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DRYDEN VERSUS POPE: A CONTROVERSY IN LETTERS TO
THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE, 1789-1791

By

Gretchen M. Foster

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ABSTRACT

DRYDEN VERSUS POPE: A CONTROVERSY IN LETTERS TO THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE, 1789-1791

By

Gretchen M. Foster

In 1789 British poetess, Anna Seward entered into a debate about the relative merits of Pope and Dryden with an obscure organist and lover of poetry, Joseph Weston. Weston had written "An Essay of the Superiority of Dryden's Versification over that of Pope and of the Moderns," in which he deplored the pernicious effect Pope's style had had on English poetry. He called on his readers to join him in restoring "to Drydenical Purity that Pierian Spring which Pope corrupted, and which his more daring imitators have Poisoned!" (WA xxiv). Anna Seward, a great admirer of Pope, challenged Weston's thesis and wrote a long letter to The Gentleman's Magazine refuting his charges. Seward's and Weston's paper war captured the reading public's notice. Literary amateurs, Cambridge dons, the renowned and the unknown, the young and the old followed, joined and finally wearied of the flood of words this two-year conflict brought forth. Seventeen correspondents, in addition to Seward and Weston, wrote one or more letters to the GM on the subject.

This dissertation is a critical edition of those letters. In the introduction, I discuss the major comparisons of Dryden and Pope made by earlier critics such as John Dennis, George

Shiels, Joseph Warton, and Samuel Johnson. I discuss how the concept of sublimity, which Warton insisted was the sole criterion of great poetry, changed throughout the eighteenth century, and I trace the development of the nature/art and wit/judgment paradigms on which critics tended to base their comparisons of Dryden and Pope. I outline the positions of the various controversialists and give pertinent background information about those whose identities we know. I describe The Gentleman's Magazine and discuss the policies of its editor John Nichols regarding poetry and letters from readers.

The issues debated included Pope's character as well as his poetry. I discuss these in some detail, especially the issue of poetic diction, which Weston accused Pope of abusing. The controversy made no lasting critical impression, but it does give us a close and fascinating look at eighteenth century literary culture in action at a time when poetry was about to undergo a major revolution.

To Arthur Sherbo
mentor, colleague and friend,
who made this project possible.

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For his patience, I wish to thank my husband, Richard Foster.

John Oldershaw and Hugh Wade, Fellows of Emmanuel College,
wagered a bottle of wine "That the dispute about Pope and
Dryden was not a fortnight ago."

Emmanuel College Wager Book
Cambridge University, January 10, 1792

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INTRODUCTION

The Nobel laureate in physics, Werner Heisenberg, has written that there are two kinds of scientists--the great theorists and those who do the practical work of making the theories work. To this effect he recalls what Schiller said about Kant: "'When kings go a-building, wagoners have more work.'"¹ We might say the same thing about literary criticism. An Aristotle or a Coleridge lays claim to new theoretical territory, but without the wagoners who construct the interpretations, auxiliary theories, and close readings, or who describe and analyze historical and social contexts, these territories would remain remote and barren.

When, in 1789, Anna Seward and Joseph Weston entered into a debate about the merits of Alexander Pope and John Dryden, they became minor wagoners in the province of educated literary taste. Their extended paper war captured the reading public's notice. Literary amateurs, Cambridge dons, the renowned and the unknown, the young and the old followed, joined, and finally wearied of the flood of words their two-year conflict called forth. Tedious and trivial as it may seem to the twentieth-century reader, the Seward-Weston controversy touches on significant issues in eighteenth-century poetic theory and contributes substantially to our understanding of polite literary taste just before

¹ Physics and Beyond (NY: Harper, 1971) 22.

the Romantic revolution.

Background of the Controversy

In the closing decades of the eighteenth century, Joseph Weston, an obscure organist in the small town of Solihull just southeast of Birmingham, translated into English a Latin poem, Philotoxi Ardenae (The Woodmen of Arden, 1788), by Birmingham attorney and amateur poet John Morfitt. Weston rendered Morfitt's poem first in blank verse, then in heroic couplets "in the manner of Dryden."¹ He prefaced the translation with "An Essay on the Superiority of Dryden's Versification over that of Pope and of the Moderns." Deploring the pernicious effect Pope's style had had on English poetry, he called on his readers to join him in restoring "to Drydenical Purity that Pierian Spring which Pope corrupted, and which his more daring Imitators have Poisoned!" (xxiv).

Anna Seward, a poetess and lady of letters who lived with her father in Lichfield, Samuel Johnson's birthplace, had met Weston during the winter of 1788 and found him to be a bit odd in appearance and mannerisms but also "a mine" of "wit, intelligence, and poetic genius," with "taste and real accuracy in criticism" which "enable him to cut the rich ore they produce brilliant."² Word that Joseph Weston had translated Morfitt's poem reached Anna Seward later that

¹ WA, title page.

² Letters 2:92.

year, and in December she wrote to him saying:

I long to see your two translations of the Latin poem on the Woodmen of Arden, being fully conscious of Mr. Morfitt's responsibility for all the classic excellence you tell me it possesses. I wish every translator of beautiful Greek, Latin, and Italian poetry, knew as well as yourself how to transfer its gold, unalloyed by any dross in the process (2:206).

By January, 1789, she had seen the poem and preface and wrote to Weston:

As to my anger, whatever my wonder may be at your strong prejudices in favour of my muse, and against the sweet Swan of Twickenham, anger is out of the question. It would be affectation, in the first instance, in the last injustice; for have you not a right to assert your own opinions, whatever they may be? I, however, devoutly wish, that, for your own sake and mine, you would greatly soften the hyperbole of your praise of me, and the warmth of your censure upon Pope, since there is such an inevitably large majority of opinions against yours in both instances (2:209-10).

In February, she wrote to thank Morfitt for the "elegant copy" of his poem with Weston's translations and preface. Here she began marshalling the objections to Weston's opinions on which she expanded in her initial long letter to the Gentleman's Magazine (GM), serialized in its April, May, and June, 1789, issues. "I admire our friend's genius," she began mildly,

but, in the same degree, do I lament the strength of his prejudices, and the errors of his system. They have betrayed him, through the preface to this work, into mistakes the most glaring, and into injustice to the illustrious band of poets, that, with redoubled rays, have warmed the nation within the last half-century (2:238).

Two months later, the GM published the first installment of what it called her "Strictures on the Preface to the Woodmen of Arden." Her strictures ran to more than 2,700 words; the

controversy which they began lasted two years and drew letters from seventeen correspondents in addition to herself and Joseph Weston. During 1789 and 1790, each issue of the GM carried something about the controversy, if only a short note from Joseph Weston delaying his rebuttal because of illness. Many issues carried two or more letters. In all, the letters ran to some 30,000 words of reasoning and opinion, quotation and counter quotation, and heated attack, rebuttal, and rerebuttal.

Although the debate may not add a great deal to our critical understanding of Pope and Dryden, it introduces us to one sector of polite literary taste which existed only a few years before Wordsworth published his prefaces to the Lyrical Ballads in 1798 and 1800. The correspondents' discussion of such topics as poetic diction, sublimity, Pope's effect on poetry, and the state of poetry in the 1780s reveals no general sense that poetry is exhausted or that a major revolution is in the making. At the same time, it does show that the literati were thinking about the need for changes in poetry.

Although Wordsworth's prefaces provide a convenient end-of-the-century date for the revolution in poetry that the Romantics brought about, interest in the more private and emotive poetry of sensibility had been growing for at least fifty years. Anna Seward's list of eminent poets (Letter 1a, p. 5) of her generation contains the names of many who were writing such poetry: Gray, Thomson, Collins,

Akenside, Cowper, Burns, and Chatterton. And Weston, despite some legalistic joking about reserving his right to challenge "every mother's son of them," finds that the contents of Anna Seward's April letter "will give me no great trouble" (Letter 4, p. 26).

The debate between Anna Seward and Joseph Weston does not remain tidily within the neo-classical era in which literary historians normally place Dryden and Pope--Dryden as the innovator and Pope as the perfecter. It raises the essential question asked by readers in every generation and answered in as many ways as there are literary periods and interpreters: What is poetry, and who is the true poet? By the time this debate takes place, the literary taste and ideals which supported the neo-classical point of view were already history.¹

Yet both Dryden and Pope were still considered by many critics and readers to be among England's greatest poets. Pope's reputation, especially, continued to grow after his death and remained strong with many critics and readers through the end of the century despite the increasing support for the more private poetry of sensibility. In Pope and His Critics, W. L. MacDonald notes that editions of Pope's writings "swelled to [their] most impressive fortissimo" between 1751 and 1769.² The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature lists "Seventeen editions or issues of the poet's

¹ See Appendix A for my definition of neo-classical.

² (London: Dent, 1951) 264.

Works, besides separate pieces, making in all upwards of 130 volumes" for this period, and the "list is not necessarily complete." MacDonald observes that, despite Joseph Warton's two-volume Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope with its relegation of Pope to the second rank of poets, "within four years of the turn of the century, critical delirium at the height of frenzy shrieked the praises of Pope" (314).

In The Reputation and Writings of Alexander Pope, James Reeves disagrees with MacDonald's estimate of Pope's supremacy. He writes: "The notion that Pope was supreme. . . throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, and was only dethroned with the triumph of Romanticism has so often been repeated that it is still regarded as a truism,"¹ and one which ignores Warton's critical insights at midcentury and glosses over the extent to which Samuel Johnson had reservations about Pope. Reeves goes on to say, however, that "justice has never, so far as I know, been done to Warton," and that, although Johnson is not Pope's "unequivocal, rapturous admirer," "he is usually taken to be" just that (6, 12).

William MacClintock's Joseph Warton's Essay on Pope: A History of the Five Editions (1933), which Reeves apparently did not know, supports Reeves's contention that Pope's reputation was not supreme during the last half of the eighteenth century. MacClintock writes, "When the Essay

¹ (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976) 2, 12.

appeared in 1756, it made a decided impression--indeed, it almost created a sensation. It challenged the supremacy of Pope, whose reputation was still high. We shall see elsewhere that it was widely read and that the second volume was eagerly awaited."¹ MacClintock estimates "cautiously" that "between four and five thousand copies of the Essay must have been printed during Warton's lifetime" (16), that is, before 1800 when Warton died. This is a large edition by 18th-century standards.

Anna Seward's and Joseph Weston's debate mirrors this split in the assessment of Pope's reputation. It also indicates where the majority lay among those who read the GM. Miss Seward assumes she has opinion on her side, and Joseph Weston agrees. He anticipates that his objections to Pope's supremacy will meet with opposition:

I am not unaware that a Sentiment so unfavourable to most of my Contemporaries, and so opposite to Prejudices long received and obstinately retained, will, probably, be considered as the rash and romantic Assertion of a vain and presumptuous Innovator, and be treated with all the Severity usually exercised against Notions which are looked upon as heterodox.²

In the course of this debate Miss Seward, Weston, and all those who join in, touch on many of the major critical topics that eighteenth-century comparisons of Pope and Dryden usually brought up. To appreciate the context of their arguments we must examine these earlier comparisons.

¹ (North Carolina: U of NC Press, 1933) 4.

² Letter 9c, pp. 60-61. Weston quotes most of his Preface in this letter, so most references to his Preface will be to Letter 9c.

Previous Comparisons of Pope and Dryden

Comparing Pope and Dryden was a frequent critical activity during the eighteenth century. The two poets wrote in the same verse form and approached many of the same subjects from similar vantage points. As Pope said to Joseph Spence, "'I learned versification wholly from Dryden's works.'" ¹ Pope also followed Dryden's example in translating a major classical epic, in writing satire, and even in writing an ode to music. A glance at the footnotes to the Twickenham Works reveals how often he borrowed or echoed lines, phrases, and images from Dryden. The assiduous collector could no doubt add many more. Pope's poetry called out for comparison with Dryden's, and the critics were quick to oblige.

Dennis through Shiels (1711-1753)

The earliest comparison by a major critic was John Dennis's. A fine critic in many ways, and one who shared many of Pope's views about poetry, Dennis combined his legitimate insights into Pope's work with a violent personal antipathy.² He had believed himself attacked as the tyrannical and easily inflamed critic Appius in An Essay on Criticism (1711). Accordingly, he opened fire, calling it "a most notorious Instance of this depravity of Genius and Tast" which has

¹ Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, ed. James M. Osborn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 1:24.

² Maynard Mack discusses this in Life 178-9.

invaded English culture. Of Pope himself, he remarked, "there is a great deal of Venom in this little Gentleman's Temper....As there is no Creature in nature so venomous, there is nothing so stupid and so impotent as a hunch-back-d Toad."¹

Dennis went on to charge Pope with hypocrisy and impudence in pretending to praise Dryden while actually seeking to undermine him:

The appearing in Mr. Dryden's behalf now is too late. 'Tis like offering a Man's self for a Second, after the Principal has been whipp'd through the Lungs. Now Mr. Dryden is dead, he commends him with the rest of the World. But if this little Gentleman had been his Contemporary thirty Years ago, why then I can tell a very damn'd shape that Pride and Malice, and Folly would have appear'd in against Mr. Dryden (28).

Four years later, in a letter to Jacob Tonson, Dennis pursued this point more explicitly:

When I had the good Fortune to meet you in the City, it was with concern that I heard from you of the Attempt to lessen the Reputation of Mr. Dryden; and 'tis with Indignation that I have since learnt that that attempt has chiefly been carried on by small Poets, who ungratefully strive to eclipse the Glory of a great Man, from whom alone they derive their own faint Lustre. . . . But when I heard that that Attempt was in favour of little Pope, that diminutive of Parnassus and of humanity, 'tis impossible to express to what a height my Indignation and Disdain were rais'd.²

Dennis went on to express his admiration for Dryden,

whom I infinitely esteem'd when living for the Solidity of his Thought, for the Spring, the Warmth, and the beautiful Turn of it; for the Power, and Variety, and

¹John Dennis, Reflections Critical and Satyrical upon a Late Rhapsody, call'd, An Essay upon Criticism, 1711 (Yorkshire, England: Scolar Press, 1971) Preface and 26.

²E.N. Hooker, ed., The Critical Works of John Dennis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1939), 2:399-401. The following quotations are from that letter.

Fulness of his Harmony; for the Purity, the Perspicuity, the Energy of his Expression; and (whenever the following great Qualities are requir'd) for the Pomp and Solemnity and Majesty of his Style.

He then compared this portrait with his low estimate of Pope:

But Pope is the very reverse of all this: he scarce ever thought once solidly, but is an empty eternall babbler: and as his thoughts almost always are false or trifling, his expression is too often obscure, ambiguous, and uncleanly. He has indeed a smooth verse and a rhyming jingle, but he has no power or variety of harmony; but always the same dull cadence, and a continuall bagpipe drone. Mr. Dryden's expressions are always worthy of his thoughts: but Pope never speaks nor thinks at all; or, which is all one, his language is frequently as barbarous, as his thoughts are false.

As for Dryden's faults, Dennis declared, "Wherever Genius runs thro' a Work, I forgive its Faults, and where that is wanting no Beauties can touch me. Being struck by Mr. Dryden's Genius, I have no Eyes for his Errors; and I have no Eyes for his Enemies Beauties, because I am not struck by their Genius."

Dennis's adverse criticism of Pope ran to an extreme even for an era that did not soften its critical blasts. J. V. Guerinot has pointed out the "virulence" of Dennis's attack on Pope in the Reflections, coupled with the unusual number of inaccuracies in his quotations from Pope's Essay on Criticism. And of the letter to Tonson he says that this charge "is, as far as I know, unique."¹ This appears to have been so, both during Pope's lifetime, when adverse response was at its bitterest, and for some forty-five years afterwards, until Joseph Weston, possibly remembering

¹ Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope 1711-1744 (London: Methuen, 1969) xxviii, 5.

something of Dennis, made the same charge. ¹

Not all the early comparisons with Dryden were so unfavorable. When Pope published the first samples of his translation of the Iliad into heroic couplets, Joseph Addison compared them favorably with Dryden's Virgil.² Later, however, when Thomas Tickell published his translation of Book One of the Iliad, Addison apparently revised his estimate of Pope downward. If we can credit John Gay's roundabout intelligence, Addison "'said that Tickell's translation was the best that ever was in any language.'" ³ By this time, however, Pope had angered the Whiggish group that congregated around Addison at Button's Coffee House, and this reported opinion of Addison's reflects literary politics as much as it does literary criticism.

It was to be expected that various members of Addison's "little Senate" and its sympathizers would consistently compare Pope unfavorably to Dryden. A letter to Mist's Weekly Journal in June of 1728 (a month after The Dunciad appeared), signed by "W.A." and believed by Pope to be by "some or other of the Club of Theobald, Dennis, Moore, Concanen, Cooke," said:

The Model of his Poem seems copied from Mack-Flecknoe, and the Dispensary; but is as different from Dryden, if compared with that pointed Satyr, as it is below the admir'd and elegant Reflections, which are the Beauties of Garth. The smooth Numbers of the Dunciad are all

¹Letter 9c, pp. 57-58.

²Freeholder 40, Works of Joseph Addison, ed. Richard Hurd (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854) 5:48-49.

³The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958) 1:305.

that recommend it, nor has it any other Merit.¹

An anonymous letter to the Daily Journal, attributed to Dennis by his editor, E. N. Hooker, summarized the case against Pope and for Dryden:

In the Ode which the same Pantomimical Creature wrote upon St. Caecilia's Day, an Ode which was vainly and foolishly writ in Emulation of Mr. Dryden's Feast of Alexander, he has not the least Shadow of any of Mr. Dryden's great Qualities, neither of his Art, his Variety, his Passion, his Enthusiasm, or his Harmony. The very Numbers in Mr. Dryden's incomparable Ode, are themselves incomparable, and are always adapted and adjusted by that great Poet to his Passion and his Enthusiasm.²

Pope himself, as part of the critical apparatus for The Dunciad (A), presented "A Parallel of the Characters of Mr. Dryden and Mr. Pope, As drawn by certain of their Cotemporaries [sic]" (5:231-35). He collected similar opinions from hostile critics and grouped them under parallel headings. These critics had castigated Dryden and Pope for everything from their politics, religion, and morals to their smooth but empty verse, inept translations of Virgil and Homer, ignorance of classical languages, and misrepresentations to subscribers. The parallel concluded with an alphabetical list of names they had both been called, beginning with Ape and ending with Thing.

In presenting this "Parallel," Pope implied that to be insulted in the same way, and even with the same epithets, as Dryden was praise indeed. Pope's collection of insults also revealed how relative criticism could be. Yesterday's

¹ John Barnard, ed., Pope: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge, 1973) 212.

² Works 2:526.

sinner was today's saint. Dryden's contemporaries had charged that his "Genius did not appear in any thing more than his Versification" (5:232). A century later, Joseph Weston and his supporters, in charging Pope with the same flaw, pointed to Dryden's verse as the model of all that poetry should be.

Just as Pope's enemies consistently ranked him far below Dryden, so his sympathizers, especially his early biographers, while recognizing his debt to Dryden, typically ranked him above the older poet. William Ayre wrote that Pope "exceeded [Dryden] as well in the Copiousness of his Subject, as in the Sharpness of his Pen." Of their respective habits of writing and revision, Ayre was one of the earliest writers to note that Dryden was obliged

to write for his Bread. . .so that his Works were sometimes made publick in a Week after they were wrote, whereas Mr. Pope would keep a Piece Years by him, and have the Approbation of all whose Judgments he depended upon, before he would let the publick Eye pass over it.¹

A much more extended and significant comparison by Robert Shiels (one of Samuel Johnson's amanuenses for the Dictionary) appeared at mid-century, just a few years before the first volume of Joseph Warton's Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope. Shiels began by affirming that Pope

is allowed to have been one of the first rank amongst the poets of our nation, and to acknowledge the superiority of none but Shakespear, Milton, and Dryden. With the two former, it is unnatural to compare him, as their province in writing is so very different.²

¹Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Alexander Pope, Esq. (London, 1745) 1:274, 275.

²Shiels in Theophilus Cibber's Lives of the Poets of Great-Britain and Ireland (London, 1753) 5:247.

This left Dryden, with whom "there is a great similarity of writing, and a very striking coincidence of genius." He then compared Pope's and Dryden's versification and invention, together with their relative merits as satirists, lyric poets, and translators in order "to discover to whom the superiority is justly to be attributed, and to which of them poetry owes the highest obligations" (5:247, 248).

Like critics before and after him, Shiels found that, although Dryden had done much to smooth and polish English verse, Pope had done still more. Dryden's lines "with all their smoothness were often rambling, and expletives were frequently introduced to compleat his measures." Pope's genius was to make verse "compleatly musical" as well as "minutely correct." Shiels seemed to view this as a mixed blessing and wondered "whether the ear is not apt to be soon cloy'd with this uniformity of elegance, this sameness of harmony." (5:248, 249). Thirty-five years later, Joseph Weston and his adherents did more than wonder about this. John Morfitt spoke for the anti-Pope side when he asserted that Pope's "cuckoo notes disgust my ear; the interminable level tires; and I pant for hill and dale" (Letter 10, p. 68).

As Joseph Warton and Edward Young were to do a few years later, Shiels noted that "the grand characteristic of a poet is his invention, the surest distinction of a great genius." But, while Warton and Young would charge Pope with lack of imaginative invention, Shiels found that

nothing is so truly original as [Pope's] Rape of the

Lock, nor discovers so much invention. In this kind of mock-heroic, he is without a rival in our language, for Dryden has written nothing of the kind. His other work which discovers invention, fine designing, and admirable execution is his *Dunciad* (5:249).

Comparing Pope and Dryden as satirists, Shiels named Pope the superior because "his *Dunciad*; which, tho' built on Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe*, is yet so much superior, that in satiric writing, the Palm must justly be yielded to him. Even the "poignant strokes of satire" in Dryden's "*Absalom and Achitophel*" could not overbalance Pope's superiority in this genre.

When he considered their performances in lyric poetry, as exemplified in their odes on St. Cecilia's Day, Shiels gave Dryden the overwhelming superiority. Anna Seward would say much the same thing in two letters written at the beginning of the GM controversy, but not published as part of it.¹ Indeed, no eighteenth-century critic, no matter how partisan, ever suggested reversing the lyric ranking. For Shiels, superiority in lyric poetry categorically raised Dryden over Pope because "it hath been generally acknowledged that the Lyric is a more excellent kind of writing than the Satiric; and consequently he who excels in the most excellent species, must undoubtedly be esteemed the greatest poet" (5:249). Shiels based his judgment on the traditional classical and neo-classical idea of the hierarchy of genres, according to which the form itself determined the rank of the poetry. A poet who wrote in a lower form such as satire

¹ Letters 2:281, 324-25.

would generally rank lower than one who wrote in a higher form such as the lyric ode.

Such ranking by genre increasingly posed a problem for eighteenth-century critics in the face of new, not easily classified forms. For instance, Shiels called Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard" and the "Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady" "occasional pieces," although there were classical precedents for their forms in the verse epistle and elegy. He compared them with Dryden's Fables, which he said show "perhaps a greater variety," as well as a "great extent of invention, and a large compass of genius" (5:250), but he did not explain why he chose to compare these particular poems of Pope's with Dryden's Fables, which were not only different genres but translations of much longer works. Shiels tries to look beyond genre classifications, but he lacks the critical vocabulary to do so and falls back on such neo-classical generalities as "variety," "invention" and "genius."

In Pope's and Dryden's translations of Homeric and Virgilian epic, Shiels found it hard to elevate one poet over the other. He seemed to want to give Dryden the preference, but finally conceded that Pope "was the greatest translator." He was quick to add that Dryden's "dramatic works," to which Pope has nothing to oppose, "turn the ballance greatly in favour of Mr. Dryden" (5:251). His final comparison of the two took the same course as that which Samuel Johnson would

pursue some thirty years later:¹

Perhaps it may be true that Pope's works are read with more appetite, as there is greater evenness and correctness in them; but in perusing the works of Dryden the mind will take a wider range, and be more fraught with poetical ideas: We admire Dryden as the greater genius, and Pope as the most pleasing versifier (5:252).

Shiels's comparison highlighted the art versus nature and judgment versus wit paradigms of which eighteenth-century critics were so fond. In finding Pope's highly articulated and refined art inferior to Dryden's robust and varied poetry with its "poignant discoveries of wit" and its "general knowledge of the humours and characters of men," he extended to Dryden and Pope the popular comparison in which Homer was superior to Virgil and Shakespeare to Ben Jonson because the former had more nature and wit while the latter had more art and judgment.²

Three years after Shiels's comparison of Pope and Dryden appeared, Joseph Warton published the first volume of his two-volume Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope. He dedicated it to Edward Young, who shared many of his views about poetry and who, a few years later, published his own Conjectures on Original Composition.³ In his dedicatory letter to Young, Warton sounded the keynote of his criticism of Pope: "The sublime and the pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poesy. What is there transcendently sublime or pathetic in Pope?" (1:vi). In order to understand the the significance of this question, we must first examine what

¹For Johnson's comparison see pp. lxiv-lxxiii.

²These terms are discussed below, pp. liii-lxiv.

³Discussed at pp. li-lii.

the term sublime meant to critics and philosophers during the eighteenth century.

The Sublime in the Eighteenth Century

The concept of the sublime¹ evolved during the eighteenth century from a theory about elevated writing to a theory about human perception and imagination. For poets it changed from an objective goal which they might achieve through exercising and improving on their natural gifts to a subjective, somewhat mysterious, process which they, as poets, must inevitably undergo.

Samuel Johnson's definition of sublime epitomized the neo-classical view which dominated the early decades of the century. The sublime is "the grand or lofty style," and sublimity is "Loftiness of style or sentiment" (Dictionary). To illustrate this, he quoted Joseph Addison's definition: "'The sublime rises from the nobleness of thoughts, the magnificence of the words, or the harmonious and lively turns of the phrase; the perfect sublime arises from all three together.'" This definition emphasized the origin of the sublime in human nature and art--in elevated thought and elevated rhetoric. It derived from Longinus's Treatise on the Sublime, translations of which were becoming readily

¹For this discussion of the sublime, I am indebted to Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1960); Walter J. Hipple, The Beautiful, The Sublime and The Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois UP, 1957); and W. J. Bate, From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth Century England (NY: Harper, 1946.)

available in England in the early 1700s.

Longinus based the sublime on both nature and art. Nature bestowed "boldness and grandeur in the Thoughts" and "the power of raising the passions to a violent and even enthusiastic degree." Art accounted for how the sublime was expressed in writing through "a skilful application of figures. . . of sentiment and language"; "a noble and graceful manner of expression, which is not only to chuse out significant and elegant words, but also to adorn and embellish the stile, by the assistance of Tropes"; and "the Structure or composition of all the periods, in all possible dignity and grandeur."¹ The sublime which neo-classical writers derived from Longinus was an art of writing, supported by natural gifts. Longinus emphasized that, although nature bestowed the gifts, man could nurture them: "we ought to spare no pains to educate our souls to grandeur, and impregnate them with generous and enlarged ideas"(27). In the sublime, the man and his work became one, just as "bold Longinus. . . Is himself that great Sublime he draws" (EOC, 1:680).

Early in the century, John Dennis developed the subjective and emotional implications of Longinus's treatise into a theory of the sublime based entirely on what he called enthusiasm. This was no ordinary enthusiasm, but a passion that embraced the most intense feelings of desire, sorrow,

¹Longinus on the Sublime, trans. William Smith (Baltimore, 1810) 23-24.

terror, joy and awe. Such enthusiasm was evoked by religion and in that case led to transcendent ecstasy. Although Dennis did not distinguish the sublime from the beautiful, he attributed qualities to it, such as terror and horror, that led to its later separation.¹

Addison made such a separation, distinguishing the great (his term for the sublime) from both the uncommon and the beautiful. The sublime evoked the feeling of "a rude kind of Magnificence"² such as we feel in the vast works of nature like deserts, mountains, oceans, cliffs, and precipices. The arts exhibited greatness in architectural wonders like the Parthenon or literary masterpieces like Paradise Lost. Poetry, especially the descriptive poem, was especially favorable to the sublime because poets could use their powers of selection and combination to present "Things more Great, Strange, or Beautiful than the Eye ever saw."³ Tragic poets could make great but unpleasant events produce pleasure partly through the faithfulness with which they imitated an action and partly through their audience's consciousness of its own security from the dangers and terrors represented. Addison's ideas about the sublime were given wide circulation by Mark Akenside's poem The Pleasures of Imagination (1744) which made the distinction between beauty and sublimity clearer and more memorable.

¹ Hooker, Works 1:358-63.

² Spectator 412.

³ Spectator 418.

Meanwhile, the philosopher David Hume had carried the analysis of greatness and beauty further than Addison, giving them a basis in sensation and perception. He did not set them in opposition, but viewed greatness (i.e., sublimity) as a larger kind of beauty. He emphasized that beauty and greatness lie not in the object perceived but in the mind of the perceiver. Vastness or distance increase rather than diminish the feeling of sublimity. Even though the mind experiences difficulty in perceiving a vast or distant object, rather than "extinguishing [the mind's] vigor and alacrity" difficulty "has the contrary effect of sustaining and encreasing it."¹

A decade before Joseph Warton published the first volume of his Essay on the Genius and Writing of Pope, Dr. John Baillie published An Essay on the Sublime, in which he set aside all rhetorical considerations and explored the origin of the sublime in natural objects and their effect on the mind. Making vastness the essential quality of the sublime, he anticipated Edmund Burke in giving it a sensationalist basis, but stood apart from him and from the rest of the century in separating the sublime from the pathetic.

The year after volume one of Warton's Essay appeared, Edmund Burke published his Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757). Burke located the sublime in human passions: "The passions

¹Treatise on Human Nature (1739) in Philosophical Works, ed. Green and Grosse (London, 1784) 2:212, 213.

which belong to self-preservation, turn on pain and danger... they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger without being actually in such circumstances. . . . Whatever excites this delight, I call sublime," and these "are the strongest of all passions."¹ Nature in upheaval or in its great manifestations produces the sublime: storms, floods, earthquakes, deep abysses, great waterfalls, oceans, the heavens.

When Burke distinguished the sublime from the beautiful, he opened the path for new ways of viewing poetry that would culminate in the Romantics' repudiation of neo-classical standards. Burke said that the beautiful was clear, regular, smooth, and harmonious--all the neo-classical attributes. The sublime was directly opposite to this. It was indistinct, irregular, vast, and rough--characteristics which neo-classical poets had generally avoided. For Burke the sublime "always dwells on great objects, and terrible"; the beautiful, "on small ones, and pleasing" (113). It originated in things which seemed infinite or almost infinite and had a splendid profusion that was magnificent. Burke went so far as to say that "the apparent disorder" of something like the heavens augments the grandeur, for the appearance of care is highly contrary to our ideas of magnificence." He qualified this by adding that this kind of disorder is "to be very cautiously admitted: because "in many cases this splendid confusion would destroy all use, which should be attended to

¹J. T. Boulton, ed. (London: Routledge, 1958) 51.

in most of the works of art with the greatest care" (78). Even with these qualifications, Burke's description of the sublime departs from neo-classical ideals of clarity, harmony, and order. The neo-classical assumption that human nature is essentially uniform and that poetry's goal is delightful instruction was no longer adequate in the face of a theory based on "the effect of objects" and "the individual response"¹ to those objects. Burke and those who followed him opened the way to an aesthetic of the sublime which focused on the individual's psychological response, on the internal subjective process rather than on the external objective product.

From Burke's Essay onward to the last decade of the century, the idea of the sublime became increasingly subjective and tied to natural objects. Sublime poetry was no longer a matter of high-flown rhetoric and elaborate ornamentation. Those who wrote and thought about the sublime frequently cited the Bible, especially the opening chapters of Genesis and parts of Isaiah, Milton's Paradise Lost, and the primitive poetry of Ossian. Gothic fiction benefitted from the idea that horror, terror, mystery, grief and melancholy were sources of the sublime. This reached its ridiculous extreme when one writer classed Mrs. Radcliffe with Dante as the great artists of sublime horror. Whatever the aberrations, the concept of the sublime was evolving into something far different from simply "the grand or lofty

¹ Monk, 85.

style" of writing.

During the second half of the century Hugh Blair's lectures as Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at the University of Edinburgh did much to spread this more subjective, nature-based idea of the sublime. Blair began reading his lectures on sublimity and taste about 1762 and continued for twenty-four years. The published Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) ran to more than sixty editions as well as numerous abridgments and translations. Blair wrote that the sublime depended on nature not artifice and that it "must come unsought, if it come at all; and be the natural offspring of a strong imagination."¹ In writing, the sublime depended on the object and the thought connected with it, not on the words used. Simplicity of description, not ornate decoration, produced the sublime. Primitive poets writing in rude and unpolished societies were more likely to achieve the sublime than those writing in highly polished civilizations. For Blair, Ossian, with his irregularity, bold expression, violent passions, and lack of polish, was the supreme sublime poet. Blair added little to the psychology of the sublime, but he did make it widely known as an idea intimately connected with natural objects and the primitive--in short as an idea at the opposite pole from the neo-classical ideal.

By the closing decades of the eighteenth century, poets seeking the sublime would turn to those natural objects and events which raised strong feelings such as terror, awe,

¹ (New York: Scott and Seguire, 1819) 43.

astonishment, and religious reverence. Because sublimity resided not in the objects themselves but came about through the individual's physical and psychological response, poets became far more interested in the uniqueness than in the uniformity of human response.

In 1790, Archibald Alison discussed the sublime in his Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste. In words which could almost be Wordsworth's, he wrote:

When we feel either the beauty or sublimity of natural scenery. . . we are conscious of a variety of images in our minds, very different from those which the objects themselves can present to the eye. Trains of pleasing or of solemn thoughts arise spontaneously within our minds; our hearts swell with emotions, of which the objects before us seem to afford no adequate cause; and we are never so much satiated with delight, as when, in recalling our attention, we are unable to trace either the progress or the connections of those thoughts, which have passed with so much rapidity through our imagination.¹

Alison, aided by David Hartley's associationist psychology, defined the sublime as a complex aesthetic experience which took place within the human imagination. The effect of the sublime was greater than the sum of the objective qualities which produced it. Imagination, working powerfully and mysteriously on the mind's complex associations, made the difference.

As ideas about the sublime were changing, especially during the second half of the eighteenth century, so were ideas about what constituted poetry. Just as philosophers had begun placing the idea of the sublime inside the human

¹Abraham Mills, ed. (NY: Harper, 1844) 20.

mind, critics were looking for the sources of poetry inside the human imagination. At mid-century, Joseph Warton wrote the first volume of his Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope, in which he distinguished between the moral and didactic poetry of Pope and Dryden and what he called "true poetry," which arose from a "warm and glowing imagination" (1:iii). In 1782, a few years before the Seward-Weston controversy, Warton published the second volume of his Essay, so his comparison of Pope and Dryden would have been fresh in the controversialists' minds.

Joseph Warton's Essay (1756-1782)

Warton's comparison of Pope and Dryden combined traditional views with new ideas about the importance of imagination, sublimity, and emotion or, as he put it, pathos. Warton found that comparing Pope with Dryden was particularly appropriate because Dryden "was the constant pattern of Pope" (2:12). The terms in which he characterized them followed the familiar eighteenth-century models of nature versus art, wit versus judgment. Accordingly, he found Pope's poetry showed great judgment and art. His language was elegant and appropriately elevated, although he could use simple language to good effect at times. His versification could become monotonous, as in his translation of the Iliad, in which his scrupulous avoidance of the Alexandrine caused it to fall "into an unpleasing and tiresome monotony" (1:143). Dryden, by contrast, was sprightly, witty, flexible, exuberant, and

natural. Although Pope used "common and familiar words" from time to time, Dryden used them more freely, giving "a secret charm, and a natural air to his verses, well knowing of what consequence it was sometimes to soften and subdue his tints, and not to paint and adorn every object he touched with perpetual pomp, and unremitted splendor" (2:170-71).

Warton found Pope's early compositions to be his best. He gave his highest praise to The Rape of the Lock, comparing Pope favorably with Shakespeare: "It is in this composition Pope principally appears a Poet; in which he has displayed more imagination than in all his other works taken together" (1:244). Dryden's finest work was his last: "It is to his Fables, though wrote in his old age, that Dryden will owe his immortality" (2:11).

In his final assessment of Pope as compared with Dryden, Warton commented on Pope's "correctness" (2:404). Earlier, he had noted that the "principal merit of the Pastorals of Pope consists, in their correct and musical versification" and that in this form of poetry he had "lengthened the abruptness of Waller, and at the same time contracted the exuberance of Dryden" (1:10). Is there a note of regret here for that contracted and corrected exuberance?

Elsewhere in his Essay, Warton discussed Walsh's advice to Pope about the importance of being correct, and took that opportunity to discuss "the nauseous cant of the French critics" about correctness:

If it means, that, because their tragedians have avoided the irregularities of Shakespeare, and have observed

juster oeconomy in their fables, therefore the *Athalia*, for instance, is preferable to *Lear*, the notion is groundless and absurd (1:196).

Although Warton did not accuse Pope of subscribing to the French "cant," he did make Pope the occasion for discussing the fallacy of correctness. By doing so, he may have implied that Pope's own correctness was a potential if not an actual drawback. Dryden, of course, was open to no such criticism. Whether by choice or necessity, he had avoided the stultifying effects of too much refining and reworking. This does not mean that Dryden was by nature careless about the use of language. Warton noted that Dryden was the Earl of Roscommon's "principal assistance" in planning "a society for the refining and fixing the standard of our language" (1:192).

In his Life, Maynard Mack has speculated about what Walsh meant by correctness, noting that Pope's account of Walsh's advice "leaves us quite in the dark as to what Walsh meant by correctness." Perhaps he meant technicalities of versification, or the "keeping of various decorums" in diction, genre, harmony of subject and style, or "avoidance of low, indelicate, or specialized locutions. Or perhaps both." Mack has concluded that the only thing we know for certain is that Walsh "stressed the taking of infinite pains" and that this included everything from changing words and phrases to suit tone or genre to subtle modulations in sound patterns. Whatever he meant by correctness, Walsh had his greatest influence on Pope's early work and his lasting legacy was

probably the skill with which Pope played off the sounds of certain consonants one against the other (112-17). It seems probable that Pope took only as much from Walsh as suited his nature, so that whatever the advantages or limitations of his concern with correctness, they are ultimately his own.

Comparing Dryden's MacFlecknoe with Pope's Dunciad, Warton found Dryden's satire superior. The Dunciad was too violent and extreme. Its satire would "sour the temper of the reader." It was "much laboured, and encumbered with epithets," and its numbers "have something in them of stiffness and harshness." The case was otherwise with "that very delightful and beautiful poem, MacFlecnoe, from which Pope has borrowed so many hints, and images, and ideas." In versification Dryden's poem was "particularly and exquisitely sweet and harmonious" (2:377n.).

Warton carefully compared the two poets in every possible genre, sometimes finding Pope superior, sometimes Dryden and sometimes just noting that their achievements differed, without one necessarily being superior to the other. In translating Ovid's "Epistle of Sappho to Phaon," Pope's version was produced with "faithfulness and with elegance, and much excels any that Dryden translated in the volume he published" (1:284). Similarly, Pope's "alterations of Chaucer are introduced with judgment and art" and "are more in number, and more important in conduct, than any Dryden has made of the same author" (1:395). In the lyric, Dryden's "Alexander's Feast" is "at the head of modern lyric

compositions," while Pope's "Ode for Musick on St. Cecilia's Day" is "the second of its kind" (1:50). And in the epistle, Pope's "Epistle to Mr. Jervas," "however elegant and finished this epistle must be allowed. . . does not excel that of Dryden, addressed to Sir Godfrey Kneller" (2:387). Their achievements in writing prologues differed because their aims differed:

The prologues of Dryden are satirical and facetious; this [to Addison's Cato] of Pope is solemn and sublime, as the subject required. Those of Dryden contain general topics of criticism and wit, and may precede any play whatsoever, even tragedy or comedy. This of Pope is particular, and appropriated to the tragedy alone which it was designed to introduce (1:254).

When he finally assessed each poet's works as a whole, Warton wrote of Pope:

considering the correctness, elegance, and utility of his works, the weight of sentiment, and the knowledge of man they contain, we may venture to assign him a place, next to Milton, and just above Dryden. Yet, to bring our minds steadily to make this decision, we must forget, for a moment, the divine Music Ode of Dryden; and may, perhaps, then be compelled to confess, that though Dryden be the greater genius, yet Pope is the better artist (2:404).

Pope excelled Dryden in craftsmanship, artistry, and consistent moral reasoning, but in one poem at least, Dryden revealed the genius of a true poet. And this was enough to make Warton's final ranking inconclusive. Although we cannot be certain when Warton wrote the closing portions of the second volume of his Essay, it may well have been during the time he was immersed in Dryden's poetry. Warton died before he could complete his edition, but his notes were included in the 1811 edition of Dryden's Poetical Works.

Warton's ambivalent assessment of Pope and Dryden revealed the emotional approach to poetry in him vying with the formal, more classical approach. Reason told him to prefer Pope; his heart urged him to choose Dryden. Neither Dryden nor Pope, however, could join the top rank of "true poets." Although, had more of Dryden's work been like his "divine Musick Ode," Warton would have probably placed him in the highest category.

It is not so much the comparison of the two poets that makes Warton's Essay important, but rather his underlying assumption that the species of poetry in which he places Pope and Dryden, that of wit and sense, of the "moral, ethical, and panegyrical," excellent as it may be, still "is not the most excellent one of the art" (1:vii, ii). In his prefatory letter to Young, Warton made clear his position about the various kinds of poetry:

all I plead for, is, to have their several provinces kept distinct from each other; and to impress on the reader, that a clear head, and acute understanding, are not sufficient, alone, to make a Poet; that the most solid observations on human life, expressed with the utmost elegance and brevity, are Morality, and not Poetry; that the Epistles of Boileau in Rhyme, are no more poetical, than the Characters of La Bruyere in Prose; and that it is a creative and glowing Imagination, "*acer spiritus ac vis*," and that alone, that can stamp a writer with this exalted and very uncommon character, which so few possess, of which so few can properly judge (1:ii-iii).

Through this creative and glowing imagination the true poet created "genuine poesy," and the "two chief nerves" of such poetry were "the sublime and the pathetic" (1:vi). When

Warton found Pope's poetry lacked these essential "nerves," and that Pope and Dryden were in the second rank of poets, he might as well have said, as Matthew Arnold would say a century later, that the eighteenth century had no major poets and that much of its most esteemed poetry was not poetry at all.

As we have seen, at this very time, the concept of the sublime was taking on new meaning and philosophical depth. Burke's Enquiry was still a year away from publication, but critics and philosophers had already established the groundwork for his theory. Dennis, drawing on the emotional implications of Longinus, had made the sublime, and the passionate "enthusiasm" it evoked, the central criterion for poetry. Addison and Akenside had distinguished the sublime from the beautiful, and Hume and Baillie had given it a basis in human perception and sensation.

When Warton called on poetry to return to its true basis in the creative imagination and its true expression in sublimity and emotion, he linked the already developing idea of the sublime with one that was just beginning to gain ground--the creative imagination. Philosophers and critics had been searching for ways of viewing man that could better explain the world being revealed by science and its methods. The imagination seemed to provide them. As James Engell has pointed out:

the Great Chain of Being could no longer take the full brunt of philosophical inquiry, nor support a view of man and nature, or of God, that squared with empiricism, psychology, and the new sciences of chemistry,

astronomy, geology, and biology. The imagination offers the dynamic and active. It is a force, an energy, not a state of being. It more easily explains the interchange of state and the transforming, organic qualities of psyche and nature. The imagination better solved the problem why God would create the boundless diversity of nature if He were self-sufficient unto himself.¹

By mid-century the creative imagination was just beginning to be developed as a way to "unify man's psyche and, by extension, to reunify man with nature, to return by the paths of self-consciousness to a state of higher nature, a state of the sublime where senses, mind, and spirit elevate the world around them even as they elevate themselves."²

In the "Advertisement" to the first edition of his Odes on Various Subjects (1746), Joseph Warton had declared, that he, as the author of the poems, "is convinced that the fashion of moralizing in verse has been carried too far, and as he looks upon Invention and Imagination to be the chief faculties of a Poet, so he will be happy if the following Odes may be look'd upon as an attempt to bring back Poetry into its right channel."³

Warton looked for guidance to Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. His subjects included fancy, liberty, superstition, despair, the rural and pastoral scene with its fountains, dryads, bowers, woods, and caverns--emotions and natural objects which poets connected with the sublime. In an earlier blank-verse poem "The Enthusiast: or, the Lover of

¹The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1981) 6.

²Engell, 8.

³(Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1977).

Nature," "Written in 1740," Warton expressed his longing to flee the artifice of "gardens deck'd with art's vain pomps" and return to unimproved, unspoiled Nature with her "unfrequented meads, and pathless wilds."¹ He sought the feelings evoked by nature in all her forms from the "true bliss" of "dashing wave, and sea-mew's clang" to the "delight" of "the rough mountain shagg'd with horrid shades" (74, 75). As for poets, "What are the lays of artful Addison,/ Coldly correct, to Shakespear's warblings wild?" (78).

Warton could not always realize his goals for poetry in his own verse, but in "The Enthusiast," as his editor has noted, "he is intrinsically at his best and historically most significant."² The nineteenth-century critic Sir Edmund Gosse picked "The Enthusiast" as the first example of "'what was entirely new in literature, the essence of romantic hysteria'" and "'the earliest expression of complete revolt against the classical attitude.'" Despite Gosse's dig at Warton's "romantic hysteria," "The Enthusiast" is certainly an early expression of the desire to effect a fundamental change in poetry, and his Essay, especially the dedicatory letter to Young, continues this theme.

¹Eric Partridge, ed., The Three Wartons: A Choice of their Verse (London: Scholartis, 1927) 72.

²Partridge, 14.

From the time it was published until today, critics have disagreed about the significance of Warton's Essay. Twentieth-century critic W. L. MacDonald finds Warton often inconsistent and vague, "seldom saying why an image is good or bad."¹ James Reeves, admittedly unsympathetic with the current academic "infatuation with Pope," disagrees with MacDonald. He finds that Warton "is as precise as most critics of his time (Johnson, for instance) and he writes of Pope with firm conviction, though without dogmatism. MacDonald fails to give Warton full credit for the earliness of his views." Nor is Warton simply "a somewhat ineffectual pioneer of Romanticism, 'a revolutionary without conviction', in Macdonald's phrase. . . . It was not Romanticism [Warton] was concerned with, it was what he called true poetry."²

From our twentieth-century vantage point, we cannot determine exactly how Warton's Essay influenced the literary tastes and aspirations of mid- and late-eighteenth-century England. Certainly, it was well known in literary circles, but because of its diffuseness, readers and critics could respond to it in a wide variety of ways. The three leading literary journals reviewed it, and the GM printed several pages of excerpts, or "epitomes." Generally the reviewers of both volumes of the Essay found it informative, entertaining, and impartial. They said little about Warton's call for reviving "true poetry" or about his placing the

¹ Pope and His Critics 273.

² The Reputation and Writings of Alexander Pope 2, 6.

century's two poetic giants, Dryden and Pope, in the second rank of poets.

The reviewer for The Critical Review found it "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."¹ The anonymous author failed to mention Warton's ideas about true poetry, sublimity, pathos, and originality, although he disagreed with Warton on many minor points. When he reviewed Volume 2, he described the contents at length, and ended by quoting Warton's final ranking of Pope so that "his idea of the merits of the great English poet may be precisely known and ascertained" (53:107). Beyond this enigmatic statement, the reviewer made no comment. He may have meant just what he said, but he may also have implied that we must take a hard critical look at someone who denigrates Pope, "the great English poet."

The critic for The Monthly Review, Dr. James Grainger, was equally open to various interpretations. He quoted from the 1756 Essay at even greater length (his remarks were continued for two issues), but seemed not to have known Warton's name, referring to him as "our unknown Essayist."² He disagreed with a number of Warton's specific points, and unlike the other reviewers, took exception to Warton's calling Pope's poetry "'Morality and not Poetry.'" In this

¹ "Art. V. An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope," The Critical Review 1:240. Quoted in MacClintock, 25.

² 14:528.

connection he asked,

what then makes Pope's version [of the Iliad] so greatly preferable to those of the others [Ogilby, Chapman, and Hobbes]? His versification. Burnet of the Charterhouse had a sublime imagination, but he was no poet; he wanted numbers" (14:529).

Presumably a great poet must have a sublime imagination, but without "numbers," or versification, he is still "no poet." And given the same material, such as the Iliad, superior versification will swing the balance, and the reviewer assumed that Pope's highly wrought heroic couplets were the superior form.

Dr. Grainger also disagreed with Warton's statement that Pope's reputation will depend on three works: Windsor Forest, The Rape of the Lock, and Eloisa to Abelard. Pope's other pieces, such as Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady and the Ode for Musick on St. Cecilia's Day, "have secured [him] the character of a Sublime and Pathetic Poet" (15:77). He concluded that Warton's "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" (15:77-78). The reviewer seems to have disagreed with this lowering, but also hoped "that the ingenious Author will continue his Observations" (15:78). He appreciated Warton's Essay as lively and provocative reading, but remained vague about its implications for what constitutes true poetry and where Pope should rank.

The reviewer for the GM limited himself to "epitomes" (examples from the text) of Warton's 1756 Essay, together with very general comments such as "entertaining and useful"

and "candid criticism, containing censure without acrimony, and praise without flattery."¹ Of the second volume, he noted that it "has been impatiently expected," again went on to devote most of his review to "epitomes," and concluded that the second volume would "contribute largely to the entertainment and information of the reader."² The reviewer also expressed his belief that Pope would have approved of Warton's Essay just as he had approved of "Spence's Essay on his Odyssey" (52:240). We might wonder if the reviewer had fully appreciated the significance of Warton's placing Pope in the second rate of poets because of his concentration on moral and didactic poetry--the very poetry that Pope had felt was his highest achievement.

In his review of the 1756 Essay for the Literary Magazine, Samuel Johnson was less enthusiastic than his fellow critics. He began by commending it as "a very curious and entertaining miscellany of critical remarks and literary history" and ended by repeating this commendation and adding "if there be any too learned to be instructed in facts or opinions, he may yet properly read this book, as a just specimen of literary moderation."³ Between these generally approving remarks, he proceeded to note specific points of agreement and disagreement. Some of these were so minor as

¹ 26:251.

² 52:240.

³ "Review of an Essay on the Writing and Genius of Pope" from The Literary Magazine, 1756, in Dr. Johnson's Works, Oxford English Classics (Oxford, 1825) 6:37 and 46.

to seem "like pure quibbling."¹ Many were minor but insightful. Some were major, such as Johnson's conclusion that, in his remarks about The Rape of the Lock, Warton "is indeed commonly right but has discussed no difficult question (6:44)." Johnson made no comment on the Dedicatory letter to Young. Perhaps he judged Warton's opening call for a return to "true poetry" as pronouncement not discussion, and as such beyond the reach of practical, analytical criticism.

Johnson gave more enthusiastic endorsement to Warton's comment that "'In no polished nation, after criticism has been much studied, and the rules of writing established, has any very extraordinary book ever appeared'" (6:43-44). This reflects the growing concern with the effect of increasing literary refinement on poetry. The popular nature/art paradigm similarly emphasized the tension between the rugged originality of nature and the refinements of art. Thus, if natural Homer is superior to artistically refined Virgil, then the less civilized societies produced great poetry, while the rule-conscious eighteenth century seemed doomed to produce the second rate. And this is Warton's conclusion about Pope.

Johnson's review is strangely silent about Warton's placing Pope outside the realm of "true poets." His silence was not consent, however. It must have been in his mind when, some years later he wrote in The Life of Pope:

After all this [examination of Pope's versification] it is surely superfluous to answer the question that has once been asked, Whether Pope was a poet? otherwise

¹MacClintock, 26.

than by asking in return If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found? To circumscribe poetry by a definition will only shew the narrowness of the definer, though a definition which shall exclude Pope will not easily be made. Let us look round upon the present time, and back upon the past; let us enquire to whom the voice of mankind has decreed the wreath of poetry; let their productions be examined and their claims stated, and the pretensions of Pope will be no more disputed (3:251).

Warton had attempted such a definition--the true poet has "a creative and glowing imagination" and his poetry's primary characteristics are the sublime and pathetic--and found Pope wanting. Johnson's practical approach to literature admitted no such definition, except as a revelation of the definer's narrowness. Of the attempt to define poetry, he had originally written more acerbically that it "is the pedantry of a narrow mind" (3:251n).

Overall, Johnson's review of Warton's 1756 Essay seems limited and uneven. He did not come to grips with what seem to us now its most interesting features, but he did recognize its importance by devoting a fair amount of space to it in the Literary Magazine. Nonetheless, his apparent dismissal of Warton's challenge to poetry seems to reveal a lack of vision as well as insensitivity to the currents that were moving poetry toward a major revolution.

A few years later, in his Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding (1762), Arthur Murphy, branching out from his discussion of what a "fair-dealing" critic should do, challenged Warton's "unjust sentence" that "Mr. Pope had little invention."¹ Warton's concept of invention was not

¹The Works of Henry Fielding 1:28.

comprehensive enough, and it failed to take the complex nature of invention into consideration:

Thus then we see the two provinces of Invention; at one time it is employed in opening a new vein of thought; at another, in placing ideas, that have been pre-occupied, in a new light, and lending them the advantages of novelty by the force of a sublimer diction, or the turn of delicate composition (1:35).

Murphy called the first kind of invention "primary and original" and the other "secondary and subordinate." He asserted that "there has not been so much [primary invention] in any one poet (not even excepting Homer) as has been generally imagined" (1:34-5,36). Voicing the neo-classical belief that a poet drew not only on his imagination or fancy but also on learning and tradition, Murphy stated that, like Homer, Pope "enriched his mind with all the knowledge that subsisted in his time; all that could be furnished by the valuable remains of antiquity" (1:36), together with morality, theology, and philosophy.

Murphy went on to reject the idea that invention "solely consists in describing imaginary beings" or in constructing "what the Critics call a Fable, that is to say, an unity of action." Rather, invention includes how the poet uses his imagination to put his "acquired ideas" to use. It includes "the apt allusion which illustrates, the metaphor which raises his language into dignity, the general splendor of his diction, the harmony of his numbers, and in short the poetic turn of his pieces." And these surely "were all his [Pope's] own" (1:36, 37). On this basis, Murphy rejected Warton's judgment that Pope's The Rape of the Lock showed "'more

imagination than all his other works taken together'"(1:29). Imagination, and its offspring invention, was as manifest in The Dunciad or The Essay on Man as in The Rape of the Lock.

Murphy was writing during the time that imagination as the central organizing force in art was just beginning to develop,¹ and his defense of Pope reflected this change. It was no longer enough to assert Pope's supremacy in taste, knowledge, dignity of language and harmony of verse. Murphy seems to have recognized that imagination and invention were becoming the key criteria for poetry, and he skillfully defined these terms to make them apply to all of Pope's work, not just those pieces, The Rape of the Lock and Eloisa, which had been traditionally granted "imagination" and "sublimity." Of all those who praised or censured Warton's Essay, only Arthur Murphy seems to have grasped its significance and attempted to rebut it in its own terms. But, as James Engell has pointed out, the imagination as a term that subsumed all previous critical terms for poetic inspiration did not come into its own until the 1780s. When Arthur Murphy made a digression on Pope's invention a part of his Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding, British philosophers and critics were just beginning to work out their ideas about creativity and genius. Alexander Gerard's "Essay on Taste (1759) and, even more important, An Essay on Genius (1774) move[d] associationism and the theory of imagination onto a

¹See Engell, viii.

higher and richer plane." William Duff, in his Essay on Original Genius (1767), attained "a view of the imagination as a broad and natural power whose scope in poetry is 'absolute and unconfined.'"¹ Murphy was a playwright and critic not a philosopher, and he was a neo-classicist at heart. Nevertheless, he had sensed the temper of the time enough to attempt to reconcile Pope's poetry to it, albeit during a digression buried in the Life of a writer who was primarily a novelist.

Arthur Murphy and Joseph Warton were by no means alone in responding to the powerful currents moving poetry away from neo-classical ideals. Edward Young, to whom Warton had dedicated his Essay, published his Conjectures on Original Composition in 1759. In it he briefly compared Pope and Dryden. Although neither Pope nor Dryden revealed the originality of the true poetic genius, Young saw more possibility in Pope. Had Pope not become "pre-engaged with Imitation," which "is inferiority confessed," and attempted emulation, which "is superiority contested, or denied," he might have been another Homer.² Dryden, on the other hand, worked in a medium (drama) that "demands the heart; and Dryden had none to give. . . . But the strongest demonstration of his no-taste for the buskin, are his tragedies fringed with rhyme; which, in Epic poetry, is a sore disease; in the Tragic, absolute death. To Dryden's enormity, Pope's

¹Engell, 84, 79.

²(Leeds: The Scolar Press, 1966) 65-9 passim.

was a light offence" (83). Although Young followed Aristotelian tradition in ranking tragedy above all other forms, he did so not because of the form itself but because it "demands the heart." Dryden was more to blame than Pope because he had sinned against the noblest form.

Young reacted as a poet, condemning those fellow poets who in his view had perverted their talents. He showed none of Warton's moderation and fair-mindedness. Such qualities became irrelevant when one's art was at stake. Warton's Essay was a carefully documented analysis of the supreme neo-classical poet. Young's Conjectures was a manifesto and a call to arms. He may also have wanted to make public his own view of Pope and Dryden, which readers of Warton's first volume might have assumed reflected Young's judgment of them.

Many of the critics who compared Dryden and Pope found Dryden's poetry more natural and spontaneous than Pope's. Pope was often criticized as being too artificial, as lacking that unpremeditated fire which only natural genius can provide. Those who supported Pope found Dryden's poetry too subject to excess and to gross defects in tone, language and versification. He may have had abundant natural wit, but he lacked artistic judgment and consistency. As we have seen, Robert Shiels found Pope's work more even and correct than Dryden's, but Dryden had a wider range and his verse was "more fraught with poetical ideas."¹ Samuel Johnson enlarged

¹ See above, xxv.

on this comparison in this famous passage from the Life of Pope:

[Dryden's] mind has a larger range. . . . The style of Dryden is capricious and varied; that of Pope is cautious and uniform. Dryden observes the motions of his own mind; Pope constrains his mind to his own rules of composition. Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid; Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle. . . . Dryden often surpasses expectation, and Pope never falls below it. Dryden is read with frequent astonishment, and Pope with perpetual delight. (3:222).

Like his predecessors, Johnson drew on the traditional paradigms of nature versus art and wit versus judgment. In order to appreciate what these terms had come to mean by Johnson's time, we must review briefly their origins and history.

Nature and Art; Wit and Judgment

We have been discussing these pairs of terms as if they opposed each other: nature versus art; wit versus judgment. But we can also see them as cooperating with or complementing each other: nature and art; wit and judgment. Historically, they have been viewed both as cooperating and opposing.¹

Conflicting interpretations of the relationship between nature and art stem from the ways in which thinkers conceived of them. Today, we rely on the definitions developed during the Renaissance that nature is what God makes, and art is what man makes. These become more complicated when we

¹For this discussion of nature and art, I am indebted to Edward Tayler, Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature (NY: Columbia UP, 1964) and Arthur O. Lovejoy, Essays in the History of Ideas (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1948).

consider the possible relationships between nature and art. The cooperating or complementary view conceives of nature as God's art, and art as man's imitation of what God does in nature. The conflicting or noncomplementary position conceives of nature as solely God's province and of man's art as an attempt to usurp God's powers.

These two extremes are epitomized in the conflicting interpretations of the Promethean myth which began with the ancient Greeks. On the one hand, Prometheus was the hero who, along with fire, brought all the arts to mankind. On the other, he was the villain who, by introducing the luxuries that art made possible, softened humanity's natural vigor by interposing artificial objects or institutions between man and nature.

These opposing interpretations opened up a large range of possibilities for viewing the nature/art relationship. Between the extremes of ideal balance and irreconcilable conflict, Greek and Roman philosophers developed a wide range of views. Stoicism, for instance, held up Nature as the ideal, identifying "God and everything valuable with it" and looked with "respectful nostalgia"¹ to the unspoiled Golden Age which needed no art to make it perfect. More sophisticated, as well as more representative, thinkers such as Cicero (and the Stoic Seneca as well) conceived of nature and art as more complexly related. Thus, in the moral sphere, philosophers could view nature as the instinctive, spontaneous, and

¹Taylor, 49.

nonrational aspect of human life which needed the art of rational thought and reflection in order to be complete. Seneca wrote, "For Nature does not bestow virtue; it is an art to become good."¹

In classical literature, the pastoral became the ideal form for embodying the nature/art dichotomy. Authors contrasted natural country life with artificial court or city life. Here again, the relationship varied from writer to writer. Theocritus held the two in a balance in which each qualified or corrected the other. Virgil created "the green world of Arcadia, in which ideal Nature has no need of Art"² because nature was already perfect. On the other hand, Longus, the author of Daphnis and Chloe, placed nature and art in active philosophical opposition in which the "pastoral world of Nature" was "fundamentally opposed to the corrupt and decadent world of Art."³

Because medieval thinkers and writers were far more concerned with the relationship between nature and grace than with that between nature and art, the nature/art relationship lost most of its philosophical impact during the middle ages. The nature/art division remained important primarily for rhetoric. Horace had answered the age-old question of whether nature or art is more powerful in writing poetry by stating that both were essential. Medieval writers accepted this commonplace which descended pretty much unchanged to the

¹The Epistles of Seneca 2:429.

²Taylor, 69.

³Taylor, 69.

sixteenth century. The nature/art relationship gained some new philosophical life from the twelfth-century thinker John of Salisbury. He conceived of art as "'a system that reason has devised'" to expedite "'our ability to do things within our natural capabilities.'"¹ His thinking put the kind of emphasis on man and his work that the Renaissance was to revive and expand on.

