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THE BUSINESS OF THE POET:
POETIC SELF-AWARENESS FROM SIDNEY TO JOHNSON

By

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to discover the extent to which English poets before the Romantic Movement inquired into the cognitive processes involved in their poetry writing and to examine their remarks on these processes. I have considered primarily the prose critical works of poets from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries, although poems and letters figure marginally in my discussion.

Focusing in Chapter 1 on Sir Philip Sidney's Apology for Poetry, often regarded as the earliest piece of English literary criticism, and reading it against contemporary defenses of poetry, I argue that the reflective character of the Apology, rather than the theories it expresses, sets it apart as a beginning in English criticism and that this work paves the way for subsequent poetic self-examination. The seventeenth century, which I consider in Chapters 2 and 3, sees gradual development of poetic introspection, particularly in the thought of Jonson and Dryden.

It is in the eighteenth century, however, that reflection on one's cognitive activities in writing poetry becomes normative; hardly a poet fails to describe either the

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composing process or the components of good writing in general. Chapter 4 examines a number of the critical documents of this period, especially those of Pope, Young, and Johnson, comparing each poet's remarks with those of his contemporaries and his predecessors. Despite this widespread tendency in the eighteenth century toward poetic self-analysis, conditions grounding the separation of writing poetry and reflecting on it emerge as well. Chapter 5 discusses the nascent academization and commercialization of poetry and concludes that the union of writing poetry and theorizing about it begins to dissolve just as poetic self-awareness reaches its peak.

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Chapter 1

Staking out the Territory:

Sir Philip Sidney on the Poet's Work

Sir Philip Sidney's Apology for Poetry is clearly a pivotal document in the history of English literary criticism. Whether because Sidney's arguments are more compelling or because Sidney himself is, his document on poetry has succeeded in speaking for the late Renaissance in a way that Puttenham's or Webbe's or Harington's has not. Consequently, Sidney's Apology has come to be regarded by many literary historians as the first significant piece of sustained literary theory in English and has received the scholarly attention appropriate to this position. Its many critics have generally been concerned either to demonstrate the organizational and thematic coherence of the work, or to discover the Renaissance, medieval, and classical sources of Sidney's ideas.¹ Recently, some attention has been paid its tone as well, critics chiefly contending that Sidney speaks ironically in the Apology.² All this attention to the Apology has implicitly accorded its author an eminence as a literary theorist that modern students of the work often assume without debate; critics who in biographical terms recognize Sidney's primary commitment to political life tend, in critical terms, to forget that he is not an R. P. Blackmur. Despite the enormous amount of criticism focusing

on this work, no one, to my knowledge, has attempted to answer--in the context of the Apology--the fundamental question of how seriously Sidney took writing poetry and how he understood the creative process.

Certainly critics discuss Sidney's preference for political over poetic activity, but they either dismiss it as a Renaissance commonplace (as they do so much else in Sidney) or imply that it has no bearing on his opinions regarding poetry.³ Likewise, critics writing general interpretations of the Apology discuss Sidney's refusal to follow Plato in a belief in outright inspiration, and there are discussions of Sidney's idea of the fore-conceit and his understanding of imitation. But these references to his ideas about the poetic process either are mere paraphrases or else come in support of some other inquiry, especially Sidney's understanding of the social and moral good that poetry does its readers. The fact that we regard Sidney's Apology with high seriousness seems to encourage us to assume without much investigation that Sidney did too; in fact, I think perhaps he did not. Critical treatments of Sidney's poetics suggest that critics expect seminal ideas from Sidney, given his reputation, and do not quite know what to do with the commonplace ideas he shares with most of the rest of the Renaissance. I shall argue that Sidney is in fact a generative thinker for poets contemplating their own invention process, but in an oblique manner traceable

neither to the summarizable content of the Apology nor to other poets' specific enunciations of that process.

What Sidney actually says about the poetic process falls into two thoroughly conflicting categories--critics may have done well to steer clear of this particular problem. On the one hand, Sidney speaks disparagingly of his career as a poet quite often: in the opening of the Apology he describes himself as "in these my not old years and idlest times having slipped into the title of a poet."⁴ Similarly, in the letter Sidney wrote his sister the Countess of Pembroke to accompany the Old Arcadia, he belittled his accomplishment:

Here now have you . . . this idle work of mine, which, I fear, like the spider's web, will be thought fitter to be swept away than worn to any other purpose. For my part, in very truth, . . . I could well find in my heart to cast out in some desert of forgetfulness this child which I am loth to father. . . .if you keep it to yourself or to such friends who will weigh errors in the balance of goodwill I hope, for the father's sake, it will be pardoned. . . . For indeed, for severer eyes it is not, being but a trifle, and that triflingly handled. Your dear self can best witness the manner, being done in loose sheets of paper, most of it in your presence, the rest by sheets sent unto you as fast as they were done.⁵

Even on his deathbed Sidney was supposedly anxious that his reputation as a poet not be preserved. According to Thomas Moffet, writing a biography of Sidney for the poet's nephew William Herbert, the dying Philip Sidney implored his brother to suppress his love poetry.⁶

On the other hand, the special pleading for the poet's work in the Apology is remarkable. Sidney essentially compares the poet's activity to that of God in creating the world (101). He denies that the poet is directly inspired by God, but claims something even grander in suggesting that only the poet of all thinkers is not bound by nature, that the poet "disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect into another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in Nature" (100). Many critics leap over this passage to the famous "definition" of poetry and statement about the poet's activity that follows: "Poesy is therefore an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth--to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture--with this end, to teach and delight" (101). This, Sidney says, is a "more ordinary opening" offered "that the truth may be more palpable" because the earlier remarks "will by few be understood and by fewer granted." Critics taking the imitation passage for the central thesis of the Apology often fail to read it in light of the previous explanation of the way in which the poet imitates--that is, the poet does not imitate nature but rather creates a new nature and thus imitates God.

