measure himself against’ previous ‘English writers’.⁶⁰⁰ Previous poets were entities against which he could measure himself; they were also a means through which Wordsworth facilitated his self-discovery as a poet. It is unsurprising then, as Nicholas Roe has contended, that ‘Pope and Milton preside together in Wordsworth’s self-discovery as poet of *The Prelude*’.⁶⁰¹ I would push further Roe’s comment that Pope is central to Wordsworth’s ‘self-discovery as poet of *The Prelude*’, and suggest that Pope is integral to Wordsworth’s self-discovery as poet *tout court*.

The opening line of Wordsworth’s two-part *Prelude* of 1798-1799 comprises only four monosyllables: ‘Was it for this’ (pt.1, l.1).⁶⁰² The abrupt style of the opening was clearly a considered choice. ‘The fact that Wordsworth didn’t write an introduction in December 1799’, notes Jonathan Wordsworth in *The Borders of Vision* (1982), despite ‘carrying out other needful alterations before the poem was fair-copied, suggests very strongly that he had come to find the abruptness acceptable’.⁶⁰³ Stephen Parrish, in the introduction to his Cornell edition of the two-part *Prelude* (1977), asserts that ‘this’ in Wordsworth’s opening line ‘seems here to have been the powerful disturbance of mind occasioned by a superabundant flow of inspiration’.⁶⁰⁴ Parrish is paraphrasing Wordsworth’s own famous words in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800).⁶⁰⁵ In the opening line, Wordsworth is abruptly announcing his intention to write an epic poem, and the ‘flow

⁶⁰⁰ James A. Butler, ‘Poetry 1798-1807’, *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.38-54, p.46.

⁶⁰¹ Nicholas Roe, ‘Pope, Politics and Wordsworth’s *Prelude*’, *Pope: New Contexts*, ed. David Fairer (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp.189-204, p.202.

⁶⁰² See Wordsworth, *The Prelude, 1798-1799*, ed. Stephen Parrish (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

⁶⁰³ Jonathan Wordsworth, *William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p.420, f.2.

⁶⁰⁴ Stephen Parrish, ed., introduction to *The Prelude, 1798-1799, The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.6.

⁶⁰⁵ Wordsworth had written: ‘For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men...’ (Wordsworth, 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads, The Cornell Wordsworth*, pp.744-745).

of inspiration' in starting this endeavour. John A. Hodgson has placed Wordsworth's opening words in an English literary tradition prevalent in the eighteenth century.⁶⁰⁶ James Thomson uses a similar form of words in *The Seasons* (first published complete in 1730), where he laments the bees that are killed by humans rifling their hives for honey:

And was it then for this ye roam'd the spring,
Intent from flower to flower? for this ye toil'd
Ceaseless the burning summer-heats away?
For this in autumn search'd the blooming waste,
Nor lost one sunny gleam? for this sad fate?
(‘Autumn’, ll.1085-1089)⁶⁰⁷

Thomson's four poems comprising *The Seasons* are known to have been an inspiration for Wordsworth's poetry.⁶⁰⁸ Other, perhaps less well-known, examples of the eighteenth century tradition to which Hodgson alludes, include Richard Jago's 'The Goldfinches: An Elegy' (published in Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* 1755) and William Shenstone's 'Elegy XVIII' (published in 1764).⁶⁰⁹ Jago makes repeated use of the same formulation—'Was it for this'—in his poem, which evokes the grief of two goldfinches whose nest is plundered:

Was it for this, alas! with weary bill,
Was it for this, I pois'd the unwieldy straw?
For this I pick'd the moss from yonder hill?
Nor shun'd the pond'rous chat along to draw?
(‘The Goldfinches: An Elegy’, ll.53-56)

In almost parodic fashion, Jago then proceeds to have three ensuing stanzas with the same formulation:

⁶⁰⁶ John A. Hodgson, “‘Was It for This...?’: Wordsworth's Virgilian Questionings”, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 33.2 (Summer, 1991), pp.125-136.

⁶⁰⁷ James Thomson, *The Seasons* (London, 1730), p.179.

⁶⁰⁸ See Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993-1995), vol.1, pp.136-137. Wordsworth adored Thomson's *The Seasons* from a very early age. For an outline of Wordsworth's use of *The Seasons* whilst still at Hawkshead see Kenneth R. Johnston, “‘While We Were Schoolboys’: Hawkshead Education and Reading”, *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: William Wordsworth*, ed. Harold Bloom, rev. ed. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2007), pp.163-190, pp.176-178.

⁶⁰⁹ Richard Jago, 'The Goldfinches: An Elegy', *A Collection of Poems in Four Volumes. By Several Hands*, ed. Robert Dodsley, 4 vols. (London, 1755), vol.4, pp.318-321; and William Shenstone, 'Elegy XVIII', *The Works in Verse and Prose, of William Shenstone, Esq; Most of which were Never Before Printed*, 2 vols. (London, 1764), vol.1, pp.65-68.

Was it for this, I cull'd the wool with care?
 And strove with all my skill our work to crown?
 For this, with pain I bent the stubborn hair?
 And lin'd our cradle with the thistle's down?

Was it for this, my freedom I resign'd;
 And ceas'd to rove from beauteous plain to plain?
 For this I sate at home whole days confin'd,
 And bore the scorching heat, and pealing rain?

Was it for this, my watchful eyes grow dim?
 The crimson roses on my cheek turn pale?
 ('The Goldfinches: An Elegy', ll.57-66)

Shenstone takes on the voice of 'a discerning shepherd' who is 'lamenting the state of the woollen manufactory'.⁶¹⁰ A stanza of Shenstone's poem reads:

Was it for this, by constant vigils worn,
 I met the terrors of an early grave?
 For this, I led them from the pointed thorn?
 For this I bath'd 'em in the lucid wave?
 ('Elegy XVIII', ll.33-36)

We find a similar construction, at the start of a stanza, in the first canto of Byron's *Don Juan* (the first two cantos of which were first published anonymously in 1819). Byron was self-consciously attempting, in this work, to craft an epic poem; in a later canto, he referred to it as 'this Epic Satire' (canto 14, l.790). In canto one, Julia rebukes her husband Don Alfonso, who is searching her room for a secreted lover:

Was it for this that no Cortejo e'er
 I yet have chosen from out the youth of Seville?
 Is it for this I scarce went any where,
 Except to bull-fights, mass, play, rout, and revel?
 Is it for this, whate'er my suitors were,
 I favour'd none—nay, was most uncivil?
 Is it for this that General Count O'Reilly,
 Who took Algiers, declares I used him vilely?
 (*Don Juan*, canto 1, ll.1177-1184)

Byron is playing here with this tradition, and with the idea that 'My poem's epic, and is meant to be...After the style of Virgil and of Homer, | So that my name of Epic's no misnomer' (*Don Juan*,

⁶¹⁰ Shenstone, 'Elegy XVIII', *Works*, vol.1, p.65.

canto 1, ll.1593-1600). Pope too had used this construction in *The Rape of the Lock* when Thalestris laments the wasted hours of Belinda's life:

Was it for this you took such constant Care
The *Bodkin*, *Comb*, and *Essence* to prepare;
For this your Locks in Paper-Durance bound,
For this with tort'ring Irons wreath'd around?
For this with Fillets strain'd your tender Head,
And bravely bore the double Loads of Lead?
(canto 4, ll.97-102)

Hodgson identifies in this questioning construction a form that references Virgil's *Aeneid*. There are two relevant sections of Virgil's poem. The first comes late in book two. Troy has been overwhelmed and Aeneas, instructed by his mother Venus, has returned to his home to find his father Anchises, wife Creusa, and son Ascanius. Anchises refuses to flee Troy with the others. Rather than leave his father behind, Aeneas resigns himself to the possibility of his family's being massacred. At this point in the poem, Aeneas is ignorant of his great Roman destiny. The second reference appears in a section of the poem in counterpoint to that at the fall of Troy; the scene is at Carthage and the destiny in question is Dido's. At the end of the fourth book, Anna, Dido's sister, returns to Carthage in horror to find Dido committing suicide on the sacrificial pyre raised purportedly for the immolation of Dido's mementos of Aeneas (his clothes and sword, and their marital bed).

Hodgson asserts that 'To any eighteenth-century student...the Englishing of Aeneas' and Anna's questions as "Was it for this?" would have been straightforward'.⁶¹¹ Several English translations of the *Aeneid* use this phrase—"Was it for this?"—at the opening of Aeneas' and Anna's speeches. In the Earl of Surrey's sixteenth-century translation, Aeneas asks in book two, 'O sacred mother was it then for this...?'.⁶¹² In the popular eighteenth century translation by Joseph Trapp, the same section is rendered 'Was it then for This, | Celestial Parent...?' (bk.2, ll.828-829),

⁶¹¹ Hodgson, 'Wordsworth's Virgilian Questionings', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* (1991), p.132.

⁶¹² Henry Howard [Earl of Surrey], trans., *Certain Bokes of Virgiles Aenæis turned into English Meter* (London, 1557), [p.23].

and the later speech of Anna is translated as ‘Was it for This, | My Sister?’ (bk.4, ll.895-896).⁶¹³ Christopher Pitt, in the 1753 translation accompanying Joseph Warton’s *Eclogues and Georgics* (referred to in chapter one), likewise has Anna ask, ‘Was it for this my hands prepar’d the pyre, | The fatal altar, and the funeral fire?’ (bk.4, ll.971-972).⁶¹⁴ At the turn of the nineteenth century, in a prose edition intended for use in schools, Joseph Davidson translated the two passages as ‘Was it for this, my indulgent mother, that you saved me...?’ and ‘O Sister, was this *then* your Meaning?...*Was it for this* I raised *that Pile* with these very Hands...?’.⁶¹⁵ This questioning mode remains in other translations that do not include the ‘Was it’ precursor to the phrase. John Ogilby’s 1649 translation has Aeneas ask, ‘For this blest mother, me through sword and fire | Didst bring?’, and Anna, ‘For this, O sister? was this fraud your aime? | For this the pile, fire, *Altars?*’.⁶¹⁶ Wordsworth owned a copy of Ogilby’s translation.⁶¹⁷ Dryden also uses ‘for this’ in his translation. Dryden’s Aeneas asks ‘O Goddess Mother...Did you for this, unhappy me convey | Through Foes and Fires to see my House a Prey?’ (bk.2, ll.903-906), while his Anna cries:

Was all that Pomp of Woe for this prepar’d,
 These Fires, this Fun’ral Pile, these Altars rear’d;
 Was all this Train of Plots contriv’d, said she,
 All only to deceive unhappy me?
 (bk.4, ll.971-974)⁶¹⁸

Wordsworth embellished his own translation of the *Aeneid*, in line with his ‘principle of compensation’, to keep it a ‘spirited translation’.⁶¹⁹ Even so, he did not dispense with the by now traditional question (‘for this...?’), as in his rendering of Aeneas’ lament:

⁶¹³ Joseph Trapp, trans., *The Works of Virgil: Translated into English Blank Verse. With Large Explanatory Notes, and Critical Observations*, 3 vols. (London, 1731), vol.2, p.127, p.274.

⁶¹⁴ Christopher Pitt [and Joseph Warton], trans., *The Works of Virgil*, vol.2, p.345.

⁶¹⁵ Joseph Davidson, trans., *The Works of Virgil Translated into English Prose, as near the Original as the different Idioms of the Latin and English Languages will allow. With the Latin Text and Order of Construction on the same Page; and Critical, Historical, Geographical, and Classical Notes, in English, from the Best Commentators both Ancient and Modern, beside a very great Number of Notes entirely New. For the Use of Schools, as well as of Private Gentlemen*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (London, 1794-1801), vol.1, p.289; vol.2, p.56.

⁶¹⁶ John Ogilby, trans., *The Works of Publius Virgilius Maro* (London, 1649), p.46, p.95.

⁶¹⁷ See Wordsworth’s letter to Walter Scott, 18 January 1808: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.2, p.190, f.4.

⁶¹⁸ Dryden, trans., *The Works of Virgil: Containing his Pastorals, Georgics, and Æneis. Translated into English Verse; by Mr. Dryden. Adorn’d with a Hundred Sculptures* (London, 1697), p.311, p.375.

⁶¹⁹ Wordsworth, ‘Notes to Appendix A’, *Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, vol.4, p.470. See chapter two.

For this, benignant Mother! didst thou lead
 My steps along a way from danger freed,
 That I might see remorseless Men invade
 The holiest places that these roofs o'ershade?
 See Father, Consort, Son, all tinged and dyed
 Each in the other's life-blood, perish side by side?
 (bk.2, ll.892-897) ⁶²⁰

Given Wordsworth's familiarity with the English practice of translating Virgil in this way, it is likely that he was deliberately playing on this established convention in the opening of *The Prelude*. Wordsworth is considering his own destiny as a poet, just as Aeneas and Anna had considered the desperate-seeming destinies of themselves and Dido. Wordsworth's questioning mode is apparent not just in the opening line, but in the subsequent repeated questions in the opening section, beginning 'For this didst thou...' (pt.1, l.6) and 'Was it for this...' (pt.1, l.17).

Robert Griffin surmises in *Wordsworth's Pope* that the 'phrase ['Was it for this...?'] is overdetermined by the time it reaches Wordsworth', but that he deliberately 'use[d] Pope's phrasing' to contrast the comparison of Belinda with Dido in *The Rape of the Lock* against his own predicament. ⁶²¹ Griffin comments that Pope's 'scene in which Thalestris attempts to comfort Belinda is a reworking of the Death of Dido', while in *The Prelude* 'Wordsworth here is...Dido'. ⁶²²

Like Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, Pope also draws on Virgil's *Aeneid* in the opening of *The Rape of the Lock*. Pope's claim of 'What mighty Contests...I sing' (canto 1, ll.2-3) humorously alludes to the opening of Virgil's poem. Dryden, for example, renders Virgil's opening words as 'ARMS, and the Man I sing (*Aeneid*, bk.1, l.1). ⁶²³

In *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Prelude*, respectively, Pope and Wordsworth are positioning their poems within, and simultaneously against, epic inheritance. By drawing attention to aspects of their poems through their Virgilian playfulness, they are in fact drawing attention to

⁶²⁰ Wordsworth, *Translations of Chaucer and Virgil*, ed. Bruce Edward Graver (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), p.241.

⁶²¹ Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope*, p.106.

⁶²² Ibid, p.104, p.106.

⁶²³ Dryden, *The Works of Virgil*, p.201.

their innovativeness. Both poets deliberately use this familiar form of words in order to explore their own notions of what good poetry is.

In the first century AD the historian Curtius noted that Thalestris, queen of the Amazons, gave ‘notice the queen was eager to meet and become acquainted with’ Alexander the Great, but when she did meet him she ‘was unimpressed with Alexander’s slight stature and ordinary appearance, which did not live up to the fame of his heroic exploits’.⁶²⁴ Nevertheless, she was still ‘intent to become pregnant with his child’ and pointed out ‘that she was a woman worthy of giving him an heir’.⁶²⁵ It was apparently a joke among Pope’s circle to compare Pope to Alexander the Great. In a letter to Wycherley, dated 23 June 1705, Pope self-deprecatingly responds to the comparison:

’Tis certain, the greatest magnifying Glasses in the World are a Man’s own Eyes, when they look upon his own Person; yet even in those, I cannot fancy my self so extremely like *Alexander the Great*, as you wou’d persuade me: If I must be like him, ’tis you will make me so, by complimenting me into a better opinion of my self than I deserve[.]⁶²⁶

Pope proceeds to write, in the same irreverent vein, that if he were deluded enough to believe that he was like Alexander the Great, that would place him in the company of ‘incurable’ ‘Madmen’ and ‘Poets’ ‘irrecoverably Be-Mus’d’, and would ‘feed’ his ‘Vanity’—which, he jokes, ‘for the most part is all that is fed in a Poet’:

In our Days, the greatest obligation you can lay upon a Wit, is to make a Fool of him. For as when Madmen are found incurable, wise Men give them their Way, and please them as well as they can; so when those incorrigible things, Poets, are once irrecoverably Be-Mus’d, the best way both to quiet them, and secure your selves from the effects of their Frenzy, is to feed their Vanity; (which indeed for the most part is all that is fed in a Poet.)⁶²⁷

The suggestion is that only in a poetic ‘Frenzy’ might he believe that he is like Alexander the Great. For all Pope’s apparent self-deprecation here, his control of language shows his confident mastery.

⁶²⁴ Adrienne Mayor, *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p.321.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.321.

⁶²⁶ Pope to Wycherley, 23 June 1705: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.9.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.10.

He sums up his point in punning on ‘Be-Mus’d’: the poet is bemused when the poet is be-mused. Pope repeats these words and thoughts (and jokes) almost verbatim five or so years later, in a letter in response to Caryll, dated 25 January 1710/1711, at around the time he was composing *The Rape of the Lock*.⁶²⁸ Pope had sent Caryll ‘some verses’, and in response to Caryll’s praise of them, Pope writes that of ‘my verses I may truly say they have never been the cause of any great vanity in me...I appear not the great Alexander Mr Caryll is so civil to [compare me to], but that little Alexander the women laugh at. But if I must be like Alexander, ’tis in being complimented into too good an opinion of my self’.⁶²⁹ Again, Pope retorts that the only response to a frenzied poet is to feed his or her vanity, ‘which indeed for the most part is all that’s overfed in a poet’.⁶³⁰

It was not only in private correspondence that Pope played with the comparison between smallness and greatness. Pope translated Statius’ *Thebais*, one of the characters in which is the small but brave warrior Tydeus.⁶³¹ Book One of this translation was first published, as the opening poem, in Bernard Lintott’s *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations* (1712), a volume which also contained, as its final poem, the two canto version of *The Rape of the Locke*.⁶³² In Pope’s *Iliad*, Minerva praises the bravery (cf. bk.5, l.1004) and daring (cf. bk.5, l.1002) of Tydeus’ ‘glorious Toils’ (bk.5, l.1000) in ‘the War’ (bk.5, l.1001), and pays tribute to ‘Tydeus’ Kind, | Whose little Body lodg’d a mighty Mind’ (bk.5, ll.998-999). Along with Joseph Addison, Pope also published papers on the clubs of little and great men in *The Spectator* and *The Guardian*. In *The Spectator* No. 42 (18 April 1711), Addison writes of the ‘English’ that ‘One would believe, that we thought a great Man and a tall Man the same thing’.⁶³³ Pope, writing as ‘Bob Short’, the secretary of the Club of Little Men, stood up in defence of ‘little Men’ in an article in *The Guardian*, No. 92 (26

⁶²⁸ Pope to Caryll, 25 January 1710/11: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, pp.113-115.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol.1, pp.113-114.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.114.

⁶³¹ See ‘The First Book of Statius his Thebais’, in *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, eds. E. Audra and Audrey Williams in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.1, pp.405-446.

⁶³² Bernard Lintott, ed., *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations. By Several Hands* (London, 1712): ‘The First Book of Statius his Thebais’, pp.5-56; and ‘The Rape of the Locke’, pp.355-376.

⁶³³ Addison, *The Spectator*, vol.1, p.178.

June 1713), arguing ‘We are likewise particularly careful to communicate in the Club all such Passages of History, or Characters of Illustrious Personages, as any way reflect Honour on little Men’; particularly ‘never forgetting Little *Alexander the Great*’.⁶³⁴

For all his posturing, it is clear from his tone that Pope quite enjoyed playing with the comparison between himself and Alexander the Great. Considering the notion of scale is, in fact, an integral element in the form of mock-epic itself. It would have been surprising had Pope not had this comparison in mind when he composed Thalestris’ speech in *The Rape of the Lock*. Instead of giving Alexander the Great an heir, she will give Alexander, the great poet, the means through which to stake his claim as a worthy poet. He will not be among the mere ‘Wits [who] take Lodgings in the Sound of *Bow*’ (canto 4, l.118), his poetic reputation will not ‘perish’ (canto 4, l.120), he will not commit to his cause with the effort that Belinda had to hers only to be thwarted. Thalestris asks of Belinda, ‘And shall this Prize, th’ inestimable Prize, | Expos’d thro’ Crystal to the gazing Eyes...for ever blaze?’ (canto 4, ll.113-116). Pope answers at the close of the poem that his poetry will immortalise her, her apotheosis being ‘mark’d by none but quick Poetic Eyes’ (canto 5, l.124). He simultaneously suggests that he too will be immortalised through his poem about Belinda.

Wordsworth develops Pope’s manipulation of the ‘Was it for this’ form to cement his poetical reputation by bringing it more overtly to the fore as a direct expression of his poetical ambitions. He wants *The Prelude* to explore what ‘composed my thoughts’ (pt.1, l.11), with an evident play on the composition of his poetry. The growth of a poet’s mind is in part influenced by previous poets who, like the River Derwent, have ‘a voice | That flowed along my dreams’ (pt.1, ll.5-6) and even now ‘Make ceaseless music through the night and day’ (pt.1, l.9) which provides Wordsworth with the necessary ‘knowledge’ (pt.1, l.14) to become a poet.

⁶³⁴ For more on Pope’s ‘Society, who are sworn to *Dare to be Short*’, see *Guardian* No. 91 and No. 92, *Prose of Pope*, Vol.1, pp.121-129.

Combat on the Velvet Plain

A further connection between *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Prelude* has been noted in their respective use of a game of cards; ‘Ombre’ for Pope (canto 3, l.27, see ll.37-100), ‘Lu’ [alternatively called Loo] and ‘Whist’ for Wordsworth (pt.1, ll.198-233). Wordsworth’s ‘And to the combat’ (pt.1, l.215) alludes to Pope’s description, ‘Draw forth to Combat on the Velvet Plain’ (canto 3, l.44). This echo is emphasised in Wordsworth’s exclamation ‘Oh with what echoes on the board they fell—’ (pt.1, l.220). The dash after ‘fell’ gives the reader pause to think about other echoes outside of the poem itself that have fallen on the board, that is the spectre of Pope’s poetic card game. Pope plays with the colour ‘sable’, black, to compare the figures on the cards to ‘Sable Matadores’ (canto 3, l.47) and ‘Africk’s Sable Sons’ (canto 3, l.82). Wordsworth picks up the word to ‘Ironic [in describing red-coloured]...hearts of sable hue’ (pt.1, l.221).

The editors of the 1979 Norton edition of *The Prelude* state that ‘Wordsworth’s card game is a playful imitation of Pope’s mock-heroic game of ombre’, and that in the extension of this scene in the subsequent versions of 1805 and 1850 ‘the influence...of Pope is more obvious’.⁶³⁵ Howard Erskine-Hill shows that both Pope and Wordsworth use card games to symbolise larger political concerns, with Wordsworth developing Pope’s metaphors.⁶³⁶ While their concerns are different, Erskine-Hill notes that ‘The changes which Wordsworth introduced into his account of his boyhood

⁶³⁵ Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill, eds., *The Prelude, 1799, 1805, 1850: Authoritative Texts, Context and Reception, Recent Critical Essays* (New York: Norton, 1979), p.7, p.58.

⁶³⁶ See Howard Erskine-Hill for discussion Wordsworth’s card-game in the tradition of poems of political allusion (‘The Satirical Game at Cards in Pope and Wordsworth’, *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition*, eds. Claude Rawson and Jenny Mezciems (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp.183-195). Nicholas Roe presents further evidence for the currency of the card-game metaphor in the 1790s (‘Pope, Politics and Wordsworth’s *Prelude*’, *Pope: New Contexts*, pp.189-204).

card-games, between the 1799 and 1805 *Prelude*, show the level at which he responded to Pope's game'.⁶³⁷

Wordsworth's wish for this section of the poem to allude directly to Pope's poem, rather than only echo it, is seen in the additions in the 1805 version (bk.1, ll.535-571).⁶³⁸ Wordsworth's inserted list 'Clubs, Hearts, Diamonds, Spades' (bk.1, l.555) builds on Pope's '*Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild Disorder seen*' (canto 3, l.79). Wordsworth further alludes to Pope's '*one Plebeian Card*' (canto 3, l.54) in the following lines:

...some, plebean cards,
Which Fate beyond the promise of their birth
Had glorified, and call'd to represent
The persons of departed Potentates.
Oh! with what echoes on the Board they fell!
(bk.1, ll.550-554)

The direct reference to Pope in 'plebean cards' suggests that it is he who 'Fate' has 'glorified', and that Wordsworth now uses this allusion to represent Pope—again with a playful nod to the connotations of the name—as a 'departed Potentate'—'Potentate' meaning 'monarch', 'ruler', and 'influential person' (*OED*). Wordsworth may be gesturing towards Pope's influence on the youthful formulation of his poetic ideas. Wordsworth changes the grammar of the final line: 'Oh with what echoes on the board they fell—' to 'Oh! with what echoes on the Board they fell!'. The double use of an exclamation mark perhaps calls attention to the Popean 'echoes' that 'fell' on his childhood. The section does not change significantly in the 1850 version, except that Wordsworth replaces 'glorified' with 'dignified' (bk.1, l.524), in order, perhaps, to lessen any implied association between Pope and the divine.⁶³⁹ J. Robert Barth has argued that *The Prelude* becomes 'more explicitly or assertively' religious in the 1850 version.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁷ Erskine-Hill, 'The Satirical Game at Cards in Pope and Wordsworth', *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition*, p.193.

⁶³⁸ See Wordsworth, *The Thirteen Book Prelude*, ed. Mark L. Reed, 2 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁶³⁹ See Wordsworth, *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, ed. W. J. B. Owen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

⁶⁴⁰ J. Robert Barth, *Romanticism and Transcendence: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Religious Imagination* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), p.24. For more on Wordsworth and religion see also William Andrew Ulmer, *The Christian Wordsworth, 1798-1805* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

Wordsworth is not the only writer at the end of the eighteenth century to refer to the card game in *The Rape of the Lock* for poetic effect. Cowper, also, uses the image of the card game to make a wider point in *The Task* (1785). A verse paragraph in the first book of *The Task*, ‘The Sofa’, begins by describing the negative effects of ‘The spleen’ (bk.1, l.455):

The low’ring eye, the petulance, the frown,
And sullen sadness that o’ershadeth, distort,
And mar the face of beauty, when no cause
For such immeasurable woe appears
(‘The Sofa’, bk.1, ll.456-459)

Cowper is alluding to Pope’s ‘gloomy Cave of *Spleen*’ (canto 4, l.16) in which Belinda ‘sighs for ever on her pensive Bed’ (canto 4, l.23), ‘pow’rful Fancy works’ (canto 4, l.53) so ‘Bodies [are] chang’d to various Forms by *Spleen*’ (canto 4, l.48) and ‘a sickly Mien | Shows in her Cheek’ (canto 4, l.32). Cowper implies that a life like Belinda’s ‘is the constant revolution stale | And tasteless, of the same repeated joys’ (bk.1, ll.462-463), and he cannot understand why, when their ‘Health suffers’ (bk.1, l.466) ‘thousands still desire to journey on, | Though halt and weary of the path they tread’ (bk.1, ll.470-471). Cowper then introduces the metaphor of the game of cards to criticise the lethargy and indolence of contemporary society. ‘The paralytic who can hold her cards | But cannot play them’ (bk.1, l.472-473) is ‘Spectatress both and spectacle, a sad | And silent cypher’ (bk.1, ll.476-474) who is a ‘corpse’ (bk.1, l.481) in her own life.

In ridiculing a life that ‘is the constant revolution stale | And tasteless, of the same repeated joys’ (bk.1, ll.462-463), Cowper is making a comment about the state of the literary landscape after Pope. Those writers who endlessly ‘repeat’ Popean style are just paralytics who cannot successfully play and win the card game of poetry; not as well, at any rate, as Pope had done in *The Rape of the Lock*. Cowper does not want poetry to be a mere circular revolution which always returns to the same position—in Pope’s words, poetry that ‘ring[s] round the same *unvary’d*

Chimes' (*An Essay on Criticism*, l.348)—rather, he desires that poetry undergo a wholesale upheaval, 'a revolution' in a different sense, from which a new poetic course will emerge.⁶⁴¹

Yellow Meads of Asphodel

Robert Griffin suggests that Wordsworth finds his own independent poetic voice through his early use of the communal figure of Pope.⁶⁴² In the first extant lines we have of his, Wordsworth self-consciously alludes to Pope. In his 'Autobiographical Memoranda' Wordsworth wrote: 'I was called upon, among other scholars, to write verses upon the completion of the second centenary from the foundation of the school in 1585, by Archbishop Sandys. These verses were very much admired, far more than they deserved, for they were but a tame imitation of Pope'.⁶⁴³ This exercise, Wordsworth recalled, 'put it into my head to compose verses from the impulse of my own mind'.⁶⁴⁴ It has often been assumed that the reason Wordsworth subsequently distances himself from 'Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School' is that it imitates Pope, but Wordsworth's real problem with it is not that it is Popean; rather that it is a 'tame imitation' of another's versification and style. For Wordsworth, imitation of another poet will always be 'tame', and this thought is what afterwards spurs him to create poetry 'from the impulse of...[his]...own mind'.

Pope's influence on Wordsworth's 'Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School' can be found partly in verbal echoes, but in saying that the poem was a little in Pope's style, Wordsworth perhaps had in mind that his handling of his subject owed something to *The Dunciad*.

Wordsworth's poem is, in effect, *The Dunciad* in reverse, since it chronicles the triumph of an

⁶⁴¹ See chapter two for more on Cowper's frustration with Pope's imitators.

⁶⁴² Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope*, p.89.

⁶⁴³ Wordsworth, *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797*, eds. Carol Landon and Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.354.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.354.

articulate goddess of Education, with her attendant ‘Pow’rs’ (l.17), as opposed to the triumph of the equally articulate Goddess Dulness, and her numerous satellites. The strongest connection suggested here is with the fourth book of *The Dunciad*—the book that, if he chose to introduce the poem to his pupils at Hawkshead School, William Taylor, Wordsworth’s tutor, likely judged the most appealing.⁶⁴⁵ The ‘Argument’ of *Book the Fourth* states that the Goddess Dulness aims to keep ‘Youth...out of the way of real Knowledge’.⁶⁴⁶ The educational practices and attitudes that are so brilliantly dramatized with satirical intent in *The Dunciad* are the same ones that are condemned straightforwardly in ‘Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School’: such as ‘perplex[ing] the weary mind’ with ‘mazy rules’ (l.50); allowing the passions to infect the young with ‘Vice’s dross’ (l.82); and trivialising nature and reason instead of ‘search[ing] the mystic cause of things’ (l.75). The very opposite, in other words, of the educational policies espoused by the ‘noble Sandys’ (l.65).⁶⁴⁷

Wordsworth also alludes to other poems of Pope (and quotes phrases of Pope) in ‘Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School’. Duncan Wu has noted, for example, that Wordsworth’s lines ‘Nor that the vile wretch who bade the tender age | Spurn Reason’s Law and humour passion’s rage’ (ll.9-10) refer to Pope’s translation of Chaucer’s *Merchant’s Tale* (which Pope published in 1709), in which Justin is the ‘vile wretch’ who instructs May, the ‘tender Age’ (*January and May*, l.246), to go against reason and succumb to the lust of the old merchant January (Passion).⁶⁴⁸ Wordsworth, like Pope, translated Chaucer (in 1801). In a sense, in ‘Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School’, Wordsworth is ‘tame[ly] imitat[ing]’ the *translation* of another writer—creating an echo of an echo of previous poets. From his first extant poem, Wordsworth is concerned to link his own poetry with that of poets of the past.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid, p.354.

⁶⁴⁶ Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.5, p.337.

⁶⁴⁷ Wordsworth, *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797, The Cornell Wordsworth*, pp.355-356.

⁶⁴⁸ Wu, *Wordsworth’s Reading*, vol.1, p.27. For Pope’s ‘Translations from Chaucer’ see *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.2, pp.1-78.

Wordsworth's description 'And Hue far deeper than the Tyrian dye' (l.22) is Popean. Pope uses this image frequently: in *The Fable of Dryope* (first published in the *Works* of 1717), he describes spring as 'In glowing colours with the *Tyrian dye*' (l.24); *Windsor-Forest* has a 'bright-ey'd Perch with Fins of *Tyrian Dye* (l.142); and in the *Iliad*, 'various Colours vie, | The shining Whiteness and the *Tyrian Dye*' (bk.4, ll.174-175).⁶⁴⁹ In these three cases, Pope places 'dye' in the second rhyme of the heroic couplet, as does Wordsworth, creating the sense that '*Tyrian dye*' is the splendid climax of these lines. In *Windsor-Forest*, Pope uses the internal chiming assonance, and reverse-lettered anagram, of 'ey'd' and 'dye'; Wordsworth further echoes Pope's image in *Windsor-Forest* with his use of the rhyme 'eye' (Wordsworth's preceding line is 'Shame follow'd after with reverted eye' (l.21)).