With this Renaissance interest in man came renewed interest in Classical ideas about how nature and art worked together or against each other. This relationship became a key organizing force in philosophy and literature. Renaissance writers and thinkers arguing about man's position in the universe used nature and art as focal points for organizing their ideas, much as we use terms like nature and nurture, heredity and environment, today. Starting from the Christian view that God makes nature and man makes art, they drew on classical texts to redefine and revivify the nature/art relationship. The "orthodox moral philosophers"² viewed it as cooperating. Because nature is God's art, when man exercises his own art, he is in tune with God's plan. In this view, art was a positive help to fallen man in his attempt, as Milton put it, "to repair the ruin of his first parents."³

The opposing view held that nature and art conflicted and that any attempt by man to interfere with God's handiwork

¹Metalogicon (c. 1159), quoted in Tayler, 79.

²Tayler, 21.

³"Of Education," Paradise Lost and Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Northrop Frye (NY: Rinehart, 1956) 439.

(His art with nature) corrupted it. Fallen man had had to develop arts in order to survive, but his ultimate goal should be to cast these aside and return to unsullied nature--Eden before the fall. This subsumed Virgil's green Arcadia and gave renewed strength to primitivist admiration for man in his savage, or natural, state, uncorrupted by society.

As in classical times, pastoral literature became the primary means for developing the nature/art relationship. With their humanistic approach, Renaissance authors adapted the pastoral to a wide array of human concerns from the personal to the political to the spiritual, whether as cooperation or conflict. The Medieval concern with nature and grace had Christianized the pastoral, making possible religious and allegorical interpretations of the old pagan stories about shepherds and their sheep, rustic swains and their brides. Poets could identify the Golden Age and Arcadia with Eden, Pan with Christ, the shepherd with the king or priest. The Song of Songs could be read both as celebrating the courtship and wedding of a king (who was also a religious leader) and also as embodying the mystery of Christ's love for and union with His church.

Turning to the art of writing itself, Renaissance authors rediscovered Quintillian's dictum that the "'height of art is to conceal art.'"¹ Art as nature's essential, yet invisible, handmaid dominated Renaissance aesthetic thought and continued as an important view through the first half of

¹Tayler, 34.

the eighteenth century, after which it faded into the background as new concerns with the sublime, the picturesque and the power of the imagination emerged.

By the eighteenth century, the nature/art relationship had become a commonplace, an accepted model from which most of the life had been drained. Poets and critics invoked it to support various, even opposing, views of human life. For the neo-classicist, nature was regular and uniform. When Pope said that the poet should "first follow nature" (EOC 69), he assumed that nature was the source of the aesthetic, and conversely that art was the handmaid of nature. His view was similar to that of the Renaissance's ideal balance between art and nature. Ironically, this view carried the seeds of its own decay because "nearly all norms of the revolt against neo-classical standards invoked the same catchword"¹ of keeping close to nature. Those who followed nature into its wild and irregular recesses emerged with the view that far from being orderly, uniform, and harmonious, nature was full of diversity and uniqueness. The cult of the picturesque in painting and gardening, the Gothic Revival in architecture, and the Gothic novel in literature all manifested this new taste for the wild, the rough, and the discordant. Primitive nature, unspoiled by the arts of man, which had always attracted thinkers and writers, reasserted its claims. This changing view the the nature/art relationship was reflected in the concept of the sublime as

¹Lovejoy, 76.

manifested in nature at its wildest and most gigantic.

While the nature/art dichotomy had become fossilized by the eighteenth century, the wit/judgment relationship emerged as a paradigm that, though narrower in focus, took on some of its meaning. As Renaissance thinkers had given new vigor to the nature/art dichotomy, the seventeenth century philosophers developed the wit/judgment relationship. In doing so, they narrowed the definition of wit so that it no longer meant the intellect or mental powers in general but referred to a specific kind of mental activity. Thomas Hobbes shows this change in the making.

In 1640, he described the activities of a "quick ranging" mind or wit "under which fancy and judgment are comprehended."¹ Fancy consists in "comparing the things that come into the mind, one with another: in which comparison, a man delighteth himself either with finding unexpected similitude of things, otherwise much unlike." It produces "those grateful similies, metaphors, and other tropes, by which both poets and orators have it in their power to make things please or displease." By contrast, judgment consists in "discerning suddenly dissimilitude in things that otherwise appear the same." By making distinctions among things, it leads "to exact and perfect knowledge." A decade later, Hobbes began to narrow his definition of wit. Retaining the

¹ Human Nature in The English Works of Thomas Hobbes, ed. Sir William Molesworth (London, 1860) 4:55-6. The quotations in this paragraph are from the same place.

old idea of wit as mental powers, he offered a second definition of wit as "one certain ability," which, when strong, he called "good wit." This was identical to "good fancy" and like it observes "similitudes." Judgment continued to discern "dissimilitudes," and "good judgment," like "good wit," showed itself in difficult cases.¹

In his "Answer to Davenant's Preface before Gondibert" (1650), Hobbes seemed to denigrate the role of fancy (as he was still calling it) in relation to its "severer sister," judgment: "judgment begets the strength and structure, and fancy begets the ornaments of a poem." Fancy is agile and swift, but "her wonderful celerity, consisteth not so much in motion, as in copious imagery discreetly ordered, and perfectly registered in the memory." He softened this view by admitting that "so far forth as the fancy of man has traced the ways of true philosophy, so far it hath produced very marvelous effects to the benefit of mankind."² Going even futher, he depicted fancy, or wit, as the faculty which supports true philosophy when its "precepts fail, as they have hitherto failed in the doctrine of moral virtue." It becomes finally "the architect" which "must take the philosopher's part upon herself." Such a concept of wit gives it a breadth and power that resembles the creative imagination, which, as James Engell has shown, emerged during the second

¹Leviathan, ed. Michael Oakeshott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960) 43.

²Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry, ed. Alexander M. Witherspoon and Frank J. Warnke (NY: Harcourt, 1982) 213.

half of the eighteenth century. Hobbes's own development within his "Answer to Davenant" of the power of fancy from literary ornament to philosophic guide foreshadows, in miniature, the next century's development of the power of imagination as the chief force for organizing "the unity of all creation and implanting the divine in man."¹

In his History of the Royal Society (1667), Thomas Sprat, like Hobbes, moved from the general definition of wit as mental powers to a more specific one. And like Hobbes, he defined wit as the mental power that discovers similitudes, or the "resemblance of one thing to another."² It depended on "the Works of Nature, which are one of the best and most fruitful Soils for the growth of Wit" (415). Those men who perform experiments on nature will contribute to the stock of poets' images because "the Comparisons which these [experimenters] may afford will be intelligible to all, because they proceed from things that enter into all mens senses" (416). In this connection, Sprat distinguished between the trivial wit of "Raillery" which comes from "observation of the deformity of things" and the "nobler" pleasure which wit produces when it discerns the "Order and Beauty" in nature (418). He both followed and extended Hobbes's view of wit as a powerful quality that could organize and revitalize men's understanding of their world.

¹Engell, viii.

²Jackson Cope and Harold Jones, eds. (St. Louis: Washington U Studies, 1958) 413. The anomalies in spelling are Sprat's.

Sprat devoted much less space to discussing judgment than he did to wit. He did not follow Hobbes in defining judgment as the power that makes distinctions, but viewed it as the force which carries on the conceptions which wit discovers. Judgment is not wit's critic, or as Hobbes put it, its "severer sister," but its enabler and extender. Hobbes had seen them as neatly balanced opposites, Sprat emphasized their emotional differences. "Great wits" were often "fiery" and "Impetuous men" whose work needed "the more judicious, who are not so soon possess'd with such raptures" to "carry on the others strong conceptions, by soberer degrees, to a full accomplishment" (85-86).

Later in the century, John Locke restated the relationship between wit and judgment in terms that recalled Hobbes and set the pattern for eighteenth-century critics, especially Addison:

For Wit lying most in the assemblage of Ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant Pictures, and agreeable Visions in the Fancy: Judgment, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully, one from another, Ideas, wherein, can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by Similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another.¹

Addison quoted this definition in Spectator 62 and added that resemblance of ideas is not wit unless it also gives "Delight and Surprize to the Reader." Addison shared the view begun by Hobbes and Sprat that wit leads to truth and is allied with the majesty and simplicity of nature.

¹An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975) 156.

Dryden and Pope followed this general view of wit and judgment. Dryden emphasized the liveliness of wit, its energy, broad range, and delightfulness. He saw it as the "product of imagination" which both mirrors and goes beyond nature because "it sets before your eyes that absent object as perfectly and more delightfully than nature."¹ For Dryden, judgment retrenched the excesses of wit. Ideally it balanced these excesses, restraining wit's tendency to run exuberantly into error.

Pope followed Dryden's lead in defining the relationship between wit and judgment. Wit is powerful, free, and wide-ranging. It "May boldly deviate from the common Track" and "snatch a Grace beyond the Reach of Art" (EOC 151, 154). Similarly, Pope agreed with Dryden that wit run wild needed the control of judgment. Dryden had viewed the relationship as vigorous, even violent. Judgment curbed wit as the horse-man curbed a "hot-mouthed jade."² In Pope's more refined image judgment guides and checks "the Muse's Steed," and produces not just control but a kind of cooperation in which wit, "like a gen'rous Horse,/ Shows most true Mettle when you check his Course" (EOC 84, 86-87).

The wit and judgment paradigm reached its height during the neo-classical era, just as the art/nature dichotomy had reached its during the Renaissance. Eighteenth-century critics often saw the two models as parallel pairs, thus linking

¹Dramatic Poesy 1:98.

²Dramatic Poesy 1:225.

the nature/art model to their own times and turn of mind. Nature and wit resembled each other in being vital and creative, akin to imagination and invention, and were exemplified by Homer and Shakespeare. Similarly, art and judgment shared the power to order and refine their respective partners and were exemplified by Virgil and Ben Jonson. Dryden wrote:

If I would compare him [Jonson] with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare.¹

Joshua Reynolds made the same distinction between Michelangelo, whom he termed sublime, and Raphael, whom he saw as more balanced and artistically correct.²

Johnson's Comparison of Pope and Dryden

When Samuel Johnson compared Dryden and Pope, he made the same kind of distinction former critics had made between Homer and Virgil, Shakespeare and Jonson, and Michelangelo and Raphael. Dryden was freer, broader ranging, and more vigorous than Pope. Pope was more consistent and "steadier on the wing" than Dryden. Johnson's contrast of the two conformed to the paired models of nature and art, wit and judgment, but his conception of those terms--especially wit and judgment--bore his distinctive mark.

¹Dramatic Poesy 1:79.

²Discourses on Art, ed. Robert R. Wark (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1959) 83-84.

In discussing nature and art, he followed the main lines of tradition. He took the neo-classical view that nature was uniform, underlying everything. Whatever the accidental appearance of things, nature itself was as stable as truth. Shakespeare was the "poet of nature," because his characters and their actions were "the genuine progeny of common humanity." ¹ Like his predecessors, Johnson saw nature as beyond human control. A poet could not learn it. Only his God-given instinct or intuition could lead him to "snatch a grace beyond the reach of art" (EOC 155).

Art contrasted with nature in being "the power of doing something not taught by nature and instinct; as, to walk is natural, to dance is an art" (Dictionary). Not only was dancing learned, it conformed to specific rules. Still, it built on the natural ability to walk, refining and elevating it. Johnson saw the reciprocal relationship between nature and art as essential in any great human undertaking. In the greatest literature, art and nature joined as partners in a particularly organic way: "Fame cannot spread wide or endure long that is not rooted in nature, and manured by art. That which hopes to resist the blast of malignity, and stand firm against the attacks of time, must contain in itself some original principle of growth."² Johnson's organic imagery reflects his concern with both the fundamental and the ordinary. It shows his tendency to merge pairs into a third idea

¹ "Preface to Shakespeare," Works 7:62.

² Rambler 5:154.

that contains their qualities but expresses them in a new entity. The plant, fame, is the growth of root and manure, not just their mechanical combination.

In discussing wit and judgment, Johnson resisted his contemporaries' tendency to restrict wit to a particular kind of mental power. He seized on the first two lines of Pope's famous definition of true wit ("What oft was Thought, but ne'er so well Exprest" (EOC 298), charging that it "depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language."¹ Even when he defined wit more narrowly than "the powers of the mind," he included judgment within it. The Dictionary's definitions include "imagination; quickness of fancy. . .sense; judgment." Conversely, his definition of judgment is broad enough to include contemporary concepts of wit. The Dictionary states that judgment is "the power of discerning the relations between one term or proposition and another." In his Life of Pope, Johnson further defined judgment as that aspect of an author's genius "which selects from life or nature what the present purpose requires, and, by separating the essence of things from its concomitants, often makes the representation more powerful than the reality."² For Johnson, judgment both discerned relations and made distinctions. It operated somewhat like wit in enhancing an author's depiction of nature rather than retrenching wit's excesses. Its

¹Lives (Cowley) 1:19.

²Lives 3:247.

relationship to wit resembled art's to nature. It used the human ability to think, select, join, and distinguish to enhance the poet's native wit.

Although Johnson's principal comparison of Dryden and Pope appeared in his Life of Pope (1781), he had formed his opinion years earlier. Boswell reported this conversation from February, 1766:

I told him that Voltaire, in a conversation with me, had distinguished Pope and Dryden thus:--'Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat trim nags; Dryden a coach, and six stately horses.: Johnson. 'Why Sir, the truth is, they both drive coaches and six; but Dryden's horses are either galloping or stumbling: Pope's go at a steady even trot.'¹

A few years later, Johnson noted "that in Dryden's poetry there were passages drawn from a profundity which Pope could never reach."²

In his Life of Pope, abandoning or not recalling the earth-bound carriage metaphor which Voltaire had started, he summed up the differences between the two poets:

If the flights of Dryden therefore are higher, Pope continues longer on the wing. If of Dryden's fire the blaze is brighter, of Pope's the heat is more regular and constant. Dryden often surpasses expectation, and Pope never falls below it. Dryden is read with frequent astonishment, and Pope with perpetual delight.³

Flight and fire are fused with human thought and feeling in this powerful and comprehensive image. Shiels had covered the same ground and had started some of the images. Pope's

¹James Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. G.B. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1934) 2:5.

²Boswell, 2:85.

³Lives 3:223.

"evenness" contrasted with Dryden's "wider range." Pope was "the most pleasing versifier; Dryden, "the greater genius."¹ But Johnson transformed the comparison as he said Dryden had transformed English poetry, "He found it brick, and he left it Marble."²

Johnson's evaluation recalls Shiels's, but his approach differed. Shiels examined the poets' works; Johnson explored their minds.³ Dryden's "mind has the larger range."⁴ "The notions of Dryden were formed by comprehensive speculation, and those of Pope by minute attention. There is more dignity in the knowledge of Dryden, and more certainty in that of Pope." Their poetic geniuses differed as wit unbounded differed from wit circumscribed by judgment. Dryden had more of "that energy which collects, combines, amplifies and animates," but "it is not to be inferred that of this poetical vigour Pope had only a little because Dryden had more." Dryden's vigor was intense but sporadic: "What his mind could supply at a call, or gather in one excursion, was all that he sought and all that he gave." Pope's "dilatory caution" led to long and consistent labor "to accumulate all that study might produce, or chance supply." For their prose styles, Johnson turned to the popular eighteenth-century landscape image, with its juxtaposition of nature and art: "Dryden's

¹ Above, xxv.

² Lives 1:469.

³ M.H. Abrams traces the shift in criticism from "Pragmatic" to "Expressive," from works to writer, in The Mirror and the Lamp (NY: Oxford UP, 1953) 14-26.

⁴ Lives 3:222. The quotations in the rest of the paragraph are from 222-23.

page is a natural field, rising into inequalities, and diversified by the varied exuberance of abundant vegetation; Pope's is a velvet lawn, shaven by the scythe, and levelled by the roller."

Johnson's comparison of Dryden and Pope received little or no critical comment when the Lives of the Poets was first reviewed. The volumes themselves were widely reviewed, and despite sharp criticism of Johnson's harsh treatment of specific poets like Milton, Collins and Gray, the judgment was generally favorable. From 1779-1782 The Monthly Review devoted some sixty-four pages to reviewing the twelve-volume Lives and quoted the Pope-Dryden comparison without making any comment on it. Although its reviewer found much to admire in the Lives, he deplored the frequency with which "the Critic's judgment seems altogether under the dominance of predilection or prejudice."¹ The Critical Review allotted about eleven pages to each of the two six-volume sets. It did not quote or comment on the Pope-Dryden comparison. In the Gentleman's Magazine, Robert Potter, who signed himself "W.B." made a few generally favorable comments about the Lives and then proceeded to discuss selected passages from the Lives in detail, breaking off in the middle of Pope without having reached the Pope-Dryden comparison. The article ended with the notice "to be continued," but no further essays appeared. Potter's rather bland remarks in the GM drew a response from an unnamed contributor ("H.") who

¹ 66:126.

objected to Johnson's prejudices coupled with his authoritative manner that led them to be "adopted as truths."¹ Several years later, Anna Seward voiced a similar opinion in a letter to William Hayley (July 15, 1787):

I have always despised the admirers of Johnson as an equitable critic, assured that they had not strength of understanding to think, or sensibility to feel for themselves (1:306).

Anna Seward did not like the Lives. In 1786, she had condemned the effect Johnson's Lives had had in turning public taste against contemporary poets:

I know there is a great falling off since Johnson's Lives of the Poets appeared. It is in the taste of the public, however, not in the genius of individuals; but the induration [hardening] on the sensibility of excellence in the higher walks of poetry, which that work has so generally produced, will, in future, create the paucity it does not meet. Who takes the trouble of singing to the deaf, or of painting for the blind? (1:187).

Anna Seward was not alone in her charge of insensitivity. John Hawkins considered Johnson to have a "talent for criticism both perceptive and corrective" which was "justly celebrated"² and recognized the greatness of the Lives. Yet he concluded that Johnson's physical limitations, especially his poor eyesight, caused a "defect in his imaginative faculty," which resulted in his "frigid commendation" (473) of the highly descriptive poetry that was becoming increasingly popular. This together with Johnson's avowed prejudice against blank verse and in favor of rhyme caused him to

¹ 52:19.

² Life of Samuel Johnson (Dublin, 1787) 243.

devalue poets like Milton, Gray, and Thomson.

Johnson's Lives of Dryden and Pope escaped such criticism. From the time they appeared, they were considered among his best, and his comparison of the two poets has been quoted repeatedly. The basis for Johnson's comparison was probably familiar to many readers from Shiels's work. And it was uncontroversial. It drew on the popular paradigms of nature and art, wit and judgment in language that is among Johnson's most eloquent and humane. If Johnson's Lives has "often been taken as a book of wisdom,"¹ the Dryden-Pope comparison strikes most readers as sounding one of its finest notes.

Its wisdom still survives, but the paradigms that underlay the comparison were engulfed by the nineteenth century's emphasis on creative imagination and individual expressiveness. The nature and art model had been losing its vitality since the Renaissance. The eighteenth-century kept it alive mainly by linking it with wit and judgment, terms which reflected their concern with the rational mind and its workings. To the Romantic poets, however, these terms represented everything they disliked about the eighteenth century, with its mechanical rules, its love of ornament, its joy in artifice, and its nonorganic compartmentalizing of the human mind. As a paradigm for poetic composition, the interrelation of wit and judgment disappeared. In the

¹Robert Folkenflik, Samuel Johnson, Biographer (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978) 27.

twentieth century, perhaps we find its descendant in the complex view of scientific discovery as both creative and analytical. New theories spring from man's intuitive wit which works in a nonrational way that resembles the operation of nature itself. Such leaps of wit alone do not make new science. Critical judgment, an art scientists learn through years of study and experience, constantly tests and refines the discoveries of wit.

If Johnson wrote the most memorable eighteenth-century words about Pope and Dryden he did not write the last. From April 1789 through April 1791, some thirty thousand more were expended in the pages of The Gentleman's Magazine. In addition to the two principals, seventeen others joined in the paper war. Most were relatively obscure; a few were well known. Some were temperate; others were vehemently partisan.

The Controversialists

The Various Sides

Anna Seward and Joseph Weston were the originators and principal combatants in the controversy about whether Pope or Dryden was the superior poet. Their letters begin and end the debate and occupy most of the space. Weston's letters, which include a transcription of most of the Preface to the Woodmen of Arden, run to more than 150 pages. Miss Seward's take up

less than 50 pages and end midway through the exchange. Weston not only has the last word, but promises more to come. It never does. Of the seventeen other letter writers, six support Miss Seward's position and five side with Weston. The remainder refute or agree with both sides' arguments, add information of their own, or call for peace.

The unidentified "M. F."¹ is Miss Seward's most prolific champion, contributing six letters to the controversy. "M. F." both supports Miss Seward and attacks Weston, forcing Weston to fight on two fronts at once. "W." (Letter 27), an Edinburgh correspondent, supports Miss Seward's defense of Pope's character. "J. S." (Letter 30) gives learned support to the defense of Pope against Weston's charges in Letter 17 about Pope's treatment of Thomas Burnet and George Duckett. "Obadiah Meanwell" (Letter 28), who sounds like a Quaker, joins in as the friend of "M. F.," who has commissioned him to explain the pro-Pope side further because "M. F." has promised to write no more himself.

A particularly scathing attack on Weston comes from "B. L. A." (Letter 35). With a good deal of Greek and Latin fanfare, he undertakes to refute "by chronology" (232) Weston's assertion that Pope "incited Swift to ridicule Dryden in 'The Tale of a Tub'" (233). The final defense for the

¹Most of the letter writers signing initials or pseudonyms remain unidentified. Some are positively or tentatively identified by James Kuist in The Nichols File of The Gentleman's Magazine (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1982), and in all but one of those cases I have given his identification.

Seward camp comes from "Norfolciencis" (Letter 41). Although he is tentatively identified by Kuist as G. Aiken, it seems more likely that he may be John Aikin. There is no record of a G. Aikin in Nichols's Anecdotes or Illustrations, and Anna Seward's Letters do not mention him. John Aikin, however, was practicing medicine in Yarmouth in 1791, and "Norfolciencis's" letter comes from there. Aikin knew Dr. Erasmus Darwin and was known to Anna Seward, who referred to him several times in her Letters. She took special notice of Dr. Aikin's interest in poetry.¹ "Norfolciencis" supports "B. L. A.'s" position and reproves those calling for peace by noting that Miss Seward has long since retired from the debate, leaving Weston, like Garrick's Richard III "stabbing the air at the feet of Richmond" (247).

On Weston's side are John Morfitt (Letter 10), whose poem was the occasion for the controversy; "M----s," (Henry Francis Cary, Letters 5 and 12); and Philip Thicknesse, (Letter 26) who agrees with Weston about Pope's character. The unidentified "L. M." contributes a sonnet, complete with Drydenic triplet and Alexandrine, praising Weston "whom Virtue and the Muses fire" (220). "R. W.," or Bardus Ordovicensis (poet of North Wales) writes from Flintshire in North Wales (Letter 37) supporting Weston, but restores the balance by commenting that Weston has been vanquished in the debate not by Miss Seward's arguments but by the "resistless power of her eyes" (239).

¹ See 1:20, 73; 2:5; 6:145, 157.

Among the remainder, "Impartial" (Letter 14) lives up to his pseudonym by agreeing with and praising both Miss Seward and Weston. "M[atthew] G[reen]" (GM editor John Nichols, Letter 24) agrees with Weston about Pope's treatment of Leonard Welsted, and even contributes a hitherto unobtainable poem by Welsted to his own magazine's poetry section. Then to even things up, he sides with Miss Seward by pointing out that Pope became "so convinced of the injustice with which he had treated Welsted" that he withdrew "the most offensive lines" from later editions of the Dunciad (189). Nichols pleases readers on both sides and gives a boost to that month's poetry section. "R. B." (Letter 38) contributes a brief note commending Pope's wit and Welsted's patience.

Calls for peace or at least for silence come from "Remigius" (Letter 36); David Dalrymple (Lord Hailes, Letter 39) who also adds some incorrect information about the pamphlet "Homerides;" and "D. R.," who writes in the penultimate letter (42) that "Pope will be read long after he [Weston] will be forgotten" (252).

"Maria" (Letter 31) takes a different approach to the controversy. She tacitly sides with Weston by asserting that Miss Seward is defending "a bad cause," but she also conjectures that "these two literary Geniuses" have collaborated "to show themselves off" (219). Her real interest lies elsewhere, however. In challenging Philip Thicknesse's assumption that he knows how Miss Seward's mind works, she comments wryly on the position of women: "Women can read

women better than men even of superior understanding, as fools can find fools better than wiser heads" (219). She goes on to support this with a fable about how Esquire Fox's fool found Esquire Hare's fool. Her letter becomes more interesting if I am right in suggesting that she is Maria Edgeworth.

Maria Edgeworth was connected with Anna Seward both through her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, and her step mother, Honora Sneyd Edgeworth. Richard Edgeworth met Anna Seward in 1766 when he visited Dr. Erasmus Darwin and was entertained by the Lichfield circle. Subsequently, he visited Lichfield often, staying with his close friend Thomas Day. Day and Edgeworth both courted Anna Seward's foster sister and intimate friend, Honora Sneyd. In 1773, the newly widowed Edgeworth married Honora, who became the stepmother of his children by his first marriage. One of them was Maria, who was then six years old. Although Anna Seward remained estranged from Honora, probably because she was jealous of Richard Edgeworth's superior claim to Honora's love, Honora may well have talked of her to Maria. Her own past relationship to Anna Seward was somewhat parallel to her new one with Maria. Honora went to live with the Swards when she was a child of five. Anna, nine years her senior, had been her early teacher and later friend. Honora took "a most tender and motherly interest in Maria."¹ Maria, in turn, was greatly impressed by Honora, and "she remembered

¹Grace A. Oliver, A Study of Maria Edgeworth (Boston, 1882) 63.

always" her "minutest advice."¹ Through their relationship, so reminiscent of the past, Miss Seward's presence may have been often felt in the Edgeworth household. Although Anna Seward and Maria Edgeworth did not meet as adults until after the controversy (1800), Maria and her sister Emmeline had been in Seward house as children. Later, as Anna Seward recorded in a letter, Maria "spoke with apparent delight of my attentions" to them in their infancy, and of the hours they called happily spent beneath my father's roof."²

At the time of the "Maria" letter, Maria Edgeworth was in her early twenties. She already had a reputation as a storyteller. Her first published work, The Parent's Assistant; or, Stories for Children would appear five years later, in 1795. "Maria" begins her letter "Let me tell you a story." Further, Maria Edgeworth, as her mature work shows, had a well developed sense of irony. "Maria" writes with gentle, but unmistakable, irony both about the position of women and about Miss Seward: "This Lady could no where find a fairer channel to make her virtues and her talents known to all the world, than by engaging in such a dispute in the Gentleman's Magazine" (219-20). Here is a gentle dig at Anna Seward's well-known vanity and perhaps an oblique fling at the value a "Lady's" opinions gain from being printed in the "Gentleman's" magazine. Considering Maria Edgeworth's connection with Anna Seward, her penchant for creating tales

¹Oliver, 61.

²Letters 6:207.

with a moral, and her strong sense of irony, I think it is at least possible that she is "Maria."

Individual Backgrounds

Anna Seward (1742-1809) was well known as a poetess, informal essayist, letter writer and literary critic.¹ Although she is usually referred to as "the Swan of Lichfield," no one knows how the epithet originated. Lichfield's proximity to Stratford-upon-Avon may have made Lichfield's citizens think "it should have a Swan, even as Stratford had a hundred years before."² Today, we may wonder that the epithet was not attached to a more famous Lichfield native such as Samuel Johnson or David Garrick. That Anna Seward became the Swan of Lichfield attests both to her poetic reputation during her own time as well as to the arresting physical impression she made with her auburn eyes, majestic figure, and melodious voice.

Today we do not read the poetry which made her famous, and we smile at her unceasing enthusiasm conveyed in yards of relentlessly elevated verse. But she was popular in her day for those very qualities. As one GM reviewer wrote of her: "There is. . . a poetess of the age, in whom almost every poetical excellence seems to be united. . . her merit is so universally acknowledged, that I trust that I shall not be

¹For biographical information about Anna Seward I am especially indebted to Margaret Ashmun's The Singing Swan (NY: Greenwood Press, 1931).

²S. Addleshaw, "The Swan of Lichfield: Anna Seward and Her Circle," The Church Quarterly Review 247 (April-June 1937): 15.

suspected of flattery, even to a female!"¹ By the time the GM controversy occurred, she had become "the most famous poetess in England."²

One of Anna Seward's earliest and best remembered poems, Monody on the Death of Major André (1781), which bitterly denounced his execution as a spy by the Americans, elicited a response from George Washington. A few years after peace had been made, he sent an officer to call on Miss Seward with proofs of Washington's efforts to save André. Washington, the officer assured her, had found no "'circumstance of his life. . .so mortifying as to be censured in the Monody on André.'"³ Most of Anna Seward's works were very popular. Her poetical novel Louisa (1784) ran to five editions in England and one in America. Her translations of Horace's Odes, which were actually paraphrases in verse of English prose translations, appeared regularly in the GM during the mid 1780s and were later included in Original Sonnets on Various Subjects, and Odes Paraphrased from Horace (1799), which ran to two editions. Although strict scholars criticized them because Miss Seward knew no Latin, others praised them as graceful paraphrases. Their appearance in the GM swelled the fame which had been started by her monodies and elegies and continued by Louisa. Even Samuel Johnson, her

¹ Ashmun, 92.

² Samuel Holt Monk, "Anna Seward and the Romantic Poets," Wordsworth and Coleridge: Studies in Honor of George McLean Harper, ed. Leslie Griggs (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1939) 128.

³ Ashmun, 85.

lifelong literary and personal antagonist, had praised a section of her Elegy on Captain Cook (1780), which had extended to four editions. Her collection of one hundred of her own sonnets (1799) drew praise from several of the literary journals. In these she is at her best in the minutely observed descriptions of nature. Her Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin (1804), although "severely criticised by some reviewers," "remains an eminently readable book," especially the sections about Erasmus Darwin's life, personality, and friends.¹ After her death, The Beauties of Anna Seward² continued her fame into the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Anna Seward was a prolific letter writer and shows to advantage in this form. Her letters still provide eighteenth-century researchers with information about a wide variety of literary figures. The biographers of people as diverse as Henry Francis Cary and Maria Edgeworth quote her extensively.³ The six volumes of letters which she chose for publication are by her own reckoning "only a twelfth part of what she had written."⁴ Inflated enthusiasms, stilted diction and verbosity mar some of her letters, especially those to authors or critics whom she wanted to impress. But even parts of these letters, together with others to humbler

¹Addleshaw, 22.

²W. C. Oulton, ed. (1813, 1822).

³R. W. King, The Translator of Dante: The Life, Work and Friendships of Henry Francis Cary (London: Martin Secker, 1925) and Oliver, A Study of Maria Edgeworth.

⁴Addleshaw, 26.

recipients, show her more direct and sensible side. Although too often carried away by enthusiasm for the poets of her time, she could be a sharp critic and judge of both literature and people. When she allowed herself to speak frankly, her opinions are worth reading.

She loved to talk and argue about poets and poetry. Of the four controversies published in the GM in which she was involved, three revolve around this favorite topic, and the fourth concerns the related topic of pulpit oratory. She believed passionately in the progress of poetry. She read her contemporaries, good and bad alike, with pleasure and pride. Her third list of poets, those of the "modern" period which began with Pope's death in 1744 (Letters 1a and 1b) shows her overwhelming preference for her contemporaries. Perhaps this also reflects her lack of academic training. No one had set her a course of reading in seventeenth-century poetry that might have brought more poets from earlier times to her notice. However, her choices from the past reflect those of her compatriots. We hear little even from Johnson about Donne, Herbert, Traherne, Vaughan, Marvell or the Cavalier poets. Of the more than fifty contemporary poets she sees as the geniuses of her day, less than a dozen are still read with any frequency. Many of the remainder have been relegated to the ranks of "pretenders" and "poetasters" (Letter 1a, p. 3) from which Miss Seward felt her lists to be free. Indeed, the poet she names second (after Gray) is William Hayley, whose works have long been consigned to the poetaster trash heap. Her inclusion of Thomson and Collins

in the modern period is questionable, because their dates (1700-1748 and 1721-1759 respectively) place them in Pope's time.¹ She admits her mistake with Thomson, but defends Collins's placement because his fame came after midcentury (Letter 8, p. 36).

At the time the Pope-Dryden controversy began, Anna Seward was forty-seven. She lived with her seriously ill father in the bishop's palace (former home of Gilbert Walmesley, mentor of the young Johnson and Garrick) in Lichfield's Cathedral Close. As the daughter of Canon Thomas Seward, Anna was socially and economically secure. She played a central role in Lichfield society not only because of her position but also because of her personality. People liked her and enjoyed her company. Her fame as a poetess was increasing and would increase further. Her circle included Dr. Erasmus Darwin, author of the Botanic Garden (1789-1791) and grandfather of Charles Darwin; Lucy Porter, Samuel Johnson's step-daughter; Richard Lovell Edgeworth, father of Maria Edgeworth; Thomas Day, author of Sandford and Merton (1783-1786), a didactic novel for children which contained advanced theories about child-rearing and education; and the youthful Henry Francis Cary, translator of Dante. Dr. Darwin had encouraged her early verse writing and she subsequently composed some seventy lines of verse on his actual

¹The correspondent "M----s" (Henry Francis Cary), without commenting on their presence on the list of moderns, deplores their omission from the list of Pope's contemporaries (Letter 5, p. 29).

botanic garden which was printed in the GM in 1783 and which Darwin appropriated for the exordium to his Botanic Garden.¹ Although she opposed most of Johnson's opinions about poetry and deplored his rough treatment of those whom he considered intellectually inferior and pretentious (including Miss Seward's father), she knew him all her life and visited him often during the closing months of his life.

Anna Seward was passionately fond of music, especially Handel. Lichfield choirmaster, John Saville, was her dear friend (some even said lover, but this is doubtful). Her acquaintance with Joseph Weston began through Saville and was probably furthered by his being an organist. In a sense Anna Seward was also a musical performer. She was often asked to read poetry (her own or others') aloud, and her voice was so musical that wherever she went she was asked to perform. Her own poetry benefited greatly from her fine reading in which tone and expression masked poetic shortcomings.

Her world extended beyond Lichfield. William Hayley, arbiter of literary taste and thought by many to be the leading poet of his day, was her friend and literary comrade for much of her life. She met and corresponded with a number of literary figures, including Sir Walter Scott, Robert Southey, Hannah More, Helen Maria Williams, and Hester Thrale. The advocate of abolition, William Wilberforce, visited her, as did Thomas Erskine, the famous Whig orator who became Lord Chancellor. Dr. Samuel Parr, who was, in

¹ Ashmun, 67-68.

Hesketh Pearson's words, "a sort of whig Dr. Johnson,"¹ called on her. Romney painted her. Scott sent her his early works for comment and edited her literary remains, which included his memoir of her and extracts from her letters.

As a critic and arbiter of taste, she was listened to and respected, as the contributors to the controversy all attest. Joseph Weston is guilty of less hyperbole than we might at first think in calling her "one of the finest Writers of the Age" (Letter 4, p. 24). Granted, Weston was unknown and of a humbler origin than Miss Seward, and thus might view her with more awe than was warranted. Yet much of the public shared his view and might well have agreed that his position in dueling with Miss Seward was doubly dangerous. Whether he fights or flees,

disgrace awaits me on either hand. If I defend myself, who can tell that, in the warmth of argument, a strenuous defence may not undesignedly be converted into an Attack? And what a pitiful figure does one of Homer's Heroes make while wounding a Goddess! If, to avoid this danger, I give ground to my fair Antagonist, will the World give me credit for my Magnanimity? No (Letter 4, p. 24).

Joseph Weston was an organist in the small town of Solihull, a few miles southeast of Birmingham. His humble origin and general obscurity probably added to his apprehension about debating with Anna Seward. As she notes, "He was by no means calculated to the meridian of our pompous gentry."² Anna Seward's letters provide most of our

¹ The Swan of Lichfield (NY: Oxford UP, 1937) 150n.

² Letters 2:90.

information about him. Apparently, he had long wanted to meet her and introduced himself to her after having been encouraged by John Saville, with whom "he had lately passed an evening."¹ Her vivid description of the comic yet intellectually impressive figure he cut not only gives us a distinct picture of Weston but also shows how direct and lively she can be when she descends from her Parnassian elevation:

. . .his height and proportion mighty slender, and well enough by nature, but fidgeted and noddled into an appearance not over prepossessing; nor are his sharp features and very sharp little eyes a whit behind them in quizzity. Then he is drest--ye gods, how he is drest!--in a salmon-coloured coat, sattin waistcoat, and small-clothes of the same warm aurora-tint; his violently protruded chitterlin [chitterling, a frill on his shirt front], more luxuriant in its quantity, and more accurately plaited than B. B.'s [Beau Brummel's] itself, is twice open hemmed. . . . A hat furiously cocked and pinched, too small in the crown to admit his head, sticks upon the extremest summit of the full-winged caxon [wig]. . . .

His voice has a scrannel-tone [harsh, unmelodious sound] --his articulation is hurried, his accent distinguished by Staffordshire provinciality; and it is difficult to stand his bow with any discipline of feature. He talks down the hours, but knows nothing of their flight. . . .

Now look on the other side the medal. His wit, intelligence, and poetic genius are a mine; and his taste and real accuracy in criticism enable him to cut the rich ore they produce brilliant.

He knows of every body, and has read every thing. With a wonderfully retentive memory, and familiar with the principles of all the sciences, his conversation is as instructive as it is amusing; for his ideas are always uncommon and striking, either from absolute originality, or from new and happy combination. . . .

The heart of this ingenious and oddly compounded being, is open, ardent, and melting as even female-tenderness (2:91-93).

The peculiarities which Miss Seward noticed on first

¹ Letters 2:94.

meeting Weston show in the letters he writes during the controversy. He displays a stereotypically feminine hypersensitivity to criticism. He responds to his adversaries with floods of words, endlessly quoting himself and them, as he writes "down the hours." His nervous prose is studded with italics, capitals, and dashes. Yet he appears to have read almost as much as Miss Seward, and remembers it more accurately. He catches her several times in her customary practice of imprecise quotation.

At the time of the controversy, Weston had published a few poems in the GM, including one to Miss Seward's young protégés Henry Francis Cary and Thomas Lister.¹ He had translated John Morfitt's Philotoxi Ardenae (1788) into blank verse and Drydenic couplets. To this he added as preface "An Essay on the Superiority of Dryden's Versification over that of Pope and of the Moderns," which started the controversy. This is his only work to extend to a second edition (1885). In the early 1790s, the GM published several patriotic poems in which Weston deplored Napoleonic France's "tyrant Liberty and anarch laws."² Preoccupation with the events in France may explain Weston's failure to finish his proofs of Pope's villainous character. He continued his connection with the Lichfield circle at least through 1793 when he wrote an "Occasional Prologue, For the Opening of the New Theatre,

¹ 58:823.

² "On the King's Refusal of his Sanction to the Decree against the Emigrants," GM 62.2:654.

Lichfield."¹ In it, he describes a "drop scene" with a statue of Shakespeare having medallions on its pedestal picturing Miss Seward, Dr. Johnson, and Mr. Garrick. With undiminished gallantry, he refers to Anna Seward as "The bright-ey'd Champion of mellifluous Pope." In 1794 he and John Morfitt contributed poetical sketches to a volume of Poems by Mrs. Pickering. Several of Weston's sonnets in this volume are in "imitation of Milton," causing Dr. Samuel Parr to comment, "'Tho had it been poor Milton's fate to see thee strive to imitate him t'would sure have driven him mad.'"²

In addition to his connection with Lichfield literary society, Weston seems to have mingled to some extent in Birmingham literary society. His name is joined with Birmingham resident John Morfitt's in two of his three published works, both of which were published in Birmingham. At some time during his life, probably after the Pope-Dryden controversy, he became a close friend of the Suffolk peasant poet Robert Bloomfield.³ He edited the poet's Remains (1824) and in his preface called Bloomfield, "one of the most perfect poets of his day" (viii). He admired the "extreme purity of his taste" and sounded a Johnsonian note in remarking that, "his rural scenes are never infested with dryads, or fauns, or genii, or any other phantoms of foreign extraction" (ix).

¹GM 63.1:559-60.

²"Additional Poems" section of Pickering, Poems, 25. Parr's handwritten comments appear in the margin of the British Library's copy.

³Bloomfield's biographers describe Weston as the man "who knew him so well." William Wickett and Nicholas Duval, The Farmer's Boy (Lavenham, England: Terence Dalton, 1971) 62.

The defender of Dryden's "full resounding Line" and "long, majestic march" (2HE1 4:268-69) apparently became attracted to the "simple and unaffected" (x) style of Romantic nature poetry. In his prefatory essay and during the controversy, Weston calls for a return to a simpler style. At some point he stopped looking for models in the past and began finding them in the present. His individual movement from the cause of Drydenic purity to that of Romantic rusticity unites him with the great revolution in poetic taste that was taking place even as the paper war about Dryden and Pope extended through 24 issues of the GM. Whatever his faults as a critic, he saw what was coming sooner than many and devoted himself as zealously to the Romantic cause as he had to the Drydenic.

When Anna Seward and Joseph Weston met in 1788, she described him as being in "middle life," most likely the mid-forties.¹ Thus, Weston was probably born between 1743 and 1745. He was still alive in 1824, when he would have been in his late seventies.

Henry Francis Cary (1772-1844) was a schoolboy of fifteen at the time of the controversy. He grew up to become "the greatest Italian scholar of his age."² His translation of Dante, initially made famous by Coleridge's lectures, has,

¹Letters 2:90. When Anna Seward met Hester Thrale Piozzi's husband Gabriel in 1787, she described him as being "'in middle life'" (Ashmun, 150); he was then 46.

²King, The Translator of Dante 7.

according to the DNB, "remained the translation which, on Dante's name being mentioned, occurs first to the mind." Born in Gibralter, Cary was raised in Staffordshire. He attended various local grammar schools including The King Edward VI School in Birmingham, which he was attending at the time he contributed his letters to the controversy. He may have met Joseph Weston through this school. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, took orders in 1796, and became the vicar of Abbot's Bromley. He began translating Dante's Inferno in 1800. When it was published five years later, it attracted little notice, partly because Dante himself was out of fashion but also because of "Cary's own independence of the corrupt poetical taste of the day." Unlike his one-time mentor, Anna Seward, he had embraced the homely expressions Dante had used in the Italian. She reproved him for his "familiarity and even vulgarity" (DNB).

Cary first attracted Anna Seward's notice through the poetry he contributed to the GM in 1787. His close friend and fellow-poet, Thomas Lister, who lived just outside Lichfield, had also drawn Miss Seward's notice. Through Lister, Cary met Miss Seward in the spring of 1788 and "was enrolled among her disciples and adorers."¹ Cary's biographer deplores the "Sewardian" influence on Cary's early poetry, which consists of odes and sonnets, most of which were ornate and sentimental, together with translations of a number of Horace's odes, some Greek pieces and one Italian poem.

¹ King, 22.

Despite his great admiration for the Swan of Lichfield, Cary had an independent mind and showed it in the letters he wrote as "M----s" (short for his adopted poetic name "Marcellus"¹) while still her devoted protégé. In these letters he disagreed with Miss Seward about her three lists of poets, finding the list from Milton's time too scanty and that from the present far too long. Showing admirable discernment even for a precocious adolescent, Cary wrote:

But it must be more than common excellence which can insure a reputation of an hundred years; and probably in that space many of those luminaries, which contribute to the splendour of the present day, will be extinguished and forgotten (Letter 5, p. 35).

In his second letter, he displayed something of the critical bent that was to inform his work with Dante. He adopted the garden metaphor begun by Johnson and used by Miss Seward to attack Dryden's unpruned and weedy "wilderness" (Letter 1c, p. 18). With the glee of a student tripping up his mentor, he turned the metaphor to Dryden's support:

While Dryden, studying to render his poetic garden rather spacious than nicely beautiful, suffered the rankest weeds to spring up among the most luxuriant flowers, and entirely neglected the assistance of art; Pope, with deliberate leisure, was employed in banishing every appearance of disorder, in adjusting his delicate plants in the most striking dispositions, and in checking, sometimes too severely, the sportive wantonness of Nature. There are some, who (to preserve the metaphor) are on the whole more delighted with the wilderness of the former, than with the regular, yet elegant parterres of the latter; and I profess myself to be one of the number (Letter 12, p. 116-17).

¹Cary's biographer can find no clear reason why he adopted this particular name (King, 18-19).

Miss Seward gives no indication that she recognizes Cary's hand in the "M----s" letters. In her letters to him, she is quick to correct what seem to her to be his errors in poetic taste, but the letters from this period contain no mention of the controversy. We may assume she did not recognize "M----s" as her protégé.

As Cary matured, he left the Seward fold and devoted himself to the exact and unostentatious form of translation for which he is still known. He married in 1796, upon taking orders, and in 1807 moved to London where he completed his translation of Dante. In 1812, while his translation was still languishing in obscurity, he met Coleridge, who was so impressed with Cary's work that he included it in his course of lectures and helped to make it well-known. Through Coleridge, Cary met Charles Lamb who became an intimate friend. In addition to translating Dante, Cary wrote a good deal of prose--essays on French and Italian poets and a series of lives of English poets supplementing Johnson's work. He translated Aristophanes' The Birds and Pindar's odes and edited several standard English poets "with much judgment" (DNB). In 1826, Cary obtained a position at the British Museum as assistant-keeper of printed books in the poetry section but retired after eleven years when he failed to be appointed head of the library. He died at 72 and was buried in Westminster Abbey next to Samuel Johnson.

John Morfitt had a good deal in common with his translator Joseph Weston. They both admired Dryden, feared the

menace of the French Revolution and Napoleon's imperialism, and used their literary talents to express their patriotism. Like Weston, he was relatively obscure and is known to us primarily through the letters of Anna Seward, to whom he sent a copy of The Woodmen of Arden. Morfitt was a barrister at law in Birmingham, where he took an active part in public affairs. He wrote essays on legal matters affecting Birmingham¹ and exhorted his countrymen to patriotic efforts during the Napoleonic wars. His Observations on the present alarming crisis: addressed to the Nobility and Clergy (1797) ran to four editions. During the early 1800s, he continued to sound the call to arms against the French.² He died in Birmingham in 1809, the same year as Anna Seward. It seems likely that he was close to Weston's age, so he would have been about 45 when he wrote his single letter in the controversy, and about 65 when he died.

John Nichols (1745-1826), printer, editor, antiquarian, and contemporary historian, was the GM's editor during the controversy. He rose from very modest origins to become a leading figure in publishing and literature. Having missed a chance at a naval career, he was apprenticed as a boy of twelve to the printer William Bowyer from whom he received "a very fair classical training" (DNB). Bowyer encouraged him to write poetry, which he began publishing when he was

¹For instance, An Abstract of all the Acts of Parliament that relate to the town of Birmingham (1791).

²The British Tocsin or the charge sounded, concluding with An address to the regulars, militia, yeomanry and volunteers of Great-Britain (1803).

eighteen. In 1766, Bowyer took Nichols into partnership. By the mid 1770s Nichols was beginning to do significant literary work, including editing a volume of Swift's Works (1775) and producing a two-volume Supplement to Dr. Swift's Works, with Explanatory Notes (1776 and 1779). When Bowyer died in 1777, he left Nichols the residue of his estate which allowed him to buy a share in the GM, where he joined with David Henry in its editing and management. From 1792 until his death, Nichols had sole charge of the magazine and continually wrote for it as well.

Nichols had strong antiquarian interests which led to substantial work in that field and influenced his conduct of the GM. He became a close friend of Samuel Johnson, to whom he often appealed for copy for his magazine and whose Lives of the English Poets he printed. Among his many and varied publications were Biographical Anecdotes of Mr. Hogarth, with a Catalogue of His Works, with occasional Remarks; The Progresses of Queen Elizabeth; and The History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Leicester, which he considered his "'most durable monument'" (DNB). Today, eighteenth-century scholars find his most useful works to be the Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century and Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century, both of which furnish a wealth of information about literature and literary figures.

At the time of the controversy, Nichols was in his prime, and his magazine had become the most widely-read

journal of its day.¹ His contribution to the debate addresses his own editorial persona, "Mr. Urban." In it, he flatters both of the principal combatants and touts his own work as well as the GM's poetry section by mentioning that it contains a poem by Leonard Welsted, "which the industrious Editor [Nichols] of his Works laments that he never could obtain" (Letter 24, p. 188).

Philip Thicknesse (1719-1792) spent most of his adult life in military or government service. Plain-spoken and often contentious, he combined great integrity and generosity with "'the faculty of lessening the number of his friends and increasing the number of his enemies'" (DNB). His quixotic behavior affected his entire life. As a young man of sixteen, he went to Georgia with General Oglethorpe, but left that service because he criticised the colony's management. While he was lieutenant governor of Landguard Fort, Suffolk (1753-66), he quarreled with the colonel of the Suffolk militia for which he was fined and imprisoned for three months. During this time, he also met and attached himself closely to the painter Thomas Gainsborough, but again a squabble ended their friendship.

After leaving Landguard Fort, Thicknesse moved around a good deal, a pattern he was to continue throughout his life. In 1775 he went to Spain where he intended to settle because of resentment toward the House of Lords. He had appealed for

¹For further discussion of the GM see below, xcvi-civ.

reversal of a chancery suit denying him L12,000 which he felt due him from his first wife's family. Upon losing the appeal, he considered himself "'driven out of his own country'" (DNB). He returned to England the next year, however, and settled first at Bath and later at Sandgate, near Hythe, where he could see the shores of France. He was living there at the time he contributed his letter to the controversy.

Thicknesse's writings are as diverse as they are numerous and lengthy. They range from Man-Midwifery Analysed to Useful Hints to those who make the Tour of France (8 vols.) to A Sketch of the Life and Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough (8 vols.) to The Speaking Figure and the Automaton Chess Player exposed and detected. He wrote particularly interesting accounts of his experiences in Georgia, Jamaica, and Europe. His eight-volume Observations on the Customs and Manners of the French Nation (1766) ran to three editions.

Thicknesse's contribution to the controversy was written November 4, 1790, presumably from Sandgate. For the next two years he traveled back and forth between France and England, spending some time in Paris while the revolution was in its early stages. He died suddenly in France in the fall of 1792.

Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes (1726-1792) was a renowned Scottish judge, scholar, and author. His knowledge of legal history equaled that of his distinguished contemporary Lord Monboddo. He was acquainted with many of

the leading thinkers and writers of his day and was known as a judicious and broad-minded man. As a judge he was "distinguished for humanity at a time when the criminal bench was disgraced by opposite qualities" (DNB). Although ineffective as an orator because of a speech defect, he was known for the learning and accuracy of his written pleadings and opinions.

Dalrymple was a friend of Johnson, Burke, William Warburton (editor of Shakespeare and Pope), and Boswell, in whom he had first inspired the desire to meet Johnson. He was acquainted with the learned men of Edinburgh, including Adam Smith and David Hume, who asked him to revise his "Inquiry into the Human Mind," even though Hailes, an "earnest believer in christianity" (DNB), was not sympathetic to Hume's skepticism. His numerous publications were related almost entirely to the history of Christianity and of Scotland. Many were short pamphlets, poems or biographical sketches, and his shorter pieces often appeared in the GM. His most important work was a three-volume Annals of Scotland (1776-1779), which ran to three editions. He died of apoplexy ten months after his call for peace in the controversy.

A magazine that would publish such a controversy--30,000-words of debate about two deceased poets--without fear of losing its readers is a peculiarly eighteenth-century phenomenon. The origin and history of the GM bears looking at in more detail.

The Gentleman's Magazine

The Gentleman's Magazine was the first and longest-lived periodical of its kind. When the Pope-Dryden controversy began, it was 58 years old and destined to continue publication for another century and beyond, finally ceasing in 1922. Founded by printer Edward Cave in 1731, it began as a miscellaneous collection of articles reprinted or digested from other sources. As Edward Cave wrote in the Preface to the GM's first volume, he proposed

to give a Monthly View of all the News-Papers (which of late are so multiplied as to render it impossible, unless a Man makes it a Business, to consult them all) and in the next Place, we shall join there with some other Matters of Use or Amusement that will be communicated to us. . . . This Consideration has induced several Gentlemen to promote a Monthly Collection, to treasure up, as in a Magazine, the most remarkable Pieces on the Subjects abovementioned [public affairs and entertaining essays], or at least impartial Abridgments thereof, as a Method much better calculated to preserve those Things that are curious, than that of transcribing.¹

The GM was more than just an eighteenth-century Readers' Digest. Even before it began including original material, it attempted to cover the current history of its day, and it soon grew into a periodical which combined the features of today's Time, U.S. News and World Report, The New York Times Book Review, The New Yorker, National Geographic, Science

¹Quoted in C. Lennart Carlson, The First Magazine: A History of The Gentleman's Magazine (Providence: Brown U, 1938) 29-30. For information about the GM, I am indebted to this book and to John Nichols, "The Rise and Progress of The Gentleman's Magazine," General Index to The Gentleman's Magazine (1821) 3: iii-lxxx.

Digest and The Farmer's Almanac. Edited by the fictitious Sylvanus Urban, whose name comprehended both country and city, it was intended for a large and varied audience. At its inception it reported: "Publick Affairs, Foreign and Domestic, Births, Marriages, and Deaths of Eminent Persons, Pre-ferments, Ecclesiastical and Civil, Prices of Goods, Grain and Stocks, Bankrupts declar'd and Books Publish'd, Pieces of Humour, Disputes in Politicks and Learning," together with advertisements, civil and military lists, "Instructions in Gardening," and notices of fairs.¹ It soon added poetry and book reviews, and from 1735 on also depended increasingly on correspondence from its readers. Albert Pailler estimates that during Cave's time the GM had between six and seven hundred correspondents and that most of them submitted only one piece.² This dependence on its readers as contributors fostered the close connections between reader-authors and the GM's editor which continued throughout Nichols's tenure as editor (he died in 1826) and was a major factor in keeping the Pope-Dryden debate going for two years.

The GM's original title indicates the breadth of its potential audience: The Gentleman's Magazine; or Trader's Monthly Intelligencer. The rather touchingly explicit "Trader's" was dropped after the first issue, but the audience remained a broad group of literate Britons (including

¹ Carlson, 30.

² Arthur Sherbo, "Additions to the Nichols File of the Gentleman's Magazine," Studies in Bibliography (1984) 37:229.

colonists) who certainly did not fit within the Johnson's classical definition of gentleman: "homo gentilis, a man of ancestry. All other derivations seem to be whimsical" (Dictionary). A wide range of men and women--landed gentry and manufacturers, clergymen and office clerks, scholars and governesses, civilians and military men--read the GM.

Because of its wide appeal and Cave's industry and good management, the GM prospered. Cave encouraged contributions from his readers, which cost him nothing, and he also secured the services of some excellent professional writers and editors, the most outstanding being Samuel Johnson. Throughout most of his career, Johnson contributed essays, biographies, and poems. He took over the accounts of parliament's doings, immortalizing them as the "Debates in the Senate of Magna Lilliputa," thus sidestepping the law against directly reporting parliament's activities, while appealing to the public's curiosity about what went on there. For about seven years from 1738 on, Johnson was also probably the GM's chief editor and a key figure in making the magazine far more intellectual than it had been at its outset.¹ It depended less and less on digests from other sources and began publishing important literary and scientific essays. Cave's sense of what made news, together with his interest in science, led him to publish the first report of Benjamin Franklin's

¹In "The Rise and Progress of The Gentleman's Magazine," John Nichols calls Johnson "my illustrious Predecessor," General Index to the Gentleman's Magazine, 3:iii.

Experiments and Observations in Electricity, after the Royal Society had "barely condescended" to notice it.¹ Although many imitators sprang up in the wake of the GM's success, Cave kept his magazine ahead of the competition. His figures for 1746 show a circulation of 3,000 copies a month, a very large one for the time, and one which presumably increased throughout the remainder of the century. When Cave died, he left behind a well-established magazine that "was within the next century destined to become one of the most important influences on literature and on the reading of persons of all classes."²

After Cave's death, his brother-in-law David Henry took over as editor. In 1778, John Nichols bought a share of the magazine. He and Henry were co-editors until Henry's death in 1792, when Nichols became sole editor until his own death thirty-four years later. A few years before the Pope-Dryden controversy, the GM had expanded both in coverage and size. With the 53rd volume, it began appearing in two parts, each of almost 600 pages each as contrasted with the previous year's single 600-page volume. Under Nichols's influence it had increased its antiquarian side to such an extent that the preface for 1783 announced: "'The Antiquary who may purchase these Volumes will find materials sufficient to gratify the amplest curiosity.'"³ And by the next year, these included

¹Carlson, 27.

²Carlson, 28.

³Nichols, "Rise and Progress of the GM" 3:1xi.

accounts of ancient families, cities, churches and monasteries; old maps; antique furniture; bygone domestic customs including old recipes; "antient modes of internal carriage"; and old crafts, arts and sciences (3:lxiv). Among things modern, it continued to cover all its original subjects and had greatly expanded its pages on literature and science. It gave attention to "the mineral and fossil Kingdoms," physics and metaphysics, mathematics, the "Phaenomena of Nature," and medical news of all sorts: "Prescriptions in the Medical Art," "Extraordinary cases in Surgery," and analysis of "the most celebrated Nostrums" (3:lx-lxi).

Such was the magazine which John Nichols was managing and editing during the Pope-Dryden controversy. Although David Henry may have owned the larger share of the magazine, by 1789 he was nearing the end of his life and had probably turned much of the editor's job over to Nichols. Nichols had taken over the printing in 1781, and in 1782 because of "the extensive literary connexions of the present Editor [Nichols]," expanded the GM's scope and size (3:lix).¹ In 1790, the GM's fictional editor, Mr. Urban, proudly reported his magazine and its staff "to stand conspicuous in the foremost rank of Monthly Journalists," where they functioned as "the brief, but faithful, reporters of the Chronicle of the Times" (3:lxvii).

¹In his account of the GM, Nichols scarcely mentions Henry beyond saying that he gave up the printing in 1778.

The Pope-Dryden controversy involved two things which the GM had always featured--poetry and Pope. From its early years, the GM had published poetry. As was true of all the magazines during the 1730s and 40s, the verse was second or third rate, "without individualized expression or original talent," and revealing all too clearly "the inward decay of Neo-Classicism."¹ Most of the verse was short, much of it occasional, and was often sent in by readers either named or anonymous. The GM's verse, like everything else in the magazine, was calculated for wide public appeal. As Carlson points out, "it was popular with great numbers of its readers" and "is still valuable as an index to the tastes of an age."² Also, Cave's policy favored bland poetry free of extreme tendencies in either thought or versification. Controversial material was for the magazine's prose essays.

The GM did publish some first-rate poetry, but almost always as lengthy extracts from an established author's works. Thus, Pope's Essay on Man was extracted at length, and Pope himself was the single most frequently quoted poet during Cave's time. The "Poetical Essays" during the Nichols years continued Cave's tradition--short unremarkable pieces showing none of the ferment that was about to produce the Romantic revolution. Generally, it favored variety over excellence, although it did publish short pieces by Swift, Pope, Johnson, Akenside, Thomson, and Shenstone, to name a

¹ Carlson, 197.

² Carlson, 196.

few.¹ But also like Cave, Nichols favored lively controversy in the magazine's prose essays, particularly in the contributions from readers which accounted for many of these essays.

The Pope-Dryden controversy shows how Nichols managed the GM as a literary forum. By publishing the letters from the two principals, Weston and Seward, in installments and dividing them at provocative junctures, while simultaneously feeding in contributions from other combatants at strategic intervals, Nichols kept his readers eagerly awaiting each monthly issue. This practice angered some of the correspondents, especially when letters were held for a long time or when dates were changed, as with "M.F.'s" first letter which was actually written before Anna Seward's first letter. According to Nichols's note (Letter 7, p. 33), the date was changed by accident. Although it is not clear when the letter was received, it could well have arrived before Anna Seward's, but didn't capture Nichols's interest until after he saw hers. Anna Seward was well-known to the GM's readers as a poetess as well as a lively controversialist (the first four letters in her debate with Boswell and others about Samuel Johnson had appeared just two years earlier), and her long, wide-ranging letter promised to capture readers' interest more securely than the unknown "M.F.'s." Whether "M.F.'s" letter was accidentally or purposely delayed, the result was better for circulation.

¹ See Donald Bond, "The Gentleman's Magazine" rev. of The First Magazine, by Lennart Carlson, Modern Philology (1940-41) 38:89-100.

As the controversy dwindled down to Weston's single combat against a variety of Pope supporters, Nichols called a halt to contributions from "all but the principals" (Letter 36, p. (237)). Even after this, he printed letters from five correspondents besides Weston, one of them being from David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes. But the interest was waning. Anna Seward had dropped out of the debate six months earlier (her last letter appeared in the June 1790 issue). Weston was repeating himself and others without producing "Pope's Evidence Against Himself" (Letter 43, p. (261)). In a note to this letter, Nichols declined to insert anything further except another letter from Weston which Nichols noted "is to appear in our next" (262), but does not. We cannot tell if there was such a letter or if Nichols was just holding out bait. If the letter existed and was just more of the same, Nichols probably decided that his readers would stand no more. The twenty-four month talk show was over.

But what had it been about and what did it decide? The short answers are Pope's poetry and character, and nothing. For a more complete answer, we must turn to the issues raised and debated by Joseph Weston, Anna Seward, "M. F.", and the others.