Critics have been disinclined to discuss this conflict between Sidney's lofty view of the poet's work and his

casual dismissal of his own poetic endeavors. Some regard Sidney's modesty as a conventional but disingenuous stance befitting a Renaissance courtier and substitute their own Romantic-influenced view of the poet's high calling without entertaining the notion that Sidney may have genuinely felt ambivalent about his poetic inclinations. Others acknowledge the doubts Sidney announces but seem able to divorce their awareness of those doubts from their analysis of his "thought." Dorothy Connell escapes both modern tendencies when she points out that Sidney, for whom writing poetry was part of the courtly game, "made poetry to pass time, without any pretension to conquering it. He drew back quite deliberately from accepting the poetic gift as a mantle conferring on him special powers."⁷ James Osborn, who speaks frankly of wishing to see Sidney chiefly as a poet but being forced by historical evidence not to do so, also points out that Sidney often used intellectual exercise to combat depression.⁸ Connell and Osborn are unusual in their ability to see past modern assumptions about the "set-apart" character of the poet.

As for Sidney's more laudatory remarks on poetic creation, the critics who do not just ignore his ideas about the poet's creation of "another nature" have been more inclined to speculate about their sources than to consider their possible motivation by Sidney's circumstances or feelings (perhaps because little is known of his circumstances and less

of his feelings). Lewis Soens argues that Sidney is essentially taking a Platonic stance but in doing so modifies the position of the French Pléiade to mollify Calvinists for whom only the Bible can be inspired by God.⁹ Likewise, Irene Samuels and many others regard Sidney as a Platonic thinker paradoxically offering a corrective to Platonism.¹⁰ E. R. Curtius says that Macrobius was the first to compare the poet's work to the creation of the world¹¹; surprisingly, no Sidney critic has yet suggested that it is Macrobius that Sidney follows on this point.

Definitively reconciling Sidney's high-flown opinions of the poetic act as expressed in the Apology with his poetic self-disparagement there and elsewhere (or definitively demonstrating that they never were reconcilable in the first place) is probably not possible at this temporal distance, especially given the poverty of documentation from Sidney's period of retirement. No amount of source study, no ingenious thematic interpretation of the Apology will yield the longed-for resolution of this conflict. Quite simply, Sidney was torn. Given the ultimate irreconcilability of his two points of view, I should like to contend that the Apology for Poetry is better read as the poet's probing and justifying of himself to himself than as a Renaissance manifesto, and that historical and textual evidence (as well as the principle of Occam's razor) supports such a reading. In fact, it is precisely Sidney's Janus-like ability to turn

from civil servant to poet and back again, to think about poetry while holding in mind his doubts about it, that gives the Apology for Poetry its power and seminal character. The ideas Sidney expresses are indeed much like those of Ascham, Puttenham, and the rest; it is the reflective, exploratory character of the Apology that sets it apart from other, dogmatic, pieces of Renaissance poetics and clears the ground for the musings on their art of poets to come.

1

That the young Sidney preferred an active political life to the retirement of the poet admits of no doubt. Not only do his extant letters--which almost without exception fail even to mention poetry¹²--focus on political and military concerns; as James Osborn has shown, Sidney did not pursue literary studies or the acquaintance of poets during his years studying and traveling on the Continent. Dr. Moffet offers oblique confirmation of Sidney's general disinclination to devote himself to poetry: "since he craved to be wise rather than strong, he would almost have failed in both had he not given himself over, though unwillingly, to recreation, and mingled, by way of spice, certain sportive arts--poetic, comic, musical--with his more serious studies. He amused himself with them after the manner of youth, but within limits; he was somewhat wanton, indeed, but observed a measure and felt shame" (73-75). So far as is known,

Sidney wrote no poetry as a very young man, during the period of his highest, most idealistic, political aspirations. Only when Elizabeth's refusal to embark wholeheartedly on Sidney's projects, her failure to employ him meaningfully at court, and her displeasure at his letter against her marriage to Alençon forced Sidney to leave London did he begin his poetic career. Even then, as Osborn and Roger Howell both point out, Sidney's first impulse was to return to the Continent to act as a military leader in the Netherlands. Only after Languet changed his own mind about such a course of action did Sidney resign himself to retiring to Wilton with his sister to write the Arcadia.¹³ As Howell goes on to say, "it would probably be wrong to think that initially he did so for much more than its diversionary value; he still thought in terms of service rather than ease, and the cautions of his friends to forbear the seductive aspects of withdrawal were, in reality, scarcely needed" (154).

Moffet, who makes quite a point of the idea that poetry is an unvalued sport for Sidney, oddly includes a rebuttal of the notion that Sidney therefore despised poetry as some members of the court did. Sidney, he says, "kept far away from those noblemen. . . who, averse to the Muses and in some degree robbed of their minds . . ., despise literature; who without sensibility, without the smack of any learning, gulp down sensual pleasures with their greedy mouths, who

actually feel disgust at knowledge . . . and toss it aside" (83). George Puttenham had expressed this concern about anti-intellectual noblemen as well: Princes are so taken up with statecraft that they "haue not one houre to bestow upon any other ciuill or delectable Art of naturall or moral doctrine: nor scarce any leisure to thincke one good thought in perfect and godly contemplation, whereby their troubled mindes might be moderated and brought to tranquillitie."¹⁴ Sidney does seem to occupy a middle position between the self-acknowledged poets of his day, such as Spenser and Shakespeare, and the despisers of poetry, who apparently were many. The fact that Moffet, who has been accused of negating Sidney's actual poetic interests in order to shape young Herbert for better things,¹⁵ goes to the trouble to demonstrate that Sidney did not despise poetry and the life of the mind suggests to me that Moffet's remarks cannot be so easily dismissed, that there was at least a side of Sidney represented accurately by his picture.