There are other allusions to Pope in 'Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School'. In the line 'Through all my frame the pleasing accents ran' (l.28), Wordsworth is eliding a couple of images from Pope. First, Wordsworth is referring to a line in the final book of Pope's *Odyssey*: 'Quick thro' the father's heart these accents ran' (bk.24, l.367). Secondly, he is echoing a line from *Eloisa to Abelard*: 'Back thro' the paths of pleasing sense I ran' (l.69). The notion that *Eloisa to Abelard* might have been in Wordsworth's mind is supported by the 'pensive face' (l.24) of Wordsworth's 'heav'nly Goddess' (l.27) 'Through...[whose]...frame the pleasing accents ran' (l.28), recalling Pope's 'heav'nly-pensive' (l.2) and 'ever-musing melancholy' (l.3) that runs through *Eloisa's* 'frame' (l.337).

Within twelve lines of the line 'Through all my frame the pleasing accents ran' (l.28), Wordsworth twice more echoes Pope's *Iliad*: 'And fled indignant to the shades of night' (l.30) adapts Pope's 'The Soul indignant seeks the Realms of Night' (bk.5, l.360); and 'The God of Day in all the pomp of Light | Moves through the vault of Heav'n, and dissipates the night' (ll.39-40) alludes to 'Now flaming from the *Zenith*, *Sol* had driv'n | His fervid Orb thro' half the Vault of

⁶⁴⁹ For 'The Fable of Dryope. From the Ninth Book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*' see *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, eds. E. Audra and Audrey Williams in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.1, pp.383-390.

Heav'n (bk.16, ll.938-939). Wordsworth makes this reference explicit in using Pope's exact phrase 'Vault of Heav'n'.⁶⁵⁰ Wordsworth again echoes the *Iliad* in the lines, 'I gaz'd upon the visionary train | Threw back my eyes return'd and gaz'd again' (ll.25-26), which recalls Pope's 'With mournful Eyes they gaze, and gaze again' (bk.19, l.408). Pope is describing 'Night-wand'ring Sailors, pale with Fears' (bk.19, l.404), who gaze in awe at the vision of Achilles who is 'high tow'ring o'er the rest' (bk.19, l.390) dressed in 'Arms which the Father of the Fire bestow'd' (bk.19, l.392). Wordsworth is comparing himself in front of the vision of the 'heav'nly Goddess' (l.27) of Education to the soldiers staring at Achilles. Achilles 'Flames from his Chariot, and restores the Day' (bk.19, l.437), which again echoes through Wordsworth's opening 'the Sun his flaming Chariot driv'n' (l.1).

In this early poem of Wordsworth's, accordingly, he not only imitates the coupleted versification of Pope, he emulates Pope's style by playing with Popean images. Moreover, the placing of the comma in Wordsworth's assessment of the poem—that it is nothing 'but a tame imitation of Pope's versification, and a little in his style'⁶⁵¹—means that it is his own versification that Wordsworth is calling 'tame', not Pope's style; the reference to Pope's 'style' is in a separate clause. Furthermore, Wordsworth's use of 'tame' suggests that he is here acknowledging Pope's superior versification.

Pope's image of a repeated 'gaze'—'they gaze, and gaze again' (bk.19, l.408)—reappears in Wordsworth's later poetry. In *I wandered lonely as a Cloud*, composed twenty years or so after 'Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School', Wordsworth continues to consider ways in which he learns.⁶⁵² He had wandered by some 'dancing Daffodils' (l.4) and now remembers them 'In vacant or in pensive mood' (l.14) as a poetical guide. The second stanza reads:

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid, vol.1, pp.75-76.

⁶⁵¹ Wordsworth, *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797, The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.354.

⁶⁵² See Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp.207-209.

The waves beside them danced, but they
 Outdid the sparkling waves in glee:—
 A Poet could not but be gay
 In such a laughing company:
 I gaz'd—and gaz'd—but little thought
 What wealth the shew to me had brought
 (ll.7-12)

Wordsworth suggests that the natural, carefree, dancing flowers 'Outdid the sparkling waves' for 'A Poet' seeking 'gay' and 'laughing company'. The 'sparkling waves' recall Pope's 'sparkling Waves' (bk.2, l.888) from the *Iliad*. While the phrase itself might be commonplace enough, Pope's poetry had long been associated with the term 'sparkling'. Johnson in his influential 'Life of Pope', for example, described Pope's 'sparkling sentences'.⁶⁵³ Wordsworth himself warned against Pope's bewitching 'sparkling and tuneful manner' in *Essays upon Epitaphs II* (written in 1810).⁶⁵⁴ In a review of August 1817, disparaging Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* in which he coined the term 'the Lake school', Jeffrey compared these writers' poetry to the 'rich and honeyed words, like the candied coat of the auricula' and the 'glittering tissue of quaint conceits and sparkling metaphors' that 'is the style of Pope'.⁶⁵⁵ Pope's 'sparkling Waves' (bk.2, l.888) appear amongst a particularly classically-laden section of the poem, with little natural imagery of the type in Wordsworth's poem. At the same time as perhaps rejecting what he might consider to be too unnatural sections of Pope's poetry, Wordsworth himself is in 'laughing company' in alluding to Pope's *Iliad* again in the next line in the repetition of 'gaze'—'I gaz'd—and gaz'd'. It is with 'little thought | What wealth the shew to me had brought', and this wealth of learning, while undoubtedly referring to the image of the daffodils, also refers to the learning he has gleaned from previous poets.

⁶⁵³ Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.40.

⁶⁵⁴ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.2, p.75.

⁶⁵⁵ Francis Jeffrey, 'Review of *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*. By Samuel Taylor Coleridge', *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* 28.56 (August, 1817), pp.488-515, p.509, p.512.

Wordsworth discussed *I wandered lonely as a Cloud* in minute detail in a letter to George Beaumont, dated 20 February 1808.⁶⁵⁶ It is clear that education is fundamental to the poem as Wordsworth writes that ‘Every great Poet is a Teacher: I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing’.⁶⁵⁷ Pope, likewise, is, in some sense, a poetical teacher for Wordsworth. Wordsworth also makes it very clear that he has considered precisely each and every word that he has chosen, and should be reviewed attentively at that level: ‘what shall we think of criticism or judgement founded upon and exemplified by a Poem which must have been so inattentively perused? My Language is precise’.⁶⁵⁸ One of the phrases that Wordsworth is particularly annoyed at having been mistranscribed is line eight, which he writes in the letter as ‘Outdid the *sparkling waves* in glee’ in order to highlight that he intended ‘sparkling waves’ precisely.⁶⁵⁹ Given the association of Pope and ‘sparkling’, this suggests that the phrase is explicitly an allusion to Pope.

William and Dorothy had seen the original daffodils together. In her *Journal* Dorothy records, for 15 April 1802, the freedom of these flowers in their ever-changingness:

...we saw a few daffodils close to the water side. We fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more and at last under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing.⁶⁶⁰

The image obviously struck the Wordsworths: that Dorothy says ‘*We* fancied’ [my emphasis] suggests that they had talked about and were inspired by the scene, with it firing their imaginations. Dorothy’s florid and extended description of the daffodils shows the pleasure she took in converting this lived experience into text. Dorothy records that later that day ‘William was sitting

⁶⁵⁶ Wordsworth to Beaumont, 20 February 1808: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.2, pp.194-196.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, vol.2, p.195.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vol.2, p.194.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, vol.2, p.194.

⁶⁶⁰ *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth: The Alfoxden Journal 1798 and The Grasmere Journals 1800-1803*, rev. ed. Mary Moorman, 2nd ed. reprint with corrections (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.109.

by a bright fire when I came downstairs. He soon made his way to the Library piled up in a corner of the window. He brought out a volume of Enfield's *Speaker*'.⁶⁶¹ From Dorothy's description we can suppose that Wordsworth wanted to think through their experience of seeing the daffodils using his library, as if Wordsworth wanted to supplement his real-life imaginings with descriptions by other poets. William Enfield's *Speaker* (1774) includes many extracts of Pope's poetry, one of which is *Ode for Musick. On St. Cecilia's Day* (first published in 1713).⁶⁶² In this poem Pope describes the effects of music and poetry; they are 'breathing Instruments [that] inspire' (l.2) humans out of their present suffering. '[W]hen the Soul is press'd with Cares' (l.26), inspirational music 'Exalts her in enlivening Airs' (l.27); it 'can soften Pain to Ease' (l.120), and 'Our Joys below it can improve' (l.122). In Wordsworth's terms, Pope's music brings bliss when considered in a pensive moment, just as the image of the daffodils does for him. For both Pope and Wordsworth, an inspiring song brings a perceptive bliss. Pope perceives this bliss as 'Spectres dance!' (l.68):

By the Streams that ever flow,
By the fragrant Winds that blow
 O'er th' *Elysian* Flowers,
By those happy Souls who dwell
In Yellow Meads of *Asphodel*
(ll.71-75)

Pope's phrase 'Yellow Meads of *Asphodel*' is worth considering in relation to Wordsworth's *I wandered lonely as a Cloud*, as another name for these flowers is daffodils. The *Oxford English Dictionary* shows that the synonymy of 'asphodel' and 'daffodil' had existed since the sixteenth century. It cites a *Historie of Plantes* from 1578 which notes, 'This herbe is called in Greke *ἀσφόδελος*; in shops Affodilus...in English also Affodyl and Daffodyll'; and it quotes *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611), which notes that the French 'Asphodile' is in English

⁶⁶¹ Ibid, p.110.

⁶⁶² Enfield, *Speaker*, pp.368-372. See 'Ode for Musick. On St. Cecilia's Day', in *Minor Poems*, ed. Norman Ault in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.6, pp.29-36.

‘The Daffadill, Affodill, or Asphodill flower’.⁶⁶³ In his *Dictionary of the English Language* (published in 1755), Johnson notes in his definition of ‘Daffodil’ that the word is ‘corrupted from *asphodelus*’. Johnson quotes Pope’s *Ode for Musick. On St. Cecilia’s Day* in his definition of ‘Asphodel’. Wordsworth converts Pope’s ‘Yellow...Asphodel[s]’ into ‘golden daffodils’ (l.4). Moreover, Wordsworth takes up Pope’s image of ‘Winds that blow | ‘O’er th’ *Elysian* Flowers’ next to ‘the Streams’ in the description of ‘Ten thousand [daffodils] dancing in the breeze’ ‘beside’ ‘the sparkling waves’. Using Pope’s words, Wordsworth is one of ‘those happy Souls who dwell | In Yellow Meads of *Asphodel*’ in his reading, writing, experience, and contemplation of that day on 15 April 1802.

Wordsworth’s comment on his ‘Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School’—that writing the poem ‘put it into my head to compose verses from the impulse of my own mind’—does not mean that he is explicitly rejecting Pope. He continues to use Popean imagery, the same Popean imagery he had used in the ‘Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School’, in his later poetry. Moreover, he builds on Pope’s influence in those later poems.

⁶⁶³ Rembert Dodoens, *A Nieuwe Herball, Or Historie of Plantes*, trans. Henry Lyte (London, 1578); and Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London, 1611).

The Most Beautiful Nightpiece that can be found in Poetry

The Troops exulting sate in order round,
 And beaming Fires illumin'd all the Ground.
 As when the Moon, refulgent Lamp of Night!
 O'er Heaven's clear Azure spreads her sacred Light,
 When not a Breath disturbs the deep Serene;
 And not a Cloud o'ercasts the solemn Scene;
 Around her Throne the vivid Planets roll,
 And Stars unnumber'd gild the glowing Pole,
 O'er the dark Trees a yellower Verdure shed,
 And tip with Silver ev'ry Mountain's Head;
 Then shine the Vales, the Rocks in Prospect rise,
 A Flood of Glory bursts from all the Skies:
 The conscious Swains, rejoicing in the Sight,
 Eye the blue Vault, and bless the useful Light.
 So many Flames before proud *Iliad* blaze,
 And lighten glimm'ring *Xanthus* with their Rays.
 The long Reflections of the distant Fires
 Gleam on the Walls, and tremble on the Spires.
 A thousand Piles the dusky Horrors gild,
 And shoot a shady Lustre o'er the Field.
 Full fifty Guards each flaming Pile attend,
 Whose umber'd Arms, by fits, thick Flashes send.
 Loud neigh the Coursers o'er their Heaps of Corn,
 And ardent Warriors wait the rising Morn.
 (Pope, *Iliad*, bk.8, ll.685-708)

———The sky is overcast

With a continuous cloud of texture close,
 Heavy and wan, all whitened by the Moon,
 Which through that veil is indistinctly seen,
 A dull, contracted circle, yielding light
 So feebly spread, that not a shadow falls,
 Chequering the ground, from rock, plant, tree, or tower.
 At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam
 Startles the pensive traveller while he treads
 His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
 Bent earthwards; he looks up—the clouds are split
 Asunder,—and above his head he sees
 The clear moon, and the glory of the heavens.
 There, in a black-blue vault she sails along,
 Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small
 And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
 Drive as she drives;—how fast they wheel away,
 Yet vanish not!—the wind is in the tree,
 But they are silent;—still they roll along
 Immeasurably distant;—and the vault,
 Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds,
 Still deepens its unfathomable depth.
 At length the Vision closes; and the mind,
 Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
 Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
 Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.
 (Wordsworth, 'A Night-Piece', ll.1-26)⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶⁴ *Poems*, 2 vols. (London, 1815), vol.1, pp.301-302.
 See *Lyrical Ballads, The Cornell Wordsworth*, pp.276-277.

Wordsworth engages with, within his own work, poetry of Pope's of which he is elsewhere apparently critical and dismissive. Wordsworth is famously disdainful of Pope's 'translation of the celebrated moonlight scene in the Iliad' in *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface*.⁶⁶⁵

Wordsworth contends that Pope's lines, 'though he had Homer to guide him, are throughout false and contradictory'.⁶⁶⁶ Wordsworth is frustrated that these lines are so celebrated, and that they:

...still retain their hold upon public estimation,—nay, there is not a passage of descriptive poetry, which at this day finds so many and such ardent admirers. Strange to think of an enthusiast, as may have been the case with thousands, reciting those verses under the cope of a moonlight sky, without having his raptures in the least disturbed by the suspicion of their absurdity!—⁶⁶⁷

Within the volume in which the *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface* was published, *Poems* (1815), Wordsworth includes 'A Night-Piece'. The term 'night-piece' had long been associated with Pope's moonlight scene: Pope had footnoted his line describing the 'Moon' as 'refulgent Lamp of Night' as 'the most beautiful Nightpiece that can be found in Poetry'.⁶⁶⁸ In the same footnote, Pope declares 'A Poet is not obliged to speak with the Exactness of Philosophy, but with the Liberty of Poetry'.⁶⁶⁹ For Wordsworth, however, there is not enough 'Liberty' and freedom in the poetry in this passage of Pope's. Lawrence Lipking notes that the title 'A Night-Piece' 'itself issues a challenge' to Pope.⁶⁷⁰ The poem had been originally composed at Alfoxden in January 1798, so Wordsworth waited seventeen

⁶⁶⁵ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.73. Pope's 'celebrated moonlight scene' is quoted on the left on the preceding page. The text of Wordsworth's 'A Night-Piece' quoted on the right-hand side is from *Poems*, 2 vols. (London, 1815), vol.1, pp.301-302.

⁶⁶⁶ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.73.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid*, vol.3, pp.73-74.

⁶⁶⁸ Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.428.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid*, vol.7, p.428.

⁶⁷⁰ Lawrence Lipking, 'Night Thoughts on Literary History', *Literary History: Theory and Practice, Volume Two*, ed. Herbert L. Sussman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1984), pp.59-79, p.71.

years to publish it.⁶⁷¹ He could have included it in the volume of poems he published in 1807, but chose not to.⁶⁷² It was, furthermore, originally simply titled ‘A Fragment’; in renaming it ‘A Night-Piece’, Wordsworth makes the challenge to Pope more overt. The fact that Wordsworth included this poem and *Essay* within the same volume, as well as its title, supports Lipking’s assertion. In the ‘Nightpiece’ footnote, Pope writes that Homer ‘presents you with a Prospect of the Heavens, the Seas, and the Earth: The stars shine, the Air is serene, the World enlighten’d, and the Moon mounted in Glory’.⁶⁷³ In ‘A Night-Piece’ Wordsworth wants to present this prospect too, but he wants to do it in his own style, and so explicitly show his poetic difference from Pope.

Wordsworth unambiguously engages with Pope’s passage in his poem’s form. Wordsworth opens the poem, ‘The sky is overcast’ (l.1) and closes it, ‘the solemn scene’ (l.26); which is a direct allusion to Pope’s ‘And not a Cloud o’ercasts the solemn Scene’ (bk.8, l.690). This is symbolic of what Wordsworth is attempting in the poem. He wants to convey that Pope glosses over too much in his descriptions; instead, he will fill a whole twenty six lines of poetry, beauty which Pope skips over in a single line.

While in Pope there is ‘not a Cloud’ to make the sky ‘o’ercast’ (bk.8, l.690), in Wordsworth ‘The sky is overcast | With a continuous cloud of texture close’ (l.1-2). Wordsworth emphasises Pope’s lack of clouds in his evocative description. The soothing consonance and sibilance of the repeated ‘s’ and ‘c’ sounds, with the additional ‘x’ sound, make the line sound soft and pillowy, like the ‘Heavy’ (l.3) cloud cover it describes. Simultaneously, the density of repeated sounds evokes the ‘texture close’ of the ‘veil’ (l.4) of mist. In Wordsworth ‘the Moon...is indistinctly seen, | A dull, contracted circle’ (ll.3-5). Again the continuing consonance of ‘contracted circle’ links the hidden moon’s shape with

⁶⁷¹ See: Wu, *Wordsworth’s Reading*, vol.2, p.253; and *Lyrical Ballads, The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.276.

⁶⁷² Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes*, 2 vols. (London, 1807). See also *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems in The Cornell Wordsworth*.

⁶⁷³ Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.428.

the ‘continuous cloud’ (l.2) that covers it. This contrasts to Pope’s moon from which ‘A Flood of Glory bursts from all the Skies’ (bk.8, l.696).

Wordsworth writes of the ‘yielding light | So feebly spread, that not a shadow falls, | Chequering the ground’ (ll.5-7), whereas Pope describes ‘shady Lustre o’er the Field’ (bk.8, l.704) and the light ‘tip[s] with Silver ev’ry Mountain’s Head’ (bk.8, l.694) and so ‘shine the Vales’ (bk.8, l.695). For Wordsworth the shadows do not fall ‘from rock, plant, tree, or tower’ (l.7). The plain list undercuts Pope’s plentiful descriptions of the same things: ‘the Rocks in Prospect rise’ (bk.8, l.695); ‘yellower Verdure’ (bk.8, l.693); ‘the dark Trees’ (bk.8, l.693); and ‘The long Reflections...Gleam on the Walls, and tremble on the Spires’ (bk.8, l.701-702) of ‘the *Trojan* Tow’rs’ (bk.8, l.682). Wordsworth’s plain unshadowed ‘ground’ (l.7) is in contrast to Pope’s ‘Ground’ which ‘beaming Fires illumin’d all’ (bk.8, l.686). In the plainness of his list it is as if Wordsworth is suggesting that Pope’s descriptions are plentiful in the wrong areas, and that his interest focusses on the wrong places. In the poem, Wordsworth wants to have his cake and eat it too, by implying that at times Pope can skip too easily over lines that warrant greater expansion, while at other times indulge too liberally in unnecessary embellishment.

In the *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface*, Wordsworth writes that, despite being a ‘distinguished writer’, Pope ‘could habitually think that the visible universe was of so little consequence to a poet, that it was scarcely necessary for him to cast his eyes upon it’.⁶⁷⁴ For Wordsworth a great poet should ‘faithfully and poetically describe the *phenomena* of nature’ [emphasis added].⁶⁷⁵ A ‘phenomenon’ is defined as a ‘thing which appears, or which is perceived or observed’ and an ‘occurrence, or change as perceived through the senses or known intellectually’, especially ‘the cause or explanation of which is in question’ (*OED*).

⁶⁷⁴ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.74.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid*, vol.3, p.74.

Johnson's eighteenth century definition is more explicit in linking 'phenomena' and nature; he defines 'phenomenon' as 'an extraordinary appearance in the works of nature'.⁶⁷⁶

It is the 'unfathomable' (l.22) that Wordsworth is interested in, and which he thinks is lacking in some of Pope's descriptions. For Wordsworth there is no wonder at nature's brilliance in Pope's poem, there is only brilliant description of things found in nature.

A phenomenal change occurs in Wordsworth's lines immediately after the plain list: 'At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam | Startles the pensive traveller while he treads | His lonesome path' (ll.8-10). A 'pensive traveller', as often in Wordsworth's poetry, is a figure in the poem, besides the narrative voice, who individually experiences a phenomenon in nature. This phenomenal change 'Startles' (l.9) him. The 'pensive traveller' has an interactive relationship with nature: he 'looks' (l.11), it 'Startles' (l.9). The movement of nature within Wordsworth's poem also serves to highlight the apparently static scene in Pope's poem. Pope's poem describes nature in a way which makes it feel inert, fixed, unmoving, unchanging, like an exquisite moment captured in a picture. Wordsworth describes nature changing over time, and the immediacy of the images suggests this movement is happening in the time it takes to recite the poem; nature is ever-changing, ever-'roll[ing] along' (l.19). This fluidity is evident in Wordsworth's repetitions of description. In the repeated description 'white clouds, enormous clouds' (l.21) it is as if different qualities in the clouds are more striking in different moments; the same effect would not be achieved if Wordsworth had written *enormous white clouds* instead. The movement of the 'pensive traveller' (l.9) who 'treads | His lonesome path' (ll.9-10) mirrors the movement of the nature he experiences. Wordsworth puts his description of an individual's continuing experience of nature directly in contrast to the indiscriminate stationary groups in Pope's poem, who do not

⁶⁷⁶ Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755).

interact with the brilliant scene of nature that surrounds them; instead, ‘The Troops exalting sate in order’ (bk.8, l.685) ‘And ardent Warriors wait the rising Morn’ (bk.8, l.708).

At the exact mid-point of his poem, the thirteenth line of twenty six, Wordsworth places ‘The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens’ (l.13). The line is central to the poem both formally and allusively. It is Wordsworth’s re-rendering of Pope’s lines on ‘the most beautiful Nightpiece that can be found in Poetry’.⁶⁷⁷ Pope’s lines read:

As when the Moon, refulgent Lamp of Night!
O’er Heav’ns clear Azure spreads her sacred Light
(bk.8, l.687-688)

Wordsworth inverts Pope’s imagery. In Pope it is ‘the Moon’ (bk.8, l.687) from which ‘Glory bursts’ (bk.8, l.696), and ‘Heav’n’ which is ‘clear’ (bk.8, l.688); in Wordsworth, the Moon is ‘clear’ and ‘heaven’ spreads ‘glory’ (l.13). Wordsworth’s preceding line, ‘and above his head he sees | The clear moon, and the glory of the heavens’ (ll.12-13), demonstrates that it is *his*, the individual pensive traveller’s, experience which determines how his surroundings are perceived: ‘he sees’. It shows the importance for Wordsworth of poetry detailing the individual, human *experience* of nature, rather than Pope’s more distant and unengaged *descriptions* of nature. In Pope the description of the Moon is the beginning of a sentence, it does not have any link with ‘The Troops’ (bk.8, l.685) who are mentioned in the previous sentence. Wordsworth deliberately selects this line of Pope because he wants to make clear that Pope’s poem is lacking an individual human’s experience of nature which Wordsworth believes is integral to great poetry. As with Wordsworth’s plain list in contrast to Pope’s florid descriptions (l.7), Wordsworth here lets the beauty and power of ‘The clear Moon, and glory of the heavens’ (l.13) speak for themselves without what he elsewhere

⁶⁷⁷ Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.7, p.428.

describes as ‘the gaudiness and inane phraseology’ of superfluous decoration.⁶⁷⁸

Wordsworth wants ‘a plainer and more emphatic language’ for poetry.⁶⁷⁹

Wordsworth continues to allude directly to Pope during the second half of the poem. Wordsworth’s ‘lonesome’ ‘pensive traveller’ (ll.9-10) who eyes the moon ‘in a black-blue vault’ (l.14), contrasts with Pope’s cavorting ‘Swains, rejoicing in the Sight, | Eye the blue Vault, and bless the useful Light’ (bk.8, l.697-698). A recurrent theme throughout Wordsworth’s poetry, and particularly in evidence in ‘A Night-Piece’, is his use of collective experience concentrated in a solitary figure: for example, the ‘solitary man’ (l.24), the ‘Poor Traveller!’ (l.58), in ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’ (which was first published in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*).⁶⁸⁰ Wordsworth is interested in the relationship between individual and collective experience in a way that Pope is not. In Pope the ‘Swains’ rejoice in and bless the ‘useful Light’ of the moon, but there is no attempt to link this image to a greater, collective humanity.

Wordsworth seeks out darker and more mysterious images which are not present in Pope’s imagery. Pope describes ‘Stars unnumber’d [which] gild the glowing Pole’ (bk.8, l.692), Wordsworth fleshes out the description of the stars ‘along the dark abyss’ (l.16):

Followed by a multitude of stars, that, small
And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
Drive as she drives
(ll.15-17)

Wordsworth’s stars are given agency and have a relationship with the moon—they ‘Drive as she drives’ (l.17)—Pope’s stars merely ‘gild’ what they cover and are not put in a relationship with the other celestial bodies. In describing the moon driving through the sky in its heavenly vault, Wordsworth is echoing, and inverting, another image from Pope’s *Iliad*, which he had also echoed in ‘Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School’: ‘Now flaming

⁶⁷⁸ Wordsworth, 1798 ‘Advertisement’ to *Lyrical Ballads*, *The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.738.

⁶⁷⁹ Wordsworth, 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, *The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.743.

⁶⁸⁰ See Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, *The Cornell Wordsworth*, pp.228-234.

from the *Zenith*, *Sol* had driv'n | His fervid Orb thro' half the Vault of Heav'n (bk.16, ll.938-939). Pope had written in the moonlight scene 'the vivid Planets roll' (bk.8, l.691) among many separate descriptions of other cosmic entities: 'the Moon' (bk.8, l.687), 'Heav'n' (bk.8, l.688), 'Cloud' (bk.8, l.690), and 'Stars' (bk.8, l.692). As if to highlight how unnecessary Wordsworth thinks Pope's unconnected description is, he writes of the stars 'still they roll along' (l.19). Wordsworth does not bring in 'Planets' as Pope does; instead he uses Pope's image that 'Planets roll' (bk.8, l.691) through the sky to refer to the stars which he has already described in detail. He does the same thing again with the vault, with its direct allusion to Pope, when he takes the reader back to the vault that 'Still deepens its unfathomable depth' (l.22). Wordsworth is driving home his point that Pope's poetry does not have enough 'depth', and that in his own poetry he is constantly looking to delve deeper and deeper into what is 'unfathomable', into the world's mysteries. In this Wordsworth is playing with Pope's claim, in *Peri Bathous, Or the Art of Sinking in Poetry*, that 'depth' is a failed, and often comic, attempt at sublimity.⁶⁸¹ For Pope, 'depth' is 'the bottom, the end...the *non plus ultra*' [nothing more beyond], but for Wordsworth there is always something more beyond; depth can be a genuine route to sublimity in search of the never-ending 'unfathomable'.⁶⁸²

Within 'A Night-Piece' Wordsworth is depicting nature as a spur to contemplation, and concurrently implying that Pope's poem is not contemplative enough. Wordsworth suggests that Pope's poem contains too many unrelated and superficial descriptions; that the reader is straightforwardly bombarded with a succession of unrelated tableaux. In Coleridge's terms, Pope's poetry contains 'a sorites' of unconnected images.⁶⁸³ Instead, Wordsworth wants poetry to look forwards and backwards within itself, so that readers can also experience the changing phenomena of nature and develop a relationship with it as the

⁶⁸¹ Pope, *Prose of Pope*, Vol.2, pp.186-276.

⁶⁸² Ibid, p.186.

⁶⁸³ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, p.18.

poem progresses. Wordsworth implies that Pope's poetry consists of a series of static pictures that appear distant from us. To show that his poetry does not suffer a similar failing, Wordsworth interrupts a description of the stars to let the reader know '—the wind is in the tree | But they are silent—' (ll.18-19). The disruption is made clear with the use of parenthesis, and serves to mock the supposed logical mechanicalness of Pope's lines. Wordsworth's use of enjambement here shows how Wordsworth consciously chooses a poetic form that is unlike Pope's: it emphasises the impression that his poetry is continually flowing and developing in meaning, in a way that Pope's self-contained epigrammatic heroic couplets do not.

Wordsworth highlights in the final lines of the poem the principal differences between his and Pope's poetic vision:

At length the Vision closes; and the mind,
Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.
(ll.23-26)

The phrase 'Not undisturbed' (l.24) is a typically Wordsworthian double negation.⁶⁸⁴ In the *Iliad* Pope had also used more simple negative description in the moonlight prospect: 'When not a Breath...And not a Cloud' inhabit the 'Scene' (bk.8, ll.689-690). Wordsworth's double negation creates a space in which the feeling excited appears flexible and changeable, rather than fixed and steady: to be 'Not undisturbed' suggests that the narrative voice experiences both opposites—disturbance and the lack of it—at different moments; whereas to be straightforwardly 'disturbed by the delight it feels' would suggest one fixed feeling and conclusion about the experience. Paul Magnuson has noted that double negation is a feature

⁶⁸⁴ For more on Wordsworth's use of negation and litotes see Michael Cooke, 'The Mode of Argument in Wordsworth's Poetry', *Romantic and Victorian: Studies in Memory of William H. Marshall*, eds. Paul Elledge and Richard Hoffman (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971), pp.95-109.

that often ‘signifies a turn in Wordsworth’s poetry’, as it does here.⁶⁸⁵ Wordsworth is turning to the crux of his message, that poetry should ‘take...its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity’.⁶⁸⁶ Wordsworth values ‘the Vision[ary]’ (l.23) in poetry; he wants to see beyond what is in front of him, to ‘deepen...depth’ (l.22). Wordsworth introduces ‘the mind’ (l.23) in the closing stages of the poem to show the effect nature has on his inner self; ‘disturbed’ (l.24), ‘delight’ (l.24), ‘feels’ (l.24), ‘peaceful’ (l.25), ‘calm’ (l.25), ‘left to muse’ (l.26). For Pope, ‘not’ even ‘a Breath disturbs the deep Serene’ of the ‘solemn Scene’ (bk.8, ll.689-690), but Wordsworth—playing with Pope’s own diction—converts this into an internal image in explicit contrast to Pope, ‘the mind | Not undisturbed...slowly settles into peaceful calm...to muse upon the solemn scene’ (ll.23-26). For Pope, human life does not disturb nature nor *vice versa*; for Wordsworth, nature does ‘Not undisturb’ human life; and, moreover, it is this disturbance of human life by nature which is, or should be, the essence of poetry.

More broadly, Wordsworth’s poetical response to Pope’s moonlight scene is reflective of a perceived difference in emphasis: the implication is that Pope is concerned with the artifice of the external, while Wordsworth accentuates the internal.

In *The Prelude* of 1805 Wordsworth had elucidated these ideas:

Receive enduring touches of deep joy
From the great Nature that exists in works
Of mighty Poets. Visionary Power
Attends upon the motions of the winds
Embodied in the mystery of words.
(*The Prelude* 1805, A-B Stage, bk.5, ll.617-621)

He compares the ‘ecstasy’ (bk.5, l.614) of being ‘intimate’ ‘With living Nature’ (bk.5, l.612) with that of ‘glittering verse’ (bk.5, l.615). The term ‘glittering’ was associated with Popean poetry throughout the eighteenth century. As early as 1726-1727, Spence had defended Pope

⁶⁸⁵ Paul Magnuson, *Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p.23.