The Issues

The issues in the controversy appear broad because they touch on everything a critic might discuss about a poet--his work and its interrelation with his personal character. Actually, the issues come down to the specific charges Weston makes against Pope's character and poetry in his Preface. He accuses Pope of bad character in both his professional and personal life. As John Dennis had done some seventy-five years earlier,¹ he charges Pope with enhancing his own reputation at the expense of Dryden's and allowing his friends to do likewise. Throughout the controversy, Weston maintains he has evidence of "the insidious Arts which he [Pope] suffered his Friends to practice, in order to undermine the Reputation of the deceased Poet and to asperse the Characters of his living Supporters" (Letter 9c, p. 57). Challenged repeatedly by Anna Seward and "M.F." to bring forth these proofs, Weston fails to produce the pamphlet in which he says he has convicted Pope out of his own mouth. He does attempt to prove that Pope incited Swift to denigrate Dryden in A Tale of a Tub, and becomes embroiled in a debate over chronology with "B. L. A.," who by comparing dates concludes that Pope was "from five to nine years of age when Dr. Johnson thinks it [Tale of a Tub] was written; and when it was printed he was sixteen" (Letter 35, pp. (235-36)).

¹See above, xvii-xix.

Weston also attacks what he sees as Pope's personal vindictiveness. Like John Dennis and a number of other eighteenth-century critics, he is convinced that Pope used his satire not to chastise fools and knaves for the good of literature and society, but to pay off personal scores. In his Life of Pope, Johnson accepted the tradition of Pope's vindictiveness and irritability and recorded it with such authority that it continued to be the prevailing view for almost two centuries. Recently, in preparation for his monumental Alexander Pope: A Life (1985), Maynard Mack investigated the accuracy of Johnson's judgments about Pope's character. "Reading Johnson," he notes, "one is struck by the ease with which he resorts to such terms as proud, vain, mean, niggardly, ungrateful, resentful, fretful, irritable, petulant, peevish, arrogant, malignant, capricious, malicious, and treacherous."¹ Mack found Johnson's account full of misstatements and misinterpretations. In some cases, Johnson "actually makes up scenarios out of whole cloth," as when he perpetuated the myth that Pope was proving to be his usual ungrateful and waspish self by satirizing the Duke of Chandos's country estate Cannons in the conspicuous consumption and bad taste of "Timon's Villa" (Epistle to Burlington) (xxx). If an admirer of Pope's poetry like Johnson could be so seduced by the myths about his character that he

¹ "Alexander Pope: Reflections of an Amateur Biographer," Modern Language Review (October 1984) 79.4: xxix.

failed to examine them with his usual keenness, we cannot be surprised that the non-admiring Weston should seize on them as proof that Pope was indeed "execrable."

Anna Seward defends Pope's character mainly by attacking Dryden's. She dismisses Weston's charges as "impolitic" because the crimes imputed to Pope "must be only conjectural" and are "as a passing cloud of Summer" compared to the "December's darkness" of Dryden's sins. His "writings prove that he was wholly without fixed principles in Religion, Politics, or Criticism; that his Interest was his Legislator, his Guide, and his God" (Letter 1c, p. 19) "M. F.," whose Letter 2, which predates Anna Seward's, was written especially to object to Weston's epithet "execrable," shoulders the defense for Pope's character. This defense is moderate enough, for "M. F." willingly admits what no one was prepared to challenge, that at times, Pope may have been too irritable and acrimonious. As Weston's charges escalate from "execrable" to "foe to human kind" (Letter 9b, p. 51), "M. F." steadily repels his attack, drawing testimony from "no less a man than Lord Orrery" and even from Addison (Letter 19, pp. 130-31). Finally he takes on the case of Thomas Burnet and George Duckett.

In Letter 17, Weston addresses "M. F.," laying out the case against Pope. In Dunciad (A), Pope wrote:

"Behold yon Pair, in Strict Embraces join'd;
How like in manners, and how like in mind!

Fam'd for Good-Nature, Burnet, and for Truth;
Ducket¹ for Pious Passion to the Youth" (5:3.173-76).

Weston accuses Pope of slandering Burnet and Duckett in this passage and in his notes to it, which include a scurrilous epigram about Burnet and Duckett, that the Twickenham editors ascribe to Pope. In it Burnet and Duckett appear as an "Amphisboena" (a two-headed snake) which "At either end assails;/ None knows which leads, or which is led,/ For both heads are but tails."² Weston says:

Here is a Charge of the most atrocious, the most unnatural, the most detestable Kind, brought against Colonel Ducket; for it is not possible for any one possessed of common Sense, and common Modesty, to sign his name to an Opinion that Pope meant really to praise Burnet for Good-nature and for Truth, or that he intended to celebrate the Wit or the Politeness of either Party (121).

Weston concludes that Pope intended his readers to believe that Burnet was "famed for Ill-nature and Falsehood; and that Ducket was famed for an impious Passion for the Youth" (144).

Pope had reason to be annoyed with Burnet and Duckett. Both had attacked him in print as early as 1715. George Duckett, in the words of the Twickenham editor, "probably wrote two numbers of Pasquin which annoyed Pope (Nos. 12 and 13)" (5:439). Pope clearly believed he had. The offending numbers had dwelt on Pope's relationship with his patron John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, whose works Pope had edited. Three days after Pope published them in January of 1723, they

¹In the first edition of Dunciad (A) (1728a), only initials are used for Burnet and Duckett. Pope supplied names in later editions (1729d-42), and Weston refers to one of those.

²For the entire epigram, see Letter 17, p. 121.

were "seized on account of Jacobite principles and expressions" which they contained, and "Pope thus found himself, as the editor of a seditious work, in an awkward situation" (5:168n.).

Thomas Burnet attacked Pope in the Grumbler in 1715. He and Duckett ridiculed Pope's forthcoming translation of the Iliad in a pamphlet originally entitled The Hump Conference (1715) and altered, "at Addison's suggestion," to Homerides (1716).¹ A decade later, Pope "retaliated on Burnet, though not very sharply, in 'Sandys' Ghost' (1727)" and on Duckett in Peri Bathous (1728) (5:432). Burnet was a member of Addison's circle at Button's coffee house. Both he and Duckett were active in Whig politics and no friends to Pope. Duckett was also a friend of John Dennis's, who was writing violently against Pope. Pope believed that Duckett was responsible for engraving the frontispiece to Pope Alexander's Supremacy (1729), which portrays Pope's head on the body of an monkey and is signed "G.D.," which the Twickenham editor notes seems fairly conclusive proof of Duckett's authorship (5:439). Mack makes the same conjecture.² When this pamphlet first appeared, Pope thought Burnet had written it, but later (c. 1735) he believed it to be Dennis's and Duckett's work. The Twickenham editor concludes that based on Burnet's letters to Duckett, "It is unlikely that Burnet had any part in it" (5:432). Who actually wrote the pamphlet remains unclear.

¹Mack, Life 277.

²Life 474.

George Sherburn points out that Pope's description of the author as a "Person who has great obligations to me"¹ does not fit Dennis. E. N. Hooker, editor of Dennis's critical works, thinks Dennis did not write the piece, and D. Nichol Smith thinks Duckett had no part in it.²

Whatever the truth of all this, Pope's animosity toward Burnet and Duckett seems justified, although his method of paying them off in The Dunciad may be questioned. Burnet and Duckett had attacked first, and if Pope scores more heavily than they, their hands were none too clean. They had happily publicized his accidental connection with treason in his publication of Buckingham's Works and had attempted to undercut his Homer. Unfortunately for them Pope was more powerful with pen and innuendo than they, and his verses in Dunciad (A) with their attendant notes slid the stiletto in with deadly effect. Duckett "is said to have demanded and obtained satisfaction from Pope"³ for the implications of homosexuality in these lines and the scurrilous epigram in the notes. Pope's own notes to the passage in Dunciad (A) show he was aware of its implication. John Dennis had drawn the inference, and Pope quotes his interpretation at length in order to deny its truth.⁴ The Twickenham editors note

¹The Correspondence of Alexander Pope (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956) 3:33n.

²J. V. Guerinot, Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope 1711-1744 166.

³Twk 5:439.

⁴Weston quotes Pope's note, Letter 17, pp. 120-22.

that "Pope may have been sincere in his protestations; but he never suppressed the passage, nor the note calling attention to Dennis's interpretation of it" (5:3.176n.) In Dunciad (B), Pope omitted the lines containing the names and deleted the epigram (5:3.179-84 and note), but in his note to the lines he reminded the reader of the previous version. Weston is certainly right that the compliments are insults and the epigram is scurrilous, and Pope tacitly admitted this by his modifications in both Dunciad (A) and (B). But in the pamphlet wars few holds were barred, and Burnet and Duckett had struck first.

Pope's defenders in the controversy struggle to clear him of all scandalous intent. "M. F." (Letter 22) notes that neither of the injured parties, Burnet or Duckett, first drew the implication of homosexuality, but that John Dennis "took it into his head to annex such an idea to the fourth line (though a literal translation from a Latin classick) as no one else had thought of" (150). "M.F." rather naively accepts Pope's denials of any guilty intention and fails to notice that although Pope altered the passage, the new version still recalled the earlier one. "J. S." (Letter 30) enlarges on "M. F.'s" reference to a classical source. He points out that since Pope was writing a mock epic or "comic epopee" in order to parody "the young Chiefs" in one of the Aeneid's "most interesting" (185) episodes, he needed a pair

¹ Weston quotes Pope's note, Letter 17, pp. 120-22.

of contemporary writers who were ripe for satire. "J. S." also touches on, but does not develop, another possibility for Pope's overlooking the scurrilous interpretation of the Burnet-Duckett passage. The passage is set up as part of hack-poet Elkanah Settle's long speech to chief dunce Colley Cibber. The lack of discrimination it reveals could be part of Pope's parody of Settle's mushy thinking and expression. But, Pope could also have used the Settle persona as a cover for slipping in nasty suggestions.

Taken at its worst, the implication of homosexuality was as demeaning to Pope as to its intended victims. It allied him with the likes of playwright William Kenrick whose failure to get one of his plays produced led him to write the slanderous poem, "Love in the Suds," in which he tried to brand David Garrick as a homosexual (Letter 23, p. 154n). If Pope fully intended such an implication about Burnet and Duckett, he slipped into a much cruder kind of vindictiveness than was his custom. If, on the other hand, he was concentrating primarily on the classical allusion and its potential for comic reversal, he may truly have overlooked the full implications of "pious passion." Maynard Mack notes, "Publishing the Dunciad was in many ways the greatest folly of Pope's life."¹ He concludes that both "sheer arrogance" and "legitimate resentment" played their parts. If we view the Dunciad's excesses in the context of Pope's entire life and

¹Life 476. The quotations in the rest of the paragraph are from the same place.

work, Mack makes a persuasive case that: "Though he was sometimes vengeful and could hate with the best, the stereotype that he was a monster of spleen, or decidedly unlike the rest of us, it is time we outgrew." Except for Weston, the GM controversialists would agree.

Weston's complaints about Pope's poetry center around what he saw as Pope's obsessive correctness, his monotonously regular couplets, and above all his overly refined poetic diction. In contrast to this, Weston applauded Dryden's variety, exuberance, and energy. Even Dryden's "flats" in thought and expression were deliberate: "He, therefore subdued his Style occasionally--to burst upon his Reader with greater Splendour, when the Subject demanded a Loftier Lay" (Letter 9c, p. 55). Discussing this point in Letter 9d, Weston cites a passage from Joseph Warton's Essay which says in part that Dryden's practice was "'sometimes to soften and subdue his tints, and not to paint and adorn every Object he touched, with Perpetual Pomp, and unremitted Splendor'" (84).¹ Weston charges that Pope's overrefinement had a devastating effect on his successors, whose Pope-inspired obsession with brilliance led them to "torture [poetry] into Obscurity, and refine [it] into Imbecility" (Letter 9c, p. 58).

To this Anna Seward again counters, in Letter 1b, by attacking Dryden. She cites his "incongruous metaphor, inconsistent fable, and prating familiarity of expression" as

¹Warton's comparison of Pope's and Dryden's styles is discussed above, xxxiv-xlvi.

well as his poorly placed Alexandrines and "botching" triplets (8, 11). Although prepared to defend Pope's versification, she sees it as a minor part of his or any author's poetry because:

A poem has little merit if it does not remain fine poetry after having been taken out of all measure. Where there is loftiness of thought, ingenuity of allusion, and strength of imagery, to stand that test, true lovers of the art allow an author to do almost what he pleases with the numbers, provided he does not insist upon their preference of the slovenly to the polished ones, readily promising that such a work shall be dear to them in any dress (Letter 1c, p. 19).

At first glance we might take this for a revolutionary poetic manifesto, with its suggestion that the poet's thought and expression are the core of his poem and that the form is shaped by them. But Miss Seward soft pedals the revolutionary tone with her proviso that the numbers be "polished." Polish to her, as to William Hayley and the other poetasters whom she admired, was just what it sounds like--laid on from the outside and the more the better. Polish, along with ornament, was the second-rate poet's downfall. Also, Anna Seward's dictum overlooks what makes Pope's poetry great--stunningly successful integration of thought and feeling with sound and rhythm.

The debate narrows down to what Weston had written in the Preface (most of which he reproduces in Letter 9c) about Pope's influence on poetic diction: "Let me not be misunderstood.--Poetic Diction, and that Alone, is the Object of my Reprobation" (58). Weston argues that poetic diction has seriously declined since Dryden's time, largely because of

Pope's influence; Seward maintains that under Pope's influence, it has improved. Weston contrasts Dryden's simplicity, variety, and unaffected sublimity with the "modern System" which "appears decisively to exclude every Mode of Expression from Poetry which is so unlucky as to find a Place in Prose" (58). As examples of the new poetic diction he cites, "harsh Construction and fantastic Inversion--Tinsel Phrases and tinkling Compound-Epithets" (57).

The use and abuse of poetic diction was a major concern for eighteenth-century critics. Samuel Johnson wrote: "There was therefore before the time of Dryden no poetical diction: no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestick use and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts."¹ For Johnson, poetic diction was "those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose." Such diction should be appropriate to its context, clear to the general reader and unobtrusive. It should contribute to the reader's pleasure and thus should avoid "those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions" from which "we do not easily receive strong impressions or delightful images." If it is to be both elegant and clear, it must avoid technical words "to which we are nearly strangers" and which "draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things." Johnson considers poetic diction a positive attribute of poetry. His terms, "strong impressions or delightful images," call to

¹ Lives 1:420. The following quotations are from the same place.

mind the words of the twentieth-century critic Owen Barfield: "When words are selected and arranged in such a way that their meaning either arouses, or is obviously intended to arouse, aesthetic imagination, the result may be described as poetic diction."¹ Like John Locke, Johnson saw words as arbitrary symbols, "words are but the signs of ideas."² Moreover, they are dependent on their context:

No word is naturally or intrinsically meaner than another; our opinion therefore of words, as of other things arbitrarily and capriciously established, depends wholly upon accident and custom. . . . Words become low by the occasions to which they are applied, or the general character of them who use them.³

Poetic diction was also subject to abuse, and Johnson details some of its pitfalls. He objects to adjectives formed from nouns and given participial endings such as "the cultured plain, the daisied bank" and to "arbitrarily compounded" words such as Thomas Gray's "'many-twinkling,'" which he censured as "not analogical; we may say many-spotted, but scarcely many-spotting."⁴ But such comments are occasional rather than systematic. Other eighteenth-century critics attempted to systematize the abuses of poetic diction.

James Beattie, in An Essay on Poetry and Music as They Affect the Mind (1776), warned against abusing the "'English poetical dialect'"⁵ which poets relied on to heighten the

¹ Poetic Diction (London: Faber, 1952) 41.

² "Preface" to the Dictionary [2].

³ Rambler 5:168.

⁴ Lives, 3:436-37.

⁵ Quoted in Arthur Sherbo, English Poetic Diction from Chaucer to Wordsworth (E. Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1975) 1. I am indebted to this book for much of my understanding of eighteenth-century poetic diction.

effect of their work. He enumerated seven features of poetic language, and uncommon or obsolete expressions and compound epithets were among them. Beattie noted that both Pope and Dryden were usually "'good authority for the use of a poetical word.'" At the same time he noted that in his translation of Homer, Pope "'sometimes, for the sake of his numbers, or for fear of giving offence by too close an imitation of Homer's simplicity, employed tropes and figures too quaint or too solemn for the occasion.'" Overused, Beattie warned poets in general, this can lead to "'the finical style'" which

"is in part characterised by the writer's dislike of literal expressions, and affectedly substituting in their stead unnecessary tropes and figures. With these authors a man's only child must always be his only hope, a country-maid becomes a rural beauty, or perhaps a nymph of the groves; if flattery sing at all, it must be a syren song; the shepherd's flute dwindles into an oaten reed, and his crook is exalted into a scepter; the silver lillies rise from their golden beds, and languish to the complaining gale. A young woman, though a good Christian, cannot make herself agreeable without sacrificing to the Graces; nor hope to do any execution among the gentle swains, till a whole legion of Cupids, armed with flames and darts, and other weapons, begin to discharge from her eyes their formidable artillery. For the sake of variety, or of the verse, some of these figures may now and then find a place in a poem. . . ."

Joseph Weston would have recognized the tinsel phrases and imbecile refinements in this list of abuses. Unfortunately, both he and Anna Seward sprinkle their own works with them far oftener than "now and then."

Looking into the origin of stock phrases and images in poetry, Joseph Warton found that beginning in Classical

¹Sherbo, 2. The following quotations are from the same place.

times, poets had created "'a set of hereditary objects [which] has been continued from one poet to another, without any propriety either as to age or climate.'"¹ Descriptive and epic poetry lent themselves to this kind of poetic diction. Traditional objects and phrases helped establish "an epic tone," just as stock features in natural description evoked the ideal landscapes handed down from classical times.² Anyone who translated the classics into English found repeated words, phrases and objects used by the original author as well as by those who had previously translated him. Sherbo documents how Dryden inherited and transmitted English poetic diction "especially in its two main divisions, epic diction and the diction of poetry of natural description" (129). Pope continued in Dryden's path, drawing on earlier translators' language in his translation of Ovid and carrying this diction over into his own translation of Homer. Samuel Johnson noticed this when he wrote, "Homer doubtless owes to his translator many Ovidian graces not exactly suitable to his character."³

Poets attempting to create an original English poem worthy of carrying on the classical tradition also used these resonant words, phrases and objects to establish an epic or pastoral tone whether or not they were appropriate to the English scene. Sherbo points out how, in descriptive poetry, shady scenes, which were grateful in the hot, dry climate of Greece and Italy were carried over wholesale to cool, cloudy

¹ Sherbo, 24-25.

² Sherbo, 22-23.

³ Lives 3:239.

England (24). Geoffrey Tillotson points out that such diction enriched a poem's meaning for the eighteenth-century reader because of its associations with the classics.¹

Poetic diction is not necessarily a term of opprobrium. Pope used it admiringly in his Preface to the Iliad, where he called Homer

the Father of Poetical Diction, the first who taught that Language of the Gods to Men. . . . 'Tis the Sentiment that swells and fills out the Diction, which rises with it, and forms itself about it. And in the same degree that a Thought is warmer, an Expression will be brighter; as That is more strong, This will become more perspicuous: Like Glass in the Furnace which grows to a greater Magnitude, and refines to a greater Clearness, only as the Breath within is more powerful, and the Heat more intense (7:9-10).

As an aid to this heightened diction and to "throw his Language more out of Prose," Pope notes that Homer adopted compound-epithets: "This was a sort of Composition peculiarly proper to Poetry, not only as it heighten'd the Diction, but as it assisted and fill'd the Numbers with greater Sound and Pomp, and likewise conduced in some measure to thicken the Images." Compound epithets provided the most economical way of fleshing out or thickening images without "diverting the Reader too much from the principal Action or Figure. As a Metaphor is a short Simile, one of these Epithets is a short Description" (7:10). Anna Seward echoes this idea in her rebuttal of Weston's objection to "tinkling compound-epithets." She finds that such epithets when badly chosen

¹ "Eighteenth-Century Poetic Diction," Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, 1939 25 (1940): 59-80.

"cannot tinkle on the ear" because "their merit is not to the ear, but to the understanding, by their condensing and energetic power" (Letter 1b, p. 6).

Overall, Pope finds that Homer's poetic diction "is indeed the strongest and most glowing imaginable, and touch'd with the greatest Spirit" (7:9). Again, this recalls Owen Barfield's definition of poetic diction as what results "when words are selected and arranged in such a way that their meaning either arouses, or is obviously intended to arouse, aesthetic imagination."¹

Joseph Weston thinks of poetic diction in a much narrower sense, one that suggests it is an abuse rather than a description of the language peculiar to poetry. This allies him with the predominant thought of the nineteenth rather than of the eighteenth century. Wordsworth voiced his century's view when he called poetic diction a "distorted language" which stems from "mechanical adoption" of "figures of speech" by poets who seek to emulate earlier great poetry without experiencing the powerful feelings that originally gave rise to their language.² Wordsworth's charge that poetic diction was "a motley of tricks, quaintnesses, hieroglyphics, and enigmas" (466) could be read as a heightened version of Weston's complaint against "tinsel

¹ Above, p. cxvi.

² "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads, 1802, Appendix on Poetic Diction, Selected Poems and Prefaces by William Wordsworth, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton, 1965) 465.

phrases," "fantastic inversion," "obscurity," and "imbecility."

Anna Seward is firmly rooted in the eighteenth-century outlook regarding poetic diction. Like Johnson, she decries using low or common expressions and approves of elegance. But unlike Johnson she too often confuses lowness with simplicity and ludicrous inflation with elegance. In Letter 18, she gives her improved translation of Juno's speech in Book I of the Aeneid. Her version makes Dryden's clear and forceful language turgid and weak. Dryden's "Cou'd¹ angry Pallas, with revengeful spleen,/ The Grecian navy burn, and drown the men?" becomes, "Shall injur'd Pallas, with avenging aim,/ O'erwhelm the Greeks, and wrap their fleets in flame?" (126). Such revisions underscore what Weston was objecting to: second-rate poets (and poetesses) who thought they were carrying on Pope's tradition when they were actually bed-izening poetry with tinsel phrases.

Like many mediocre poet/critics, Anna Seward talks about poetry better than she writes it. Her general principles seem unexceptionable. She agrees with Weston's quotation from Joseph Warton in praise of Dryden's use of "'common and familiar words'" (Letter 9d, p. 84). Although Warton's comment "perfectly meets [Miss Seward's] sentiments," she will not allow it to apply to the passage from the Aeneid because there the common words do not suit the character of the

¹Miss Seward's quotation has "Shall." Even in quoting Dryden, she unconsciously revises his diction.

speaker" (Letter 18, p. 127). For Anna Seward a goddess is an elevated being who must always speak in elevated language.

In his dissatisfaction with contemporary poetry, we have seen how Joseph Weston partially anticipates the kind of stand Wordsworth takes only a decade later. Whatever the accuracy of his critical insights, however, Weston is neither the poet nor revolutionary theorist that Wordsworth is. In looking backward for a fixed model and insisting that simply a change in poetic diction and versification can refresh poetry, he recommends an external cure for an internal disease. He wants to fight the stultifying effects of Pope's correctness with a correctness of his own.

By the 1780s, the philosophers Alexander Gerard and William Duff were emphasizing the idea that the power of imagination was central to poetic genius. Young and Warton had called attention to the importance of the imagination. Burke had given a physiological basis to the ideas of the sublime and the beautiful, and Hume had noted the "reciprocity of inner and outer sense when the imagination operates between them."¹ Then, the German philosopher J. N. Tetens, who influenced both Kant and Coleridge, connected imagination, which he saw as the "only source of everything original," with external physical sensations and the internal "workings of the mind."² Thus,

imagined sensations, hopes, and fears become real to us,

¹ Engell, 126.

² Engell, 125, 126.

and we experience physical sensation of what may only be in our minds. We grow cold and sweat, supposing as Theseus says, "each bush a bear."¹

Weston is either unaware of these ideas or, in his narrow concern with style and diction, fails to explore their implications. As we noted at the outset, he and Anna Seward are minor agents in the debate about what poetry is and should be. Miss Seward read and supported the poets who were making the new kind of poetry that led to the Romantic revolution. At some time after this controversy, Weston strongly supported the peasant-poet Robert Bloomfield. But neither Miss Seward nor Joseph Weston had the philosophic or aesthetic grounding to describe their appreciation of Romantic poetry in terms that go much beyond enthusiastic exclamation.

Despite its shortcomings as literary criticism, the debate between Anna Seward and Joseph Weston reveals something about debating technique in polite society, together with a good deal more about what we now call sexual politics. Combat with "the Swan of Litchfield," upsets Joseph Weston. His illness during the first summer of the controversy may well have been aggravated or even caused by the debate. His hypersensitivity leads him to conduct his side of the conflict with an uneasy combination of sugary flattery and bitter acrimony. He does not hesitate to brand Pope as devious, self-serving, and "execrable," while simultaneously addressing Pope's ardent defender, Anna Seward, as a "Thales-tris" who "discovers a countenance that melts down all

¹ Engell, 126.

opposition, and eyes that dim the radiance of the gems that spangle-o'er her burnished helmet" (Letter 4, p. 25).

As the debate warms up, Weston's chivalry suffers. Despite his initial delicacy in refusing to discuss Burnet and Duckett's imputed homosexuality in a letter to Miss Seward, he presents all the details in his letter to "M. F." which, he sends to the GM for all to read. He also levels some telling sarcasms at his bright-eyed Thalestris's diction. Discussing her rewriting of Dryden's description of Juno's wrath, he notes her translation is neither faithful to the original in Virgil's Aeneid, nor is it good poetry. Without saying a word about tinsel phrases or bombast, he writes:

As Dryden has contrived it, Juno pours out the Effusions of her Wrath in a regular Climax. One sees the offended Goddess working herself into a Passion by very natural Gradations. But Miss Seward has begun in so lofty a Strain, that I have little Doubt of the Effect which would have been produced had she translated the whole Soliloquy! (Letter 25, p. 69).

Continuing with a subtle irony worthy of Jane Austen, he notes:

The chief Blemish in modern poetic Diction is Inflation. If that Blemish is undiscoverable in Miss Seward's Works, it is probably owing to the Grandeur and Sublimity of her Conceptions, which justify the uniform Majesty of her Style. The Shortness of her Poems is a Circumstance also much in her Favour (169-70).

Anna Seward has an easier job of managing her tone. She is not obliged to be elaborately and artificially polite to her opponent while demolishing his arguments. Thus she manages to sound more sincere and balanced, more "masculine," than Weston. Whether she intentionally exploits this

advantage or not, her more consistent and simpler approach undercuts Weston's hyperbole. In the battle of the sexes, Anna Seward maintains a rational, "masculine" tone, while Joseph Weston, with his italics, his dashes, his plethora of capitals, reveals a highly emotional, "feminine" approach.

Weston's tendency to become excited, even irrational, leads him to ignore a fundamental rule of debate--to sound judicious and remain cool. He commits the very sins of which he accuses Pope in his Preface: attempting "to undermine the Reputation of the deceased Poet, and to asperse the Characters of his living Supporters" (Letter 9c, p. 57). While charging Pope with using "Means not very honourable" to undermine Dryden's reputation and place himself on the throne, Weston himself uses the questionable means of making a damning accusation and withholding the proof. As we have seen, he never produces the "Work" he has held so long which would render "Pope's Goodness of Heart... no longer problematical" (57-58). What he and all the other letter writers do produce are tens of thousands of words on a question which we still find intriguing today--how do we assess poets and poetry?

Perhaps the most striking feature of the debate is the importance which the controversialists ascribe to poetry and the time they are willing to spend reading and writing about it. In part this reflects their more leisured era. But reading and talking about poetry was far more central to their time than to ours. Yet, even today, we share their

concern with what makes writing effective. And we share their fascination with how an author's character influences his work.

THE TEXT

Arrangement of the Letters

The letters are numbered consecutively in the order in which they appeared in The Gentleman's Magazine. This does not always correspond to their dates. The GM usually printed the long letters from Anna Seward and Joseph Weston when they were received or, if they were too long for a single issue, in consecutive issues. Letters from other correspondents were not always printed when received, but were sometimes held for several months. For further discussion of this point see above, ciii.

Reproduction of the Letters

I have preserved the spelling, punctuation, and capitalization of the originals in the GM. I have modernized the eighteenth-century's long "s." Typographical limitations do not allow reproduction of the large and small capital letters often employed in the eighteenth century for proper names and emphasis; therefore, I have used only initial capitals. I have been unable to reproduce the elided "Ae" as in Aeneas.

I have followed modern practice of indenting and single-spacing long quotations, but I have reproduced the quotation marks as printed in the GM. I have reproduced quotations in foreign languages exactly as they appeared in the GM, because it is not possible to ascertain from which text the writer is quoting.

I have collated the quotations from Dryden and Pope with the standard twentieth-century editions (James Kinsley's edition of Dryden's poetry and the Twickenham edition of Pope's poetry). I have noted all the variations in wording but not in accidentals such as spelling, capitalization, italics, and punctuation. Corrections of short misquotations appear in brackets in the text. Longer ones appear in footnotes. Illegible words which I have deciphered from the context are followed by a question mark in brackets [?]. I have put corrections of obvious printing errors in brackets.

Annotation of the Text

I have reproduced the GM's notes at the foot of the page directly beneath the text. My own notes begin below them. In all but one instance, the notes appearing in the GM are indicated by asterisks or daggers. In the letter from "B.L.A." (No. 35), the writer used arabic numerals, so I have separated his notes from mine by a solid line and put parentheses around his numbers. When a GM footnote has called for annotation, I have added my note to it in brackets.

The correspondents quoted freely from each other's letters. Often they transposed words, changed verb tenses or form, and otherwise adjusted the original to fit into their own writing. I have not noted such alterations unless they changed the meaning of the original.

I have followed the revised (1984) MLA Handbook's form for annotation. Its most significant changes are omitting

"p." and "pp." before page numbers and abbreviating publishers' names: e.g.: UP = University Press, Holt = Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

For frequently cited works, I have used short titles, a list of which follows. All references to Pope's poetry are to The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt, et. al., 11 vols. (London: Methuen, 1961-1969). All references to Dryden's poetry are to The Poems of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958). In the text of the letters, references to Dryden's and Pope's poetry appear in brackets following each quotation. They are in this order: title, volume, book or part if appropriate, and line(s). For example [Il 8:23.141-49.] refers to Pope's Iliad, Twickenham edition volume 8, book 23, lines 141-49. In the case of volumes with several parts, the volume number is separated from the part number by a period (e.g., 3.2 is volume three, part two).

I have used the New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature as the authority for publication information, and where that is incomplete or unclear, the British Museum Catalogue. For biographical information, I have used the Dictionary of National Biography, unless otherwise noted. Definitions from Samuel Johnson's Dictionary are from the 1755 edition.

I have used the Loeb Classical Library editions for the following authors: Cicero, Horace, Livy, Ovid, Plutarch, Seneca, and Virgil.

SHORT TITLES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of Dryden's and Pope's poems correspond to those used in the concordances: Guy Montgomery, ed., Concordance to the Poetical Works of John Dryden (Los Angeles: U of California P, 1957); Emmett G. Bedford and Robert J. Dilligan, eds., A Concordance to the Poems of Alexander Pope, 2 vols. (Detroit: Gail Research Co., 1974).

Ae = The Aeneid, Dryden.

AF = Alexander's Feast; or The Power of Musique. An Ode, In Honour of St. Cecilia's Day, Dryden.

Arbu = An Epistle from Mr. Pope, to Dr. Arbuthnot, Pope.

CA = Ovid's Metamorphoses, Ceyx and Alcyone, Dryden.

DA = Ovid's Epistles, Dido to Aeneas, Dryden.

DNB = Dictionary of National Biography.

Dramatic Poesy = John Dryden, Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays, ed. George Watson, 2 vols. (London: Dent, 1962).

DunA = The Dunciad (A), Pope.

DunB = The Duncaid (B), Pope.

ElAb = Eloisa to Abelard, Pope.

EOC = An Essay on Criticism, Pope.

Ep1 = Epistle I, To Sir Richard Temple, Lord Viscount Cobham, Pope.

Ep4 = Epistle IV, to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington, Pope.

EOM = An Essay on Man, Pope.

EpJ = Epistle to Mr. Jervas, Pope.

GM = The Gentleman's Magazine, vols. 1-63 (1730-1793).

HAP = The Hind and the Panther, Dryden.

2HE1 = Horatian Epistle, Book 2, Epistle 1, Pope.

HP = Ovid's Epistles, Helen to Paris, Dryden

HS2 = Horatian Satire, Book 2, Satire 2, Pope.

Il = The Iliad, Pope.

Johnson, Works = The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, various editors, vols. 1-10, 14-15 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1958-1985).

Kinsley = The Poems of John Dryden (see p. cxxix for full reference).

Letters = The Letters of Anna Seward: Written between the Years 1784 and 1807, ed. A. Constable, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: G. Ramsay, 1811).

Lives = Johnson's Lives of the English Poets, ed. G. B. Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905). Lives 1 = Life of Dryden; Lives 2 = Life of Addison; Lives 3 = Life of Pope or Life of Gray.

Mack, Life = Maynard Mack, Alexander Pope: A Life (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985).

Od = The Odyssey, Pope.

OED = Oxford English Dictionary (1970).

NCBEL = New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature.

PWi = The Pastorals, Winter, Pope.

SG = Sigismonda and Guiscardo, from Boccace, Dryden.

TJD = To My Honour'd Kinsman, John Driden, Dryden.

TF = The Temple of Fame, Pope.

Twk = The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope (see p. cxxix for full reference).

UDH = Upon the Death of the Lord Hastings, Dryden.

VP4 = Virgil's Pastorals, The Fourth Pastoral. or, Pollio, Dryden.

WA = The Woodmen of Arden from the Latin of John Morfitt with "An Essay on the Superiority of Dryden's Versification over that of Pope and of the Moderns," by Joseph Weston (Birmingham, 1788).

Warton, Essay = Joseph Warton, An Essay on the Genius and
Writings of Pope, 2 vols. (London, 1806).

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THE LETTERS

1a.

Mr. Urban,

April 25.

A Publication has lately appeared, intituled, The Woodmen of Arden. It consists of an ingenious Latin poem by Mr. Morfitt, with two translations of it by Mr. Weston;¹ one literal, in blank verse; the other paraphrastic, and in rhyme. I think highly of Mr. Weston's genius; I know that he has many virtues; and I cannot but be grateful for that partiality to me which his writings have more than once displayed. In the close of a systematic Preface to his translation in rhyme, mentioned above, appears a phantom of imputed perfection, to which he has most inapplicably given my name. Mr. Weston is a being whose prejudices are as strong as his talents. In this same Preface, he accuses Pope of having meanly influenced his friends to exalt his compositions above their just level, for the purpose of Dryden's, and tearing the laurels from his brow.² I believe Pope injured by this accusation; and I am afraid that my acquaintance with Mr. W. and the hyperbole of his encomium, should

¹ (Birmingham, 1788). For biographical information about John Morfitt see the Introduction, pp. xci-xcii, and for Joseph Weston, pp. lxxxiv-lxxxviii.

² Letter 9c. Miss Seward paraphrases Weston's words, which were that he had traced "the insidious Arts which he [Pope] suffered his Friends to practise, in order to undermine the Reputation of the deceased Poet and to asperse the Characters of his living Supporters" (57).

subject me to a similar imputation, and induce many to believe that the general assertions of that Preface have my concurrence.

Hence it is that I wish you would allow a place in your Magazine to the ensuing strictures. In combat with the opinions of a man I esteem, to whom I am obliged, they were drawn from me by jealousy, "even to a Roman strictness,"¹ for the poetic glory of the last half-century.

It is probable the length of these observations may render it inconvenient to comprise them in one, or even in two Magazines. Should you divide them, and should Mr. W. reply before their course is finished, I declare that I will not be led into new paths of controversy. My business is with the Preface to The Woodmen of Arden.

In the first place, it asserts the Author's opinion, that English Rhyme was brought to the acme of perfection by Dryden; that, since his time, it has been gradually declining from good to indifferent, and from indifferent to bad; and this bad, Mr. W. calls the modern style of versification. Farther on in the Essay, he avows an ardent desire to see the Pierian spring restored to what he calls Drydenical purity; asserting, that it was corrupted by Pope, and has been poisoned by his successors.²

In this, in every age, since first the light of Poesy dawned, there have been fifty pretenders to its inspirations

¹Unidentified.

²Letter 9c, pp. 54, 59.

for one that has been really inspired; but no person in their senses will affirm, that the poetic character of any period takes its colour from the poetasters who infest it. Mr. W. cannot be so absurd as to bring such of our scribblers into comparison with the illustrious bards of Milton and Dryden's day, and of Pope's and Prior's.

By the Moderns, therefore, Mr. W. must be supposed to mean the celebrated poetic writer's [sic] from Pope's decease to the present hour. Let us look at the distinct lustre of the three periods to which he alludes.¹

The first shone by the light of Milton's genius, of Dryden's, Otway's, Cowley's, Waller's, Davenant's, Butler's, Denham's, Lee's, Lord Roscommon's.

The second, generally called the Augustan age, by that of Pope, Prior, Young, Gay, Swift, Addison, Tickell, Rowe, Congreve, Parnell, Arbuthnot, Steele, Philips, Watts, Lady M. W. Montague.

Ours, by that of Gray, Hayley, Mason, Thomson, Collins, Akenside, the two Wartons, Cowper, Jephson, Goldsmith, Johnson, Beattie, Churchill, Shenstone, Langhorne, Sir William Jones, Pye, Mallet, Owen Cambridge (whose epic satire on Antiquarianism, *The Scribleriad*,² is, perhaps, the best mock-heroic poem in the language except the *Dunciad*), Sheridan, Lowth, Sargent, Whalley, Mathias, Jerningham, Whitehead, Horace Walpole, and Cha. Fox (whose poetic brilliants, though

¹ See Appendix B.1

² London, 1751.

small, are of the first water), Lloyd, Wesley (author of the noble allegoric poem *The Battle of the Sexes*),¹ Dyer, Potter, the two Hooles, Hawkins Browne, Somerville, Crabbe, Cawthorne, Home, Crowe, Stevens [Steevens] (author of a fine poem in blank verse called *Retirement*),² Garrick, Murphy, De la Crusca, Cumberland, Greathed, Swift (a spirited satiric poet), Barry, Butt (whose fame has been blighted by too free an use of the Drydenic licences as to versification), the witty, but irreverent, Peter Pindar, the two Cunninghams, the Seven* celebrated Female Poets, Barbauld, More, Williams, Piozzi, Carter, Cowley, Cath. [Charlotte] Smith, the rising poetic lights, Cary and Lister, the unschooled sons of genius, Burns (who is our new Allen Ramsay), Newton, Yearsley, Reid, and the greatest of these wonders, the ill-starred Chatterton, who, had he lived, and his ripe years borne proportionate fruits, must have been the first Poet in the world.

Yours, &c. Anna Seward.

(To be continued.)

*Fear of offending an amiable correspondent prevents our changing this to Eight. Edit.

¹London and Dublin, 1724.

²Published in The Repository, ed. Isaac Reed (London, 1777-1783.

1b.

Miss Seward's Strictures on the Preface to the Woodmen of Arden; (continued from p.292)

If I had not been in some sort addressing him, I should certainly have added the name of Weston to the last*, and (Milton excepted) far the brightest, as well as greatly the most numerous, of the three lists; for Mr. W. has genius to vie with most of his contemporaries, if Prejudice had not chained him to Dryden's car, and persuaded him to take the dirt upon its wheels for studs of jet, placed purposely there, as foils to its golden axis [sic].

Have they of this third list collectively "poisoned the Pierian Spring,"¹ either respecting sentiment, imagery, or style? The imputation is injurious, and demands public refutation.

In order to prove Pope's long-confessed refinements to have been real corruptions, Mr. W. asks some ingenious questions concerning the eligibility of keeping down certain parts in poetic composition, upon the painter's system, to give more effect to the brilliant passages.² Judgement will

*The author of these Strictures is shocked to perceive that she had, through haste, omitted to mention the distinguished names, Lyttleton, Anstey, Mickle, Jekyll, [see Appendix B.2] amid her former enumeration of the Poetic Writers in the last half-century. She will probably feel future pain from recollecting several others, whom the incompetence of her memory alone prevented from being named to the honour of the times in which she has lived.

¹Letter 9c, p. 59, read "that Pierian Spring which Pope corrupted."

²Letter 9c, pp. 55-56.

readily confess, that the system should be adopted by the sister science; but the manly and graceful plainness of style, such as frequently occurs in Milton's poetry, form its judicious shades; nor is Pope's by any means destitute of these mellowings; but incongruous metaphor, inconsistent fable, and prating familiarity of expression, instead of softening down, at intervals, the too obtrusive lights of composition, blot, and defile it. With such errors did the great Dryden too often corrupt the living waters of that Pierian Spring, to which his genius gave him perpetual access.¹

The Essay in question enumerates what it calls tinkling compound epithets amongst the fancied improvements of the Moderns.² Tinkling is a most inapplicable adjective; since when, ill chosen compound epithets may be stiff, may grate, but cannot tinkle on the ear. When well chosen, their merit is not to the ear, but to the understanding, by their condensing and energetic power. They are of the Miltonic, not of the Popeian school, and are too seldom used by its disciples.

Our Drydenic enthusiast has certainly convicted Prior and Montague's able criticism upon the Hind and Panther, of one trivial mistake, viz. their idea that the words fated and

¹Anna Seward says substantially the same thing in a letter to John Morfitt, dated Feb. 7, 1789. Letters 2:239-40.

²Letter 9c, p. 58.

doomed are exactly synonymous.¹ He calls that criticism a wretched abortion; with what justice, let the following quotation from it decide. It is given from memory, and therefore perhaps not verbatim; but the sense is faithful.

"Though the fables of the ancients carry a double meaning, the story is one and entire, the characters not broken and changed, but always conformable to the nature of the creatures they introduce. They never tell us that the dog which snapt at a shadow lost his troop of horse; that would be unintelligible. It is Dryden's new way of telling a story, to confound the moral and the fable together. How can we conceive a panther reading in a Bible? and what relation has the hind to our Saviour? If you say he means the ancient church, how can we imagine an eating and walking church, feeding on lawns, and ranging in forests? Let it, at least, be always a church, or always a cloven-footed beast; common sense cannot endure his shifting the scene every line."²

Extreme must be the prejudice that can induce a man of genius to deem observations, so indisputably just, the abortive effects of malice. Where the understanding is thus outraged, can it be in melody, sweet as even Pope's, to make compensation? and in the Hind and Panther we only find some harmonious and picturesque lines amidst a tedious number of pages, filled with dry, prolix jingles of senseless controversy.

¹Matthew Prior and Charles Montagu, The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd to the Story of The Country Mouse and the City-Mouse in The Literary Works of Matthew Prior, ed. H. Bunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959), 1:40.

²Prior Works, 1:35-6. Miss Seward has remembered the sense and much of the wording accurately. She conflates two passages from the original and changes a few words here and there. Her greatest deviation from the original occurs in the two sentences beginning "How can we conceive a panther reading" and ending "ranging in forests." Instead, read "What relation has the Hind to our Saviour? or what notion have we of a Panther's Bible? If you say he means the Church, how does the Church feed on lawns, or range in the Forest?"

It is curious that Mr. W. should have selected the eight charming verses, which open the Hind and Panther, as specimens of fine style,¹ since they are not in Dryden's general manner, but exactly in that of Pope and his disciples,--without one Alexandrine or triplet; with much point and antithesis, and with the sense only once, and that slightly, but very beautifully, overflowing the couplet.

It always appeared to me, that Pope formed his style upon a few of the best passages in Dryden. Mr. W. is very angry with him for separating the dross from the gold.

Pope's numbers seem to have but one fault; viz. the sense, as Mr. W. observes, is too generally confined within the boundary of the couplet;² but that is surely better than its overflowing too often, as in Dryden's.--My ear dislikes the drag occasioned in the versification of the latter by his placing Alexandrines so frequently in the middle of sentences: when harmoniously constructed, they have a majestic effect on closing them, even in the heroic measure; but surely the frequent triplets are very botching. I find more sameness in Dryden's everlasting Iambics than in that which results from the sense being too seldom allowed to float into the first line of the ensuing couplet for its pause, as in Pope. He uses the spirited accent upon the first syllable in a verse twenty times for once that it occurs in Dryden; and where several objects are to be described in succession, he

¹WA, xix.

²Letter 9c, p. 57. Weston wrote, "The Thought is so seldom suffered to stray beyond the Bounds of the Couplet."

generally takes the inverted order of the words and the natural one alternately, as in the following passage from a recently published poem of infinite beauty:

Pale shoot the stars across the troubled night;
The timid Moon withdraws her conscious light;
Shrill scream the famish'd batts, and shivering owls,
And loud and long the dog of midnight howls.¹

Another species of superior excellence in Pope's verses over those of Dryden; the former describe in the lively dramatic present tense much oftener than the latter. The passage quoted above is in Pope's style. Had it run thus, it had been in Dryden's, and perhaps not in his worst manner:

The stars shot pale across the troubled night,
And the affrighted Moon withdrew her light;
And hungry batts, and owls, and ravens prowl'd,
And, to increase the din, the dog of midnight howl'd.

By this alteration the lines are all Iambics, and have therefore less solemn force of sound.

Mr. Weston complains that Pope is too regularly harmonious.² I have selected, out of countless instances, the following passage, in proof that he spared not, occasionally, to use harsh numbers for picturesque purposes.

First march the heavy mules, securely slow,
O'er hills, o'er dales, o'er crags, o'er rocks they go;
Jumping high o'er the shrubs of the rough ground,
Rattle the clattering cars, and the shock'd axles bound.
But when arriv'd at Ida's spreading woods,
Fair Ida! water'd with descending floods,
Loud sounds the axe, redoubling strokes on strokes,
On all sides round the forest hurls her oaks;
Headlong, deep echoing, groan the thickets brown,
And rattling [Then rustling], cracking,
crashing, thunder down: [Il. 8:23.140-49.]

Let us look at a passage in Dryden, whose harshness of

¹ Unidentified.

² Letter 9c, p. 57.

numbers is not picturesque.

Was there no milder way but the small-pox,
 The very filthiness of Pandora's box?
 So many spots, like naeves in Venus' soil!¹
 One jewel set off by [with] so many foil*!
 Blisters, with pride swell'd, that [which] through's
 flesh did sprout,
 Like rose-buds stuck i'th' lily skin about.
 Each little pimple had a tear in it,
 To wail the fault its rising did commit;
 Which, [Who] rebel-like, with its [their] own lord at
 strife,
 Thus made an insurrection 'gainst his life.
 Or were these gems sent to adorn his skin,
 The cabinet of a richer soul within?
 No comet need foretell his change drew on,
 Whose corpse might seem a constellation. [UDH 1:53-66.]

To say nothing of the odiousness of these ideas, or rather conceits, let the passage be viewed as style merely; a specimen of the purity of Dryden's Pierian Spring, which Pope is accused of having corrupted. If it be urged, that this extract is from a juvenile poem of Dryden's, be it remembered that Pope wrote his Pastorals, and the first part of sweet Windsor Forest, two years earlier in life. Thus, at sixteen, did Pope corrupt the Aonian fountain.

His Pastorals.

Thyrsis, the music of the [that] murmuring spring
 Is not so mournful as the lays [Strains] you sing;
 Nor rivers, winding through the vale [vales] below,
 So sweetly warble, or so smoothly flow.
 Now sleeping flocks on their soft fleeces lie,
 The moon, serene in glory, mounts the sky;
 While silent birds forget their tuneful lays,
 Sing [Oh sing] of thy Daphne's fate, thy [and] Daphne's
 praise. [Wint. 1:1-8.]

*Bad grammar.

¹Read "like naves, our Venus soil?"

As an instance that Dryden, in his riper years, was prone to let his style fall below the poetic level where the subject called aloud for elevation, observe how the Empress of Heaven is made to open her indignant soliloquy, in his translation of the Aeneid:

Then am I vanquish'd, must I yield, said she,
 And must the Trojans reign in Italy?
 So Fate will have it, and Jove adds his force,
 Nor can my power divert their happy course.
 Could angry Pallas, with revengeful spleen,
 The Grecian navy burn, and drown the men,
 And cannot I, &c.¹ [Ae 1:56-62.]

Six lines after, Juno says,

The wretch, yet hissing with her father's flame; [67.]

and thus describes the victim of Minerva's wrath, as Falstaff describes himself reeking from the buck-basket,

Hissing hot, Master Ford, hissing hot.²

Now let us compare the style of the two poets, assuming the persons of females, and addressing their lovers,--Helen her Paris, Eloisa her Abelard.

Dryden's Epistle from Helen to Paris.

The crown of Troy is powerful, I confess,
 Yet [But] I have reason to think ours no less;
 But 'tis your love moves me, which made you take
 Such pains, and run such hazards for my sake.
 I have perceiv'd, though I dissembled too,
 A thousand things that Love has made you do;
 Your eager eyes would almost dazzle mine,
 In which, wild man, your wanton thoughts would shine.
 Sometimes you'd sigh, sometimes disorder'd stand,
 And with unusual ardour press my hand

¹Read "She for the Fault of one offending Foe".

²Shakespeare, The Merry Wives of Windsor III.v.124. For "Master Ford" read "Master Brooke."

Contrive, just after me, to take the glass,
 Nor would you let the least occasion pass;
 When oft I fear'd I did not mind alone,
 But [and] blushing sat for things which you have done.
 Then murmur'd to myself, "he'll for my sake
 Do any thing,"--I hope 'twas no mistake.
 Oft have I read, within this pleasing grove,
 Under my name, [those] charming words, "I love!"
 I, frowning, seem'd not to believe your flame,
 But now, alas! am come to write the same.
 For O! your face has such peculiar charms,
 That who can hold from flying to your arms? [HP 1:61-62,
 73-90, 93-94.]

This is the style to which Mr. W. seeks to draw us back
 from the corruptions of the following.

Eloisa to Abelard.

Thou know'st how guiltless first I met thy flame,
 When Love approach'd me under Friendship's name.
 My fancy form'd thee of angelic kind,
 Some emanation of th' all-beauteous mind;
 Those smiling eyes, attempering every ray,
 Shone sweetly lambent with celestial day.
 From lips like those what precepts fail'd to move?
 Too soon they taught me, 'twas no sin to love.
 Dim and remote the joys of saints I see,
 Nor envy them that heaven I lose for thee. [2:59-64, 67-
 68, 71-72.]

A little more from Dryden's Cheapside Miss, married to
 Menelaus:

Your Trojan wealth, believe me, I despise,
 My own poor native land has dearer ties;
 I cannot doubt [Nor can I doubt] but, should I follow
 you,
 The sword would soon our fatal crime pursue;
 A wrong so great my husband's race [rage] would rouse,
 And my relations would his cause espouse.
 You boast your strength and courage, but alas!

Your words receive small credit from your face. [HP 1:
 220-21, 238-43.]

So Helen tells her lover he looks like a sneaking cow-
 ard, so ill does she express this compliment to his complex-
 ion.

A little more from Pope's charming Nun:

No weeping orphan saw his father's stores
 Our shrines irradiate, or emblaze our floors!
 But such plain roofs as Piety could raise,
 And only vocal with their Maker's praise.
 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,
 Thy eyes diffus'd a reconciling ray,
 And gleams of glory brighten'd all the day.
 But now no face divine contentment wears,
 'Tis all blank sadness and [or] continual
 tears. [ElAb 2:135-36, 139-48.]

The lines which, in the poem, succeed to the above passage, and form a description of the Paraclete scenery, yield to no poetry as landscape painting. Dryden never equaled, and Milton has not excelled, them. The landscape is as original as it is solemn and striking, and the sound of the versification breathes the very spirit of elevated melancholy.

(To be concluded in our next.)

1c.

Miss Seward's Strictures on the Preface to the Woodmen of Arden; (concluded from p. 391.)

Few, Mr. Urban, that attend to the extracts in your last number, will think Mr. Weston wise in rejecting the excuse which Friendship, less blinded by injudicious zeal, alledges for the frequent coarseness of Dryden's ideas, and the frequent bathos of his style, viz. "writing for bread, he had

not time to choose and reject his thoughts, to polish and refine his language."¹ But it being known that he never expunged, or even altered, a single passage in the course of those various editions of his Poems that passed under his eye, prove that the pruning knife and the chissel were not voluntarily withheld; since it is impossible to conceive that there ever lived a man so notoriously conceited as that, in repeated revision of so many volumes he could see no passage, nor even expression, that he wished to omit or alter. It is therefore plain that Dryden found his wilderness so weedy, that to attempt clearing it would be an Herculean labour, swallowing up that time which he wanted to employ in pressing on with new publications, for whose profits his necessities so loudly called. -- He trusted to the majestic trees of this wilderness, "laden with blooming gold,"² for the preservation of his fame and they will preserve it. But he little dreamt that their fruits should so far intoxicate the brain of a brother poet, in future time, as that he should assert the superior beauty of this wilderness on account of its weeds, and abuse the majestic parks and lawns of succeeding bards, from which the nettles and switch-grass have been rooted up.

¹Probably a conflation of various eighteenth-century authors. David Erskine and Isaac Reed wrote that Dryden was driven to "writing for mere bread," Biographica Dramatica (London, 1812) 1:202. Pope's biographer, Owen Ruffhead, reported that Pope used to say of Dryden's poetry that he "would have been perfect in it had he not been so often obliged to write with precipitation," The Life of Alexander Pope, Esq. (London, 1769) 23. William Ayre noted the same thing in his Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Alexander Pope 1:247.

²Milton, A Mask (Comus) 349.

It is also terribly impolitic in Mr. Weston to bring Dryden and Pope in to view at once, and then to attack the moral character of the latter, whose imputed crime must be only conjectural; and whose errors are, compared with the mean faults of Dryden, but as a passing cloud of Summer to December's darkness.

Pope did every justice to Dryden's genius; witness one amongst many lines in his praise:

And what Timotheus was is Dryden now. [EOC 1:383.]
But in that style in which they both chiefly wrote (for Pope was not a master of lyric composition) he felt his own superiority; not vainly, because thousands felt, and still feel it also. He probably wished to see it asserted. Why should that wish be deemed proof of a bad heart, even if he did finesse a little to obtain it?

Dryden's writings prove that he was wholly without fixed principles in Religion, Politics, or Criticism; that his Interest was his Legislator, his Guide, and his God. Witness his mean and profane renunciation of the religion in which he had been educated, and had ably defended, for the idolatries he had stigmatised! A Popish King just then mounted on the throne, who discerns not the court parasite in the new apostate? Witness his hyperbolic praise of the deceased Cromwell, to please the Republicans, whose downfall he did not then foresee!--and witness his subsequent abuse of Cromwell, who being dead when he extolled him, the Poet had no excuse, from any after-conduct of the imputed angel, for changing him into a devil. Even Mr. W. allows that he formed

his critical opinions according to the interest of the hour, callous to all the self-contradictions into which such meanness betrayed him.

How inconceivable is it, that beneath the obtrusive prominence of such faults in Dryden, the writer, who compares the two poets, can be severe upon the human frailties of Pope, relieving the necessities of his abusive foe, and watching, with filial tenderness, by the couch of his aged mother!

Mr. W's observation is just upon Dryden's Alexandrine,¹ reprobated by Dr. Johnson, in his Life of that Poet.² But to reprobate poetic excellence was Dr. Johnson's custom; a thrice dangerous one to the public taste, since it requires unusual strength of mind to escape the pernicious influence of that wit and force of language,

which can make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
True criticism.³

The line reprobated by the despot is this:

And with paternal thunder vindicates his throne.⁴ [HAP
2:2.537.]

Mr. W. justly defends its dignity of sound.

And, like another Helen, fir'd another Troy, [AF 3:150,
154.]

is upon the same construction. But it appears to me that

¹Letter 9c, pp. 58-59 and WA xx.

²Lives 1:469.

³Unidentified.

⁴Read "And with paternal thunder vindicates her crown."
Johnson had remembered the line incorrectly. See Lives
1:469n.

this is the only variation from its perfect model that the ear endures in the Alexandrine; though Mr. W. affirms that the pause may be placed after any of its syllables, without injury to the harmony.¹

The next line, quoted in proof of that assertion, is to my ear a doleful drag, little resembling a verse:

By many follow'd, lov'd by most, admir'd by all.

There are several of kindred imperfection in Guiscard and Sigismunda; for instance:

Like Liberty, indulg'd with choice of good and [or] ill,
and

A pomp, prepar'd to grace the present be design'd. [SG 4:509, 608.]

Those lines, if read with proper emphasis, are not verse, though they may scan as such, since the sense allows no pause after the words indulg'd and grace.

Mr. W. asserts the poetic right of intermixing, at pleasure, lines of fourteen syllables into the common heroic couplet.² The first line quoted from Dryden, to illustrate the claim,

But Maurus sweeps whole parishes, and peoples every grave, [TJD 4:83.]

has such strength of thought and imagery, that they atone for any liberty, however generally unjustifiable, that may be taken with the numbers; but the next citation,

The tedious [nauseous] qualms of nine [ten] long months, and travail, to requite, [VP4 4:75.]

possessing nothing striking or poetic in the thought, it

¹WA xxi-xxii.

²WA xxii-xxiii.

cannot surely be in the mere echo of its sound to its sense to recompense the bad effect of putting a line and three quarters, of eight feet measure, into one, and then drawing it through the texture of the couplet numbers, like a hoop, five yards wide, stuck across the limbs of an elegant maid of honour!

This last Drydenic licence sounds to me like ludicrous ballads, part of which are sung, and then a line said.

Captain Colvert's gone to sea, heigh boys! ho boys!
 Captain Colvert's gone to sea, O!
 Captain Colvert's gone to sea, with all his company,
 In the great Benjamin, ho!
 Now you shall hear how he was cast upon an uninhabited
 island, and married the governor's daughter.
 Captain Colvert's gone to sea, &c.¹

Mr. W. gives to Pope's patrons amongst the nobility the title of wou'd be Maecenases.² The phrase is invidious; and his poetic brethren of this day are not much obliged to him for thus discouraging poetic patronage; for assisting to spread that Gothic mantle over the Muses which the dark huge hands of the envious Colossus first unfurl'd in the Lives of the Poets. Either Horace has had more injustice from his translators, Cowley, Dryden, and even Milton of the number, than ever poet met, or those whom Mr. W. calls the wou'd-be Maecenases patronised a greater poet than Horace.

Mr. Weston writes in this Preface as if the excellence

¹The ballad "Captain Chilvert's Gone to Sea" closely resembles this, except for the prosaic fifth line, which Miss Seward may have invented to reinforce her point. See The Roxburghe Ballads, ed. J. Woodfall Ebsworth, (Hertford: Ballad Society, 1890) 7.1:529.

²Letter 9c, p. 56.

or worthlessness of a poem depended wholly upon the construction of its measure; and as if the couplet was the only order of rhyme. He seems to forget that the lyric, with its countless varieties, and almost unlimited privileges, affords ample field for his alexandrines and triplets, whose frequent intermixture suits not the chastity of the heroic couplet; though it appears to me that it is by no means an advantage to make the sense so generally end with the second line, as in the otherwise perfect style of Pope's versification.

After all, it is a small part of the intrinsic excellence of poetry that the elegant style of Pope, or the slovenly one of Dryden, can give or take away. A poem has little merit if it does not remain fine poetry after having been taken out of all measure. Where there is loftiness of thought, ingenuity of allusion, and strength of imagery, to stand that test, true lovers of the art allow an author to do almost what he pleases with the numbers, provided he does not insist upon their preference of the slovenly to the polished ones, readily promising that such a work shall be dear to them in any dress. They will by no means wish that every part should blaze; but would chuse that there should be "interstices of black velvet between the gems;"¹ desiring, however, to be excused from applauding the custom of Dryden's Muse, to put on "soiled linen with her diamonds."²

Several of Mr. W's poetic friends, as well as himself,

¹Letter 9c, p. 56.

²This is probably Miss Seward's reply to Weston's remark just quoted.

are surprised that any person can prefer his close translation of Mr. Morfitt's fine Latin poem to his more ingenious paraphrastic one. He and they, must however expect that preference from those who agree with him in thinking that Pope has degenerated from Dryden in the beauty and purity of style. My friend will find many who, because the latter-named poet lived a degree more remote from the present day than the former, will decree the palm of pre-eminence to him; but whatever author shall be rash enough to resume the slipshod licences of Dryden, see if they will applaud the result. Not they; even though it should be adorned with all the riches of allusion and imagery which glow through the writings of Mr. Weston. His Miltonic Sonnets appear to me models of perfection in that arduous order of poetic composition.

Anna Seward.

2.

Mr. Urban,

May 30. [1789]

I was much concerned to observe, vol. LVIII, p. 1060, that Mr. Weston, in his very just and reasonable appeal to the publick on the premature, incorrect, and clandestine appearance of his poetry, in the conclusion should apply such an harsh epithet as "execrable"¹ to Mr. Pope, that favourite

¹In this letter to the GM of November 6, 1788, Weston wrote in a P.S.:

Before I entirely conclude this long appeal, I must, in the name of every friend to worth and ingenuity, justice and humanity, thank your indefatigable Editor, for having so generously and spiritedly rescued the writings

of the Muses, whose harmonious numbers, elegant sensibility, condensation of good sense, poignant wit, delicacy and taste, have, and will continue to charm thousands, as long as our language has existence. I doubt not Mr. Welsted had his excellencies. I am willing to allow him every merit, as Poet and a Man, that Mr. Weston attributes to him, and that he has been too severely satirised by Mr. Pope;¹ and in abatement of Mr. Pope's character, will allow he might have a spark of envy in his composition; that he might be too irritable, too peevish, that he would

Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne. [Ep-Arb. 4:198.]

Yet who does not know that exalted genius and first-rate talents generally have too high a sense of their own superiority, and are too apt to bear hard on those a few degrees below them, and, from a fear or envy of their rising merit, will depreciate that they really possess? Undoubtedly it is wrong; and in the particular instance under consideration, Mr. Pope might and did diffuse his satiric wit with unmerited acrimony: yet, though I blame, I cannot execrate

of a worthy and most elegant poet, from that oblivion to which they were hastening, through the vile arts of a jealous tyrant, not less remarkable for meanness than for malignity, equally distinguished by cowardice and by cruelty! It is almost unnecessary to add, that, by the former, I mean the excellent Welsted; and, by the latter, the execrable Pope!