In Sidney's correspondence with Languet, we see an ambivalence similar to that expressed by Moffet. While both men generally fail even to mention literary studies, both also occasionally express a weakness for poetry as well. Osborn cites a letter from Languet in which the older man mentions sending some verses composed under the inspiration of a portrait of Sidney (138-139); this same Languet ordinarily urges political studies and activities on the

young Sidney in every letter, cautioning the young man against too much leisure when it is his duty to serve the state. So frequently does Languet send the latter message that Sidney felt obligated to apologize for his own leisure in 1578: "the use of the pen, as you may perceive, has plainly fallen from me; and my mind itself, if it was ever active in any thing, is now beginning, by reason of my indolent ease, imperceptibly to lose its strength, and to relax without any reluctance. For to what purpose should our thoughts be directed to various kinds of knowledge, unless room be afforded for putting it into practice, so that public advantage may be the result, which in a corrupt age we cannot hope for?"¹⁶ A. Leigh DeNeef has attempted to synthesize Sidney's political aspirations and his poetic disposition, suggesting that Sidney's method of enacting the dreams of Languet's Protestant League was to write the Apology for Poetry: "there is every reason to believe that Sidney hoped to lead England into the broader European reform movement. One of the ways he might have planned to do this was by seeking to reform English literature, and as the chief 'manifesto' of that reform he wrote the Apology sometime between 1581 and 1583."¹⁷ Appealing as DeNeef's synthesis is, the publication history of the Apology, the absence of other tracts by Sidney, and Sidney's own testimony to Languet simply do not support the view that Sidney envisioned his own poetic career as his political

work, although his discussion of poetry in the Apology might allow one to establish a poetic career on those grounds.

As for the direct remarks of Sidney disparaging his poetry, nothing definite can be said. Certainly it is true that such remarks constitute a "Renaissance commonplace"; Sir John Harington, for example, writes a cover letter to his Orlando Furioso much like Sidney's to the Arcadia. Writing to his mother-in-law, Lady Jane Rogers, late in the year 1600, Harington says "Madam, I have sent you my long promised Orlando, and that it maie properly belong to you and you heire femall, I have added to it as manie of the toyes I have formerly written to you and your daughter, as I could collect out of my scattered papers." On the same day he writes the Countess of Bedford in a similar vein, referring to his contribution as "some shallow meditations of myne owne."¹⁶ Ronald Levaio also cites Greville on this point; that biographer of Sidney himself dismissed Sidney's self-effacement as a meaningless courtly gesture.¹⁷ Clearly there is evidence for dismissing Sidney's remarks in this way.

The case of Harington is perplexing, however. Like Sidney, Harington seems to be at least somewhat genuine in his depreciation of poetry in general. In 1602 he wrote to his son's schoolmaster "I desire not that hee [the son] should bee much addicted to them [verses] least yt hinder him (as yt hath done mee) of better studies" (96), and early in 1603

remarked, after a visit to read verses to Queen Elizabeth in her last illness, that the Queen warned him that such "fooleries" would please him less in old age (97). Some months later yet, Harington writes to Lord Thomas Howard in both veins, saying first that he is "now settinge for the country, where I will read Petrarch, Ariosto, Horace, and such wise ones. I will make verses on the maidens, and give my wine to the masters," then changing his tone to reflect on whether his poetry will live on after his death and on the poor living to be made writing prose or poetry. How seriously Harington took his poetic work would seem to be as uncertain as the case of Sir Philip Sidney.

To deny that belittling one's poetry is a Renaissance commonplace would clearly be ridiculous, given the testimony of Greville and the consensus of centuries of scholarship. However, the use of a commonplace does not insure the absence of sincerity; one might surmise that a "commonplace" becomes common by being widely said and meant, that it only gradually comes to be understood as polite but insincere. Even then, some may still genuinely feel the sentiments they express in a commonplace form. It does not seem to me that the commonplace nature of Sidney's disparaging remarks about his work outweighs the other evidence that his commitment to poetry was partial at best.

It is ironic that the state of Sidney criticism in 1988 requires such lengthy assertion that Sidney was ambivalent

about poetry, that his first loyalty was to the active political life, and that he felt torn between his desire to write and his sense that writing poetry was a waste of time. Precisely the opposite arguments were apparently necessary some fifty years ago. The motivating critical crisis of Kenneth Myrick's seminal book for modern Sidney studies was the commonplace assumption by critics that Sidney regarded his literary work as a mere filler of the time between political activities. Myrick argues that the only evidence we have for that view is the words of the poet himself, and he claims that Sidney feigned disinterest in poetry partly to ward off criticism and partly because he was aware of his own work's shortcomings.²⁰ The whole purpose of his book is to demonstrate that Sidney is a serious poet and critic, a purpose in which he succeeded so thoroughly that until the 1970s the oratorical structure of the Apology which he discovered went completely unchallenged, and even now is often assumed by Sidney scholars. But as the years of this century have distanced us from the old assumptions about Sidney's first loyalties, I believe that we have come to take Sidney too seriously as a critic if not as a poet, that we have attributed to him a kind of definitive philosophical position and seriousness of intent to convert others to his views that are beyond the desires or abilities of a man who was not absolutely convinced of the value of poetry himself.

By its title, An Apology for Poetry suggests itself as the repository for what Sidney really believed about poetry. Beyond the title, however, the work is more problematic. While the title and the surface structure of the Apology imply a clear position addressed to a well-defined audience, closer examination reveals less coherence and definition than one would hope to find in such a document.