⁶⁸⁶ Wordsworth, ‘Preface’ (1800), *Lyrical Ballads, The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.743.

against accusations that his work contained a ‘blameable’ ‘profusion of Glitter and Embroidery in the Language’.⁶⁸⁷

In fact, however, Pope himself criticises poetry that is merely ‘glittering’. In a letter to Henry Cromwell, dated 17 December 1710, Pope makes a distinction between ‘the Body’ and ‘the Soul of Poetry’.⁶⁸⁸ The ‘Body’ of poetry is concerned with its ‘dress’, with ‘pretty conceptions, fine metaphors, glitt’ring expressions, and something of a neat cast of Verse’ which constitutes ‘the dress, gems, or loose ornaments of Poetry’.⁶⁸⁹ But authors who only write with the ‘dress’ of poetry in mind, and not ‘the Soul of Poetry’, ‘shou’d be consider’d as *Versifiers* and *witty Men*, rather than as *Poets*’—the italicisation is Pope’s own, and shows that Pope distinguishes heavily between a mere versifier and a poet.⁶⁹⁰ Well ‘dress[ed]’ verse is necessary but not sufficient for good poetry. Moreover, in stating that ‘great Nature...exists in works | Of mighty Poets’ (bk.5, ll.618-619) Wordsworth is in agreement with Pope’s assertion in *An Essay on Criticism* that Nature lives within art: ‘Then *Sculpture* and her *Sister-Arts* revive; | *Stones* leap’d to *Form*, and *Rocks* began to *live*’ (ll.701-702).

It has long been noted that the adjectives ‘false’, ‘overwrought’, and ‘glittering’, in the closing passage of Book Five of Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, refer to Pope’s poetry.⁶⁹¹ But in preferring the ‘ecstasy’ of ‘living Nature’ to ‘glittering verse’ Wordsworth is not dismissing Pope’s poetry; rather, he is making a subtler point about poetic influence. The opposition that Wordsworth is outlining here is not between ‘glittering verse’ with ‘great Nature that exists in works | Of mighty Poets’ (bk.5, ll.618-619), but between ‘others’ (bk.5, l.614) and ‘himself’ (bk.5, l.616). Griffin writes that in this passage Wordsworth is asserting that he ‘has a finer sensibility than others, and has therefore advanced beyond the seductions

⁶⁸⁷ Spence, *An Essay on Pope’s Odyssey: In Which some Particular Beauties and Blemishes of that Work are Consider’d* (London, 1726-1727), p.60.

⁶⁸⁸ Pope to Cromwell, 17 December 1710: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.110.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.110.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.110.

⁶⁹¹ See, for example, Raymond Havens, *The Mind of a Poet* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1941), pp.402-405.

associated with Pope, whereas others have not'.⁶⁹² Whether or not he has 'advanced beyond' Pope's poetry, the point is that Wordsworth has advanced *because* of his early memorising and contemplation of Pope's poetry. Book Five closes with Wordsworth's acknowledgement 'Of what I owed to Books in early life' (bk.5, l.631) whose 'later influence yet remains untold' (bk.5, l.632). Wordsworth writes of 'when first | My ears began to open to the charm | Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet | For their own sakes' (bk.5, ll.576-579). As we saw earlier in the chapter, Wordsworth later became wary of Pope's bewitching 'tuneful manner'.⁶⁹³ In the reference to Pope, however, Wordsworth suggests that he may have read in his youth 'tuneful' poems, 'Repeating favourite verses' (bk.5, l.588) where the 'phrases pleas'd' (bk.5, l.580) and gave 'delight' (bk.5, l.580), but simultaneously in remembering such poetry 'no vulgar power | Was working in' (bk.5, ll.595-596) him. He might now dismiss lines which are 'in their splendour overwrought' (bk.5, l.594), but he recognises their 'influence' (bk.5, l.632) and what he 'owe[s]' (bk.5, l.631) to them.

In 'A Night-Piece' Wordsworth wants to show that he can resurrect poetry from the 'low state' to which it had 'sunk' in the previous generation, and of which he thinks Pope's 'celebrated moonlight scene' a case in point.⁶⁹⁴ He wants to show that he can steadily fix his eye upon external nature, and 'that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination'.⁶⁹⁵ Although Wordsworth picks out Pope for criticism here, in the same passage in the *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface* he does praise Pope's originality. Pope had created 'a passage or two in the Windsor Forest' that contain 'new image[s] of external nature', which 'scarcely' any other poet of Pope's era accomplished.⁶⁹⁶

Wordsworth chooses Pope's moonlight scene to challenge not because he dismisses it, but because it is in 'the style' which typifies poetry's previous 'low state' yet which 'retains' its

⁶⁹² Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope*, p.97.

⁶⁹³ Wordsworth, *Essays upon Epitaphs II, Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.2, p.75.

⁶⁹⁴ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.73.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid*, vol.3, p.73.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid*, vol.3, p.73.

‘hold’ on ‘public estimation’ and still ‘finds so many and such ardent admirers’.⁶⁹⁷

Wordsworth wants to challenge it because it is ‘celebrated’.⁶⁹⁸

In a letter to Alexander Dyce written towards the end of his life, and many years after ‘A Night-Piece’ was published, Wordsworth extolled Pope’s ‘poetic Imagination’, compared to that of Pope’s ‘Contemporaries’.⁶⁹⁹ Pope ‘stands alone—as a man most highly gifted’.⁷⁰⁰ Dyce went on, in 1831, to publish a three volume edition of Pope’s *Works*.⁷⁰¹ Pope’s poetical ability is not in dispute; in fact, Wordsworth singles him out for particular praise, ‘—but unluckily he took the Plain, when the Heights were within his reach—’.⁷⁰² In ‘A Night-Piece’ Wordsworth builds on Pope’s exceptional ‘poetic Imagination’ in the descriptions and images, in order to show how Pope’s poetry could be lifted to even greater ‘Heights’. In his deconstruction of Pope’s poem, Wordsworth shows a thorough and intimate knowledge of Pope’s *Iliad*. And, moreover, the tenderness and care with which he revivifies the imagery suggests that he does not reject Pope’s poetry, rather that he is engaging with it and giving it, in Keatsian terms, ‘other pulses’ (‘Addressed to the Same [Haydon]’, 1.12). In the *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface*, after all, Wordsworth states that ‘Pope’, alongside ‘the Translators of the Bible, and Shakespeare, [and] Milton’, all have ‘beauties’ and ‘fine feathers’ that make them ‘our most celebrated English Poets’; being ‘celebrated’ is not then necessarily a bad thing.⁷⁰³

It is not just the contemplation of nature that Wordsworth is extolling in ‘A Night-Piece’; he is rhapsodising over the poetic inspiration he is taking from Pope’s poem and is revitalising in his own style. Wordsworth is suggesting that just as he takes inspiration from nature, he here takes inspiration from Pope’s poem. It is in analysing the ways in which he

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid, vol.3, pp.73-74.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid, vol.3, p.73.

⁶⁹⁹ Wordsworth to Dyce, 12 January 1829: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.5, p.3.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid, vol.5, p.3.

⁷⁰¹ *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. Alexander Dyce, 3 vols. (London, 1831).

⁷⁰² Wordsworth to Dyce, 12 January 1829: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.5, p.3.

⁷⁰³ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.78.

distances his poem from Pope's that we can better understand how Wordsworth constructs his poetic vision.

the Language of the Heart

The Prelude is not the only poem by Wordsworth to remember intoxicated youth from a perspective of sober maturity; so too does *Tintern Abbey*, and so too does Wordsworth echo Pope in that poem.⁷⁰⁴ Wordsworth writes in an apostrophe to Dorothy:

My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes.
(ll.116-119)

If Wordsworth catches in Dorothy's voice the language of his former heart, the reader catches in the poet's voice the language of a former poet.⁷⁰⁵ Pope refers to 'the language' of the 'heart' twice in his poetry: in *Epistle to Arbuthnot* and the Horatian imitation *Epistle to Augustus*. In both poems Pope uses the phrase to discuss a father-figure. In *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, Pope praises the straightforward honesty of his actual, biological, father:

Un-learn'd he knew no Schoolman's subtle Art,
No language, but the Language of the Heart.
(ll.398-399)

In *Epistle to Augustus*, Pope charts the progress of literary history and praises a poetical father, Abraham Cowley:

⁷⁰⁴ See *Lyrical Ballads, The Cornell Wordsworth*, pp.116-120.

⁷⁰⁵ Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope*, p.97.

Who now reads Cowley? if he pleases yet,
 His moral pleases, not his pointed wit:
 Forgot his Epic, nay, Pindaric Art,
 But still I love the language of his Heart.
 (ll.75-78)

Cowley's reputation had dwindled through the succeeding century after his death in 1667, hence Pope's lament. In the late eighteenth century Johnson praises Cowley in his 'Life of Cowley', and quotes some of his poetry, which suggests that he agrees with Pope's approval of 'the language of his Heart'. Cowley himself had written that 'clouds which in the head appear' are due 'To overflowings of the heart below' (*Sleep*, ll.12-14).⁷⁰⁶ Wordsworth contributes to a revival of Cowley's literary status in the early nineteenth century when he adopts Cowley's style of the Pindaric Ode—Cowley's 'Pindaric Art' is mentioned by Pope in the quotation above—in *Ode*, published as the final poem of *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807).⁷⁰⁷ As with Warton then, Wordsworth's appreciation of the English poetic canon is not out of kilter with Pope's.⁷⁰⁸

I am not the first to notice Wordsworth's remembering of Pope's phrase, about 'the Language of the Heart', in *Tintern Abbey*, a poem about distance and memory. Griffin argues persuasively that 'In terms of the notion "the child is father to the man," the phrase "language of my former heart" alerts us to the uncanny presence of Pope as "father," or former self'.⁷⁰⁹ Megumi Ohsumi, more recently, has argued for a biographical reason for Wordsworth's use of Pope; that both poets reject, albeit respectfully, their relatives who represent a former self, and from whom they now feel 'a sense of detachment'.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁶ Quoted in Johnson, 'Life of Cowley', *Lives of the Poets*, vol.1, p.205.

⁷⁰⁷ See Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, The Cornell Wordsworth*, pp.269-277.

Wordsworth re-worked the poem, and it became *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* in *Poems* (1815), vol.2, pp.345-355.

⁷⁰⁸ See chapter one.

⁷⁰⁹ Griffin, *Wordsworth's Pope*, p.98. See Griffin, 'Wordsworth's Pope: The Language of his Former Heart', *ELH* 54.3 (Autumn, 1987), pp.695-715. For more on poetical father figures see Christopher Ricks' section 'The Poet as Heir' in *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.7-216.

⁷¹⁰ Megumi Ohsumi, 'Pope's "Language of the Heart" in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*', *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, 4.4 (April, 2014), pp.250-258, p.258.

The notion of personal feeling as fundamental to creating affecting poetry applies to both poets. As we saw earlier, Warton was drawn to the personal aspect of *Eloisa to Abelard*. Pope confessed that the poem ‘gr[ew] warm’ and was the ‘Breathings of the Heart’, almost as if it was living.⁷¹¹ Those who read it may ‘think’ that Pope ‘was in love’.⁷¹² The idea of self-expression as a poet is coming through here. In *Eloisa to Abelard*, Pope refers to ‘my pensive ghost’ (l.365), and closes the poem ‘He best can paint ’em, who shall feel ’em most’ (l.366). In his *Essays upon Epitaphs II*, Wordsworth contemplated ‘the best of Pope’s Epitaphs’, and wrote, in sympathy with Pope, that in poetry ‘it is a living creature that must interest us’.⁷¹³

What neither Griffin nor Ohsumi draws attention to, however, is the change in the determiner that Wordsworth makes in the allusion. Pope had referred externally to ‘the Heart’ and ‘his Heart’, whereas Wordsworth refers to the ‘language of...my heart’ [emphasis added]. Wordsworth is adopting Popean language to show how it has affected *him*. The change that Wordsworth makes in this one word is indicative of much of Wordsworth’s poetry, as evident in *The Prelude*; he is interested in taking inspiration and showing its effect on his mind and his poetry. In other words, how Pope’s poetry has transformed within him the language of his heart.

Wordsworth’s friend, Barron Field, contends:

Wordsworth’s genius has a kindredness with that of Pope’s poetry, though an antipathy to that of his style. The human heart and character is the great province of both poets, and not mere descriptive landskip—nor “arms and the man”—not “the dragon’s wing, the magic ring”.⁷¹⁴

The ‘arms and the man’ refers to the opening of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and ‘the dragon’s wing, the magic ring’ (l.141) is from Wordsworth’s ‘Prologue’ to *Peter Bell* (first published in

⁷¹¹ Pope to Martha Blount, March 1716: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.338.

⁷¹² *Ibid*, vol.1, p.338.

⁷¹³ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.2, p.77.

⁷¹⁴ Field, *Barron Field’s Memoirs of Wordsworth*, p.37, f.43.

1819).⁷¹⁵ Field's use of quotation highlights both Pope's and Wordsworth's appreciation of classic poetry—evident in their deployment of Virgilian technique in *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Prelude*—and fantastical imagination—evident in Pope's sylphs and Wordsworth's boyhood excursions which were 'the trouble' of his 'dreams' (*The Prelude*, bk.1, l.428). More than this, Field has recognised that both poets' 'great province' is the 'human heart'. In 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', Wordsworth describes the collective humanity that connects us all as 'we have all of us one human heart' (l.146); our unity is emphasised by the alternative use of 'we', 'all', 'us', 'human', creating a pulsing rhythm through the line. In his *Prologue to Mr. Addison's Tragedy of Cato* (written in 1713), Pope opens the poem by stating the purpose of the muse:

To wake the soul by tender strokes of art,
To raise the genius, and to mend the heart
(ll.1-2)⁷¹⁶

Wordsworth and Pope show their 'kindredness' by the connection between language and the heart in their poetry.

what they half-create

In his allusions and echoes to other poets, Wordsworth finds a means of poetic genesis. In *Tintern Abbey*, for example, Wordsworth writes in a footnote that a 'line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young, the exact expression of which I cannot recollect'.⁷¹⁷ This footnote is attached to the word 'half-create' (l.107). Wordsworth writes:

⁷¹⁵ See Wordsworth, *Peter Bell*, ed. John E. Jordan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.55.

⁷¹⁶ See Pope, *Minor Poems*, ed. Norman Ault in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.6, pp.96-98.

⁷¹⁷ Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.119.

...all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, both what they half-create,
And what perceive
(*Tintern Abbey*, ll.106-108)

The reference to the ‘eye and ear’ of ‘the mighty world’ also includes previous ‘mighty Poets’ (*The Prelude*, bk.5, l.619) through whom we ‘perceive’ the world and who facilitate further creativity—‘half-create’. The collective and the singular are in part translated through the poem into one another: ‘the mighty world’ has one ‘eye and ear’, and yet individuals ‘create’ and ‘perceive’ it. With Pope more particularly, Wordsworth’s perception of what good poetry is has come through a comparison of his and Pope’s ‘eye and ear’, and the different sights and sounds they value in poetry.

In the ‘Advertisement’ to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Wordsworth had pronounced, in agreement with Sir Joshua Reynolds’ view, that ‘An accurate taste in poetry...can only be produced by severe thought, and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition’.⁷¹⁸ This recalls Milton’s comment that it is the duty of poets to be well-versed in the poetry that went before them. In *Areopagitica* (1644), Milton had written that ‘When a man writes to the world...he takes himself to be inform’d in what he writes, as well as any that writ before him’.⁷¹⁹ A customary part of English literary culture involved the gathering of *loci communes*, commonplaces, and reusing them. In Milton’s time ‘no one hesitated to use lines of thought or even quite specific wordings from another person without crediting the other person, for these were all taken to be—and most often were—part of the common tradition’.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁸ Ibid, p.739.

⁷¹⁹ Milton, *Areopagitica*, p.21.

⁷²⁰ Walter Ong, introduction to Milton’s ‘The Art of Logic’, *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Don Marion Wolfe, 8 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1953-1982), vol.8, p.187. For more on Milton’s literary communality see Stephen B. Dobranski, ‘Milton’s Social Life’, *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. Dennis Danielson, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.1-24. For how this literary practice developed over the eighteenth century see Richard Terry, *The Plagiarism Allegation in English Literature from Butler to Sterne* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Milton's stance is opposed by Shelley in a letter to Byron, dated 4 May 1821, in which Shelley contends that 'True genius vindicates to itself an exemption from all regard to whatever had gone before'.⁷²¹ It is for this reason that Shelley does 'not think Pope, or *any* writer, a fit model for any succeeding writer' because otherwise 'it would all come to a question as to under *what forms* mediocrity should perpetually reproduce itself'.⁷²²

Wordsworth does not use Pope's poetry as a 'model' to reproduce in his own poetry, but it cannot be doubted that Wordsworth considered Pope to be among the 'best models of composition', or that he engaged in 'a long continued intercourse' with Pope's poetry.

Writing to Dyce when in his mid-seventies, Wordsworth declared 'I am much in the same situation as Pope when Hall's Satires were first put into his hand'.⁷²³ Johnson had written in the 'Life of Pope':

That he gleaned from authors, obscure as well as eminent, what he thought brilliant or useful, and preserved it all in a regular collection, is not unlikely. When, in his last years, Hall's Satires were shewn him, he wished that he had seen them sooner.⁷²⁴

Wordsworth, like Pope, gleans from other poets including Pope himself what he thinks is brilliant and useful, including from Pope himself, and reimagines it in his own poetry.

Through his 'long continued intercourse' with Pope's poetry, Wordsworth seeks to discover and develop what he considers to be 'An accurate taste in poetry'. It is through his reimagining of Pope that Wordsworth creates a poetic space for himself, which at once shows both recourse to and distance from Pope's poetic legacy. Pope is a central figure in Wordsworth's working through of his own poetic vision.

⁷²¹ Shelley to Byron, 4 May 1821: *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederick Lafayette Jones, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), vol.2, p.290.

⁷²² *Ibid*, vol.2, p.290.

⁷²³ Wordsworth to Dyce, 5 January 1844: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.7, p.515.

⁷²⁴ Johnson, 'Life of Pope', *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.79.

CHAPTER FOUR: ‘a brotherhood in song’

*The consequence of this re-awakening of the poetical faculty is not
as some imagine, a contempt for Pope*
Leigh Hunt⁷²⁵

Part I: ‘To fit the naked foot of Poesy’

One of the central literary debates of the Romantic era concerned Pope and the poetic canon. Indeed, James Chandler argues in the *Critical Inquiry* that ‘the dispute over Alexander Pope...is arguably the canonical canon controversy in English literary history, the one associated with the nation’s major revolution in poetry and taste’.⁷²⁶ How did the early-nineteenth-century context of evolving perspectives on Pope affect Keats and his poetry?

In chapter one, I examined the extent to which Joseph Warton was critical of Pope in his *Essay on Pope*, and concluded that Warton’s intention was not to denigrate Pope’s poetry. Still, what we might call the straightforward interpretation of Warton’s *Essay on Pope*—that is, that Warton was trying to suggest that Pope was a mere second-rate poet when compared with Milton, Spenser, or Shakespeare—persisted through the end of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century.⁷²⁷ The tendency to try to categorise poets into various ‘Schools’ may be thought to have exacerbated this impression. In 1791, for example, Joseph Warton published a posthumous collection of poetry written by younger brother, Thomas (who had been made poet laureate in 1785), with the announcement that ‘the ingenious Author of the following Poems was of the SCHOOL of SPENSER and MILTON, rather than that of

⁷²⁵ Hunt, *Foliage; or Poems Original and Translated* (London, 1818), p.130.

⁷²⁶ Chandler, ‘The Pope Controversy’, *Critical Inquiry* (1984), p.481.

⁷²⁷ As I argued there, the straightforward interpretation can be challenged; nonetheless, where in this chapter I refer to Warton and the *Essay on Pope*, it is the straightforward interpretation that I have in mind.

POPE'.⁷²⁸ The tone of such comments is often taken to imply that those who appreciate true poetry revere the brilliance of Milton, Spenser, and Shakespeare, but those who prefer Pope are unable to perceive the true genius of the deeper, more profound, more natural, more *true* poetry of the pre-Augustan poets. In this sort of environment, to admit that you liked Pope was, in effect, to reduce yourself as an appreciator of poetry.

Just because an author does not like another author, however, does not mean that she or he is not influenced by that author. Pope's poetry was pervasive. It would have been impossible for Keats not to have encountered it. That Keats was familiar with Pope's poetry is evident from explicit references in his letters. In a letter to his brother and sister-in-law, dated 18 December 1818, for example, Keats quotes a line from Pope's *The Dying Christian to his Soul, Ode* (written in 1712): 'What is this absorbs me quite?' (l.9).⁷²⁹ Keats is here making a light-hearted suggestion for a 'Comedy' play, featuring a 'Scene, [in] a little Parlour' between, *inter alios*, the 'Creatures' of Hunt and Hazlitt.⁷³⁰ He puts the words of Pope's *Dying Christian* into the mouth of Hunt, who wonders whether he is too 'lax in [his] christian principles'.⁷³¹ At the same time, Hunt plays 'at the Music', again echoing the *Dying Christian*, who 'hear[s] around soft Musick play' (l.14, in the 1730 version of the poem). In this letter, Keats references Pope to draw out the humour of the imagined scene, particularly by putting Pope's words in the mouth of Hunt.

Although Keats is being jovial in this letter, he elsewhere echoes lines of *The Dying Christian to his Soul, Ode* more earnestly. In that poem, Pope's restless soul—with what we might now characterise as Keatsianesque submersion in paradoxical experience—exclaims 'Oh the pain, the bliss of dying!' (l.4). Pope's question, 'can this be Death?' (l.12), is echoed through Keats' own ode, *Ode to a Nightingale*, where the narrative voice has 'been half in

⁷²⁸ *The Poems on Various Subjects, of Thomas Warton*, ed. Joseph Warton (London, 1791), p.iii.

⁷²⁹ Keats to George and Georgiana Keats, 18 December 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.14.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid*, vol.2, p.14.

⁷³¹ *Ibid*, vol.2, p.14.

love with easeful Death' (l.52), and 'Now more than ever seems it rich to die' (l.55).

Imagined death, for Pope, 'Steals my senses, shuts my sight' (l.10)—while, for Keats' lyric voice, 'drowsy numbness pains | My sense' (ll.1-2); she/he 'cannot see' (l.41) in 'embalmed darkness' (l.43). There is an unnerving play here in 'embalmed', which calls to mind an elongation and preservation of death. Pope's fantasy death 'Drowns my spirits, draws my breath' (ll.10-11); while Keats' line 'Lethe-wards had sunk' (l.4) is also suggestive of drowning spirits, and he wants death 'To take into the air my quiet breath' (l.54). Pope invites death so as to 'Cease, fond Nature, cease thy strife' (l.5); while Keats wants 'To cease upon the midnight with no pain' (l.56). In Pope's poem:

The world recedes; it disappears!
Heav'n opens on my eyes! my ears
With sounds seraphic ring:
Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!
(ll.13-16)

The world also recedes and disappears for Keats' poetic voice; he wants the world to 'Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget' (l.21)—'here there is no light, | Save what from heaven is' (ll.38-39). Keats' ears are met with the sounds of the angelic nightingale who is 'pouring forth [its] soul abroad | In such an ecstasy' (ll.57-58), and 'Darkling I listen' (l.51) to 'thy high requiem' (l.60). In *Endymion* (1818), Keats exclaims 'O I could fly | With thee into the ken of heavenly powers' (bk.2, ll.795-796), recalling Pope's wish to 'fly' (l.16) and 'come away' (l.8) with the 'Angels' (l.7). Pope wants to borrow the 'wings' of the seraphims so that he can 'fly' with them; Keats' narrative voice in *Ode to a Nightingale* exhorts 'Away! away! for I will fly to thee' (l.31) on 'wings of Poesy' (l.33), 'Already with thee!' (l.35). Keats' use of the image of 'wings' as a release to 'fly' away and escape life echoes Pope's. Moreover, in using the phrase 'wings of Poesy', Keats is suggesting that his imaginative flights of fancy have in part been achieved using the 'wings' of other 'Poesy'.

Both poems end with a double question:

O Grave! where is thy Victory?
 O Death! where is thy Sting?
 (*The Dying Christian to his Soul, Ode*, ll.17-18)

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
 Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?
 (*Ode to a Nightingale*, ll.79-80)

There are obvious differences between these two pairs of questions, but they both end with uncertainty and existential contemplation. There is a similar sense of wondering about one's reputation after death: Pope wonders whether there can be any victory beyond the grave; and Keats compares the nightingale's 'high requiem' to his own 'becom[ing] a sod' (l.60) ignored by the bird and world. The echoes of Pope in Keats' poem suggest that both poets struggle with contemplating death in similar ways: on the one hand, there is, in Pope's words, a 'Trembling' and 'hoping' (l.3) for death, for life to 'cease' (l.5) which will 'let [one] languish into life' (l.6); on the other, there is a sense of insecurity about the reputation one's poetry will experience after death. Pope's image, to 'languish into life', is echoed in Keats' *Hyperion. A Fragment* (published in 1820), where Apollo, the God of poetry, 'Die[s] into life' (part 3, l.130).

Ode to a Nightingale was written in May 1819. Keats had already appropriated imagery from Pope's line 'Oh the pain, the bliss of dying!' (l.4) in *Endymion*, where simultaneous but contradictory sensations of 'O bliss! O pain!' (bk.2, l.773) 'doth bereave | My soul of any rest' (bk.2, ll.775-776). The paradoxical emotions experienced by the narrative voice in Pope's poem—'bliss' and 'pain'—clearly resonate with Keats; they bubble through his mind and into his own poetic imagery.

In a letter to Haydon, dated 10-16 May 1817, Keats questions his abilities as a poet, and wonders how he can ever attain the heights of his great poetical predecessors. The 'truth is I have been in such a state of Mind as to read over my Lines and hate them', he laments.⁷³²

⁷³² Keats to Haydon of 10-16 May 1817: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, p.141.

The ‘Cliff of Poesy Towers above me’, Keats continues, ‘—yet when, Tom [Keats’ brother] who meets with some of Pope’s Homer in Plutarch’s Lives reads some of those to me they seem like Mice to mine’.⁷³³ Although this is not a flattering account of Pope, it shows at least that Keats was well acquainted with Pope’s poetry, and that the brothers chose to pass their time in its perusal. Keats describes himself as ‘one that gathers Samphire dreadful trade’.⁷³⁴ Keats quotes *King Lear*:

halfway down
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice.⁷³⁵

Keats ruminates on how poets and poetry are preserved; he begins his letter by quoting the very opening lines of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*: ‘Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives, | Live registered upon our brazen tombs’.⁷³⁶ Keats is ‘tormented’ by poets’ literary afterlives, and seeks comfort when he asks Haydon, ‘I remember your saying that you had notions of a good Genius presiding over you—I have of late had the same thought...Is it too daring to Fancy Shakespeare this Presider?’.⁷³⁷ In his reverence for past authors Keats is reminiscent of Pope, who ‘fairly confess[es] that I have serv’d my self all I could by reading’.⁷³⁸ Keats not only compares himself with Pope and Shakespeare, but also compares Pope with Shakespeare. Like the samphire picker, Keats’ ‘trade’ is ‘dreadful’ (full of dread): in contemplating his poetic career, ‘glorious fear’ (*Sleep and Poetry*, l.128) ‘Towers’ over him. Pope, on the other hand, is a mere mouse-like ‘fisherman that walk[s] upon the beach’; he is a tradesman, a ‘handicraftsman’ (*Sleep and Poetry*, l.200), who finds himself near the cliffs of

⁷³³ Ibid, vol.1, p.141. John Livingston Lowes argues that the edition of *Plutarch’s Lives* that the Keats brothers were reading was either published in 1758 or 1770 (‘Moneta’s Temple’, *PMLA* 51.4 (December, 1936), pp.1098-1113, p.1099).

⁷³⁴ Keats to Haydon, 10-16 May 1817: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, p.141.

⁷³⁵ Act IV, sc.v, ll.18-22 (*The Royal Shakespeare Company Complete Works*, eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2008), p.2056).

⁷³⁶ Act I, sc.i, ll.1-2 (*Royal Shakespeare Company Complete Works*, p.309).

⁷³⁷ Keats to Haydon, 10-16 May 1817: *Letters of Keats: Letters of Keats*, vol.1, pp.141-142.

⁷³⁸ Pope, ‘The Preface to *The Works*, 1717’, *Prose of Pope, Vol.1*, p.293.

poetry, but does not actually attempt to scale them. In this letter, then, Keats is explicitly comparing his own abilities as a poet with those of his predecessors. Keats' manoeuvre, in contrasting Pope unfavourably with Shakespeare, conforms to the pervading Wartonian categorisation of 'genuine poetry'.⁷³⁹

In the letter to Haydon, Keats is propounding views that are in line with those of the literary sphere to which he aspires. To illustrate the literary context in which Keats is developing his notions about what poetry ought to be, one might cite Coleridge's suggestion to Southey (in a letter dated 10 November 1799) that the latter's upcoming *Annual Anthology* should open with 'a poem in couplets...such as the Ignoramuses & Pope-admirers would deem genuine Poetry'—in the hope, one imagines, that this would lead it to sell better to the general public.⁷⁴⁰ Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, which appeared a year later, in 1800, explains just how he and Coleridge aim to overthrow the views of 'Ignoramuses & Pope-admirers' who do not understand true poetry:

...a language arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings is a more permanent and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation.⁷⁴¹

In 1802, Wordsworth added to *Lyrical Ballads* a perceptibly anti-Popean appendix on '*poetic diction*', which criticises the 'adoption' of 'mechanical...figures of speech' by 'men ambitious of the fame of Poets'.⁷⁴² Wordsworth supposes that 'this distorted language was received with admiration' only because such poets 'spake...in the character of a man to be looked up to'.⁷⁴³ He sees such poetry as a 'perverted' 'corruption'; such 'Poets constructed a

⁷³⁹ Warton, 'Dedication', *Essay on Pope* (1756), p.x.

⁷⁴⁰ Coleridge to Southey, 10 November 1799: *Collected Letters of Coleridge*, vol.1, p.545.

⁷⁴¹ Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, *The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.744.

⁷⁴² *Ibid*, p.761.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid*, p.761.

phraseology' which is not (again with a nod to Joseph Warton) 'the genuine language of poetry', and renders their poetry merely 'a motley masquerade of tricks'.⁷⁴⁴ In this regard, Wordsworth cites 'Pope's "Messiah"' as one of the worst culprits.⁷⁴⁵

Pope claims in the preface to his *Works* (1717) that 'I publish'd because I was told I might please such as it was a credit to please'.⁷⁴⁶ Keats, on the other hand, particularly in the earlier part of his career, is in part writing to impress a specific group within a small, known circle: a circle that, for all its talk of liberating poetry, has very particular ideas about what is good and what is not.⁷⁴⁷ A fundamental belief, within this circle, is that Pope's poetry is not of the calibre of Shakespeare's, Spenser's, and/or Milton's. Hazlitt had written in *Lectures on the English Poets* that 'DRYDEN and POPE are the great masters of the artificial style of poetry in our language' just as 'Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, were of the natural' style of poetry.⁷⁴⁸ Hazlitt continues that Pope's 'artificial style is generally and very justly acknowledged to be inferior to the other'.⁷⁴⁹ To sympathise overtly with Pope's poetry in any way was to align yourself with literary values other than those held very dear by the group among whom Keats was trying to insinuate himself.

The Pope controversy provides more than a backdrop against which Keats is writing. Keats' poetry itself becomes embroiled in this debate from the publication of his first volume.⁷⁵⁰ Upon the publication of Keats' *Poems* (1817), Hunt wrote three literary notices which continued a theme laid out by Keats in *Sleep and Poetry*, the final and most serious

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid, p.762.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid, p.763. For the poem *Messiah* itself see Pope, *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, eds. E. Audra and Audrey Williams in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.1, pp.97-122.

⁷⁴⁶ Pope, 'The Preface to *The Works*, 1717', *Prose of Pope, Vol.1*, p.292.

⁷⁴⁷ Although Pope did write for individual subscribers, they had to pay in advance for his poetry, which suggests that they supported his poetic endeavours. Subscribers are more likely to be sympathetic than general literary critics.

⁷⁴⁸ Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets*, p.135.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid p.135.

⁷⁵⁰ *Poems* (London, 1817).

poem in the volume: ‘Now ’tis a fairer season’ (l.221) for poetry.⁷⁵¹ Hunt binds Keats into the controversy by setting him against Pope. In the first of these articles, Hunt derides Pope’s poetry as of the ‘school of wit and ethics in verse’ with ‘little imagination, of a higher order, no intense feeling of nature, no sentiment, no real music or variety’, and claims that in Keats’ poetry ‘something which was not poetry has made way for the return of something which is’.⁷⁵² Hunt’s use of the word ‘return’ supposes that the Augustans are an aberration from the true poetry of their predecessors.