¹Pope had satirized Leonard Welsted in Dunciad(A), comparing him to his "inspirer, Beer,/ Tho' stale, not ripe; tho' thin, yet never clear; (5:3.163-64). Welsted and James Moore Smythe, whom Pope had also consigned to the dunces, retaliated in One Epistle to Mr. Pope (1730) in which they chastised Pope for being a spiteful and vicious satirist.

him for it. My Dictionary says the word means hateful, destestable, abominable, very wicked, odious, or impious; surely Mr. P. cannot deserve all these; if he did, he might as justly be said to deserve a halter. I hope Mr. Weston, on a retrospect, will regret that the word escaped him; and I wish he may think a gentler term more just and applicable in the comparison of Pope and Welsted.

Yours, &c.

M. F.

3.

Mr. Urban, Solihull, July 20. [1789]

Assailed by so powerful an antagonist as Miss Seward--called upon in so earnest a manner by your correspondent M.F.--misunderstood by the Monthly, and misrepresented by the Critical, Reviewers¹ --I cannot remain entirely silent, though unable, at present, to enter into a defence either of my Poetry, my Preface, or my letter inserted in your Magazine for December last.

An indisposition of many months continuance renders every task, that requires even a moderate share of attention, exceedingly irksome, difficult, and dangerous; I must, therefore, unwillingly defer my reply to these various attacks till I shall have recovered, in some degree, my strength and spirits: and I will then endeavour to prove, that my fair and

¹Weston's translation of The Woodmen of Arden, together with his preface, was reviewed unfavorably in The Monthly Review (Jan.-June, 1789) 80:329-31 and in The Critical Review (March 1789) 68:200-202.

most respectable opponent has been for once mistaken--that the Critical Reviewers deserve a scourge--and that Pope, however the assertion may shock M. F., really did deserve--What He Mentions.

Yours, &c.

Joseph Weston.

4.

Mr. Urban,

Solihull, Aug. 23. [1789]

When I published the Woodmen of Arden I was perfectly aware that, unless the Poem should steal quietly along into the Vale of Oblivion, the Preface would furnish an ample subject for animadversion. My dislike to Pope's Versification, my detestation of his Principles, and the indignation which I felt that so many wise and so many worthy persons should have become the Dupes of an Imposter, hurried on my pen with a degree of vehemence that set Fear at defiance. But, though, on cool reflection, I entertained some doubts of the prudence of my conduct, I had none of the justice of my cause; and, reposing with confidence on arguments which I conceived would not easily be confuted, I felt little apprehension that any Antagonist would start up in a very formidable shape.

But I was too blindly secure. An Antagonist has started up in a most formidable shape indeed--viz. that of a Friend; armed too with weapons of the most formidable kind--Candour, Politeness, and Generosity: and, to form a regular climax of distress, that candid, polite, and generous Friend, is a

Woman; a beautiful, accomplished, and amiable Woman! Can a more perplexing dilemma be imagined than that disagreeable predicament be invented than that in which I stand?

I am attacked by one of the finest Writers of the Age, with the united force of brilliant Wit, magnificent Metaphor, and critical Acumen. What must I do? Must I defend myself, or must I fly the field? Disgrace awaits me on either hand. If I defend myself, who can tell that, in the warmth of argument, a strenuous defence may not undesignedly be converted into an Attack? And what a pitiful figure does one of Homer's Heroes make while wounding a Goddess! If, to avoid this danger, I give ground to my fair Antagonist, will the World give me credit for my Magnanimity? No.-- Will my fair Antagonist herself give me credit for it? No.--To decline the proffered combat would, in her eyes, as well as in those of the publick, betray a consciousness of a weak cause; and, perhaps, seem an insolent affectation of superiority: and both her sense and her spirit would, I am sure, reject with scorn the idea of being indebted to my forbearance or compassion.

Such, Mr. Urban, have been my reflections for the four last months; and ridiculous as the assertion may appear to some, whose minds are strangers to those trebly-refined sensations which constitute the extreme degree of human Happiness or Misery, I aver that I have passed many an unpleasant hour in vain attempts to form some resolution on the subject. Weakened and dispirited by reiterated attacks of a nervous fever, I looked forward, with an anxiety bordering on terror,

to the time when, on the closing of Miss Seward's correspondence, I should no longer be able to delay my choice of combat or of flight. Nor do I know which mode of conduct I might ultimately have adopted, had not a new opponent rushed into the field, to offer his assistance to one who is herself
An Host!

"Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis
"Seward eget."¹

I feel so grateful for this strange Knight's unexpected interference (which has so considerably lessened my embarrassment), that I am not much disposed to enquire if I am obliged, by the laws of chivalry, to accept the challenge of one who has slept for six months over the supposed provocation: nor will I urge the still stronger objection that this unknown Adversary comes in disguise, and refuses to declare his name and rank in arms. Though, from the gentle and courteous terms in which his defiance is couched, I believe him to be of no vulgar degree, I cannot but think the behaviour of my first Opponent infinitely more intitled to respect, who, with the grace and dignity of a Thalestris, while with one hand she shakes her glittering spear, with the other lifts her beaver, and discovers a countenance that melts down all opposition, and eyes that dim the radiance of the gems that spangle-o'er her burnished helmet.

I may now, Mr. Urban, content myself with parrying some of this literary Amazon's most dangerous thrusts, and secure

¹Aeneid, 2:521-22. For "Seward" read "tempus." "Not such the aid nor these the defences the hour craves."

a not inglorious retreat, to try my strength upon her Auxiliary.

As the Strictures on my Preface are extended to three Numbers, I shall extend my observations on them to three Numbers also; a method which, in the present state of my health, I shall find peculiarly convenient. Letter the first, in your Magazine for April, will give me no great trouble, as there is very little business done in that, except summoning the Court, opening the Commission, and calling over the names of the Jurymen; to every one of which I object, however, from motives of sound policy. Though they may be all good men and true, I claim the privilege (allowed in the court of Apollo at least) of challenging every mother's son of them, lest those, whom as interested persons I reject, should deafen the Court with the clamours of their resentment.-- No.--If I must be put upon my defence, e'en let my fair Accuser, whom, as Mr. Hayley has acknowledged her to be "the leader of the female Train,"¹ I will also allow to be my Judge, make up her Seven female Poets a Dozen, and let me be tried by Them! I shall then stand a chance of a favourable Verdict, as I can conscientiously affirm, that their share of the Censure which I have bestowed on the Moderns will be very trifling indeed.

Two Mistakes occur in Miss Seward's Exordium. I have neither imputed to Her a single Perfection which she does not possess, nor have I accused Pope "of having meanly influenced

¹William Hayley, Essay on Epic Poetry, Poems and Plays (Dublin, 1788) 3:4.91. Read "lovely Train."

his friends to exalt his Compositions above their just Level, for the purpose of lowering Dryden's and tearing the Laurels from his his Brow."¹

All who have the Honour and Happiness of Miss Seward's Acquaintance, must own that I might have considerably enlarged the Catalogue of her Virtues without the least violation of Truth; and, on a reference to my preface (p.14), it will be found that I only glanced at "the insidious arts which Pope suffered his Friends to practise, in order to undermine the Reputation of the deceased Poet, and to asperse the Characters of his living Supporters."² But I will not insist on the Distinction; for, although the difference between influencing and permitting may appear at first sight material, I will frankly confess, that I should be inclined to consider the person who commits a crime, and the person who, with the power to prevent it, suffers that crime to be committed, for the sake of his own advantage, as nearly upon an equality.

I shall reserve to a more proper place³ what I have further to say on this point, and proceed to remark, that Miss Seward is perfectly right when she supposes, that by the Moderns I mean the celebrated Poetic Writers from Pope's decease to the present hour-- (indeed I could not possibly mean the Poetasters): and a most tremendous Phalanx, in Battle-array, has she brought against poor me!

¹Letter 1a, p. 1.

²Letter 9c, p. 57.

³See Letter 21, pp. 147-148.

The plan which I have proposed to myself will not permit me to reply now to the question which she so triumphantly asks, in the beginning of her second letter; but I most sincerely admire her spirit and good-sense in restoring to that rank, from which Dr. Johnson so unjustly degraded him, Sir William Davenant,¹ who, in spite of the illiberal ridicule of the profligate Villiers,² and in spite of the instances of false Taste which may be found in his Writings, had yet Spirit, Sense, Genius, and Morality, sufficient to secure for him a very high place among the Bards of Charles's days.

Had our Arch-critic read, or at least recollected, a Stanza with which I shall conclude this Address, its superlative merit (doubly endeared to Him by the nature of the Subject) would have pleaded hard for the unfortunate Author's admission into the Poetic Corps, even though, to make room for him, Johnson should have been obliged to thrust from their unmerited situations Duke, Stepney, Yalden, Pomfret,³ and many more, whom the good Doctor seems to have lugged out of Oblivion, for the mere Purpose of "exalting the humble, and bringing the mighty low!"⁴

¹Joseph Weston is mistaken. Johnson did not comment on Davenant.

²Johnson noted that Villiers' play, The Rehearsal, initially had Davenant as its satirical target, Lives 1:369. Villiers was also credited with an anonymous poem ridiculing Davenant's Gondibert, "Verses on the Preface of Gondibert." This is no longer believed to be by Villiers. See Buckingham: Public and Private Man., ed. Christine Phipps (NY: Garland, 1985) 260.

³See Appendix B.3.

⁴Probably a paraphrase of Luke 1.52: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree."

O, harmless Death, whom still the Valiant brave,
 The Wise expect, the Sorrowful invite,
 And all the Good embrace, who know the Grave
 A short, dark passage to Eternal Light!
The Dying Reply to the Philosopher.¹

Yours, &c.

Joseph Weston.

5.

Mr. Urban,

Aug. 5. [1789]

The publick could not but be obliged to Mr. Weston, if he had no other merit than that of having called forth those animated and ingenious strictures which have lately graced the pages of your Miscellany. Yet, much as I admire the good sense and taste of the fair writer, I cannot help thinking that she has overstepped the limits of justice, and that, in endeavouring to vindicate Pope and the moderns from some undeserved accusations, she has been too hard upon Dryden, and totally unfair in her estimation of the poets of preceding times. Is not the lustre of Pope's period considerably diminished by the absence of the names of Akenside, Hammond, Collins, Thomson, Mallet, Lyttelton, A. Philips, Welsted, Allen Ramsay, Glover, Broome, Shenstone, Somervile, Pomfret, Hughes, Garth, the Duke of Buckingham, and Dennis?² The list of poetic writers in Milton's age might be swelled to an equal amount, if all those who were admired during their lives were admitted. But it must be more than common

¹William Davenant, Stanza 10, "The Christian's Reply to the Phylosopher," Poems on Several Occasions, Works (London, 1673) 334-35.

²See Appendix B.4

excellence which can insure a reputation of an hundred years; and probably in that space many of those luminaries, which contribute to the splendour of the present day, will be extinguished and forgotten. That Dryden purposely kept down certain parts of his writings, in order to serve as foils to the rest, is an assertion in which Mr. W. will not, perhaps, find a single advocate; as the prematurity in which pecuniary circumstances compelled him to hurry his publications into the world is known and lamented by every one. Had he polished with the minute skill and diligence of Pope, he would have been without an equal in his line. But since the unfortunate state of his affairs denied him leisure to do so, let us throw a veil over his blemishes, and exhibit with conscious pride the numerous beauties of our noble countryman. Instead of this, Miss S. has extracted the most dark and blotted passages, which are contrasted with the most splendid and graceful lines of his rival. What would she say if a critic, as a specimen of Shakespeare's genius, should produce some of that vile ribaldry which is so plentifully interspersed in the works of our immortal bard? Permit me to shew how Dryden could sometimes write. In his Epistle to Sir Godfrey Kneller are these lines:

"More cannot be by mortal art exprest,
But venerable Age shall add the rest;
For Time shall with his ready pencil stand,
Retouch your figures with his rip'ning hand,
Mellow your colours, and imbrown the teint,
Add ev'ry grace which time alone can grant,
To future ages shall your fame convey,
And give more beauties than he takes away." [1:174-81.]

A description of a storm:

"The cries of men are mix' with rattling shrouds.
Seas dash on seas and clouds encounter clouds;
At once from East to West, from pole to pole,
The forky lightnings flash the roaring thunders roll."
[CA 4:121-24.]

Again:

"No star appears to lend his friendly light,
Darkness and tempest make a double night;
But flashing fires disclose the deep by turns,
And while the lightnings blaze, the water burns." [CA
4:157-60.]

Nothing can go beyond the following passage in his
translation from the Metamorphoses.--The House of Sleep:

"An arm of Lethe, with a gentle flow,
Arising upwards from the rock below,
The palace moats, and o'er the pebbles creeps,
And with soft murmurs calls the coming sleeps;
Around its entry nodding poppies grow,
And all cool simples that sweet rest bestow,
Night from the plants their sleepy virtue drains
And passing sheds it on the silent plains." [CA 4:282-
89.]

We cannot wonder at any enthusiasm offered up to the
author of the foregoing lines. But, as a friend to the
Muses, I regret that Mr. W. should carry his admiration of
Dryden so far, as even studiously to imitate his defects. He
will find his account, if he has the resolution to make a
sacrifice of his own judgement to the public taste, since
private prejudice should always give way, in such matters, to
universal and established opinion. With pleasure I seize
this opportunity of adding my vote to Miss Seward's with
respect to Mr. W's Sonnets, which are extremely elegant and
highly finished. M[arcellu]s [Henry Francis Cary]

6.

Mr. Urban,

Solihull, Sept 25. [1789]

My indisposition, though it seems inclined to leave me, removes by such gentle gradations, that I still find Writing and Study insupportably fatiguing, and am most reluctantly compelled to request your own and your Readers' indulgence till next month; by which time I hope I may be enabled to resume, perhaps to finish, the justification of my Preface to the Woodmen of Arden.

Joseph Weston.

7.

Mr. Urban,

Sept. 8. [1789]

Mr. Weston, in his answer to Miss Seward, p. 680,¹ is pleased to take umbrage at my presuming to think his execration of Mr. Pope harsh and unjustifiable. In the exuberance of his fancy, he is pleased to denominate me "a strange knight," wants to know my "rank in arms," and calls me his "unknown adversary." I am not insensible that gentlemen of Mr. Weston's genius and literary abilities are "tremblingly alive" at any arraignment of their productions; I am well aware they nearly approach to infallibility in their own estimations; yet I had no idea when I sent you those few candid remarks inserted in p. 512² couched, as I thought, in terms both respectful and inoffensive, that they would so far

¹Letter 4, pp. 23-29.

²Letter 2, pp. 20-22.

have excited Mr. Weston's spleen; I could not suppose those observations on the justice and propriety of a single word would have so much discomposed him. Mr. Weston seems to possess the genus irritabile¹ in a very superlative degree, and to be happy in a very comfortable sense of his own importance. On the one hand, he ranks me as an auxiliary of the elegant Seward, and, on the other, pushes me back with his flourish of non tali auxilio,² &c.; but, when the truth of the matter appears, the sentence will be found totally inapplicable to me; I have not the least claim to the honour he has unwittingly assigned me. Mr. Urban can inform him my letter was transmitted at least four months before its insertion*, and previous to the appearance of Miss Seward's elegant strictures on Mr. Weston's Preface: why the date was altered+, Mr. Urban can also best tell him. He may assure himself I had not "slept six months over the supposed provocation."

Does Mr. W. suppose it enhances his magnanimity by insulting over the ashes of the venerable dead, and execrating the man who has almost universally been esteemed in the foremost rank of poets, and among the best of men? Would Mr. W. have adventured on the sentence had the admired Pope been living? If so, his hardihood might have excited our

*True. Edit.

+By chance.

¹"Genus irritabile vatum," "fretful tribe of bards," Horace, Epistles 2.2.102.

²Letter 4, p. 25. The next quotation is from the same place.

astonishment, though I question whether his prudence would have acquired our applause.

Mr. W. is perfectly right in saying I am "unknown, and in disguise."¹ I acknowledge myself a son of obscurity, "a fellow whom nobody knows;"² but in this, as well as in my estimation of Mr. Pope, I plead a majority on my side; I believe more than two-thirds of Mr. Urban's correspondents make use of initials or anonymous signatures. But this is nothing to the matter in hand. What does it avail to the justice of the cause who or what I am? The whole dispute between us is, whether Mr. Pope can be justly deemed Execrable or not, I hold the latter; Mr. W. has pledged himself to prove the former: and, if I mistake not, a very tough piece of work he will have of it. When he has brought forth his "strong reasons," his valid evidences, and laid them before us with those shining talents he is confessedly master of, if they are satisfactory, I shall retain to myself a liberty of yielding to superior evidence, changing my opinion, and becoming his convert; until which time I hope he will let me quietly enjoy my present sentiments, as I have no intentions of occupying Mr. Urban's valuable columns or troubling him or the publick on this subject again. Thus far I thought necessary in my own vindication. Yours, &c. M. F.

¹Letter 4, p. 25.

²These are not Weston's words. "M.F." may have ascribed them to Weston by accident.

8.

Mr. Urban,

Lichfield, Sept. 15. [1789]

You will permit a few comments on the letters in your last number, from my polite antagonists, concerning the subject of Dryden and Pope. Mr. Weston imputes to the latter the meanness of at least suffering those preferences of himself to Dryden to get abroad, which appeared so frequently in the public prints during his life-time.

Reflecting one instant coolly on the subject, he must have the generosity to withdraw this charge. I have avowed my opinion, that the two writers possessed great and equal genius, and that Pope became, upon the whole, much the finest poet, from that superior taste and judgement which banished those prosing redundancies, those disgusting images, those low expressions, which so often sully and debase the writings of Dryden. Can Mr. W. suppose, were Pope alive, I should have been indelicate enough to consult him before I published my vindication of his character and of his claims? How very improbable that he had power to prevent the appearance of similar assertions!

When prejudice and personal enmity peruse Mr. Weston's hyperbolic praise of me, they may with equal justice, de-claim, as he does against Pope, upon the meanness and vanity of my suffering its appearance. They will ungenerously conceal their consciousness that it was probably out of my power to suppress what it is certain I never saw till I saw it in print. Knowing that truth, he would be shocked at their injustice. I hope, therefore, that he will awaken to a sense

of his own.

In reply to the observation of your ingenious correspondent M----s p. 682,¹ that the lustre of Pope's period is diminished by the absence of the names of Akenside, Hammond, Collins, Shenstone, with some others of considerable celebrity, I alledge, that the personal existence of those writers during that of Pope is of no consequence. He heard Dryden converse in a coffee-room when he was twelve years old, and boasted of the circumstance through life with generous pleasure; but a poet cannot be said to exist till his writings become known. Akenside died so lately as the year 1770, aged forty-nine. His great work, The Pleasures of Imagination, was not published till forty-four, in which year Pope died. Akenside's poetic lustre cannot, therefore, be said to gild the period in which the Bard of Twickenham flourished; it descended upon the later times, where the poets are placed whom we mention to the honour of our own day. Collins also was not heard of in Pope's life-time. His Odes, descriptive and moral, were first published in the year forty-six, and it was many years before they had either sale or fame. The blindness of the age to their now celebrated excellence cost their unfortunate author his reason and his life. His glory, so long eclipsed, first shone on the aera in which I placed the last, and by no means the least, powerful division of the bards. The same plea justifies the placing of Shenstone,

¹Letter 5, pp. 29-31.

Hammond, Somerville, Mallet,¹ &c. in the last set, namely, their celebrity not being risen in the meridian of Pope, in the reigns of Anne and George the First, in the age that is styled Augustan. Allen Ramsay and the Duke of Buckingham² were omitted through forgetfulness in the second list; and in the third, from the same cause, Lyttelton, Ansty, Mickle, Jekyl[1], Polwhele, and our present Tickell.³ If the poetasters Pomfret and Dennis⁴ ought to have been found in the second enumeration, there are an army of better writers not mentioned in the third. I did not chuse to bring forward, for the honour of Pope's period, any of the heroes of his inimitable Dunciad. On examination, I find Thomson ought to have graced the second instead of the third galaxy.⁵

I cannot think with M----s, that only very superior poets survive their century. On the contrary, it has always seemed to me that antiquity induces the generality of readers to set a double value on every beauty, and to pass over

¹Most of William Shenstone's works were published before 1744. James Hammond, who is not on Miss Seward's third list, published his elegies during the 1730s. William Somerville's poems gained in popularity after his death in 1742. At least half of David Mallet's works were published before 1744, including his collected Works in 1743. Also see Appendix B.1.

²George Villiers. See Appendix B.1 and B.4.

³Miss Seward added Lyttleton, Ansty, Mickle, and Jekyll to her third list in Letter 1b, p. 5n. See Appendix B.2. Richard Polwhele and Thomas Tickell are listed in the NCBEL and the DNB.

⁴The DNB describes John Pomfret as poet and John Dennis as a critic, poet, and playwright. They are both listed in NCBEL.

⁵James Thomson's major work, The Seasons, was published in individual parts between 1726 and 1728, and as a whole in 1730. It had run to many editions before his death in 1748.

defects with indulgence. Had Dryden's contemporaries, Denham, Lee, Roscommon, and even Waller, whose names have outlived the centennial limits; had they lived and produced their poems Now, I do not believe they would have many admirers. Denham's verses are in general heavy, laboured, inharmonious; and Waller's have more courtly wit than poetic fire. In the second division, Parnell, Gay, Addison, Watts, and the two Philips, soar not to the highest eminences of the Aonian mountain; yet each of them have written some things in verse that will probably preserve the honour of their memories so long as our language shall remain. Amongst the least celebrated of the third list, there are few who have not written as well as those second-rate bards of the preceding periods.

Suffer me to assure M----s, that I produced some of the many bald passages from Dryden, not to lower his name on the ground of possessing a genius creative, rich, and luxuriant, but merely to confute an assertion which, if believed Just, might tempt our young writers into a coarse and weedy style, Viz. that Dryden's gross defects are happy negligences, voluntarily adopted for the Judicious repose of composition, and in themselves preferable to the chaste, graceful, and polished numbers of Pope.

M----s says, I have selected the most dark and blotted passages of the elder bard, contrasting them with the most splendid ones of his rival. That was by no means my design; but I thought it fair to make the first selection from the

earliest compositions of each; and the Pastorals of Pope, from which the first quotation was made, are the least esteemed of any thing he wrote.

If from Pope's Homer lines can be produced mean and wretched as those which Dryden has, in his Aeneid, put into the mouth of the Empress of Heaven,¹ and if it cannot be proved that such vulgar language occurs on almost every page in Dryden, I will give up the point in contest; which, on my part, goes no farther than to assert, that the poetic writers of This day have done honour to their art, by avoiding the botching vulgarities of Dryden's style, and emulating the polished graces of his successor.

It was surely fair to place in one point of view the enamoured epistle by Dryden from Ovid, and that by Pope from Eloisa's Letters to Abelard. All who have sense and taste enough to Attend to the subject, know that Both these poets translated upon the only plan which makes translations worth any thing, Viz. to abandon every idea of closeness, and to interweave any new sentiment or imagery that occurs, if it can add grace or spirit to the theme. It is thus that translations justly procure for those who give them the honours of original composition. The most beautiful of Dryden's poetry, in the heroic couplet, is from Ovid, Chaucer, and Boccace. In the epistles from Helen, and Eloisa, their respective translators took similar subjects; and if it is fair to compare the Odes on the Power of Music, for the purpose of

¹Letter 1b, p. 11. Miss Seward's references are to that letter unless otherwise noted.

decreeing the Lyric palm to Dryden, it is equally fair to compare the two love epistles, where Pope's superiority over his rival in the Heroic measure is even more distinguished.

Neither did I, in that comparison, extract the Most splendid lines from the Eloisa. Those in which she describes herself and Abelard in the hour of her profession; those where she presents herself officiating as priestess amidst the solemnities of the mass; the Paraclete scenery; the impersonization of Melancholy sitting amongst the twilight groves, dusky caverns, long-sounding ailes, and intermingled tombs of the monastery, and breathing over them a gloom, which shades the flowers, and darkens the umbrage; all those are passages of great poetic superiority to those I quoted from that poem in contrast to the vapid effusions of Helen's ideas from the pen of Dryden. Scarce any traces of the picturesque beauties can be found in the original letters between Abelard and Eloisa; they are the rich creations of an imagination, which, setting style apart, I have not seen transcended by Dryden.

M----s has quoted some extremely beautiful passages from that confessedly great poet. We often find them interspersed in his writings; but we also find them surrounded and disgraced by verses below mediocrity. The following lines, from Pope to Jervas, are not less excellent than those which M----s has given us from Dryden's Epistle to Kneller. Speaking of the beautiful women whose pictures had been drawn by Jervas, the Poet says,

"O! lasting as those colours may they shine,

Free as thy stroke, and faultless as thy line;
 New graces hourly, [yearly] like thy works, display,
 Soft without weakness, without glaring gay;
 Led by some rule that guides, but not constrains,
 And finish'd more thro' happiness than pains.
 The kindred arts shall in their praise conspire,
 One dip the pencil, and one string the lyre." [EpJ
 6:63-70.]

The ensuing verses, describing seastorms, by Pope, have an equal right to our admiration with those quoted in the last Magazine from Dryden. Both are free translations: Dryden's from Ovid, Pope's from Homer.

"He spoke, and high the forky trident hurl'd,
 Rolls clouds on clouds, and wakes [stirs] the watry world;
 At once the face of sea and sky [earth and sea] deforms,
 Swells all the winds, and rouses all the storms; [Od.
 9:5.375-78.]
 Wide o'er the waste the rage tempestuous sweeps,
 And Night rush'd headlong on the shaded deeps. [Od.
 9.77-78.]
 With what a cloud the brows of Heaven are crown'd! [Od.
 9:78.306.]
 What raging winds, what roaring waters round! [Od.
 9:5.389-90.]
 Now here, now there, the giddy ships are borne, [Od.
 9:79.306.]
 And all the whirling [rattling] shrouds in fragments torn; [Od. 9:80.306.]
 For, [While] by the howling tempest, rent in twain,
 Flew sail and sail-yards rattling o'er the main." [Od.
 9:407-08.]

Dryden's House of Sleep, from the Ceyx and Alcyone of Ovid, is exquisite versification; but, in that passage, all the imagery and invention is Ovid's. As allegoric painting, Pope's portrait of Dulness, where all the features are original, has equal happiness of invention, equal strength of colouring. How often, in the great work from whence it is quoted, do we find the most beautiful flowers of fancy entwined around the rod of satire!

"Dulness o'er all possess'd her ancient right,
 Daughter of Chaos, and eternal Night;
 Fate, in their dotage, this fair idiot gave,
 Gross as her sire, and as her mother grave;
 Laborious, heavy, busy, bold, and blind,
 She rules in native anarchy the mind.
 Her ample presence fills up all the space,
 A veil of fogs dilates her awful face." [DunB 5:1.11-
 16 and 261-62.]

A local description, what can be more charming than the following lines from the same poem?

"Lo! where Maeotis sleeps, and scarcely [hardly]
 flows,
 The freezing Tanais through a waste of snows,
 The North by myriads pours her might sons,
 Great nurse of Goths, of Alans, and of Huns.
 See, where the morning gilds the palmy shore,
 The soil that arts and infant letters bore,
 His conquering tribes th' Arabian prophet draws,
 And saving Ignorance inthrones by laws." [DunB 5:3,87-
 90 and 95-99.]

We may apply to the above extracts from Pope what M----s says after his quotations from Dryden; "we cannot wonder at any enthusiasm offered up to their author."¹

Yours, &c.

Anna Seward.

¹Letter 5, p. 31.

9a. [continues Letter 4]

Mr. Urban, Solihull, Oct. 26. [1789]

Unpleasant as the task of answering Miss Seward's objections to my unfortunate Preface proves to be; interrupted as I am by perpetual returns of my fever; that task is rendered still more unpleasant by interruptions of a different kind. One correspondent, and another, and yet another, urges objection after objection, before I have advanced three steps in my defence*.

I might, perhaps, without much impropriety, wave a reply to those objections until I shall have finished my reply to Miss Seward; but I must take the liberty of suspending, once more, my principal design, that I may set M. F. right in a matter which I can with truth aver that he has totally mistaken; for, though I hope I do not possess all that Irritability, and all that Self Sufficiency which, in a moment of vexation, he has thought proper to ascribe to me, I certainly do possess so much Sensibility as to feel exceedingly hurt at his remarkable misconception of my intentions; and flatter myself with the idea of possessing just so much Importance as entitles me to a vindication, when unjustly accused.

I did not "take umbrage"¹ at my execration of Mr. Pope being deemed by M. F. harsh and unjustifiable. On consulting

*After this affecting exordium we have no doubt but our other correspondents (particularly the benevolent M----s) will excuse our omitting their favours on this subject till Mr. Weston has concluded. Edit.

¹The quotations in this paragraph are from "M.F.'s" Letter 7, pp. 32-34.

my letter in your Magazine for August, it will be found that I professed myself (and with evident sincerity) very "grateful" for M. F.'s unexpected interference. True it is, that I denominated him a "strange knight;" but, if he ever read a single romance, he could not be ignorant that the epithet "strange" is used seldom, if ever, in the language of Chivalry, in an invidious sense (as if it were synonymous to queer). "Strange knight" means there neither more nor less than stranger-knight, but is rather better grammar.--He is again mistaken in supposing that I "want to know his rank in arms." I have expressed no such wish. I did call him my "unknown adversary;" and where was the crime? Is he not unknown? Is he not my adversary?

Whoever will take the trouble of glancing over the paragraph which has given so much offence to M. F. will find that good-humoured raillery has been misapprehended by him for virulent invective. "I had no idea (says M. F.) when I sent you those few candid remarks inserted in p. 512, couched, as I thought, in terms both respectful and inoffensive, that they would so far have excited Mr. Weston's spleen; I could not suppose those observations on the justice and propriety of a single word would have so much discomposed him."¹ Why all this parade? In the paragraph alluded to above, I had done this "strange knight,"² this "unknown adversary," the justice to own that, from the gentle

¹Letter 7, pp. 32-33.

²This, and the references which follow, are from Letter 4, p.25.

and courteous terms in which his defiance was couched, believe him to be of no vulgar degree; and I had already confessed, in an apologetical address, inserted in your Magazine for July,¹ that the manner in which he called upon me was "candid"² and I appeal, Mr. Urban, to your ingenious Editor, whether I did not make a similar acknowledgement in the postscript of a private letter which accompanied that which was intended for publication*; and a compliment which was never meant to meet the eye of your correspondent could neither be intended [to] conciliate his favour, nor to deprecate his further censure.

Expressions thus favourable betrayed, one would think, no very large portion of spleen, no very violent degree of discomposure! Oh! but (says M. F.) the "non tali auxilio," &c.!!³ True. There is no getting rid of that. Fatal quotation! There was an implication of inferiority in the supposed auxiliary;-- "that's the truth on't."⁴ But, in some measure to soften the never-to-be-forgiven censure, permit me just to hint to M. F. that his talents may be much above mediocrity, and yet have no right to range themselves in the same rank with the transcendent abilities of a Seward!

If M. F. imagines my flourish (as he calls it) was introduced merely at random, and without apparent reason, let

* This was certainly the case. Edit.

¹Letter 3, p. 22.

²"Without malice; without deceit, fair; open; ingenuous," Johnson, Dictionary. Actually, Weston called "M. F.'s" manner "earnest," not "candid."

³Letter 7, p. 33.

⁴Unidentified.

him reconsider one paragraph toward the beginning, and one toward the conclusion, of his first letter, and he may possibly retract his opinion. In the former of those passages he will find an enuumeration of the excellencies of the Poet, seemingly intended to prove the injustice of my execration of the Man; and in the latter he will find a list of various meanings which his Dictionary affixes to the word "execrable," followed by a grave exclamation of "surely Mr. Pope could not deserve All these!"¹

Every classical reader of the book of Job knows that the naughty word which our translators have put into the mouth of his wife, viz. "curse," might, with equal probability, and with greater politeness, have been rendered "bless."² Had Miss Seward commented on this circumstance, she might probably have complained of the hardship which Job's unfortunate helpmate has sustained, thus stigmatised as an impious vixen, when, for aught that appears to the contrary, she might be a very religious and very peaceable kind of a woman; but, most assuredly, Miss Seward, after informing Mr. Urban's readers that the verb in the original admits of different, nay opposite significations, and, in reality, means either "to bless" or "to curse," would never have exclaimed, "surely the good lady could not mean Both!"

¹Letter 2, pp. 20-22.

²Miss Seward may be referring to the double meaning of the Hebrew cherem, "a thing devoted to god," "whether for His service, as sacrifices" or "for its destruction, as an idol," W.E. Vine, M.F. Unger, and William White, An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words (NY: Thomas Nelson, 1984) 254.

Had my spleen been roused, even in the least degree, by M. F.'s reprehension of the term "execrable," what prevented me from bringing forward these hasty inaccuracies, these accidental slips of a not inelegant pen, while under the influence of that spleen? Nor are they blazoned even now (when Candour itself must allow that I have received some provocation) in the unmanly wantonness of triumph, nor in the mean spirit of revenge; but only to prove that my implication of the inferiority of M. F. to Miss Seward originated not from rancour or from pride.

I do not "insult over the ashes of the venerable dead."¹ The man whom, had he been living, I should have regarded with horror, I cannot allow to have become venerable by ceasing to exist. His works exist; and many whose abilities have challenged admiration, and many whose virtues have excited esteem, are consigned to contempt and infamy as long as those works endure. Shall I be deterred by the foolish adage of "De mortuis nil nisi Bonum"² from entering my protest against such injustice? Shall an assertion, that "Pope has almost universally been esteemed in the foremost rank of poets, and among the best of men,"³ strike me with such awe, that, though I can prove both claims to be unjust, I must not dare to do it, lest I should find the Universe in arms against me?

¹Letter 7, p. 33.

²"Speak no ill of the dead," Plutarch, Lives (Solon), Sec. 21.

³Letter 7, p. 33.

Whatever may be the risk, however, I shall do it. Fiat Justitia, ruat Coelum!¹

Shall this Cromwell, who has injured that poetical constitution which he pretended to amend, trampled on the rights of those fellow-citizens whom he ought to have loved and protected, and, by dint of the most hypocritical pretences to piety and morality, imposed on the understandings, and seduced the affections of the rich and the powerful, making them his stepping-stones to the highest seat in the realms of Parnassus; shall this Usurper, I say, who, having thus wickedly gained the throne, vilified the abilities, and assassinated the reputations of those whose claim to it might interfere with his own, and gibbeted all their adherents and abettors, rest undisturbed in the dust? Can the office of tearing him from his grave, that he may be exalted for an example to all succeeding tyrants, though disagreeable, be deemed sacrilegious? Is it not even meritorious? Seeming cruelty to the dead is real humanity to the living.--- Who, endued with poetic genius and classical erudition, though, perhaps, not blest with sufficient application, or sufficient leisure, to produce works of an elaborate or an exalted kind, will venture to amuse the world with the light and elegant effusions of Taste and Sensibility, through the medium of your very respectable Miscellany, if some Leviathan of literature, suspecting that the young fry may, some time or other,

¹ "Let justice be done, though the heavens fall," proverbial.

prove rivals, is at hand, with his enormous jaws distended,
to swallow them at a gulp?

Joseph Weston.[* *]
*

9b.

Continuation of Mr. Weston's Vindication of himself (from p. 876.)

M. F. exultingly asks, if "I would have adventured on the sentence had the admired Pope been living?"-- I certainly would; and M. F. might have stared with "astonishment at my Hardihood" and "Imprudence."¹ I might perchance, Mr. Urban, have been rewarded with a place in the Temple of Dulness; and would then have consoled myself for present Disgrace, by the Consciousness of Rectitude, and the Hope that some future Writer might be as just and as generous to Me, as the Conductor of your Magazine has been to the injured and insulted Welsted: for which I once more thank him. Were it necessary, I could evince the Sincerity of my Thankfulness, by producing a Poem,² written more than a Dozen Years since, 300 Lines of which are appropriated to the honest purpose of rescuing from unmerited Obloquy not only Welsted, but also many other Heroes of the inimitable Dunciad. That Dunciad, upon whose

* *

* We must apologize to our readers for this letter's breaking off abruptly.--Mr. W. will know that we were so closely urged in respect of time, that it is not without difficulty we have made room for so much of it. Edit.

¹In this letter, all the quotations from "M.F." are from Letter 7, pp. 32-34.

²This poem does not appear in Weston's published works. I have been unable to find any record of his unpublished papers.

rotten, pestilential Carcase, even the embalming Art of the admirable Seward is exercised in vain!--Inimitable?--Ay, that it is; and so, I believe, will long remain!--Inimitable in its Wit--inimitable in its Malevolence!--But let it rest for the present! I shall pay it another Visit, as soon as I have fulfilled my Engagement with Respect to my Preface to the Woodmen of Arden; from which no more Interruptions from M. F. nor from any one else shall divert me.

When I have dispatched that essential business, I shall endeavour to convince M. F. that he is again mistaken; for I shall assuredly find no "very tough piece of work" in proving Mr. Pope to be--what no honest man Can be.--Nor shall I derive any Assistance from those "shining Talents," of which M. F. obligingly supposes me possessed. I shall state a plain Fact, in plain Language.--My Reasons, it is true, will be "strong;" and my Evidence will be "valid:"--such Reasons and such Evidence as M. F. will scarcely controvert; since the single Witness whom I shall produce on the Occasion will be--Pope himself!--a Witness who will settle the affair much more effectually than the train of Lords and Commons united could have done, whom he has so ostentatiously called to his Character; and who, it seems, esteemed him "to be in the foremost Rank of Poets, and among the best of Men."

If, in my Journey through Life, I have met with Monsters of Selfishness, Inhumanity, Hypocrisy, and Ingratitude (and God knows that such monsters I have met with!), who, with not the tenth part of Mr. Pope's Cunning, have yet had the Address to impose themselves on very good, nay, very wise

Persons, for Models of the opposite Virtues--can I wonder that so great a Master of the Art of Dissimulation contrived to blind those whom the lustre of his Talents had already dazzled?

I acknowledge M. F. to be right, when he remarks that, "who or what he is" avails little to the Justice of the Cause; but I must observe that Mr. Urban's anonymous Correspondents have, in some respects, greatly the Advantage of those who sign their real Names.

M. F., for Instance, can give ample Vent to his Spleen in snug Security; since, however just, however severe a Retort he may meet with, if he has Prudence enough to keep his own Secret, no friend can insult him with Pity--no enemy with Derision: but no such Refuge remains for Me. If I leave an Opening for Censure, my Friends* --but verbum sat;¹ my Enemies, however (and I should be ashamed to think that I had not some), may be reasonably supposed to feel no slight Gratification, when they see me charged in Print with being "tremblingly alive at any Arraignment of my Productions"--with "nearly approaching to Infallibility in my own Estimation" with "possessing the Genus irritabile in a very superlative Degree"--and with being "happy in a very comfortable Sense of my own Importance;"--and all this Abuse (for what gentler Term does it deserve?) occasioned by my having had

*No true [barely legible] Friends Can merit the implied Sarcasm; pretended ones are welcome to it.

¹A brief version of "verbum sapienti sat est 'a word is sufficient to the wise person,'" OED. Originally used by both Plautus and Terence.

the Impiety to execrate a "Foe to Humankind"¹ the Absurdity to call a Stranger a Stranger--an Adversary an Adversary--and (above all) the audacious Illiberality to intimate, that the literary Talents of M. F. are not quite equal to those of (pardon me, Miss Seward! but I must still repeat) "one of the finest Writers of the Age!"²

Joseph Weston.+

+Mr. W.'s Second Letter next month.

¹Pope, Od 10:14.320.

²Letter 4, p. 24.

9c.

Mr. Urban, Solihull, Nov. 23. [1789]

Unwilling as I am (for Reasons sufficiently obvious) to quote my own Authority, I know not how I can contrive to render my Defence of the Preface to the Woodmen of Arden intelligible to such of your Readers as may entertain no great Fondness for turning backward and forward very many Pages of your Publication, unless I request Admission for some copious Extracts from the Work itself.

Loathing every Species of Affectation, I will not insult your Understanding, by making any long Apology for the Room which they will take up in your valuable Miscellany; since, however erroneous the Opinions contained in the Essay may be thought, however feeble my Justification of them may prove, the Subject, at least, can never be deemed uninteresting to a large Proportion of your Readers, which has had the painful Distinction of arresting the Attention, and of calling forth the critical powers of a Correspondent, whose occasional Contributions so beautifully irradiate the Gentleman's Magazine!

But, left the Liberty which I claim should be construed Licentiousness, I intend to select only such Passages as have been the immediate Cause of drawing down upon me Miss Seward's Animadversions; nor shall I select all those: conscious that the Parts which are absolutely necessary to be adduced will occupy more of your Columns than you can conveniently spare, overwhelmed as you evidently are by such a Multiplicity of Communications.--Give me Leave to suggest, by

Way of reconciling you, in some Measure, to the uncommon Length of the Quotations of which I am soliciting the Insertion, that (containing in themselves, as I hope they do, an almost complete Apology) they will materially lessen my present Labour; and, perhaps, engross no larger Portion of your Paper than those Observations probably would, which I must be obliged to make, if I should be refused this more summary, and, of course, more eligible Mode of Vindication.

Without further Preamble, then, I proceed to the Essay which is prefixed to that Translation of Mr. Morfitt's admirable Latin Poem, which I profess to be attempted in the Manner of Dryden.

"To neglect the modern Style of Versification--to overlook even that which Pope introduced--and, professedly, to copy from the old fashioned Model of Dryden--will excite some Degree of Surprise among those who take for granted that Poetic Diction has, since his Time, received considerable Improvement.--But, to confess the Truth, I cannot help thinking that English Rhyme was brought by that wonderful Man to the Acme of Perfection; and that it has been, for many Years, gradually declining from Good to indifferent--and from indifferent to Bad.

"I am not unaware that a Sentiment so unfavourable to most of my contemporaries, and so opposite to Prejudices long received and obstinately retained, will, probably, be considered as the rash and romantic Assertion of a vain and presumptuous Innovator, and be treated with all the Severity usually exercised against Notions which are looked upon as heterodox.--But such Severity would be flagrant Injustice.--The Opinion which I have expressed is neither dictated by Vanity, nor prompted by an Affectation of Singularity; but is, in Fact, the Result of much Reflection, and of very minute Investigation.

"To do Justice to the Subject would be to extend a Preface--to a Volume; but it may not be unnecessary to prove, that I have not hazarded so bold a Declaration on slight Grounds; and that, while I endeavor to convince my Reader, I am, at least, convinced myself.

"The Poetry of Dryden, though allowed to be, in general, Correct, Energetic, and Harmonious, is also

said to be sometimes Careless, Languid, and Prosaic; in Fine (to use his own Words, when speaking of Milton), he is charged with having 'Flats among his Elevations.[']¹ --They who bring the Charge usually accompany it with an Exclamation of 'how unfortunate was the poor Man, whose Necessities compelled him to precipitate his Works to the Press in so unfinished a State!'²

"I will admit the Justice of the Accusation, but wave [sic], as entirely unnecessary, the Apology.--Poor he certainly was--to the never-dying Infamy of the Age which he so splendidly adorned; but his Poverty has little to do with the Question in Debate.--Many of his Lines seem, it is true, to have wanted his last Touches; but those last Touches, I am persuaded, were not hastily Neglected--but deliberately Denied. His intuitive Judgement, doubtless, suggested, that all Things figure but by Comparison; and that even Excellence, undiversified, must, at length, Fatigue. He, therefore, subdued his Style occasionally--to burst upon his Reader with greater Splendour, when the Subject demanded a Loftier Lay.

"But how reconcile this Supposition to his Remark respecting Milton--which seems to imply, that no Flats should be admitted among the Elevations?--Very easily.--Steadiness and Consistency were, by no Means, Characteristics of the Doctrines which Dryden promulgated in his numerous Prefaces;--Doctrines which he varied, without much Scruple as Times or Circumstances changed: and, in the present Case, Dread of Milton's superior Genius, and Detestation of his political Principles, might, reasonably, be supposed somewhat to pervert his natural Candour, and somewhat to bias his wonted Impartiality.

"The Poetry of Pope, though less enriched with [by] Classical Knowledge, and less illumined by Vivid Imagination, appears, however, at first Sight, to greater Advantage than that of Dryden; as it is, certainly, more elaborately correct, and more mechanically regular--more delicately polished, and more systematically dignified,--But are these really Advantages?--Let us examine.

¹ Dramatic Poesy, 2:84. Dryden wrote of Milton, "his thoughts are elevated, his words sounding. . . . 'Tis true, he runs into a flat of thought, sometimes for a hundred lines together."

² "M---s" says in Letter 5, p. 30, "That Dryden purposely kept down certain parts of his writings, in order to serve as foils to the rest, is an assertion in which Mr. W. will not, perhaps, find a single advocate; as the prematurity in which pecuniary circumstances compelled him to hurry his publications into the world is known and lamented by every one."

"Does the skilful Painter bring all his Figures forward on the Canvas, and bestow the last Hand upon every Part of the Picture?

"Does the Musician cloy The Ear with an eternal Succession of harmonious Sounds, uncontrasted by the dire, but necessary, Discords?

"Does the Ornament of the Stage lavish Emphasis, Expression, Attitude, and Action, upon every Line of every Sentence?

"Does the Beauty of a Birth-Night¹ concentrate all her Jewels (unrelieved by Interstices of black Velvet) in one Intolerable Blaze?

"Would the Face of Creation appear more lovely, were it--instead of 'rising into Inequalities, diversified by the varied Exuberance of abundant Vegetation'--to exhibit one immensurable 'Velvet Lawn, shaven by the Scythe, and levelled by the Roller?'²

"Why then must Poetry adopt a preposterous Plan of Equalisation which her Sister Muses reject with Scorn--and aspire to an imaginary perfection, alike unknown to Nature and to Art?

"The Question seems to lie in so small a Compass, and to be so easy of Determination, that one feels inclined to enquire how so absurd a Notion could possibly gain a Footing, and maintain its Ground, in an Age so polished and enlightened as to have acquired the Title of Augustan?-- Great Events, 'tis certain, arise sometimes from very trivial Causes; but never, surely, was so important a Revolution in the Parnasian Realms produced by Means so utterly contemptible!

"When Dryden's Sun was set, darting its* brightest Ray at its Departure, Pope was beginning to dawn on the poetical Hemisphere,--A young Man of lively Talents, with a peculiar 'Knack at Rhyming,'³ could not fail to attract the Notice of many would-be Maecenases; among others, one Walsh undertook to usher this rising Genius into the World: he did more; he affected to point out a Way, by which his Pupil should surpass all who had gone before him.--'Mr. Pope (said he), there is one Path as yet entirely untrodden--the Path of Correctness:

*Dryden's inimitable Ode is said to have been his last Production. ["Alexander's Feast; or the Power of Musique. An Ode in Honour of St. Cecilia's Day" (1697). This is Dryden's last lyric poem. Fables Ancient and Modern (1700) was his final work. See Kinsley 1: Table of Contents.]

¹"The evening of a royal birthday. . .the court-festival held thereon," OED.

²Lives 3: 222.

³John Dennis, A True Character of Mr. Pope, Works, ed. E. N. Hooker, 2:108.

Dryden was a great Poet--but he had not Leisure to be correct.--Seize the glorious Opportunity; supply the Deficiency, and be immortal![']¹

"In an evil Hour did the ambitious young Bard hearken to the fatal Advice of 'knowing Walsh' (as he somewhere calls him);² and, hoping to supply this supposed Deficiency, he began to labour, and stiffen, and polish, and refine: till, having discarded whatever seemed loose, or languid, or harsh, or prosaic, his Verse Flowed in one equal, smooth, mellifluous Stream; marked by an almost total Want of that Variety of Pause, Accent, Cadence, and Diction, so eminently conspicuous in his imcomparable Predecessor, and so absolutely essential to the Harmony of true Poetry.

"The Thought is so seldom suffered to stray beyond the Bounds of the Couplet, and so frequently wire-drawn merely to end with it--one Part of a Line so exactly reflects the other--[and] there is such a Paucity of Triplets and of Alexandrines (the Break too, in the latter, so regularly at the sixth Syllable),--that even the most ingenious Allusions, the most striking, beautiful, and graceful Imagery, the most perspicuous and pointed good Sense, and the most elegant and nervous Expression--with all their Powers united--find it difficult to render the tiresome Uniformity of his Versification supportable.

"To the officious Interposition of this same Walsh, then, we are indebted for the Contamination of the Heliconian Fountain for near a Century! Risum teneatis?³ "But so material a Change in the Constitution of Poetry could not be expected to take Place without some literary Convulsions.--The Disciples of Dryden were ardent in their Veneration, formidable by their Numbers, and respectable by their Rank.--Violent was the Clamour, and tedious was the Contest.--Pope, however, in the End--by Means not very honorable indeed--proved triumphant.

"In the Course of my Researches, I have found considerable Amusement (though alloyed, in no small Degree, by a Mixture of Scorn and Indignation), in tracing and developing the insidious Arts which he suffered his Friends to practise, in order to undermine the Reputation of the deceased Poet and to asperse the Characters of his living Supporters; and if a Work,

¹ Weston seems to be freely paraphrasing what Joseph Spence recorded that Pope said of Walsh, "He encouraged me much, and used to tell me, that there was one way left of excelling: for though we had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct; and he desired me to make that my study and aim," Spence, 32.

² Arbu 4:136.

³ Horace, The Art of Poetry 5, "Could you refrain from laughing?"

which, for a longer Term of Years than that prescribed by Horace¹, has been incarcerated in my Closet, should ever escape into Light, Pope's Goodness of Heart would be no longer problematical:--at present, I shall content myself with observing, that He, while the injured Dryden sunk in the public Estimation, was exalted to the vacant Chair, and proposed as a bright Exemplar to all succeeding Bards.

"But, as He was supposed to have improved upon his Master, Our Poets seem ambitious of improving upon theirs.--He rejected every Thing that was not rich; They reject every Thing that is not brilliant.--He is every where clear and manly; They not unfrequently torture into Obscurity, and refine into Imbecillity.

"To confirm and illustrate my Observation, by selecting Instances of harsh Construction and fantastic Inversion--Tinsel Phrases and tinkling Compound-Epithets--were a Task as easy as it were unpleasant and unwise.--The Genus irritabile Vatum² is proverbial; and I shall, probably, find Inconvenience enough, from having disturbed the Horner's Nest, by a General Censure, without the additional Imprudence of pulling it about my Ears by a Particular Enumeration.--Suffice it, therefore, to observe, that the modern System appears decisively to exclude every Mode of Expression from Poetry which is so unlucky as to find a Place in Prose.

"Let me not be misunderstood.--Poetic Diction and that Alone, is the Object of my Reprobation; nor, even in that Department, am I insensible of some very splendid Exceptions: but flatter myself, as the Influence of their Example gradually expands, that I shall still live to see the apparent Negligence but real Art--the dignified Simplicity--the unaffected Sublimity--and the endless Variety of the Prince of Rhyme (as Mr. Hayley justly styles him),³ once more shine forth, in the Fullness of Beauty--the Admiration of all--but cold, mechanical Versifiers, and tasteless, blind Idolators!"⁴

I then proceed to combat Dr. Johnson's Assertion, that an Alexandrine "invariably requires a Break at the sixth

¹Horace advised, "put your parchment in the closet and keep it back till the ninth year," The Art of Poetry, 388-89.

²See Letter 7, p. 33n.

³I have been unable to identify the source of this in William Hayley's works. In his "Essay on Epic Poetry," Hayley wrote: "Milton's Verse, and Dryden's Rhyme, / Are proof alike against the rage of Time," Poems and Plays (1788), 3: 5.233-34.

⁴WA vii-xv.

Syllable;"¹ and, after endeavouring to prove that the Pause may be introduced, with considerable Effect, at the fifth, seventh, and eighth Syllables*, thus conclude the Subject:

"To multiply Instances would be superfluous; enough has been said to demonstrate what many have supposed to be incapable of Demonstration--viz. that Pope is not infallible, nor his Biographer invulnerable.

"If this should seem the Language of Exultation, let it be remembered that it is, likewise, the Language of Conviction; and--to repress the gathering Sneer, which an Introduction so disproportioned to the Size of the Poem may tempt--let ill-natured Criticism be informed, that to justify the Style of the following Translation is but a subordinate Object: my principal Design in this Prefatory Essay being to seize an apt Occasion--unexpectedly presented--of co-operating with those who so meritoriously endeavor to restore to Drydenical Purity that Pierian Spring which Pope corrupted, and which his more daring Imitators have Poisoned!"²

You will please to observe, Mr. Urban, that the Opinions which I have here expressed, when divested of their figurative Dress, are briefly these.--That Rhyme was brought by Dryden to the utmost Pitch of Perfection; that it was injured by Pope; and still more injured by his Successors.

The Reasons on which I ground these Opinions are stated, I am sure, with Sincerity and Candour; and, I hope, with good Manners. If they will not plead for themselves, they must stand condemned; for I have neither Health nor Spirits (as I

*Miss Seward has inadvertently quoted me as affirming, "that the Pause may be placed after any of the Syllables, without Injury to the Harmony." [Letter 1c, p. 17.] such Affirmation appears in my Essay; and I can only account for the Mistake, by supposing that I must have dropped some such Remark in Conversation: for I am as confident as I am of my Existence that Miss Seward is incapable of intentional Misrepresentation.

¹ "A Grammar of the English Tongue," Dictionary (1755). Read, "The pause in the Alexandrine must be at the sixth syllable."

² WA xxiii-xxiv.

fear I have already too often hinted) to exert myself, at present, in their Support.--To Miss Seward's Strictures, however, I have pledged myself to reply; and, in the first Place, I own that I do not readily apprehend with what Propriety Sentiments sustained by Argument can be styled Prejudices: but, well aware how easily a Person may be deceived, when judging of himself, I will not obstinately contest the Point; nay, I will freely confess that, having been, for more than twenty Years, in the Habit of admiring Dryden, I may, possibly, entertain a greater Predilection in his Favour than his Merit will justify.--But can my fair Opponent be quite certain that she is entirely free from a similar Influence with Respect to Pope.

Ingenious and ingenuous as I know her to be, she has more than once misunderstood my Meaning, and more than once misquoted my Words; partly, perhaps, from trusting too implicitly to a wonderful Memory, and partly from having her Attention divided between literary Labours and an Employment of a much more amiable and exalted Kind+.

+I ought to be very cautious, Mr. Urban, how I condemn with too much Acrimony, Want of Attention, or Reliance on Memory; as they have jointly contributed to a Mis-quotation of my own. I have scarcely been so much surprized, and, I may add, shocked, as I was Yesterday; when, on accidentally referring to the Magazine for July, I was unable to find the Word "candid" in the apologetical Letter [No. 3, pp. 22-23.] which I mentioned in your last Number [Letter 9a, p. (51) and note#] I instantly examined the rude Draught (for I have so great a Respect for the public Eye, that I submit nothing to its Perusal which has not been twice written), and found the Passage to stand thus--"called upon in so earnest and so candid a Manner by your Correspondent M. F."--This rude Draught, which I fortunately shewed to a Gentleman, while the Ink was yet wet, and who perfectly remembers the Circumstance, I inclose. I would willingly flatter myself that the

She has produced three Lists of Authors,¹ to prove what I never denied, viz. that the Writers of Verses are more plentiful now than they were in the Days of Dryden or of Pope; and, after observing that "the last is (Milton excepted) far the brightest, as well as greatly the most numerous, of the three Lists," she demands--"have they of this third List collectively 'poisoned the Pierian Spring,' either respecting Sentiment, Imagery, or Style?"² --I am firmly persuaded that they have--with Regard to "Style;" but why must "Sentiment" and "Imagery" be introduced?--I had not mentioned either.--"Poetic Diction, and that alone, is the Object of my Reprobation; nor even in that Department am I insensible of some very splendid Exceptions."³ --These were my Words.--Miss Seward cannot expect me to be so daringly imprudent as to specify particularly those "splendid Exceptions."--My Preface assigns a Reason for my Reluctance to select "Instances of harsh Construction and fantastic Inversion, Tinsel Phrases, and tinkling Compound-Epithets;" and, indeed, were I to be so rash, what would be the Use?--to point them out to those who do possess a true poetic Taste--would be

Omission was the Fault of your Compositor, but I fear it would indeed be Flattery; for I perceive that there are other Parts of the Letter which vary from the Copy: so the Blame will probably rest on Me. I feel, however, some Consolation in learning, from your Note to my last Communication, that my Acknowledgement of M. F.'s Candour was retained in the Private Letter, though forgotten in the Public One; as that Acknowledgement sufficiently acquits me of his Charge of Splenetic Resentment.

¹Letter 1a, pp. 3-4.

²Letter 1b, p. 5.

³Above, p. 58. The following quotations are from the same place.

unnecessary; and to those who do not--would be ridiculous!--
Who talks of Music--to the Deaf--or of Painting--to the
Blind?

Miss Seward observes, that my Essay "enumerates what it
calls tinkling Compound-Epithets amongst the fancied Improve-
ments of the Moderns."---"Tinkling (she adds) is a most
inapplicable Adjective; since, when ill-chosen, Compound-
Epithets may be stiff, may grate, but cannot tinkle, on the
Ear. When well-chosen, their Merit is not to the Ear, but to
the Understanding--by their condensing and engergetic
power."¹--To the latter Part of this Paragraph no Objection
can be made; but, with great Deference to such high Author-
ity, I must beg Leave still to retain my Opinion, that some
ill-chosen Compound-Epithets may Tinkle if others may Grate;
and I shall, for once, risk a modern Quotation, that I may
confirm my Position, and prove that I am not accustomed to
deal in unfounded Assertions.

"Each Change of Many-colour'd Life he drew." Johnson.²

"Shakes o'er the darken'd Throne her Blood-distilling
Plumes." Hayley.³

"Glance their many-twinkling Feet." Gray.⁴

Judgement must own that the first of these Compound-Epithets

¹Letter 1b, p. 6.

²"Prologue, Spoken at the Opening of the Theatre in
Drury-Lane, 1747," Works 6: 3.

³William Hayley, "Revolution Ode." This line and the
one before it are quoted in the GM 59: 27. I have been
unable to find the entire poem.

⁴Thomas Gray, "The Progress of Poesy," 35. Samuel John-
son noted, "Gray is too fond of words arbitrarily compounded.
'Many-twinkling' was formerly censured as not analogical; we
may say many-spotted, but scarcely many-spotting" (Lives,
3:437).

is appropriative, easy, and elegant; that the second is picturesque, awful, and sublime; and that the third is affected, tinkling, and nonsensical.

My candid Antagonist owns that I have convicted Prior and Montague¹ of one Mistake; but calls that Mistake trivial.--With Submission, it appears to me to be of the highest Importance.--Can she possibly suppose that the two Associates were such Blockheads, as to believe the Words "doomed" and "fated" were intended by Dryden to express the same Thing?---If they were such Blockheads, they were, surely, ill qualified for Critics; and if, on the other Hand, they did not believe the Words to be synonymous, their Consciences must, of course, give the Lye to their Criticism.--In short (for why should I mince the matter?), they must be deficient in Sense, or in Honesty; and, in either Case, totally unfit for Judges! Great indeed must be the Abilities which can reasonably hope to extricate them from this deplorable Dilemma!

Granting the Observations, which Miss Seward has extracted, to be "indisputably just," it does not follow that "my Prejudice must be extreme," because I denominated their Production a "wretched Abortion of silly Malevolence."--There are but few Rules without Exceptions; and I trust that they who will take the Trouble of wading through their muddy Pamphlet will find, that the general Tenour of the Work will amply justify the Severity of my language.

¹Letter 1b, pp. 6-7. The quotations in this and the next paragraph are from the same place.

I did "select" the eight charming Verses, which open the Hind and Panther, as Specimens of fine Style;"¹ to prove that Pope did not "heighten the Magic of that Versification which he acknowledged to have learned from Dryden."² --I own that they are Almost "exactly in the Manner of Pope;"³ but I think that they differ widely from that of his Disciples. The Lines are much too unaffected, and much too intelligible, to resemble many of Modern Fabrication:--I also confess that they are not in Dryden's general Manner.--Beautiful as they are, the Artfulness of their Construction is rather too apparent; and, had he uniformly written so mechanically, I should have been as much fatigued with his Virgil, as I have been with his Pupil's Homer.

Joseph Weston.

(To be concluded in the Supplement.)

10.

Mr. Urban, Birmingham. Jan. 20. [1790]

My interference in the literary engagement between Miss Seward and Mr. Weston will not, I hope, be imputed to improper views. In my prefatory advertisement to the Woodmen of Arden, I alledged that "the judicious sentiments contained in Mr. Weston's manly essay, which accompanied it, chiefly prompted me to submit to the public eye, what was originally

¹Letter 1b, p. 8.

²WA xviii.

³Letter 1b, p. 8.

intended for a private circle." The approbation which I then gave, justice stimulates me now to support. Mr. W. I am certain, neither wishes, nor wants, my assistance: I am well acquainted with the extent of his reading, the vigour of his intellect, the correctness of his taste, and his persevering, though candid, firmness. Animated by the cause of justice and truth, though he may be dazzled, he will not be dismayed, by the "celestial Panoply"¹ of his fair antagonist. As for myself, I feel no terrors in encountering the formidable Miss Seward: her very censure will give celebrity. But I will not praise her. Panegyric is exhausted upon the varied excellence of her character; and I have no leisure to collect the scattered sweets. It is useless to "gild refined gold, or cast a perfume on the violet."--²

Your correspondents M----s and M.F. are well entitled to the attention of the public; but I beg leave to confine myself to your two leaders in this interesting dispute.