The first problem with taking the Apology as a unified presentation of Sidney's ideas to an audience is its actual lack of unified ideas. Despite the long-accepted analysis of Kenneth O. Myrick, the concept of oratorical structure does not adequately deal with the content of the Apology, as a number of more recent critics have been at pains to detail. In a 1974 Ph.D. dissertation, for example, Leslie Donley Foster attacks Myrick's rhetorical analysis and offers in its place his own "logical analysis" of the Apology for Poetry. "Centrally at issue," says Foster, "is what is at the heart of the Defence--is it a speech in praise of poetry (or as I put it, in praise of the nature of man), or is it a legal defense against specific charges that have been brought against poetry?"²¹ He finds each of Sidney's arguments progressively more concessive pieces of praise, with the "man as Maker like God" section the key to Sidney's views. The Pugliano story with which Sidney opens the Apology is, in Foster's opinion, an example of a debased view of

humankind (36), against which Sidney wishes to argue. Foster's claims for the Apology seem a bit extravagant; knowing that Sidney dropped his poetic career in mid-sentence to take up arms on the Continent, I find it hard to concede that Sidney rejects "military power as a civilizing force" (35) on the basis of his European tour and proposes poetry in its place. A. Leigh DeNeef offers a more modest rereading of the Apology, in which he finds thematic unity and "internal consistency" in Sidney's understanding of the concept imitation, which shapes both writing and reading poetry: "The reader learns to imitate the poet's imitation of God's imitation."²² Frank Evans argues that the Fall is Sidney's starting point and finds coherence in the entire essay around that topic, as does Andrew Weiner, while for Neil Rudenstine the thematic key to the work is that it is also an apology for love.²³

For each of these writers, some external agent of coherence must be imposed on the Apology for Poetry if Myrick's simpler view that it is a classical oration in defense of poetry is not adequate to the work. Another recent method of distancing Sidney criticism from Myrick has been to note and relish the inconsistencies of the Apology. In his Renaissance Minds and their Fictions, Ronald Levao suggests that Renaissance ideas about invention are stated so decidedly and so often precisely because those ideas are so completely in question. He examines the Apology with an

eye to its self-contradictions and finds that, beneath the surface organization, Sidney is simply trying out a variety of ideas. With respect to the description of the poet as a maker like God, Levao argues that "the passage is something of an indulgence, a voice he has assumed in order to sound out certain attractive, if abstruse, arguments. He is not concerned with proving their validity, and he neither affirms nor denies them to those who will not grant them."²⁴ Thus far Levao's reading of the Apology seems appropriate to its historical circumstances, but when he goes on to attribute philosophical intentionality to Sidney, I find his argument less plausible: "Even as he points out the logical mistakes of his opponents, Sidney seems to be deliberately committing his own, making any first premise impossible and so exposing himself to an inevitable regress" (153-154).

Alan Hager takes a tack similar to Levao's. He finds virtually everything in the Apology to be ironic, suggesting that the process of the quest for truth, rather than some specific truth about poetry, is Sidney's interest in the work. "I think we must conclude," Hager says, "that he has consciously made it impossible for us to know him in his works. In fact, he has invited us to look for him, and then has retired behind his ironic and paradoxical mask."²⁵ Like Levao, Hager seems to me to attribute implausible intentions to Sidney, even if the effect on the sensitive twentieth-century reader is much as they describe. While one might

relish the thought of a philosophically skeptical Sidney willfully setting English criticism off on a reflexive and ironical course, the explanation for the contradictions that Levao and Hager rightly note in the Apology seems to me to be simpler than their conversion of Sidney into a deconstructor.

Although Myrick's reading does seem accurate on the surface (and other attempts to find coherence seem strained, at best), it does not provide incontrovertible evidence for Sidney's intentions; classically educated Sidney would have framed any argument in the appropriate structure of his day just as modern English teachers likely cast letters and private journal entries in the thesis-support style they teach, however unconsciously. Within and among the parts of Sidney's oratory, in any case, the argument is less than perfectly coherent, as so many critics have pointed out. Sidney permits himself to use even the crucial term "poetry" equivocally. Part of his early justification of poetry is that the ancients used verse for writing all their history and philosophy, but later he demonstrates that history and philosophy are different from and inferior to poetry, generally excluding them as appropriate poetic content by definition. While such commonplace equivocality certainly does not much affect our understanding of Sidney's argument, his carelessness in such a matter might mitigate against our believing that he meant the Apology to be a careful

marshalling of arguments for a dubious audience, as does the unclear relationship between the passages on the poet as maker and the poet as imitator. Depending upon one's own biases, one can argue that Sidney really sees the poet's work as creative, based on his discussion of the justness of the Latin and Greek words for poet; or one can argue that in Sidney's opinion the poet imitates, in a Platonic way, "what may be and should be" (102). Either way, Sidney goes to no great pains to defend his terms, explaining by would-be synonyms--imitate, represent, counterfeit, figure forth, feign--rather than by definition. In this matter he differs completely from his contemporary Puttenham (leaving aside the question of which Puttenham, if any, wrote what is attributed to the name George Puttenham), who carefully and at length considers "icastic" as opposed to "phantastic" imagination in his Art of English Poesie,²⁴ while Sidney briefly mentions the terms in a single sentence (125). Likewise, George Gascoigne, one of the "professional poets" of the day, carefully goes through the formalities, at least, of defining his terms as for an audience, peppering his discussion with such phrases as "by which I mean . . . "27

Most tellingly, however, Sidney's own secretary, William Temple, who was a respected Ramist philosopher at Cambridge before joining Sidney in 1585, wrote an extensive (and, in everyone's defense, fairly recently discovered) treatise

directly to Sidney, taking the poet to task for his cavalier use of technical terms without adequate definition and for other illogical points of his argument. As John Webster points out, Temple's "Analysis" of the Apology implies "Temple's feeling that Sidney's definition takes for granted the whole process by which the poet first conceptualizes and then embodies the 'idea' he sets out to imitate."²⁰ In fact, according to Temple, Sidney's whole treatment of poetic imitation ignores a crucial factor: because "fiction-making" is invention of "something that does not yet exist," it therefore belongs "not to poetry, but to dialectical invention" (81); "just as often as poets feign," he says, "they do so not by some gift peculiar to poetry, but by the faculty of the art of dialectic" (83). Throughout the "Analysis," Temple focuses on Sidney's philosophical "errors" while also pointing out a variety of smaller inconsistencies. Although the precise circumstances of the composition of the "Analysis" are not known, it seems likely that a man close enough to Sidney to respond at length and in writing, but privately, to the Apology would also be close enough to him to be aware of and remark on any special intention to demonstrate the sort of philosophical point that such critics as Samuel and Dowlin or Levao and Hager would like to find in the work.