Despite his early support for Keats, and his invective against Pope, Hunt later sought to distance himself from Keats’ sweeping denunciation of Pope in *Sleep and Poetry*. In the preface to his *Foliage* (1818), Hunt writes that ‘The consequence of this re-awakening of the poetical faculty is not as some imagine, a *contempt* for Pope’.⁷⁵³ Hunt’s use of ‘re-awakening’ indicates that he has Keats’ *Sleep and Poetry* in mind. Keats had depicted Pope and his followers as being asleep and therefore unresponsive to the beauties of nature: ‘beauty was awake! | Why were ye not awake?’ (ll.192-193). Keats emphasises this image by using the word ‘awake’ twice, which Hunt then picks up in describing a poetical ‘re-awakening’.⁷⁵⁴

The Pope controversy was fuelled in part by a growing desire among the literary public for the establishment of a settled canon or tradition of English poetry.⁷⁵⁵ Lawrence Lipking remarks on the contemporary ‘national desire for an evaluation of what English poets had achieved’.⁷⁵⁶ Sensing the existence of a gap in the market, Pope had himself sketched a plan for a possible history of English poetry. This project remained no more than a sketch,

⁷⁵¹ See ‘Poems by John Keats’, *The Examiner* 492 (1 June 1817), p.345; *The Examiner* 497 (6 July 1817), pp.428-429; and *The Examiner* 498 (13 July 1817), pp.443-444.

⁷⁵² *The Examiner* 492, p.345.

⁷⁵³ Hunt, *Foliage*, p.130.

⁷⁵⁴ See Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, ‘Keats, Hazlitt, and Augustan Poetry’, *A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews* 16.4 (Fall, 2003), pp.41-47, p.42.

⁷⁵⁵ For further exploration of the forming of the poetic canon see Richard Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past, 1660-1781* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁷⁵⁶ Lipking, *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p.328.

and this, perhaps, is a relevant factor when considering Pope's literary afterlife. England would have no major overview of its poetic history until the 1770s and 1780s, when Thomas Warton issued his pioneering *History of English Poetry* (1774-1781) and Johnson published *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-1781). In his 'Preface', Warton acknowledges that he has seen 'an authentic copy of Mr. POPE's scheme of a History of English Poetry', but that his, Warton's, version is 'considerably enlarged, extended, and improved'.⁷⁵⁷ In July 1803, Coleridge is still unhappy with the developing canon and writes to Southey: 'I write now to propose a scheme...of your grand work....I would have the work entitled Bibliotheca Britannica, or an History of British Literature', with one volume containing 'the history of English poetry and poets'.⁷⁵⁸ The Lake Poets continued to be anxious on this score into the 1810s; the perceived importance of establishing a canon is still evident in a letter from Wordsworth to Robert Anderson, editor of *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain*, dated 17 September 1814.⁷⁵⁹ Wordsworth wished that Anderson's anthology 'would have included many valuable works of our elder Poets which have no place there', the result of this omission being that 'The Public therefore is still unprovided with an entire Body of English Poetry'.⁷⁶⁰ Wordsworth saw himself, and his fellow Lake Poets, as the guardians of 'Literature':

I have long wished this to be done; and have talked with several of my Friends Messieurs Coleridge and Southey in particular upon the subject who both participate my desire to see your Edition adequately enlarged....A few days ago I had a conversation with Mr Southey on this subject, and we both agreed that it would be a fortunate thing for the interests of Literature.⁷⁶¹

The formulation of the poetic canon was a central issue for many who concerned themselves with literature at this time. The desire to reach consensus as to the correct constituents of this canon is evident in the literary magazines that proliferated during this period. *The Edinburgh*

⁷⁵⁷ Warton, *The History of English Poetry*, vol.1, p.iv.

⁷⁵⁸ Coleridge to Southey, July 1803: *Collected Letters of Coleridge*, vol.2, p.955.

⁷⁵⁹ Robert Anderson, ed., *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain*, 13 vols. (London, 1792-1795).

⁷⁶⁰ Wordsworth to Anderson, 17 September 1814: *Letters of the Wordsworths*, vol.3, p.152.

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid*, vol.3, p.152.

Review was founded in 1802, closely followed by *The Examiner* in 1808 and *The Quarterly Review* in 1809; *Blackwood's Magazine* began somewhat later, in 1817.

In 1811 Francis Jeffrey pointedly remarked that ‘the Restoration brought in...what was called a classical and polite taste; and the wings of our English muses were clipped and trimmed’.⁷⁶² Hazlitt later echoed this:

It cannot be concealed, however, that the progress of knowledge and refinement has a tendency to circumscribe the limits of the imagination, and to clip the wings of poetry.⁷⁶³

Keats also expressed the view that Popean ‘taste’ and ‘refinement’ restrict poetry and, in *Sleep and Poetry*, he, too, employs the image of clipping. Keats writes, in a mocking tone, that Pope and his imitators ‘clip, and fit’ lines to wear ‘the mask | Of Poesy’ (ll.197-201). In a letter to his publisher, John Murray, dated 31 July 1821, Byron disparages what he calls Keats’ ‘principles of poetry’ and ‘abuse of Pope’.⁷⁶⁴ For Keats, Pope’s poetry does not accord with the Wordsworthian view that ‘all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’—or rather, perhaps, that all good poetry *appears to be* the spontaneous overflow of feelings.⁷⁶⁵ Pope explicitly crafts and redrafts his poetry. Spence attributes the following words, from May 1730, to Pope:

After writing a poem one should correct it all over with one single view at a time. Thus for language, if an elegy: ‘these lines are very good, but are not they of too heroical a strain?’, and so vice versa.⁷⁶⁶

For Pope, one going-over was never enough. As Johnson observes, Pope ‘examined lines and words with minute and punctilious observation, and retouched every part with indefatigable diligence, till he had left nothing to be forgiven’.⁷⁶⁷ Indeed, editing is a central

⁷⁶² Jeffrey, ‘Review of *The Dramatic Works of John Ford*’, *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* 18.36 (August, 1811), pp.275-304, p.278.

⁷⁶³ Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets*, p.18.

⁷⁶⁴ Byron to Murray, 31 July 1821: *Byron's Letters and Journals*, vol.8, p.163.

⁷⁶⁵ Preface to 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, *The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.744.

⁷⁶⁶ Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, Collected from Conversation*, orig. pub. 1820, ed. J. M. Osborn, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), vol.1, p.171.

⁷⁶⁷ Johnson, ‘Life of Pope’, *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.64.

tenet of Pope's 'Ideas of Poetry'.⁷⁶⁸ Pope wrote that 'the Ancients (to say the least of them) had as much Genius as we; and that to take more pains, and employ more time, cannot fail to produce more complete pieces'.⁷⁶⁹ The Ancients 'constantly apply'd themselves not only to that art, but to that single branch of an art, to which their talent was most powerfully bent'.⁷⁷⁰ It was, moreover, 'the business of their lives to correct and finish their works for posterity'.⁷⁷¹ Pope's belief is that if you want 'the same [poetical] immortality' as the Ancients, then you must use 'the same industry'.⁷⁷²

This is not to say that Pope is not passionate about poetry, or that Wordsworth, despite his exhortations on spontaneity, does not wrestle with poetic composition—after all, poetry should express powerful feelings 'recollected in tranquillity'.⁷⁷³ In *Epistle to Arbuthnot* Pope asks, 'Why did I write?' (l.125). His answer is, 'As yet a Child, nor yet a Fool to Fame, | I lisp'd in Numbers, for the Numbers came' (ll.127-128). He cannot imagine himself as anything other than a poet. As for spontaneous outpourings, Spence reports that Pope said in February-March 1735, 'The things that I have written fastest have always pleased most'.⁷⁷⁴ According to Spence, Pope liked to write 'fast', and then 'All the machinery...was added afterwards'.⁷⁷⁵ For Pope, 'I corrected because it was as pleasant to me to correct as to write'.⁷⁷⁶ In Pope's conception of good poetry, the processes of creation and edition are equally important.

Not all Romantic poets were opposed to Pope. Byron, a vociferous supporter of Pope's poetry and brilliance, comments in 1821: 'I look upon this as the declining age of English Poetry—no regard for others—no selfish feeling—can prevent me from seeing this—

⁷⁶⁸ Pope, 'The Preface to *The Works*, 1717', *Prose of Pope*, Vol.1, pp.292-293.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid, pp.292-293.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid, pp.292-293.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid, pp.292-293.

⁷⁷² Ibid, pp.292-293.

⁷⁷³ Preface to 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, *The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.744. See Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth's Revisiting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁷⁷⁴ Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, vol.1, p.45.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid, vol.1, p.45.

⁷⁷⁶ Pope, 'The Preface to *The Works*, 1717', *Prose of Pope*, Vol.1, p.292.

and expressing the truth.—There can be no worse sign for the taste of the times than the depreciation of Pope'.⁷⁷⁷ Byron is fed-up with the contemporary 'undermining of the reputation of the most *perfect* of our poets'.⁷⁷⁸ Byron's Horatian satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809), both reflects the influence of Pope (and, in particular, the 'Imitations of Horace') on Byron, and instantiates Byron's support for Pope and Pope's poetic aesthetic:

Time was, ere yet in these degenerate days
 Ignoble themes obtained mistaken praise,
 When Sense and Wit with Poesy allied,
 No fabled Graces, flourished side by side,
 From the same fount their inspiration drew,
 And, reared by Taste, bloomed fairer as they grew.
 Then, in this happy Isle, a POPE's pure strain
 Sought the rapt soul to charm, nor sought in vain;
 A polished nation's praise aspired to claim,
 And rais'd the people's, as the poet's fame.
 (ll.103-112)

The fervour with which the opposing sides did battle in the Pope controversy is accounted for, perhaps, by the concern then current for the solidification of the nation's literary canon. Byron, who was as concerned as the Lake Poets about the literary health of the nation, describes Pope's poetry as having 'rais'd the people'. Others teased Byron for his support of Pope. In 1812, for example, Horace and James Smith parodied *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, in a poem ostensibly 'By Lord B.' entitled 'Cui Bono?' (which translates loosely from the Latin as 'who gains?'):

Thinking is but an idle waste of thought,
 And nought is every thing, and every thing is nought.
 (ll.71-72)

Throughout this playful pastiche of Popean epigrammatic couplets, and particularly in the second line's chiasmus, mockery of Byron for supporting Pope is evident.⁷⁷⁹ By 1821,

⁷⁷⁷ Byron, *Prose of Byron*, p.149.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.149.

⁷⁷⁹ Horace and James Smith, 'Cui Bono?', *Rejected Addresses: or, The New Theatrum Poetarum* (London, 1812), pp.11-17.

Byron ‘shall not presume to say that Pope is as high a poet as Shakespeare and Milton—though his enemy Warton places him immediately under them’.⁷⁸⁰ Byron, like Warton, considers Pope, Shakespeare, and Milton to produce different types of poetry. In a backhanded dig at Warton, however, Byron refuses to ‘presume’ that he is able to classify them.

Keats was writing at a time when the question, ‘what constitutes valuable poetry?’, permeated most literary discussion. It is likely that contemporary attitudes shaped Keats’ stance towards Pope’s poetry, at least to some extent. Someone in Keats’ social and financial position was, perhaps, particularly susceptible to these sorts of pressures. Byron, on the other hand, had comparative freedom to express any view he liked, without fear of detriment to his life or livelihood. By 1821, when Byron wrote to Murray about Bowles, thus igniting the Pope controversy, he was living abroad in self-imposed exile. Keats was dependent, to some extent, on the literati with whom he socialised; on Hunt, for example, who published Keats’ early poems in *The Examiner*. During the early part of his career, Keats felt the need to ingratiate himself with such people, which implied at least some alignment between his views and theirs. Keats explored his ideas about good poetry in *Sleep and Poetry*. Part of this poem was written in Hunt’s Hampstead house, in a room in which Hunt kept busts of various poetic heroes. Keats refers to this fact in the poem—‘Round about were hung | The glorious features of the bards who sung | In other ages’ (ll.355-357).⁷⁸¹ Keats invokes the ‘friendly aids’ (l.314) of this poetic ‘brotherhood’ (l.317); even so, in an atmosphere of such gravitas, it is unsurprising that he should have exhibited a certain self-consciousness about his own potential place among these august figures.

In *Sleep and Poetry*, we can discern the influence of Keats’ contemporaries on his ideas about poetry, *circa* late-1816. Evidence of contemporary literary thinking about what

⁷⁸⁰ Byron, *Prose of Byron*, pp.149-150.

⁷⁸¹ See ll.312-404 for the whole passage.

constitutes good poetry may be adduced from the response, in the literary press, to Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (originally published in 1814). Wordsworth's poem received disappointing reviews, which in the main dismissed it as unpoetical. Jeffrey, for example, opens his critique:

This will never do. It bears no doubt the stamp of the author's heart and fancy; but unfortunately not half so visibly as that of his peculiar system.⁷⁸²

The subsequent year, 1815, Wordsworth published an *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface*, in which he sought to justify his poetic vision. In this essay, Wordsworth sets himself up against Pope, whom he portrays as bombastic, and who 'dazzled' readers into submission with 'his polished style', despite his poetry's 'detestable' and 'disgusting passages'.⁷⁸³

Wordsworth writes:

The arts by which Pope...contrived to procure to himself a more general and a higher reputation than perhaps any English Poet ever attained during his lifetime, are known to the judicious. And as well known is it to them, that the undue exertion of those arts is the cause why Pope has for some time held a rank in literature, to which, if he had not been seduced by an over-love of immediate popularity, and had confided more in his native genius, he never could have descended. He bewitched the nation by his melody, and dazzled it by his polished style, and was himself blinded by his own success.⁷⁸⁴

Wordsworth justifies himself by scorning Popean 'unworthiness': 'Having had the good fortune to be born and reared in a mountainous country, from my very early childhood I have felt the falsehood that pervades the volumes imposed upon the world' by poets who use an unnatural 'polished style' and who remove themselves from nature 'into absolute independent singleness'.⁷⁸⁵ In *Sleep and Poetry*, Keats is reflecting on this Wordsworthian conception of poetic imagery when he asks: 'Should I rather kneel | Upon some mountain-top until I feel | A glowing splendour round about me hung, | And echo back the voice of thine own tongue? | O Poesy!' (ll.49-53).

⁷⁸² Jeffrey, 'Review of *The Excursion*', *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* 24.47 (November, 1814), pp.1-30, p.1.

⁷⁸³ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.72.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid*, vol.3, p.72.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid*, vol.3, p.77.

They sway'd about upon a rocking horse, And thought it Pegasus

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a schism
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
Men were thought wise who could not understand
His glories: with a puling infant's force
They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,
And thought it Pegasus. Ah dismal soul'd!
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious: beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did not know it,—no, they went about,
Holding a poor, decrepid standard out
Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large
The name of one Boileau!
(*Sleep and Poetry*, ll.181-206)

Keats' portrayal of the Augustans, in perhaps the most straightforwardly critical passage in *Sleep and Poetry*, is ostensibly prompted by his anxiety, as he contemplates a poetic career, that 'the high | Imagination cannot freely fly | As she was wont of old' (ll.163-165). Here Keats is echoing the concerns of critics such as Jeffrey, who observed in 1803 that 'The gradual refinement of taste had, for nearly a century, been weakening the force of original genius'.⁷⁸⁶ Jeffrey continues to say that poets since Pope have 'circumscribed themselves both in the choice and the management of their subjects, by the observance of a limited number of models, who were thought to have exhausted all the legitimate resources of the art'.⁷⁸⁷ To let the 'Imagination' 'freely fly', poetry must return to a period 'of old', one prior, that is, to the previous 'century' which had seen poetry 'weaken'.

Keats refers to the 'poor, decrepid standard' of the 'dismal soul'd' Augustans, who are no better than 'A thousand handicraftsmen', and who 'Made great Apollo blush' with their mere 'verses' 'That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face'. Keats is incongruously vitriolic about the Popean style in the lines, 'with a puling infant's force | They sway'd about upon a rocking horse, | And thought it Pegasus'. In echoing Hazlitt's 'On Milton's Versification' (originally published in *The Examiner* on 20 August 1815), with its assertion that 'Dr. Johnson and Pope would have converted [Milton's] vaulting Pegasus into a rocking horse', Keats is clearly making a reference to Pope.⁷⁸⁸ Indeed, so overt is Keats' reference here, that there can be little doubt that he was publicly aligning himself with the anti-Popean side of the controversy.

⁷⁸⁶ Jeffrey, 'Review of *The Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper*', *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* 1.3 (April, 1803), pp.64-86, p.81.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.81.

⁷⁸⁸ *The Round Table: A Collection of Essays on Literature, Men, and Manners*, 2 vols. (London, 1817), vol.1, p.110. The influence of Hazlitt on Keats has been well documented. Roy Park asserts that 'Keats admired Hazlitt more than any other contemporary' *Hazlitt and the Spirit of the Age: Abstraction and Critical Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p.34.

Ironically Pope, too, had used the image of a soaring Pegasus as representative of a great poet who is not bound by unnecessary rules. As mentioned above, Pope had written, in *An Essay on Criticism*: ‘Some Beauties yet, no Precepts can declare’ (l.141); there ‘Are *nameless Graces* which no Methods teach, | And which a *Master-Hand* alone can reach’ (ll.144-145). He explains that ‘Rules were made but to promote their End’ (l.147), and so there will be times when, for a true poet, ‘the *Rules* not far enough extend’ (l.146). In such instances, this ‘*Pegasus*’ (l.150), this true poet, ‘May boldly deviate from the common Track’ (l.151) and ‘From *vulgar Bounds* with *Brave Disorder* part | And *snatch* a *Grace* beyond the Reach of Art’ (ll.154-155). Pope condemns, moreover, those who would crush a Pegasus-like writer. In the *Dunciad*, Pope rails against ‘Songster[s] and ‘Riddler[s]’ ([Text B] bk.3, l.157) who torture ‘the Muses, on their racks’ ([Text B] bk.3, l.159) and so ‘Break...Pegasus’s neck’ ([Text B] bk.3, l.162).

Elsewhere in *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope is just as acerbic about poetry which uses hackneyed phrases and care-worn poetic imagery, similar to that later ridiculed by Keats in *Sleep and Poetry*. Pope mocks dull poetry:

Where-e’er you find *the cooling Western Breeze*,
 In the next Line, it *whispers thro’ the Trees*;
 If *Chrystal Streams* with *pleasing Murmurs* creep,
 The Reader’s threaten’d (not in vain) with *Sleep*.
 (ll.350-353)

The problem with Augustan poets, according to Keats, is that they lack proper feeling and sensitivity, that they are not touched by ‘beauty’: ‘beauty was awake! | Why were ye not awake?’. Instead they ‘were closely wed | To musty laws lined out with wretched rule | And compass vile’. His diction here—‘compass’, ‘laws’, ‘lined out’, ‘tallied’—calls to mind a scientific mode of composition that Keats finds unpalatable at this stage in his poetic career:

no great minist’ring reason sorts
 Out the dark mysteries of human souls
 To clear conceiving
 (ll.288-290)

The use of ‘sorts’ repeats the idea of scientific categorising. A poet cannot ‘simply’ (l.268) ‘reason’ with the soul, or understand its ‘dark mysteries’ by applying scientific logic to it, and so good poetry, which ‘must’ be concerned with ‘the agonies, the strife | Of human hearts’ (ll.123-5), cannot follow such rigid and confining strictures either. Keats’ import here is that, just because the Augustans’ ‘verses tallied’, that does not mean they could not write bad poetry. Poetry ought always to remain part ‘mystery’ (l.138): it should not be reduced to constituent parts, and cannot be understood through logic and reasoning; part of poetry’s power is that its power is unknowable. Keats censures the Augustans because they ‘felt...not’ the indescribable power and ‘beauty’ of poetry. The point of poetry is that it is meant to be ‘felt’—otherwise, it is only a collection of ‘flimsy mottos’. In disdaining such ‘flimsy mottos’, Keats echoes Coleridge’s assessment of Popean language, as ‘claiming to be poetical for no better reason, than that it would be intolerable in conversation or in prose’.⁷⁸⁹

But Pope, equally, disliked verse that is prose masquerading as poetry. In *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, he derides verse-writing which is ‘so sublimely bad, | It is not poetry, but prose run mad’ (ll.187-188). More than this, in using ‘flimsy’, Keats is echoing Pope’s own condemnation of writers who are ‘Proud of a vast extent of flimsy lines’ (*Epistle to Arbuthnot*, l.94). Keats might be using Pope’s diction in conscious irony in order to mock Pope by implying that Pope himself is a writer who is proud of his own ‘flimsy’ verse. Yet again, this echo of Pope’s diction in a line of poetry condemning other writers, as Pope’s own line does, might suggest that Pope’s poetry is so embedded in Keats’ mind that it is subconsciously influencing his creative process. Douglas Bush has written on the subtlety of the mature Keats’ use of literary echoes, which ‘pass through his own sensibility into his own idiom; they are part of his imaginative process of conception and composition’.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁹ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.2, p.30.

⁷⁹⁰ Douglas Bush, *John Keats: His Life and Writings* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), p.137.

Keats condemns what he saw as the limitation of Augustan poets: ‘ye were dead | To things ye knew not of’. Keats is keeping to the standard contemporary interpretation of Augustanism as representative of a restricted understanding of poetry’s beauty and power: ‘Men were thought wise who could not understand’ Apollo’s ‘glories’. Keats offers some comfort, however, to the anti-Popean reader of the present; there need be no ‘lamenting’, no ‘mournful sound, | And weep[ing]’, as ‘Now ’tis a fairer season’ (ll.212-221). By using the word ‘Now’, Keats sets this ‘fairer season’ in the present, thus creating distance between the perceived staleness of the Popean age, and the release of contemporary poetry from its grip—so that poetry ‘Now’ has ‘Fresh garlands’ (l.223).

Keats was at pains in this passage to ensure that his satire on Pope did not itself become a Popean satire. Keats aims to demonstrate the correlation between Pope’s mode of writing and his failure to regard the inspiration of nature. Pope famously uses heroic couplets. Paradoxically, Keats both does and does not want to spoof this supposedly unnatural style: he wants to parody it to show how ridiculous he finds such poetry, yet simultaneously he is aware that to write a parody is to use a style that dominated in Pope’s poetic age. The lines in which Keats specifically describes how Popeans construct their couplets—‘ye taught a school | Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit, | Till, like the certain wands of Jacob’s wit, | Their verses tallied’ (ll.196-199)—seem at first to imitate what they describe. By making line 197 the most metrically regular in the passage, Keats is mocking what he perceives to be the regularity of Popean practice, as is evident from his description of Popean poetic technique as attempting ‘to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit’ into mere ‘verses’. This line comprises five weak syllables alternating with five strong syllables, and its syntax and metre correspond completely with one another in a kind of trotting rhythm. In some ways this is reminiscent of Pope’s line in *An Essay on Criticism*—‘And Ten low Words oft creep in one dull Line’ (l.347)—which is both onomatopoeic and humorously

ironic; it both is and mocks a type of poetic construction.⁷⁹¹ Furthermore, Keats' line and the next one are the first pair of comma-end-stopped rhyming lines in the segment. In this couplet about couplets, however, Keats is careful to avoid becoming Popean himself. The couplet fails to achieve epigrammatic integrity because it opens with enjambement—'school | Of dolts'—which gives the impression that the lines are capturing a natural flow of thought. Note that Keats opens this couplet mocking Popean style by highlighting the 'wretched rule' of this 'school'. Earlier lines (187-192) have already characterised enjambement as an effect inspired by nature.⁷⁹² Set in the middle of a passage in which Keats is mocking the Augustans for their supposed unnaturalness, it is as if Keats is trying to show, through contrast, the difference between the two styles. In these lines, the form of Keats' couplets is extremely fluid. The mutability of the lines' structures and rhythms echoes the uncontrollable imagery of nature enclosed within them. Moreover, in the content of the lines, Keats is arguing for the necessity of not being bound by apparent boundaries. In the lines 'the dew | Of summer nights collected still to make | The morning precious', Keats is implying that night and day are not two separate entities. Instead, the night before bleeds into the morning after, and this continuation is beneficial, as it leads to the beauty of a 'precious' dewy morning. Keats is arguing that poetry and life are about expansion rather than confinement or definition. Keats is setting his own style up against that of Popeans, in order to show their supposed artificiality and rigidity. He deliberately uses enjambement to accuse Popeans of being insensitive to the power of nature, while showing that he himself is not. This is not so say that Popeans do not also use enjambement, and to great effect, but that Keats is keeping in line with the conventional contemporary view of Augustan style.⁷⁹³

⁷⁹¹ We will return to this later in the chapter.

⁷⁹² Cf. Wordsworth's 'Night-Piece' in the previous chapter.

⁷⁹³ Cf. Chapter two and the discussion of heroic couplets as too bitty and fragmented, and so are concerned with the small rather than the extensive ('sorites' of 'epigrams': Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, pp.18-19).

A prevalent Romantic criticism of Popean poetry was that it is too artificial, both in content and form. Joseph Warton wrote of Pope:

He stuck to describing *modern manners*; but these *manners*, because they are *familiar, uniform, artificial, and polished*, are, for these *four* reasons, in their very nature *unfit* for any lofty effort of the Muse.⁷⁹⁴

The apparent thrust of his argument is that Pope's poetry must be rejected because it is blind to the influences of nature. As Keats puts it, such poetry is mere artificial 'foppery'; the poet should write 'what he sees from native merit' (l.46). Keats' use of the word 'native' suggests something that is naturally intrinsic to the poet, rather than something externally cultivated.

Keats' diction echoes Wordsworth's recent admonition in *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface* that Pope should have 'confided more in his native genius'.⁷⁹⁵ According to Wordsworth, the poetry of the 'elder Poets'—and, presumably, also of the Lake Poets he considers to be their heirs—is to be esteemed primarily on account of its naturalness.⁷⁹⁶ As we saw in the previous chapter, Wordsworth dismisses poets who:

...could habitually think that the visible universe was of so little consequence to a poet, that it was scarcely necessary for him to cast his eyes upon...and poetically describe the phenomena of nature.⁷⁹⁷

Keats' lines, 'The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd | Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue | Bared its eternal bosom', allude to Wordsworth's 'The world is too much with us':

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The Winds that will be howling at all hours
(ll.5-6)⁷⁹⁸

Wordsworth argues of 'nature' (l.3), 'we are out of tune; | It moves us not' (ll.8-9). Keats transfers this Wordsworthian conception onto the Popeans in 'ye felt it not'.

⁷⁹⁴ 'The Life of Alexander Pope, Esq.', *The Works of Alexander Pope* (1797), vol.1, p.lxviii.

⁷⁹⁵ Wordsworth, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.72.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid*, vol.3, p.74.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid*, vol.3, p.74.

⁷⁹⁸ See Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.150.

In genial Spring, beneath the quiv'ring Shade

Despite the vehemence with which Keats ridicules Popean style in *Sleep and Poetry*, elsewhere he appears positively to be influenced by Pope's poetry. In places, he quotes directly from Pope; as, for example, in *To My Brother George (epistle)* (written in August 1816):

As to my sonnets, though none else should heed them,
I feel delighted, still, that you should read them.
Of late, too, I have had much calm enjoyment,
Stretch'd on the grass at my best lov'd employment
Of scribbling lines for you. These things I thought
While, in my face, the freshest breeze I caught.
E'en now I'm pillow'd on a bed of flowers
That crowns a lofty clift, which proudly towers
Above the ocean-waves. The stalks, and blades,
Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades.
(ll.117-126)

I cannot find, within English poetry, an earlier use of the phrase 'quivering shades' than in Pope's poetry. Pope uses the phrase first in 'Summer' in the *Pastorals*:

A Shepherd's Boy (he seeks no better Name)
Led forth his Flocks along the silver *Thame*,
Where dancing Sun-beams on the Waters play'd,
And verdant Alders form'd a quiv'ring Shade.
(ll.1-4)⁷⁹⁹

He repeats the phrase in *Windsor-Forest*:

In genial Spring, beneath the quiv'ring Shade
Where cooling Vapours breathe along the Mead
(ll.135-136)

A dozen or so poets between Pope and Keats use this phrase in their poetry. Thomas Warton and Samuel Johnson—ostensibly two writers on different sides of the Pope controversy—do

⁷⁹⁹ For all quotation of the *Pastorals* see Pope, *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, eds. E. Audra and Audrey Williams in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.1, pp.35-95.

so in the same year, 1749: Warton in *The Triumph of Isis* (l.5), and Johnson in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (l.42).⁸⁰⁰ It is clear that Warton is directly inspired by Pope's 'Summer' pastoral. Pope's poem includes:

Where stray ye Muses, in what Lawn or Grove,
While your *Alexis* pines in hopeless Love?
In those fair Fields where Sacred *Isis* glides,
Or else where *Cam* his winding Vales divides?
(ll.23-26)

Warton's poem opens:

On closing flow'rs when genial gales diffuse
The fragrant tribute of refreshing dews;
When chaunts the milk-maid at her balmy pail,
And weary reapers whistle o'er the vale;
Charm'd by the murmurs of the quiv'ring shade,
O'er *ISIS*' willow-fringed banks I stray'd
(ll.1-6)

Warton goes on to mention 'CAM, slow-winding thro' the breezy reeds, | With kindly wave his groves of laurel feeds' (ll.57-58). More than just using 'quiv'ring shade', much of Warton's diction is identical to Pope's—'grove', 'vale', 'stray'—and Warton also appropriates the imagery of rivers and streams, exemplified by the Isis and Cam. Where Pope writes about 'Muses' who 'stray' apart from their 'hopeless Love[rs]', Warton writes 'To the dear Muse afflicted Freedom calls' (l.24). Moreover, Warton's description of 'genial gales' and 'murmurs of the quiv'ring shade' echoes Pope's image in *Windsor-Forest* of 'genial Spring, beneath the quiv'ring Shade | Where cooling Vapours breathe'.

Johnson also uses Pope's phrase, but his poem is very different in tone. Pope's poems, and that of Warton, are playing with the conventional idyll of the pastoral genre. Johnson's 'quiv'ring Shade' is not cast by idyllic 'verdant' trees, but rather brings 'dire' 'Fears' that 'invade' and cause 'Pain':

⁸⁰⁰ Warton, *The Triumph of Isis, a Poem. Occasioned by Isis, an Elegy* (London, 1749), p.3. Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes: The Tenth Satire of Juvenal, Imitated* (London, 1749), p.6: see *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol.6, pp.90-109.

Now fears in dire vicissitude invade,
 The rustling brake alarms, and quiv'ring shade,
 Nor light nor darkness bring his pain relief,
 One shews the plunder, and one hides the thief.
 (ll.41-44)⁸⁰¹

Johnson alludes to Pope in order to contrast the image of the pastoral ideal with the reality of human vanity in imagining that such a thing is possible. The phrase 'quivering shades', therefore, is one that was adopted by two of the key players who were determined to shape Pope's literary afterlife. By using it, Keats is employing a phrase that is bound up with the history of Pope's poetical reputation. In both the 'Summer' pastoral and *Windsor-Forest*, Pope had put 'quiv'ring Shade' at the end of the line; Warton, Johnson, and Keats all do this too, which gives the phrase prominence and emphasis in the line.

Pope's influence of Keats is also apparent in other passages from *To My Brother George (epistle)*, where some of the diction and imagery are strikingly similar to the 'Summer' pastoral. In Pope's poem, the line which immediately precedes 'quiv'ring Shade' describes summer as 'Where dancing Sun-beams on the Waters play'd'. Keats' lines resemble Pope's:

His breast is dancing on the restless sea.
 Now I direct my eyes into the west,
 Which at this moment is in sunbeams drest
 (ll.138-140)

Like Keats in *Sleep and Poetry*, Pope, too, obviously revels in the idea of being 'overwhelm[ed]...in poesy' (ll.96-97):

Oh! how I long with you to pass my Days,
 Invoke the Muses, and resound your Praise
 ('Summer' pastoral, ll.77-78)

Pope expresses a similar feeling of poetic fervour to Keats, 'Whose head is pregnant with poetic lore' (l.54). Pope, however, is unlike the self-torturing Keats, who asks anguishedly:

⁸⁰¹ *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol.6, p.93.