With respect to Dryden and Pope, I feel no inclination to join the* AEgyptian Inquest that has for some time been sitting on their moral characters. Dryden might be lax in his religious, and flexible in his political principles: Pope might be querulous, petulant, envious, malignant. The

*Diodorus Siculus tells us, that it was a custom in AEgypt, for judges to sit on every man's life at his interment. [Diodorus of Sicily, trans. C. H. Oldfather (NY: Putnam, 1933) 1:313-15.]

¹Pope, Il 8:10.511.

²Shakespeare, King John, IV.ii. 11-12. Read "to gild refined gold, to paint the lily, to throw a perfume on the violet."

former might be meanly lavish of his praise, and the latter shamefully prodigal of his abuse, crying, like his parrot, "Cuckold" to every man in the street.¹ But the one might plead in his excuse the malesuada fames,² the almost irresistible persuasions of penury; and the latter, his natural, and perhaps incurable, irritability of disposition, inflamed by perpetual disease. It may not be improper on this occasion to quote the reply of Lord Bolingbroke, when appealed-to [sic] respecting the avarice of the celebrated Duke of Marlborough: "He was so great a man, I have forgot his faults."³ "C'est une consolation," says Voltaire, "pour un esprit aussi borné que le mien, d'être bien persuadé, que grands hommes se trompent comme le vulgaire."⁴--

As to the political [poetical]⁵ merits of the rival bards, I am compelled to give the palm to Dryden. I admit the general inequality of his poems, the occasional coldness of his conceptions, and the not unfrequent depressions of his style. I allow that he sometimes sinks lower than Pope; but he sinks to rise proportionably higher, and, like Antaeus, gathers strength from touching the ground.

I am abundantly convinced from the philosophy of the human mind, that without contrast and variety, the greatest

¹ Ep1 3.2:6.

² Virgil, Aeneid 6.276, "ill-prompting hunger." Dryden rendered it "Famine's unresisted rage," Ae 3:6.387.

³ Written source unidentified.

⁴ Unidentified.

⁵ Weston corrects this "evident Blunder" in Letter 29, p. 184n.

intellectual efforts fail of their effect. This principle, Mr. Weston justly observes, pervades the whole circle of the fine arts: it also governs our corporeal sensations. We must fall below safe to rise above it: "The Indian Sickness amidst his grove of fragrance;"¹ and a perpetual spring, however it may charm in the page of poetry, would be intolerable. The ever-darting polish of Pope hurts my eye; his cuckoo notes disgust my ear; the interminable level tires; and I pant for hill and dale. I know not whether the sinkings in Dryden proceeded from neglect, accident, or design; I speak merely of the effect, without being capable of assigning the cause. Some of them undoubtedly took their rise from the infirmity of the human mind. The highest flights of genius necessarily produce a temporary languor: the lark, after soaring in the clouds, reposes in the furrow.

Miss Seward seems to reason from parts, and Mr. W. from the whole; and I am convinced, from my personal knowledge of the former, that she does great violence to her feelings in the mode of conducting this dispute. It is certainly repugnant to her usual candour, to expose the dirty alleys, and neglected passages, in a magnificent city, and industriously hide from view its spacious streets, splendid squares, and "gorgeous palaces."²--

Longinus, in enumerating the sources of the sublime, mentions in the first place, an elevation of mind which makes us think nobly and happily; and in the second, the natural

¹Unidentified.

²Shakespeare, The Tempest IV.i.152.

vehemence or enthusiasm which strikes and moves us. These, says he, are the gifts of nature;¹ and in these Dryden seems to me to have the advantage over Pope. Figurative language and the arrangement of words are the province of art. Miss S. with ingenious anxiety, endeavours to confound what Mr. W. wishes to separate. The question which he agitates, is not whether Dryden is more chaste and congruous in his figures than Pope, but whether he is not on the whole superior in the effect produced by the structure of his verse. And, upon the whole I agree with Mr. Weston, though I think Dryden too licentious in the use of his Alexandrines, particularly in the middle of sentences. When properly managed, they add much to the sonorous swell of English rhyme, and bring it nearer to the majesty of the Greek and Latin Hexameter, which contains no less than seventeen syllables. Triplets certainly do not deserve the opprobrious epithet "botching:"² they tend to relieve a painful uniformity, and are of singular use in translations. To make the sense invariably terminate with the couplet, which is Pope's constant manner, not only imposes unnecessary fetters on rhyme, but loses that bewitching undulation of sound, which winds through the pages of Milton, and is the same to the ear as the "magic curve of beauty to the eye."³ I allow blank verse admits of it with greater

¹Longinus on the Sublime, trans. William Smith (Baltimore, 1810) 23-27.

²Letter 1b, p. 8.

³Letter to John Morfitt dated February 7, 1789, Letters 2:237. Miss Seward's actual words were "the magic curve, so dear to beauty."

facility, and to a greater extent than rhyme; but I would not have the latter entirely discard a grace for the absence of which no regularity can atone. With some of the points discussed by the two contending critics, the understanding has nothing to do; but an appeal lies to the ear only. [For] my own part, I cannot read 200 pages of Pope together, without satiety: the De gustibus non est disputandum. The formal cut of the verse disgusts one like the taste in gardening, Nothing can be more irksome to my ear, than the lullaby occasioned by the caesura filling so frequently on the 4th and 5th syllable. The mellifluous melodies put me in the situation of a man half smothered with roses. No one, says Lord Kames, contracts a constant habit of taking honey.¹

But I have lain "on these primrose beds too long:"² the fascinating smiles of poetry cannot long detain me from severer studies.

"Discedam, explebo numerum, reddarque tenebris."³

J. Morfitt.

¹Henry Home, Lord Kames, Elements of Criticism (Edinburgh, 1762) 2:88. "No man contracts a habit of taking sugar, honey, or sweet-meats, as he doth of tobacco."

²Probably a paraphrase of "upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie," Shakespeare, A Midsummer-Night's Dream I.i.215.

³Virgil, Aeneid 6.545, "I will go my way; I will fill up the tale and get me back to the darkness."

9d.

Conclusion of Mr. Weston's Reply to Miss Seward's Strictures on the Preface to the Woodmen of Arden (from vol. LIX p. 1106.). [Continues Letter 9c, pp. 59-75.]

"It always appeared to me," says Miss Seward, "that Pope formed his Style upon a few of the best passages in Dryden. Mr. W. is very angry with him for separating the Dross from the Gold."¹ --Pope was indebted to Dryden for his Style, and something more than Style, the astonishing number of Phrases, Half lines and Whole-lines, which he has, most unblushingly, transferred from Dryden's Works to his own abundantly evinces.--I am not angry with him for rejecting the Dross--but for not admitting a Portion of Alloy, sufficient to give to his own Coin Strength, Permanence and Currency.--That Dryden's Gold is entirely free from Dross I will not be so absurd as to affirm; but, whatever may be found reprehensible in his Sentiments or Imagery, his Style, I will still contend, is pure.--With "incongruous Metaphor" and "inconsistent Fable"² I meddle not; my business is merely with his Diction.

Miss Seward allows that Pope too generally confines the Sense within the Boundary of the Couplet; but thinks that Dryden permits it to overflow too often, and that he is too fond of Iambics.--Though I think otherwise, I know of no argument which can establish as a Fact what, I fear, must remain Matter of Opinion; and I have Humility enough to recollect Whose Opinion it is, from which I am so unfortunate

¹Letter 1b, p. 8.

²Letter 1b, p. 6.

as to dissent.

She further observes that Pope "uses the spirited Accent upon the first syllable in a Verse twenty Times for once that it occurs in Dryden;" and that the Verses of the "former describe in the lively dramatic present Tense much oftener than the latter."¹--These assertions I feel no inclination to controvert; perfectly satisfied that my cautious Opponent examined before she affirmed.--I allow that Alexandrines are not often graceful in the Middle of Sentences; but I shall presently have occasion to produce an Exception to this Rule.--Why She, who reasons so ably on the condensing Power of Compound-Epithets, should conceive such a dislike to Dryden's Triplets, I do not readily comprehend; since the Latter assuredly possess that Power, in an eminent Degree: compressing into three Lines the Sense which, though refusing to be confined within two, would become too much enfeebled were it wire-drawn into four; not to mention the additional Dignity which the majestic Alexandrine Derives, from being preceded by two Relatives, instead of one.

The Quotation from the Iliad, in Point of picturesque Harmony, may have been rivalled, but will never be excelled.--But why contrast this utmost effort of Pope's long-practised Wing with the first weak attempt of Dryden's unfledged Pinion?--That the Genius of Pope was at its Zenith, at an Age when that of Dryden was yet below the Horizon, is granted.--And what then?--The Former (in the Opinion of Dr.

¹Letter 1b, pp. 8-9.

Johnson,¹ at least,) never exceeded his Essay on Criticism, written at Seventeen; and the Latter (in the Opinion of all the World) never equalled his incomparable Music Ode--produced at Seventy!--A Reflection not very much to the Advantage of the Premature Poet!

If Dryden, in his eighteenth Year, afforded such faint Glimmerings of that Poetic Flame which afterward blazed so bright, what Hope would Miss Seward have entertained of the celebrated Jonathan Swift, had she seen his first Performance in Verse, (if it deserves the Name,) when he was twenty-four years old--from which the following extracts are taken?

"The first of Plants after the Thunder, Storm, and Rain,
And thence with joyful, nimble Wing,
Flew dutifully back again.
Who by that, vainly talks of baffling Death,
And hopes to lessen Life, by a Transfusion of Breath.
And seen (almost) transform'd to Water, Flame, and Air,
So well you answer all Phaenomenas there."

Anecdotes ancient and modern,

By James Petit Andrews, F. A. S.
page 295.²

Miss Seward proceeds to select six or seven Lines from Juno's Soliloquy, in the first Book of the Aeneid; to prove "that Dryden, in his riper Years, was prone to let his Style fall below the poetic Level, where the Subject called aloud for Elevation."³ --To prove that he does not, however, fall below his Original will, I apprehend, be deemed ample

¹ Lives 3: 229.

² (1790) Andrews, Fellow of the Antiquarian Society, wrote, "The great Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's made his 'debut' in the literary world, by one of the wretchedest odes which ever disgraced Grub-street," (295).

³ Letter 1b, p. 11.

justification--Permit me, therefore, Mr. Urban, to copy the whole Speech from Virgil, to subjoin a literal Version (for the Information of such of your Readers as may have neglected their Latin) and then to add the Translation in Question.

----Me-ne incepto desistere victam?
 Nec posse Italia Teucrorum avertere regem?
 Quippe vetor fati. Pallas-ne exurere classem,
 Argivum, atque ipsos potuit submergere ponto,
 Unius ob noxam & furias Ajacis Oilei?
 Ipsa Jovis rapidum jaculata e nubibus ignem,
 Disjecitque rates, evertitque aequora ventis:
 Illum expirantem transfixo pectore flammam
 Turbine corripuit, scopuloque infixit acuto.
 Ast ego, quae Divum incedo regina, Jovisque
 Et soror, & conjux, una cum gente tot annos
 Bella gero; & quisquam numen Junonis adoret
 Praeterea, aut supplex aris imponat honorem? [Aeneid
 1:36-48.]

Must I, overpowered, desist from my enterprise? And cannot I drive the Trojan King from Italy? I am forbidden by the Fates, forsooth! Could Pallas burn the Fleet of the Greeks, and drown them in the Sea, for the Crime of one alone--for the mad Passion of Ajax Oileus? She hurled the rapid Fire of Jupiter from the Clouds, and shattered the Ships, and* turned the Sea up from the Bottom with the Winds, and seized him with a Whirlwind, expiring Flames from his transfixed Breast, and fastened him to a pointed Rock--But I, who walk the Queen of the Gods, both the sister and the Wife of Jove, wage War so many years with one Nation; and who will, hereafter, adore the power of Juno, or, suppliant, place Honours on her Altar?

Then am I vanquish'd, must I yield, said she,

*_____Up from the Botton turn'd
 By furious Winds. Milton. [Paradise Lost 7.213.]

And must the Trojans reign in Italy?
 So Fate will have it, and Jove adds his Force;
 Nor can my Power divert their happy Course.
 Cou'd angry Pallas, with revengeful Spleen,
 The Grecian Navy burn, and drown the Men?
 She, for the Fault of one offending Foe,
 The Bolts of Jove Himself presum'd to throw:
 With Whirlwinds from beneath she toss'd the Ship,
 And bare expos'd the Bosom of the Deep:
 Then, as an eagle gripes the trembling Game,
 The Wretch yet hissing with her Father's Flame.
 She strongly seiz'd, and, with a burning wound
 Transfix'd, and naked, on a Rock she bound.
 But I, who walk in awful State above,
 +The Majesty of Heav'n, the Sister-Wife of Jove,
 For Length of Years my fruitless Force employ
 Against the thin Remains of ruin'd Troy.
 What Nations now to Juno's Pow'r will pray,
 Or Off'rings on my slighted Altars lay? [Ae 3:1.56-75.]

If Miss Seward's Observation, in your Magazine for September, (page 820)¹ be just--viz. that "the only Plan which can make Translations worth any thing is--to abandon every idea of closeness, and to interweave any new Sentiment or Imagery that occurs, if it can add Grace or Spirit to the Theme"--then will this masterly Translation procure for its Author "the Honours of original Composition;" the English will be found, on Comparison, nowhere Inferior, and in many Places greatly Superior to the Latin.

My facetious Antagonist laughs at the Hissing which the poor Devil made, whom the Heavenly Virago sous'd redhot into the Sea; and adverts to Shakespear's Jolly Knight and his Buckbasket: but I must beg leave to decline being a partaker

+Does not the unexpected Length of this Line convey to the Ear a very lively Idea of the Empress of Heaven, swelling with self-importance? And does not this Example prove that an Alexandrine may sometimes be introduced with Propriety in the Middle of a Sentence?

¹Letter 8, p. 39.

of the Merriment--until it shall be proved that the expression is inapplicable, and until I shall be convinced that Wit and Humour have lost their acknowledged prerogative, of making any Phrase, however just, however pertinent, appear ridiculous, for a Time--by exhibiting it in a ludicrous Point of View, or by contriving for it an unlucky association.

But Sense survives, when merry Jests are past,¹

Apropos.--What a glorious Use has the ingenious Critic made of the Coalition of Dryden with Lord Mulgrave,² in a translation from Ovid!³--Nor can I blame her.--The Cause which she had undertaken to support required every Exertion of her multifarious Pen; and no Expedient that was not absolutely disingenuous was to be rejected: (for of Disingenuousness I know her to be incapable).--Stratagems are lawful in a poetical as well as in a political Warfare; and though it was impossible that Sagacity like hers could, for one Moment, be imposed upon by the Lustre of a Name--though She could not but be sensible that the Translator of the Epistle from Canace to Macareus, and of that from Dido to Aeneas, could not possibly scribble one Line of that paltry Stuff which she has extracted from Helen's Epistle to Paris--she certainly was not obliged to render that Justice to Dryden which he did not think proper to claim--nay, which he

¹ "But Sense surviv'd, when merry Jests were past," EOC 460.

² In 1679, Dryden collaborated with John Sheffield (Earl of Mulgrave and Marquis of Normanby, later Duke of Buckingham) on a translation of Ovid's epistle, Helen to Paris.

³ For excerpts from Helen to Paris, see Letter 1b, pp. 11-12.

actually renounced.--As he suffered his Credit to be so shamefully prostituted, for the mean Purpose of tickling the Vanity of a rhyming Peer, he well deserved the disgrace of having that meagre and ricketty Brat, to which he acted the Part of Midwife as well as of Father, brought forward, as a Foil to the beautiful and elegant offspring of his more prudent Competitor.

By the Way, how are we to prove, unless by internal Evidence, whether Dryden did--or did not-- write the Lines in Dispute?--The right Honourable the Earl of Mulgrave's Name appears to the Firm of the House.--How are we to ascertain, with Precision, what Share each contributed to the joint-stock, unless by comparing, Article by Article, the various Kinds of Goods thus strangely jumbled together, with the very different Qualities of those fabricated in the respective Manufactories which each of the quondam Associates established, after the preposterous Partnership was dissolved?

Upon the Ground of this Species of Examination, I may venture to affirm (without the slightest Hazard of Contradiction from any one possessed of discriminating Taste) that Mulgrave was the Author of every Syllable of the Translations from Ovid, which Miss Seward has ascribed to Dryden.

This Mezentian Combination,¹ this unnatural junction of the living with the dead, provoked the Waggy of contemporary Wits.--One Couplet I recollect.

¹ "Comparable to the cruel action of Mezentius, a mythical Etruscan king, who caused living men to be bound face to face with corpses, and left to die of starvation, Virgil, Aeneid 8.485-88," OED.

"How [But how] did [could] this learned Brace employ their Time?

"One construed sure--while t'other pump'd for Rhyme!"¹

The pecuniary Advantages which the Poet might reap from his Connexion with the Lord (and they surely must have been great, to atone for such a Sacrifice!) were not without their Alloy.--The abandon'd and cowardly Rochester hired Ruffians to cudgel Dryden, in Revenge for an admirable Portrait of him, in the Essay on Satire; a Work in which Mulgrave was again permitted to claim a Share.²--If the peer may be believed, (but no Judge of Poetry can believe him) the Laureat was "prais'd and beaten for another's Rhymes."³ --No, no, Lord Mulgrave We know better; and Rochester knew better.--Aut Erasmus aut Diabolus.⁴ --The Cudgel was certainly applied to the Author of the Rhymes. If Dryden's Poverty and Pope's Avarice induced them to lavish upon you unmerited Honours, for which Posterity will pity one and despise the other, as much as I do--your Lordship's critical and poetical abilities, rest assured, (in spite of their lying Praises,) are beneath all Contempt!

I cannot, Mr. Urban, forbear smiling at the Slyness

¹Matthew Prior, "A Satyr on the Modern Translators," 39-40.

²The Essay upon Satire, which contained an unflattering portrait of John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester, circulated in manuscript in November 1679. When Dryden was assaulted in Rose Alley a few weeks later, people assumed that Rochester had hired the assailants. Dryden's biographer has concluded that Rochester was not involved. See Charles Ward, The Life of John Dryden (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1961) 353n.

³Unidentified. In 1681, Mulgrave admitted he was the author of the Essay (Ward, 144).

⁴"Either Erasmus or the Devil," proverbial.

with which Pope, while affecting to commend this same Earl of Mulgrave for that Miserable Farrago of common-place Cant, called the Art of Poetry,¹ carefully points out the vilest Line among the vile--as an Example of its Excellence.

"Nature's chief Master-piece--is Writing well." [EOC 1:724]²

Whether his Grace smoked³ the Jest I know not; but it is certain that, in those vapid, water-gruel Verses which he has prefixed to Pope's Works,⁴ for one Commendation which he condescends to bestow on the Bard, he wastes ten on himself: ostentatiously informing the Reader that he has been distinguished as a Courtier, a Soldier, and a Poet--considering his "launching forth" in his Service as an immense Obligation--and declaring (with princely Generosity) that the Merit even of the Iliad should not have made him sing--without the additional Recommendation of "a good Companion and as firm a Friend."⁵--As if the Works of a late eminent Engraver were intitled to no Applause, because the wretched Artist was convicted of Forgery! Or as if we were to withhold our Admiration from the Georgics and the Aeneid, because their Divine Author was suspected of indulging a very atrocious Passion!

¹ Essay upon Poetry published anonymously (Dublin, 1682).

² Pope's note to this line ascribes it to the Duke of Buckingham's Essay on Poetry (1717).

³ "To smell out; to find out," Johnson, Dictionary.

⁴ (London, 1717).

⁵ "On Mr. Pope and His Poems," The Works of His Grace John Duke of Buckingham, in Verse and Prose, ed. Alexander Pope (The Hague, 1726) 1:20.

Permit me, Mr. Urban, to risk a conjecture.--After Dryden's charming Version of Ovid's Epistle from Dido to Aeneas, we are favoured with a Translation of the same Epistle by another Hand--Bald, spiritless, and unfaithful as it is, one cannot help wondering "how the Devil it came there!"--Reflecting Readers will suppose that no ordinary Motive induced the *Editor, whose Reputation was too well established to render a Foil necessary, to disgrace his Work by Such a hideous Excrescence.--The Other Hand, who twittered, it seems, for those Laurels which he was half-conscious that he did not deserve, was afraid to hazard his Name! Ergo, it was a Name of Importance.--The very Quintessence of Conceit could not have the Impudence to suggest to the Other Hand that his Translation would not appear to a Disadvantage, "Cheek by Jowl"¹ with that of Dryden. Yet still this bald, spiritless, and unfaithful Translation must have a Place! Ergo, the Translator was of Importance.--

"But when a Lord once owns the happy lines!" [EOC 1:420.]

The needy Poet could not refuse the affluent Peer; but what Dryden could not sanction with his Name (having translated the Whole, himself,) the real Author durst not attempt to sanction with his.

In short--the right Honourable the Earl of Mulgrave was, meo periculo,² the Doer of the second Version of Dido's

*Dryden.

¹A commonplace. See OED and also Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream III.ii.338.

²"At my risk," a commonplace found in Plautus and Cicero.

Epistle to Aeneas!¹--Let the Doubtful compare the uniform Style of that with "Helen to Paris+."

As a striking Proof of the Superiority of Dryden, not only to his contemptible Coadjutor, but also to his elegant Original, give me Leave, Mr. Urban, to present your Readers with the Conclusion of the Epistle, as it appears in Ovid--in Mulgrave--and in Dryden! accompanied by a close Translation, for the Reason before assigned.

Pro meritis, & siqua tibi debebimus ultro,
 Pro spe conjugii tempora parva peto,
 Dum freta mitescunt & amor: dum tempore & usu
 Fortiter edisco tristia posse pati.
 Sin minus; est animus nobis effundere vitam.

+That the Author of one Version was perfectly conversant with the other the Number of Lines which bear strong Marks of Imitation incontestably prove.--To select only two Instances--

"So, on Maeander's Banks, when Death is nigh,
"The mournful Swan sings her own Elegy." Dryden. [DA 1:1-2]

"So in unwonted Notes, when sure to die
"The mournful Swan sings her own Elegy." Mulgrave.

Perfect Resemblance, Mr. Urban!

"But now with Northern Blasts the Billows roar,
 "And drive the floating Sea-Weed to the shore." Dryden.
 [DA 1:186-7]

"These Winds have driv'n the Floating Sea-Weed so,
 "That your intangled Vessel cannot go." Mulgrave.

"Levis"--which Both have agreed to render "floating"--signifies light.--The Lightness of the Sea-Weed is, undoubtedly, the Cause of its floating; but--that two Persons, translating the same Word, and ignorant of each other's Intention, should hit upon the same elegant Mode of substituting the Effect for the Cause, exceeds my Portion of Credulity!--'Twas no casual Coincidence.--The Translators were well acquainted, and had compared Notes, 'tis plain.

¹Weston seems to be mistaken. I can find no record of this among John Sheffield's (Mulgrave's) workss. The BM Catalogue does not list it.

In me crudelis non potes esse diu.
 Adspicias utinam, quae sit scribentis imago!
 Scribimus; & gremio Troicus ensis adest:
 Perque genas lacrymae strictum labuntur in ensem;
 Qui jam pro lacrymis sanguine tinctus erit.
 Quam bene conveniunt fato tua munera nostro!
 Instruis impensa nostra sepulcra brevi.
 Nec mea nunc primo feriuntur pectora telo:
 Ille locus saevi vulnus Amoris habet.
 Anna soror, soror Anna, meae male conscia culpae,
 Jam dabis in cineres ultima dona meos.
 Nec, consumpta rogis, inscribar Elissa Sichaei;
 Hoc tamen in tumuli marmore carmen erit:
 Praebuit Aeneas & causam mortis & ensem
 Ipsa sua Dido concidit usa manu.¹

On account of what I have merited, and if I am to be indebted
 to thee for any voluntary Kindness, on Account of my Hope of
 Marriage, I implore a little Time; until the Seas and my
 affections grow calm: until by Time and Habit I learn to
 bear my Sorrows with Fortitude. But if not--I am resolved to
 shed my Blood. Thou canst not be cruel to me long. I wish
 thou could'st witness my Appearance while writing! I write;
 and in my Lap lies the Trojan Sword: and Tears glide down my
 Cheeks upon the drawn Blade; which will instantly be stained
 with Blood instead of Tears. How well thy Gifts agree with
 my Fate! Thou preparest my Sepulchre at a small Expence.
 Nor is my Breast now pierced with the first Weapon: that
 place already bears the Wound of cruel Love!* Oh Anna! O my

*"O Anna my Sister! O my sister Anna! would have been
 rather a ludicrous--though certainly a literal--Translation
 of "Anna soror, soror Anna."__Thompson [James Thomson] must
 surely have had this passage in his Eye, when he ventured
 upon that tragic Line which made his audience so merry! "Oh
 Sophonisba! Sophonisba Oh!" [The Tragedy of Sophonisba
 (Dublin, 1730) III.ii.19.]

¹Ovid, Heroides 7.177-96.

sister! Unhappily conscious of my Crime! Thou wilt soon pay the last Tribute to my Ashes. Nor, when consumed on the Funeral pile, will I be styled Sichaeus's Elissa; but this Verse shall be on the Marble of my Tomb: "Aeneas supplied both the Motive of Death, and the Sword. Dido fell by her own Hand."

Mulgrave's Translation.

By all I suffer, all I've done for you,
 Some little Respite to my Love allow.
 Time and Calm Thoughts may teach me how to bear
 That Loss, which now alas 'tis Death to hear,
 But you resolve to force me to my Grave,
 And are not far from all that you would have.
 Your Sword before me, whilst I write, does lye,
 And by it, if I write in vain, I die.
 Already stain'd with many a falling Tear,
 It shortly shall another Colour wear.
 You never could an apter Present make,
 'Twill soon the Life you made uneasy take.
 But this poor Breast has felt your Wounds before,
 Slain by your Love, your Steel has now no Pow'r.
 Dear guilty sister, do not you deny
 The last kind office to my Memory;
 But do not on my Fun'ral Marble join
 Much wrong'd Sichaeus' sacred Name with mine.
 "Of false Aeneas let the Stone complain; }
 "That Dido could not bear his fierce Disdain, }
 "But by his Sword, and her own Hand was slain.¹ }

Dryden's Translation.

If by no Merit I thy mind can move,
 What thou deny'st my merit give my Love.
 Stay 'till I learn my Loss to undergo;
 And give me Time to struggle with my Woe.
 If not: know This, I will not suffer long,
 My Life's too loathsome, and my Love too strong.
 Death Holds My Pen, and dictates what I say,
 While cross my Lap the [thy] Trojan Sword I lay.
 My Tears flow down; the sharp Edge cuts their Flood,
 And drinks my Sorrows, that must drink my Blood
 How well thy Gift does with my Fate agree!

¹ See above p. 80n.

My Fun'ral pomp is cheaply made by thee.
 To no new Wounds my Bosom I display:
 The Sword But enters where Love Made the Way.
 But thou, dear Sister, and yet dearer Friend,
 Shalt my cold Ashes to their Urn attend.
 Sichaeus' Wife let not the Marble boast,
I lost that Title when my Fame I lost.
 This short Inscription only let it bear,
 "Unhappy Dido lyes in Quiet Here.
 "The Cause of Death, and Sword by which she dy'd
 "Aeneas gave: The rest her arm supply'd." [DA 1:191-212.]

I am, at length, arrived at Miss Seward's third and last Letter; and, if I should not trace "her every step" so minutely as I have hitherto done, suffer me to plead, in Excuse, the unaffected Aversion which I feel (and which every Moment's Reflection contributes to strengthen) to prolong a Contest, in which the Politeness the sacred Sex may so justly claim is in constant Danger of Violation.--If I am told that my amiable Adversary's Abilities are Masculine--I reply that her Sensibility is, nevertheless, extreme; and, were I sure, by the compleatest Victory, to secure Immortal Renown, I should esteem it dearly purchased, at the Risk of losing her invaluable Friendship! That Light Of Life, which once withdrawn the Blaze of Noon would seem to me Egyptian Darkness, and Creation a dreary Blank!--But I am still further wearying the patience of your Readers--and must descend from my Altitudes.

I only rejected the Apology commonly made for Dryden (viz. Poverty) because I thought and continue to think it unnecessary.--I am still firmly of Opinion that--whatever Alterations a deliberate Revisal of his hasty Publications might have produced, in his Images and Sentiments, his Style would have remained untouched; its striking Inequality being,

I sincerely believe, the Result of Choice rather than of Necessity.--Having sufficiently discussed this Point, in my Preface, I shall content myself with producing an Authority in my Favour, which Miss Seward, I am sure, will acknowledge to be highly worthy of Attention.

In Warton's celebrated Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope, (Vol. ii. p. 175.) after some Remarks on the well-known Lines of the Man Of Ross, the learned and ingenious Writer thus proceeds.

"The particular Reason for which I quoted them, was to observe the pleasing Effect that the Use of common and familiar Words and Objects, judiciously managed, produce in Poetry. Such as are here the Words, Causeway, Seats, Spire, Market-place, Alms-house, apprentic'd. A fastidious Delicacy, and a false Refinement, in order to avoid Meanness, have deterred our Writers from the Introduction of such Words; but Dryden often hazarded it, and gave by it a secret Charm, and a natural Air to his Verses, well knowing of what Consequence it was sometimes to soften and subdue his tints, and not to paint and adorn every Object he touched, with perpetual Pomp and unremitted Splendor."¹

Your polite Correspondent M----s (to whom I am indebted for a very handsome Compliment) either had not read, or had forgotten this remarkable paragraph, when he expressed an Apprehension that I should not, perhaps, find a single Advocate for what he, inattentively, styles my "Assertion"--though I had, in Fact, only given it as my Opinion.

I certainly have attacked Pope's moral Character, and shall as certainly make good my Charge; but I cannot recollect that I have praised that of Dryden, and, therefore, am not compelled to defend it from Miss Seward's weighty

¹Warton 2:170-71.

Accusations.--Strongly tempted, however, to extenuate, in some Degree, such Parts of his erroneous Conduct as will admit of Extenuation, Fear of lengthening that which is already too long alone restrains my Pen.

Had I not been convinced by a very serious Investigation, that the Disposition of Pope was base and rancorous in the Highest Degree, and that his* Example has been attended with pernicious effects, his Memory would have remained undisturbed by Me.--I never heard that he "relieved the necessities of his abusive Foe"¹ otherwise than by+ writing a delightful Prologue to a Play² acted for the Benefit of the poor old Man, after he had lost his sight; unless a couple of Guineas which he paid, as a Subscription, for two Volumes of Epistolary Correspondence, which Dennis published,³ may be placed to the Account of Charity.

They who shall peruse the following Letter, written by

*A more ample Explanation of my meaning would here occupy too much Room; and may not improperly be reserved till the "Ides of March:" [Shakespeare, Julius Caesar 1.2.18] at which Time I intend to answer the Challenge of M.F. respecting the uncourtly Epithet which I applied to Pope.

+Though it may appear somewhat invidious to assign to a good Action an unamiable Motive, I cannot help suspecting that there might be more of Parade than of Humanity in the Case.--Vanity less enormous than that which fell to his Share might have grasp'd with Greediness at so lucky an opportunity of purchasing a very valuable Species of Fame at a very trifling Expence.

¹Letter 1c, p. 20. Mack notes that according to a letter from Pope to David Mallet in 1733 "Pope had, it seems clear, been contributing financial aid to Dennis surreptitiously through Mallet," Life 588.

²Prologue, for the Benefit of Mr. Dennis, 1733 at a performance of Colley Cibber's The Provok'd Husband, Dec. 18, 1733, Twk 6:355.57.

³Original Letters, Familiar, Moral and Critical (1721).

Pope, though (for very wise Reasons) not inserted in his own artful and mutilated Edition of his Works,¹ may possibly attribute his seeming Liberality to a Motive less exalted than that suggested by his generous Apogolist.

To Mr. Dennis.

Sir,

May 3, 1721.

I called to receive the two Books of your Letters from Mr. Congreve, and have left with him the little Money I am in your Debt. I look upon myself to be Much More So, for the Omissions you have been pleased to make [in those Letters] in my Favour, and sincerely join with you in the Desire that not the Least www Traces may remain of that Difference between us, which indeed I Am Sorry For. You may therefore believe me, without either Ceremony or Falseness, Sir, Your most obedient humble Servant,

A. Pope.²

The Consideration of his "Filial Tenderness"³ I shall, at present, wave; having introduced my Sentiments of that pleasing Part of his Character in a Poem,⁴ with which I mean to conclude this long-protracted Defence: but, having intruded so very far on your Good-nature, Mr. Urban, I cannot solicit for the Admission of between two and three Hundred Lines more--This Month.

In treating of the Alexandrine, Miss Seward has been witty, if not argumentative;⁵ but, indeed, Argument has but little to do in the business. The proper Places for the

¹ Probably the 1735 edition.

² George Sherburne, ed., Correspondence of Alexander Pope (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956) 2:75-76. The letter was originally published by John Dennis in his Remarks Upon the Dunciad, Hooker 2:370-71.

³ Letter 1c, p. 16.

⁴ Letter 15, poem "To Miss Seward," ll. 148-57, pp. 112-13.

⁵ Letter 1c, pp. 16-18.

Break must, after all, be settled by the Ear; and, having appropriated so many Pages of my Essay to the Elucidation of this subject, I think any addition to my former Remarks superfluous.

When I mentioned "Wou'd be Maecenases"¹ I alluded to Hallifax, Buckingham, Walsh, and the rest of the "Mob of Gentlemen, who wrote with Ease,"² and prated about Poetry and Criticism; undignified by Genius, and unadorned by Taste:--of Walsh I have spoken, in my Preface; Buckingham's Pretensions may be nearly ascertained, from the Specimens which I have adduced; and they, who (unsatisfied by my Quotation from the City Mouse and the Country Mouse) are curious to learn yet more of the critical Talents which Hallifax possessed, may obtain entire Satisfaction, by referring to an Anecdote, of unquestionable Authenticity, related in Dr. Johnson's Life of Pope.³--Surely I could not intend to discourage Poetic Patronage, in an age like this that seems to plume itself on patronizing every Art liberal and illiberal except Poetry.

Have I really written "as if the Excellence or Worthlessness of a Poem depended wholly upon the Construction of its Measure; and as if the Couplet was the only order of

¹Letter 9c, p. 56.

²HE 4:2.1.08.

³Lives 3:126-27. Johnson recounts how Halifax told Pope to revise passages in the first three books of his Iliad to give them "'a little [better] turn.'" Dismayed, Pope asked Garth's advice, and Garth recommended that Pope leave the passages untouched and reread them to Halifax in a few months as if he had changed them. Pope did so, and Halifax "was extremely pleased with them, and cried out, 'Ay, now [Mr. Pope] they are perfectly right: nothing can be better.'"

Rhyme?"¹ I must then have written in my Sleep--and am not yet awake; for I have searched, with the most rigid Scrutiny, for a single Passage that could, by any mode of Construction, be supposed to convey such a Meaning--but searched in vain.--I have said much about Diction, 'tis true, and little about any thing else; because Diction, and that alone, was my Object. But, so far from thinking Measure the only Essential, I cordially agree with Miss Seward, that "a Poem has little Merit if it does not remain fine Poetry after having been taken out of all Measure;"² and Horace must have been of the same Opinion: or he would scarcely have recommended the Transposition and Inversion of the Order of the Words, as a Criterion, by which to distinguish whether the Compositions (thus deprived of Measures and Numbers) contained the vital essence of Poetry!³

A Gleam of Satisfaction darts across the Gloom which has, for such a length of Time, hung upon my Spirits--as I approach the Conclusion of my irksome Task. A Task--so very irksome, that not the Honor of a public Correspondence with Miss Seward--not the Pleasure which Her parting Words inspired whose Praise is Fame--no, nor even the Consciousness of having embarked, from the purest Motive, in the justest Cause, could reconcile me to a Situation, in which I would

¹Letter 1c, pp. 18-19.

²Letter 1c, p. 19.

³Weston may be partially remembering Horace's words, "Take from the verses which I am writing now . . . their regular beat and rhythm--change the order of the words, transposing the first and the last--and it would not be like breaking up . . . where, even when he is dismembered, you would find the limbs of a poet," Satires 1.4.56-62.

not wish my bitterest Enemy to be placed!

Though I have now finished all I intend to urge--in Prose, I will not, Mr. Urban, take a formal Leave; as the Winding-up of the subject is reserved for the Verses to which I have adverted: and which, Being expressly composed in humble Imitation of my ever-honoured Master's Style, may serve for a Commentary on my Text--an Illustration of my Remarks.

Believing that well-meant, though, perhaps, weak and ineffectual Endeavours to entertain the Public may reasonably hope for Pardon, if not intitled to Praise--and conscious that those Lines which may seem to have been the least laboured would, on the Drydenic Plan of Light and Shade, have been denied an higher Polish--had I even been blest with better Health and greater Leisure--I will not insinuate a Lye, though in the Words of Truth. I will not meanly attempt to soften the Severity of Criticism, by alledging, as an Apology for the Inequalities which will be found in the Poetical Epistle to Miss Seward, that far the greater Part of it was written, (to borrow the pathetic Language of Dr. Johnson,) "not in the soft Obscurities of Retirement, or under the Shelter of Academic Bowers, but amidst Inconvenience and Distraction, in Sickness and in Sorrow."¹

Joseph Weston.

¹ "Preface" to the Dictionary (1755) 11.

11.

Mr. Urban,

Lichfield, Feb. 13.[1790]

Polite as are my ingenious Drydenic antagonists, I must, in justice to myself, disavow a sensibility which Mr. Morfitt affects to take for granted, and a stratagem for which Mr. Weston affects to forgive me. I have suppressed no sensibilities during my investigation of this subject. I scorn to suppress involuntary consciousness because it may militate against my argument. For the imputed stratagem, my combat with prejudices of such demonstrable futility, could not need the aid of auxiliary stratagem; and were it possible to have wanted, I would have disdained to use it. Solemnly do I disavow the least suspicion that the Epistle from Helen to Paris was not his whose name is prefixed to it. No one, impartial enough to be disgusted with bold and vulgar style in a favourite author, and who has read all Dryden's works, can feel internal evidence that a work is not his, which bears his name, because it is written ill.

I did no violence to my feelings in producing instances of wretched style in the great, the illustrious Dryden, because the nature of my dispute with Mr. W. obliged me to produce them, and because I thought it incumbent upon me, though he acts otherwise by Pope, to bring my proofs with my accusations. As great, as illustrious, with all his sins against sincerity and poetic elegance, I have ever considered Dryden; as such I have mentioned him through the whole course of those strictures, which defend the pointed, polished, and

harmonious style of Pope, and the judgment with which he shunned whatever was turgid or vulgar in its conception, false or absurd in its metaphoric sense, awkward or slovenly in its expression.

Mr. Morfitt confesses that Dryden's imagination, which, by allusion, he justly terms a "magnificent city,"¹ has its dirty alleys and neglected passages, but thinks it uncandid to search them out. Never had they been searched out by me, if his friend had not publicly denied their existence in any such squalid form, and falsely termed them well-disposed shades amidst lights, and judicious flats amidst elevations; if he had not renounced all pardon extended to Dryden for the frequent defects of his style, on the score of pecuniary necessity; and if I had not apprehended a possibility of mischief to our young writers from Mr. Weston's erroneous assertions--mischief, that Mr. Morfitt will find stated in a letter of mine to M----s, in the Gentleman's Magazine for September last, p. 818.²

To prevent such mischief, and without a wish to rob Dryden of those luxuriant laurels, won by the rich fertility of his ideas, by the frequent grandeur of his conceptions, and by the frequent mellifluence of his numbers, did I prove that they were blind alleys, and lamentably neglected passages in the magnificent city. I sought not to hide, as Mr. Morfitt more than insinuates I did, its spacious streets,

¹Letter 10, p. 67. Anna Seward's references to Morfitt are to this letter.

²Letter 8, pp. 35-42.

splendid squares, and gorgeous palaces. Have I not said that Dryden trusted to the majestic trees of his wilderness, "laden with blooming gold,"¹ for the preservation of his fame? Was that the language of one who sought to suppress the recollection of his excellences? But I here repeat a conviction, which I sincerely feel, namely that he never dreamed that their fruits should so far intoxicate the brain of a Brother Poet, as to make him assert the superior beauty of the wilderness on account of its weeds, and abuse the majestic parks and lawns of succeeding Bards, from which the nettles and switch-grass have been rooted up. Flats amidst elevations do certainly promote the general beauty of the scene; but it is very undesirable that they should be overgrown with weeds, "unsightly, and unsmooth."² I have asserted that Pope's poetry is not destitute of this contrasting plainness and simplicity of style. It may be found in sufficient plenty in his Epistles, in his Essay on Man, on Criticism, on Fame; in his Iliad; still more in his Odyssey; and even in the glowing, impassioned, and highly-coloured poem, the Eloisa to Abelard.

If in this disquisition I have produced parts, (and what but parts could I produce?) I have judged from the whole--thus--that Dryden was in the lyric style greater than Pope, but inferior to him in that of the ten feet couplet. I acknowledged that it was a fault in the latter so seldom to float his pause into the middle of the next line; but that

¹Letter 1c, p. 14 and note 2.

²Milton, Paradise Lost 4.631.

Dryden's floating it too often, his Alexandrines in the middle of sentences, his perpetual triplets, which hurt the ear by prolonging the jingle of the rhyme, his everlasting expletives, with which, in particular, his elegy on Cromwell is so much deformed, his "says hes, and says shes," [sic] instance:

The Panther smil'd at this, and when said she
Were these first councils disallow'd by me?

and again:

Why all this war [these wars] to win the book, if we
Must not interpret for ourselves but she?

Hind and Panther. [2:2.168-69, 283-84]

That these, I mean the habitual use of these, formed in the opposite scale of defect so much an heavier preponderance, as to give the superiority, in point of diction, clearly to Pope. I produced my proofs that Dryden often wrote too ill to write so ill from any other motive than necessitous haste.

Mr. Morfitt observes that "figurative language, and the arrangement of numbers, are the province of art." The latter certainly; but the former, if justly figurative, is the constituent, the vital principle of Genius, that combination of remote resemblances, whose happy union mere art will strive to effect in vain. When Shakespear, describing a summer night, exclaims:

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon the bank!¹
and says that it tips with silver the tops of the fruit-

¹Merchant of Venice V.i.54. Read "this bank."

trees;¹ and, in painting wintry darkness, tells us,

Now the loud howling wolves arouse the hours [jades],
That drag the tragic, melancholy night,
And, with their drowsy, slow, and flagging wings,
Clip dead men's graves;²

he speaks figuratively, but with such figures as art alone had never brought him.

That Dryden perpetually sinks below, O how much below Pope! I willingly agree with Mr. Morfitt; but that he ever rises proportionably higher I utterly deny, and would undertake to equal the noblest and most beautiful passages from Dryden's poems, in the couplet measure, with selections from those of his rival. Their genius was equal; but Pope would not abuse his talents, and Dryden lived in the perpetual prostitution of his.

That ear must be oddly modeled, to which Pope's harmonious and flowing verses appear formal. It is not allowed to the couplet rhyme to wind the pause through whole passages, as Mr. Morfitt beautifully expresses it. Dryden did not attempt it. That grace belongs to blank verse, as he allows. Hence the superiority of exquisite blank verse to the most exquisite rhyme.

Mr. Morfitt calls Pope's numbers "Cuckoo-notes;" if he had termed them Blackbird notes, he had spoke more justly; since the blackbird's, sweet beyond a name, and beyond all power of satiety to a musical ear, have not the varieties of the nightingale's melodies. Neither does the

¹ Romeo and Juliet II.ii.108.

² Henry VI IV.i.3.

couplet measure admit great variety in the flow of the numbers; that grace belongs to Ode-writing, and to blank verse.

With such "Cuckoo-notes" as the following, I confess myself incapable of being cloyed, or of perceiving in them any resemblance to folding doors, or to Dutch gardening:

So Zembla's rocks, the beauteous work of frost,
Rise high [white] in air, and glitter on the coast;
Pale suns [unfelt] at distance roll unfelt away,
And on th' impassive ice the lightnings play.
Eternal snows the growing mass supply,
Till the bright mountains prop th' incumbent sky:
Like [As] Atlas fix'd each hoary pile appears
The gather'd winter of a thousand years. [TF 2:53-60.]

Pope's severity to the Dunces, who had maligned him, was just chastisement. They gave the provocation; they distilled their venom upon his immortal laurels, though it had no power to canker them. He formed a mock-heroic poem in consequence of thei[r] malice, and made his enemies ridiculous to all ages. Such ever be the doom of Envy aspersing Virtue, and endeavouring to shroud the light of Genius!

Mr. Weston still procrastinates his proofs, that Pope was an execrable villain, the insidious underminer of his fame, whom he professed to honour. My antagonist has closed the correspondence with me, without producing them. He owed it to his own character, and to the demand I made upon him for those proofs, to have produced them in the first page of his reply. To assert Dryden's style advantaged by its frequent vapidness and vulgarity, is but want of taste for pure and elegant composition. From unsupported accusation, brought against the moral character of a fine writer, every

one will turn indignant, who can feel his beauties, and be grateful for the delights they have afforded.

Ere I make any comments upon Mr. Weston's letter in the last Magazine,¹ where every position he advances is open to confutation, I shall wait the promissory Ides of March for those proofs which my friendship for Mr. Weston almost induces me to wish he may be able to produce. It behooves him to take especial care that they be unquestionable.

Yours, &c.

Anna Seward.

12.

Mr. Urban,

Oct. 11. [1789]

I am much flattered by the notice which your fair correspondent (vol. LIX. p. 820)² has paid to my remarks on her poetical strictures*: but, as they were ventured at the time, not without some conviction of their justice, I am still ready to maintain them.

Pope was one of the first who gave praise to Akenside's chief work;³ and perhaps his word conduced greatly to

*This and the following letters, received in October, were kept back till Mr. Weston had compleated his vindication. Edit.

¹Letter 9d, pp. 70-89.

²Letter 8, pp. 35-42. "M----s's" references are to this letter, except where noted.

³Pope praised Pleasures of the Imagination when it appeared in 1744. Maynard Mack, Life 924 cites Johnson's Lives (Akenside) 3:412.

establish its reputation. Hammond's death happened two years before Pope's, Collins published his epistle to Sir T. Hammer, and his Persian eclogues, some time before that event.¹ Miss Seward herself allows of Thomson's claim to a place in the Augustan aera, as it is sometimes called; and this being the case, Mallet's follows of course, since he frequently wrote in conjunction with that charming poet: Lyttelton² as well had the honour of being intimate with him. The name of Welsted³ next occurs, which is mentioned by the Satirist in the following terms:

Flow, Welsted, flow, like thine inspirer beer;
 Tho' stale, not ripe; tho' thin, yet never clear:
 So sweetly mawkish, and so smoothly dull,
 Heady, not strong, o'er flowing, tho' not full. [DunB
 5:3.169-72.]

Yet the person thus stigmatized is now beginning to obtain attention, and even respect. Miss S. however, thus expresses herself: "I did not chuse to bring forward, for the honour of Pope's period, any of the heroes of his inimitable Dunciad." Something like indignation arises on the perusal of this sentence. Will then the admirers of this allowedly great writer consent to sacrifice the same of every one whom this splenetic and vindictive spirit has marked out as the object of ridicule or detestation? It may be hoped, that, on

¹1743 and 1742 respectively.

²For Hammond and Mallet see p. 36 note 2; for Thomson and Lyttleton p. 37 notes 5 and 3 respectively. George Lyttleton's works began appearing in 1728, but no collection was published until the year after his death in 1773.

³Leonard Welsted is not on Miss Seward's lists. He is listed in NCBEL and DNB.

reflexion, so rash an opinion will be revoked. The fair critic does not think proper to notice the name of Garth,¹ though surely of some consideration, even from having gained the lavish praises of her favourite, yet, on this plea, Lord Lansdowne, Walsh, Wycherley, Trumbull [sic],² and others, will obtain respectable seats in the poetic synod. Fenton and Broome assisted the translator of Homer in his version of the Odyssey; and executed their parts with such spirit, that they are scarcely to be distinguished from the pen of their master. This will be admitted as an undeniable claim.

It is the opinion of my respectable opponent, that Time, instead of stamping their real estimation on admired writers, has rather a contrary effect; and "induces the generality of readers to set a double value on every beauty, and to pass over defects with indulgence." instances, she brings among Dryden's contemporaries Denham, Lee, Roscommon, and Waller; and, from the second division, Parnell, Gay, Addison, Watts, and the two Philipps.³ This assertion is incontrovertibly just: but it must be remembered, that while antiquity puts more than their intrinsic price on the few writers she preserves, as great, or even a greater number of equal value, at first are overwhelmed by her in oblivion.

¹Sir Samuel Garth (c. 1660-1718). "M----s" refers to Miss Seward's three lists of poets in Letter 1a, pp. 1-4.

²George Granville, Baron Lansdowne; William Walsh, Pope's early mentor; William Wycherley; and Sir William Trumbull (died c. 1716-17), Pope's neighbor and "second father," see Mack, Life of Pope (104-09). All these, together with Elijah Fenton and William Broome, are listed in the DNB and all, except for Trumbull, are listed in the NCBEL.

³Letter 1a, p.3. Miss Seward lists only one "Philipps."

It is very probable, that if those selected from the first class "had lived, and produced their poems now, they would not have had many admirers." Yet this must not be attributed to any natural deficiency in their genius, but rather to the difference of tastes in the two ages. Had Lee been placed in the present times, he would have been obliged to discard his bombast, and might still have preserved his pathetic powers. Waller in the same case might have been prompted to despise the conceitedness of thought, which in his day was so much esteemed; and would have found that species of versification already perfect to his hand, which he spent so much labour in improving, while yet in its rude and unpolished infancy: and, by these means, Denham's verses would not have incurred the imputation of being in general "heavy, laboured, and inharmonious." So necessary is it to consider, not only the writers themselves, but the ages in which they existed. We now come to the comparative merits of our two poetic rivals. Every one knows, and laments, (let me again repeat) that Dryden, from the unfortunate and pressing state of his affairs, was frequently obliged to be hasty and negligent, and had not time to make selections from the multiplicity of images and expressions, which constantly crowded on his pen. For this reason I thought it hard and ungenerous that his most defective passages should be contrasted with the lively and polished graces of the younger Bard. As for the fear of "our young writers being tempted into a coarse and weedy style," there is not the shadow of a danger that Mr. Weston's sentiments on this subject will have

so great a prevalence over the rising generation, which is more inclined to degenerate into the contrary extreme.

While Dryden, studying to render his poetic garden rather spacious than nicely beautiful, suffered the rankest weeds to spring up among the most luxuriant flowers, and entirely neglected the assistance of art; Pope, with deliberate leisure, was employed in banishing every appearance of disorder, in adjusting his delicate plants in the most striking dispositions, and in checking, sometimes too severely, the sportive wantonness of Nature. There are some, who (to preserve the metaphor) are on the whole more delighted with the wilderness of the former, than with the regular, yet elegant parterres of the latter; and I profess myself to be one of the number. I conclude with adding the testimonies of two deservedly celebrated modern poets in favour of Dryden. Gray, finishing one of his letters to Dr. Beattie, has these remarkable words, "Remember Dryden, and be blind to all his faults."¹ And Mr. Warton calls Palamon and Arcite "the most animated and harmonious piece of versification in the English language." History of English Poetry, chap. 23, p. 364.²

Yours, &c. M----s.

¹ Letters of Thomas Gray, ed. Duncan C. Tovey (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1912) 3:95. Gray made the remark in a letter to Thomas Wharton. He was repeating what he had said to James Beattie in conversation.

² Thomas Warton (London, 1870) 243.

13.

Mr. Urban,

Oct. 14. [1789]

I had no intention of troubling you again on the little controversy with Mr. Weston, especially as I wish not to increase his embarrassments, or in any wise impede his returning health, (you will therefore publish this at your own convenient and proper time); but some assertions in his letter, p. 875¹ seem to demand a further reply.

Mr. W. thinks I have totally mistaken his meaning, and taken that as "virulent invective," which he intended for "good-humored raillery:" if I have so misconceived him, I am sorry for it; but certainly, from the whole aim of the paragraph, I did conceive of it, in the light of a contemptuous sneer, intended to affright me from the field at once, as an opponent too puny for the trial of his acknowledged strength.

I am much concerned he should continue to deem me his adversary. I cannot think it either fair or candid, because we differ in opinion about the merit of another, that I should be called his adversary; the term is most opprobrious; even the Arch Apostate Spirit himself is emphatically denominated, "The Adversary;"² most certainly Mr. W. is mistaken, I am not his adversary, I hold him no enmity; I have an high opinion of his talents, and in this, I suppose, I think with himself: but perhaps this supposition constitutes part of my

¹Letter 9a, pp. 43-49. Except where noted, all of "M.F.'s" quotations are from this letter.

²See the King James Version of the Bible (Esther 7.6, Psalms 74.10, Lamentations 1.10, 4.12, 1 Timothy 5.14) and Milton, Paradise Lost 2.629, 3.156, 9.947.

crime; I see much to commend, and have only to except his unreasonable, and very singular prejudice, against an excellent and admired Poet, a Poet who has many a time and oft administered to my pleasure, at whose harsh treatment I felt myself hurt, and in the absence of an abler pen (for at that time I was ignorant of Miss Seward's taking up the matter) found myself inclined to add my mite in his favour.

Mr. Weston sends me to Romances, for the true explanation of a "Strange Knight:" I am obliged to him, he may have defined it justly; but this reminds me of Sydenham's answer to Blackmore, when the latter, commencing the study of physic, requested the opinion of the former what books he had best read, replied, "Don Quixote; 'tis a very good book I read it still."¹

I cannot think it strange, or savouring of knight errantry, to offer a few words in vindication of him who is now unable to defend himself. It is neither attacking windmills, or storming enchanted castles, to parry off any rude assault on his fair fame. From what has yet appeared, I am not inclined to esteem him that execrable impostor Mr. W. is endeavouring to make him appear; but it may be Mr. Weston is in possession of secret anecdotes, of some private history, that the world is hitherto a stranger to; if so, I suppose we shall be shortly indulged with them, and have to new-modify our opinions of this yet-esteemed Poet.

¹George Sydenham was warning Blackmore against the romantic approach to medicine. Sir Richard Blackmore, A Treatise upon the Small-Pox (London, 1723), quoted in Bertram H. Davis, Sir Richard Blackmore Boston: Twayne, 1980, 23.

I now proceed to this "fatal quotation," as Mr. W. is pleased to term it, this "non tali auxilio," this vivid retaliating paragraph. I assure him, he proceeds on a mistaken idea, if he supposed it excited my chagrin; I am as sensible of the justice of it as Mr. W. can be: I well know that Miss Seward is "herself an host,"¹ and wants no such poor assistance as mine; she is fully adequate to her generous undertaking, and hath incontestably appreciated the distinctive merits of Dryden and Pope. If I had vainly aimed at any contest with her, I might justly be accused of most egregious folly. I wish Mr. Weston to be aware, that tho' I am groveling in the Prosaic vale beneath, I can look up with admiration to this elegant Poetess, justly seated on the top of the Aonian mountain; yet without envy, or the vain hope of ever attaining even the midway.

I can scarce comprehend Mr. Weston's drift, on his introduction of Job's wife; and, as he has it, the synonymous terms of "bless and curse."² Would he insinuate that we can annex no distinct ideas to words, that they mean any thing, or nothing, and a matter totally indifferent, whether we call a man excellent or execrable? Words I know are supple, but I had no idea of such pliancy.

I am under much obligation to Mr. W's candour for his mild attention to my "slips and inaccuracies," I am sensible of my defects; I boast not of genius; I am but little used to the press, my only aim was the vindication of what I thought

¹ Letter 4, p. 25.

² 46n.

an injured character. I wish to convince Mr. W. of his unreasonable prejudice; and in this I have done no more than what Miss Seward has avowed as her intention; I have the honour to think with her, and where is the crime?

Mr. W. objects mostly to Mr. Pope's satirical pieces; their acrimony he thinks too severe on many worthy characters. This may in part be true; I think I have before acquiesced to it: but we ought to consider Mr. Pope's provocations, his abilities, and the swarm of minor Poets that were constantly nibbling at him; and "many with his provocations, and many with his abilities"¹ would, like him, have consigned them to everlasting fame.

I am yet to learn in what Pope "injured the poetical constitution," in what respect "he trampled on the rights of those citizens he ought to have loved and protected." I know nothing of this sort in Pope's history, nor that he had any "pretences to piety and morality" that were unreal; he must have been very artful and very wicked, to "impose on the understandings, and seduce the affections, of the rich and powerful;" though it must be acknowledged, that riches and power do not at a dead certainty produce wisdom and caution. Mr. Pope, it seems, was too hard for them, and made them his "stepping stones" to the highest seat on the Parnassian mount; for to that highest seat he certainly did attain. And

¹Exact source unidentified. This may be "M.F.'s" reference to what had become a commonplace about Pope. See Ayre, 1:242. Even Colley Cibber wrote that Pope appeared "to have had personal provocation" for his satire in the Dunciad, An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, ed. B. R. S. Stone. (Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1968, 26.)

shall he rest quietly in his grave for this? No; Mr. W. is determine to gibbet him in terrorem¹ to all future tyrants. Pardon me, my good Sir; but this too is like the Roman big-ots, manfully attacking the "cerements"² of the venerable Wickliff, and wreaking their vengeance on his passive remains, after their peaceable interment forty years.

Yours, &c.

M. F.

14.

Mr. Urban,

Oct. 31. [1789]

Our great Poetess, in her late ingenious, but partial, estimate of Pope and Dryden, asserts of the first-mentioned Poet's description of the monastic solitude, where the graces of his amiable recluse pined in sorrow, that as landscape painting it is entitled to the highest praise, not having been equalled by Dryden, nor surpassed by Milton. I shall not examine the justness of her remark, with respect to Milton and Dryden; but shall only observe, that much as I admire the breathing colours awakened by the bold pencil of sad Eloisa's Poet, the following landscape, from her sublime and tender Louisa, has a still more forcible influence on my feelings:

'Twas here, e'en here! where now I sit reclin'd,
And Winter's sighs sound hollow in the wind;
Loud, and more loud, the blast of ev'ning raves,
And strips the oaks of their last ling'ring leaves.
The eddyng foliage in the tempests flies,

¹Livy, Book 34, Ch. 28, sec. 3.

²Religious reformer John Wycliffe was buried in 1384. In 1428, by order of the Council of Constance, his body was disinterred, burnt and thrown into a nearby river. (DNB).

And fills with duskier gloom the thickning skies.
 Red sinks the sun behind the howling hill,
 And rushes, with hoarse stream, the mountain rill;
 And now with ruffling billows, cold and pale,
 Runs swoln and dashing down the lonely vale;
 While to these tearful eyes, Grief's faded form
 Sits on the cloud, and sighs amid the storm.¹

It may be thought impossible to have exceeded Pope in the allegorical parts. But though the figures of Grief and Melancholy are marked with the same grandeur of conception, Miss Seward has not, like Pope, sought to embellish what was already great. That nice finishing, which so well accords with an elegant subject, a lofty one disdains. The winding valley derives new charms from the bloom scattered over it by the hand of spring: but such beautifying would ill become the majestic foliage of the mountain forest*.

I agree with your elegant and ingenious, and, as far as one can judge from his writings, your upright and amiable correspondent, Mr. Weston, in giving up to the detestation of the considerate Pope's treatment of Leonard Welsted. And what shall we say to his satire on that profound scholar and virtuous man Dr. Samuel Clarke?² Had a writer of inferior abilities to Pope been guilty of such conduct, he would have been damned to everlasting infamy. And yet, great talents,

*It must be evident that this parallel is confined to the delineation of nature; for the monastic painting itself, which all will allow to be one of the highest efforts of fancy in the chiaro scuro, has nothing to correspond to it in the picture this lady has given us.

¹Anna Seward, "Epistle 1," Louisa, A Poetical Novel in Four Epistles (Lichfield, 1784), verse 23, p. 12.

²This classical scholar and author of religious works may be the "gloomy clerk" referred to in DunB 5:4.459ff. and note.

instead of softening the harsh feature of vice, should only
serve to make them appear the more deformed. Dryden may have
flattered Guilt, but I do not know that he has degraded
Excellence.

Yours, &c.

Impartial.

15.

Mr. Urban,

Solihull, Feb. 22. [1790]

The Opening of the following little Poem would be somewhat obscure, were I not to inform your Readers that, on the Commencement of my Acquaintance with Miss Seward, the comparative Merits of Pope and Dryden becoming a Subject of our Discussion, I was so strangely disconcerted by the Archness of her Smile, the Vivacity of her Repartees, and the indescribable Brightness of such Eyes as I never before beheld, that I was actually dumbfounded.--The Circumstance mentioned in the first Triplet¹ (ludicrous as it may seem to such as "wear Flints in their Bosoms, by way of Hearts,"²) was literally a Fact.

Despairing, therefore, to confute my fair Opponent viva voce, I chose the more prudent Method of epistolary Debate; but, after making some Progress, I dropped or at least postponed, my Design, for Reasons unnecessary to recite: and the Verses would, probably, never have been compleated, but for her public Attack on my Poetic Opinions.

So long fastened as I have been on the Rack of Controversy, I shall not be thought to make an ill Use of my Emancipation, by shewing my Charity for my Amiable Tormentor; and, though I cannot be supposed to relish, in any high Degree, the Means she has employed for my Conversion, I am not displeased with an Occasion of expressing my unaffected

¹Below, p. 110, ll. 19-21.

²Possibly a paraphrase of "from brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint," Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, IV.i.31.

Approbation of her Motives.

My Contemporaries may reproach me (and, perhaps, justly) with my Temerity, in daring to delineate what none of them have attempted--viz. a whole-Length Protrait of a Lady who is as much the Glory of the present Age as she will be the Admiration of all succeeding ones.--They who have not witnessed her Triumphs in the Drawing-room, nor seen her in those happier Hours of Domestic Retirement when the less glaring but not less valuable Graces unfold themselves, will be apt to suspect me of hyperbolical Adulation; they who have will be inclined to wonder that such animating Scenes should have inspired me with no greater Portion of Enthusiasm, and that from so glowing an Original so cold a Copy could be drawn!