The second problem in understanding the Apology as a unified presentation of Sidney's carefully considered

opinion is the uncertainty of its intended audience, a problem linked inextricably to the question of his motivation in writing it. Sidney writes to a "you," but he does not attribute sufficiently specific ideas to "you" for identification of his intention. Most critics have simply assumed that Sidney meant to answer Gosson, who had dedicated his 1579 "Schoole of Abuse" (abusing literary activities in general) to Sidney, implying that Gosson was both motivation and primary audience, though Gosson's own audience would presumably also be intended as Sidney's. O. B. Hardison, Arthur Kinney, Neil Rudenstine, and countless others take Gosson for Sidney's primary target without discussion,²⁹ while Andrew Weiner lists him first in a series of possible motivations for the Apology: "Whether we owe the Defence of Poesie to the accident of Stephen Gosson's logical but ill-received dedication to Sidney of his Schoole of Abuse (1579), to Sidney's conversations about poetry with Dyer, Greville, and possibly Spenser, to Sidney's own need to justify the investment of time he was making on the Old Arcadia, or to some combination of all these, we are indeed fortunate that Sidney was for some reason moved enough by something to sit down, at approximately the same time that he was in the midst of composing and revising the Old Arcadia, and to write out a formal defence of the art of poetry embodying those principles he had perhaps reached as a consequence of his efforts."³⁰

Weiner strikes a note of common sense with respect to the motivation of the Apology. The possibilities are as far-flung as he suggests. I should like to add, however, that if Sidney meant the work primarily as an answer to Gosson, he might have been expected to respond to Gosson's own objections and slant his remarks more clearly at Gosson than he does, as Geoffrey Shepherd also points out.³¹ Thomas Lodge wrote A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse in defence of Poetry, Musick and Stage Plays in which he takes up specific points raised by Gosson, addressing the latter directly. Lodge's last lines are "lastly I frendly bid Gosson farwell, wyslinge him to temper his penn with more discretion."³²--very different from Sidney's universal closing.

The disparate closings epitomizing their documents' wide dissimilarity, Lodge's defense couldn't be more different from Sidney's defense of poetry; however, it is rather like Sidney's defense of Leicester in its use of invective and snideness as well as in its directness toward its target. In the "Defence of the Earl of Leicester," Sidney opens his argument quite directly indeed: "Of late there hath been printed a book in form of Dialog to the defaming of the Earl of Lester full of the most vyle reproches which a witt used to wicked and filthy thoughtes can imagin." His closing is similar: "And this which I wryte, I woold send to thyne own handes, if I knew thee; but I trust it can not bee intended, that he shoold be ignorant of this printed in London, which

knows the very whispringes of the prive chamber. I will make dainti of no basenes in thee, that art indeed, the wryter of this book. And from the date of this wryting, emprinted and published I will three monthes expect thyne answer."³³ What intervenes takes on the allegations against his uncle quite specifically, unlike the Apology for Poetry with respect to Gosson. It could be argued that a defense of poetry differs from a defense of an uncle, but Lodge's answer to Gosson would seem to belie this position. Given Sidney's straightforward approach on more immediately controversial matters than the character of poetry--not only his uncle's position, but also the possibility of the queen's marriage--I find it difficult to believe that he would not have taken on Gosson or any other well-defined audience much more directly than he does; surely he has no more to fear from the enemies of poetry than from Queen Elizabeth herself.

Some critics incline to the view that Sidney was answering general Protestant ideas, defending poetry against views that were "in the air," although there are also critics who believe he intended his defense against the ideas of Plato in The Republic.³⁴ In either case, the fact that he neither published the Apology nor, apparently, circulated it among the enemies of poetry is perplexing: why did he bother defending poetry if its enemies, whoever they might have been, did not have access to his defense? There is some

evidence that John Harington wrote his own "Briefe Apologie of Poetry," with a copy of Sidney's at hand,³⁰ but Sidney can hardly have regarded Harington--or Spenser and Dyer and Daniel Rogers and the rest of his circle, assuming that he probably circulated his manuscript among his literary friends--as an enemy of poetry. The Apology, when finally published in 1595, was treated as a document in the glorification of the dead Sir Philip Sidney, not as a serious threat to widely held opinions, as evidence the absence of any "Answers to The Lately Discover'd Scurrilous Defense of Poesy by Sir Philip Sidney" in the Short Title Catalog.³¹ Taken altogether, the historical evidence for the view that the Apology was meant as a straightforward defense of poetry against specific ideas or people is overwhelmingly negative.