Ah, my dear friend and brother,
 Could I, at once, my mad ambition smother,
 For tasting joys like these, sure I should be
 Happier, and dearer to society.
 (ll.109-112)

As with ‘quivering shades’ (l.126), Keats’ poetic ‘mad ambition’ is an allusion to Pope’s ‘mad *Ambition*’ in *Windsor-Forest*:

Exil’d by Thee from Earth to deepest Hell,
 In Brazen Bonds shall barb’rous *Discord* dwell:
 Gigantick *Pride*, pale *Terror*, gloomy *Care*,
 And mad *Ambition*, shall attend her there.
 There purple *Vengeance* bath’d in Gore retires,
 Her weapons blunted, and extinct her Fires:
 There hateful *Envy* her own Snakes shall feel,
 And *Persecution* mourn her broken Wheel:
 There *Faction* roar, *Rebellion* bite her Chain,
 And gasping Furies thirst for Blood in vain.
 Here cease thy Flight, nor with unhallow’d Lays
 Touch the fair Fame of *Albion*’s Golden Days.
 (ll.413-424)

In these lines, Pope is almost overwhelmed by the destructive force that poetry can produce, just as Keats wrestles with the paradox of feeling overwhelmed by poetry yet longing to appreciate its benefits. Keats concedes, ‘At times, ’tis true, I’ve felt relief from pain | When some bright thought has darted through my brain’ (ll.113-114), but this suggests that at other ‘times’ poetry does not relieve him of ‘pain’, rather it renders his ‘brain bewildered, and...mind o’ercast’ (l.2). Pope seems to be advocating poetry of ‘unambitious Strains’ (l.427) over one of ‘mad *Ambition*’, even apostrophising ‘My humble Muse’ (l.427):

Ev’n I more sweetly pass my careless Days,
 Pleas’d in the silent Shade with empty Praise;
 Enough for me, that to the listening Swains
 First in these Fields I sung the Sylvan Strains.
 (ll.431-434)

Any suggestion of complete contentedness, is, however, undercut by the word ‘empty’. The ‘silent Shade’ contrasts with the earlier image of the expectant ‘genial...quiv’ring Shade’.

There is disharmony in claiming to be ‘Pleas’d in the silent Shade’ where ‘First in these

Fields I sung the Sylvan Strains'; it cannot be right that a poet 'more sweetly pass[es]' time being 'silent', than when she or he 'sung'. Pope plays on the double meaning of 'strain'—as meaning both a musical riff and a sense of being burdened—to encapsulate deftly his anxieties about his poetry. In his *Ode on A Grecian Urn*, Keats also uses the image of silence to work through his anxieties about poetry: 'Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard | Are sweeter' (l.10).

Pope's 'Strains' recur at the end of a line twice within eight lines; that is, with only two couplets between them. The repeated rhyme reinforces the strength of Pope's anxiety but, in adopting this structure, Pope had violated his own decree 'of English Versification', which states that 'I could equally object to the *Repetition* of the same Rhimes within four or six lines of each other, as tiresome to the Ear thro' their Monotony'.⁸⁰² The conscious repetition of the rhyme, which might be 'tiresome to the Ear', emphasises the boundedness of a poet being silent, as if 'strain[ing]' to break free.

There is apprehension here, that the 'Swains' are 'listening'; the self-consciously archaic word 'Swains' emphasises the sense of history, as if these 'Swains' have the knowledge and experiences of lovers throughout the ages—lovers and poetry being perennially so consumed with one another. That the 'Swains' are 'listening' suggests Pope feels the burden of expectation, and the pressure of measuring up to the past.

Keats, too, struggles with a desire for 'Praise': he imagines that writing 'Lays...of such a dear delight | That maids will sing them on their bridal night' (ll.81-82) would provide external confirmation of his abilities:

⁸⁰² Pope to Walsh, 22 October 1706: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.22, p.24.

These are the living pleasures of the bard:
 But richer far posterity's award.
 What does he murmur with his latest breath,
 While his proud eye looks through the film of death?
 "What though I leave this dull, and earthly mould,
 Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold
 With after times..."
 (ll.67-73)

He questions, however, whether his abilities will enable him to fulfil his 'mad ambition', and indeed whether attempting to fulfil this 'mad ambition' could ever satisfy him. He ponders those 'seasons when I've thought | No spherey strains by me could e'er be caught' (ll.3-4). Keats is again picking up Pope's diction. Keats connects into Pope's expression of the paradoxical feeling that poetry brings—the joy of its sensory music coupled with its burdensomeness—which is beautifully encapsulated in Pope's 'Strains'. Unlike Pope who, despite poetry's occasional oppressiveness, is able still to write, 'I sung the Sylvan Strains', Keats emphatically declares he can write 'No spherey strains'. Although Pope is aware of feeling some pressure from the burden of trying to create poetry, he remains apparently confident in his own poetic abilities:

And yet my Numbers please the rural Throng,
 Rough *Satyrs* dance, and *Pan* applauds the Song
 ('Summer' pastoral, ll.49-50)

Pope imagines that his own poetry is 'pleas[ing]' and 'applaud[ed]', where Keats can only worry 'That I should never hear Apollo's song' (l.9). For Pope, 'Here Bees from Blossoms sip the rosie Dew' (l.69), but for Keats his poetic struggle is not so 'rosie':

...the still murmur of the honey bee
 Would never teach a rural song to me
 (ll.13-14)

Keats picks up Pope's image of the 'bee', yet whereas, in Pope's poem, the bees are surrounded by lush vegetation, in Keats' poem the bees are enigmatic and distanced, which is evident in the apparent contradiction of the bees being in a 'still murmur'. In 'still murmur', Keats is reversing Pope's image of 'the driving Bees' (bk.2, l.112) 'With deeper Murmurs'

(bk.2, l.114) that ‘the Shephard sees’ (bk.2, l.111) in Pope’s translation of Homer’s *Iliad*.

The bee itself is a classical image for the poet. The Ancient Greek *Homeric Hymns* imagine that Apollo divines his poetic inspiration from three bee goddesses called The Thriae. Virgil had also used the image of the bee in the fourth book of the *Georgics*. Jonathan Swift had employed the image as a metaphor in the more recent *Battle of the Books* (1704) to suggest that authors are like bees: they gather their materials from nature and sing in the fields.⁸⁰³

Pope’s and Keats’ differing representations of bees reflect their divergent feelings about their abilities as poets. Pope seems to have easy access to a ‘rural Throng’, the sense of which he heightens by rhyming this with ‘Song’. Keats combines these images in ‘rural song’, but unlike the easeful Pope, Keats fears he will ‘never’ experience such bucolic restfulness. Keats uses emphatic diction in the line ‘Would never teach a rural song to me’. It is psychologically telling that Keats uses the word ‘teach’ here. It suggests that he is still looking for an external source to instruct him how to be a poet, as if he does not yet have the confidence within himself to trust his own poetic mind. Perhaps, in this poem, Keats is looking to Pope, in part, to provide him with a figurehead of poetic confidence. Their different levels of self-belief are evident when one compares Pope’s certain description of his poetic future with Keats’ anxious lament:

But nigh yon’ Mountain, let me tune my Lays,
Embrace my Love, and bind my Brows with Bays
(‘Summer’, ll.37-38)

That the bright glance from beauty’s eyelids slanting
Would never make a lay of mine enchanting
(*To My Brother George (epistle)*, ll.15-16)

Subconsciously or otherwise, Keats associates his ‘best lov’d employment’ (l.120) of ‘scribbling lines’ (l.121) with Pope’s poetry; such is apparent from his direct references to and oblique echoes of Pope in *To My Brother George (epistle)*. Nonetheless, the fact that, in

⁸⁰³ See Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*, ed. Marcus Walsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

the letter in which he copied out the poem, he disparaged it as mere Popean ‘prosing {verse}’, and, yet, still, included it in the published volume *Poems* in 1817, provides some insight into the conflicted nature of his feelings about it.⁸⁰⁴ Further evidence of Keats’ divergent attitude towards his literary heritage is suggested by the fact that *To My Brother George (epistle)*, which displays a sympathy with Pope, was published alongside *Sleep and Poetry*, which is critical of Pope’s style.

Form’d by thy converse

Like any great poet, Pope requires imaginative interpretation by his readers, and it is important not to let preconceptions about his regularity or ‘True Ease’ (*An Essay on Criticism*, l.362) interfere with thoughtful reading. Pope’s well-known assertion that ‘A little Learning is a dang’rous Thing’ (l.215) applies to the reading of his own poetry by those who come to it expecting something predictable. Keats is surely intelligent enough to see the truth of this. Subsequent to the publication of *Poems*, with its contradictory responses to Popean influence, Keats’ attitude to Pope developed further. In a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds of 3 May 1818, Keats is aware that some of his ideas align with Pope’s. Although he is being slightly light-hearted, in an attempt to cheer up his friend, who is ill, Keats is also making a point in earnest when he writes:

⁸⁰⁴ Keats to George Keats, August 1816: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, p.105.

I must play my draughts as I please, and for my advantage and your erudition, crown a white with a black, or a black with a white, and move into black or white, far and near as I please—I must go from Hazlitt to Patmore, and make Wordsworth and Coleman play at leap-frog—or keep one of them down a whole half holiday at fly the garter—“From Gray to Gay, from Little to Shakespeare”.⁸⁰⁵

In this misquotation, Keats is playing with Pope’s *An Essay on Man*: ‘From grave to gay, from lively to severe’ (bk.4, l.380), but he is not doing so merely to make a pun for Reynolds’ amusement. Just before his reference to Pope, Keats says that he will ‘move into black or white’, as though he has no preference for either extreme. Pope observes, immediately before the line misquoted by Keats: one is ‘Form’d by thy converse’ (bk.4, l.379). For Keats, as for Pope, a thing is formed partly in juxtaposition with its opposite. Pope wrote that ‘ALL subsists by elemental strife’ (bk.1, l.169), which is a classical view of the balance of nature. Commenting on the lines from the *Iliad*—‘*Jove*, as his Sport, the dreadful Scene decries, | And views contending Gods with careless Eyes’ (bk.21, ll.454-455)—Pope writes:

I was at a loss for the reason why *Jupiter* is said to smile at the Discord of the Gods, till I found it in *Eustathius*; *Jupiter*, says he, who is the Lord of Nature, is well pleased with the War of the Gods, that is of Earth, Sea, and Air, &c. because the Harmony of all Beings arises from that Discord: Thus Earth is opposite to Water, Air to Earth, and Water to them all; and yet from this Opposition arises that discordant Concord by which all Nature subsists. Thus Heat and Cold, moist and dry, are in a continual War, yet upon this depends the Fertility of the Earth, and the Beauty of the Creation. So that *Jupiter*, who according to the *Greeks* is the Soul of all, may well be said to smile at this Contention.⁸⁰⁶

In writing of ‘that discordant Concord by which all Nature subsists’, Pope is drawing on a phrase from the twelfth epistle in Horace’s *First Book of Letters*, ‘*concordia discors*’. Like Keats, Pope perceives that man has a mixed nature:

Virtuous and vicious ev’ry Man must be,
Few in th’extreme, but all in the degree;
The rogue and fool by fits is fair and wise,
And ev’n the best, by fits, what they despise.
(*An Essay on Man*, bk.2, ll.231-234)

⁸⁰⁵ Keats to Reynolds, 3 May 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, pp.279-280.

⁸⁰⁶ Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.8, pp.439-440.

Consequently, each human being is at the centre of a network of oppositions that must be held in harmonious tension. It is this tension which creates ‘the Fertility of the Earth, and the Beauty’ and brilliance of life:

The lights and shades, whose well accorded strife
Gives all the strength and colour of our life.
(*An Essay on Man*, bk.2, ll.121-122)

Keats, too, perceived ‘The lights and shades...of...life’. Indeed, for him, ‘the poetical Character itself...enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated’.⁸⁰⁷ Pope and Keats both insist vehemently on the necessity of this contradiction, as, for example, where Pope writes: ‘All Nature’s diff’rence keeps all Nature’s peace’ (bk.4, l.56). Perhaps this shared belief in the life-giving powers of light and shade explains the proliferation of oxymoronic compounds in the poetry of both. Pope, for example, happily uses seemingly paradoxical phrases and imagery such as: ‘voluntary pains’, ‘severely kind’, ‘Divine oblivion’ (*Eloisa to Abelard* l.18, l.249, l.298); ‘Oh the pain, the bliss of dying!’ (*The Dying Christian to his Soul, Ode*, l.4); ‘harmoniously confus’d’, and ‘tho’ all things differ, all agree’ (*Windsor-Forest* l.14, l.16). Keats’ poetry has been characterised by Jack Stillinger as exhibiting a ‘density of opposites’, typified in a phrase such as ‘pleasant pain’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, l.52; written in 1819 and published in 1820).⁸⁰⁸ When he writes to Fanny Brawne that he wants to ‘take a sweet poison from your lips’, Keats echoes Pope’s contradictory diction in his description of a lover who wishes ‘Still [to] drink delicious poison from thy eye’ (*Eloisa to Abelard*, l.122).⁸⁰⁹ Both these images immediately call to mind *Romeo and Juliet*, but nowhere in Shakespeare’s climactic death scene is the word ‘poison’ coupled with a positive adjective. That both Pope and Keats do so couple it—‘delicious’ and ‘sweet’—emphasises their shared fondness for paradoxical description.

⁸⁰⁷ Keats to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, pp.386-387.

⁸⁰⁸ Stillinger, *Romantic Complexity: Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), p.122.

⁸⁰⁹ Keats to Fanny Brawne, 25 July 1819: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.133.

One can deduce, from Keats' explicit reference to *An Essay on Man*, that Pope was in Keats' mind when he composed his letter to Reynolds of 3 May 1818. Throughout the letter, traces of Pope's lines are discernible: for instance, Pope's assertion 'human soul | Must rise from Individual to the Whole' (bk.4, ll.361-362) is echoed in Keats' assertion that 'Every department of knowledge we see excellent and calculated towards a great whole'.⁸¹⁰ Keats perceives the mind as a 'Mansion of Many Apartments': the 'Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open...We see not the ballance of good and evil'.⁸¹¹ Keats conceives of the mind similarly to Pope, who writes:

Wide and more wide, th'o'erflowings of the mind
Take ev'ry creature in, of ev'ry kind
(bk.4, ll.369-370)

Although Keats feels overwhelmed by the 'burden of the Mystery' of human life, he is certain that exploring it will ultimately be worthwhile.⁸¹² Keats is drawing on Wordsworth's image in *Tintern Abbey*, where 'the burthen of the mystery' (l.38) 'Of all this unintelligible world' (l.40) is a 'heavy and...weary weight' (l.39). As Keats elucidates and clarifies in a subsequent letter to his brother George, dated 21 April 1819, 'Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul?'.⁸¹³ This echoes Pope's conception of Jupiter as 'the Soul of all', who smiles at 'Contention' 'because the harmony of all beings arises from...discord'. Keats' philosophy, without the religious flavour implicit in Pope's words, aligns with Pope's belief in 'Hope of known bliss, and Faith in bliss unknown' (bk.4, l.346). In Keats' own words, a belief in 'A hope beyond the shadow of a dream' (*Endymion*, bk.1, l.857).

⁸¹⁰ Keats to Reynolds, 3 May 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, p.277.

⁸¹¹ *Ibid.*, vol.1, pp.280-281.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.281.

⁸¹³ Keats to George Keats, 21 April 1819: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.102.

In his letter to Reynolds, Keats suggests that he has departed from the fairly orthodox anti-Popean viewpoint he espoused in *Sleep and Poetry*. Now, he does not want to conform to one standard attitude; instead, he ‘must play my draughts as I please’. He must oscillate between different types of author: Horace; Wordsworth; Shakespeare; Pope. By continually ‘filling some other Body’, and having no identity that is fixed, the poet strives to attain to the ideal ‘poetical Character’, which ‘has no self’.⁸¹⁴ Pope makes a similar point when, in the preface to the 1717 edition of his *Works*, he writes: ‘I believe no one qualification is so likely to make a good writer, as the power of rejecting his own thoughts’.⁸¹⁵

Leave such to tune their own dull Rhimes

In *Sleep and Poetry*, Keats describes Popean style poetry as being merely a ‘mask | Of Poesy’. Three years later, on the other hand, in ‘If by dull rhymes our English must be chain’d’—itself in part a reflection on and reconsideration of the issues he explored in *Sleep and Poetry*—Keats refers to ‘the naked foot of Poesy’ (l.6). In the later poem, Keats has come to the realisation that poetry needs a certain amount of restraint and construction in order, paradoxically, for it to flourish ‘freely’. The technicalities of poetic composition are the structural trellis on which flowers and fruit can grow more abundantly (see ‘Ode to Psyche’, ll.59-63). ‘If by dull rhymes’ and ‘Ode to Psyche’ were both written in the spring of 1819. In ‘If by dull rhymes’, Keats repeats the words ‘if’ and ‘must’ twice: ‘If’ we ‘must be chain’d’ (l.1) and ‘if we must be constrain’d’ (l.4). He now appreciates that poetry ‘must’ have certain ‘bound[s]’ (l.14) in order for its ‘garlands’ (l.14) to thrive. Keats uses rhyme to

⁸¹⁴ Keats to Woodhouse, 27 October 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, pp.386-387.

⁸¹⁵ Pope, ‘The Preface to *The Works*, 1717’, *Prose of Pope*, Vol.1, p.294.

highlight the constructed form of the poem: the words ‘chain’d’ and ‘constrain’d’ themselves mean boundedness, and are rhymed to show that they ‘fit’ (l.6) correctly in place. Later in the poem, these words are rhymed with ‘gain’d’ (l.8); Keats aims to show ‘what may be gain’d’ by being ‘chain’d’ and ‘constrain’d’. He uses the same poetic techniques for the poem as he explores in its substantive content. Keats argues for concision in poetry; he wants poetry that is ‘more interwoven and complete | To fit the naked foot of Poesy’ (ll.5-6). The word ‘interwoven’ here compliments the image of the ‘wreath’d trellis’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, l.60). Keats uses ‘fit’ here in a positive way. This is an undoubted development from *Sleep and Poetry*, in which Keats had mocked Popean poetry that ‘taught a school | Of dolts to...fit | Till...Their verses tallied’.

Keats chooses the sonnet form for ‘If by dull rhymes’—‘the sonnet sweet | Fetter’d, in spite of pained loveliness’ (ll.2-3). The sonnet is a poetical form not much used by Augustans but reinvigorated by Romantics. ‘That the sonnet virtually disappeared from the British shores in the century after Milton’s death’, Stuart Curran argues, ‘is a symptom of the cultural distance the eighteenth century imposed between itself and the Elizabethans’, whose example had been ‘effaced by subsequent refinements of language, literary conception, and versification’; in that sense, ‘The omission of the sonnets from eighteenth-century editions of Shakespeare is a measure of the time’.⁸¹⁶ It is, perhaps, a measure of the time at which Keats wrote that, as the value of the Popean style of poetry began to be questioned and a desire to emulate Shakespeare’s poetry became modish, poets looked again to the sonnet form, a form embraced by Shakespeare but ignored by Pope. Bowles, amongst others, helped to resuscitate the sonnet. Coleridge fondly recollected ‘the genial influence of a style of poetry, so tender, and yet so manly, so natural and real, and yet so dignified, and harmonious, as the

⁸¹⁶ Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, p.29.

sonnets, &c. of Mr. Bowles!'.⁸¹⁷ The sonnet, in fact, became a kind of symbol for the anti-Popean contingent of the Pope controversy. John Cam Hobhouse, for example, witheringly wrote of Bowles's 1806 edition of Pope's poems:

take the only path that open lies
 For modern worthies who would hope to rise:
 Fix on some well known name, and bit by bit,
 Pare off the merits of his worth and wit;
 On each alike employ the critic's knife,
 And where a comment fails prefix a life;
 Hint certain failings, faults before unknown,
 Review forgotten lies, and add your own;
 Let no disease, let no misfortune 'scape,
 And print, if luckily deformed, his shape:
 Thus shall the world, quite undeceiv'd at last,
 Cleave to their present wits and quit their past;
 Bards once rever'd no more with favour view,
 But give their modern sonneteers their due;
 Thus with the dead may living merit cope,
 Thus BOWLES may triumph o'er the shade of POPE.
 (ll.247-262)⁸¹⁸

Byron shared these views: 'Stick to thy sonnets, man! at least they sell' (*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, l.244). Indeed, he later wrote that he did not think *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* went far enough in denouncing Bowles: 'I am grieved to say that in reading over those lines—I repent their having so far fallen short of what I meant to express upon the subject of B's Edition of Pope's works'.⁸¹⁹

In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, therefore, the 'modern sonneteers' (l.260) are set up against Pope; and yet, in choosing to write 'If by dull rhymes' in sonnet form, Keats is experimenting with old and modern poetic ideas, as if trying to fuse the two. By 1819 he was less wedded to contemporary notions of poetic taste than he had been earlier in his career. Instead of prescribed principles dictating what poetry is good and what is bad, Keats seeks to play with and subvert such principles. He subscribes to Johnson's dictum that 'To

⁸¹⁷ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, p.17.

⁸¹⁸ *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers. A Satire* (London, 1809), pp.21-22. Hobhouse's lines were contained in the anonymous first edition, but Byron later removed them and replaced them with his own.

⁸¹⁹ Byron, *Prose of Byron*, p.123.

circumscribe poetry by a definition will only shew the narrowness of the definer'.⁸²⁰ Keats now realises that it is necessary to get beyond contemporary restrictions on poetry, no less than the bias of any other era.

Pope was renowned for seeking concision in his poetry, and his process of redrafting and revising aimed to purge superfluous words—which he refers to, in *An Essay on Criticism*, as 'Expletives' (l.346)—from his finished text:

These *Equal Syllables* alone require,
 Tho' oft the Ear the *open Vowels* tire,
 While *Expletives* their feeble Aid *do* join,
 And Ten low Words oft creep in one dull Line
 (*An Essay on Criticism*, ll.344-347)

As I noted earlier in this chapter, Pope here elucidates what he thinks makes bad poetry bad, in a brilliant, ironic parody of that poetry itself. The final line quoted above simultaneously points up how 'dull' poets pad out a line with monosyllables, and confirms that this is not the case with Pope. Individually, these might be 'Ten low Words', but dullness is obviated by the self-conscious irony of the line. Furthermore, 'their feeble Aid *do* join' is a deliberately weak phrase; in using the extra word 'do' in '*do* join', in the same line in which he derides '*Expletives*', Pope is, again, being ironic. Having criticised poets who use such '*Expletives*', he is giving an example of exactly this type of unnecessary verbiage. The word 'Aid' is therefore heavily mocking, as such '*Expletives*' do not 'Aid' poetry, only make it more 'feeble'. The second line above stresses the '*Vowel*' sounds, even while it comments that 'the Ear' 'tire[s]' of '*open Vowels*'. By the end of the line, the reader struggles to get her or his mouth and ear around the abundant vowel sounds, and hence has indeed begun to 'tire' of the line. The first line above is rhythmically symmetrical, containing '*Equal Syllables*' with no particular stress to dominate, and thus invigorate, the line. It contains soft, rather than hard, consonant sounds to discourage stresses. The most pronounced consonant sound is the

⁸²⁰ Johnson, 'Life of Pope', *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.80.

‘q’ of *Equal* and ‘require’; this sound ties the two words together. Pope suggests that, in such poetry, a standard uniformity, where all lines are *Equal*, is all that is ‘require[d]’. He builds up to the idea that all these poetic weaknesses are ‘dull’. The whole extract is technically brilliant and concise. Pope was later to deliver the injunction: ‘show no mercy to an empty line’ (*The Second Epistle of the Second Book of Horace*, l.175). This is reminiscent of Keats urging Shelley in a letter of 16 August 1820 to “‘load every rift” of your subject with ore’.⁸²¹ Both poets demand poetic intensity, and that no line of poetry be redundant.

In March 1743, reflecting on his own youth, Pope recalled how he had set out to occupy what he saw as a void in English poetry: ‘there was one way left of excelling, for though we had had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct’.⁸²² For Pope, to be ‘correct’ was to be original, and to perfect his poetry would create a space for himself as the ‘one great poet’ who had achieved such correctness in English literature. Consequently, he made that his ‘study and aim’.⁸²³ Although Pope sought to set himself apart from other poets by his correctness, that did not mean that feeling and passion had no place in his poetry, as he recognised. In *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope repeatedly advocates evocative poetry; moreover, he states his belief that poetic rules should never overtake the truth and beauty of a poem. Poetry should convey ‘*naked Nature*’ (l.294); poets should not ‘With *Gold* and *Jewels* cover ev’ry Part, | And hide with *Ornaments* their *Want of Art*’ (l.295-296). With his tongue in his cheek, Pope disdains those who, in a style ‘dryly plain, without Invention’s Aid, | Write dull *Receipts* how Poems may be made’ (ll.114-115); rather, ‘Where *Nature moves*, and *Rapture warms* the Mind’ (l.236) the reader, or critic, should not ‘seek slight Faults to find’ (l.235). For what marks true poetry, ‘what affects our Hearts | Is not th’ Exactness of peculiar Parts’ (ll.243-244), but ‘the joint Force and full *Result* of *all*’ (l.246). Pope urges that poetry should with ‘*Rapture warm*...the Mind’ (l.236); it should not be

⁸²¹ Keats to Shelley, 16 August 1820: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.323.

⁸²² Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, vol.1, p.32.

⁸²³ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.32.

‘*Correctly cold*’ (l.240). Keats echoes this sentiment about the warmth of art—warmth suggesting life—when he accuses the Grecian Urn of being a ‘Cold Pastoral’ (*Ode on a Grecian Urn*, l.45), which compares unfavourably with the scene depicted on it, which is ‘For ever warm’ (l.26).

To imply, as Keats arguably does in *Sleep and Poetry*, that Pope cared only for the melodiousness of his lines, and the tallying of his verses (l.199), would be unfair. In *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope chastises misguided critics who ‘judge a Poet’s Song...*right or wrong*’ (ll.337-338) only ‘by *Numbers*’ (l.337). It is a ‘tuneful Fool’ (l.340) who goes to church only for ‘the *Musick*’ (l.343), and not for ‘the *Doctrine*’ (l.343); who would rather ‘please their Ear’ (l.341) than ‘mend their Minds’ (l.342).

By April 1819, when he wrote ‘If by dull rhymes’, Keats recognised that he and his contemporaries could be open to discovering a more concise style of poetry, and was convinced that this need not dampen the emotional impact of the poem. ‘Let us find out’ (l.4), Keats writes:

Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress
Of every chord, and see what may be gain’d
By ear industrious, and attention meet
(ll.7-9)

To ‘find out’, ‘weigh’, ‘inspect’ a poem’s sound—to be ‘industrious’ and pay ‘attention’ to poetic construction—might be thought to accord more with Pope’s poetic conciseness, than with the supposed naturalness of poetry that is the ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’. Keats is retreating from the position that he adopted in *Sleep and Poetry*. He now appreciates that something may be ‘gain’d’ from the ‘Misers of sound and syllable’ (l.10).

This nod of support in the direction of Popean principles is strengthened by Keats’ use of the phrase ‘dull rhymes’, earlier employed by Pope:

Leave such to tune their own dull Rhimes, and know
What’s *roundly smooth*, or *languishingly slow*
(*An Essay on Criticism*, ll.358-359)

This couplet encapsulates Pope's technical mastery. The wordplay of using the full-bodied 'O' sounds of '*roundly smooth*', and the luscious soft sounds of both the consonants and vowels in '*languishingly slow*', force the reader to linger over the words and slow the pace. Pope's construction of the line encourages us to read '*roundly smooth*' and '*languishingly slow*' onomatopoeically. In 'If by dull rhymes', in other words, Keats is using Pope's reflections on poetic technique to express his own realisation of the necessity of mastering such technique. Keats echoes Pope's exhortation to eschew redundant '*Expletives*', when he writes:

let us be
Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown
(ll.11-12)

As Pope enjoins that good poetry is devoid of '*Expletives*', so Keats believes that it should be shaken free of 'dead leaves'. Whereas Keats had earlier appeared to embrace the received wisdom that Popean conventions were 'dull', his more mature self is in greater sympathy with them; hence, his adoption of Pope's phrase in such fashion as to suggest that Pope's are *not* 'dull rhymes'. In *Sleep and Poetry*, Keats said that the contemporary era 'wreathed | Fresh garlands' (ll.222-223) for poetry yet, by 1819, he has arrived at the recognition that poetry 'will be bound with garlands of her own' (l.14). Poetry has an existence separate from the era in which it was composed, but the 'muse' (l.13) of poetry will always be bound by rules of her own.

To some extent, Keats' poem is a response to *An Essay on Criticism*, since both poems explore similar issues. Keats discerns that, as Pope insists:

True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
(ll.362-363)

Despite saying that poetry 'comes from Art', Pope does not conceive of his poetic aesthetic as artificial or affected, in the way it has been interpreted by some of his Romantic

successors. Rather, Pope believes that good poetry is animated by nature, and harmonised by the poet's art: it is '*Nature Methodiz'd*' (l.89), and here we might note the scientific connotations of '*Methodiz'd*'. In his later poetry, Keats effectively endorses this Popean outlook. He wants us to understand that poetry must both 'fit'—be '*Methodiz'd*'—and be 'naked'—like '*Nature*'.⁸²⁴

The Learn'd reflect on what before they knew

Keats shares Pope's idea that a poet is immortalised through his poetry. For Pope:

Truth guards the Poet, sanctifies the line,
And makes Immortal, Verse as mean as mine.
(*Epilogue to the Satires II* (1738), ll.246-247)⁸²⁵

These sentiments accord with Hazlitt's subsequent ruminations on poetic fame in his lecture 'On Poetry in General', with which, I would suggest, Keats sympathised. In a letter to George and Georgiana, dated January 1819, Keats outlines his notion of the 'double immortality of Poets', and incorporates his poem explaining this idea:

Ye have left your souls on earth!
Ye have souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new!
(*'Bards of passion and of mirth'*, ll.38-40)⁸²⁶

The poet is twice immortal, in Keats' conception, since, in the first instance, his poetry is a permanent creation that is capable of lifting generations of 'souls' to what Hazlitt called their 'highest pitch'.⁸²⁷ The second facet of poetic immortality arises from the way in which the

⁸²⁴ Cf. Pope's notion that poetry should convey '*naked Nature*' (*An Essay on Criticism*, l.294).

⁸²⁵ 'Epilogue to the Satires', Dialogues I & II in *Imitations of Horace*, ed. John Butt, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.4, pp.295-327.

⁸²⁶ Keats to George and Georgiana Keats, January 1819: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.25.

⁸²⁷ Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets*, p.20.

poet is, as it were, reincarnated in the mind of the reader. A poem, once created and disseminated, as Hazlitt says ‘puts a spirit of life and motion into the universe’.⁸²⁸ In his assertion that the true poet is ‘not afraid that truth and nature will ever wear out; will lose their gloss with novelty, or their effect with fashion. If their works have the seeds of immortality in them, they will live’, Hazlitt echoes Pope’s claim that ‘Truth guards the Poet’ (l.246).⁸²⁹ Keats did not attend all of Hazlitt’s ‘Lectures on the English Poets’, but it is likely that he read them in manuscript form, having borrowed them from Reynolds.⁸³⁰ Whether Pope directly, or rather Pope as mediated through Hazlitt, most influenced Keats’ views about the ‘double immortality’ of poets, we cannot be certain. Nonetheless for both Pope and Keats, the specific era in which the poet exists is always capable of being transcended. True poetry lives outside temporal boundaries; it is in this sense that the poet is immortal, or can, at any rate, aspire to immortality. With this comforting thought, the petty brickbats of those who happen to be alive when one is writing, and take it upon themselves to criticise one’s poetry, can be dismissed. However much they might have liked to project the impression that such slights left them untouched, neither Pope nor Keats was, in fact, wholly immune to them. Indeed, each was renowned, after his death, for his sensitivity to criticism. Shelley wrote apocryphally of Keats, for example, in the preface to *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats* (published in July 1821), that Keats’ sensitivity to hostile criticism contributed to his death:

The savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgements from more candid critics, of the true greatness of his powers, were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.⁸³¹

⁸²⁸ Ibid, p.6.

⁸²⁹ Ibid, p.286.

⁸³⁰ See Bromwich, *Hazlitt: The Mind of A Critic*, p.365.

⁸³¹ *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, eds. Zachary Leader and Michael O’Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.529-530.