Truth guides my Pencil, and describes a faithful Outline; Genius and Skill vouchsafe not their Aid--to fill it up.

Joseph Weston.

To Miss Seward.

Boast not, fair Victress, that so soon were gain'd
The Honours of a Field so ill maintain'd!
Boast not; for most unequal were our Arms:
Mine--feeble Vocals; thine--Almighty Charms!
My Flight (be this my Comfort, this my Pride!)
Nor Friend shall pity, nor shall Foe deride;
No Force terrestrial cou'd my Soul dismay:
Arms of etherial Temper urge Resistless Way!
Not all the Wonders of that witching Tongue,
Whose every Accent breathes the Soul of Song
--Not all th' Effulgence of that mighty Mind,
Enrich'd by Fancy, and by Taste refin'd--

[10]

Not the soft Blush, which on that glowing Cheek
 Can speak--what Words must never hope to speak--
 Not the sly Sophistry of that sweet Smile,
 Which might the Fierce disarm--the Wise beguile--
 No--nor the Magic of that Air sublime--
 Cou'd shake my Duty to the Prince of Rhyme:
 'Twas the electric Glance, which flashing, flies, }
 On Wings of Lightning, from those ardent Eyes, } [20]
 That wither'd every Pow'r--and snatch'd
 th'unyielded Prize! }
 Illustrious Dryden! O forbear to blame
 My half-desertion of thy righteous Claim!
 Were every Nerve of Elocution mine--
 How weak to th' Eloquence of Eyes divine!
 Thy own great Mexican¹--his Cause though just,
 His Host though countless, and though firm his Trust--
 Found Justice, Confidence, and Myriads vain,
 When Strange Artillery o'er th' embattled Plain
 In beauteous--fatal Coruscations play'd, [30]
 And Fire from Heav'n appear'd the Foe to aid!
 Like Me admiring, and like Me amaz'd,
 (His plummy Diadem quivering as he gaz'd!)
 Dazzled, confounded, aw'd, he left the Field--
 Unskilful to resist--untaught to yield!
 The Wonder ceas'd.--The Purple Tide return'd
 To his blanch'd Cheek; with pristine courage burn'd
 His swelling Breast: his Country's Wrongs to right,
 And guard his ancient Gods, he brav'd the unequal
 Fight.
 Though, more than Cortes fear'd, a Foe is mine, [40]
 Who of a greater Pope the Right Divine
 Dauntless maintains, yet, since (fond Terrors o'er)
 I feel that Voice--I feel those Eyes no more--
 True to myself, and to my Idol true,
 The dangerous Conflict, distant, I renew;
 Waging, like Montezuma*, feather'd war,
 With Her whom I revere--with Him whom I abhor!
 Once, once again the Rival Bards survey;
 In Candour's equal Scale, one Moment, weigh
 Each glittering Ore: the Hero of my Theme [50]
 Ponderous shall sink, and light Pope strike the Beam.
 First view "the God of thine Idolatry."--²
 What airy Car, what winged Steed has He?
 None.--Aims he, then, a nobly-painful Flight,
 Up some rough, craggy Rock's stupendous Height?
 Or cleave his potent Spells the yawning Ground,

*"Lauriger Edvardus, pennato Marte timendus." Morfitt's
Philotoxi Ardenae [Line 33. Weston translates it "By lau-
 rell'd Edward's winged Weapons slain!" (60).]

¹Montezuma in The Indian Emperour (1665).

²Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, II.ii.115. Read "the
 god of my idolatry."

T'explore, with daring Foot, the vast, the fathomless
 Profound?

No.--O'er the flowery Level of the Plain,
 In pompous Indolence, he sweeps his Train;
 Like Israel's Tribes, in Egypt's fatal Day, [60]
 With borrow'd Gold and Jewels cheaply gay,
 Solemn and slow, the verdant Vale along,
 With measur'd March he moves, and sings his Cuckow-song.
 Now mark great Dryden! From the vile, vile Earth,
 That own'd--yet not rewarded--modest Worth,
 He bounds indignant; on a Whirwind's Wings
 He mounts sublime: the vast Empyreum rings
 With Sounds that might a Seraph's Self entrance!
 The list'ning Spheres their everlasting Dance
 Suspend; to wonder at the Strains unknown: [70]
 At mortal Strains--harmonious as their own!
 Amaz'd to find his Fingers, all on Fire, }
 Elicit Sparkles from a living Lyre, }
 And rouze to vengeful Rage, and sooth to soft Desire! }
 Now, like a Meteor, with eccentric Flight,
 He shoots along; and leaves a Trail of Light:
 Now on the fleecy Bosom of a Cloud
 Reposes; while beneath him, murmuring loud
 Its jealous Fears, the Thunder rolls away;
 And innocent around him envious Light'nings play. [80]

O Thou, who (free from Pride, from Envy free,
 If not from Prejudice) art wont to see
 This genuine Sun of the Parnassian Sky
 Through Glass distain'd--attentive to descry
 Those grateful Spots that not deform, but grace,
 With softening Shade, his too refulgent Face--
 Triumphant pointing to that spurious Light,
 That Theban Prodigy,¹ so vainly bright,
 On whose portentous Glare, (of Vapour form'd,
 And magnified by Mist,) uncheer'd, unwarm'd,² [90]
 The gaping Vulgar gaze--can Taste like Thine
 Deem Earth-born Exhalations--Fires Divine?
 What more than Talismanic Charm can bind
 In Error's Fetters thy energetic Mind?
 'Tis Sympathy, with melting, dove-like Eye--
 Who drops th'incessant Tear, and heaves th' eternal
 Sigh.

Have I not seen thee?--Yes--with Terror seen
 That gentle Bosom--which nor Rage, nor Spleen,
 Nor Guilt shall ever ruffle--throb with Pangs
 Convulsive!--Lo!--in awful Balance hangs [100]

¹ Probably a monstrous prodigy, as in the Sphinx, or "Theban Monster," Milton, Paradise Regained 1.572.

² Compare Pope's description of Dulness DunB 5:1.261-62, "Her ample presence fills up all the place;/A veil of fogs dilates her awful face." Miss Seward quotes these lines in Letter 8, p. 42.

A Parent's precious Life!¹--What Force has Fear,
 That, ere it fall, congeals that starting Tear!
 What Force Despair, that steals from Eyes so bright
 Each Scintillation of Celestial Light--
 Till, beamless, motionless, they not Illume
 --But prove how deep the Tinge of Grief's impervious
 Gloom!

'Tis past!--The Prayers of Piety prevail--
 A Daughter's Prayers--and turn the wavering Scale.
 Now melt, thou sable Cloud, in beauteous Tears!
 Now, lovely Mourner, hush thy frantic Fears! [110]
 While Sleep's balsamic Dews his Eyelids close,
 Give Thy sad, suff'ring Breast to taste Repose!
 Ah! 'twill not be!--A Thousand fond Alarms
 Sick Fancy fright with visionary Harms;
 And every filial Fibre is in Arms!

Sleep Thou, then, good old Man! Securely sleep,
 While thy parental Offspring wakes to weep,
 Dubious Pulsation tremblingly to trace,
 And mark each Muscle of the varying Face!
 Sleep on; an Host of virtues is thy Guard-- [120]
 Of a fond Father's Toils the Fruit--and sweet Reward!
 Know hence, vile Scoffers--bold Blasphemers know--
 Virtue can find a Recompense Below;
 One Gem from that bright Crown, in purer Skies,
 That waits the plainly Good, and simply Wise!
 Had not thy watchful Zeal, Time-honour'd Sage,
 Op'd on her infant-view the Sacred Page,
 And stor'd the fertile Eden of her Mind
 With Vegetation of immortal Kind--

(Guarding each Avenue, with anxious Care, [130]
 Lest Serpent-Vice should find an Entrance there,)--
 Sinking with Weakness, and opprest with Pain,
 Thine Eye had eloquently ask'd--in vain;
 No duteous Fondness had thy Wish presag'd,
 Thy Weakness Strengthen'd, and thy Pain assuag'd;
 No Daughter's Praises, from a Thousand Tongues
 Echoing, had charm'd thine Ear, like Syren's Songs;
 No Daughter's Glories had, reflective, shed
 A radiant Circle round thy hallow'd Head!

When Phebus thus, has run his lengthen'd Race, [140]
 And Evening Clouds obscure his beauteous Face,
 While his faint transient, Occidental Gleams
Contrast the Brightness of his Orient Beams,
 In mournful Majesty, the Night's fair Queen
 Ascends, to solemnize his closing Scene;
 Mingles her rising with his setting Rays,
 And the blest Light He lent, all-gratefully, repays.

With Fear--with Grief--with Tenderness like thine,
 Saw Pope his doting Parent's Day decline.
 O wonder-working Pow'r, whose strong Controul [150]

¹Miss Seward had recently nursed her father through a critical illness. He died in March of 1790.

Can tame the fiercest Savageness of Soul!
 He, whom nor Pity, Truth, nor Justice sway'd,
 Great Nature's Call omnipotent obey'd;
 Life's melancholy Evening Hour to sooth,
 And restless Languor's thorny Couch to smooth,
 His pious Task:--how chearfully, how Well
 That Task he plied--his own sweet Numbers tell.¹
 O when the fearful, the tremendous Day
 Of Retribution shines--when deep Dismay,
 With Fiend-like Fang, shall fasten on his Breast, [160]
 While All whom his despotic Pride opprest,
 All whose fair Fame his Envy undermin'd,
 All whom his Hate, with Cruelty refin'd,
 Stretch'd on the Mind's dire Rack, shall, pointing,
 rise,
 And view his shuddering Form with pitying Eyes--
 May Penitence have purg'd each Crimson Stain
 --But this bright Feature of the Soul remain
 Full in the sight of that Eternal Son,
 Who cried "not mine--but thy great Will be done!"
 Who 'gainst unutterable Tortures strove-- [170]
 With dying Voice to perfect Filial Love--
 And may this Godlike Attribute alone
 For Human Errors plead, for Human Crimes atone!
Well (lovely Sophist!) well have Sages said,
 "The tenderest Heart can dupe the wisest Head!"²
 One Solitary Star, the dark, dark Mind
 Of the fell Tyrant brightning, joy'd to find--
 When call'd to shine in more congenial Skies--
 Its dear* Twin Constellation, sparkling, rise;
 Its dear Twin-Sparkles with impassion'd Gaze, [180]
 Sighing, laments the last--lov'd--lingering Rays!
 And, sure, one lingering, lov'd, fraternal Ray
 Has to thy inmost Bosom wing'd its Way!
 For, did not Sympathy's seductive Charm
 Thy trait'rous Feeling 'gainst thy Judgement arm,
 Could'st Thou the Lord of Lyric Lays asperse,
 And praise--a Weaver of Mechanick Verse?
 Thou! Who, with Dryden's, nay, with Milton's Fire,
 Sweep'st the bold Chords of a Cherubic Lyre--
 While Sounds Celestial undulate along, [190]
 Now sweetly soft, and now sublimely strong!
 Thou! Who, when Wit and Worth resign their Breath,
 Bidst them deride the pointless Dart of Death--
 The Meed bestowing Bards alone can give--
 To Live--till Nature's Self shall cease to live!
 Thou! who, from Fancy's rich exhaustless Stores,

*Criticism may object that my Castor and Pollux are of different Sexes; unjustly though:--Filial Piety is of no Sex.

¹ Arbu 2:408-13.

² Possibly Weston's versification of La Rochefoucauld, Maximes, No. 102, "The head is always the dupe of the heart."

Hast form'd what, spurn'd by Folly, Sense adores!
 (Nor was it strange Louisa,¹ Angel-bright,
 Should blind dull Critics--with Excess of Light!)
 Never, t'exalt the Soul with generous Pride, [200]
 And win rebellious Passion to the Side
 Of bleeding Duty, Malice must confess,
 Did Fiction shine in a diviner Dress.
 But 'Tis Not Fiction.--Friend of Humankind,
 It finds a faithful Mirror--in thy matchless Mind!
 An Hour must come (but far, O wondrous far,
 Avert that hour, each tutelary Star!)
 When Thou, to whom--magnetic as the Pole--
 Turns every Eye, and Ear, and Heart, and Soul--
 Shalt fascinate no more; all powerless, laid [210]
 In Death's cold Arms, and black Oblivion's Shade!
Well hast thou chosen, then, with wisest Art,
 To thy undying Verse thy Charms t'impart;
 Each Flash of Fancy, every sparkling Grace,
 Each nameless Energy of Mind and Face,
 Each perishable Beauty, to transfuse--
 To bloom, and bloom for Ever--on th'immortal Muse!
 Thus in some Room, that mourns excluded Day,
 At one small Inlet darts th' indignant Ray,
 While, through a Crystal Medium, faithful shewn, [220]
 Creation shines--in Glories all her own.
 Here Valleys smile, in Robes of tenderest Green!
 There Mountains frown a Horror o'er the Scene!
 Wak'd by a Zephyr's Wing, the ruffled Stream,
 Emitting Diamonds to the Noon-tide Beam,
 Trembles; or, hush'd in Silence and Repose,
 The blue Expanse its glassy Bosom shews!
 Nature's fair Miniature, serenely bright,
 In one illumin'd Circle's mellow'd Light,²
 With unfatiguing Lustre, captivates the Sight! [230]
 To late Posterity's admiring Eyes
 Thus thy Own Beauties shall, reflected, rise;
 While many a wiser, many a worthier Age
 Shall view Thyself--in thy transcendent Page;
 That Page--which Envy's venom'd Shafts shall soil,
 And mock Time's cankering Tooth's unceasing Toil--
 That Page--which, like Vesuvius, flows in Flame!
 Type of the Soul that animates thy Frame!
 That Page--by every Virtue deep imprest,
 Which lights thy Countenance, and warms thy Breast! [240]
Sweet as thy Smile, and as thy Speech refin'd--
Pure as thy Heart, elastic as thy Mind--³

¹For the critics' cool reception of Louisa, see Ashmun, 129-30.

²See EOC 1:70-71.

³In this line, Weston may be paying tribute to Miss Seward's admiration for Pope's practice of taking "the inverted order of the words and the natural one alternately." Also, in this and the following two lines, he uses another

Bright as those Living Gems "of Ray serene"--¹
Melodious as thy Voice, majestic as thy Mein!

But what avails all Beauty? Genius? Worth?
 Daughters of Heav'n! Bow down to sons of Earth!
 Mere Clods of Clay, (whose Minds, inert and dark,
 No Beam illumines--no vivifying Spark!)
 When Luna fills her Horns, in judgement plac'd
 O'er the wide Realms of Science--Fancy--Taste--
 In airy Vatican sit, triple-crown'd,
 Indulgences to sell--or deal Damnation round!
 Their venal Code admits no saving Clause [250]
 For Merit--scorning to suborn Applause;
 All--All they doom--unkowing how to spare--
 The Great, the Wise, the Good, the Brave, the Fair!

Thy chaste, thy moral, thy enchanting Page
 Attracts full oft their Impotence of Rage;
 And Let the Maniacs fulminate their Spleen
 Against thy Laurels of eternal Green--
 While, in the Graces'--in the Muses' Love--
 Secure, thou smil'st--triumphant from above!
 Thus some poor Ideot at the glorious Sun [260]
 Lances the puny Lightning--of a Gun!
 Vain of the momentary Thunder's Sound,
 And wrapt in deep'ning Shades that wreathe around,
 "Lo! yon proud Orb--(he cries) no longer proud--
 "Shorn of his Beams, and glimmering through a Cloud!"
 The God--rejoicing in his Heavenly Way,
 Shines On--and brightens still--to more Distinguish'd
 Day! J. W.

16.

Mr. Urban, Solihull, March 26. [1790]

"The Ides of March are come;"² and I must still "procras-
 tinate my Proofs," of Pope's "Villainy."³--I am not insen-
 sible of the Triumph which I shall afford to M. F. and to
 feature of Pope's poetry that Miss Seward admired; he places
 "the spirited accent upon the first syllable," Letter 1b, p.
 8.

¹ Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard,"
 53.

² Shakespeare, Julius Caesar III.i.1. Quoted in response
 to Miss Seward's reference to "The promissory "Ides of
 March," Letter 11, p. 96.

³ Letter 11, p. 95. Read "Mr. Weston still
 procrastinates his proofs, that Pope was an execrable
 villain."

those who fancy, with him, that the "Proofs" are only withheld, because I am not able to produce them. That Triumph will, however, be short.--The perfect Propriety, and extreme Delicacy, of my procrastination will, on the Perusal of your Magazine for April, be acknowledged by every Reader, possessed of Sense and Candour.

When I promised to answer M. F.'s Challenge in your present Number, I could not possibly foresee the irremediable Calamity which has fallen on my most amiable Opponent*; and which, though so long expected, will require even all Her Fortitude and Resignation to support.¹

Her last very severe Letter must not pass unnoticed; and I cannot (for Reasons which will appear) produce my "Proofs" until my Correspondence with her is finally closed.--The present moment would be extremely improper for that Purpose.--Far from Me be the Guilt of violating her sacred Sorrows, by the unpleasant Remonstrances of injured Pride, or by the peevish lamentations of lacerated Sensibility.

J. Weston.

*In my Poetical Epistle to whom, inserted in your last, your Compositor, by mistaking a Letter, has rendered totally unintelligible what was already, I fear, more than sufficiently obscure.

"Its dear Twin sparkler, with impassion'd gaze,"
should have been

"Its dear Twin-sparkles," &c. [Poem "To Miss Seward," 180, Letter 15, p. 113. Weston's memory fails him. The GM printed "sparkles".]

¹The death of Anna Seward's father. See p. 112n.

17.

Mr. Urban, Solihull, April 25. [1790]

I will not return the Compliment paid me by my fair Antagonist, and say that every Position she advances in her last Letter is open to Confutation; but I will venture to affirm that many of them are so.--I am obliged to depart from my first intention of closing my Correspondence with her, previous to the Production of my Evidence of Pope's Baseness of Heart--(for how can I close it?). I shall, therefore, in Imitation of Miss Seward, reserve my "Comments" on her latest Remarks, until she shall have published the threatened Confutation; and only state my real Reason for the Delay of my promised "Proof."--That Reason was--Delicacy.

M. F's first Attack on me followed Miss Seward's third Epistle, in your Magazine for June.--¹ The Lady had a prior Claim to my Attention, and to her I accordingly attended.--Before I had made any great Progress in my Defence, M. F. thought proper to renew the Attack; and in such a Way that I found a tedious, and inglorious Paper-War, with anonymous Correspondents, must ensue, if the "Proof" were to leave any Room for Cavil or Contradiction: and I judged it necessary "to take especial Care that it should be unquestionable."²

Discarding, of Course, every idea of bringing forward Pope's Meanness to Broome, Hypocrisy to Hughes and Hill, Treachery to Bolingbroke, Baseness to Welsted, Lord Harvey

¹Letter 2, pp. 20-22 and Letter 1c, pp. 13-20.

²Letter 11, p. 96.

[Hervey] and Lady Mary Wortley Montague, and Ingratitude to Chandos¹ and Addison--(Facts--the Truth of which has been disputed)--I determined to confine myself to one substantial Instance of his Villainy, which, standing recorded by Himself, should laugh to Scorn the very Possibility of Denial.-- But the Subject unfortunately happened to be of a Nature so peculiarly horrible and disgusting, as to render a Discussion of it--in a Letter intended for the Perusal of a Lady--impossible.

Joseph Weston.

To M. F.

Solihull, April 25. [1790]

As this is the last Notice which I intend to take of an anonymous Correspondent, I will endeavour to part with you, in tolerable Good-humour, and restrain my Pen from that Severity of Censure to which I cannot help thinking some Parts of your last Letter entitled.--I know not from what Cause, you chuse to persist in your Supposition that I have an high opinion of my own Talents; but, whether your Conjecture in that Respect be right or wrong, I hope your Charge of Inhumanity is undeserved. I thought that I had alledged such Reasons for my execrating the Memory of a jealous Tyrant as would have secured me from a Repetition of that Accusation.

¹For John Hughes (or possibly Jabez Hughes) and Aaron Hill see Appendix to DunA 5:2.283n.; for John Hervey, first Baron of Ickworth, see HS 4:2.1.6; for James Brydges, Duke of Chandos see Ep4 3.2:99n.

As you think the Term "Adversary"¹ inapplicable to a Person who maintains an Opinion adverse to one's own, you have my free Leave to change it for any other which you may like better.--If you, Sir, are ignorant of my "Drift," on "my Introduction of Job's Wife,"² I fancy that you are the only Reader of Mr. Urban's unequalled Miscellany who is in that Predicament!--Had You studied Pope's Character with Half the Attention which I have, you might have spared your elegant Sarcasms on that Subject.--Amidst that infamous Farrago of bold Assertion, artful Equivoque, sly Subterfuge, and gross Misrepresentation, which has rendered almost every Page of the Preface, Advertisement, Letter to the Publisher, Testimonies of Authors, and Notes, which accompany the Dunciad, "inimitable"³--you might, perchance, have discovered that very many of the supposed Dunces were not the Aggressors; and that--of those Few who were--the Punishment intended to be inflicted bore no Manner of Proportion to the Degree of Provocation: a most flagrant Instance of which I shall presently produce--to justify my Execration of your Idol.

Although I cannot agree with you, Sir, you say that Miss Seward "hath incontestably appreciated the distinctive Merits of Dryden and Pope," yet I am far from contesting the Propriety of your next Opinion--viz. that, "if you had vainly aimed at any Contest with her, you might be accused of most

¹Letter 13, p. 101.

²Letter 13, p. 103.

³Miss Seward first uses this adjective in Letter 8, p. 37, and "M----s" quotes her in Letter 12, p. 97.

egregious Folly."¹

The poetic Department of the Magazine² which contains your Abuse of myself, and Praise of my amiable Adversary, evinces that "I can look up to this elegant Poetess, justly seated on the Top of the Aonian Mountain," with as much "Admiration," and with as little "Envy," as You can.³

But to the point in question.

The following is extracted from an early Edition of the Dunciad, Book III.⁴

"Behold yon Pair, in Strict Embraces join'd;
How like in manners, and how like in mind!
Fam'd for Good-Nature, Burnet, and for Truth;
Ducket for Pious Passion to the Youth.
Equal in Wit, and equally Polite,
Shall this a Pasquin, that a Grumbler write;
Like are their merits, like rewards they share,
That shines a Consul, this Commissioner. [5:3.173-80.]

REMARKS.

V.175. Fam'd for good nature, Burnet, &c.
Ducket for pious passion to the youth]

The first of these was son of the late bishop of S. Author of a weekly Paper called the Grumbler, as the other was concerned in another called Pasquin, in which Mr. Pope was abused with the late Duke of Buckingham and Bishop of Rochester. They also joined in a piece against his first undertaking to translate the Iliad, intitled Homerides, by Sir Iliad Dogrel, printed 1715.⁵

Mr. Curll gives us this further account of Mr. Burnet. "He did himself write a Letter to the E. of Halifax, informing his Lordship (as he tells him) of what he knew much

¹ Letter 13, p. 103. The poem To Miss Seward (GM 60:160-63), is reproduced above, 109-15.

² February, 1790, Weston's poem "To Miss Seward." See above pp. 109-15.

³ Letter 13, p. 103.

⁴ Weston quotes an edition of Dunciad A, other than the first, in which letters were used instead of names. For Pope's treatment of Thomas Burnet and George Duckett see the Introduction, pp. cvii-cxiii. The "REMARKS" are Pope's note to line 175 and include the epigram.

⁵ Published as The Hump Conference in 1715, changed to Homerides in 1716.

better before. And he published in his own name several political pamphlets, A certain Information of a certain Discourse, a Second Tale of a Tub, &c. All which it is strongly affirmed were written by Colonel Ducket. Curll, Key, p. 17. But the author of the Characters of the Times tells us, the political pieces were not approved of by his own father, the Reverend Bishop.

Of the other works of these Gentlemen, the world has heard no more than it would of Mr. Pope's, had their united laudable endeavours discouraged him from his undertaking. How few good works had ever appeared (since men of true merit are always the least presuming) had there been always such champions to stifle them in their conception? And were it not better for the Publick, that a million of monsters should come into the world, which are sure to die as soon as born, than that the Serpents should strangle one Hercules in his cradle?

The Union of these two Authors gave Occasion to this Epigram:

Burnet and Ducket, friends in Spite,
Came hissing forth in verse;
Both were so forward, each would write,
So Dull, each hung an a--
Thus Amphisboena¹ (I have read)
At either end assails;
None knows which leads, or which is led,
For both heads are but tails. [5:3.175-76n.]

Here is a Charge of the most atrocious, the most unnatural, the most detestable Kind, brought against Colonel Ducket; for it is not possible for any one possessed of common Sense, and common Modesty, to sign his name to an Opinion that Pope meant really to praise Burnet for Good-nature and for Truth, or that he intended to celebrate the Wit or the Politeness of either Party. (The beastly Epigram settles that Point beyond all Controversy.)--The whole Passage is evidently ironical, and clearly calculated to impress the Reader with an Idea that both were the Reverse of Witty--both the Reverse of Polite; that Burnet was famed for Ill-nature and Falsehood; and that Ducket was famed for an impious

¹ "A serpent supposed to have two heads." Johnson, Dictionary.

Passion for the Youth.--It only remains to examine whether this horrid Accusation was well-founded or not.

In Consequence of the Colonel's spirited Conduct on this extraordinary Attack, Pope found it convenient to add the following Note.

'V. 167. [176]--for pious Passion to the Youth--The Verse is a literal Translation of Virgil, Nisus amore pio pueri--and here, as in the Original, applied to Friendship; that between Nisus and Euryalus is allowed to make one of the most amiable Episodes in the World, and surely never was interpreted in a perverse Sense. But it will astonish the Reader to hear, that on no other Occasion than this Line, a Dedication was written to this Gentleman to induce him to think something further. "Sir, you are known to have all that Affection for the beautiful Part of the Creation which God and Nature designed--Sir, you have a very fine Lady--and, Sir, you have eight very fine children"--&c. {Dedic. to Dennis Rem. on the Rape of the Lock.}¹ The Truth is, the poor Dedicator's Brain was turned upon this Article; he had taken into his Head that ever since some Books were written against the Stage, and since the Italian Opera had prevailed, the Nation was infected with a Vice not fit to be named: He went so far as to print upon the Subject, and concludes his argument with this Remark, "that he cannot help thinking the Obscenity of Plays excusable at this Juncture; since, when that execrable Sin is spread so wide, it may be of Use to the reducing Men's Minds to the natural Desire of Women." Dennis, Stage defended against Mr. Law, p. 20.² Our Author Solemnly Declared, he never heard any Creature but the Dedicator mention That Vice and This Gentleman together.' [DunA 5:3.176n.]

What Power of Language can do Justice to the Sentiments of Indignation which this most impudent Attempt to impose on the Understanding excites?--However, the Acknowledgment in the last Line of this fallacious Note signs Pope's Passport to Everlasting Infamy.--Confessing that he had not even the

¹Works 2nd ed. (London, 1728). Read "You are known to have that Respect, Esteem, and Affection for the most beautiful Part of the Creation which God and Nature design'd we should have. . . These Qualities which have recommended You to a very fine Lady, to whom You have been married many Years, and by Whom You had Eight Children."

²Hooker 2:314. Pope condensed Dennis's remarks.

smallest Ground for the Diabolical Charge, yet conscious that, while the most obnoxious Couplet remained, none but ideots could avoid seeing the Matter in its true Light, he, at last, thought it expedient to expunge it, and to alter the Notes in the following Manner.

"Behold yon Pair, &c.) One of these was Author of a weekly Paper called The Grumbler, as the other was concerned in another called Pasquin, in which Mr. Pope was abused with the Duke of Buckingham, and Bishop of Rochester. They also joined in a Piece against his first undertaking to translate the Iliad, intituled Homerides, by Sir Iliad Doggrel, printed 1715." (Eleven succeeding Lines are omitted.) "Of the other Works of their Gentlemen, &c."--(to the End of the Paragraph.)

"The Union of these two Authors gave Occasion to this Epigram:

"-----and Ducket, friends in Spite, &c." (to the End of the Epigram).

"After many Editions of this Poem, the Author thought fit to omit the Names of these two Persons, whose Injury to him was of so old a Date. In the Verses he omitted, it was said that one of them had a pious Passion for the other. It was a literal Translation of Virgil, &c." [DunB 5:3.179n.]

Mark, gentle Reader, the curious Reason intimated for the Omission of both Names in the Poem, while one of them is retained in the Note!--But Ducket was probably dead, and Burnet was probably become a judge!¹

And now, Mr. M. F. I take a final Leave!

If, after this unembellished Statement of facts, you can believe that Pope did not attempt to fix this most loathsome and most horrible Stigma on an innocent Man--or, being convinced that he did attempt it, can believe him to be less than a Villain--you are welcome to think Me as vile a Slanderer, and as consummate a Scoundrel, as I have proved Him to be!

Joseph Weston.

¹Duckett died in 1732; Burnet was appointed a judge for the court of common pleas in 1741.

18.

Lichfield Close. June 16. [1790]

Once for all, Mr. Urban, permit me to observe, that Mr. Weston's original charge against Pope remains wholly unsupported. In the controverted Preface to the Woodmen of Arden, its Author professes to have found "amusement, alloyed with indignation, in tracing the insidious arts which Pope suffered his friends to practise to undermine the fame of Dryden, and exalt himself into the vacant chair."¹

Mr. Weston has been repeatedly called upon to exhibit some of these numerous proofs. He closes the controversy without producing one of them. It is plain, therefore, that those proofs had only an imaginary existence in the strange violence of his prejudices; and Pope stands clear of the imputed meanness; for it is contrary to all justice, when a person is arraigned of one crime, to condemn him upon evidence of another, which is perfectly dissimilar.

That Pope, when incensed, was often vindictive to a faulty extreme, has never been denied; but what has his conduct to an absurd fellow, who had abused him, to do with the imputed treachery to Dryden? How does that prove him the artful source of those numerous critical decisions, which pronounced Pope the brilliant reformer of Dryden's vulgarities, and slovenly versification?

Mr. Weston once read to me an abusive poem of Welsted's

¹Letter 9c, pp. 57-58. Miss Seward conflates Weston's words.

upon Pope.¹ It was by no means ill-written; but it attempted to deprive the latter of every pretension to genius and worth. Mr. Weston acknowledged that this Philippic passed the press before the Dunciad, and the priority acquits Pope of every thing like baseness to Welsted. Where is the baseness of retorting the charge of poetic inability in lines whose wit and spirit prove the injustice of the first accuser?

In p. 386,² my antagonist challenges me to produce that confutation of his arguments in his letter, p. 27,³ to which I have said they are given. Thus then--he triumphantly quotes the original in vindication of that vulgar harangue which Dryden has made for the Empress of Heaven.

"When labouring still with endless discontent,
The Queen of Heaven did thus her fury vent:
Then am I vanquish'd, must I yield, said she,
And must the Trojans reign in Italy?
So Fate will have it, and Jove adds his force,
Nor can my power divert their happy course.
Shall [Cou'd] angry Pallas, with revengeful spleen,
The Grecian navy burn, and drown the men?
Shall [She]," &c. [Ae 4:1.54-62.]

The original writer is certainly responsible for the sentiments and imagery; but for the manner in which they are expressed in another language the translator solely. We all know that vulgar expressions may convey the sense of a foreign author, though that sense may have been primarily given

¹Palaemon to Celia at Bath, or the Triumvirate (1717). See DunA 5:2.293n.

²Letter 17, p. 117.

³Letter 9d, pp. 70-89. The quotation from Dryden's Aeneid which follows is on pp. 73-74. Weston quoted lines 56-75. Miss Seward misquotes the beginnings of lines 60 and 62.

in words that have no congenial meanness. If Mr. Weston does not feel the verbal bathos of the "said she" in the third line, and the "burn the navy"--"drown the men," in the last, his insensibility gives proof that poetic genius and poetic taste may be disunited. How easy to express Virgil's sense as faithfully with less inelegance!

When, with the dark'ning frown of angry pride,
In haughty tone, imperial Juno cried:
Then am I vanquish'd, shall the Trojans gain.
Triumphant empire on the Latian plain?
While gods and men my powerless efforts see,
Jove and the Fates this hated doom decree.
Shall injur'd Pallas, with avenging aim,
O'erwhelm the Greeks, and wrap their fleets in flame?
Shall she, &c.

If the above lines equally express Virgil's meaning, without the ludicrous inelegance that disgrace Dryden's, Mr. Weston's first argument is confuted.

His other pleas, which seek to prove the certainty that Dryden was not the translator of the Epistle from Helen to Paris, though he avows it solely his through all the editions, are set aside by those passages, of equal inelegance, which have been already cited in the course of this controversy, from the Hind and Panther, Ode on the Death of Anne Killigrew, the Virgil,¹ and other of his works. Upon most of those quotations Mr. Weston wisely makes no comment, willing, doubtless, that his readers should forget them,

¹Miss Seward quotes from The Hind and the Panther (Letter 11, p. 93), and from Dryden's Virgil (Letter 1b, p. 11). She does not quote from the Ode on the Death of Anne Killigrew, but she does quote Upon the Death of the Lord Hastings (Letter 1b, p. 10).

being utterly destructive of his unfor[t]unate assertion, that the style of the great Dryden is never injudiciously debased. My edition of Dryden's Works contains no second version of Dido to Aeneas; and the first, from which Mr. Weston quotes, and calls charming,¹ appears to me a collection of vapid, stiff, inharmonious lines, interspersed with a few beautiful couplets, but all along disgraced with such writing as the following, that certainly challenges the worst lines in the Helen to Paris, and resembles them sufficiently to leave no doubt, with the unprejudiced, that their origin is the same.

"Built walls you shun, unbuilt you seek; that land
Is yet to conquer, but you this command.
Suppose you landed where your wish design'd,
Think what reception foreigners would find.
When will your towers the height of Carthage know?
Or when your eyes discern such crowds below?
If such a town and subjects you could see,
Still would you want a wife that [who] lov'd like me."
[DA 1:13-16, 21-24.]

Lord Mulgrave could not jingle couplets that less deserved the name of Poetry; nor is the general style of this Epistle, which Mr. Weston calls charming, a whit more elevated.

His quotation from Warton² perfectly meets my sentiments; the most ample and common expressions are frequently beautiful when they harmonize with the general style, and suit the character of the speaker. When they do not, prosaic flatness, or ridiculous vulgarity, results from their use.

¹Letter 9d, p. 79. He quotes from the poem on pp. 82-83.

²Letter 9d, p. 98.

The words burn, drown, men, sound ludicrous as they are applied and combined by the imperial Juno; yet the two first, from being used in a metaphoric sense, and the last from different combination, are capable of acquiring great dignity; instance, Galatea on the Sea: vide that celebrated poem The Botanic Garden.

"And as the lustre of her eye she turns,
Soft sighs the gale, and amorous Ocean burns."¹

Also Pope:

"As the rapt Seraph that adores and burns." [EOM 3.1:1:278.]

And so the word drown in Hayley's beautiful Ode on Howard:

"See that [yon] sweet rustic drown'd in tears."²

And the word men, in Pope's Homer:

"To gods and men to give the golden day." [Od 9:3.4]

If it is felt, from these examples, that the same words, according to their sense and combinations, may be vulgarly prosaic, or beautifully poetic, then it remains evident, that Mr. Weston's observation was not meant to justify Dryden's style, when it sunk so low as in passages frequently quoted in my letters upon this subject. I question not its having, in many places, acquired beauty from the use of those common expressions, that very often were so applied as to disgrace it.

¹Erasmus Darwin (Lichfield and London, 1789) 2.425.26. For Anna Seward's relations with Darwin see Introduction p. 76.

²William Hayley, "Ode Inscribed to John Howard," Poems and Plays (1788) 1:131.

And now, having produced that confutation of Mr. Weston's arguments in his former letter, which his latter challenged, I resolve never more to resume the subject; glad that no proofs can be brought of meanness used to acquire fame, which, in so great a writer as Pope, appeared utterly improbable. I confess it were to be wished that his disposition had been as free from acrimony as his verse from imperfection: nor need such exemption to have robbed the world of the inimitable Dunciad, since the generality of the corrections inflicted there are no more incompatible with sweetness of temper, than the prosecuting a thief who has robbed, or a ruffian who has assaulted us.

If with a single being, but Mr. Weston, it can yet remain a doubt, whether Dryden's style of versification in the heroic couplet, or Pope's, be the most happy, let him compare Dryden's Translation of the first book of Homer's Iliad and Pope's. He will find the latter conveying, with brilliant strength and harmonious sweetness, the same sense in a less number of lines than Dryden, with his feeble Alexandrines in the middle of sentences, and botching triplets; the superior conciseness is in a proportion of about eight to twelve.

Anna Seward.

19.

Mr. Urban,

Jan. 15. [1790]

Your known impartiality gives me to hope you will admit a few more observations on Mr. Weston's defence, and in

vindication of Mr. Pope; whom Mr. W. intends to make the great witness of his own infamous delinquency, and to convince us that he was an "execrable impostor,"¹ "a foe to human-kind."² Really, Mr. Urban, I do not see what harsher terms could be applied to a Nero, a Borgia, a Catiline, a Chartres,³ or any other monster that ever disgraced humanity. The bitterness of his animosity to Mr. Pope exceeds all bound. We must suppose that, in Mr. Weston's estimation, Mr. P. never entertained a good thought, uttered a good word, or did a good action, through his whole life: and yet there are abundant proofs to the contrary of all this; and by witnesses, it may be, as unexceptionable as Mr. Weston. I appeal to the candour of your readers in general, whether Mr. W's prejudice is not most unreasonable and cruel, in supposing any man, especially such an one as Mr. Pope, so desperately and entirely wicked and infamous as he represents. He is generally allowed by those who have most studied the human heart, that no man is so entirely abandoned as totally to exclude every ray of goodness, or none so perfect as to be exempt from failings; but, when the balance of merit and demerit has for its object such a man as Pope, who can hesitate to decide? for few, like him, have equal attestation from the wise and good. With Mr. Urban's leave, my

¹ Weston simply called Pope "execrable," Letter 2, p. 20n. "M. F." lengthened the epithet to "execrable impostor," Letter 13, p. 102.

² Letter 9b, p. 52.

³ Francis Chartres was Prime Minister Robert Walpole's "runner and informer, known for good reason as 'Rape-Master General' of Great Britain," Mack, Life 568.

recollection serves me with a few. No less a man than Lord Orrery has asserted. "that this 'foe to human-kind, this execrable Pope,' treated his friends with a politeness that charmed, and a generosity that was much to his honour; every guest was made happy within his doors; pleasure dwelt under his roof, and elegance presided at his table."¹ Lord Orrery knew the man; he would not hazard such an eulogium at random, and without due conviction of its justice.

The excellent Addison, or at least a literary associate, with his approbation, introduces that divine poem the Messiah, in the Spectator, with the following terms: "I will make no apology for entertaining the reader with the following poem, which is written by a great genius, a friend of mine in the country, who is not ashamed to employ his wit in the praise of his Maker."² Yet this friend of Addison's, who thus praiseth his Maker, is Mr. Weston's "execrable impostor," his "foe to human-kind!"

It would be no difficult task to adduce testimonies in favour of Mr. Pope from many of the greatest names of the last age. Arbuthnot, Atterbury, Swift, Steele, Gay, and many others, might be brought. But why mention what is so well-known to all literary men? It would be occupying your valuable work unnecessarily. Mr. Weston's ipse dixit, like a torrent, is to bear down all before it. These men were nothing more than simple dupes to Mr. Pope's artful

¹Quoted in Ruffhead, 500.

²Joseph Addison, Spectator 378.

duplicity and cunning; like Satan he beguiled them; and they were foolish enough to esteem him an agreeable companion, an elegant poet, and a very desirable friend. I felt no "exultation"¹ in asking Mr. W. whether he would have attacked Mr. Pope, had they been contemporaries. I asked a simple question, and he has answered it. He will, I hope, excuse me if I have my doubts. I have known men talk of wonderful prowess when danger has irreturnably passed by; whose "courage would have oozed out at every pore"² under the idea of immediate contest.

Mr. W. has a very ingenious, I will not call it a happy, turn, at seeing the worst side of every thing. For instance, he thinks your anonymous correspondents may be so, for the laudable purpose of "venting spleen in snug security;"³ and this amiable motive he more particularly applies to me. He might, with more truth, justice, and candour, have assigned a different one; one I dare assert more congenial to the sentiments of the majority of your anonymous correspondents, viz. a modest diffidence. It is not every one, like Mr. W, who has a sufficient self-confidence to bear the piercing rays of the meridian sun, or dare to think their Christian and surname a sufficient shield of security, and certain assurance of applause. Those literary veterans who have attained to

¹Letter 9b, p. 49. Read "M.F. exultingly asks."

²Possibly a partial quotation of the speech by Acres, "my valour is certainly going!--it is sneaking off!--I feel it oozing out as it were at the palms of my hands!" Richard Sheridan, The Rivals V.iii. 93-95.

³Letter 9b, p. 51. Read "M.F. . .can give ample Vent to his Spleen in snug Security."

this confidence may properly avail themselves to it, and their names undoubtedly add weight to their communications. On the other hand, I am inclined to think that several pieces are given to the publick by you, anonymously, and which are thought well of, that would obtain but little notice, were the obscurity and incelebrity of their authors known: therefore, you have very properly determined, that every one in this respect ought to use his own pleasure.

Mr. W. has thought proper to honour some expressions in my letter in your Magazine, vol. LIX. p. 818, ¹ with the term of abuse.² I am not conscious of having betrayed any improper warmth in that letter: if I have, he may justly blame himself for it; his attack on my first fairly demanded the retort courteous; I think I encroached not on the bound of justice and candour. Had I any other motive than a friendly attempt to rectify his most rooted prejudice? But if a Seward fails to convince him, can there be any hope of success to me? If he can justly call me abusive, what shall we say of the terms he has applied to the inimitable Pope? Has our language a word equal to a just idea of it?

I am now come to Mr. W's favourite rub against me; that in literary abilities I am not quite equal to Miss Seward. I again and again acknowledge this heinous crime; but that is nothing in extenuation. I may acknowledge, I may confess, and repent as oft as I please of this enormous offence: Mr. W. will continue to introduce this favourite topick, and hoot

¹Letter 7, pp. 32-34.

²Letter 9b, p. 51.

me with inferiority at his closing paragraphs: but it is his way; and every man has his humour. However, there remains some consolation to me in the thought that I have brethren in this iniquity; nay, even Mr. W. himself, great as I confess he is, I am somewhat inclined to think is also not quite immaculate of the charge. M. F.

* * Mr. Weston's final Answer to Miss Seward, from its
* extraordinary length, and from its not arriving more early in the month, is unavoidably postponed to our next.

20.

Mr. Urban, Feb. 8. [1790]

With satisfaction I read Mr. Morfitt's letter in your January Magazine.¹ We might reasonably expect his interference in the interesting dispute between Miss Seward and Mr. Weston. He has interfered, and that in a manly and candid sort, in a manner that evinces him equally learned and ingenuous. I trust, from his mode of writing, he will not deem me his adversary, though I may happen somewhat to differ from him.

Notwithstanding Mr. Morfitt prefers the poetry of Dryden to that of his successor, Pope, he does not acrimoniously deem the latter execrable, but touches on the moral character of each with a gentle hand, and kindly pleads in excuse for both. In his opinion, Mr. Dryden was a greater, and yet a

¹Letter 10, pp. 64-69. All "M.F.'s" references to Morfitt are to this letter.

less, poet than Mr. Pope; greater in his sublime flights, lesser in his depressive flats: and I believe his opinion is founded on justice, and accurate discrimination.--Mr. Pope's verses, though beautiful and excellent, he thinks tiresome, from their uniformity, and he "pants for hill and dale." Certainly contrast and variety are as necessary to relieve the "mind's eye" as that of the body. With him and Mr. Weston I agree, that an uniform, mellifluous flow of the finest verse wearies the attention, and unavoidably brings on satiety. Nature exhibits an inexhaustible variety in all around us; we have light and darkness, good and evil, pleasure and pain, and a thousand other contrasts; of which we constantly experience the necessary alternation, and without which, in our present state, we should undoubtedly be miserable, for we live but by change.

Mr. Morfitt complains of his satiety by the time he has read 200 pages of Mr. Pope; but I cannot consider this as decisive against the excellence of the poetry: that it evidences the frailty of the human intellect, most certainly must be allowed, and demonstrates our inability to bear a long succession of beautiful ideas without approaching fatigue. Sure I am, I never could read 200 pages of any author, on any subject, poetry or prose, without a desire of relieving the attention by a walk, or business of some kind. Undoubtedly, the modern mode of printing poetry, especially in our three-shilling and half-crown quartos, much favour one's getting through a good number of pages at a sitting;

for

Deep margins, large letters, and lines at a distance,
Stead of Genius prolific, become their assistance:¹

and, by-the-bye, Mr. Urban, they seem more calculated to
attack the pocket than to improve the head, or amend the
heart.

I cannot altogether agree with Mr. Weston, or Mr. Morfitt, that Mr. Pope's poetry is so uniformly destitute of the sublimer flights; nor can it plead a total exemption from the "depressive flats" which these gentlemen think so essentially necessary to constitute genuine poetry. No one appeared more sensible of this necessary variety than Mr. Pope himself; witness his letter to one Walsh, July 2, 1706, where he says, "I am convinced, as well as you, that one may correct too much; for in poetry, as in painting, a man may lay colours, one upon another, till they stiffen and deaden the piece. Besides, to bestow heightening on every part is monstrous. Some parts ought to be lower than the rest; and nothing looks more ridiculous than a work where the thoughts, however different in their own nature, seem all on a level. It is like a meadow newly mown, where weeds, grass, and flowers are all laid even, and appear undistinguished. I believe too, that sometimes our first thoughts are the best, as the first squeezing of the grapes makes the finest wine." *Memoirs of A. Pope*, by Wm. Ayre, Esq. 1745, 12 mo. [sic] p. 25.²

A poet, who thus expresses himself in a letter to his

¹ Unidentified.

² 1:24-25.

friend, I can never think would be so totally unmindful of his own declared sentiments as directly to give into that extreme and never-varying uniformity he had so justly and so properly condemned.

One might suppose this identical one Walsh was just now announced to the world by Mr. Weston, who, from his deeper researches into poetical anecdote, had made the discovery of Pope's poetical adviser to correctness; yet this one Walsh, this literary non-descript, is well known to have been a gentleman of considerable merit and consequence, author of several esteemed pieces in prose and verse, and, in the opinion of Mr. Weston's favourite Bard, even Dryden himself (in his Postscript to Virgil), the best critick of our nation in his time.¹ That he was high in the estimation of Mr. Pope is clear from the following lines:

_____"Walsh, the Muse's judge and friend,
Who justly knew to blame or to commend;
To failings mild, but zealous for desert,
The clearest head, and the sincerest heart,
This humble praise, lamented shade, receive,
This praise at least a grateful Muse may give.
The Muse whose early voice you taught to sing,
Prescrib'd her heights, and prun'd her tender wing,
(Her guide now lost) no more attempts to rise,
But in low numbers short excursions tries." [EOC 1:729-38.]

Yours, &c.

M. F.

21.

Mr. Urban, Solihull, Sept. 25. [1790]

As my fair Opponent, like the Czarina,² claims a

¹Dramatic Poesy 2:261.

²In the spring of 1790, the Russians, who were expanding

Victory, and sings Te Deum, for the supposed Destruction of my Sail Of The Line, it remains for me to retaliate on her Fleet Of Gallies; but, though certain of Success; I shall not shout Io Triumphe, I assure you, Mr. Urban.--I am abundantly too sensible of the Risk which I run, of losing that Friendship which I prize above all Things--save Honour and Conscience--to indulge even the smallest Degree of Exultation on the Occasion.--And yet my Apprehensions may, perhaps, have no solid Foundation; I think that I know Miss Seward sufficiently to hope that, when she sees the List of imperfect Selections, inaccurate Assertions, and erroneous Quotations, which Self-defence, and Regard for Truth, oblige me to produce--however she may be pained at the Sight of so many Inadvertencies of which she had no Suspicion, she will, with that Nobleness of Mind which so eminently distinguishes her, Forgive the Step which I am compelled to take.

She will probably be the more inclined to pardon when she recollects that some of those Mistakes which I now bring forward, with Sensations to which no Mode of Expression can do Justice, I could have brought forward long ago, had not Tenderness to her Sex, and Veneration for her own Talents and Virtues, induced me to waive those little Advantages which superior Attention to the Subject had given me over her, and

their borders under the aggressive Czarina Catherine II, were badly beaten in two battles with the Swedish. The first was a sea battle; the second, on land. After the second defeat, the Czarina claimed a victory, which the GM noted "has all the marks of a fabricated account, to appease the Russian people" (60:557). Weston seems to have conflated the two battles.

made me desirous rather of a drawn Battle than of a Conquest.

Her Forgiveness, I would fain flatter myself, may be complete--when she shall be convinced that, through the Unguardedness of some Expressions in her two last Letters, the Person whom she has honoured with her Praise, and blest with her Friendship, is in Danger of being considered by Posterity as a tasteless, prejudiced, lying, envious Being, "aspersing Virtue, and endeavouring to shroud the Light of Genius."¹--This undesirable Character would inevitably be my Lot, were I silently to pass over those unfortunate Letters.--The Propriety of the first Brace of Epithets I might indeed contest, but not be able to disprove; nor would it be very material, perhaps, to do so: but it is easy, and of infinite Importance to me, to demonstrate the Injustice of the latter Pair.

My gentle Antagonist may aver, that she is not conscious of having attributed to me either Envy or Falshood; nevertheless my Enemies might very excusably infer that she has--from the united Force of the following Paragraphs, in her Letter, p. 120:²

"Pope's Severity to the Dunces, who had maligned him, was just Chastisement. They gave the Provocations [provocation".] they distilled their Venom upon his immortal Laurels, though it had no Power to canker them. He formed a mock-heroic Poem in Consequence of their Malice, and made his Enemies ridiculous to all Ages. Such ever be the Doom of Envy aspersing Virtue, and endeavouring to shroud the Light of Genius!

"Mr. Weston still procrastinates his proofs, that Pope was an execrable Villain, the insidious Underminer of his Fame, whom he professed to honour. My Antagonist has closed the Correspondence with me, without producing

¹Letter 11, p. 95.

²Pp. 95-96.

them. He owed it to his own Character, and to the Demand I made upon him for those Proofs, to have produced them in the first Page of his Reply. To assert Dryden's Style advantaged by its frequent Vapidity and Vulgarity is but Want of Taste for pure and elegant Composition. From unsupported Accusation, brought against the moral character of a fine Writer, every one will turn indignant, who can feel his Beauties, and be grateful to the Delights they have afforded.

"Ere I make any Comments upon Mr. Weston's Letter in the last Magazine, where every Position [he advances] is open to Confutation, I shall wait the promissory Ides of March for those Proofs which my Friendship for Mr. Weston almost induces me to wish he may be able to produce. It behoves him to take especial Care that they be unquestionable."

No Apropos, 'tis true, appears to sink the End of the first Paragraph to the Beginning of the second;--but the connective Chain (like the sympathetic one which binds Heart to Heart), though unseen, is felt. Permit me, therefore, Mr. Urban, to justify the Motives which influenced me in my Attack upon Pope's moral Character; and account for my Detestation of his Principles and Conduct.

Miss Seward supposes that the Dunciad was written in Consequence of Insults and Injuries received by him from the Individuals whom he stigmatizes as Knaves and Fools. Such once was my Opinion; but, on examining the Preface, Advertisement, Notes, Testimonies of Authors, &c. more closely, I found so much Reason to suspect the Truth of the Assertions, and the Fidelity of the Quotations, that I employed much Time, and no small Assiduity, in procuring the Works of these same Knaves and Fools: and the Result was--a Total Conviction of the Baseness and Malignity of the Duncifier's Disposition. By far the greater Part of the supposed Delinquents (as I

remarked in a former Letter)¹ had given him no reasonable Cause for Resentment, and the intended Punishment of the Remainder immeasurably exceeded the Offence.

I plainly discovered that many a disingenuous--nay, many a Villainous Artifice was brought into Play--to degrade the Abilities, and blacken the Characters, not only of those who had spoken, or written, slightingly of himself or his Works, but also of those who had not; and his Treatment of whom must, therefore, arise from other Causes than those which he thought proper to assign: partly, perhaps, from Envy or Jealousy of those Talents which, if not timely crushed, might one Day rival his own--and partly, perhaps, from a parasitical Desire to please such of his Friends as had been animadverted upon by the Writers whom he affects to hold in Contempt.

But, whatever might be his Inducement, his Conduct I found to be such as inspired me with Horror and Indignation; and I fancied that I should render an essential Service to the Cause of Virtue and Humanity, by exposing the Hypocrisy of his Pretences and the Villainy of his Practices.--Full of this Idea, I constructed a Poem, a large Portion of which I appropriated to the Vindication of those whom he has so grossly traduced in that wicked Libel which my amiable but misguided Friend calls the "inimitable Dunciad;"²--intending to publish it with Notes and Illustrations.--But, when the first Ebullitions of Resentment had subsided, and I came

¹Letter 17, pp. 117-23.

²Letter 18, p. 129.

coolly to meditate on the Magnitude of the Undertaking, and its probable Consequences, my Ardour for Publication was somewhat abated.

I reflected on the Nature of the human Mind; I considered that no one parts with a favourite Opinion, long cherished, without Reluctance; that violent are the Struggles against Conviction, when one is pre-disposed not to be convicted;¹ that Arguments and Deductions produce Effects only in Proportion to the Extent of Understanding possessed by those on whom they are intended to operate; that, even supposing I should surmount the difficulties which Pope's consummate Cunning had thrown in my Way, and be able to trace this Proteus through all his shifting Forms, and shew him at last--to the candid and discerning--in his own proper Shape, what Recompence was I to expect?--The most violent Abuse from the Unconvinced--and very frigid Approbation from my Proselytes.--'Tis hard to forgive an Attempt (and a successful one) to appear more wise or more diligent than ourselves; and they who could not decently deny the Force of my Conclusions might doubt, or pretend to doubt, the Integrity of my Motives:--they who were obliged to own that Pope was a bad Man might wonder, or affect to wonder, what good Purpose could be answered by proving him one.

I was staggered by these and similar Reflections; and I let year after Year pass away, without coming to any Resolution.--At length Dr. Johnson's Lives of the Poets appeared;

¹Weston corrects "convicted" to "convinced" in Letter 25, p. 163.

and you may guess, Mr. Urban, my Surprize and Pleasure at finding his Sentiments of Pope's Disposition in so many respects coincide with mine!¹--But, attentively as he had studied the Poet's Character, I had studied it yet more attentively; and will frankly own that I felt no small Gratification in the Consciousness of having anticipated almost all his Observations, and of having made many others which had escaped even his scrutinizing Vigilance.

Ten Years more have elapsed; and I have had abundant Reason to congratulate myself on my Prudence, in forbearing to publish what would have subjected Me to twenty Times the Obloquy to which his honest Investigation of Pope's Merits exposed Him: for not his venerable Age--not his exemplary Piety--not even the Obligations which the Literature of his Country owes him, and must for ever owe him, could secure him from Abuse, which poured in Torrents from the polluted Pens of ignorant and tasteless Scribblers; who chose to ascribe that Conduct to Envy which, my own Feelings tell me, sprung from a very different Source.--What then had not I to apprehend, who, convinced of the Satyrist's radical Depravity, could not condescend to disguise my Sentiments, and mention what I looked upon as diabolical Villainies in such guarded and temperate Terms as Johnson has used, while descanting on what he considered as human Frailites!

What Kind of Reception were such Observations as These

¹Johnson discusses Pope's character in Lives 3:196-216. For a critique of Johnson see Mack, "Reflections of an Amateur Biographer," Modern Language Review (October 1984) 79.4: xxix-xxx.

likely to meet with, from those who had been taught to look up to Pope, as to a Model of Moral Perfection?

"But--were the Tyrant's title to the Bays
 "Of Right Divine, and Merit--past all Praise--
 "By Crooked Paths, Posterity shall own,
 "And Plottings dire he reach'd his tottering Throne;
 "Wit, Wisdom, Worth, and Learning all hewn down,
 "He mounted on their Necks, and seiz'd the Crown:
 "Nor Rank, nor Innocence, nor Sex, nor Age,
 "Could plead Exemption from his envious Rage?
 "His jealous Malice aim'd the deadly Blow,
 "Draw cansir-like, at Friend as well as Foe!"¹

But, though I forbore to print--I did not forbear to converse--on the Subject which had taken Possession of my Thoughts so long; and I had the Satisfaction to find my Arguments carry Conviction to the Breast of many a Worshipper of Pope.--Even Miss Seward owed to me (many Months before the Publication of the Woodmen of Arden) that her Favourite had, through my Means, sunk in her Opinion-- (I mean, with respect to his Moral Character); and her Attack on me for a supposed Reflection in my Preface was caused (as I shall shew presently) by a Misapprehension of my Meaning.

You may recollect, Mr. Urban, an expostulatory Letter which I addressed to you, (I think in December 1788,)² soon after your liberal-minded Editor favoured the Poetic World with a Collection of Welsted's Works.--I took that Opportunity of returning him those Thanks which were so justly his Due. Pleased to find (from the Memoirs prefixed to the Poems) that the Author's Disposition was as amiable as his

¹ "Name of a blustering, bragging, character in [George] Villiers's burlesque 'The Rehearsal. . . . Formed as a parody on Almanzor in Dryden's Conquest of Granada, perhaps intended to suggest drawing a can of liquor," OED.

² Letter 2, p. 20n.

Poetry was elegant, and glowing with Indignation at the Injustice and Inhumanity of his Persecutor, I could not resist the Temptation of expressing unreservedly my Opinion of the "Execrable Pope."--An anonymous Correspondent's Reprehension of the Term, and my Justification of it, must be fresh in your Readers Remembrance.¹

Having thus deviated from that cautious Plan which I had observed for Twenty Years, I went a little further; and, in my prefatory Essay, which was published a Month or two afterward,--after lamenting the Alteration which Poetic Diction had sustained since the Days of Dryden,--I ventured to insert the following Paragraphs.

"But so material a Change in the Constitution of Poetry could not be expected to take Place, without some Literary Convulsions.--The Disciples Dryden were ardent in their Veneration, formidable by their Numbers, and respectable by their Rank.--Violent was the Clamour, and tedious was the Contest.--Pope, however, in the End--by Means not very honourable indeed--proved triumphant.

"In the Course of my Researches, I have found considerable Amusement, (though alloyed, in no small Degree, by a Mixture of Scorn and Indignation,) in tracing and developing the insidious Arts which he suffered his Friends to practise, in order to undermine the Reputation of the deceased Poet, and to asperse the Characters of his living Supporters; and if a Work, which, for a longer Term of Years than that prescribed by Horace, has been incarcerated in my Closet, should ever escape into Light, Pope's Goodness of Heart would be no longer problematical:--at present, I shall content myself with observing, that He, while the injured Dryden sunk in the public Estimation, was exalted to the vacant Chair, and proposed as a bright Exemplar to all succeeding Bards."²

To Miss Seward's Misconstruction of a Passage in the latter Paragraph the World is, in a great measure, indebted

¹"M. F.'s" Letter 2, pp. 20-22, and Weston's Letters 9a and 9b, pp. 43-52, and 17, pp. 117-23.

²Letter 9c, pp. 57-58.

for those very ingenious Strictures which have embellished your Miscellany; and I--for the painful--painful Task of animadverting (and, perhaps, with a Degree of Bluntness of which I am myself unaware) on the Productions of a Lady, my Respect for whom can only be exceeded by my Reverence for Truth!

I meant only to affirm, that Pope's Friends practised insidious Arts, with a View to undermine the Reputation of the deceased Poet, and to asperse the Characters of his living Supporters; and that He suffered them so to do;--I did Not say instigated;--I did Not say--assisted; merely Suffered:--and I thought that I had expressed my Meaning so clearly as not to admit of Misconstruction; but I was mistaken.

Miss Seward,--in your Magazine for April 1789, Page 292,--says that I accuse Pope of "having meanly influenced his Friends to exalt his Compositions above their just Level, for the Purpose of lowering Dryden's and tearing the Laurels from his Brow."¹--This Quotation is evidently erroneous in every Part; the principal Mistake I have formerly pointed out, and need not repeat my Remarks.

In your Magazine for February 1790, Page 120--she observes, "Mr. Weston still procrastinates his Proofs, that Pope was an execrable Villain, the insidious Underminer of his Fame whom he professed to honour."²

¹Letter 1a, p. 1.

²Letter 11, p. 95. The next quotation is from the same place.

Who, Mr. Urban, would not suppose, from this Sentence, that I had asserted that Pope Was the insidious Underminer of Dryden's Fame, and was Therefore an execrable Villain?--She proceeds--"my Antagonist has closed the Correspondence with me, without producing them. He owed it to his own Character, and to the Demand I made upon him for those Proofs, to have produced them in the first Page of his Reply."

I have carefully examined Miss Seward's three Letters for April, May, and June, 1789--¹ and cannot find any such Demand.--I never Had asserted that Pope was the insidious Underminer of Dryden's Fame--and, of course, never suspected that I should be called upon for Proofs.--But, on reviewing the Passage which gave Rise to this Controversy, I must confess that it is liable to Misconception;--as the Words "in order to undermine" may, by a forced Construction, be made to refer either to Pope Or his Friends: but, if I had intended to accuse him of undermining the Reputation of his great Master, I should certainly--instead of "the insidious Arts which he suffered his Friends to practise, in order to undermine, &c."--have written--"which he, in order to undermine, &c. suffered his Friends to practise."