The tone of Sidney's Apology for Poetry presents a further obstacle to regarding this work as a public defense intended for a wide audience. In themselves, Sidney's exordium, in which he compares his defending poetry to Pugliano's praising horsemanship, and his peroration, in which he wishes a variety of exaggeratedly good or bad ends on his supposed readers, call into question the seriousness with which we can take the more straightforward argument between them. In the opening passage, Sidney compares himself to Pugliano, who purportedly spoke out either because Sidney and Wotton were slow to pay him or because they were

such admiring pupils (so Sidney says); what, then, can we suppose Sidney mean to suggest about his own motivation in writing the Apology, especially considering that he continues his remarks by attributing his writing to "self-love" (95)? Critics universally dismiss this introduction as "ironic modesty" (except for Foster, whose view of the Pugliano story I have already mentioned); however, in opening with irony Sidney would have to assume an audience that believed poetry to be of crucial importance, and in order to be modest, he would have to be an author already secure in his poetic identity, which I believe Sidney was not.³⁷ The dissimilarities of Sidney's and Puttenham's openings and closings is telling in this regard. Puttenham, who we know wrote for Queen and Court, opens directly with "A Poet is as much to say as a maker" and ends with an apology for so long requiring Her Majesty's attention. That Puttenham, writing within essentially the same courtly framework as Sidney, took so utterly different a tone from Sidney's suggests that Sidney was attempting something radically different in the Apology from what had gone before and would come shortly after. (In fact, it may well be that Sidney and Puttenham were both composing their documents in the early 1580s.) Puttenham's purpose was clearly didactic, Lodge's forensic; Sidney's was, by my reading of the evidence, neither.

Not to read the Pugliano passage as ironic seems ludicrous, but I should like to argue that it seems so to

modern literary critics because we take as normative the idea that poetry is serious and worthwhile indeed. If we regarded poetry as the (devil's) work of idle hands, as many of Sidney's contemporaries clearly did, then we very easily might in all honesty think Pugliano quite superior to Sidney. Neither Gosson and the other radical Protestant poetry-haters nor the active, unscholarly courtiers who concern Puttenham could have been trusted to read Sidney's introduction as ironic. The only contemporary audience for whom Sidney could risk such irony is his close circle--his sister and the members of what Spenser terms the Areopagus--who would know that Sidney in fact had a high regard for poetry and would join him in it. Similarly, only Sidney's friends would likely have been sympathetic to or amused by the exaggerated conclusion of the Apology:

So that since the ever-praiseworthy Poesy is full of virtue-breeding delightfulness, and void of no gift that ought to be in the noble name of learning; . . . I conjure you all that have had the evil luck to read this ink-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the Nine Muses, no more to scorn the sacred mysteries of Poesy, no more to laugh at the name of poets, as though they were next inheritors to fools, no more to jest at the reverent title of a rhymers; but to believe, with Aristotle, that they were the ancient treasurers of the Grecians' divinity; to believe with Bembo . . . , with Scaliger . . . , with Clauserus . . . , with me . . . ; lastly to believe themselves, when they tell you they will make you immortal by their verses.

Thus doing, your name shall flourish in the printers' shops; thus doing, you shall be of kin to many a poetical preface; thus doing, you shall be most fair, most rich, most wise, most all; you shall dwell upon superlatives. . . . But if (fie of such a but) you be born so near the dull-making cataract of Nilus that you cannot hear the planet-like music of Poetry, . . . then, though

I will not wish unto you the ass's ears of Midas, nor to be driven by a poet's verses (as Bubonax was) to hang himself, nor to be rhymed to death, as is said to be done in Ireland; yet thus much curse I must send you, in the behalf of all poets, that while you live, you live in love, and never get favour for lacking skill of a sonnet, and, when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph. (141-142)

Curses that have no teeth, wildly improbable claims and promises that undercut the apparently serious discussion of poetry would hardly seem designed to reinforce a carefully delineated argument directed at one's actual opponents. For Sidney's friends, on the other hand, such a conclusion would reinforce what they already knew about his state of mind; only they could appropriately understand this conclusion without calling into question all that comes before it. Given the difficulty with understanding the opening and closing passages of the Apology as ironic for a public audience, the differences in tone between Sidney's Apology for Poetry and either his own "Defence of Leicester" or other writers' treatises on poetry, the lack of a clear position on poetry, and the fact that Sidney never attempted to publish this work, I can only conclude that Sidney wrote the Apology for himself and his literary circle and did not intend it for a wider audience at all.

I have wandered far from my original question about what Sidney might have thought about his own poetic processes. I

should have liked to take at face value the remarks that Sidney makes about the poet's godlike creativity and perhaps to have explicated them in terms of Renaissance psychology and philosophy, to have compared them to Sidney's poetic practice, to have found remarkable uses of imagery unifying his treatment of poetry in the Apology. But the problems surrounding the composition and reception of this work as well as the biographical issues clouding the picture of Sidney the philosopher-poet have made it impossible for me to believe that Sidney had--much less expressed--a coherent and stable understanding of what he did as a poet.

Instead, I suggest, the Apology for Poetry represents Sidney's attempt to work out for himself and for a small group of friends how he felt about writing poetry in general, barely even beginning to explore just what he supposed he did when he wrote. In that circumstance, the inconsistencies in the poet's expressed attitudes toward poetry and the problems of unity and tone in the work itself, while still inconsistencies, are explicable--and may be seen as indicators rather than as flaws. Beginning with the Swiftean tale of Pugliano makes enormous sense if we consider Sidney's other self-deprecating testimony about his composing practices in the letter to his sister as well as Aubrey's story about Sidney jotting notes for the Arcadia as he rode out hunting³⁰; we cannot simply assume that these stories are false or exaggerated. If Sidney in fact wrote

poetry as casually as he and Aubrey describe, he might well feel reticent about theorizing loftily. And yet his circumstances almost required him to justify his occupation away from court, since he had been so vocal a proponent of the active political life before his "exile"--hence the earnest inquiry into what the poet is and does, how the poetry affects the reader.