Shelley seems to have forgotten that Keats published another volume of poetry between *Endymion* and his death.⁸³² While their sensitivity might have been exaggerated, therefore, it is nonetheless clear that, with both Keats and Pope, criticism often rankled. Pope claimed that, to produce poetry, ‘one must have the constancy of a martyr, and a resolution to suffer for its sake’ and, given Keats’ experiences with critics, one might conjecture that he sympathised with this aphorism.⁸³³ Pope’s criticism of his own lines—‘they have always fallen short not only of what I read of others, but even of my own Ideas of Poetry’—anticipates Keats’ claim that:

Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own Works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood or the ‹Edinburgh› Quarterly could possibly inflict.⁸³⁴

It is clear that the effects of Pope’s poetry and poetic ideas on Keats are less linear than has been generally accepted by critics. Keats directly engages with Pope’s poetry, and reacts critically and supportively to it at different times. Keats’ evolving relationship with Pope is one way he explores poetic valuations, a task in which ‘every Body seems at Loggerheads’.⁸³⁵ Keats becomes aware of his poetic sympathy with Pope as his understanding of poetry develops. Pope had professed: ‘The Learn’d reflect on what before they knew’ (*An Essay on Criticism*, l.740). As Keats matured, he reached a similar conclusion:

I have come to the resolution never to write for the sake of writing, or making a poem, but from running over with any little knowledge and experience which many years of reflection may perhaps give me—otherwise I will be dumb.⁸³⁶

⁸³² *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems* (London, 1820).

⁸³³ Pope, ‘The Preface to *The Works*, 1717’, *Prose of Pope, Vol.1*, p.292.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid*, p.292; and Keats to Hessey, 8 October 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, pp.373-374.

⁸³⁵ Keats to Benjamin Bailey, 8 October 1817: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, p.169.

⁸³⁶ Keats to Haydon, 8 March 1819: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.43.

Part II: *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Eve of St Agnes*

Keats was not the first to write a poem based on the myth of St Agnes's Eve. One predecessor in this regard was the Elizabethan playwright, Ben Jonson, who wrote in 1603:

And on sweet St. A[gnès'] night
Feed them with a promised sight,
Some of husbands, some of lovers,
Which an empty dream discovers.⁸³⁷

It was, perhaps, reading his house-mate '[Charles Armitage] Brown's Ben Jonson, the very best book he has', that Keats encountered Jonson's poem, and determined to write his own poem on the theme of what 'an empty dream discovers'.⁸³⁸ Brown's 'Ben Jonson' was William Gifford's 1816 edition of Jonson's *Works*, cited above.⁸³⁹ As is evident from the poem 'Lines on the Mermaid Tavern', which first appeared in the same volume as *The Eve of St Agnes* in 1820, Keats was captivated by the literary milieu that had, in Elizabethan times, centred on the Mermaid Tavern in Cheapside, and included Jonson.⁸⁴⁰ Hence, we may assume a reasonably direct link between Jonson's 'The Satyr' and *The Eve of St Agnes*. Conversely, there is nothing to suggest that, in composing *The Eve of St Agnes*, Keats was responding to, or even consciously echoing, Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. In the rest of this chapter, however, I will demonstrate that there are close parallels between Pope's poem and Keats', which help to illustrate the argument I have been making about the shared aesthetic sympathies of Pope and his successors.

The legend of St Agnes holds that she was martyred for refusing men's sexual advances, and both *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Eve of St Agnes* relay tales of a woman who

⁸³⁷ Ben Jonson, 'The Satyr', *The Works of Ben Jonson, in Nine Volumes. With Notes Critical and Explanatory, and a Biographical Memoir*, By W. Gifford, Esq., ed. William Gifford, 9 vols. (London, 1816), vol.6, p.472.

⁸³⁸ Keats to Fanny Brawne, February 1820: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.262.

⁸³⁹ See Keats to Sarah Jeffrey, 9 June 1819: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.116, f.9.

⁸⁴⁰ Nicholas Warner, ed., *In Vino Veritas: An Anthology of Drinking in Literature* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2013), p.125.

is pursued and “raped” by her “lover”, who has come with a ‘stratagem’ (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 3, l.120 and *The Eve of St Agnes*, l.139) for obtaining her, seemingly against her wishes.⁸⁴¹ Each of Pope’s Baron and Keats’ Porphyro ostensibly achieves his aim, and both poems leave the reader with a sense of unease. A feeling of trepidation is also generated by the title of each poem: ‘rape’ is unnerving in both its senses, of sexual assault and theft (*OED*) respectively; meanwhile, Keats’ reference to St Agnes foreshadows unpleasantness and mistreatment.

While, as I noted above, there is no evidence that *The Eve of St Agnes* is to any extent modelled on *The Rape of the Lock*, it would be surprising if Keats had not read Pope’s poem and, given the centrality in both poems of violence against a woman, it may, subconsciously, have influenced his linguistic choices in *The Eve of St Agnes*. As Pope writes of the Baron, for example:

Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize
(*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, ll.43-44)

So, Keats’ Porphyro likewise kneels prostrate, by Madeline’s bed: ‘Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone’ (l.297); he ‘knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye, | Fearing to move or speak, she look’d so dreamingly’ (ll.305-306). Lusting to ‘obtain’ Madeline, Porphyro ‘begs with ardent eyes’. He beseeches her: ‘My Madeline!...Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest | After so many hours of toil and quest’ (ll.334-338). Like the Baron with Belinda, Porphyro looks on Madeline as his possession: ‘my bride, my Madeline!’ (l.326). Once each man has successfully employed his ‘stratagem’, he speaks as if he has conquered the woman. Porphyro twice repeats ‘my Madeline’ (l.326, l.334) and ‘my love’ (l.347, l.350); the Baron also reacts possessively, exclaiming:

⁸⁴¹ For more on the social cynicism of Belinda’s rape see Ellen Pollak, ‘*The Rape of the Lock*: A Reification of the Myth of Passive Womanhood’, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp.77-107; and for the cynicism of Madeline’s see Jack Stillinger, ‘The Hoodwinking of Madeline: Scepticism in *The Eve of St. Agnes*’, *Studies in Philology* 58.3 (July, 1961), pp.533-555.

Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,
 (The Victor cry'd) the glorious Prize is mine!
 (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 3, ll.161-162)

Pope's line—'Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow' (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, l.99)—might equally well capture Madeline's predicament in *The Eve of St Agnes*, as she experiences the 'painful change' (l.300) between the 'invention we bestow' in dreams and what really exists in the 'awake' (l.299) world. Indeed, there is, perhaps, a foreshadowing, in Belinda's dream in the opening canto of *The Rape of the Lock*, of that of Madeline in *The Eve of St Agnes*, when Pope writes:

Belinda still her downy Pillow prest,
 Her Guardian *Sylph* prolong'd the balmy Rest:
 'Twas he had summon'd to her silent Bed
 The Morning-Dream that hover'd o'er her Head.
 A Youth more glitt'ring than a *Birth-night Beau*,
 (That ev'n in Slumber caus'd her Cheek to glow)
 Seem'd to her Ear his winning Lips to lay,
 And thus in Whispers said, or seem'd to say
 (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 1, ll.19-26)

There are, undoubtedly, differences between the women's dreams in *The Eve of St Agnes* and *The Rape of the Lock*, yet there are also resemblances. Each of Belinda's and Madeline's sleeps have been induced artificially; Belinda's 'balmy Rest' is 'prolong'd' (canto 1, l.20) by the sylphs, and Madeline's is a 'poppied warmth' (l.237) 'And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed' (l.169). A '*Beau*' 'Whispers' into Belinda's 'Ear' as she sleeps, just as Porphyro's 'whispering' (*The Eve of St Agnes*, l.280) is poured into the unconscious Madeline's 'ear' (*The Eve of St Agnes*, l.293). Readers might suppose these dreams are somewhat sexual: Belinda's dream 'ev'n in Slumber caus'd her Cheek to glow', while Madeline enjoys the 'blisses of her dream' (l.301). Both women have visions of men coming to them in sleep, and this makes a physical impression on them: Belinda blushes, and Madeline 'panted quick' (l.295). It seems that one of the questions both poets are raising is that of whether or not the women's behaviour makes them culpable, at least in part, for the

fate that befalls them. In September 1819, Woodhouse wrote to Keats' publisher, John Taylor, relaying Keats' claim, of *The Eve of St Agnes*, 'that he shd despise a man who would be such an eunuch in sentiment as to leave a <Girl> maid, with that Character about her, in such a situation: & shod despise himself to write about it &c &c &c—and all this sort of Keats-like rhodomontade'.⁸⁴² As Woodhouse intimates, we cannot be sure that Keats was speaking straightforwardly, or whether he expected to be taken entirely seriously. In part, though, his poem does ask the reader to consider whether any sexual desire that Madeline may have excuses Porphyro's behaviour to any extent. Does she bear any responsibility for her fate? Pope is asking a similar question in *The Rape of the Lock*, since Belinda, whose reputation depends on her virtue and modesty, is found by Ariel to have 'An earthly Lover lurking in her heart' (canto 3, l.144); this causes Ariel to withdraw his protection and abandon her:

He watch'd th' Ideas rising in her mind,
Sudden he view'd, in spite of all her art,
An earthly Lover lurking in her heart.
Amaz'd, confus'd, he found his pow'r expir'd,
Resign'd to fate, and with a sigh retir'd.
(*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 3, ll.142-146)

In the lines— '*Belinda!* if Report say true, | Thy Eyes first open'd on a *Billet-doux*' (canto 1, ll.117-118)—Ariel seems to imply that is Belinda is somehow at fault, that she is fair game.⁸⁴³ A similar, unnerving, question also runs through *The Eve of St Agnes*. Is rape necessarily—or even, worryingly, justifiably—a 'fate' to which women must be 'Resign'd', if at first they have a 'Lover' in their 'heart'?

In *The Eve of St Agnes*, this notion of fate manifests itself in Angela's spinning of the 'holy loom':

⁸⁴² Woodhouse to Taylor, 19 September 1819: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.163.

⁸⁴³ For more on the *The Rape of the Lock*'s anti-feminism in broader terms see Valerie Rumbold, 'Reigning Beauties', in *Women's Place in Pope's World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.48-82.

“Now tell me where is Madeline,” said he,
 “O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
 Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
 When they St. Agnes’ wool are weaving piously.”
 (ll.114-117)

Dorothy Van Ghent has argued that the character of Angela ‘corresponds with the old “nurse” of the fertility mummings, who brings up the daemonic child and helps find him a bride’.⁸⁴⁴ Angela calls Porphyro ‘my child’ (l.178), he looks at her like an ‘urchin’ (l.129). Porphyro’s swearing by the ‘holy loom’ at which the ‘secret sisterhood’ are ‘weaving’ (ll.115-17) evokes the wool woven by the ‘ancient Fates’.⁸⁴⁵ Angela, ‘Fate’, informs Porphyro where to find Madeline and leads him to her, declaring ‘by the tambour frame...Her own lute thou wilt see’ (ll.174-75). It is clear Angela knows that Porphyro has dangerous intentions from her worrying exclamation, in response to his request: ““St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes’ Eve— | Yet men will murder upon holy days”” (ll.118-119).

Keats himself seems to have held rather disturbing beliefs about women’s ‘consent’.⁸⁴⁶ According to Woodhouse, at the time Keats was getting *The Eve of St Agnes* ready for publication, he expressed the view that ‘Women love to be forced to do a thing, by a fine fellow’.⁸⁴⁷ *The Eve of St Agnes* is, however, more equivocal than this; indeed, another thing that connects it to *The Rape of the Lock* is Keats’ reluctance, which he shares with Pope, to adopt a categorical moral stance. Edmund Curll, in a letter to William Broome, dated 22 July 1735, described Pope as ‘being as well acquainted with the art of evasion as with the art of poetry’, while Jerome McGann argues in *The Romantic Ideology* (1983) that ‘evasion’ emerged as a crucial imaginative strategy in the Romantic period.⁸⁴⁸ In *The Rape*

⁸⁴⁴ Dorothy Van Ghent, *Keats: The Myth of the Hero*, ed. and rev. Jeffrey Cane Robinson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p.93. A ‘mumming play’ is ‘a traditional English folk play typically featuring Saint George’ (*OED*).

⁸⁴⁵ Van Ghent, *The Myth of the Hero*, p.95.

⁸⁴⁶ Woodhouse to Taylor, 19-20 September 1819: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.164.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid*, vol.2, p.164.

⁸⁴⁸ Curll to Broome, 22 July 1735: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.3, p.475; see McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

of the *Lock*, Pope demonstrates what Valerie Rumbold calls a ‘refusal to be simple’.⁸⁴⁹ His deliberate evasiveness is evident, for example, in the ambiguous way that the reader might interpret the moral of Clarissa’s speech (canto 5, ll.9-34). In a footnote added to the five canto version of the poem, Pope had claimed Clarissa to be ‘A new Character introduced in the subsequent Editions, to open more clearly the Moral of the Poem’, whereas, in reality, Clarissa’s actions and speech complicate ‘the Moral of the Poem’.⁸⁵⁰ Indeed, Clarissa was not a ‘new Character introduced in the subsequent Editions’, further illustrating the gnomic character of this footnote: in the 1712 two canto version of the poem, which appeared in Bernard Lintott’s *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations*, Clarissa is present, although she does not speak.⁸⁵¹ Similarly, in revisions he made to *The Eve of St Agnes* in September 1819, some nine months after writing the first draft, Keats somewhat muddled the message he intended readers to take from the poem.⁸⁵² As Woodhouse reports, Keats ‘altered the last 3 lines to leave on the reader a sense of pettish disgust, by bringing Old Angela in (only) dead stiff & ugly.—He says he likes that the poem should leave off with this Change of Sentiment’.⁸⁵³ Woodhouse perceived that Keats’ moral evasiveness was deliberate: ‘I apprehend he had a fancy for trying his hand at an attempt to play with his reader’.⁸⁵⁴ Ellen Pollak has argued, with reference to *The Rape of the Lock*, that the poet’s ‘art of evasion’ is, in part, a way to shift blame; it saves Pope from ‘ever having to take direct responsibility for an unchivalrous poetic act’.⁸⁵⁵ One might say that the same is true of Keats and *The Eve of St Agnes*.

On 18 September 1819, Keats wrote to his brother and sister-in-law: ‘I have been reading lately [Robert] Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*’; he then quotes a passage from the

⁸⁴⁹ Rumbold, *Women’s Place in Pope’s World*, p.81.

⁸⁵⁰ Pope, *Twickenham Edition*, vol.2, p.199, f.7.

⁸⁵¹ Clarissa appears, but is silent, on p.361 and p.371.

⁸⁵² Stillinger, ed., *The Poems of John Keats*, pp.623-624.

⁸⁵³ Woodhouse to Taylor, 19-20 September 1819: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.163.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid*, vol.2, p.163.

⁸⁵⁵ Pollak, ‘A Reification of the Myth of Passive Womanhood’, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth*, p.83.

section on ‘Symptomes of Love’ (Part 3, Section 2, Member 3).⁸⁵⁶ In the same section of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* (first published in 1621), Burton writes of girls ‘fasting on St. A[gnès]’ eve’, of ‘faire maid[s], singing, telling or hearing lascivious tales’, whereupon ‘an earnest longing comes hence; *pruriens corpus, pruriens anima*, amorous conceits, tickling thoughts, sweet and pleasant hopes’ ‘to know when they shall be married’.⁸⁵⁷ The sexual connotations contained in Burton’s account of the myth of St Agnes are striking, especially ‘*pruriens corpus, pruriens anima*’, which translates as ‘body itching, mind itching’ to ‘know’ about marriage. In *The Eve of St Agnes*, Keats effectively adopts Burton’s rendering of the tradition of St Agnes’ Eve, with its assumption that girls innately hanker after knowledge of sex.

Pope’s use of Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* in *The Rape of the Lock* is well established.⁸⁵⁸ Pat Rogers discerns, in Pope’s ‘study of female manners (social as well as sexual)’ in *The Rape of the Lock*, a particularly clear influence from Burton’s work.⁸⁵⁹ Moreover, Rogers notes, although he writes playfully there about Burton’s ‘doctrine’ on spleen, this doctrine was, in fact, ‘gravely accepted by Pope’.⁸⁶⁰

In addition to their shared exploration of these questions of sexual morality, a further similarity between *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Eve of St Agnes* lies in Pope’s and Keats’ respective understandings of what is real and unreal, and how that might affect their heroines’ culpability for the events that occur. Each strives to create a certain confusion between reality and unreality, not merely as to what Belinda or Madeline genuinely feels, but also as

⁸⁵⁶ Keats to George and Georgiana Keats, 18 September 1819: *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.191.

⁸⁵⁷ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy, by Democritus Junior*, corrected 11th ed., 2 vols. (London, 1806), vol.2, p.341. This is the edition of *Anatomy of Melancholy* that Keats read (see *Letters of Keats*, vol.2, p.191, f.4).

⁸⁵⁸ In his edition of *The Rape of the Lock*, Geoffrey Tillotson has noted many textual references to Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (see *The Rape of the Lock, and Other Poems*, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.2, pp.378-383). Lawrence Babb has also noted textual connections between Pope and Burton (see ‘The Cave of Spleen’, *The Review of English Studies* 12.46 (April, 1936), pp.165-176).

⁸⁵⁹ Pat Rogers, ‘Faery Lore and *The Rape of the Lock*’, *The Review of English Studies* 25.97 (February, 1974), pp.25-38, p.33.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.33.

to the true import of the events that transpire. In a couplet from *The Rape of the Lock* cited above, for example—where the ‘*Beau*’ of Belinda’s dream ‘Seem’d to her Ear his winning Lips to lay, | And thus in Whispers said, or seem’d to say’ (canto 1, ll.25-26)—Pope deliberately retreats from a position of certainty to obfuscate the truth of what happened; the text moves from the definite ‘said’ to the indefinite ‘seem’d to say’. The use of ‘seem’d’ twice in one couplet also emphasises appearance rather than reality. Likewise, Keats renders passages that relate to Madeline’s dreams with a conscious clouding of reality: ‘she dreams awake, and sees, | In fancy’ (ll.232-233). Like Pope, Keats, elsewhere in the poem, brings to the fore a questioning of our belief in what things ‘seem’; Angela judges of Porphyro, ‘I deem | Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem’ (ll.143-144).

A further point of comparison between *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Eve of St Agnes* is the impression created by Pope and Keats respectively that their protagonists are haunted by bad omens. In *The Eve of St Agnes* this is set up through the Beadsman, and the cold ‘bitter chill’ (l.1) of the opening of the poem. In *The Rape of the Lock* the bad omen is also there from the opening of the poem, but it is made more explicit: in the first line the reader is told of ‘dire Offence’ (canto 1, l.1) and in the second line it is suggested to the reader that the poem will explore ‘What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things’ (canto 1, l.2). Later in the same canto, Ariel exclaims, ‘I saw, alas! some dread Event impend’ (canto 1, l.109). In the second canto, the reader is again reminded of the impending doom, and that ‘This Day, black Omens threat the brightest Fair’ (canto 2, l.101). As Pope says of the sylphs in *The Rape of the Lock*:

With beating hearts the dire event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for the birth of Fate.
(*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, ll.141-142)

These lines might serve as a description of the sensations experienced by the reader of either of these poems, who, like the sylphs, can only observe, but not intervene. Moreover, the

following lines of Pope's are reminiscent of Angela's uncertain predictions in *The Eve of St Agnes*:

Some dire Disaster, or by Force, or Slight;
But what, or where, the Fates have wrapt in Night
(*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, ll.103-104)

The Rape of the Lock suggests that 'the Fates' have something planned for Belinda that will make her 'miss a Masquerade' (canto 2, l.108), just as Madeline does miss the 'argent revelry' (*The Eve of St Agnes*, l.37), because she is so 'wrapt' up in her own world.

Madeline feels herself affected by spirits she imagines are around her:

She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin,
To spirits of the air, and visions wide
(*The Eve of St Agnes*, ll.201-202)

These 'spirits of the air' are reminiscent of the sylphs, 'Spirits...whose Habitation is in the Air', and surround Belinda.⁸⁶¹ In Belinda's case these fairy-like creatures are visible to the reader, yet Belinda is not aware of them. Madeline, on the other hand, is 'Hoodwink'd with faery fancy' (*The Eve of St Agnes*, l.70); it is left ambiguous whether the spirits that assail her have a basis in reality, or rather are figments of her imagination.

Madeline is 'unaware' (l.193), and is frequently described by Keats as blinded and unable to see properly, which is something that he puns on disturbingly with Porphyro's hopes to 'win perhaps that night a peerless bride' (l.167)—'peerless' meaning both unrivalled, but also unable to 'peer', to look, to see. Madeline's eyes apparently have a charm over Porphyro—'her gaze on Porphyro' (l.304) makes him 'Fear...to move or speak' (l.306). Belinda's eyes also have a captivating power; her eyes aggressively attack those she looks upon, 'Bright as the Sun, her Eyes the Gazers strike' (canto 2, l.13). Despite these apparently powerful eyes, Belinda, like Madeline, remains 'blind to Truth' (canto 1, l.104).

⁸⁶¹ Pope, 'Dedication to Mrs. Arabella Fermor', *Twickenham Edition*, vol.2, p.143.

In *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope says of the female character that it is susceptible to sudden change: ‘shift the moving Toyshop of their Heart’ (canto 1, l.100). Madeline ‘the conjuror plays’ (l.124), as though she too imagines herself in a world of make-believe like a ‘Toyshop’. Pope warns:

This erring Mortals Levity may call,
Oh blind to Truth! the *Sylphs* contrive it all
(canto 1, ll.103-104)

Madeline is one such ‘Mortal’ who is ‘blind to Truth’—she is ‘Blissfully haven’d both from joy and pain’ (*The Eve of St Agnes*, l.240). In using the word ‘haven’d’, Keats suggests that Madeline is somehow sealed off from the world:

Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again
(*The Eve of St Agnes*, ll.242-243)

There are thirteen references to ‘sun’, and eleven to ‘night’, in *The Rape of the Lock*, and Pope was fond of contrasting sun/light and night/dark in this way. Hence, there is a Popean flavour to Keats’ couplet, in its use of light/dark imagery; and there is a further nod to Pope in the use of caesura to contrast the anodyne—describing a young woman as a ‘rose’—with the unsettling—the impossibility of ‘be[ing] a bud again’. Throughout the stanza containing this couplet (ll.235-243), Keats wishes to convey the dual nature of Madeline’s ‘haven’d’ state: while it might be thought ‘Bliss’ to be delivered from her ‘perplex’d’ ‘swoon’, this may be achieved only at the cost of surrendering her powers of perception. Despite Madeline’s apparent ‘Bliss’ (l.240), it is still clear that easily ‘all the charm’ (l.234) could be ‘fled’ (l.234), and that although this might seem like a comforting image, Madeline is only able to leave her ‘perplex’d’ (l.236) state and enter a state of ‘soothed limbs’ (l.238) because she is not in that moment in possession of her ‘soul’ (l.238), her own essence, as her ‘soul [is] fatigued away; | Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day’ (ll.238-239).

Of course, it is not possible for a rose that has already flowered to become a bud again; similarly, it is not possible for a woman's maidenhood to return to her when it has gone. Pope also uses the image of the rose as a metaphor for women's sexuality. Belinda asks if she should have 'kept my Charms conceal'd from mortal Eye, | Like Roses that in Deserts bloom and die' (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 4, ll.157-158). Pope is being playful here, as clearly it is not possible for roses to bloom at all in the desert. Belinda poses the question:

What mov'd my Mind with youthful Lords to rome?
O had I stay'd, and said my Pray'rs at home!
(*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 4, ll.159-160)

As if in direct response to Belinda's question, Keats through Madeline shows that even staying at home and ignoring any contact with humanity does not protect a woman necessarily. Madeline walks through the castle:

—she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retir'd, not cool'd by high disdain;
But she saw not: her heart was elsewhere
(*The Eve of St Agnes*, ll.59-62)

Significantly, Porphyro specifically promises not to 'displace' 'one of her soft ringlets' (*The Eve of St Agnes*, l.148), which has definite undertones of referring to the Baron's duplicitous behaviour in *The Rape of the Lock*. Both episodes hark back to Eve's 'wanton ringlets' in *Paradise Lost* (bk.4, l.306).⁸⁶² Both poets use the image of female hair to symbolise temptation in order to foreshadow their protagonists' downfalls. It is, after all, Belinda's 'Locks' (canto 2, l.20) that are 'the Destruction of Mankind' (canto 2, l.19).

As well as exploring, perhaps, post-lapsarian tropes of feminine destructiveness set against a masculine tendency to blame women for their own downfall, both poems also examine the horror for women upon finding themselves powerless and at the mercy of a man.

⁸⁶² Milton, *Paradise Lost* (2007), p.239.

There are parallels between the descriptions of the women when they realise what has happened to them: Madeline's 'blue affrayed eyes wide open shone' (*The Eve of St Agnes*, l.296), while for Belinda 'Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes' (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 3, l.155). Both moments of the women's realisation are characterised by light coming from their eyes: for Madeline this is a more sedate shining, while for the fiery Belinda 'lightning' flashes from her eyes, which is in keeping with their characters. Although these are very different descriptions, it is interesting that Keats and Pope both present their heroine's realisation using similar imagery.

There is a suggestion in both *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Eve of St Agnes* that even though both women may have had a vague secret flirtation with being in love, this does not mean that they are happy that things have gone further than they meant them to in reality. Madeline is unhappy at the fate that befalls her, which she calls 'this eternal woe' (l.314). Equally Belinda finds her 'Fate...Cruel!' (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 4, ll.172-175). There is, however, a difference between the two poems in that 'eternal woe' does not seem an over-effusive description of Madeline's plight, whereas Pope deliberately uses hyperbole in his rendering of Belinda's fate, for comic effect. Pope writes that no-one:

E'er felt such rage, resentment and despair,
As thou, sad Virgin! for thy ravish'd Hair.
(*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 4, ll.9-10)

Beyond that, Pope's hyperbole is a satirical reflection on the way society values appearances over reality, and promotes vanity over character. His Clarissa asserts:

But since, alas! frail Beauty must decay,
 Curl'd or uncurl'd, since Locks will turn to grey;
 Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
 And she who scorns a Man, must die a Maid;
 What then remains, but well our Pow'r to use,
 And keep good Humour still whate'er we lose?
 And trust me, Dear! good Humour can prevail,
 When Airs, and Flights, and Screams, and Scolding fail.
 Beauties in vain their pretty Eyes may roll;
 Charms strike the Sight, but Merit wins the Soul
 (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 5, ll.25-34)

There is something unnerving in Clarissa's injunction that women must 'keep good Humour still whate'er we lose' (canto 5, l.30). In addition, there is arguably a foreshadowing, in this passage, of the argument later presented by Mary Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792):

...women live, as it were, by their personal charms, how can we expect them to discharge those ennobling duties which equally require exertion and self-denial....they are unable to discern in what true merit and happiness consist.⁸⁶³

Indeed, Wollstonecraft echoes Pope's language, in her comparison of women's 'charms' versus their 'merit'.

Like Pope, Keats casts doubt on the value attributed by society of female 'Charms'.

In *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope satirises the notion that Belinda's 'Petticoat' (canto 2, l.118) might be thought of as a means of protection:

Oft have we known that sev'nfold Fence to fail,
 Tho' stiff with Hoops, and arm'd with Ribs of Whale.
 Form a string Line about the Silver Bound,
 And guard the wide Circumference around
 (canto 2, ll.119-122)

Keats also focusses on Madeline's dress, but Madeline's clothes are useless in protecting her because she unknowingly undresses in front of Porphyro. In Pope's words, the guarding 'Fence' of her modesty has 'fail[ed]'. Madeline:

⁸⁶³ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (London, 1792), p.322.

Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
 Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed
 (*The Eve of St Agnes*, ll.229-231)

In this moment Keats places the reader in the same position as Porphyro, gazing on the unknowing Madeline, in order to encourage the reader to question their own objectification of her. Keats uses the compound ‘Half-hidden’. The use of ‘half’ as a word to form the first part of a compound is typical of Pope’s poetry: ‘And see thro’ all things with his half-shut Eyes’ (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 3, l.118); ‘Her Eyes half-languishing, half-drown’d in Tears’ (canto 4, l.144). Keats’ joy at conceiving of images in terms of being only ‘half’ of something is very much in keeping with his notions of ‘*Negative Capability*’ and ‘remaining content with half knowledge’.⁸⁶⁴ In the *Epistle to Cobham* (1733), Pope discusses his own comfort with ‘half knowledge’, when he concludes that ‘vain sedate reflections we would make, | When half our knowledge we must snatch, not take’ (ll.33-34); ‘all Opinion’s colours cast on life’ (l.22), and ‘Darkness strikes the sense no less than Light’ (l.112).⁸⁶⁵ This is like Keats’ conception of the ‘poetical Character’ which equally ‘enjoys light and shade’.⁸⁶⁶

Both Pope and Keats also create compounds more generally by bringing together two separate words as one. Madeline, for example, is described as ‘sleepy-eyed’ (l.169), the owl ‘was a-cold’ (l.2), carvings are ‘eager-eyed’ (l.34) with ‘wings put cross-wise’ (l.36), the narrator wants the reader to be ‘sole-thoughted’ (l.42)—these are just a few early examples. Likewise, in *The Rape of the Lock*, virgins are ‘visited by Angel-Pow’rs’ (canto 1, l.33), there are ‘Alom-*Stypticks* with contracting Power’ (canto 2, l.131), ‘Wretches hang that Jury-men may Dine’ (canto 3, l.22), there is a ‘many-colour’d Robe’ (canto 3, l.58) and a ‘Rebel-*Knave*’ (canto 3, l.59). The passages in the two poems that describe insect wings make for an interesting comparison. This section of *The Rape of the Lock* contains one of the most

⁸⁶⁴ Keats to George and Tom Keats, 27 December 1817: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, pp.193-194.

⁸⁶⁵ For all my quotation of the ‘Epistle to Cobham’ see *Epistles to Several Persons (Moral Essays)*, ed. F. W. Bateson, in the *Twickenham Edition*, vol.3.ii, pp.3-38.

⁸⁶⁶ Keats to Woodhouse, 27 October 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, pp.386-387.

beautiful and striking descriptive passages in the poem, and it does not seem too much of a leap to imagine that Keats might have admired this passage also:

Some to the Sun their Insect-Wings unfold,
 Waft on the Breeze, or sink in Clouds of Gold;
 Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight,
 Their fluid Bodies half dissolv'd in Light.
 Loose to the Wind their airy Garments flew,
 Thin glitt'ring Textures of the filmy Dew,
 Dipt in the richest Tincture of the Skies,
 Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies,
 While ev'ry Beam new transient Colours flings,
 Colours that change whene'er they wave their Wings.
 (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, ll.59-68)

Again we can see Pope's interest in that which is only 'half' of something—in this case the wings are only 'half dissolv'd in Light'. Note the dual compound description of Pope's 'Insect-Wings' of 'ever-mingling Dies'. It is as if Keats is playing with this in his doubly-compounded 'tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings':

Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;
 (*The Eve of St Agnes*, ll.212-213)

Pope's 'ever-mingling Dies' 'too fine for mortal Sight' compare to Keats' 'Innumerable...stains and splendid dyes'. Again, Keats' echoing of earlier poets' 'wings' recalls the 'wings of Poesy' (l.33) in *Ode to a Nightingale*.

Just after his description of wings above, Pope depicts Ariel:

His Purple Pinions opening to the Sun,
 He rais'd his Azure Wand
 (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, ll.71-72)

Keats, too, uses the word 'Azure' when he writes: 'And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep, | In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd' (ll.262-263). Keats uses 'azure' in close proximity to the purple lavender, but also brings in a particularly Popean flavour with the use of the compound 'azure-lidded sleep'. I am not suggesting that this is a deliberate reference to Pope, but the Romantic poets' use of these sort of compounds is, as a general matter,

noteworthy. Leigh Hunt, for one, clearly enjoyed playing with coining new compounds. In *The Story of Rimini* (1816), for example, Hunt memorably uses the phrase ‘half-shut ears’.⁸⁶⁷ The reader might expect the princess to have ‘half-shut’ eyes, but Hunt confounds this expectation by using ‘ears’, as if all her senses were confused. The phrase’s dissonance, therefore, reflects both Francesca’s and the reader’s uneasiness at this moment in the story. In this way Hunt is building on Pope’s imagery of ‘half-shut Eyes’ (canto 3, l.118), and complicating it to achieve his poetic ends. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Wordsworth also uses compounds that comprise ‘half’ something. In *Tintern Abbey*, for example, Wordsworth uses ‘half-create’ (l.107), and then uses the footnote to this compound to half-refer to Young.⁸⁶⁸ The repeated use of compounds with the word ‘half’ in them, suggests that, just as Pope sometimes liked to create uncertainty by leaving unmentioned the other ‘half’ of a thing, so too did some of his successors.