That I had called him "execrable" is true, and that I have proved him so is equally true--if his accusing a Man of the vilest Propensity which can debase human Naure, while conscious of his Innocence, and then flying to the Sanctuary of a paltry Equivocation, Can be deemed execrable.

¹Letters 1a, b, and c, pp. 1-20.

To prove that Pope really did suffer his Friends to depreciate the Person from whom he learned all that is valuable in the Structure of his Verse were a very easy Task indeed.--To mention only One (but that one an Host!)--Miss Seward cannot forget Swift--the Partner of Pope's Labours and the Friend of his Bosom;--Nor can she forget his Comparison of Dryden's Virgil to a Mouse under a Canopy of State:¹ no--nor his grave assertion in his Dedication of his Tale of a Tub to a Prince Posterity:

"I do affirm, upon the Word of a sincere Man, that there is now actually in Being a certain Poet, called John Dryden, whose Translation of Virgil was lately printed in a large Folio, well-bound, and, if diligent Search were made, for aught I know, is yet to be seen."²
(To be continued.)

¹A Tale of a Tub with The Battle of the Books, A.C. Gulthkelch and D. Nichol Smith, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958) 247.

²Gulthkelch and Smith, 36.

22.

Mr. Urban,

June 15. [1790]

Mr. Weston has taken his final leave of me somewhat in dudgeon; although he says he is in tolerable good-humour, from his manner I cannot but have my doubts. By addressing his last letter particularly to me, he in some measure demands of me a reply. His last arrow is now shot against Mr. Pope; by an unnatural exertion he has drawn his bow to its utmost stretch, overshot his mark, but the object of his wrath remains unhurt.

What has Mr. W. told us more than every one acquainted with Mr. Pope's writings knew before; the whole is extracted from the notes to the Dunciad, save a few egregiously perverse comments, similar to those of his predecessor John Dennis. It is not possible to confute this tale of slander better than Mr. Pope's own notes confute it.

It is acknowledged on all hands, that Mr. Pope was previously abused by Burnet and Duckett.¹ Mark, reader, they threw the first stone. Aye; but then Pope ought to have been passively obedient, perfectly non-resistant: how presumptuous to defend himself! how execrable to retort! The abuse it seems was from the firm of Duckett and Co.; they wrote Homerides, Grumblers, Pasquins, &c. It was a sort of amphisboena abuse; and the satiric retort properly included them both:

¹ Weston discusses the Burnet and Duckett issue in Letter 17, pp. 120-23. Also, see the Introduction pp. cvii-cxiii.

"Behold yon pair in strict embraces join'd,
 How like in manners, and how like in mind!
 Fam'd for good-nature, Burnet, and for truth;
 Ducket for pious passion to the youth.
 Equal in wit, and equally polite,
 Shall this a Pasquin, that a Grumbler write.
 Like are their merits, like rewards they share,
 That shines a Consul, this Commissioner." [DunA
 3:3.173-80.]

The redoubtable John Dennis took it into his head to annex such an idea to the fourth line (though a literal translation from a Latin classick) as no one else had thought of, and particularly pointed it out to the gentleman concerned, who, it is wonderful, never discovered that meaning himself, if that was the real intent of the satire. What was the Colonel's "spirited conduct"¹ on this trying calumny? No doubt the laws of his country would award him excessive damages on so just an occasion: had he recourse to this mode? if not, had he recourse to any? What man alive could be passive under such obloquy?

I always take it for granted an author knows his own meaning at least as well as any of his readers; and Mr. Pope having solemnly declared he had never heard any such detestable report coupled with Mr. Ducket's name, or that any such idea guided him when he penned the obnoxious lines, what right had Dennis, or any of his successors, to point out to Mr. Ducket, or to posterity, a meaning which the author totally disavows, and has used every endeavour to do away? It is certain, if the matter was as pointed out by Dennis and

¹Letter 17, p. 120.

Mr. Weston, of loading an innocent man with such a vile accusation, the attempt was a most villainous one, and deserving the severest censure. But, on his supposition, what possible motive can be alledged for Mr. Pope's conduct in this matter? He must know that the accusation would immediately confute itself, seeing no one had ever thought or surmized any such thing, nor was there any possibility of such a non-entity charge ever being made good, consequently the ridiculousness and baseness of it must effectually secure him from making it; hence I conclude that, in this matter, he is accused wrongfully.

Mr. Pope finding that Dennis's perverse comment was certain to be espoused by all his (Mr. Pope's) enemies (and his enviable talents had made them numerous), and perhaps, on their authority, taken up by others, thought proper, in later editions of the Dunciad, to expunge the obnoxious lines, as the best reparation he could make the injured party; injured by Dennis greatly more than by himself, whom though he intended to lash for his prior abuse, he could not mean to cast on him the most odious stigma possible to be cast on man; a stigma which, as he had never heard surmized by any one, it is next to impossible he should ever think of applying.

Mr. W, in his Poetical Address to Miss Seward, has termed Mr. Pope "a weaver of mechanic verse."¹ We may safely assert, that few poetical looms have produced such exquisite work; the fineness of the tissue, the delicacy and durability

¹Letter 15, poem "To Miss Seward," p. 113, 1.187.

of the materials, have been rarely equalled.

I shall now also take my final leave of this subject, and Mr. W; yet in perfect good-will and good-humour, highly respecting his talents as a poet, a man of learning, and a gentleman, and wishing to forget his prejudices. If he is disposed to add "more last words,"¹ he will meet with no interruption or reply from me, and may enjoy the great satisfaction of concluding the dispute. I shall continue to be of opinion, notwithstanding all that has been alledged, from John Dennis even to Joseph Weston, that the poetry of Mr. Pope will continue to be read and admired when the comments of his enemies are forgotten, or remembered but through the medium of his celebrity.

Yours, &c.

M. F.

23.

To M. F.

Sir,

Solihull, Oct. 11. [1790]

Not from a silly Desire to "enjoy the great Satisfaction of concluding the Controversy,["]² but from a much more rational Motive, do I depart from my declared Intention, and once more "notice an anonymous Correspondent."³

Our Acquaintance commenced in a very inauspicious

¹ Weston actually wrote, "As this is the last Notice which I intend to take of an anonymous Correspondent," Letter 17, p. 118.

² Letter 22 above, this page. Read "dispute." Unless noted otherwise, all references are to this letter.

³ Letter 17, p. 118.

Manner. An unfortunate, but well-meant, Attempt at Pleasantry on my Part, ill-understood, and of Course ill-taken, on yours, produced a Succession of Animadversions and Recriminations, the Recollection of which gives me Pain. But for that little Mistake our Controversy might have been more agreeable in its Progress, and shorter in its Duration!

Surprized at my Execration of a Man whom you had been accustomed to contemplate with Reverence, and displeased at an Expression which you thought disrespectful to yourself, you have (with a very pardonable Degree of human Frailty) observed my Conduct with an Eye somewhat jaundiced by Prejudice. In last Month's Miscellany you may see a candid Statement of my real Inducement for attacking Pope, and, perhaps, be inclined to think more favourably of me than you have hitherto done.¹

The chief Source of your Incredulity with Respect to the horrible Tendency of the Lines which you have quoted from the Dunciad seems to be--the implicit Confidence you repose in Pope's Veracity; but that Confidence will be shaken to its Foundation when in the Magazine for next November,² you shall find Proofs on Proofs that he was in the Habit of slandering Reputations, and afterwards denying, or explaining away, his manifest Intention: then--feeling rather shocked than convinced by his "solemn Declarations"--you will perceive that

¹Weston wrote that he wished to "render an essential Service to the Cause of Virtue and Humanity, by exposing the Hypocrisy of [Pope's] Pretences and the Villainy of his Practices," Letter 21, p. 141.

²Letter 25, pp. 163-73.

it Was possible for him to attempt the Ruin of a Character, by an atrocious Artifice--and, on being threatened with personal Chastisement, that it was Also possible for him to sneak behind a vile Subterfuge. Indeed, if "solemn Declarations" were to be considered as tantamount to Exculpation, Tyburn and Botany Bay would frequently have Reason to complain that they were defrauded of their Due.

You "conclude that, in this Matter, Pope is accused wrongfully--because his Accusation of Ducket would immediately confute itself, seeing no one had ever thought or surmized any such Thing, nor was there any Possibility of such a non-entity Charge ever being made good, consequently the Ridiculousness and Baseness of it must effectually secure him from making it."

This A[rgu]ment tends to prove that no Accusation can be brought unless there be previously Some Ground for it; that the Impossibility of a Charge being made good is an effectual Security from its being made at all. Evey Day's Experience evinces the Contrary. One Case, exactly in Point, I shall produce; and it will settle that Part of the Business completely.

An Attack on one of the most distinguished Characters in the present Century--strikingly similar to that of Pope on Ducket--was made, in a Poem called "Love in the Suds," by an Author¹ whose Abilities and Disposition bore no remote

¹William Kenrick, Love in the Suds, a Town Eclogue, "Being the Lamentations of Roscius for the Loss of His Nyky" (1772). It ran to five printings that year. An unsuccessful playwright, Kenrick blamed his failure on actor-manager David

Resemblance to those of your Favourite. The Person aspersed, after fruitless Endeavours to procure a Retractation, or personal Satisfaction, applied to the Court of King's Bench. The Offender well knew that the Masquerade Habit, in which he had disguised his infamous Charge, would There avail him Nothing; and warded off impending Vengeance by signing his Name to an Advertisement in the public Papers, denying that he ever intended to convey the Meaning which was generally affixed to his Words, and entirely acquitting the Object of his unmanly Resentment of even the least Suspicion of the Propensity with which every Reader of common Sense must know he meant to brand him; and with which he owned, in private Conversation, that he did mean to brand him: "I did not believe him guilty (said he), but I did it to plague the Fellow."¹ Is it not highly probable that Pope led the Way to this, and many villainous Attempts of the same Kind? If so--what has he not to answer for?

I never asserted--I never meant to assert--that Pope ought to have been "passively obedient, perfectly non-resistant," when his poetical Reputation was assailed; I did not blame him for retaliating: it was only his Mode of Retaliation which I condemned. If Burnet and Duckett Did "throw the

Garrick. In the poem, Kenrick insinuated that Garrick and playwright Isaac Bickerstaff had a homosexual relationship. Garrick sued Kenrick for libel, but before the case came to trial, Kenrick published a full apology and Garrick dropped the suit.

¹Kenrick said this to bookseller Thomas Evans shortly after his public apology in the newspapers in November 1772 (DNB).

first Stone,¹ was a Stab in the Dark a justifiable Retort? Is an unjust Censure of one Man's Talents to be returned by a more unjust Censure of another Man's Morals? Suppose, for Instance, I were to call you, Sir, Weak--your Anger would scarcely impel you to resent the Rudeness by calling me Wicked!

But I forget myself. You think that Pope was not guilty of this Baseness. Yet one, for whose Judgement you have professed an uncommon Deference, thinks he was. Consult Miss Seward's last Letter, and you will find that (with a Degree of Candour which excites Pleasure, but not Surprise), she Admits the Charge; though she admits it only by Implication--for no Lady could discuss such a Subject: but asks, "what it has to do with the imputed Treachery to Dryden?"²

Though You, Sir, seem hardened in your Unbelief, I flatter myself that not Many of Mr. Urban's Readers remain to be convinced of Pope's Delinquency. My Remarks on the Passages which I extracted from the Dunciad, it is true, were not numerous; partly because my Ideas revolted from the hateful Subject, and partly because I did not believe many Arguments necessary to convince even Mediocrity of Understanding of the Feebleness and Fallacy of the Pretences which are furnished by the Notes, which You consider as containing a complete Confutation of my Charge against Pope; and which I consider as containing incontrovertible Evidence of his

¹"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," John 8.7.

²Letter 18, p. 124.

Guilt.

I have One Inducement, and One only, which will suggest itself to you before I conclude, for trying once more to set you right; (for, on second Thoughts, you shall not remain in your Error till November--unless it be your own Fault). Do me the Justice, Sir, to believe this Work of Supererogation a Mark of real Respect! If you chuse to reply, You will "enjoy the great Satisfaction of concluding the Controversy;" for, if you avow your Conversion, I need not rejoin--and, if otherwise, I will not:--if, from the Very plain Arguments which I shall Now urge, Conviction should not instantly flash in your Face, I should consider the Case as hopeless; and, reasonably despairing of finding a Cure for Total Blindness, I should be as little desirous of a further Correspondence with You, Sir, as I should be of a Conversation with an Idiot!

You are compelled to grant--that Pope was Serious in his Praise of Ducket's Attachment to Burnet--or--that he was Not serious; that the Words "pious Passion" must mean Pure and Virtuous Friendship--or must mean Gross and Vicious Inclination: in fine, that he intended to ascribe to Ducket a Virtue which exalts Human Nature almost to angelic Excellence--or a vice which degrades it below Brutality. To ascertain in Which of these Senses the Words in Debate ought to be understood, I shall consider Two Points; either of which would singly decide the Dispute.

In the first Place, what was Pope's Design when he constructed the Dunciad?

Miss Seward shall answer the Question,

"To make his Enemies Ridiculous to all Ages."¹ And How was this charitable Purpose to be obtained? Could the Man who, by laughing In Print at his intended Translation of the Iliad,² attempted to injure him in Fame and in Fortune (and whom Pope could not, therefore, be violently disposed to compliment)--could this Man, I say, be made ridiculous to all succeeding Ages, by attributing to him a Virtue which had been celebrated with enthusiastic Ardour by the Poets, Philosophers, Orators, and Historians, of all former ones? a Virtue--sanctioned by a bright Example, to which all Christians ought to look up with reverential Awe?--Impossible!

Shew me, Sir, a single Line in the Dunciad--shew me a single Line in the "Prose Rubbish"³ which encrusts it--in which a Virtue, or the Shadow of a Virtue, is seriously imputed to Any of its Heroes!

On this solid Basis, Sir, I might rest my Argument, and bid Defiance to Confutation; but, rather than leave a Scantling of a Doubt on any Mind which Can be enlightened, I will take the superfluous Pains of considering the Connexion of the questionable Line with that which Precedes, and with that which Follows it.

"Behold yon Pair, in Strict Embraces join'd;
How like in Manners, and how like in Mind!
Fam'd for Good-Nature, Burnet, and for Truth;
Ducket for Pious Passion to the Youth.
Equal in Wit, and equally Polite--"⁴

¹Letter 11, p. 95.

²In Homerides, see Letter 17, p. 120.

³Unidentified.

⁴See Letter 17, p. 120n.

To prove the Praise in the third and fifth Lines to be Ironical--is to prove that in the fourth Line to be Also ironical; unless a single Passage in some Author--antient or modern--can be produced, in which one Line of Serious Praise is guarded, like a Deserter, before and behind, by two Lines of Mock Panegyrick!

If you could, sir, be so absurd as to believe that Pope, smarting from the Perusal of "Homerides," meant to extol Burnet, in Earnest, for Good-Nature, the auxiliary Epigram would instantly confute your Absurdity. Are not the Colleagues there expressly termed "Friends in Spite?" Are they not there expressly stigmatised for Dulness--in direct Opposition to the Verse which celebrates their Wit? How are these apparent Inconsistencies to be accounted for?

I, Sir, as well as You, "take it for granted that an Author knows his own Meaning at least as well as any of his Readers;" but I do Not take it for granted that he can mean Good and Evil at the same Instant. Pope could Not mean that his Enemies could be at once Good-Natured and Spiteful--at once Witty and Dull! He did know his own Meaning; he Well knew it: and was willing that his Readers should likewise know it. But he was treading on tender Ground, and Caution was requisite. Therefore, to gratify present Resentment, without making future Inconvenience, he wrapped that Meaning in oracular Ambiguity--in the Text; and, to rectify Mistake which inattentive Reader might fall into by supposing his serious in his Praises, he added an epigrammatic Commentary,

which sufficiently developed his Intention; and, by contradicting that Part of his Elogium which he Durst, instructed those Readers to contradict for themselves that Part which he durst Not.

This Supposition removes every Difficulty; the seeming Incongruity vanishes; the Text and Commentary are reconciled (irreconcilable on any other Principle): and his Conduct is clear and consistent.

Since then you must allow, of Force, the third and fifth Lines to be demonstrably Ironical--reflect, Sir, how much out of Place--out of Time--out of Character--would the fourth Line appear, if designed to be understood literally as attributing one of the most exalted Qualities which can ennoble the human Mind to a Man whom he was aiming "to make ridiculous to all Ages!"

The Absurdity is so palpably Gross, and the Inference so inevitably Conclusive, that I should deem it an Insult to yourself, Sir, as well as to a large Majority of Mr. Urban's Readers, to offer another Syllable on the Subject.

And now, Sir, having travelled together one Stage more than I expected, and each of us, after all our Bickerings on the Road, having recovered our Good-humour, we will, if you please, shake Hands, and exchange Forgiveness. Sick and dejected at the Commencement of my Journey, I felt, perhaps too sensibly the sarcastic Manner with which you resented a supposed Affront, and possibly expressed my Sentiments in a Way rather peevish than polite. If, on re-examining hereafter what I have written (for I have not Time at present), I

shall perceive that to be the Case, I am persuaded, Sir, that I shall find it much less difficult to procure Your Pardon than my Own!

Meanwhile be assured that I have already forgiven, and shall instantly forget, every Expression of yours that seems ill-natured--every Inuendo that appears unjust;--even from your early Intimation, that "I think highly of my own Talents,"¹ down to your late Association of me "with the redoubtable John Dennis."

Obliged as I feel myself by your parting Civilities, I can, in Return, afford You, Sir, Praise of a much more exalted Kind; as I sincerely give you Credit for Goodness of Heart; that inestimable Jewel, before whose living Lustre all intellectual Endowments, all literary Attainments, the Elegancies of Poetry, and the Subtleties of Criticism, fade away--like Stars before the rising Sun! Joseph Weston.

24.

Mr. Urban,

Oct. 10. [1790]

Without entering into the controversy between two excellent Friends, of whom the one is universally esteemed, the other universally beloved, I send you a Poem by Welsted, which was unhandsomely sneered at by Pope, and which the industrious Editor of his Works² laments that he never could

¹ "M. F." wrote, "those shining talents he is confessedly master of," Letter 7, p. 34.

² John Nichols.

obtain*. To Him also it may be acceptable to know that Welsted's comedy, "The Dissembled Wanton," was acted, at the same period it was published, viz. 1726;¹ and that "The present State of Poetry," which is mentioned in the Life, p. xxiv,² is only a ridiculous attack on Welsted, in conjunction with Blackmore, Steele, and Ambrose Philips, on the score of vanity.--It may be fair to both parties to observe, that Pope was himself so convinced of the injustice with which he had treated Welsted, that, in all the later editions of the "Dunciad," the most offensive lines against him were constantly omitted.³ Pope must have been unpardonable indeed had he continued to persecute a Writer, who, whatever may be thought of his poetical performances (and there are those, and good judges too, who admire many of them), was universally allowed to be a gentleman of polished manners, unsuspected integrity, and unbounded benevolence.

Yours, &c. M[atthew] G[reen]

*See it among our Poetry, p. 937. [Apparently the unsigned poem, "A Hymn to the Creator, Written By A Gentleman, On Occasion Of the Death Of His Only Daughter," GM 60:936-37.]

¹The play was performed at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre on December 14-16, 19, and 21, 1726.

²The Present State of Poetry: A Satire Address'd to a Friend and Dedicated to Mr. Welsted, dedication signed "Alexis" (pseud.) (London, 1726). Perhaps the "Life" is Nichols' "Memoir" attached to his edition of Welsted's Works. I have been unable to examine this.

³Probably DunA 5:3.293-300. These lines, which described Welsted's participation in the poets' diving contest in Fleet Ditch, were omitted from 1735a onward.

25. (continues 21)

Mr. Urban,

Solihull, Oct. 11. [1790]

Permit me to point out an Error of the Press in p.778¹ of your last Number; where I am made to say, "violent are the Struggles against Convention, when one is pre-disposed not to be Convicted."--The last Word should have been "Convinced."--To resume my Answer to my fair Opponent.

I left off, if you recollect, with a Quotation from Swift, expressive of the utmost Contempt for Dryden's Translation of Virgil.² But how (Miss Seward may ask) can Pope be to blame?--Could He prevent Swift's Attack on Dryden any more than She could prevent mine on Pope?--Probably not; but He might have acted on that Occasion as she has on one nearly similar--viz. have called his Friend to a public Account for his "Prejudice" and "Want of Taste"³--My generous Assailant must surely allow that either She has done too much or he--too little!

Be that as it may, I must (and I hope I may without Ill-manners) indulge one Smile at the Joy which she expresses on my neglecting to bring Evidence of a Charge--which I never made; she was "glad that no Proofs can be brought of Meanness used to acquire Fame, which in so great a Writer as Pope. appeared utterly improbable."⁴ Miss Seward, I Am Confident, will not deny that I had, on his Evidence, convicted him of

¹Letter 21, p. 142.

²Letter 21, pp. 148.

³Letter 8, p. 35, and Letter 11, p. 95.

⁴Letter 18, p. 129.

an infamous Slander, for which he so richly "deserved an Halter" as the Object of his Slander would have done had the Accusation been just; and one would have thought that but a moderate Degree of Satisfaction could result from the consideration that, though I certainly had proved him Base, I, perhaps, had not proved him Mean!--But, in fact, while proving him the one I had also proved him the other; for the Baseness of his Attack could be equalled only by the Meanness of his Retreat!

As Miss Seward thinks that I have wrongfully accused him of Baseness to Welsted, I will substantiate that charge also, next Month; and at the same Time (contrary to my first Intention), I will discuss the other Points which I mentioned in a Letter, inserted in your Magazine for May,¹ viz. his Meanness to Broome, Hypocrisy to Hughes and Hill, Treachery to Bolingbroke, Baseness to Lord Harvey and Lady Mary Wortley Montague, and Ingratitude to Chandos and Addison.

Cum multis aliis quae Nunc perscribere longum est.²

And, if I am not strangely mistaken, the "inimitable Dunciad" will lose some of its Charms in her Eyes, whose Mind is--Rectitude, and whose Heart is--Tenderness. She will no longer, I am persuaded, look with any great Complacency on the magnificent Edifice, when she shall find, with Surprise and Sorrow, that it has been erected on the insecure Foundation of Fraud and Cruelty!

¹Letter 17, pp. 117-18.

²"Which, along with many others, would take too long to explore fully now." This unidentified hexameter line is almost surely from a Renaissance poem; it is not Classical.

Previous to my Examination of the Dunciad, I shall clear Accounts with Miss Seward. But one Caution, Mr. Urban, let me give, in Justice to her and to myself. When it shall appear (as I have already hinted) that some of her Selections have been imperfect--some of her Assertions inaccurate--and some of her Quotations erroneous, if Envy should feel inclined to sneer and Malice to exult, they would do well to consider that her Criticisms would have been more perfect had She been less so.

This seeming Paradox will be easily explained by recollecting what her Situation has been during almost the Whole of the controversy. Eyes blinded with Tears, an Heart wrung with Anguish, and an Imagination distracted with Apprehensions, are totally incompatible with patient Attention, rigid Inquisition, and cautious Collation. But, though Candour will forgive, and Virtue applaud her, I cannot permit my just Cause to suffer through her unintentional Misrepresentations. After this necessary Apology for us both, I proceed, without further Ceremony, to my unpleasant task.

In your Magazine for May, 1789 (p. 390),¹ Miss Seward selects a Passage of uncommon Celebrity from Pope's Iliad, and compares it with one from the first and least meritorious of all Dryden's Productions--a Poem on the Death of Lord Hastings; a Piece which I believe is not inserted in many Editions of his Works: and, lest this inelegant Extract should not appear to sufficient Disadvantage, she flanks it

¹Letter 1b, p. 9.

by another celebrated Passage from Pope. Two against one, you know, Mr. Urban, are odds!

Her Management of the next Example she produces is still less advantageous to poor Dryden.¹ Extracting six Lines from Juno's Soliloquy, in the first Book of the Eneid (which she considers as unpoetical), she misquotes the Beginning of the Seventh, and skips over that and the four succeeding Lines (which are admirable), fastens on one which she thinks laughable, and omits the remaining Eight, which are excellent. I thought it but Justice to insert the entire Speech, accompanied by the Original, in your Miscellany for January, 1790.² Miss Seward seems to consider this as a silent Rebuke, from the Manner in which she mentions my Quotation (p. 523)--"He triumphantly quotes the Original in Vindication of that vulgar Harangue which Dryden has made for the Empress of Heaven."³

Adverting a second Time to Juno's Soliloquy, a second Time she stops short at the seventh Line. But, to make Amends for the Omission of the Rest of this reprobated Speech, she has pressed into her Service the introductory Couplet, which contains the word "vent"--to which (by her Italicks) she seems to attach the idea of Flatness. She appears to have conceived an unaccountable Dislike to the Verbs "vent"--"burn"--and "drown"--unless used in a figurative sense; but, surely, they seem just as musical as

¹Letter 1b, p. 11.

²Letter 9d, pp. 73-74.

³Letter 18, p. 125, Weston's emphasis.

"yield--"reign"--"add"--(which escape uncensored)--or any other Monosyllable Verbs!--The Substantive "Men" seems also to have fallen under her Displeasure;--but why--is not easy to discover. That it may be so applied or combined as to appear in a ludicrous light is true;--in the Mouth of a Coquet (for Instance), who declares "she is teased to Death by these odious--Men"¹ it is ridiculous enough. But I cannot grant that it sounds inelegant when opposed to "Ships"--although it may be more elegant when opposed to "Gods."

On Miss Seward's Substitution of the metaphorical Phrase of "wrapping Fleets in Flame"--for "burning" them--I shall only remark that Dr. Harwood, disapproving of the beautiful Simplicity of "Jesus wept," altered it, in his Translation of the New Testament, to "Jesus burst into a Flood of Tears."² They who think his Amplification an Amendment will, of Course, be pleased with Miss Seward's.

Having sufficiently decried Dryden's Translation, she introduces her own, by exclaiming, "How easy to express Virgil's Sense as faithfully with less Inelegance!"³ And, after heightening every Line of the contested Passage into splendid Versification, she adds, "If the above Lines equally express Virgil's Meaning, without the ludicrous Inelegance that disgraces Dryden's, Mr. Weston's first Argument is confuted."

¹Possibly a partial quotation of Millamant's exclamation, "odious men! I hate your odious provisos," William Congreve, The Way of the World (1700) IV.i.247.

²John 11:35 in Edward Harwood, A Liberal Translation of the New Testament (London, 1768), 1:328.

³Letter 18, p. 126. The quotations in this and the next paragraph are from this letter, except where noted.

Firm as Atlas stands my first Argument--for any Shock which her Translation gives it. "If the above Lines equally express Virgil's Meaning?"--But the above Lines unfortunately do Not equally express Virgil's Meaning! And (which is still more unfortunate) the only Resemblance which the first Couplet bears to the Original is couched in two Words--"when" in the first Line, and "Juno" in the second.

To the Proof.

Cum Juno aeternum servans sub pectore vulnus
Haec secum:¹

Dryden.

"When labouring still with Endless Discontent,
The Queen of Heaven did thus her Fury vent."

Miss Seward.

"When, with the dark'ning Frown of angry Pride,
In haughty Tone, imperial Juno cried."

The Reader of true Taste may possibly deem the brilliant Additions of "dark'ning Frown"----"angry Pride" and "haughty Tone"--an inadequate Recompence for the Loss of the much more important Information--that an insatiable Desire of Revenge unceasingly rankled in Juno's Breast. Virgil evidently refers to the "saevae memorem Junonis ob iram" in the Opening of the Eneid;² a Circumstance on which the Machinery of the Poem hinges: and, therefore, not to be omitted without manifest Detriment to the Poet's Plan. Besides--the Mantuan Bard was much too judicious to say All that he could have said on the Occasion; and paid his Reader's Imagination the

¹ 1.36-37.

² 1.4. "Through cruel Juno's unforgiving wrath."

Compliment of supposing that it would easily collect--from her Words--the tone and that which accompanied them.

But, were Miss Seward's Translation as faithful as it is erroneous, I should still remain unconfuted. I must beg leave once more, Mr. Urban, to remind your Readers of the principal Object of our Contention. I had expressed an Opinion that the Style of Dryden is preferable to that of Pope--On Account of the Inequalities which so frequently occur. How does my ingenious Opponent endeavour to overthrow that Opinion? Why truly, by proving that there Are those Inequalities! A Mode of Confutation entirely new--and not a little comical!

But stay!--Miss Seward will allow Poetic Diction to Sink--but not Too low. Now we come to the Point. Who is to be the Judge of the Precise Degree to which it may be allowed to descend?--Ah, Mr. Urban! Who indeed?--Until that question be answered, Miss Seward and I may argue for ever, without being one Jot nearer the Mark; for I cannot allow that calling Dryden's Translation a vulgar Harangue is proving it to be one;--any more than I can acknowledge the Justice of those severe Epithets with which she so plentifully besprinkles most of the Passages which she has judged it expedient to select.

As Dryden has contrived it, Juno pours out the Effusions of her Wrath in a regular Climax. One sees the offended Goddess working herself into a Passion by very natural Gradations. But Miss Seward has begun in so lofty a Strain, that I have little Doubt of the Effect which would have been

produced had she translated the whole Soliloquy!

The chief Blemish in modern poetic Diction is Inflation. If that Blemish is undiscoverable in Miss Seward's Works, it is probably owing to the Grandeur and Sublimity of her Conceptions; which justify the uniform Majesty of her Style. The Shortness of her Poems is a Circumstance also much in her Favour; for Pope's Version of the Iliad proves to every unprejudiced Judge, that unvaried Sweetness and unvaried Loftiness will tire--in a Work of any considerable Length. An Elegy and an Epic Poem demand very different Degrees of Polish.

So much for Miss Seward's boasted Confutation of my first Position!

In your Miscellany for May, 1789, p. 391, she has made some Extracts from Ovid's Epistle from Helen to Paris.¹ She did not chuse to quote from Canace to Macareus--nor from Dido to Eneas---but pitched upon the very worst of the three. Culling with uncommon Care the dullest Parts, she has made Stupidity appear more stupid, by tacking together Passages that were never intended to be joined, and which derive no small Inconvenience from the Union.

After quoting Two Lines, she omits Ten, then quotes Eighteen more,--then omits One Couplet--and then inserts another; and all these mutilated Limbs, thus preposterously jumbled together, and constituting one hideous Mass of Deformity, are very gravely contrasted with some lovely Lines

¹Letter 1b, pp. 11-13.

from Pope's highly-finished Eloisa to Abelard. She then makes some more Extracts from Helen to Paris--selecting Two Lines--then jumping over Sixteen--then chusing Six more--linking them all together--and finally comparing them with some other beautiful Lines form Eloisa.

Miss Seward remarks (p. 524), that my "other Pleas, which seek to prove the Certainty that Dryden was not the Translator of the Epistle from Helen to Paris, though he avows it Solely his through All the Editions, are set aside by those Passages of equal Inelegance, which have been already cited in the Course of this Controversy, from the Hind and Panther, Ode on the Death of Anne Killigrew, the Virgil, and other of his Works."¹

The Assertion, that Dryden avows the Epistle from Helen to Paris Solely his through All the Editions, is inaccurate. I had before asserted that the Names of the Poet and the Peer were United in that Production; and I had quoted a satyrical Couplet written on the Occasion:² Circumstances which, one should suppose, might have induced My Friend to have expressed a contrary Opinion with some Hesitation--Were I to take the Trouble of a Search, I should, probably, find twenty Editions that would confirm my Assertion; but two will suffice. In one, printed for Jacon Tonson in 1716 (the Property of Hugford Hassall, Esq. of Solihull), and in another, printed for J. Tonson 1725 (belonging to the Rev.

¹Letter 18, p. 126. Weston adds some of the emphases.

²Letter 9d, p. 77.

Mr. Blyth of the same Place), the Earl of Mulgrave's Name is joined to that of Dryden;¹ nor, to the best of my Recollection, did I ever see or hear of any Edition--the one which Miss Seward mentions excepted--in which they were disunited.

Whoever, Mr. Urban, will refer to your Magazine for January, p. 29,² will find that--far from "seeking to prove the Certainty that Dryden was not the Translator of the Epistle from Helen to Paris"³ only sought to prove that he was not the Author of those Parts of that Epistle which Miss Seward has ascribed to him. I do not consider my supposed Plea as set aside by the Passages she quoted from the Hind and Panther, &c.--because I do not consider those Passages as "of equal Inelegance!"

Miss Seward's Notion, that, because I made "no Comment," I was "willing your Readers should forget them," is not founded. The Recollection of them could not have been "utterly destructive of my unfortunate Assertion, that the Style of the great Dryden is Never injudiciously debased"⁴--because I had made no such Assertion. My Words, in your Magazine for January, p. 27, were--"whatever may be found reprehensible in his Sentiments or Imagery--his Style, I will still Contend, is pure."⁵ In the Preface to the Woodmen of Arden (p. 9), I said "Many of his Lines seem, 'tis true, to

¹The British Museum Catalogue lists editions for 1683, 1701, 1705, 1712, 1720, and 1725.

²Letter 9d, p. 75.

³Letter 10, p. 126.

⁴Letter 18, p. 126-27.

⁵Letter 9d, p. 70.

have wanted his last Touches; but those last Touches, I Am Persuaded, were not hastily Neglected--but deliberately Denied."¹

Contending for the Propriety of a Persuasion is not equivalent to the asserting of a Fact; nor, if I had made such an Assertion, would the Quotations in Question have utterly destroyed it:--because ludicrous Imagery, incongruous Metaphor, and inconsistent Fable, are the Faults most conspicuous in those Passages; Matters with which I had Nothing to do;--"my Business being merely with his Diction."²

Joseph Weston.

(To be continued on our next.)

¹Letter 9c, p. 55.

²Letter 9d, p. 70.

26.

Mr. Urban,

Nov. 4. [1790]

You will believe me, I doubt not, when I assert, that I am an utter stranger to Mr. Weston, Miss Seward, and to M. F. All I know of either is by their writings; and, if I could indulge my own gratifications at the expense of another man's repose, I could not wish Mr. Weston's correspondence with you, Mr. Urban, at an end. But it grieves me to see a man of rare talents, whose language is so correct, whose manners are so polished, and whose talents are so great, employed in endeavours to make Miss Seward publicly acknowledge what she and all the world know to be true; namely, that Pope was a paltry fellow. But Mr. W. may rest satisfied that she will never acknowledge it. She has said it; she has written it; and, like Lord Lyttelton, she will no more give up her favourite poet, than the Noble Lord would his Scots historian Bowler, [Bower].¹ Yet, after Dr. Douglas had proved him to be as contemptible as Mr. Weston has proved Pope to be, his Lordship stuck to his text, rather than give up himself. Miss Seward is a lady of a respectable character, and Lord Lyttelton was deemed a man of honour. But if such a Man as Lord Lyttelton would not fess, what hopes can Mr. Weston have

¹ Archibald Bower (1686-1766) wrote History of the Popes, representing himself to be a staunch protestant. Reverend John Douglas proved that not only was Bower a Roman Catholic but that he was "as little remarkable for his chastity as for his love of the truth" (DNE). George Lyttleton, who had gotten a government post for Bower, continued to defend him after Rev. Douglas's disclosure. Samuel Johnson noted that Bower "did not want abilities" and when he attacked "his adversaries retreated." (Lives 3:451).

of bringing a Woman to confession, unless she were a nun?¹
 If any apology can be offered for Miss Seward's want of
 conviction of Pope's infamous charge upon Burnet and Duckett,
 it must be her not understanding (and no wonder) the nature
 of the charge. And if M. F. be not silenced by Mr. Weston's
 letter in your last, p. 903,² how can he expect success with
 the lady? Yours, &c. P. T.

27.

Mr. Urban, Edinburgh, Nov. 9. [1790]

I am one among many of your numerous readers who cannot
 suppress my indignation at the cruel treatment the character
 of Pope continues to experience from one of your most re-
 spectable correspondents. I have beheld with pain the eager,
 but fruitless, efforts of that elegant writer to substantiate
 some charge that might criminate him.

But I believe a majority of your readers will agree with
 me, that what has been yet said or done are [sic] not suffi-
 cient to effect that purpose, and that the Poet has now, as
 heretofore, the multitude on his side. He is charged, but
 surely not with justice, with envy and hatred to Dryden; the
 man, of all others, whom he appears to have regarded with
 cordial esteem and affection, and to whom, in all his writ-
 ings, he pays the most unequivocal homage. But it seems he

¹Italics probably used solely for emphasis.

²Letter 25, pp. 163-73.

suffered the gentle and compliant Swift to sneer at that great Poet's translation of Virgil, in a satirical romance considered anonymous, I suppose, even by Pope himself. He is also accused of having satirized certain authors, rather too severely, in a poem called the Dunciad; but certainly not from envy, or fear of rivalry; for who envies or fears those who are infinitely beneath them? We can crush a wasp with a touch, though it may hurt us with its sting. These are the crimes, Mr. Urban, for which the character of Pope is to be damned to everlasting fame. But, admitting they were as aggravated as his accuser is pleased to alledge, would the Poet deserve for all that such epithets as "execrable," "detestable," &c. &c. epithets only applied to the most pernicious vipers of human kind--to a Judas or a Jefferies!¹ The pharisaical Addison, with a heart as cool as his writings, could be really guilty of the crime which Pope is accused of; and the pious Johnson well knew the use of the literary stiletto; yet these were certainly virtuous men, though not of immaculate virtue; that, I suppose, is alone the estimable lot of the accuser of Pope. After all, Mr. Urban, poets are observed to be more irascible and envious of each other than any other sort of people, because a fine imagination and philosophical understanding are seldom united. Every one knows that Pope had a remarkably infirm, and consequently irritable, constitution. Is it any wonder

¹The British judge, George Jeffreys (1648-1689), was notorious for his arbitrary decisions and severe punishments (DNB).

then, with the wanton and unceasing abuse he met with, that he should be provoked to retaliate? But, while the general tenor of his writings and of his life display the most striking traits of morality, benevolence, and noble independence, we should ascribe any asperities in the one, or peevishness of the other, to that unhappy frame of body, which irresistibly governs even the greatest minds.

It has of late become fashionable to lower the estimation which the writings of Pope were heretofore universally held in. This, however, will not change their qualities; for de gustibus non est disputandum¹ is as applicable to poetical as to any other taste; and the poetry of Pope still continues to please nine out of ten readers, who can find no meaning in the clinguant of modern rhimers.

If writers, whose fame is already established, are to be opposed to each other, they should be compared, like Plutarch's heroes, not with an intention of depreciating their merits, but of displaying their excellencies in the fullest point of view.

Yours, &c.

W.

28.

Eleventh Month,

10th Day. [1790]

Friend Urban,

My friend M. F, in conformity with his declaration in thy publication for the ninth month, of finishing his

¹ "There is no disputing about taste," proverbial.

controversy with thy friend Joseph Weston, on the merits of the late Alexander Pope, intendeth not to write to thee again on that subject; but he hath commissioned me to tell thee and thy friend Joseph, that he taketh in good part what thy friend hath written in thy last month's publication.¹ His motive for defending Alexander Pope, was his verily believing that thy friend Joseph had unjustly aspersed him both as a poet, and also as a man; my friend had never heard any sufficient reasons for questioning his genius as to the one, or his integrity as to the other.

My friend's last letter to thee in defence of him, as to the particular charge thy friend hath so strenuously accused Alexander of, viz. of branding an innocent man with a vile calumny, was founded, as thy friend Joseph justly conjectureth, on my friend's opinion of the veracity of Alexander Pope, and on the improbability of his making good, or making any one believe, a charge never before thought on.

My friend acknowledges the obvious connexion of the satiric lines quoted doth seem to require the untoward meaning thy friend Joseph hath annexed to them, he need not have used so many words towards proving this; but on this supposition my friend is unable to account for the conduct of Alexander Pope--he thinks it in this particular instance unaccountable--this could not answer what is said to be the intention of the poem, viz. of "rendering his enemies

¹Letter 22, pp. 149-52. All references to "M. F." are to this letter.

ridiculous to all ages;"¹ it might excite horror, but not ridicule. My friend, willing to think and hope the best of all men, his inclination swayed him to the favourable side, and, more especially as Alexander Pope, being removed from this world, was unable to plead his own cause, he did not think he was doing an ill thing in offering his mite in his defence.

My friend never thought, or intended to assert, that Alexander Pope was a perfect man; he knoweth that no man is so: he has always understood him to have been of a disposition somewhat too irritable; he hath before acknowledged this. This temper might at times betray him to exceed the bounds of justice in his retorts. But, my friend Urban, thy impartiality will give thee to estimate his good qualities and his singular abilities in abatement of this soreness of disposition; and, on balancing the accounts, perhaps we shall form a true estimate of the man on whom I must think thy friend Joseph hath borne too hard.

When thy friend hath occasion to enter again into controversy with any one, let him argue the matter coolly, devoid of ire; let him not apply to his antagonist such epithets as "ideotism, total blindness,"² and such like; by abstaining from them thy friend will the sooner attain his point. Let him also beware of shouting victory too early. My friend thinks himself under much obligation to thy friend

¹Originally in Anna Seward's Letter 11, p. 95, and also quoted by Weston in Letters 21, p. 139 and 23, p. 157.

²Letter 23, p. 157.

Joseph for his good opinion; he thinks himself honoured that thy friend thinks well of any part of him, or his conduct; and if he hath offended thy friend in the warmth of argument, he wisheth a mutual amnesty, a perpetual oblivion and peace; and he will always attend to thy friend Joseph's productions with much complacency I am thy friend, and thy friend Joseph's friend,

Obadiah Meanwell.

* * Bardus Ordovicensis and R. S. on this subject are
 *
 unavoidably deferred.

29. (continues 25)

Continuation of Mr. Weston's Defence of the Preface to the Woodmen of Arden.

Solihull, Dec. 23. [1790]

Who, Mr. Urban, that reads Miss Seward's Remark, page 120,--viz. "to assert Dryden's Style advantaged by its frequent Vapidness and Vulgarly, is but to want Taste for pure and elegant Composition"¹--would not take for granted that I had really made such an assertion?--And yet none such is to be found.--To assert that any Style could derive an Advantage from Vapidness would be indeed Want of Taste; but that a certain Degree of Vulgarly, occasionally introduced, is a Disadvantage, I am not quite so sure.

I will concede to my too fastidious Antagonist--that

¹Letter 11, p. 95.

many Low expressions may be picked out of Dryden's Works; and let her make the most of this concession: it no way contradicts my Opinion of the Purity of Dryden's Style--An apt Example will save a World of Argument; and my Meaning will be sufficiently explained by a single couplet.

In the Opening of the celebrated Absalom and Achitophel we meet with the following lines.

"When Man on Many multiplied his Kind,
Ere One to One was, Cursedly, confin'd." [1:3-4]

Cursedly is now, and, probably, was then, a Low word.--"I am cursedly mortified"--"I was cursedly taken in"--are Modes of Speech in very frequent use among the vulgar; but were Miss Seward, on that score, to expel the honest, unaffected, and forcible expression, and to supply its place by one of her own elegant--or one of her Parnassian Brethren's finical Phrases--the Line would, in my Opinion, be cursedly injured.--"Fatally"--"cruelly"--and twenty other Substitutes might be found--and serve to liquify the Line, and lull tasteless Readers to Sleep; but Memory, trust me, might be ransacked long enough, before a Word would present itself so nervously descriptive of the Poet's Meaning as that Vulgar one which he has so judiciously chosen!

But to proceed.--Miss Seward quotes eight lines from Dryden's Charming Version of Dido to Eneas as challenging the "worst Lines in the Helen to Paris;"--"Lord Mulgrave," she says, "could not jingle couplets that less deserved the Name

of Poetry;"¹ --let us examine the Justice of this Assertion.

But I shall take the Liberty of restoring to their Place four Lines, which Miss Seward has omitted, and of adding four more which complete the sense, and if Dryden's Translation shall not be found equal, at least, to his Original, I will for ever renounce all Pretensions to Knowledge or to Judgment.

First for Ovid.

Facta fugis; facienda petis, quaerenda per orbem
 Altera, quaesita est altera terra tibi.
 Ut terram invenias, quis eam tibi tradet habendam?
 Quis sua non notis arva tenenda dabit?
 Alter habendus amor tibi restat, & altera Dido:
 Quamque iterum fallas, altera danda fides.
 Quando erit, ut condas instar Carthaginiis urbem,
 Et videas populos altus ab arce tuos?
 Omnia ut eveniant, nec te tua vota morentur;
 Unde tibi, quae te sic amet, uxor erit?
 Uror, ut inducto ceratae sulfure taedae:
 Ut pia fumosis addita thura focus.
 Aeneas oculis semper vigilantis inhaeret:
 Aenean animo noxque diesque refert.²

Dryden.

Built Walls you Shun, unbuilt you Seek; that Land
 Is yet to Conquer; but you this Command.
Suppose you landed where your wish design'd,
 Think what Reception Foreigners would find.
 What People is so void of common Sense,
 To vote Succession from a Native Prince?
 Yet there new Scepters and new Loves you seek;
 New Vows to plight, and plighted Vows to break.
 When will your Tow'rs the height of Carthage? know?
 Or when your Eyes discern such Crowds below?
 If such a Town, and Subjects you could see,
 Still would you want a Wife--who lov'd like me.
 For, oh, I burn, like Fires with Incense bright;
 Not holy Tapers flame with purer Light:
Aeneas is my Thoughts perpetual Theme:
 Their daily longing, and their nightly Dream. [1:13-28.]

¹Letter 18, p. 127.

²Heroides 7:13-26.

Mulgrave*

On Carthage and its rising Walls you frown,
 And shun a scepter, which is now your own;
 All you have gain'd, you proudly do contemn,
 And fondly seek a fancy'd Diadem.
 And should you reach at last this promis'd Land,
 Who'll give its Power into a Stranger's Hand?
 Another easy Dido do you seek;
 And new occasions new-made Vows to break?
 When can you Walls like ours of Carthage build,
 And see your Streets with Crowds of Subjects fill'd?
 But tho' all this succeeded to your Mind,
 So true a Wife no Search could ever find.
 Scorch'd up with Love's fierce Fire my Life does waste,
 Like Incense on the flaming Altar cast;
 All Day Aeneas walks before my Sight;
 In all my Dreams I see him ev'ry Night:¹

To offer a single Observation on the respective Merits of the two Translations would be to offer an Insult to every Judge of Poetry;--the only Readers for whom I wish to write.

To Miss Seward's Remarks on the Conciseness of Pope's Version of first Book of Homer's Iliad I shall oppose the masterly Criticism of a Correspondent who signs himself "Impartial" (p.495);² and to her Censure of Dryden's Translation of the same Book I shall oppose the Opinion of Pope himself; who says, (in his preface to the Iliad,) "had he translated the Whole Work+ I would no more have attempted Homer after him than Virgil, his Version of whom (notwithstanding some human Errors) is the most noble and

*My Reasons for conjecturing that He was the Author of the second Version of Dido to Aeneas were given in the Magazine for January, p. 30. [Letter 9d, pp. 70-89.]

+He translated only the first Book, and a small part of the Sixth. [Hector's last parting from Andromache, 1:846.]

¹Unidentified. This translation is not listed under Mulgrave in the British Museum Catalogue.

²Letter 14, pp. 105-07.

spirited Translation I know in any Language." [7:22.]

"That Dryden (says Miss Seward, p. 120) Perpetually sinks below, O how much below Pope! I willingly agree with Mr. Morfitt; but that he ever rises proportionably higher I utterly deny,--and would undertake to equal the noblest and most beautiful Passages from Dryden's Poems, in the Couplet Measure, with Selections from those of his Rival."¹

That Miss Seward is justified in denying that what sinks Perpetually below Ever rises proportionably higher no one in his senses will controvert; nor does there seem any very great Hazard in undertaking to equal what is confessedly inferior: but could my respectable Associate and valued Friend--could He whose Taste is equal to his Learning--let such consummate nonsense as his fair Opponent has ascribed to him escape his Pen?

With your Leave, Mr. Urban, we will turn to that Letter, which (without disparaging your numerous and ingenious Correspondents) never had never can have--a superior--that *Letter--whose every Sentence is a Gem, and see what he really wrote.

"As to the +political Merits of the rival Bards, I am compelled to give the Palm to Dryden. I admit the general

*Mr. Morfitt says (p.7) [Letter 10, p. 69] "I cannot read 200 pages of Pope together, without satiety:" on which Remark one of your Correspondents ["M. F.," Letter 20, p. 135] comments as gravely as if it were not a palpable Mistake of the Pen or of the Press--My Friend certainly wrote--or meant to write--either 20 pages or 200 lines.

+ Another evident Blunder.--"poetical" is the word intended.

¹Letter 11, p. 94.

Inequality of his Poems, the occasional Coldness of his Conceptions, and the not unfrequent Depressions of his Style. I allow that he Sometimes sinks lower than Pope, but he sinks to rise proportionably higher, and, like Antaeus, gathers Strength from touching the Ground."¹

When sometimes and perpetually--Time and Eternity shall be proved to have the same Meaning, a Commentary on this Passage may be necessary.

Meanwhile, I would not advise Miss Seward to be too hasty in her Selection of Passages from Pope, to match with "the noblest and most beautiful ones"² from his Master; lest a Misfortune should befall [sic] her similar to one which happened to Spence: and it should be found, that what she produces, as specimens of the Richness of that Genius which she pronounces equal to Dryden's, should only add to the Proofs already extant of his Knack at pilfering!

(To be concluded in our next.)

30.

Mr. Urban,

Nov. 30. [1790]

Every one, at all acquainted with modern poetry and criticism, well knows that one of the principal

¹Letter 10, p. 66.

²Letter 11, p. 94.

embellishments of the comic epopee is the introduction of parodies on passages in ancient and modern classicks. If Pope, among the host of bad or party-writers who attacked his fame, had not been able to discover a pair who wrote against him in partnership, he would have lost the opportunity of introducing a parody on the young Chiefs who form the subject of the most interesting episode, if episode it ought to be called, in the Aeneid. But, luckily for our Poet, one Burnet and Duckett published a joint-work against his first undertaking to translate the Iliad, intituled, "Homerides, by Sir Iliad Doggrel;"¹ and furnished him with a Nisus and a Euryalus for his Dunciad. It is in the games in honour of Anchises that the young heroes first make their appearance.

Nisus & Euryalus primi.
Euryalus forma insignis viridique juvena;
Nisus amore pio pueri. Aen. V. 296.²

And when they appear in the character of warriors, we are told,

Nisus erat portae custos,
Et juxta comes Euryalus.--
His amor unus erat, pariterque in bella ruebant,
Tunc quoque communi portam statione tenebant.
Aen. IX. 183.³

Let us now see how Pope profited by these passages. Elkanah Settle, after regretting to Cibber how unfortunate it

¹ See Weston's discussion in Letters 17, pp. 120-23 and 23, pp. 154-61; also see the Introduction, pp. cvii-cxiii.

² "Nisus and Euryalus foremost--Euryalus famed for beauty and flower of youth, Nisus for tender love for the boy," 5.294-96.

³ "Nisus was guardian of the gate. . . . At his side was Euryalus. . . . A common love was theirs; side by side they charge in the fray; now too they together were mounting sentry at the gate," 9.176, 179, 182-83.

was that two such great men of their party as Dennis and Gildon¹ should wage war with each other, addresses himself to the shades of those great Criticks, in a parody on the beautiful lines in the Aeneid alluding to Caesar and Pompey:

Embrace, embrace, my sons! be foes no more!
 Nor glad vile Poets with true Criticks' gore*.
 [DunA 5:3.171-72.]

By way of contrast, he points out to Cibber the friendship of two others:

Behold yon pair, in strict embraces join'd+;
 How like in manners, and how like in mind!
Fam'd for good-nature Burnet, and for truth;
Ducket for pious passion to the youth+
 Equal in wit, and equally polite,
 Shall this a Pasquin, that a Grumbler write.
Like are their merits, like rewards they share;
 That shines a consul, that commissioner. [DunA 5:3.173-80.]

The Critick Dennis, a fellow sufferer, as we have seen, in the cause, with the ingenuity of a commentator accustomed to find meanings his author never thought of, insinuated in

*Ne pueri ne tanta animis assuescite [adsuescite] bella:
 Neu patriae validas in viscera vertite vires. Aen. VI.
 833. ["O my sons, make not a home within your hearts for such warfare, not upon your country's very vitals turn her vigour and valour," 6.832-33.]

+Illae autem paribus quas fulgere cernis in armis Concordes animae. Ib. 826. ["But they whom thou seest gleaming in equal arms, souls harmonious now," 6.826-27.]

+Amore pio pueri. [See above, p. 186.]

¹Settle (1648-1724) was a playwright and poet, as was Colley Cibber (1671-1757). Charles Gildon (1665-1724) was a poet, playwright and critic.

print,¹ that Pope had, in the above parody, attacked the moral characters of Burnet and Ducket. But it is plain that the persons themselves were not such Dunces as to misunderstand the Poet. If the charge had been true, the crime, rendered notorious by the celebrity of accuser, must have obliged them to leave their country; and, if false, a jury would undoubtedly have adjudged heavy damages for so atrocious a calumny. But they were too wise either to fly their country, or appeal to a jury; for, had they had recourse to the latter, I think we may safely pronounce what would have been the event in the words of Pope and Horace:

Solventur risu tabulae, tu missus abibis.²

In such a case the plaintiff will be hiss'd,
My Lords the Judges laugh, and you're dismiss'd. [HS
4:2.i.155-56.]

Such is my view of the above passage, on which a late writer in your Magazine, who stands forward as the professed accuser of Pope and defender of the heroes of the Dunciad, has founded his grand charge against him. This writer, in your present volume, p. 388, asserts, that, "in consequence of the Colonel's {Ducket's} spirited conduct on this extraordinary attack, Pope found it convenient to add the following note."³ M. F. (Ib. p. 786) asks, What was the Colonel's spirited conduct on this occasion?⁴ Mr. W. has replied to

¹Letter 17, p. 122.

²Satire ii.1.86.

³Letter 17, p. 122.

⁴Letter 22, p. 150.

the letter of M. F. but has omitted to answer the above question. This I now call upon him to do.

The introduction of the authority appealed to at p. 904, col. i. para. 2, is highly indelicate, and totally inconsistent with the declaration at p. 386, col. ii. para. 3, sentence the last.¹ The supposed authority, too, is only that of a silence apparently arising rather from delicacy than conviction.

With regard to signing names (see p. 387, col. ii. para. ult.),² I have long been of opinion, that the value of original communications to your Miscellany, respecting facts which require living testimony to support them, would be greatly enhanced, if their authors would always sign their real names and places of abode; as is done in the London Medical Journal, and the Transactions of Literary Societies. But in such kind of discussions as the present, where opinions are founded on facts already known, I feel more disposed to follow the example of M. F. Yours, &c. J. S.

¹In discussing the Burnet/Duckett issue, Weston wrote, "Consult Miss Seward's last Letter" (Letter 23, p. 156). Previously he had declared the Burnet/Duckett subject was "so peculiarly horrible and disgusting, as to render a Discussion of it--in a Letter intended for the Perusal of a Lady--impossible" (Letter 17, p. 118).

²Letter 17, p. 121. Weston was discussing the impossibility of putting one's name to an opinion that Pope meant to praise Burnet and Duckett in Dunciad A. "J.S." seems to think Weston is attacking anonymous letter writers, as he had in earlier letters to "M.F."

31.

Mr. Urban,

Dec. 20. [1790]

Let me tell you a story, and then you may make the application wherever you please. Your correspondent P.T.¹ is all wrong relative to a certain dispute, so long and so elegantly kept up in your Magazine. Women can read women better than men even of superior understanding, as fools can find fools better than wiser heads. So now to my story.² Two neighbouring country esquires kept each a fool. Esquire Hare's fool was lost, and all the town had been through all the great woods in search of him, but without success. So, when Esquire Fox heard it, he visited Esquire Hare, and offered to lend him his fool to find the lost fool; "and I'll warrant you," said the Esquire, "my fool will find yours." So Fox's fool was sent into the wood alone; and, as he went along, he continually called out, Aye, aye, I sees you, I sees you; and at length he came within hearing of the other fool, who instantly replied, Nay, nay, but you don't. Now, Mr. Urban, I say that Miss ---- does not chuse to be convinced, while she has such frequent opportunities of shewing not only how well she can defend a bad cause, but procure so many high compliments, at the same time, even from her adversary. In truth, I should rather think it is a cohesion between these two literary Geniuses to show themselves off. Certain it is, this Lady could no where find a fairer channel to make her

¹Letter 26, pp. 174-75.

²"Maria" probably invented or adapted this story to make her point.

virtues and her talents known to all the world, than by engaging in such a dispute in the Gentleman's Magazine.

Yours, &c. Maria.

32.

SONNET.

[Dec., 1790]

Weston, whom Virtue and the Muses fire,
Thy generous spirit with indignant vein,
Where Envy veils the Enthusiasts of the lyre,
Expell'd their laurel'd seats in Fancy's choir,
And blends her venom with its dulcet sounds;
Well might'st thou love the high Drydenic song,
Thou who hast made its vary'd graces thine,
And cloath'd thy measures with its strength divine.
Not like Art's stream its numbers move along,
Though in all Maia's charms the bank be deckt,
And its calm breast the splendid Heav'n reflect,
But like th' unequal flood great Nature guides,
That here soft flows, there rob'd in thunder rides,
Bold winding from its natal bud now little Art derides.
L. M.

33. (continues Letter 29)

Continuation of Mr. Weston's Defence of the Preface to the Woodmen of Arden.

Dec. 23, 1790.

In that Essay on the Odyssey which, affected and superficial as it is, gained Spence much Reputation among the Admirers of Pope, he observes:

"In these last Volumes, how finely are some Thoughts wove into this Translation from the sacred Pages? from the Iliad, and Aeneid; from Dryden, and Milton among ourselves; and from several others, both Ancient and Moderns?

"The Translator is sometimes as Artful in adding, of himself, some short Strokes to what Homer has said.

We meet with several of these little insertions, which are very just and improving. I shall mention but one. As Mr. Addison proposes a Correction of *Paradise Lost*, by cutting off the two last Lines; Mr. Pope improves this Poem, by adding a Line in the Conclusion of it: This Insertion possibly is better chose, than that Alteration so modestly proposed by Mr. Addison. The Reader, indeed, would willingly go off with some Hopes and Satisfaction, after the melancholy Scene in Milton's last Book: but it may be said that, considering the moral and chief Design of that Poem, Terror is the last Passion to be left upon the Mind of the Reader. On the contrary, the *Odyssey* ought on all Accounts to terminate happily: and Mr. Pope's Addition, in the Close of it, is therefore an Improvement, because it forwards the Moral; it gives us a fuller* View and Confirmation of the Happiness of Ulysses, and leaves it upon a firmer Foundation."¹

'Tis not easy for any one, who recollects the last Line of Absalom and Achitophel,² to restrain a Smile, at this pompous Parade--The Critic, by professing to give this Line as one of those "short Strokes" which Pope added of Himself, proclaims his Unconsciousness of his being indebted to Dryden

*"So Pallas spoke: The mandate from above
The King obey'd. The Virgin-seed of Jove
In Mentor's form confirm'd the full accord,
And willing nations knew their lawful Lord. [Od
10:24.628-31. The final line is enclosed in quotation marks.]

"Homer himself does not end in so full and complete a manner: his last line does not rest well; and Chapman seems resolved to shew the infirmness of it as much as he could possibly in his Translation, which breaks off in these lines:

"----twixt both parts the seed of Jove,
Athenian Pallas, of all future love
A league compos'd; and for her form took choice
Of Mentor's likeness, both in limb and voice." [George Chapman, The Twenty-Fourth Book of Homer's Odysseys, last 4 lines.]

¹ Joseph Spence, An Essay on Mr. Pope's Odyssey (London, 1737) 246-47.

² "And willing Nations knew their Lawfull Lord."

for every Syllable of this boasted Improvement on Homer!¹

"That Ear, (says Miss Seward,) must be oddly modeled to which Pope's harmonious and flowing Verses appear Formal."² Verses, then, flow harmoniously, and yet, from the Pause being too seldom varied, appear mechanical and Formal? And must that Ear, which relishes but in an inferior Degree what gratifies Miss Seward's more highly, be Therefore queerly constructed?--Is this sarcastic Remark quite consistent with that amiable Humility which renders my candid Opponent so lovely in the Eyes of all her Acquaintance?--Claims it not rather too near an Affinity with Elizabeth's Reply to the Ambassador of the unfortunate Mary?--"How tall (said the Queen) is your Mistress?"--"Rather taller than your Grace"--"Indeed?--Then she must be too tall;--for I am neither too high nor too low."³

"It is not allowed (continues Miss Seward) to the Couplet Rhyme to wind the Pause through Whole Passages, as Mr. Morfitt beautifully expresses it. Dryden did not attempt it. That Grace belongs to blank Verse, as he allows."⁴--He allows!--As who allows?--Dryden?--Surely not.--Morfitt?--No.--He allows no such Thing.--I must again refer to his admirable Letter. "To make the Sense invariably terminate with the Couplet, which is Pope's constant Manner, not only

¹ Weston apparently forgot that the opening paragraph of his quotation from Spence mentions "some Thoughts wove into this Translation. . .from Dryden."

² Letter 11, p. 94.

³ Reported by the Scottish Ambassador Sir James Melville. See Mandell Creighton, Queen Elizabeth (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920) 85.

⁴ Letter 11, p. 94.

imposes unnecessary Fetters on Rhyme, but loses that bewitching Undulation of Sound, which winds through the Pages of Milton, and is the same to the Ear as the 'magic Curve of Beauty to the Eye.' I allow blank Verse admits of it with greater Facility, and to a greater Extent than Rhyme; but I would not have the latter entirely discard a Grace, for the Absence of which no Regularity can atone."¹ What does Mr. Morfitt allow?--Why--that blank Verse admits of it with greater Facility, and to a greater Extent.--He does not contend for its total Exclusion from Rhyme;--but even advises the contrary.--Did not Dryden attempt it?--He certainly did; and (what is more) he succeeded--"It is not allowed to the Couplet Rhyme to wind the Pause through Whole Passages, as Mr. Morfitt Beautifully expresses it."²--Mr. Morfitt talks of losing "that bewitching Undulation of Sound which winds through the Pages of Milton."³--The Resemblance between the two Paragraphs is not very striking!