Inquiry, though, seems to me the necessary label for what Sidney does in the Apology. He raises the issue of the Greek and Roman words for poet and finds an approach--man as maker like God--that strikes a chord with him, but then he stops short and says, in effect, "let me get my head out of the clouds." He goes on to offer almost a caricature of the standard Horatian definition of poetry, but then drifts back into his earlier musings about the way the poet works. This passage follows shortly upon the description of the poet's golden world, after which Sidney pulls himself up with "but let these things alone, and go to man" (100). To be carried away with his lofty conception of the poetic process and pulled down by his own more practical thoughts two times in as many pages is not suggestive of a coherent conscious awareness of his own creative impulses or habits. Sidney's subsequent discussions about the relative merits of poetry, history, and philosophy and the state of English poetry have the same unplanned, musing character, and they are peppered with such expressions as "truly," "I know not," "I think,"

"if we can," "may I not presume"--none of which mark Puttenham's text, even though Puttenham's ideas and topics of attention are quite similar to Sidney's, though greatly expanded. To be sure, Sidney's musings are readable, but one would not expect a classically educated Renaissance English gentleman to write like Joyce in Finnegans Wake; Sidney's arguments are grounded in Renaissance philosophy and psychology and Italian criticism, but again one would expect such a foundation in such a man. Even so, at the end of the Apology, when Sidney seems to find his entire enterprise ludicrous, he drops the educated, reasonable voice he assumed after the exordium and mocks his own need for justification with extravagant warnings and promises. These, I believe, are not the strategies of a Renaissance apology intended to persuade a recalcitrant audience to take an author's carefully defined view.

It may seem that my argument is calculated to denigrate the Apology for Poetry and Sidney himself. The opposite, I think, is true. The Apology seems far more valuable to me now, reading it as the unfolding of the poet's (undecided) mind, than it did when I approached it as a Renaissance manifesto. Instead of adding another formal--and commonplace--defense of poetry on classical grounds to the sixteenth-century canon, Sidney has posed questions that will concern poets and critics for centuries and has shunned the easy answers offered by such essentially rhetorical

poets as Gascoigne. In the process, he has provided us with a picture of the poet's mind at work and delivered a charge to his successors: "they that delight in Poesy itself should seek to know what they do, and how they do; and especially look themselves in an unflattering glass of reason, if they be inclinable unto it" (132).

Chapter 2

"Discovering" the Ground: Attitudes toward the Poetic Process in the Early Seventeenth Century

Although the last quarter of the sixteenth century saw a spurt of activity in literary theory, beginning with Gascoigne's "Certayne Notes of Instruction" in 1575 and including numerous defenses against the likes of Gosson and didactic treatises aimed at improving young minds, only Sir Philip Sidney's Apology for Poetry demonstrates much interest in the creative process of the poet. Concerned chiefly with versification, Gascoigne says no more than that the poet should "grounde" his verses "upon some fine inuention"--and there is no reason to believe that he meant anything other than the traditional rhetorical sense of "invention"--and avoid letting the rhyme scheme lead away from the theme. Thomas Lodge, who explicitly answers Gosson in his "Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Plays," takes the idea of heavenly inspiration literally without any real attempt at proof. Puttenham, Sidney, Webbe, and Harington all make more of the poetic process than the two earlier writers, but what they (even Sidney) have to say depends heavily on Horace and Aristotle, and (except in Sidney's case) they seem not to regard the poet's mental processes as bearing further investigation. All of them hold unquestioningly together the ideas of the poet as a maker like God and the

poet as imitator; in fact, Puttenham explicitly says that the two ideas are not in conflict, although he does not explain their compatibility. For his part, Harington regards the issue of poetic creativity so lightly that he refers his readers to Puttenham and Sidney for more information, although he does assert that poetry is a gift and not an art, using the good theory and bad poetry of Puttenham as proof for his position. Each of these writers, except for Sidney, takes a uniformly didactic approach, centered in rhetorical theory, in discoursing on poetic creation; none, again except for Sidney, conveys any sense of having derived his opinion from, or verified it by, his own practice.

The seventeenth century does not witness an immediate shift in attitude toward the poetic process on the part of the poets; the old assumptions are still present in the writings of George Chapman and Henry Peacham, for example, both of whom simply assert without reflection that poetic skill is divinely given. However, some other writers of the first half of the century pay considerably more attention to the poet's creative process. In prose writings by Henry Reynolds, Sir William Alexander, William Drummond of Hawthornden, and, especially, Ben Jonson, the mental activities involved in writing poetry come under much greater scrutiny than ever before in English criticism.

Influenced by Sidney and his generation though they must have been, the poet-critics of the early seventeenth century

clearly belong to a later age. They wrote no prose defenses of poetry, apparently feeling no need to do so. Nowhere does any of them attempt to justify being a poet. Jonson does muse a bit on the advantages of being an amateur poet rather than a professional,¹ but like most of his contemporaries he seems to take for granted the value of poetry itself. Thus, unlike Sidney, they do not spend their time explaining poetry's superiority to history and philosophy or demonstrating the ancient roots of poetry and the godlike character of the poet; instead, they move on to debate the value of studying the ancients for poetic composition or concentrate their attention on the mechanics of writing poetry in a way that even Sidney simply does not approach--and could not, without belying his stance (genuine or assumed) as a casual dasher-off of poetry in his spare time.

The intended audiences and the approaches of these seventeenth-century writers vary. Alexander addresses himself to Drummond and seems to be a casual theorist with nothing much to lose and nothing much risked; Drummond and, to a greater extent, Reynolds seem to invest much more of their personal integrity and deeply held beliefs in their discussions of the creative process, though Drummond addresses a single friend and Reynolds the general population. Like Sidney, Jonson seems to be talking to himself much of the time and specifies no single audience for the Discoveries. There is a somewhat defensive quality to a few

of Jonson's entries in the Discoveries, notably the discussion of his remark that Shakespeare should have blotted many lines rather than none, but generally he takes a matter-of-fact tone. None of the writers of early-seventeenth-century literary theory demonstrates the self-consciousness of Sidney, the heavy didacticism of Puttenham, or the forensic tone of Lodge. For all of them, the discussion of poetry seems to occupy a more clearly delineated intellectual space than it did a generation before.