In this connection, one interesting example is Pope’s description of the Baron’s ultimate frustration: ‘The Pow’rs gave Ear, and granted half his Pray’r’ (canto 2, l.45). This notion, that fate allows only an incomplete consummation of joy, is explicitly spelt out in Keats’ poem *Ode to Melancholy*: ‘in the very temple of Delight | Veil’d Melancholy has her sovran shrine’ (ll.25-26). Being granted ‘half’ a ‘Pray’r’ might result in a state more desperate than being granted nothing: if Madeline, for example, had experienced nothing but the ‘empty dream’ of Jonson’s poem, then she would have been less pained than she was by being granted a ‘pallid, chill, and drear’ (l.311) incarnation of her dream-Porphyro. In Madeline’s agonised lament—‘Give me that voice again, my Porphyro’ (l.312)—we recognise the impossibility of her returning to the dream. Both poets, seemingly, are making a point about dual-edged nature of human aspiration and its fulfilment.

⁸⁶⁷ Leigh Hunt, *The Story of Rimini* (London, 1816), p. 33.

⁸⁶⁸ Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, The Cornell Wordsworth*, p.119.

There are a number of other intriguing linguistic connections between *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Eve of St Agnes*. For example, Pope refers to the way Belinda ‘Burns to encounter two adventurous Knights’ (canto 3, l.26); her imaginings, in other words, are depicted as physically painful. In the description of Madeline hurrying to her bed—‘Paining with eloquence her balmy side’ (l.205)—there is a hint of the ‘*Pain*’ of Belinda’s ‘*Side*’:

She sighs for ever on her pensive Bed,
Pain at her Side, and *Megrim* at her Head.
 (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 4, ll.23-24)

The ‘*Megrim*’ at Belinda’s head are reminiscent of Angela’s ‘agues in her brain’ (l.189). For the women in the poems, therefore, their imaginings in the realm of fantasy bring them physical pain in the real world.

Belinda, furthermore, ‘swells her Breast with Conquests yet to come’ (canto 3, l.28). Both Madeline and Belinda physically ‘swell’ with the prospect of future encounters; for Madeline it is:

As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
 Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.
 (*The Eve of St Agnes*, ll.206-207)

Both poets use the imagery of a bird to create a sense that his heroine is going to suffer at the hands of a man. In *The Eve of St. Agnes*, Keats uses the nightingale. Marjorie Levinson notes that ‘From the Renaissance on, we find a consistent literary identification of Philomel—Ovid’s sexually victimized and silenced creature—with the nightingale’.⁸⁶⁹ Porphyro boasts ‘Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest...Saving of thy sweet self’ (ll.340-41), which Keats had edited from the proposed, ‘Soft Nightingale, I’ll keep thee in a cage...To sing to me – but hark! the blended tempests’ rage’.⁸⁷⁰ The deleted section’s capitalisation of ‘Nightingale’ implies that this is Porphyro’s nickname for Madeline, casting

⁸⁶⁹ Marjorie Levinson, *Keats’s Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p.164.

⁸⁷⁰ Quoted in Levinson, *Keats’s Life of Allegory*, p.188.

her deeper into the role of Philomel, who was raped and kidnapped to prevent her from divulging her rapist's identity. Keats uses the mythology of a bird to expound Madeline's uncertain, uncomfortable position. This worry about her being silenced appears accurate, given that her last words are troubled—she says to Porphyro, 'thou forsakest a deceived thing' (l.332)—and her subsequent silence; though 'beset with fears' (l.352), Madeline does not speak at all in the final five stanzas. Madeline, in fact, draws a parallel between herself and a bird in her final spoken line; she describes herself as 'A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing' (l.333). The reader is also party, through the narrator's cry to the Baron, to the potentially precarious position of Belinda:

Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere 'tis too late,
 Fear the just Gods, and think of *Scylla's* Fate!
 Chang'd to a Bird, and sent to flit in Air,
 She dearly pays for *Nisus's* injur'd Hair!
 (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 3, ll.121-124)

Scylla was daughter of King Nisus of Megara, who possessed a single lock of hair which granted him invincibility. Scylla fell in love with Minos, King of Crete, and promised to deliver her father to his hands by cutting off this lock and presenting it to Minos. Minos, however, was disgusted by this treachery of her father, and so despised Scylla. Scylla threw herself into the sea, and was changed into a bird (sometimes a lark, sometimes other birds), persistently pursued by her enraged father (who had metamorphosed into a bird of prey).⁸⁷¹ Both poets' choice of bird has Ovidian undertones: Scylla's myth appears in Book VIII and Philomel's in Book VI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁸⁷² In this respect, therefore, both authors align their poetic imagery with traditional literary portrayals of womanhood.

Further commonalities of image between Pope and Keats are evident. Pope writes:

While melting Musick steals upon the Sky,
 And soften'd Sounds along the Waters die
 (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, ll.49-50)

⁸⁷¹ See Adrian Room, ed., *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, rev. ed. (London: Cassell, 2000), p.1054.

⁸⁷² See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Keats also describes music using words that do not make logical sense: ‘Music’s golden tongue’ (l.20); ‘music, yearning like a God in pain’ (l.56). Reading *The Rape of the Lock*, a reader might ask, what is ‘melting Musick’, in the same way that a reader of Keats might ask what is the golden tongue of music that yearns like a God in pain? Such images are hard to conceptualise, they are impossible to fathom, they are ‘Impossible to melt as iced stream’ (*The Eve of St Agnes*, l.283). ‘Melt’ is also the word that appears at the crux of Keats’ poem—‘Into her dream he melted’ (l.320). The image of Porphyro melting into Madeline’s dream that effectively melts Madeline’s chastity ties in with a passage of Pope’s in which sylphs are described as magical mythical protectors of women’s virtue and modesty, who guard ‘the Purity of melting Maids’ (canto 1, l.71). In the passage in which this line occurs, Pope is scrutinising our conceptions of honour:

What guards the Purity of melting Maids,
 In Courtly Balls, and Midnight Masquerades,
 Safe from the treach’rous Friend, the daring Spark,
 The Glance by Day, the Whisper in the Dark;
 When kind Occasion prompts their warm Desires,
 When Musick softens, and when Dancing fires?
 ’Tis but their *Sylph*, the wise Celestials know,
 Tho’ *Honour* is the Word with Men below.
 (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 1, ll.71-78)

Keats also plays on the notion that men persuade others and themselves that their intentions are honourable. ‘*Honour*’ is all too frequently merely ‘the Word’, and not the action, ‘with Men’. The hypocrisy of both Porphyro and Angela is captured in the following lines, where Angela describes Porphyro as:

A cruel man and impious thou art:
 Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
 Alone with her good angels, far apart
 From wicked men like thee. Go, go!
 (ll.140-143)

Porphyro responds by claiming ‘I will not harm her, by all saints I swear’ (l.145). This, of course, is a lie; the last image the reader is given of Porphyro and Madeline is that they head off ‘into the storm’ (l.371).

In *The Rape of the Lock*, Belinda is seen as analogous to a luxurious object; while, in *The Eve of St Agnes*, Porphyro seems to view Madeline as, in some sense, an extension of the luxurious exotic commodities that he presents to her at the feast (ll.264-275) with the intention of seducing her. In *The Rape of the Lock*, breaking ‘Diana’s Law’ (that is to say, chastity) is ironically presented as equivalent to breaking a ‘China Jar’, and the figurative ‘stain’ on a seduced woman’s ‘Honour’ is equivalent to any literal stains that such an event might leave on her ‘Brocade’:

Whether the Nymphs shall break *Diana*’s Law,
Or some frail *China Jar* receive a Flaw,
Or stain her Honour, or her new Brocade,
Forget her Pray’rs, or miss a Masquerade,
Or lose her Heart, or Necklace, at a Ball;
Or whether Heav’n has doom’d that *Shock* must fall
(*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, ll.105-110)

Keats has Porphyro treat Madeline’s chastity with a similar degree of disregard. Pope scathingly writes of women who lose their hearts as easily as they might lose a necklace; as if in response to this, Keats describes Madeline removing her ‘warmed jewels’ (l.228) in front of Porphyro in an accidental striptease, as if to suggest that Madeline’s unclasping and loosening of her jewels is symbolic of her release of her right to chastity. Arguably, in much eighteenth-century writing, the commodification of women’s chastity is apparent from the way in which the words ‘jewel’, ‘virtue’, and ‘virginity’ are virtual synonyms. This is evident, for example, in Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740), in which Pamela’s father fears she

‘should be *too* grateful’ to her master ‘and reward him with that Jewel, your Virtue, which no Riches, nor Favour, nor anything in this Life, can make up to you’.⁸⁷³

Both poems explore the idea of wish-fulfilment, not only in their substantive content, but also in the way they challenge the reader’s expectations of genre: each poet encourages readers to reflect on what they want from poetry. In the same way that Pope is creating a mock-epic in *The Rape of the Lock*, Keats is creating a mock-romance in *The Eve of St Agnes*—‘mock’ suggesting a combination of imitation and parody. Pope is questioning the earnestness with which the epic is treated (while not entirely eschewing its good points); Keats is asking what readers want from the quest/romance narrative.

David Fairer, in *Pope’s Imagination* (1984), writes of *The Rape of the Lock* that the ‘engagement of fantasy with reality is the heart of the poem’s meaning: as “incongruity” it is the source of its delightful mock-heroic wit; as “conflict” it generates the psychological drama’.⁸⁷⁴ As in *The Rape of the Lock*, it is what Fairer calls the ‘conflict’ between fantasy and reality—both in the disparity between Madeline’s dream fantasy and the reality upon her awakening, and in the difference between the fantasy of Porphyro’s honourable intentions and the reality of his ‘ruffian passion’ (l.149)—that ‘generates the psychological drama’ of *The Eve of St Agnes*.⁸⁷⁵ The ‘incongruity’ between fantasy and reality in Keats’ poem, however, is not the source of a ‘delightful mock-heroic wit’ (as we might understand it) as it is in *The Rape of the Lock*. Instead, in *The Eve of St Agnes*, the ‘incongruity’ gives the poem an uncanny unease. In *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope plays with imagery, ideas, plot devices, among others, that are associated with classical epic: for example, a civilised counsel. In the *Iliad*, Hector, ignores the counsels of Polydamas, which leads ultimately to his death. In *The Rape of the Lock*, the ‘British Queen’ at Hampton Court is described thus:

⁸⁷³ Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, orig. pub. 1740, eds. Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.14.

⁸⁷⁴ David Fairer, *Pope’s Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.53.

⁸⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.53.

Here *Britain's* Statesman oft the Fall foredoom
 Of Foreign Tyrants, and of Nymphs at home;
 Here Thou, Great *Anna!* whom three Realms obey,
 Dost sometimes Counsel take—and sometimes *Tea*
 (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 3, ll.5-8)

Pope is playing with a double ‘incongruity’ here. Not only is there a gulf between how a head of state ought to behave and how that head of state is presented as behaving—that is, taking tea with as much interest as she takes ‘Counsel’—there is also a meta-textual ‘incongruity’ between what the reader might expect from classically inflected poetry and what Pope actually presents. Keats is making a similar kind of play in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, but with the genre of romance rather than epic. The reader might expect a quest narrative, where the hero has to battle and overcome adversity in order to triumph and claim his prize of the hand of the fair maiden. But what the reader is actually presented with is a castle indifferent to Porphyro’s expedition—there were only ‘sleeping dragons all around’ (l.353), which deliberately contrasts Porphyro with traditional heroes who are actually called into heroic action, such as St. George the dragon-slayer. Instead of embodying courtly chivalry, Porphyro behaves more like the seducing buffoon of a Restoration farce. Keats describes Porphyro as a Peeping Tom—he ‘[be]tween the curtains peep’d, where, lo!—how fast she slept’ (l.252). Pope had also described the curtains of Belinda’s bed being penetrated by the sun: ‘*Sol thro’* white Curtains shot a tim’rous Ray’ (canto 1, l.13). Porphyro resorts to hiding in the closet of Madeline’s bedroom as she undresses, and then as she is sleeping in her four-poster bed he ‘breath’d himself: then from the closet crept’ (l.249). In this Keats is following in the footsteps of eighteenth century authors who are playing with and questioning genre. We might, for example, think of *Pamela’s* Mr. B hiding in Pamela’s closet, as Richardson works through the two characters’ conceptions of the type of narrative in which they are embroiled. This playfulness comes in part in the disparity between the public and the private. Traditional forms, such as epic and romance, are predominantly conducted in a public realm,

and concern themselves with public displays of worthiness. In both *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Eve of St Agnes* the reader is invited into a private world, in which the behaviours normally conducted in public are conducted in private, and so gets a glimpse into the actual unworthiness of behaviour expected to be worthy. Thus, the reader is expected to ask whether society ought to take counsels more seriously than tea, and whether Porphyro ought to court Madeline openly rather than in clandestine fashion.

Some of the morals that are suggested in *The Rape of the Lock* are enacted in *The Eve of St. Agnes*. For some time after *The Eve of St Agnes* was published—perhaps even up until Stillinger's reading of Madeline's hoodwinking in the mid-twentieth century⁸⁷⁶—readers' reactions to Porphyro's behaviour appeared for the most part to follow Pope's cynical assessment of the Baron's behaviour:

Th' Adventurous *Baron* the bright Locks admir'd,
He saw, he wish'd, and to the Prize aspir'd:
Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,
By Force to ravish, or by Fraud betray;
For when Success a Lover's Toil attends,
Few ask, if Fraud or Force attain'd his Ends.
(*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, ll.29-34)

Part of Keats' purpose in *The Eve of the Agnes* is to encourage his readers to question the attitude that ends justify means in this regard. That it took over a hundred years for critical readings to emerge that began to question Porphyro's behaviour suggests that Keats was correct to imagine that readers were committed to the formula of the quest/romance narrative.

It is not just readers who might expect a romance when they embark upon the poem: Porphyro, too, is caught up in the idea of himself as a romance hero:

For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage
(ll.85-88)

⁸⁷⁶ Cf. Stillinger, 'The Hoodwinking of Madeline', *Studies in Philology* (1961), pp.533-555.

But only 'For him' do these impediments exist; the narrator does not declare their existence as fact. The comma after 'him' separates this thought from the subsequent phrase, implying that what follows are Porphyro's 'fev'rous' (l.84) imaginings, rather than accurately depicting what lies in wait for him. Porphyro perceives 'foemen' inhabiting the castle, but readers never witness them behaving aggressively—in fact, they ignore him. The narrative repeatedly undermines any imagining that this is a traditional romance, and deliberately complicates the poem's tone. Is the reader supposed to enjoy or be grieved at what happens? The reader is left as 'perplex'd' (l.236) as Madeline by comments such as Angela's, 'But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve' (l.126).

Both poets use the gulf between literary fantasy and reality to play with genre. Pope highlights the difference between fantasy and reality in order to draw attention to the absurdities of epic, while Keats wants to draw attention to the limitations of romance. Neither author does this with a sense of discrediting their genre completely, indeed both authors clearly delight in the genre which they are exploring—but it is a delight that is tempered by the acknowledgement of the limitation of that form. Not only do both authors show a familiarity with the genre which they are playing with, but part of the playfulness comes from frustrating what they imagine will be the expectations of readers. Readers are supposed and, indeed, expected to be very familiar with the genres that the poets are playing with. This deliberate playing with readers' expectations of genre is evident in Porphyro's imagining of himself as Romeo to Madeline's Juliet. Just like the Capulets to the Montagues in *Romeo and Juliet*, Porphyro imagines that that the castle's 'hot-blooded lords' (l.86) would 'execrations howl | Against his lineage' (ll.87-88). Porphyro describes himself as 'A famish'd pilgrim' (l.339) waiting to pounce on Madeline, which contrasts him unfavourably with the tender delicateness of Romeo describing his lips as 'blushing pilgrims' waiting for

Juliet's kiss.⁸⁷⁷ Keats is playing with the idea that Porphyro imagines himself to be the hero of a love tragedy of Shakespeare's, whilst he is actually more like the under-hand Baron in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. Keats plays with previous authors to highlight his meta-textual aim of questioning how readers position and categorise literature.

Like the Baron, Porphyro 'to *Love* an Altar built' (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, l.37). The Baron builds his altar 'Of twelve vast *French* Romances' (canto 2, l.38), while Porphyro makes an almost sacrificial altar of the feast. The Baron builds his altar of 'Romances' while, in *The Eve of St Agnes*, Keats refers to 'old romance' (l.41) as though Porphyro believes that he is in one. Both male protagonists imagine themselves to be romance heroes, and both poets undercut this: Pope to overtly comic effect; Keats deliberately, although subtly, to comment on the nature of poetic genre. The uselessness of the Baron's obsession with 'Love' is evident in his collecting 'half a Pair of Gloves' (canto 2, l.39) as one of 'the Trophies of his former Loves' (canto 2, l.40)—he can have no practical use for only one glove. Also, half of a pair ironically highlights that despite all these trophies, which are ostensibly symbols of love, he is not yet part of a united pair, that is, married.

Keats also explores our notions of love, devotion, and religion in *The Eve of St Agnes*. At the beginning, for example, the Beadsman's prayers seem futile; the virgin to whom he prays, Mary, remains a picture—static, unyielding, cold, lifeless. The virgin to whom Madeline reaches, St. Agnes, ostensibly grants her wishes, although the reader is left to guess at the ultimate denouement. Like the Baron and Porphyro, Madeline too 'to *Love* an Altar built' (*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, l.37) in her semi-religious treatment of the St. Agnes's Eve myth. St. Agnes's Eve is not only a secular ritual; the day sees particular religious rites performed, including readings from the parable of the Virgins:

⁸⁷⁷ Act.I, sc.iv, l.215, *Royal Shakespeare Company Complete Works*, p.1693.

In the Office for St. Agnes' Day in "Missale ad usum Sarum," [Servicebook used at Sarum (Salisbury)] 1554, this passage occurs: "Hec est Virgo sapiens, quam Dominus *vigilantem* invenit" ['Here is the wise virgin, whom the Master discovered watchful/waiting']. The Gospel is the parable of the Virgins.⁸⁷⁸

Both Pope and Keats, therefore, play with notions that the characters' misguided use of religious imagery symbolises their inner confusion when it comes to love. Belinda, for example:

On her white Breast a sparkling *Cross* she wore,
Which *Jews* might kiss, and Infidels adore.
(*The Rape of the Lock*, canto 2, ll.7-8)

The aim of wearing a cross should not be so that 'ev'ry Eye was fix'd on her alone' (canto 2, l.6). In a similarly misguided fashion, Porphyro confuses earthly lust, with religious devotion, 'Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite' (l.277), an 'eremite' being a 'Christian hermit' (*OED*).

With his concern for the moral validity of the romance genre, Keats is entering into a debate that had been running from the mid-eighteenth century, and occupied authors such as Richardson and Henry Fielding. Writing to George Cheyne, for example, on 31 August 1741, Richardson writes of *Clarissa*:

I am endeavouring to write a Story, which shall catch young and airy Minds, and when Passions run high in them, to shew how they may be directed to laudable Meanings and Purposes, in order to decry such Novels and Romances, as have a Tendency to inflame and corrupt[.]⁸⁷⁹

Madeline's is, in effect, a 'young and airy Mind' that is liable to be corrupted by a protagonist who behaves as if he is in a 'Romance'. Fielding demonstrates a similar concern in *Tom Jones* (1749), albeit with an overtly comic tone.⁸⁸⁰ The opening sentence of a subsection of the novel (book four, chapter one) is titled '*Containing Five Pages of Paper*':

⁸⁷⁸ John Brand, *Popular Antiquities of Great Britain, Comprising Notices of the Moveable and Immoveable Feasts, Customs, Superstitions and Amusements Past and Present*, rev. ed. William Carew Hazlitt, 3 vols. (London, 1870), vol.1, p.19, f.2.

⁸⁷⁹ Richardson to Cheyne, 31 August 1741: *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, pp.46-47.

⁸⁸⁰ Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, 6 vols. (London, 1749).

...truth distinguishes our Writings, from those idle Romances which are filled with Monsters, the Productions, not of Nature, but of distempered Brains[.]⁸⁸¹

In *The Eve of St Agnes*, Keats is asking the reader to assess the validity of such claims: are ‘distempered Brains’ brought about by ‘idle Romances’, is ‘The brain, new stuff d, in youth, with triumphs gay | Of old romance’ (ll.40-41)?

Fairer writes of *The Rape of the Lock* that:

It is concerned with the imagination as beautiful, amoral, irresponsible and alluring thing, a cluster of adjectives as apt for Belinda as for the sylphs[.]⁸⁸²

The amorality of the literary imagination was not something to trouble Keats—who wrote in a letter to Woodhouse, dated 27 October 1818, that his poetic imagination ‘has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen’⁸⁸³—but its allure was. Both Pope and Keats explore the imagination in terms of colour.⁸⁸⁴ For Pope, the imagination can colour and misrepresent what a person sees:

All Manners take a tincture from our own,
Or come discolour’d thro’ our Passions shown.
Or Fancy’s beam enlarges, multiplies,
Contracts, inverts, and gives ten thousand dyes.
(*Epistle to Cobham*, ll.25-28)

The imagination’s ability to embody and show many different colours prefigures Keats’ conception of the ‘chameleon Poet’.⁸⁸⁵

Elsewhere there is a sense that Pope sees that the imagination can trump reality:

Where Beams of warm *Imagination* play,
The *Memory*’s soft Figures melt away
(*An Essay on Criticism*, ll.58-59)

As I outlined above, the image of melting is an important concept in both Pope and Keats; it captures something in the state of transition, of being half one thing and half another.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid, vol.2, p.1.

⁸⁸² Fairer, *Pope’s Imagination*, p.60.

⁸⁸³ Keats to Woodhouse, 27 October 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, pp.386–387.

⁸⁸⁴ For a description of Pope’s use of colour and the imagination see Thomas R. Edwards, Jr., ‘The Colors of Fancy: An Image Cluster in Pope’, *Modern Language Notes* 73.7 (November, 1958), pp.485-489.

⁸⁸⁵ Keats to Woodhouse, 27 October 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, p.387.

This condition of being half one thing and half another is familiar to the poet, as the poet is often in a conflicted state: the poet must relish and absorb him/herself within an imaginative flight of fancy, and yet must at the same time be out of him/herself enough to be able to tame that fancy and construct a poem from it. Pope describes his creative technique with particular reference to the difficulty of capturing imaginative bursts:

We grasp some more beautifull Idea in our Brain, than our Endeavors to express it can set to the view of others; & still do but labour to fall short of our first Imagination. The gay Colouring which Fancy gave to our Design at the first transient glance we had of it, goes off in the Execution; like those various Figures in the gilded Clouds, which while we gaze long upon, to separate the Parts of each imaginary Image, the whole faints before the Eye, & decays into Confusion.⁸⁸⁶

Pope's description is not dissimilar to Keats' later conception of his own writing process, and how he aims to capture his own imaginative bursts:

My judgment, (he says) is as active while I am actually writing as my imagin
In fact all my faculties are strongly excited, & in their full <state vigour>
play— And shall I afterwards, when my imagination is idle, & the heat in
which I wrote, has <cooled, sit> gone off, sit down coldly to criticise when in
Possion of only one faculty, what I have written, when almost inspired.⁸⁸⁷

From these passages, it is clear that, for both poets, the initial effort to capture moments of imaginative excitement is vital, because, once the faculties are no longer 'in their full...play', the imagination 'decays into Confusion'. Both poets agree that some imaginative 'heat' 'goes off in the Execution' of poetry if the composition happens once the 'gay Colouring which Fancy gave to our Design at the first transient glance we had of it' starts to fade. It is interesting that having considered 'state' and 'vigour', Woodhouse settles on 'play' as being most descriptive of Keats' imagination.

Writing with particular reference to Keats, Christopher Ricks has suggested that 'Paradoxically it is often by courtesy of another, with the aid of allusion, that a poet becomes

⁸⁸⁶ Pope to Henry Cromwell, 12 November 1711: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.135.

⁸⁸⁷ Woodhouse, 'Criticism of a Sonnet by Keats', July 1820, *The Keats Circle, Letters and Papers, 1816-1878*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), vol.1, pp.128-129.

himself'.⁸⁸⁸ Keats is aware that part of his poetic vision incorporates 'the prodn of another person', 'something given to him', something 'scarcely his own', and 'he cannot conceive how it came to him'.⁸⁸⁹ Keats' conception of his own poetic imaginative allusion might help us to understand how *The Eve of St Agnes* and *The Rape of the Lock* might be linked. It does not seem that Keats deliberately intended readers to read *The Eve of St Agnes* as in direct conversation with *The Rape of the Lock*; instead, the similarity of material between the two poems might suggest that wisps of Pope's poem were 'given to' Keats.

In *To George Felton Mathew*, Keats had written 'Sweet are the pleasures that to verse belong, | And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song' (ll.1-2). Such is the brotherhood of poetry that Keats conceives of when he remarks, 'I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death'.⁸⁹⁰ By this, he does not merely mean that he wishes to be considered as one of the great English poets, among whom he would have numbered Pope, but also that his own poetry was created from a conversation among the English poets.

⁸⁸⁸ Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets*, p.160.

⁸⁸⁹ Woodhouse, 'Criticism of a Sonnet by Keats', *The Keats Circle*, vol.1, p.129.

⁸⁹⁰ Keats to George and Georgiana Keats, 14 October 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, p.394.

CONCLUSION: ‘posterity would see at least, if I was no good poet’

*I have just finished reading the works of Pope & I am astonished at the false position of
criticism & taste that I have read about him*
John Clare ⁸⁹¹

Pope, it seems, has been selected as the pivot of a dispute in taste
Percy Bysshe Shelley ⁸⁹²

In the century-and-a-half after Pope’s death, there continued to be a healthy appetite for his poetry among the reading public. William St Clair notes that, during the eighteenth century, the ‘property’ in Pope’s *Works* ‘was worth more than those of Shakespeare and Milton combined’. ⁸⁹³ Between 1744 and 1900, at least three hundred editions of Pope’s poems appeared, roughly two per year. This compares with approximately two hundred and fifty publications of the works of Milton in the same period, tending to undermine our reflexive notion that Milton was preferred by Romantics and Victorians alike. Moreover, the Digital Miscellanies Index reveals that, out of 1,400 or so miscellanies published in the eighteenth century, at least 785 contain some lines of Pope, Milton mustering only a comparatively meagre 276. To the extent that, throughout this time, Pope’s status as a poet was a matter of dispute, that does not appear negatively to have affected the numbers in which copies of his *Works* were purchased and—one might not unreasonably conjecture—read.

⁸⁹¹ John Clare, *The Prose of John Clare*, ed. J. W. and Anne Tibble (London: Routledge & Paul, 1951), pp.222-223.

⁸⁹² Shelley to Byron, 4 May 1821: *Letters of Shelley*, vol.2, p.290.

⁸⁹³ William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.471-472.

As I have argued, Pope's name was frequently conjured in literary discourse of this period, particularly that pertaining to the nature of poetry. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, to invoke Pope's name in the context of such discourse was tantamount to speaking a kind of code, necessarily connoting wider implications about one's evaluation of literature. 'Pope, it seems', Shelley noted to Byron in a letter of 4 May 1821, 'has been selected as the pivot of a dispute in taste'.⁸⁹⁴ The first chapter of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (which includes as part of its title '*Comparison between the Poets before and since Mr. Pope*'), indeed, explicitly demarcates the wider poetic landscape into 'pre-Pope' and 'post-Pope'.⁸⁹⁵ Well into the mid-nineteenth century, discussion of what constituted great literature was still, as it were, haunted by Pope's spectre. De Quincey was unable to review William Roscoe's 1848 edition of Pope's *Works* without posing himself the question: 'What is it then that we mean by *literature*?'.⁸⁹⁶ As I have also argued, however, the nature of this 'dispute in taste' was hardly such as to discourage later authors from a personal appreciation of, or at any rate from engagement with, Pope's poetry. In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, for example, Hugh Blair refers to Pope at least thirty times, considerably more than he does Dryden or Shakespeare; and the variety of the poems he cites illustrates his familiarity with Pope's oeuvre.⁸⁹⁷

Undeniably, Pope came to be seen as a totem, representing a particular understanding of literary value. By the time *Sense and Sensibility* (which she had begun in the 1790s) was published, in 1811, Jane Austen could consciously play on the position he held within contemporary culture, as a kind of shibboleth of then-fashionable 'Romantic' literary tastes. As a person whose 'opinions are all romantic' (vol.1, ch.11), Elinor tells us in *Sense and*

⁸⁹⁴ Shelley to Byron, 4 May 1821: *Letters of Shelley*, vol.2, p.290.

⁸⁹⁵ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, p.ix.

⁸⁹⁶ Thomas De Quincey, 'Review of *The Works of Alexander Pope*' (August, 1848), *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, gen. ed. Grevel Lindop, 21 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000-2003), vol.16. pp.334-364.

⁸⁹⁷ He refers, for example, to Pope's Homeric translation (vol.1, p.68), *Messiah* (vol.1, p.216), *An Essay on Criticism* (vol.1, p.223), *Eloisa to Abelard* (vol.1, p.321), *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (vol.2, 217), *The Rape of the Lock* (vol.2, p.329), *Pastorals* (vol.2, p.349), and *Ethical Epistles* (vol.2, p.368).

Sensibility, Marianne conforms to the standard literary prejudices of the day.⁸⁹⁸ Elinor (and, through her, Austen) teases Marianne for respecting Willoughby's taste because he 'admir[es] Pope no more than is proper' (vol.1 ch.10).⁸⁹⁹ Marianne is shown to be misguided in her assessment.

In the *Juvenilia* she composed in the early 1790s, Austen alludes to Pope a number of times.⁹⁰⁰ In 'Frederic and Elfrida', for example, she writes 'of the amiable Rebecca, whom she found surrounded by Patches, Powder, Pomatum and Paint with which she was vainly endeavouring to remedy the natural plainness of her face'.⁹⁰¹ Austen is here playing on one of the most celebrated lines, and lists, in eighteenth-century literature, namely the passage in *The Rape of the Lock* in which Pope describes Belinda's dressing table as strewn with 'Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux' (canto 1, l.138). Austen originally wrote 'Rouge, Powder, Pomatum and Paint'; but, by changing 'Rouge' to 'Patches', she makes the allusion to Pope more overt, and heightens and exaggerates the comic alliteration by using four 'P' words to Pope's three. She is, in effect, using Pope's staggeringly beautiful Belinda to magnify, and mock, Rebecca's 'natural plainness'. By employing Popean motifs in this fashion, Austen illustrates that while she might, like Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*, be an acknowledged appreciator of Cowper's poetry, in no sense does that exclude her from being an admirer of Pope's.

In his lecture, 'On Dryden and Pope' (the fourth in his series of *Lectures on the English Poets*, delivered at the Surrey Institution on Blackfriars Road in 1818, and published soon afterwards), William Hazlitt uses Pope as a prism through which to discuss the theme of

⁸⁹⁸ Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. Edward Copeland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.66.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p.57.

⁹⁰⁰ Compare, for example, Pope's Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock* to Charles Adams in 'Jack & Alice'. Austen introduces him as 'an amiable, accomplished, and bewitching young Man; of so dazzling a Beauty' (p.14), with 'beams which darted from his eyes' (p.16). Charles' eyes are like Belinda's: 'Bright as the Sun, her Eyes the Gazers strike' (canto 2, l.13). Charles is 'polite to all but partial to none' (p.16), while Belinda gives 'Favours to none, to all she Smiles extends' (canto 2, l.11). See Austen, *Juvenilia*, ed. Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁹⁰¹ Austen, *Juvenilia*, p.7.

what distinguishes a great writer from a great poet.⁹⁰² Duncan Wu has characterised this series of lectures as allowing us to glimpse the future, in which Romantic ideas take hold of literary culture.⁹⁰³ We would do well, then, to remind ourselves of Hazlitt's conclusion: 'The question', he writes, 'whether Pope was a poet, has hardly yet been settled'; and yet it 'is hardly worth settling', for if Pope 'was not a great poet', then 'he must have been a great prose-writer, that is, he was a great writer of some sort'.⁹⁰⁴ In Essay IV of *The Plain Speaker* (1826), moreover, Hazlitt refers to 'the marrow of authors' being 'the old everlasting set', including principally 'Milton and Shakespeare, Pope and Dryden', among others.⁹⁰⁵ And Pope is one of the authors Hazlitt cites most frequently in his *New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue* (1810).⁹⁰⁶

Against that background, Wu's contention that Hazlitt's lecture 'shocked his listeners by denying the widespread belief that Pope was the perfect poet, condemning "those critics who are bigoted idolisers of our author"' is somewhat misleading.⁹⁰⁷ To be sure, Hazlitt referred to 'bigoted idolisers', but he included in that category only those who lionised Pope 'chiefly on the score of his correctness'.⁹⁰⁸ Hazlitt's purpose here is to undermine the idea that poetry is or can be perfectible, hence his insistence that Pope's 'excellence is by no means faultlessness'.⁹⁰⁹ It is equally possible, he believes, to find fault with Milton, as indeed it is with any accomplished poet. In his third lecture, 'On Shakespeare and Milton', Hazlitt recalls that 'Dr. Johnson, who had modelled his ideas of versification on the regular sing-song of Pope, condemns the *Paradise Lost* as harsh and unequal'; and he 'shall not

⁹⁰² Hazlitt, *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu, 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), vol.2, pp.228-243.