"It is not allowed!"--Why is it not allowed?--By Whom is it not allowed--Who will venture to say what is--or what is not--to be allowed to the Couplet Rhyme?--"Neither (adds Miss Seward) does the Couplet Measure admit great Variety in the Flow of the Numbers:"⁴--and so, because Pope's Verses exhibit no great Variety in the Flow of the Numbers, every succeeding Writer in the couplet Measure is condemned, like a Squirrel

¹Letter 10, pp. 68-69.

²Letter 11, p. 94.

³Letter 10, p. 68.

⁴Letter 11, p. 95.

in a Cage, to jingle his ten Bells in the same everlasting Tune!

"Mr. Morfitt calls Pope's Numbers 'Cuckoo-notes.'"¹--True.--He does so.--So does Welsted.²--So do I. (I am not ashamed of the Association)--And what then?--Miss Seward "is incapable of being cloyed with them.--Very likely.--She has an indisputable Right to dine entirely on Sweetmeats, if she pleases; but must they who deem Beef and Pudding comfortable Additions be stigmatized for Prejudice and Want of Taste?

To conclude all which I think necessary to say in Vindication of that Part of my Preface to the Woodmen of Arden which asserts the Superiority of Dryden's Versification over that of Pope and of the Moderns.

Miss Seward seems to think that a Poet, like an Asiatic Monarch, should never descend from his Dignity;--never be visible, unless surrounded with the Paraphernalia of Royalty: while I--(so essentially different is our Taste!) have felt as much sincere Respect, as much loyal Affection, for our gracious Monarch, when I have seen him, in Boots and Leather Breeches, conversing with his Attendants, with that endearing Condescension, and fascinating Affability, so conspicuous in his Character, as ever I felt when I have beheld him, seated on his Throne, in all the Pageantry of State, and looking (as old Lear expresses it) "every Inch a King!"³

¹Letter 10, p. 67.

²One Epistle to Mr. A. Pope (1730) 20.

³Shakespeare, King Lear, IV.vi.107.

Miss Seward is therefore perfectly right, in withdrawing from a Contest, in which neither of us is likely to become a Convert to the other's Opinion.

The Remainder of these Observations will be devoted to the Vindication of that Part of my Preface which respects Pope's Moral Character.

I have already mentioned a Work, which, if published, would leave his "Goodness of Heart"¹ no longer problematical;--I have explained that Work to be a Poem, with Notes and Illustrations:--I have stated the Motives which induced me to delay the Publication.--Those Motives exist no longer. My Fears are over.--The Poem, however, I shall still suppress; but the Notes, Mr. Urban, are at your Service. By accepting of them, as an Acknowledgement of the respectful Attention which you have paid to my Communications, you will confer on me a Favour.

An Apology for occupying a few Pages of your Miscellany, for some succeeding Months, would be such an Affectation of unseasonable Modesty as you would despise. Highly interesting, highly important as are many of the Subjects which fill your valuable Columns--a Subject more interesting, or more important, does not often occur than that which I am now preparing to illustrate.

Here let me suggest one friendly Caution to such of your Correspondents as feel indignant on the Occasion. Before they give further Vent to the Effusions of their Anger,

¹Letter 9c, p. 58.

they would do well to consider in what Light their Abuse of me will appear, even to themselves, when I shall have exhibited many Proofs, in Addition to that which I have already exhibited, that the Object of their blind Adoration was an Hypocrite, a Liar, and a Slanderer! When it shall be discovered that, pretending to Humility, Openness, Benevolence, Morality, and Piety, he was, in Reality, arrogant, artful, malignant, obscene, and prophane: when, with no other Materials than simple Facts and obvious Deductions, I shall have levelled with the Ground the seemingly-impregnable poetical Bastile, erected by that gloomy Despot--that Tormentor of Minds, and Murderer of Reputations; when they shall find that, by a mere Cross-examination of Pope's own Evidence, his Baseness shall be so completely established, that to talk hereafter of his Virtues would be as ridiculous as to assert the Justice of a Jefferies, or the Chastity of a Chartres¹--what Then will my precipitate Censurers feel?--Shame, if they be wise Men, for having indolently perused their Favourite's Works, without Attention and Reflection!--Remorse, if they be good Men, for having wantonly insulted a Person, of whose Character they are, probably, ignorant--and of whose Motives the awful *Ka p̄śuoſuwśhś* [Knower of Hearts] Himself alone can judge!

Their indiscreet Zeal for the Sanctity of their Idol seems to have swallowed up every Consideration of general Justice, and universal Charity.

¹Letter 27, p. 176n and Letter 19, p. 130n.

What?--Is it reasonable that a Man, blest with transcendent Talents, but cursed with a cankered Heart, should be suffered to condemn to perpetual Ridicule, or to perpetual Infamy, all who were so unfortunate as to become the Objects of his capricious Resentment?--Some who had offended him slightly, and some who had not offended him at all--many of whom he was envious, and many of whom he was jealous--every one who interfered with his Interest, and every one who stood in the Way of his Ambition?

What strange Species of Humanity is this,--which can consent to sacrifice, without Examination, the fair Fame of Fifty individuals, out of a tender solicitude for the Reputation of One? --Granting that One to have been, for more than Half A Century, unlawfully in Possession of public Esteem--must he Therefore keep Possession To All Eternity,--to the Exclusion of those who have a legal Title to it?--If the World has been so long deluded, must I permit that Delusion to continue with the Means of removing it in my Hands--lest I should happen to irritate the delicate Nerves of some who are marvelously loth to be convinced that they have been all their Lives in Error?

If common Capacity, by Dint of patient Diligence, has discovered that which exalted Abilities, for Want of patient Diligence, has failed to discover, shall I be intimidated, by the petulant Reproaches of ill-informed Bigots, from publishing the Result of my Enquiries, when the most salutary Effects may follow the Publication?

Who can tell, Mr. Urban, how many Works of Taste and of Learning the Republick of Letters may have lost, in consequence of the detestable Dunciad?--I mean not those Works only which were produced, and are forgotten; but also those which might have been produced, had not this pestilential Blast blighted the Blossoms of Knowledge, and nipt the Flowers of Fancy in the Bud?--For who could write, when certain that none would read?

Who can tell how many ingenious, how many worthy Men, whose daily Bread depended on the daily Exertions of their Pen, might be doomed, with their unoffending Wives, and innocent Offspring, to pine in hopeless Poverty, when their Employers were taught to believe them Fools or Knaves?

To prevent, if possible, the Commission of similar Enormities, is the meritorious Object I have in View. If I succeed, Mankind may be more cautious of being duped by the Artifices of future literary Tyrants; and no Wit, nor combination of Wits, under the specious Pretence of a Regard for the public Welfare, may have again the Power of securely libelling the Characters, destroying the Peace, shortening the Lives, and hurling into Oblivion the Productions of Men, whose Abilities, though, perhaps, not equal to theirs, may be far above those of the swinish Herd, who, instructed by their Example, trample on Pearls which they know not how to appreciate.

And what shadowy Inconvenience can be trumped up, by Way of counterbalancing such substantial Advantages?--What Descendants has this bad Man left, whose Sensibility may be

wounded by the Exposure of his Depravity?--None.--The Descendants of his Patrons, indeed, may possibly blush to think "their Fathers were his Friends;"¹ but then--what Pleasure will the Relations of those who fell Victims to his Villainy not feel, when they find the envious Cloud, which, for such a Length of Time, obscured the Fame of their respectable Ancestors, gradually removing--and their Talents and their Integrity breaking out with renovated Splendour!

The exquisite Gratification which arises from the last Reflection will enable me to look on illiberal Strictures of Initial Correspondents without a Moment's Pang;--Strictures--which, sanctioned with no Name, shall be honoured with no Reply.--For think not, Mr. Urban, that, in the Prosecution of so great, so generous a Plan, I shall turn aside, to answer the frivolous Objections of Inanity, or condescend to notice the vulgar Sallies of Impertinence!--If a Blockhead chuses to expose his Stupidity, by proving himself incapable of comprehending the plainest Reasoning, what Emotion can I feel but Pity?--If a Coxcomb longs to betray his Vanity by prating in Print, on a Subject of which he is totally ignorant, what Sentiment should I entertain but Contempt?

Perfectly convinced myself, I trust that I shall ultimately convince Thousands of your Readers; if I should be disappointed in that Expectation, I shall wrap myself in the Consciousness of my benevolent Intentions: and, being no Cormorant of Praise, I shall think myself amply rewarded for

¹ Unidentified.

my Labour by the Approbation of the Candid and the Discerning; and, with Respect to the Rest, I shall only say, "Si Populus Vult decipi--Decipiatur*."

Yours, &c. Joseph Weston.

34.

Mr. Urban,

Solihull, Jan. 3, 1791.

Had my communication of Dec. 23. reached you early enough to be inserted Entirely my present Trouble had been spared.--A Passage (yet unprinted) toward the Conclusion, relative to Initial Correspondents, might, on its Appearance in your next Magazine, be supposed to allude to "a Writer" in your last, who signs himself T. S. [J. S.]¹ were you not to inform your Readers, that the Whole of my Letter was in your Possession a Week before his was published.

Delicacy compels me, most unwillingly, yet once more to "notice an anonymous Correspondent;"² for I should blush to be suspected of Personal Reflections on a Writer whom I should disdain to answer.

He--who, with such hostile Intentions, wastes nearly two Columns--only to prove, at last, my Charge against Pope Well-Founded: He--who so unceremoniously "Calls" upon me to answer another Man's Question (without being able to perceive

*"If [Since] the World will--why--Let it be deceiv'd." Conscious Lovers. [Sir Richard Steele, III.434.]

¹Letter 30, pp. 185-89. Weston's references are to that letter, except as noted.

²Letter 17, p. 118.

that I had already answered it): He--who has so slender an Acquaintance with the Subject on which he writes, as to be yet to learn that Duckett Did understand "pious Passion" to convey a scandalous Aspersion, and, by Threats of "Personal Chastisement," obliged Pope to substitute "cordial Friendship" in its Room, and to add a solemn Disavowal of his malignant Meaning: He--who, by terming a Remark--"an Appeal," changes Decency into Indelicacy, and Creates an Inconsistency where he cannot Find one--may take my Word for it, that "he never shall force himself upon me for an Adversary."¹

J. W.

35.

Mr. Urban,

Oct. 27. [1790]

I have been for some time sickened with the affected and verbose invectives against Pope of Mr. Weston, whose incorrigible absurdity, and inveterate malignity against that great poet, are so conspicuous, as almost to justify the expressions I have made use of.

Disquisitions of this kind are in their nature capable of mathematical demonstration; and as Mr. W's perversion of intellect seems to incapacitate him for conviction of any sort, but such as appeals to the senses, my indignation would have evaporated in silence, had he not in your last Magazine,

¹Weston first uses the term "Adversary" for "M. F.", Letter 4, p. 25. This quotation seems to be an extension of his own.

p. 780,¹ advanced a position which may be refuted by chronology⁽¹⁾, and of the falsehood of which, therefore, even he must be convinced.

Pope, says Mr. W, incited⁽²⁾ Swift to ridicule Dryden in "The Tale of a Tub,"⁽³⁾ and "Battle of the Books." One must be very little acquainted with Swift's character, to suppose

(1) Dr. Bentley (Dissert. on Phalaris, p. 122, [Richard Bentley, Dissertations upon the Epistles of Phalaris, ed. Wilhelm Wagner (London, 1883) 121-22.]) justly considers the argument, drawn from discrepancy of time, to be the most conclusive which can be adduced on subjects of this nature: and in conformity hereunto Cicero says, "Non tu quidem totâ re [I cannot say so much for Mr. Weston], sed quod maximum est, Temporibus errâsti." Philipp. 2da. ["here you are mistaken, not indeed in the facts as a whole, but--what is most important--in the dates," Philippics 2, p.87.] *Παρ Τιτίβ*
αβυαίθυθο; ἐξέτι τῶν χρόνον ἀναγχαί, says Titian, [Τίτα]
[Τῶ] τοῖς, γίνεσε τὰ τῆς αἰ[Τ]τορίας ἀλγύθενεν λυαθαί.
["With him who is untrained in the next [skill of] time," says Titian, "with these it is impossible to arrive at the truth of medicine [the art of healing]." [I can find no record of a Greek writer named Titian. The name may be a misprint. The source remains unidentified.]

Judicis officium est, ut res, ita Tempora rerum
Quaerere. ["It is the duty of one who exercises judgment to inquire both into the facts and their chronology." Unidentified.]

(2) This is a rather stronger expression than that used by Mr. Weston. Edit. [Weston wrote, "To prove that Pope really did suffer his Friends to depreciate the Person from whom he learned all that is valuable. . . Miss Seward cannot forget Swift," Letter 21, p. 147.]

(3) I have long had doubts of Swift's title to this work; and my suspicions are much confirmed by observing that Dr. Johnson (as Mr. Boswell, in his Journal, tells us,) entertained the same idea. [Johnson stated, "I doubt whether the "Tale of a Tub" be his [Swift's]; for he never owned it, and it is much above his usual manner." Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1934). 1:452. Boswell recorded Johnson's repetition of this opinion at 2:318-319 and at greater length at 5:44.] This was, however, an esoterick doctrine of the Doctor; for, in his "Lives of the Poets," he does not hint at such a thing. [In the Life of Swift, Johnson temporized judicially: "That Swift was its [Tale of a Tub's] author, though it be universally believed, was never owned by himself, nor very well proved by any

¹Letter 21, pp. 137-48.

for a moment that he would permit Pope to direct his pen upon any subject. One must be very ignorant not to know, that Swift's aversion to Dryden arose from a personal disgust⁽⁴⁾; and that Pope, as Dr. Johnson himself relates, always vindicated Dryden from the censures of Addison, and praised him through his whole life with unvaried liberality⁽⁵⁾.

But these observations are intended for readers of another turn of mind than Mr. W.; who may however, it is possible, be ashamed⁽⁶⁾ when he reads that Swift was born in 1667,

evidence; but no other claimant can be produced, and he did not deny it when Archbishop Sharpe and the Duchess of by shewing it to the Queen, debarred him from a bishoprick." Lives 3:10.] It is certain that Swift never owned the work; which, to those who consider how much Swift prized his reputation as a man of wit, and how little he regarded the opinion which the world entertained of his religious character, will appear pretty extraordinary: and I think there is more learning in this than Swift has displayed in any of his avowed publications, together with a very different strain of humour. I have been inclined to give the work to Mr. Anthony Henley (father of Lord Chancellor Northington); a man of wit and learning, as appears by the IXth and Xth letters of "Swift's Correspondence," [The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D., ed. F. Elrington Ball (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1910) 1:112-15] and to whom Dr. Garth dedicated "the Dispensary." He was, however, the patron of Dennis, and assisted him in his plays. [Henley (d. 1711) was a wit and friend of Swift's. There is no evidence that he wrote Tale of a Tub. His son Robert was Lord Chancellor to George III, who made him Earl of Northington in 1764.]

(4) When Swift shewed to Dryden some specimens of his early poetry, which are, to be sure, very bad, "Cousin Swift," said Dryden, as he returned him his papers, "you will never make a poet." [footnote, check Ehrenpreis] Hence Swift's sarcasms.

(5) Lives, vol. IV. p 168. [Lives, 3:220.]

(6) Crebillon, it is true, says, that some men are as incapable of being ashamed of thinking wrong, as they are incapable of thinking right. Agaremens de Coeur, par.2da. [Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crebillon, Les Egaremens du Coeur et de L'Esprit, trans. by Barbara Bray as The Wayward Head and Heart (London: Oxford UP, 1963) possibly p. 154. Because of the difference in translations, I have been unable to find "B. L. A.'s" exact words.

Pope not till 1688. Before 1688 Swift's chamberfellow is said to have seen a copy of "The Tale of a Tub" in his own handwriting⁽⁷⁾. Dr. Johnson thinks it was written between 1693 and 1697; and (not to trouble ourselves with considering when, or by whom, it was written), we all know that it was published in 1704. The consequences in favour of Pope's innocence arising from this chronological deduction are obvious. Pope was born in the year when Swift's chum saw a copy of the work which Mr. W. supposes him to have dictated; he was from five to nine years of age when Dr. Johnson⁽⁸⁾ thinks it was written; and when it was printed he was sixteen. At what period the acquaintance of these great men commenced, I have not learned; but it certainly was not till after this time, because Pope had not then published his Pastorals, with which his literary life commenced⁽⁹⁾; and we know that he was recommended to the notice of Swift by his growing celebrity only, which could not have been till some time after 1704.

After this, I shall leave Pope's vindication from Mr. W's other equally unmerited charges to abler hands.

(7) Dean Swift, p. 21. [Irvin Ehrenpreis cites evidence that the Tale "was mainly composed about 1696," Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age (London: Methuen, 1967) 2:333. Ehrenpreis also mentions the belief of Swift's eighteenth-century biographer, John Lyon, that several people saw a draft of the Tale in Swift's handwriting while he was at Trinity College, Dublin (1682-1686) 1:186n.]

(8) Lives of the English Poets, vol. III. p. 388. [Johnson places The Tale of a Tub's composition "in the four years that passed between his {Swift's} return {to Sir William Temple's employ} and Temple's death"; i.e., 1696-99 not 1693-97 as "B.L.A." says. Lives, 3:7 and note 5. Johnson gives its publication date as 1704 (3:10).]

(9) Ib. vol. IV. p. 12. [Lives 3:94.]

Accipe.....insinias [insidias], & crimine ab uno
Disce omnes.¹

Yours, &c.

B. L. A.

36.

Mr. Urban,

Jan. 10. [1791]

[I have omitted first and final paragraphs of this letter because they are irrelevant to the controversy.]

Surely, Mr. Urban, you may be allowed to end the contest between the Poet and Poetess by declaring the battle drawn. Your readers have borne it patiently a long time. Let it end with the last year; let the manes of Dryden and Pope rest in peace; and let the favourers of each enjoy, uncontroverted, those opinions respecting them and their works, which they would continue to entertain were the antagonists to go on disputing as many years as they have done months. It mortifies me, Mr. Urban, that the lady and gentleman I allude to should misapply those talents, and mis-spend that time, in wrangling, which might be so well employed in adding value to your poetical department. I beseech you, Mr. Urban, to proclaim silence* on the subject of the merits of Dryden and Pope.

Remigius.

*We proclaim it to all but the principals, who have a right to be fully heard. Edit.

¹Read "Accipe nunc Danaum." "Hear now the treachery of the Greeks and from one learn the wickedness of all," Virgil, Aeneid 2.65.

37.

Mr. Urban,

Flintshire, Sept. 22. [1790]

I have read with much attention, in your valuable Magazine, the controversy respecting the poetical merits of Pope and Dryden, begun by Miss Seward and Mr. Weston, and since carried on by several anonymous correspondents. In addition to the latter, I hope I shall not be deemed impertinent in risking my humble opinion upon the subject; which I will request the favour of you to insert whenever a proper opportunity shall be found. The dispute has been conducted, on both sides, in a manner infinitely superior to any weak attempt of mine to throw new light upon it; but I could not resist the opportunity of publishing my sentiments respecting two Poets deservedly held very high in the estimation of their country. However loth I may be to differ from a lady of Miss Seward's acknowledged taste, and although I admire Pope very much, I must candidly confess that, upon the whole, I subscribe to Mr. Weston's opinion; and think Dryden most certainly merited a more exalted seat in the Temple of Fame than his rival. One of your correspondents has observed, that he could never read two hundred pages of Pope without satiety.¹ For my part, two hundred lines at one time, however admirable in point of rhyme and cadence, are enough to disgust my ears with their unvaried melody and uniformity of construction: no flats, nor sharps; no happy mixture of discord; no spirit or fermentation of thought or numbers,

¹Letter 10, p. 69.

produced by a due combination of sweets and acids; few Alexandrines, or triplets (which I think very essential, at least in a poem of any length), to break the constant monotony of the cuckow--no, the blackbird-notes, so warmly vindicated by Miss Seward.¹ Dryden, on the other hand, it must be confessed, even by Mr. Weston, is frequently too careless, and very unequal in his versification: "Nil fuit unquam sic impar sibi."² But in regard to genius, originality, conception, strength, and sublimity, there surely can be no comparison! Pope, if I may be allowed the expression, may be said to offend by his perfection; Dryden, to please by his imperfection. I say nothing of Pope's moral character, because, in my opinion, that has nothing to do with the subject in dispute; which I conceive at its commencement to have been, not which of the two was the better Man, but the better Poet. Besides, it is an invidious task; and I hasten with pleasure to congratulate your fair and amiable correspondent upon the very charming poem, p. 160,³ her dazzling beauties* have avowedly produced from the pen of her antagonist; and I sincerely wish the contest may end here, unless Miss S. should find her Muse willing to dispute the laurel, and to answer Mr. W's Drydenic Imitation, by a poem in her favourite

*"Vultus nimium lubricus aspici." [Horace, Odes 1.19.8, "her face seductive to behold."]

¹Letter 11, p. 94.

²"Never was a creature so inconsistent," Horace, Satires I.iii.18.

³Letter 15, pp. 109-15.

Bard's best manner: "Envy must own her equal to the task."¹

After all that has been said upon the occasion, either by Mr. W. or his coadjutors, he seems to consider himself in the situation of Prior, when engaged in a similar dispute with a lady:

Spare, gen'rous victor! spare the slave,
 Who did unequal war pursue;
 That more than triumph he may have,
 In being overcome by you.²

I must however observe, that, whatever other motives he might have for retiring from the combat, Mr. W. seems to have yielded to the resistless power of her eyes,³ more than to the weight of her arguments.--I now take my leave of both parties, with a consciousness of having delivered my free sentiments without prejudice, disguise, or partiality; and my utmost ambition is to be thought not altogether unworthy of the notice of the triumphant Seward, and the reluctantly-retreating Weston.

Yours, &c. R. W.

Or, Bardus Ordovicensis. [Poet of North Wales]⁴

¹ Perhaps a partial quotation of "Envy must own I like among the Great," Pope HS1 4:133.19.

² Matthew Prior, "To a Lady: She Refusing to Continue a Dispute with me, and Leaving Me in the Argument," 1-4.

³ See Weston's poem To Miss Seward, p. 110, 11.18-29.

⁴ From Ordovices, the "name of an ancient British tribe in North Wales" (OED).

38.

Mr. Urban,

Nov. 27. [1790]

Mr. Pope's character may safely be trusted in the hands of so able an advocate as Miss Seward; and her defence will be no difficult business, if what those who best knew him have affirmed, be true; "His meanest talent was his wit."¹

As to Welsted, his patience under an infamous calumny was wonderful in a man so irritable as he is represented, and so admirably qualified to revenge the affront.

Full ten yerrs [years] slander'd, did he once reply?
Three thousand suns went down on Welsted's lie. [EpArb
4:374-75.]

Yours, &c.

R. B.

¹Jonathan Swift, "A Libel on the Reverend Dr. Delaney and His Excellency John Lord Carteret," The Complete Poems of Johnathan Swift, ed. Pat Rogers (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1983) 80.

39.

Nevhailes, near

Mr. Urban,

Edinburgh, Jan.1. [1791]

Had the controversy, as to Dryden and Pope, been carried on by inferior writers, the publick might have been entertained with it as long as the antagonists had any literary ammunition left of paper and ink. But it must give pain to considerate readers, when they see persons of genius bestowing that time in fruitless altercation, which they might employ more worthily, and more usefully. Will the combatants agree to an armistice for twelve months, on the principle of uti possidetis?¹ I dare say that, after the lapse of that term, neither party will be disposed to renew hostilities.

The cause of Pope's censure is said to have originated from a pamphlet, entitled "Homerides."² I will not assert positively, but I think that the pamphlet was not aimed against Mr. Pope, or his translation of Homer, which, by the way, is no more to Homer, than I to Hercules. It is, if I mistake not, a catalogue of the last House of Commons in the reign of Queen Anne, composed in burlesque rhymes. As the author was a zealous Whig, it may well be supposed that he did not spare the Tory friends of Mr. Pope.³

¹Read "Uti nunc possidetis," "Thus, as you now possess." Sextus Pompeius Festus, De Verborum Significatu Quae Super-sunt Cum Paul Epitome, ed. Wallace M. Lindsay (Hildesheim, Ger.: Georg Olms, 1965) 260.

²See Letter 17, pp. 118-23.

³David Dalrymple is mistaken. The original title, The Hump Conference, clearly points to Pope. See Mack, Life 277.

[I have omitted the final paragraph of this letter because it is not relevant to the controversy.]

Dav. Dalrymple. [Lord Hailes]

40.

Mr. Urban,

Solihull, Feb.22. [1791]

I Mentioned, in your Supplement, my Intention of letting Inanity and Impertinence pass unnoticed; but Falsehood and Insolence demand a Reply; Truth and Civility deserve one.--My Remarks on Pope's Treatment of Lady M. W. Montague must, therefore, with your Leave, be postponed till I have paid a Debt of Gratitude to your Correspondent B.L.A. whose Letter, Vol. LX. Page 1177,¹ exhibits such shining Specimens of Candour, Elegance and Learning, as cannot fail to impress the Reader with equal Admiration of the ingenious and amiable Author's Head and Heart.

"I have been (says he) for some Time sickened with the affected and verbose Invectives against Pope of Mr. Weston, whose incorrigible Absurdity and inveterate malignity against that great Poet, are so conspicuous, as Almost to justify the Expressions I have made Use of."

Suffer me, Mr. Urban, to contemplate, for a Moment, the uncommon Excellence of this interesting Exordium; every part of which may boast of peculiar and appropriative Beauty!--The first Line gently intimates the extreme Delicacy of the Author's critical Stomach; the second and third incontestibly

¹Letter 35, pp. 202-206. All quotations from "B.L.A." are from this letter. Weston has added the emphasis and capitals.

prove the Accuracy of his Discernment; the fourth and fifth strikingly exemplify the Politeness of his Manners: but how--How shall I do Justice to the Winding Up of this exquisite Paragraph?

An Orator, in the Heat of Declamation, may let fall an Expression, for which he may afterwards deem it necessary to apologize.--A Writer, too, in the Warmth of his Zeal for the Reputation of a favourite Character, may be betrayed into Language, which, on cooler Consideration, he may think proper to retract.--But--to make Use of Expressions, which the Author, even in the Moment of Composition, is sensible cannot be Entirely justified--and to permit those Expressions to pass through the Press--for the sake, as it should seem, of publicly acknowledging their Unjustifiableness--appears to be such a Stretch of Modesty and Self-denial as I really believe is without a Parallel!

"Disquisitions of this Kind (continues B.L.A.) are in their Nature capable of mathematical Demonstration; and as Mr. W's Perversion of Intellect seems to incapacitate him for Conviction of any sort, but such as appeals to the Senses, my Indignation would have evaporated in Silence, had he not, in your last Magazine, p.780, advanced a Position which may be refuted by Chronology, and of the Falsehood of which, therefore, even He must be convinced."

The Remarker's Love of Mercy, and Regard for Justice, are here displayed in the most vivid Colours!--My Verbosity, Affectation, and Incurable Absurdity, which his profound Penetration call him to discover, and which his inflexible Integrity compelled him to censure, are benevolently attributed to "Perversion of Intellect;"--and, being non compos mentis, I should have escaped, it seems, unchastized, had not

my "inveterate Malignity" against the great Poet prompted me to advance "a Position of the Falsehood of which even I must be convinced!"

Considerate and tender-hearted B.L.A!--Rash and unfortunate J.W!

But what Is this Position,--so demonstrative of my inveterate Malignity? "Pope (says Mr. W.) Incited Swift to ridicule Dryden in 'The Tale of a Tub,' and 'Battle of the Books.'"

In Verity, Mr. Urban, if I Had advanced any such Position, I must have been--not only the maddest of all Madmen--but, also, the most foolish of all Fools; for well do I remember that the express Purpose of the entire Page to which B.L.A. adverts was to vindicate myself from a similar Charge brought against me by Miss Seward--viz. that I had accused Pope of "having meanly Influenced his Friends to exalt his Compositions above their just Level, for the Purpose of lowering Dryden's and tearing the Laurels from his Brow."¹

Do me the Favour, Mr. Urban, to remark the pointed Manner in which I disclaimed the imputed Intention.

"I meant only to affirm, that Pope's Friends practiced insidious Arts, with a View to undermine the Reputation of the deceased Poet, and to asperse the Characters of his living Supporters; and that He suffered them so to do;--I did Not say instigated--I did Not say assisted; merely Suffered:--and I thought that I had expressed my Meaning so clearly as not to admit of Misconstruction; but I was mistaken."

After so strenuously declaring that I never meant to

*See Vol. LX. p. 780. [Letter 21, p. 146.]

¹Letter 1a, p.1.

affirm that Pope Instigated--to have affirmed, in the same Page, that he Incited any of his Friends to ridicule Dryden, would have been droll enough!--Language so very explicit one would imagine left no Room for Misapprehension; but humanum est errare--A Reference to the Paragraph (p.780.) which B.L.A. so candidly and so correctly quotes will prove that--to whatever Quarter "Malignity" and "Falsehood" may be ascribed--they cannot with any great Propriety be attributed to Me.

"To prove that Pope really did suffer his Friends to depreciate the Person from whom he learned all that is valuable in the Structure of his Verse were a very easy task indeed.--To mention only One (but that one an Host!).--Miss Seward cannot forget Swift--the Partner of Pope's Labours and the Friend of his Bosom;--nor can she forget his Comparison of Dyden's Virgil to a Mouse under a Canopy of State: no--nor his grave assertion in his Dedication of his Tale of a Tub to Prince Posterity:

"[']I do affirm, upon the Word of a sincere Man, that there is now actually in Being a certain Poet, called John Dryden, whose Translation of Virgil was lately printed in large Folio, well-bound, and, if diligent Search were made, for aught I know, is yet to be seen.'"¹

Here, Mr. Urban, you find my Complaint against Pope to be--not that he incited--but--that he Suffered Swift to ridicule that Work which Pope himself pronounced to be "the most noble and spirited Translation he knew in any Language."²

B.L.A. asserts (p. 1178) that I suppose Pope to have Dictated the Tale of a Tub; but so far was I from entertaining any such absurd Supposition that, in your Magazine for

¹Letter 21, ^{6p' 148}~~pp. 147-48~~.

²Pope, "Preface" to Homer's Iliad 5:22.

November (p.974.) I continued my Observations on Pope's Conduct, in the following Manner.

"But how (Miss Seward may ask) can Pope be to blame?--Could He prevent Swift's Attack on Dryden any more than She could prevent mine on Pope?--Probably Not; but He might have acted on that Occasion as She has on one nearly similar--viz. have called his Friend to a public Account for his 'Prejudice' and 'Want of Taste.'--My generous Assailant must surely allow that either she has done too much or he--too little!"¹

These Quotations, I fancy, will be more than sufficient to exculpate me from the Imputations of inveterate Malignity, and wilful Falsehood; and, if I Do feel Shame, on this Occasion (of which B.L.A. obligingly allows the Bare Possibility), I certainly do not feel it on my Own Account!

By the Way, Mr. Urban, might it not tend to prevent, or, at least, to shorten Disputes, if Critics, before they presumed to write, would condescend to read? In the present Case, however, the Neglect of that Precaution has been eventually fortunate for your Readers; for--had B.L.A. but Read--he, probably, would not have Written: and then--what a delicious Olio of classical, critical, and chronological Knowledge would the Literary World have lost!

Joseph Weston.

41.

Mr. Urban,

Yarmouth, March 5. [1791]

Your Correspondent Mr. Weston, after he has been disarmed, and thrown to earth, struggling in vain to wound the genius and character of the illustrious Pope, like Garrick's

¹Letter 25, p. 163.

Richard¹ stabbing the air at the feet of Richmond, affords melancholy proof of the strength of Prejudice, debasing a mind which Imagination has adorned, and on which Benevolence is allowed to have often shed her kindest influence.

Mr. W. is furiously angry at a letter in your last Supplement, which does most certainly ruin his cause by disarming the force of all the evidence which he can produce to destroy the general esteem in which the memory of that exquisite Poet, that warm, Friend, that tender and pious Son, is deservedly held: notwithstanding his too keen irritability when the envious Troop threw their feeble darts against a shield of proof.

B.L.A.'s letter is fatal to Mr. Weston, because whenever a person has given, or at least refuses to retract an accusation, of which the accused is proved innocent, every previous and succeeding evidence from such an inveterate enemy, naturally and inevitably lose all force upon Minds of free and candid enquiry.

Behold a passage from Mr. Weston's comment in your last Mag. upon B.L.A.'s undoing Letter.

"Here Mr. Urban you find my complaint against Pope to be, not that he Incited, but that he Suffered Swift to ridicule the Work, which Pope himself pronounced to be the most noble and spirited Translation that he knew in any language."²

B.L.A.'s letter observes that Dr. Johnson avows his

¹Shakespeare, Richard III V.v. The fight occurs at the beginning of the scene.

²Letter 40, pp. 212-16. All quotations from Weston are from this letter.

belief that the Tale of a Tub, which contains that ridiculous spite of Swift's to the great Dryden, was written in an interval when Pope was between five and nine years old.¹ He proves that it was published when Pope was only sixteen--yet Mr. Weston takes no shame to himself for having imputed it as a proof of Pope's badness of heart that he did not influence Swift to suppress it--What!--Could a Child of nine years old, or a young Poet of sixteen, possess the power of influencing the proudest Man existing, concerning what he should, or should not write!!!

The word Suffer, applied to Swift, not only respecting such a Child as Pope then was, but in reference to any Human Being, is even more ridiculous than Incite. An Infant might possibly tell Swift something which might incite him to anger, or might soften his resentment; but it is impossible to suppose a Man of his matchless pride, and obstinacy dependant upon the Sufferance of any man living respecting his Writings.

Mr. Weston's logic that either Miss Seward had done too much in defending Pope against himself, or Pope too little in not defending Dryden against Swift is demonstrably fallacious from the evident difference of their respective situations. Swift was twenty-one years older than Pope--his reputation established--his wit awing the whole literary world--his moroseness and the proof his injustice to Dryden afforded of unsubsidying resentments: these considerations may be

¹ P. 203n.

supposed to have operated wisely upon Pope to let the malevolent and impotent sneer, from the pen of Swift, remain through life unnoticed: his own noble-minded praise sufficiently evincing how much he disdained the malice of his friend: expressions of contempt for Dryden equally virulent and equally powerless, may be found in Lord Shaftesbury's Characteristicks¹--not merely against particular passages and whole bombast plays, which lie open to the censure of all just Taste, but against the Author as a man of genius, and against the whole of his compositions where good and bad, sublime and fustian, are so strangely mingled: and where the excellencies are so noble, as to atone for all the defects, prodigious as they are.

I apprehend Miss S. had no such reason to be silent upon attacks more virulent on Pope, from the Pen of a Man she re-spected, but not feared. Perhaps Mr. Weston was not her senior as to age: she probably did not believe him such an unforgiving Despot, as Pope knew Swift to be. Mr. W. threw down the gauntlet against the genius and worth of a writer she adored. That she took it up does not convict herself of presumption, or Pope of baseness, because he suffered Swift's to lie unnoticed on the ground, being in so very different line of connexion with the Offender.

Mr. Weston's advice to B.L.A. to read before he writes must put every body in mind of a very vulgar proverb about a Pot and Kettle. If Mr. W. had read before he wrote, he had

¹Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, ed. John M. Robertson (NY: Bobbs-Merrill) 2:328-29.333.

not thus exposed himself by vilifying Pope at nine years old for Suffering Swift to write that ridiculous sarcasm or at sixteen for Suffering him to print it.

B.L.A.'s letter is accurate in point of information: it makes no display of classical knowledge: it does not contain one word of criticism: but it speaks with the most convincing good sense concerning the inference inevitable alike upon that accusation against Pope, whether the word incited or suffered be applied: and this from the plain chronological facts it states. Mr. Weston, in sneer, calls that letter "an olio of classical, critical, and chronological knowledge," as if it had made false pretences to all three. To the two first it makes no pretences: and there must be proof that it quotes false dates before his satire can affect the last: your Readers must have remarked how fortunately for the fame of the accused and for the defensive arguments, Mr. Weston's indiscreet violence lays him open, on every hand, to the contempt of the Severe, and the pity of the Candid. Truth and Justice, calmly secure in their own native strength, never lose their dignity in vehement invective.

Some of your Correspondents seem as deficient in memory, as Mr. W. in chronological knowledge, when they wish to see the controversy ended between Miss S. and Mr. W. the former having declared, in your Mag. for June last,¹ her resolve to drop it.

Satisfied with having demonstrated that Dryden often

¹Letter 18, p. 129.

wrote wretchedly, and that Pope was clear of every cause of suspicion that he wished to lessen the fame of his admired Predecessor, nothing her Antagonist has since said upon the subject, was likely to induce her to alter her resolution. The poison, like Swift's exercised upon Dryden, carries its own Antidote.

Mr. Weston may spare his comments upon Pope's abuse of Lady M. W. Montague.¹ Its coarseness and personality were unjustifiable, be the provocation what it might. Every body allows it;² and all Mr. W. can say upon that subject is but like writing to prove the darkness of a moonless Midnight: but Midnight has its Morning; and Pope had recompensing virtues, chasing and brightening the gloom of that error.

Yours, &c. Norfolciensis. [John Aikin?]

42.

Mr. Urban,

March 16. [1791]

Not for the sake of the mighty dead,³ but in compassion to the humble living readers of your valuable Repository, have pity on the manes of Dryden and Pope. Mr. Weston may

¹"From furious Sappho scarce a milder Fate,/P--x'd by her Love, or libell'd by her Hate." Sappho is Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. First Satire of the Second Book of Horace. Imitated 4:83-84.

²See William Ayre, Memoir of the Life and Writings of Alexander Pope, Esq. (London, 1745). Discussing Pope's imitation of First Satyr of Horace, Ayre wrote that it was said to be aimed at a "Lady of Quality," (Lady Mary Wortley Montagu), but he does not cite the lines because they are "too harsh" (2:197).

³Od 9:11.776.

spare his temper, and his labours; Pope will be read long after he will be forgotten.--He says triumphantly, Miss Seward may dine upon sweets, but he likes substantial food. I should be glad to ask his cook, whether he orders her to make the sauce bad, that the dinner may be completely good?--The controversy may be very grateful to the disputants, but it is very tiresome to many of your readers.

Yours, &c.

D. R.

43.

Mr. Urban,

Solihull, April 15. [1791]

The Cause which flies for Aid to Artifice and Misrepresentation can be in no very flourishing Condition.--Of the one I have already convicted your Correspondent B.L.A. (p.139);¹ and I shall presently convict his Vindicator Norfolciensis of an Artifice even more reprehensible than direct Misrepresentation: because--to present Truth to the Eye, and to convey it Opposite to the Understanding--is the more dangerous, in Proportion as it is the less liable to Detection.

Suffer me, Sir, just to hint the relative Situation of my Adversaries and myself.--I stand forth, the undisguised Champion of an unpopular Cause; the bold Accuser of the Object of general Esteem and Admiration for half a Century.--The doughty Defenders of this popular Character B.L.A. and

¹Letter 40, pp. 212-16.

Norfolciensis, Wear A Mask!--An Inference will of Course, be drawn, not much in their Favour.--But indeed they who attempt to Deceive the Publick have no great Inducement to show their Faces!--A slight Retrospect will suffice for my complete Justification; and I shall then leave them to console each other as they may.

Miss Seward, mistaking the Meaning of a Passage in my Preface to the Woodmen of Arden, publicly accused me of asserting that Pope "meanly Influenced his Friends to exalt his compositions above their just Level, for the Purpose of lowering Dryden's, and tearing the Laurels from his Brow."¹ --To this inconsiderate and unjust Accusation your Readers will find an explicit, full, and decisive Answer Vol. LX p. 780; where it appears that the Expression I had used was not "influenced," but "suffered."² B.L.A. overlooking my positive Denial and indeed entire Refutation of the Charge, re-urged the Accusation--only substituting "incited" for "influenced;"³ and, with a Degree of confidence to which every one is not equal, pretended to prove my Guilt from the very Page which evinced my Innocence. Somewhat surprized, but Not "furiously angry,"⁴ I contented myself with reiterating my Denial, and with making the necessary References; bestowing only a passing Smile on the "Chronological Deduction"⁵ by which it was attempted to be supported: Which--had it been

¹Letter 1a, p. 1.

²Letter 21, p. 146.

³Letter 35, p. 203.

⁴Letter 41, p. 217.

⁵Letter 35, p. 205.

even as Clear and Consistent as it is Confused and Contradictory--would still have been "nil ad Dionysium;"¹ as, in Reality, I Never Brought the Accusation which it affects to Refute.

However, since an Advocate for B.L.A. starts up, (by whom the twice-exploded Charge is brought forward for the third Time,) and, in Language the most peremptory and exulting, asserts that I have been "disarmed, and thrown to Earth"--that "my Cause is ruined"-- and that "the Force of all the Evidence which I can produce is disarmed" by this "fatal" and "undoing" Letter, I will, before I conclude, appropriate a few Lines to the Purpose of proving that this boasted "Statement of Chronological Facts,"² "strong Lance" of Argument is nothing better than a "Pigmy's Straw."³

But, as the Old Ground was perceived to be no longer tenable, and the fictitious Phrases "influenced" and "incited" were obliged to be abandoned, it was determined that an Experiment should be tried with the real Word "suffered;" to find whether that could not be made to answer the Design better.--And such an Experiment Was tried as never yet has been, and probably never will be, exceeded in the Annals of Controversy!

You may believe me, Mr. Urban, when I assure you that I feel no common Degree of Pain, while compelled to swell my

¹Nothing to Dionysius. Unidentified.

²Letter 41, p. 220, read "the plain chronological facts it states."

³Not direct quotations, but probably Weston's phrases based on "Norfolciencis's" jousting metaphor.

Letter to a tedious Length by Quotations; but Necessity must plead my Excuse.

In my Answer to B.L.A's Charge (p.140)¹ are the following Passages:

"Here, Mr. Urban, you find my Complaint against Pope to be--not that he Incited--but--that he Suffered Swift to ridicule that Work which Pope himself pronounced to be [']the most noble and spirited Translation he knew in any Language.[']

"B.L.A. asserts (p.1178) that I suppose Pope to have Dictated the Tale of a Tub; but so far was I from entertaining any such absurd Supposition that, in your Magazine for November (p.974) I continued my Observations on Pope's conduct, in the following Manner:

"[']But how (Miss Seward may ask) can Pope to be to blame?--Could He prevent Swift's Attack on Dryden any more than She could prevent mine on Pope?--Probably Not; but He might have acted on that Occasion as She has on one nearly similar--viz. have called his Friend to a public Account for his 'Prejudice' and 'Want of Taste.'--My generous Assailant must surely allow that either she has done too much or he--too little![']"

In the first of these Paragraphs, you perceive, Sir, that I complain of Pope for Suffering Swift to ridicule Dryden's Virgil; and, in the last, that I explain my full Meaning, and guard against Misconstruction, by allowing the Possibility--nay the Probability-- of his being unable to Prevent Swift's Attack; and by pointing out the Manner in which, in my Opinion, he ought to have Resented the Affront offered to his great Master.

But to guard against Misconstruction is not to guard against Misrepresentation.--That every one knows to be impossible.--The Advocate for B.L.A. has quoted the first Paragraph, which speaks in general Terms of "suffering," but has

¹Letter 40, pp. 215-16.

omitted the explanatory Clause; Designedly omitted: for it could not possibly escape this amiable Advocate's Attention--as the latter Part of the very Paragraph which contains it is replied to, at considerable Length (p.225).¹

But, indeed, had my fair, open, unequivocal Acknowledgment that Pope was probably Not able to prevent his Friend's Insult to Dryden been quoted also--with what Shadow of Decency could the following taunting Observations have been introduced in the Letter from--Yarmouth?

*"B.L.A.'s. Letter observes that Dr. Johnson avows his Belief that the Tale of a Tub, which contains that ridiculous Spite of Swift's to the great Dryden, was written in an Interval when Pope was between five and nine years old. He proves that it was published when Pope was only sixteen--yet, Mr. Weston takes no Shame to himself for having imputed it as a Proof of Pope's Badness of Heart, that he did not Influence Swift to suppress it--What!--Could a Child of nine Years old, or a young Poet of sixteen, possess the Power of Influencing the proudest Man existing, concerning what he should, or should not Write!!'

"The Word Suffer, applied to Swift, not only respecting such a Child as Pope then was, but in Reference to any Human Being, is even more ridiculous than Incite. An Infant might possibly tell Swift something which might incite him to Anger, or might soften his Resentment; but it is impossible to suppose a Man of his matchless Pride and Obstinacy, dependant upon the Sufferance of any Man living respecting his Writings."

+ "Mr. Weston's Advice to B.L.A. to read before he writes must put every body in Mind of a very vulgar Proverb about a Pot and Kettle. If Mr. W. had read before he wrote, he had not thus exposed himself by vilifying Pope at nine Years old for Suffering Swift to Write that ridiculous Sarcasm, or at sixteen for Suffering him to Print it."

*P. 224. [Letter 41, pp. 217-18. Weston adds the emphasis in this and the following quotation.]

+ P. 225. [Letter 41, p. 219.]

¹Letter 41, p. 219.

To what "very vulgar Proverb" this well-bred Vindicator alludes, I, who am not much in the Habit of conversing with the Vulgar, shall not take the Trouble of enquiring; but where, Mr. Urban, Where have I "imputed it as a Proof of Pope's Badness of Heart that he did not Influence Swift to Suppress" the Tale of a Tub? Where have I "vilified Pope at nine Years old for suffering Swift to Write that ridiculous Sarcasm, or at sixteen for suffering him to Print it?"

However rash, however impudent it might have been for "the young Poet of sixteen" to have entered his public Protest against the Abuse of his immortal Master, I must continue to think that his neglecting to pay that Tribute of Justice and of Gratitude, when, by the Establishment of his own Reputation, he was placed above the Dread of Swift's Resentment, if it was a Proof of his Wisdom, was also a Proof of his Meanness.

Such, Sir, are the Expedients to which the Supporters of Pope's mouldering Reputation are driven--to prop a Little Longer the tottering Fabrick!

But some may wonder why B.L.A. and his zealous Assistant should take such disgraceful Pains to convict me of bringing a Charge against their Favourite, which I never brought--of trivial Importance compared with that which I actually did bring, and which neither of them have made the slightest Attempt to disprove!--A Motive is suggested, p.224:¹

¹Letter 41, p. 217.

"B.L.A's. Letter is fatal to Mr. Weston, Because whenever a Person has given, or at least refuses to retract an Accusation, of which the Accused is proved innocent, every Previous and Succeeding Evidence from such an invertebrate Enemy, naturally and inevitably lose All Force upon Minds of free and candid Enquiry."

So, if the Crime of refusing to retract One unjust Accusation could have been fixed upon me, by any Means, every Previous, every Succeeding Evidence, respecting other Accusations--however reasonable, however incontestable--was to stand for Nothing!

Most idle and delusory Expectation!

"Most lame and impotent Conclusion!"¹

Had I treated Pope as his Avengers have treated Me, I readily grant that I could not have hoped for much future Confidence in my Word; but, as the Evidence which I have brought against him was his Own and of Course fixed and permanent, (for Scripta Manent) I do not see how my Want of Veracity (had it been proved) could have affected my Argument.--Some Danger might, indeed, have been apprehended from the Probability of False Quotation; but the insulted Public, justly alarmed, would have regarded my Extracts with as wary an Eye, as they will, henceforth, any Quotations which B.L.A. or Norfolciensis may be pleased to make!

But the grand Object of my artful opponents is Procrastination.--Procrastination is a sure Card.--I have given a List of Charges which I have promised to substantiate; they feel most keenly, by what I have done, what I can do: and they have Nothing left for it, but to weary me out, or to

¹ Shakespeare, Othello II.1.161.

make your Readers sick of the very Names of Pope and Dryden.--As long as you, Sir, will admit their unmannered and unfounded Animadversions, they will not fail to ply you with them.--You insert;--I answer:--I confute.--What then?--Shame cannot reach whom Enquiry cannot.--The Signature, perhaps, is changed, and the Charge repeated--I again answer:--I again confute.--What follows?--Perseverance may possibly gain Something; certainly can lose Nothing: and the Charge rears yet again its Hydra-head.

Meanwhile the Trial of Pope is suspended; my Chain of Evidence is broken; my Train of Reasoning interrupted. Then comes in some petty Auxiliary, with his palty Jest, and his pert exclamation--that "the Controversy is become Tiresome!"¹ --Throwing, systematically, perpetual Rubs in my Way, my generous Adversaries affect to wonder at the Slowness of my Progress!

But, if this wretched Trifling with the Patience of the Public answers Their End, it does not answer Mine--I am not ambitious of the Title of a "literary Gladiator;"² and, though, in an open field and in open Day, I should not hesitate to meet Any One--with whom it would not be mean or infamous to contend--on the Subject of Pope's moral Character, yet I have no Kind of Inclination to return every cowardly Shot that may be aimed at me from behind Hedges or Walls: nor, though I still deem myself Bound to prosecute To

¹Letter 42, p. 222.

²Again, probably Weston's phrase using "Norfolciensis's" metaphor.

Conviction the Libeller "who scattered his Ink without Fear or Decency,"¹ will I Longer suffer the impertinent Cross examination of those whose matchless Effrontery appears to be their Only Qualification for the Task they assume; nor longer permit my Cause to be injured, by the pitiful Machinations of Anonymous Foes!

With your Leave, therefore, Mr. Urban, my Letter relative to Pope and Lady Mary shall be yet once more postponed; and that Letter, next Month, shall close the Business--For The Present;--resume it I Shall: but in a Way more likely to forward my upright Design.²

After I have, (Without Interruption,) in a Pamphlet³ of which I shall think it my Duty to apprise your Readers, fully stated Pope's Evidence Against Himself, (and to state will be to convict,) the whole hostile Phalanx may discharge their hoarded Shafts--and welcome*!

--My Point will have been established--my Cause--gained;--and the Cavils and the Clamours of a Myriad of ignorant, stupid, or malicious Critics will avail no more than Pebbles hurled against the Monument!

But forget--I have not yet quite settled Accounts with them.--Commend me, therefore, to the Candour which softens

*Till Mr Weston's promised pamphlet shall be before the publick, we think it fair to decline inserting any thing further on the subject, except the Letter of Mr. W. which is to appear in our next. Edit.

¹ Unidentified.

² Weston wrote no further letters to the GM.

³ Weston did not publish this pamphlet.

Pope's Villainy with respect to Lady Wortley into an "Error;" and which affirms that he had recompensing Virtues which chased and brightened the Gloom of that Error!"--Suppose Pope (for a Moment) to be prosecuted for the Slander; and suppose an Advocate to be pleading for a Remission of Punishment, in some such Language as the following:

"I will not trouble the counsel for the prosecution to call any Witnesses; but frankly confess that my client's conduct is not to be justified.--I hope, nevertheless, the Court will reflect that, though he be too keenly "irritable," he is an "exquisite poet;" and that poets are proverbially so: and, when it is considered that he is, likewise, a "warm Friend"--and a "tender and pious son," I flatter myself that these "recompensing virtues" will be allowed amply to atone for the "error" which he has "committed."

Might not the advocate for the Lady reply thus?

"I applaud the Prudence of my learned brother, in desiring to stop the production of that evidence which must demonstrate what he mentions by the gentle appellation of "error" to be a Crime of enormous magnitude!--But I cannot suppose that the circumstances produced with a view to extenuate this crime will have any great weight with the Court.--From the Defendant's poetical merit the scandal of which we complain obtains a more extensive circulation, and makes a more durable impression; and, though ardent friendship and filial piety certainly Be virtues, I see not the propriety of styling them, in this case, recompensing ones: since they, in no way, tend to Repair the damage sustained by my right honourable, and most amiable Client's Reputation."

To examine yet further your Yarmouth Correspondent's Remarks.

"B.L.A.'s letter is accurate in point of information."¹--

¹Letter 41, pp. 216-21. The following references are to that letter unless otherwise noted.

Of this Accuracy my letter p.139¹ pointed out one shining instance, and I shall presently produce another.--It makes no display of classical knowledge: it does not contain one word of ["]criticism:" --consult "Johnson's Dictionary" (if necessary) for the meaning of the words classical and critical,² then consult the text and notes of B.L.A's Epistle !--"But it speaks with the most convincing good-sense concerning the inference inevitably alike upon that accusation against Pope, whether the word incited or suffered be applied: and this from the plain chronological facts it states."--To the "convincing good sense" I have already replied; and to the "plain chronological facts" I am going to reply:--but first for a little more of quotation.

["]Mr. Weston, in sneer, calls that letter 'an Olio of classical, critical and chronological knowledge,' as if it had made false pretences to all three. To the two first it makes no pretences: (Again!) and there must be proof that it quotes false dates before his satire can affect the last:"--Indeed?--May not, then, a "Chronological Deduction,"--even supposing it does not "quote false dates," become ridiculous, from the pomposity of its introduction, and the grossness of its misapplication.

¹Letter 40, pp. 212-16. Weston chastised B. L. A. for misreading his letter (21) in which he explained that he had not said Pope incited or instigated his friends to undermine Dryden's reputation, but merely "suffered" them to do so.

²Johnson defined classical as "relating to antique authors; relating to literature." He defined critical as "exact; nicely judicious; accurate; diligent."

However, if proofs of "false dates" Must be produced, they Shall.

*"But these observations are intended for readers of another turn of mind than Mr. W. who may However, it is Possible, be ashamed when he reads that Swift was born in 1667, Pope Not Till 1688. Before 1688 Swift's Chamber-fellow is said to have seen a copy of "The Tale of a Tub" in his own hand-writing. Dr. Johnson thinks it was written between 1693 and 1697: and (not to trouble ourselves with considering when, or by whom, it was written), we all know that it was published in 1704. The consequences in favour of Pope's innocence arising from this Chronological Deduction are obvious. Pope was born In the year when Swift's Chum saw a copy of the work, which Mr. W. supposes him to have dictated; he was from five to nine years of age when Dr. Johnson thinks it was written: and when it was printed he was sixteen."

This "undoing" piece of chronology--so "ruinous" to my cause--so "fatal" to my fame--is certainly (to use the words of one of the characters in Foote's Bankrupt) "finely confused" but surely not "very alarming!"¹ --At the Commencement, we are informed that Pope was not born Till 1688; and that Swift's Chamber-fellow is said to have seen a copy of "The Tale of a Tub," in his own hand-writing, Before 1688. At the Conclusion, we learn, with astonishment, that Pope was born In the year when Swift's Chum saw the copy--consequently that he was born Before 1688.--Reconcile these passages who Can!--Well.--We will not stickle for a year or two.--Swift's Chum saw the copy, if not Before, at least In 1688; and Dr. Johnson thinks it was written between 1693 and 1697.--Here we learn, with still greater astonishment, that, if the Doctor

*Vol. LX. p. 1178. [Letter 35, pp. 202-06. Most of the emphasis is Weston's.]

¹Samuel Foote (London, 1776) III.ii.119-20, p. 69. The speaker is Margin.

be right, Swift's Chamber-fellow saw the Copy--several years Before It Was Written!--To crown the whole of this incomprehensible statement, we are told, in a note, (p. 1177)¹ that B.L.A. has long had doubts of Swift's Title to this work--that his suspensions are much confirmed by observing that Dr. Johnson (according to Mr. Boswell) entertained the same idea--and that B.L.A. is inclined to give the work to Mr. Anthony Henley!

Thus, Mr. Urban, we are presented--firstly, with a Report--but the Lord knows from what authority; secondly, with a Surmise the authority of Dr. Johnson,--and, thirdly, with a Suspicion the authority of B.L.A!--and, by the united force of the report--surmise--and suspicion--I am laid, it seems, sprawling on the earth!--Now let us examine the component parts of the complicated machine by which this utter "ruin" has been accomplished.

From the Report it appears probable that Swift wrote the Tale of a Tub Prior to the year 1688; from the surmise it appears probable that it was not written till some years Afterwards; and from the Suspicion it appears probable that Swift Never Wrote It At All.

I know of nothing to set in absolute competiton with this glorious climax of absurdity!--King Phyz's droll division in the Rehearsal approaches near it.

¹Letter 35, p. 203n.

"The question is--did they hear us whisper?--Which I divide Thus;--into When they heard us whisper?--What they heard us whisper?--and Whether They Heard Us Whisper Or No."¹

Joseph Weston.

¹George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, II.iv.8-9, 15-16. Weston conflates two speeches by the Gentleman-Usher.

Appendix A

By neo-classical point of view, I mean the attitude, prevalent during the first half of the eighteenth century, that the classics of Greece and Rome were the standards of literary excellence. Neo-classical poets expected their audiences to be familiar enough with the classics to respond to their imitations of classical genres and recognize their allusions to the great classical authors such as Homer, Virgil, Horace, and Ovid. They concentrated on man in his relationship to society rather than as an isolated individual, and they viewed poetry as a public utterance and social force that operated within a long tradition of such poetry and should be judged accordingly.

Because they believed that the most important aspect of human nature itself was its uniformity, not its uniqueness, neo-classical poets emphasized those qualities that all men share. Poetry expressed and appealed to this general human nature and should both delight and instruct. It was an art both useful and beautiful, one which required long study and practice. Achieving excellence in it, as in human life itself, required control, discipline and balance. In the hands of many a would-be poet, this led to a concern for correctness above all, and produced a herd of poetasters who could versify endlessly. For this description of neoclassicism, I am indebted to Albert C. Baugh, ed., A Literary History of England (NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), Bk. 3, parts 1 and 2; and M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 3rd ed. (NY: Holt, 1971).

Appendix B

1. Regarding Anna Seward's three lists of poets, I assume that Milton, Dryden, Pope, Prior, Gay, Swift, Addison, Congreve, Steele, Gray, Thomson, Cowper, Goldsmith, Johnson, Sheridan, Walpole, Crabbe, Garrick, Burns, and Chatterton need no further identification. Of the remainder, all but four can be found in the DNB, and most can also be found in the NCBEL. Those names with asterisks can be found only in the DNB. For the four names not found in either source, I have supplied dates and brief identifications.

First List: Thomas Otway, Abraham Cowley, Edmund Waller, Sir William Davenant, Samuel Butler, John Denham, Nathaniel Lee, Wentworth Dillon (Earl of Roscommon).

Second List: Edward Young, Thomas Tickell, Nicholas Rowe, Thomas Parnell, Dr. John Arbuthnot, either Ambrose Philips or John Philips (M----s assumes it is not Ambrose because he reproves Miss Seward for omitting "A. Philips" from her list (Letter 5, p.29)), Isaac Watts, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

Third List: William Hayley, William Mason, William Collins, Mark Akenside, Joseph Warton and Thomas Warton the younger, Robert Jephson, James Beattie, Charles Churchill, William Shenstone, John Langhorne, Sir William Jones, Henry James Pye, David Mallet, Richard Owen Cambridge, Bishop Robert Lowth or Louth. John Sargent (not Sarjent), died in 1831. (GM 1831, ii:285 and Bioq. Dram. 1812, 3:43) He wrote The Mine, a dramatic poem, which William Hayley commented on

in his Memoirs as rivalling Milton's Comus. Anna Seward mentions Sargent's other two poems, both odes, in her Letters 2:259. Thomas Whalley, Thomas James Mathias, Edward Jerningham, William Whitehead, Charles James Fox*, Robert Lloyd*, Samuel Wesley the younger, John Dyer, John Hoole. Rev. Samuel Hoole (c. 1758-1839), John Hoole's brother, published a volume of poems which included The Curate (1788), a volume of Sermons (1790), and Anecdotes (1804) of his brother John. He also translated The Selected Works of A. van Leeuwenhoek, containing his Microscopical Discoveries (1798). Isaac Hawkins Browne, William Somerville (or Somerville), probably minor playwright John Home rather than Scottish judge and scholar Henry Home (Lord Kames), William Crowe, George Steevens (not Stevens), Arthur Murphy. De la Crusca (or Della Crusca) is the pseudonym of Robert Merry, who adopted it from the famous Florentine Academy. Richard Cumberland, Bertie Greathead*, Theophilus Swift*, either Edward Barry* or George Barry*, George Butt.* Peter Pindar was the pseudonym of John Wolcot. John Cunningham and Thomas Mounsey Cunningham*, Anna Barbauld, Hannah More, Anna Williams, Hester Thrale Piozzi, Elizabeth Carter, Hannah Cowley, Charlotte (not Catherine) Smith, Henry Francis Cary.* Thomas Lister (1772-1828) lived in Lichfield and, along with Cary, contributed poetry to the GM. At the time of this controversy, Lister and Cary were schoolboy protégés of Anna Seward. John Newton, Mrs. Ann Yearsley, and William Reid*.

2. George Lyttelton, Christopher Anstey, William Julius Mickle, and Joseph Jekyll are listed in the DNB and all but Jekyll are listed in the NCBEL.

3. Richard Duke, George Stepney, Thomas Yalden, and John Pomfret are listed in the DNB and NCBEL.

4. Miss Seward puts Akenside, Collins, Thomson, Mallet, Shenstone, and Somervile on her third list of poets in the period succeeding Pope's. She defends this division in her Letter 8, pp. 41-43. She adds George Lyttleton to the third list in her Letter 1b, p. 7. She mentions Allan Ramsay in her third list when she says Burns is his successor. She mentions Philips in her third list, but "M----s" assumes she means John Philips. She makes no mention of James Hammond, Leonard Welsted, Richard Glover, William Broome, John Pomfret, neither Jabez Hughes nor John Hughes, Sir Samuel Garth, George Villiers (Duke of Buckingham), nor John Dennis. They are all listed in the DNB and the NCBEL.

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