⁹⁰³ See Duncan Wu, *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.237.

⁹⁰⁴ Hazlitt, *Selected Writings of Hazlitt*, vol.2, p.228.

⁹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.8, p.32.

⁹⁰⁶ Marcus Tomalin, *Romanticism and Linguistic Theory: William Hazlitt, Language, and Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.128.

⁹⁰⁷ Wu, *Hazlitt: The First Modern Man*, p.238.

⁹⁰⁸ Hazlitt, *Selected Writings of Hazlitt*, vol.2, p.234.

⁹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, vol.2, p.234.

pretend to say that this is not sometimes the case'.⁹¹⁰ In fact, echoing sentiments from Pope's *An Essay on Criticism*, Hazlitt argues that 'where a degree of excellence beyond the mechanical rules of art is attempted, the poet must sometimes fail'.⁹¹¹ Pope himself provided England with a 'great poet' who was also 'correct'; it is inevitable that, for those who come after him, a preoccupation with correctness not only feels like it leads to aridity, but is no longer original.⁹¹²

Wu also points out that Keats responded to Hazlitt's lecture in a letter to Haydon, dated 21 March 1818, in which he supported Hazlitt's condemnation of those who 'idolised' Pope: 'Hazlitt has damned the bigoted...how durst the Man?!'.⁹¹³ We know that Keats had profound respect for Hazlitt's judgement: in an earlier letter to Haydon, dated 10 January 1818, he remarks that one of the 'three things to rejoice at in this Age' is 'Hazlitt's depth of Taste'.⁹¹⁴ So taken was he with this thought, that he reiterated it a few days later in a letter to his brothers, where he describes Hazlitt's depth of taste as one of the 'three things superior in the modern world'.⁹¹⁵ As I suggested in chapter four, however, it may be that Keats' appreciation for Hazlitt's 'taste' is subtler than Wu implies: while he is undoubtedly concerned, in *Sleep and Poetry*, to dispel any notion that Pope's versification is perfect, or a fit subject for idolatry, nonetheless, as with Hazlitt, it is for the 'school | Of dolts' (ll.196-197) who merely emulate Pope's style that the brunt of Keats' disgust is reserved.

That Pope's reputation was jealously guarded—and by establishment critics of a conservative bent, never shy of denigrating his own poetry—was unlikely to provoke Keats into complete sympathy with the work of his predecessor. In his 1818 'Cockney School' series in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, for example, John Gibson Lockhart railed

⁹¹⁰ Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets*, p.120.

⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.120-121.

⁹¹² Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, vol.1, p.32. See chapter four.

⁹¹³ Keats to Haydon, 21 March 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, p.252. Cf. Wu's footnote in Hazlitt, *Selected Writings of Hazlitt*, vol.2, p.234.

⁹¹⁴ Keats to Haydon, 10 January 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, p.203.

⁹¹⁵ Keats to George and Tom Keats, 13-19 January 1818: *Letters of Keats*, vol.1, p.204.

against *Sleep and Poetry*, contemptuously accusing Keats of failing to comprehend Pope's poetry and, consequently, seeking to desecrate his legacy. This 'youthful poet', Lockhart complained, 'passes very naturally into a long strain of foaming abuse against a certain class of English Poets, whom, with Pope at their head, it is much the fashion with the ignorant unsettled pretenders of the present time to undervalue'.⁹¹⁶ Lockhart's criticism of Keats should not be read as a blanket dismissal of all contemporary poetry; he acknowledges the 'high order' of some of it.⁹¹⁷ And he continues: 'although Pope was not a poet of the same high order with some who are now living, yet, to deny his genius' (as, Lockhart imagines, Keats does) 'is just about as absurd as to dispute that of Wordsworth, or to believe in that of Hunt'.⁹¹⁸ Lockhart launches into an *ad hominem* attack on Keats, averring that, 'Above all things, it is most pitiably ridiculous to hear men, of whom their country will always have reason to be proud, reviled by uneducated and flimsy striplings, who are not capable of understanding...their merits'.⁹¹⁹ By referring to Keats as 'flimsy' Lockhart is, of course, mocking him in his own idiom, Keats having written of Pope's style of poetry that it was 'Mark'd with most flimsy mottos' (*Sleep and Poetry*, l.205). Lockhart finds it both objectionable and preposterous that a poet who speaks what he calls the 'jargon of Cockneys' should 'presume to talk with contempt of some of the most exquisite spirits the world ever produced'.⁹²⁰

During the early part of the nineteenth century, Marcus Tomalin argues, Pope completed his transition from being one poet among others, to the status of full-blown cultural icon: he came to symbolise the very 'world-view that [wa]s threatened with

⁹¹⁶ Z. [John Gibson Lockhart], 'Cockney School of Poetry, No.IV', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 3.17 (August, 1818), pp.519-524, p.520.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.520.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.520.

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.520.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid*, p.521.

destabilisation by the rising Regency generation'.⁹²¹ The words 'threatened' and 'destabilisation' imply a situation of chronic insecurity, perhaps reflected in the outpourings of literary commentators like Lockhart. My argument here has been that for poets of this period, on the other hand, Pope continued to be approached primarily *as a poet*; one whose work should be evaluated according to its own aesthetic merits, rather than as part of any broader political agenda. Hazlitt, for one, insisted that any praise or blame of poetry relate to its intrinsic qualities alone: in 'A Letter to William Gifford' (1819; Gifford was editor of the *Quarterly Review* between 1809 and 1824), he rebukes his correspondent, 'Your praise or blame has nothing to do with the merits of a work, but with the party to which the writer belongs'.⁹²² Hunt, for another, complained in *The Examiner* (9 June 1822) of critics who 'dare not say a word till they know a man's connexions and opinions', so much so that if a poet is 'not of the true cast, they cannot discover his poetry'.⁹²³ For those of such bent, Hazlitt chides, 'The question is not "Has he genius?" but "Is he one of us?"'.⁹²⁴ Hazlitt and Hunt were not alone, among writers of the early nineteenth century, in wishing to move beyond the rather dreary confines of Pope as cultural signifier, in order to make a more even-handed assessment of the 'merits' of Pope's poetry, and the 'genius' of its author.

As an examination of the so-called Pope controversy establishes, this debate was hardly one-sided: Pope had detractors, as well as supporters; there were those who compared him unfavourably, rather than reverentially, against contemporary pretenders. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, the question of Pope's poetic reputation was still a vexed one. John Clare, for example, was bemused, on reading Pope's *Works*, as to why it should be that Pope's status as a poet was so often placed at issue. In a fragment of writing, dating from some point between 1825 and 1837, Clare expresses himself puzzled by what he regards

⁹²¹ Tomalin, *Romanticism and Linguistic Theory*, p.136.

⁹²² Hazlitt, *Selected Writings of Hazlitt*, vol.5, p.344.

⁹²³ Hunt, 'Letters to the Readers of The Examiner. No.3—On the Quarterly Review', *The Examiner* 753 (9 June 1822), pp.355-357, p.356.

⁹²⁴ *Ibid*, p.356.

as the false and absurd caricature of Pope presented by critics: ‘I have just finished reading the works of Pope’, he reports, ‘& I am astonished at the false position of criticism & taste that I have read about him’.⁹²⁵ Endorsing Johnson’s position, Clare can hardly believe that ‘it was even doubted by some whether they should call him a poet or no poet at all—if he is no poet where are we to look for one’.⁹²⁶ Pope, declares Clare, ‘has written a great deal of verse & it appears to me to be uniformly excellent & therefore I should not only contend that he is a poet but a great poet’.⁹²⁷ Indeed, Pope’s ‘uniform excellence’, Clare speculates, ‘has been one of the reasons that has contributed to the false taste & false criticisms about him’.⁹²⁸

There are:

...few or no shadows in his sunshine[;] everything seems written well & when he writes better than well[,] there being no foil to set off the beauty[,] no shadow to throw out the light[,] readers do not see them & not giving themselves the trouble to look further[,] they set him down in their doubts & not in their understanding as a doubtful writer & not a Poet—⁹²⁹

‘[T]hus’, he deduces, ‘come...the absurdities that we see constantly springing up among the weeds of criticism—at least I know not otherwise to account for it—it is to me an unaccountable folly—’.⁹³⁰

Hazlitt discusses the Lake Poets alongside Pope in his essay ‘On Envy (A Dialogue)’, included in *The Plain Speaker*.⁹³¹ Here, to illustrate and support his arguments, Hazlitt juxtaposes, without explicit reference, quotations from contemporary writers with ones from Pope. He refers, for example, to a line from ‘The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere’ in the 1798 edition of Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*, substituting ‘His look made the still air cold’ for Coleridge’s ‘Her flesh makes the still air cold’ (l.191).⁹³² And, on the

⁹²⁵ Clare, *Prose of Clare*, p.222.

⁹²⁶ Ibid, pp.222-223.

⁹²⁷ Ibid, p.223.

⁹²⁸ Ibid, p.223.

⁹²⁹ Ibid, p.223.

⁹³⁰ Ibid, pp.222-223.

⁹³¹ The dialogue was with the painter James Northcote (1746–1831). Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker: Opinions on Books, Men, and Things*, 2 vols. (London, 1826).

⁹³² Hazlitt, *Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.235.

following page, Hazlitt refers to Sir Walter Scott as ‘The wisest, meanest of mankind’; Pope’s original line, apropos Francis Bacon, is taken from *An Essay on Man*: ‘The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind’ (ep.4, l.282).⁹³³ Although Hazlitt might have been writing for a relatively sophisticated audience, the fact he does not give references for these quotations suggests that he believed his inference would be readily understood.

One of Hazlitt’s points is that certain phrases will become hackneyed, irrespective of the intentions of their authors; another, that Pope was far from alone in falling prey to (what some would have conceived of as) his own over-popularity. Not just Pope, but various other writers, had suffered this fate. In *The Spirit of the Age*, Hazlitt opens his essay on Sir Walter Scott by asserting that ‘SIR WALTER SCOTT is undoubtedly the most popular writer of the age’.⁹³⁴ Yet Scott’s ‘legendary’ status had led others to imitate him and, in Hazlitt’s contention, while ‘Sir Walter may, indeed, surfeit us: his imitators make us sick!’.⁹³⁵ Hazlitt’s use, in *The Plain Speaker*, of a quotation from Pope to epitomise Scott seems to indicate that he discerns a parallel between the reception and appropriation of the latter and that of the former.

Hazlitt’s description of the damage the mimicry of insipid imitators has done to Scott’s reputation—‘it is not the excellence of that fine writer that we are tired of, or revolt at, but vapid imitations or catch-penny repetitions of himself’—serves well, in other words, to explain Pope’s fortunes at the hands of critics of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries: Pope himself does not tire or disgust, but endless bland and mercenary repetitions and imitations of him do.⁹³⁶ The very prevalence of such derivative efforts, Hazlitt believes, ‘has an obvious tendency to...lessen...instead of increasing our admiration’.⁹³⁷ ‘It seems to be an evidence’, he writes, ‘that there is no difficulty in the task’ of producing Popean

⁹³³ Ibid, vol.1, p.236.

⁹³⁴ Hazlitt, ‘Sir Walter Scott’, *The Spirit of the Age*, pp.129-156, p.130.

⁹³⁵ Ibid, p.140.

⁹³⁶ Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.249.

⁹³⁷ Ibid, vol.1, p.249.

poetry.⁹³⁸ This is to be regretted, since readers ‘have not been used to look upon works of genius as of the *fungus* tribe’; it is difficult to lend credence to ‘a superiority of genius’ that ‘works without consciousness or effort, executes the labour of a life in a few weeks, writes faster than the public can read, and scatters the rich materials of thought and feeling like so much chaff’.⁹³⁹

‘Genius’, thus conceived, is no longer special, rare or otherworldly; instead, it is diluted, quotidian, even common. ‘Imitators’, as Hazlitt’s Northcote has it in ‘On Envy’, ‘do all the mischief, and bring real genius into disrepute’.⁹⁴⁰ As Hazlitt had earlier said of Scott in *The Spirit of the Age*, Pope’s reputation was clouded by ‘a surfeit of imitations’, and this was ‘in some measure an excuse for those who have endeavoured to disparage Pope’.⁹⁴¹ ‘Poetry, in the hands of a set of mechanic scribblers’, as Northcote explains, ‘had become such a tame, mawkish thing, that we could endure it no longer, and our impatience of the abuse of a good thing transferred itself to the original source’.⁹⁴² It was, in effect, such a phenomenon, of the transferral of indignation, ‘which enabled Wordsworth and the rest to raise up a new school (or to attempt it) on the ruins of Pope; because a race of writers had succeeded him without one particle of his wit, sense, and delicacy, and the world were tired of their everlasting *sing-song* and *namby-pamby*’.⁹⁴³ So ‘disgusted’ were people ‘at hearing the faults of Pope (the part most easily imitated)’—by which Northcote means rhyme—‘cried up as his greatest excellence’, that they ‘were willing to take refuge from such nauseous cant in any novelty’.⁹⁴⁴

I would wish to adopt Northcote’s summary, here, of the perils imitation poses for a poet’s legacy. One facet of my argument in this thesis has been to point up how certain

⁹³⁸ Ibid, vol.1, p.249.

⁹³⁹ Ibid, vol.1, p.249.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid, vol.1, p.248.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid, vol.1, p.248. Cf. Hazlitt, ‘Sir Walter Scott’, *The Spirit of the Age*, p.140.

⁹⁴² Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.248.

⁹⁴³ Ibid, vol.1, p.248.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid, vol.1, p.248.

writers in the century after Pope's death reacted not so much against Pope himself but, rather, against the 'nauseous' over-saturation of Popean poetry caused by the 'race of writers [who] had succeeded' and imitated him.⁹⁴⁵

Despite taking issue with much of the 'trash' of Byron's *Letters to Murray*, Hazlitt agrees with Byron about the detrimental and dividing effect of 'nauseous cant' in contemporary England. 'The truth is', Byron reckoned, 'that in these days the grand "*primum mobile*" of England is *cant*', words which, Hazlitt thought, 'should be written in letters of gold, as the testimony of a lofty poet to a great moral truth, and we can hardly have a quarrel with the writer of them'.⁹⁴⁶ One particular object of Byron's ire was Bowles' *Invariable Principles of Poetry* (1819) which, he considered, contained a 'hysterical horror of poor Pope'.⁹⁴⁷ Bowles's dogmatism, as reflected, for example, in his response to Thomas Campbell—'If you agree with me', on various principles about the intrinsic hierarchy of what is 'poetical', 'it is all I meant to say; if not, we differ, and always shall, on the principles of poetical *criticism*'—stands in contrast with the more subtle, reflective, way in which the writers I have discussed engaged with Pope's poetry.⁹⁴⁸

Cowper, Wordsworth, and Hazlitt were not alone in identifying as detrimental to the literary health of the nation not Pope or his poetry, but a kind of hysteria that had developed out of it, which had narrowed the horizons of subsequent poets. For Southey, 'The beneficial

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid, vol.1, pp.248-249.

⁹⁴⁶ Byron, *Letter to **** * [John Murray]*, p.16. Hazlitt, 'Pope, Lord Byron, and Mr. Bowles', *The London Magazine* 3.18 (June, 1821), p.598. Hazlitt quotes the whole of the following passage on p.598: 'The truth is, that in these days the grand "*primum mobile*" of England is *cant*; *cant* political, *cant* poetical, *cant* religious, *cant* moral; but always *cant*, multiplied through all the varieties of life. It is the fashion, and while it lasts will be too powerful for those who can only exist by taking the tone of the time. I say *cant*, because it is a thing of words, without the smallest influence upon human actions; the English being no wiser, no better, and much poorer, and more divided amongst themselves, as well as far less moral, than they were before the prevalence of this verbal decorum'.

⁹⁴⁷ Byron, *Letter to **** * [John Murray]*, p.16.

⁹⁴⁸ Bowles, *The Invariable Principles of Poetry: in a Letter Addressed to Thomas Campbell, Esq; Occasioned by Some Critical Observations in his Specimens of British Poets, Particularly Relating to the Poetical Character of Pope* (London, 1819), p.29.

influence of [Pope's] works on the taste and literature of the nation may be questioned', because he:

...so familiarized his countrymen with the mechanism of verse; he supplied them with such a store of commonplace images and epithets; he coined such a variety of convenient expressions, that the very facility of versification seems to have prevented the effusions of genius, and the redundancy of poetical phrases to have superseded all originality of language.⁹⁴⁹

For this reason, 'The tune, indeed, which he set, every poetizer, whether man, woman, or child, has been singing ever since'; and though 'we are still referred to him as the perfect Poet', the 'School which Pope had perfected died with him'.⁹⁵⁰ We should note, however, that Southey's assessment of the baleful legacy of Pope's 'School' did not inhibit him from including extracts from Pope among his *Specimens*.⁹⁵¹

Hazlitt observed that 'A bigotted and exclusive spirit is real blindness to all excellence but our own, or that of some particular school or sect', with particular reference to 'the *Lake School*' and their 'envy' of Pope.⁹⁵² For Hazlitt, such envy was 'not unnatural' or malicious, but 'begins only with the natural limits of their tastes and feelings'.⁹⁵³ Indeed, the *Lake School*'s antipathy against Pope says more about them than it does him; it is not that they 'are unwilling to allow merit', but that they 'are unable to perceive it':

Mr. Wordsworth, Mr. Coleridge, and Mr. Southey have no feeling for the excellence of Pope, or Goldsmith, or Gray—they do not enter at all into their merits, and on that account it is that they deny, proscribe, and envy them.⁹⁵⁴

Hazlitt proceeds to generalise: '*Incredulus Odi*'—'I disbelieve and therefore detest' from Horace's *Ars Poetica*⁹⁵⁵—'is the explanation here, and in all such cases'.⁹⁵⁶ Samuel

⁹⁴⁹ Southey, *Specimens of the Later English Poets*, vol.1, pp.xxx-xxxii.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid, vol.1, p.xxxi.

⁹⁵¹ Southey includes two extracts; *Epistle To Miss Blount* and *To Mrs. M. B. on her Birth-Day* (*Specimens of the Later English Poets*, vol.2, pp.10-14). This seems a churlishly small representation of Pope's works; particularly if one considers that Southey also includes two specimens from Mary Mon[c]k—a person who wrote during 'the dark age of English poetry' (Southey, *Specimens*, vol.1, p.xxix)—whose one volume of poetry, *Marinda*, was published posthumously by her father in 1716 (see Southey, *Specimens*, vol.1, pp.176-178).

⁹⁵² Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.241.

⁹⁵³ Ibid, vol.1, p.241.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid, vol.1, p.241.

Johnson had used the same Latin tag, '*Incredulus Odi*', in his 'Life of Gray', to explain contemporary criticism of *The Bard* (1757).⁹⁵⁷ Here, Hazlitt uses it with particular reference to Wordsworth, for whom 'gliding verse', 'brilliant diction', and 'the fine turn of thought in Pope...have no charms'.⁹⁵⁸ Wordsworth 'has no faculty in his mind to which these qualities of poetry address themselves'.⁹⁵⁹ Accordingly, Hazlitt does not consider Wordsworth's apparent distaste for Pope to arise from 'an oppressive, galling sense' of Pope's merits, or 'a burning envy to rival them, and shame that he cannot', but from the incommensurability of his understanding of poetry and that of Pope. Even 'if he could', Wordsworth 'would not' write like Pope, because he 'has no more ambition to write couplets like Pope, than to turn a barrel-organ'.⁹⁶⁰ Hazlitt here plays on Coleridge's condemnation, in *Biographia Literaria*, that modern poetry has been 'mechanized...into a barrel-organ'.⁹⁶¹ This lack of sympathy with Pope's verse, this absence of ambition to emulate it, infects, Hazlitt suggests, Wordsworth's response to it in his literary criticism:

He has no pleasure in such poetry, and therefore he has no patience with others that have. The enthusiasm that they feel and express on the subject seems an effect without a cause, and puzzles and provokes the mind accordingly.⁹⁶²

Perhaps understandably, the singularity and originality of Wordsworth's own poetic perspective limits and 'narrow[s]' his appreciation for the poetry of others; 'Whatever does not fall in strictly with' his understanding of good poetry 'he accounts no better than a delusion, or a play upon words'.⁹⁶³

⁹⁵⁵ Johnson, *The Lives of the Poets: A Selection*, eds. Roger Lonsdale and John Mullan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.523.

⁹⁵⁶ Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.241.

⁹⁵⁷ Johnson, 'Life of Gray', *Lives of the Poets*, vol.4, p.182.

⁹⁵⁸ Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.241.

⁹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.242.

⁹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.242.

⁹⁶¹ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol.1, p.38. See chapter two.

⁹⁶² Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.242.

⁹⁶³ *Ibid*, vol.1, p.242.

In Hazlitt's imagined dialogue with Northcote, the latter alleges that Hazlitt himself is 'altogether' 'mistake[n]', and proceeds to argue, Byron-like, that the only 'acting principle in their minds is an inveterate selfishness or desire of distinction'.⁹⁶⁴ Byron had earlier referred to critics, in the mould of Bowles in *Invariable Principles of Poetry*, as 'envious destroyers of the classic temple of our predecessor'.⁹⁶⁵ 'The attempt of the poetical populace of the present day to obtain an ostracism against Pope is', Byron believes, 'easily accounted for'; poets are 'fighting for life', and if Pope 'maintains his station, they will reach their own by falling'.⁹⁶⁶ Pope is 'a Grecian temple of the purest architecture', while anti-Popeans 'are not contented with their own grotesque edifice'.⁹⁶⁷ And they will not be content 'unless they destroy the prior and purely beautiful fabric which preceded, and which shames them and theirs for ever and ever'.⁹⁶⁸

By adumbrating his own theory that 'Ostracism is not unnatural', Hazlitt is thus explicitly engaging with Byron's investigation into the reasons for 'the present day...ostracism against Pope'.⁹⁶⁹ Northcote, on the other hand, is self-consciously aligning himself with Byron; he repeats, for example, a story that Byron had used in *Letter to [John Murray]*.⁹⁷⁰ Hence, Northcote disparages the Lake School who, in his words, 'see that a particular kind of excellence has been carried to its height—a height that they have no hope of arriving at—the road is stopped up; they must therefore strike into a different path'.⁹⁷¹ Less excusably, they also, 'in order to divert the public mind and draw attention to

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid, vol.1, p.242.

⁹⁶⁵ Byron, *Letter to **** * [John Murray]*, p.46.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid, p.45.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid, p.45.

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid, p.45.

⁹⁶⁹ Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.241; Byron, *Letter to **** * [John Murray]*, p.45.

⁹⁷⁰ Byron had written that 'Goldsmith envied not only the puppets for their dancing, and broke his shins in the attempt at rivalry, but was seriously angry because two pretty women received more attention than he did. *This is envy*' (Byron, *Letter to **** * [John Murray]*, p.40). Northcote claims likewise that 'Goldsmith was jealous even of beauty in the other sex. When the people at Amsterdam gathered round the balcony to look at the Miss Hornecks, he grew impatient, and said peevishly, "There are places where I also am admired"' (Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.238).

⁹⁷¹ Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.242.

themselves,...affect to decry the old models, and overturn what they cannot rival'.⁹⁷² Because they 'know they cannot write like Pope' and 'would be only imitators if they did', 'they consequently strive to gain an original and equal celebrity by singularity and affectation'.⁹⁷³ Northcote contends that the Lake School's 'simplicity is not natural to them', but is the result of their determination *not* to imitate Pope; it reflects their 'disappointed vanity' at being unable to write like Pope.⁹⁷⁴

Hazlitt's language in 'On Envy', and in particular, the way he handles the question of how to reinvent poetry, which was widely supposed already to have reached superlative heights, calls to mind several of the writers I discussed earlier in this thesis. His claim, for example, that poets 'must therefore strike into a different path' echoes Dryden's exhortation that poets should forge new 'walks' or else 'not...write at all'.⁹⁷⁵ Similarly, his Northcote reiterates Cowper's assessment—that 'unless we could imitate' Pope well 'we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to...weaken all we write'.⁹⁷⁶

Wordsworth himself had spoken of 'the dangers of emulation': his biographer nephew reported that 'Mr. Wordsworth thinks that envy is too likely to go along with this, and therefore would hold it to be unsafe'.⁹⁷⁷ 'There must always be a danger of incurring the passion of vanity by emulation' of other people, and so one should 'strive after conformity to that excellence which we never can surpass, never even by a great distance attain to'.⁹⁷⁸ The only comparison worth making, in other words, is between oneself and God: 'I felt very early

⁹⁷² Ibid, vol.1, p.242.

⁹⁷³ Ibid, vol.1, pp.242-243.

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid, vol.1, p.243.

⁹⁷⁵ Dryden, *Of Dramatick Poesie*, p.65. Hazlitt is also playing with Dryden's essay *Of Dramatick Poesie* in the opening of 'On Envy': Dryden had written, 'But it is to raise envy to the living, to compare them with the dead' (Dryden, *Of Dramatick Poesie*, p.64), Hazlitt turns this on its head to suggest, rather ambiguously, that he 'used' to have 'a theory about Envy' that 'we were not envious of the dead, because their merit was established beyond the reach of cavil or contradiction; whereas we are jealous and uneasy at sudden and upstart popularity' (Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.231).

⁹⁷⁶ Cowper to Joseph Johnson, 15 January 1781: *Letters and Prose of Cowper*, vol.1, p.433.

⁹⁷⁷ Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, vol.2, pp.471-472.

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid, vol.2, p.472.

the force of the words, “Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect”⁹⁷⁹ Wordsworth’s idiosyncratic conception of excellence is disparagingly dismissed as ‘affect[ed]’ ‘singularity’ by Northcote.⁹⁸⁰ In this, Northcote accords with Francis Jeffrey’s criticism, in the first edition of the *Edinburgh Review*, of the new ‘sect of poets, that has established itself in this country within these ten or twelve years’, who ‘are *dissenters* from the established systems in poetry and criticism’, and whose ‘most distinguishing symbol’, in his view, ‘is undoubtedly an affectation of great simplicity’.⁹⁸¹ Such ‘*dissenters*’, moreover, ‘constitute, at present, the most formidable conspiracy that has lately been formed against sound judgement in matters poetical’.⁹⁸² Their poetry ‘consists...in a very great degree, in the positive and *bona fidē* rejection of art altogether’.⁹⁸³ Jeffrey explicitly states that the ‘feeble, low, and disjointed’ poetry of the Lake School ‘would teach us to undervalue’ both Milton and Pope.⁹⁸⁴

Northcote reverses the Lake School’s notion that Pope’s dazzling style blinded other readers to his faults—Wordsworth, for example, argued that Pope ‘dazzled’ and so ‘bewitched the nation’.⁹⁸⁵ Instead, Northcote asserts that it is the Lake School themselves who are ‘dazzled’ by Pope, and so they ‘wilfully shut their eyes’ to his ‘beauty...splendour...strength’.⁹⁸⁶

Northcote seems to sneer at poets of the Lake School, for wanting to branch away from their predecessors, but this, it might be thought, is not such an unusual desire in an artist. As Dryden appreciated in his essay *Of Dramatick Poesie*, ‘*præteritoe eo in quo eminere non possumus, aliquid in quo nitamur, conquirimus*’: ‘foregoing that in which we are

⁹⁷⁹ Ibid, vol.2, p.472. Wordsworth is referring to Matthew 5:48.

⁹⁸⁰ Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.243.

⁹⁸¹ Jeffrey, ‘Review of *Thalaba, the Destroyer: A Metical Romance*. By Robert Southey’, *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* 1.1 (October, 1802) pp.63-83, pp.63-64.

⁹⁸² Ibid, p.64.

⁹⁸³ Ibid, p.65.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid, p.69.

⁹⁸⁵ Wordsworth, ‘Essay, Supplementary to the Preface’, *Prose of Wordsworth*, vol.3, p.72.

⁹⁸⁶ Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.243.

unable to distinguish ourselves, we look for something else to strive at'.⁹⁸⁷ As with Byron, however, Northcote's real complaint is not the Lake School's pretensions to originality; it is that, in their attempts to justify departing from Pope, the Lake Poets have unfairly belittled him.

Thomas Warton comments in his edition of Milton—in relation to Milton's allusions to other poets—that 'The best poets imperceptibly adopt phrases and formularies from the writings of their contemporaries or immediate predecessors'.⁹⁸⁸ 'This, no doubt, is true', noted Coleridge, in the margin of his copy of Warton's book.⁹⁸⁹ But good poets also do more than simply 'adopt' the writings of their predecessors 'imperceptibly'; they also play with and challenge them. For the writers I have discussed in this thesis, imitation is not the sincerest form of flattery, instead they engage with Pope's poetry in a much more complex way.

Hazlitt concludes his section on the Lake School's view of Pope by underscoring his notion that Pope's and the Lake School's poetic visions are inherently incompatible:

I do not think there is any point of sympathy between Pope and the *Lake School*: on the contrary, I know there is an antipathy between them.⁹⁹⁰

Assessments such as that of Hazlitt have cemented an idea that the poetry of the Lake School is diametrically opposed to Pope's. Yet Hazlitt's professed 'know[ledge]' of this 'antipathy' should be treated with caution. Wordsworth, as we have seen, thought Hazlitt's characterisation of his own understanding of Pope 'Monstrous'.⁹⁹¹ In conversation with William Hazlitt, a mutual friend, 'turning short round upon' Charles Lamb', remarked 'I

⁹⁸⁷ Dryden, *Dryden: Poetry, Prose and Plays*, ed. Douglas Grant (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1952), p.407. Lisiideus quotes Velleius Paterculus.

⁹⁸⁸ The opening of Milton's *Lycidas*, 'Yet once more, O ye Laurels', for example, alludes to the elegy on the death of the Countess of Pembroke which opens 'Yet once againe, my Muse' (Thomas Warton, ed., *Poems upon Several Occasions, English, Italian, and Latin, with Translations, by John Milton. With Notes Critical and Explanatory, and Other Illustrations* (London, 1785), p.2).

⁹⁸⁹ Coleridge, *A Book I Value: Selected Marginalia*, ed. H. J. Jackson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁹⁹⁰ Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, vol.1, p.244.

⁹⁹¹ Field, *Barron Field's Memoirs of Wordsworth*, p.37, f.43.

thought...that you of the Lake School did not like Pope?', to which Lamb responded 'Not like Pope! My dear sir, you must be under a mistake—I can read him over and over for ever!'.⁹⁹²

I have shown in this thesis that there are, in fact, many points of sympathy between Pope and his poetic successors. I have also demonstrated Pope's centrality to the poetic development of those who follow him—even in poets whose response to him was knotty.

T. S. Eliot remarked that 'the man who cannot enjoy Pope as poetry probably understands no poetry'.⁹⁹³ There are, perhaps, many ways that Pope's successors do not enjoy Pope as a poetical figure—particularly the impression he left on his insipid imitators. Nevertheless, Warton, Cowper, Wordsworth, and Keats, all agree that Pope is a great poet, and they use Pope's poetry as a tool for developing their own understandings of what constitutes good poetry, and how they hope to write it. For Pope, 'posterity would see at least, if I was no good poet'.⁹⁹⁴ Posterity has indeed seen whether Pope was no good poet; and not even those who overtly criticise aspects of his poetry can deny Pope's poetical genius.

⁹⁹² William Hazlitt, 'Of Persons one would have Wished to have Seen', *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 16.61 (January, 1826), pp.32-41, p.36.

⁹⁹³ T. S. Eliot, 'Introduction' to Ezra Pound's *Selected Poems*, p.xxi.

⁹⁹⁴ Pope to Caryll, 19 March 1713/1714: *Correspondence of Pope*, vol.1, p.215.

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