Paradoxically, it is precisely in their differences from Sidney's generation that these poets most follow Sidney, effectively taking up the challenge issued by the Apology. Knowingly or not, they have enacted Sidney's admonition to subsequent poets "to know what they do, and how they do; and especially look themselves in an unflattering glass of reason."² The simple oratorical defense of poetry, after Sidney, is no longer an available discursive form--perhaps because Sidney's definitive use of it depleted its possibilities, perhaps because the issues on which it was based and audience to which it was directed belonged to the sixteenth century--even if the anti-Ciceronian Jonson and his contemporaries were inclined to write one. What is now available, however, is the essay on poetic theory, the exploration into the poetic mind which Sidney advocated in the passage above and himself half-attempted in the Apology but which was submerged under the constraints of the formal

apology. This, I believe, is what we get in the early seventeenth century.

1

It is unfortunate not to be able to include Michael Drayton in this discussion of early-seventeenth-century poets who wrote about the poetic process more expansively than their sixteenth-century counterparts. Drayton seems likely to have performed an important function in the evolution of the English poetic mind. Friendly with most of the poets and dramatists of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, he apparently spent a good deal of time eating, drinking, and conversing with his fellow poets, including Reynolds and Alexander, and he corresponded with some of them as well, notably with William Drummond of Hawthornden.³ However, neither Drayton's extant letters nor his verse "Epistle to Henry Reynolds, Esquire, Of Poets and Poesie" (1627) suggests that Drayton thought more deeply about his own or other poets' creative processes than did Gascoigne or Webbe, whatever the biographical evidence of his friendships with poets and the prolific writings of those poets on that topic may lead one to imagine.

Drayton's friend Henry Reynolds did set down his views on poetic composition in Mythomystes. Wherein a Short Survey is Taken of the Nature and Value of True Poesy and Depth of the Ancients Above Our Modern Poets (1632).⁴ Reynolds' opinions are a curious mix: anticipating the ancients vs.

moderns controversy by more than half a century, his argumentation nevertheless harks back to the days of The Courtier. It seems clear, in any case, that Reynolds has reflected at some length upon the poet's work rather than merely parroting the formulations of earlier writers, opening as he does with the affirmation "I haue thought vpon the times wee liue in" (144). He also obliquely asserts a kind of independence from previous works in his preface "To the Candid and Ingenuous Reader." Others' defenses of poetry, he says, have dealt with the "Accidents or appendixes" to poetry--tropes and figures, genres, verse forms--but he will explore "the Essentiall Forme of true Poësy" (142).

True poesy is indeed Reynolds' concern, and most self-styled poets, he argues, are not true poets at all. They write "out of the treasonous mint of their owne imaginations" (145) with no reliance on the ancient learning that is so much more intimately connected to the ideal realm of Truth than anything capable of being discerned in the "decrepit" modern world. There are some (unnamed) modern poets Reynolds feels he "must deseruedly commend for those parts of fancy and imagination they possesse, and should much more, could wee see them somewhat more force those gifts and liberall Graces of Nature to the end shee gaue them, and therewith worke and constantly tire vpon sollid knowledges; the which hauing from the rich fountes of our reuerend Auncients drawne" (147-48). Unfortunately, he

says, even the best modern poets have looked to the Ancients for style only and not for substance.

Clearly for Reynolds a key factor in poetic creation is the study of the substance of ancient poetry. But the compositional method of the ancients is also, inevitably, superior to that of the moderns, because, closer to the beginning of time, they were closer to the truth of things, and they were able to discern that truth. Entering into a neo-Platonic discourse on the ecstasis and subsequent poetic rapture brought on by intellectual love, he argues that the ancients' poems "are not the inuentions of men, but gifts and graces of heauen" (153). Modern poets, by comparison, are not inclined "to the loue or search of any great or high truthes, for the Truthes sake meereley"; only "worldly profit or popular eminence" interests them. "Whence it is that much time spent in sollid contemplative studies is held vaine and vnneccessary; and these slight flashes of vngrounded fancy (ingenious Nothings & meere imbroideries vpon copwebbs) that the world swarmes with (like sophisticate alchimy gold that will not abide the first touch, yet glitters more in the eye than the sadd, weightyer, true gold) are only laboured for and attended too, because they take best, and most please the corrupt tast and false appetite of the sordid and barbarous times we liue in" (154). The state of contemporary poetry is so bad, in Reynolds' estimation, that he reverses the usual

sixteenth-century claim that poetry is maligned or ignored because people forget its ancient and continuing relation to the greatest truths; instead, Reynolds argues, people with any understanding of these truths abhor poetry for its triviality (155).

In his conflation of Renaissance Platonism and Baconian science, Reynolds continues his attack on contemporary poets' creative processes--with no apparent sense of disjuncture--by accusing them of "generall ignorance . . . in any the mysteries and hidden properties of Nature, which as an unconcerning Inquisition it appeares not in their writings they haue at all troubled their heads with," unlike the "many Prose-men" who are "excellent naturall Philosophers in these late times" (162).

The confusion of philosophical perspective is heightened yet further when Reynolds moves on to cite the Fall as the cause of man's ignorance, and the pursuit of the knowledge and love of God as man's, and hence the poet's, highest calling (163). The poet is to carry out this pursuit "by laying his burden on him that on his Crosse bore the burden of all our defectes" and by carefully searching God's creation, which, because they "liued nearest to the time of the gods" (though not God), the ancient poets best understood (164-65).

Reynolds does not present a clear program for poetic composition. He throws modern science, religious

experience, and Platonic ecstasis together to conclude that ancient poets practice "true poesy" and moderns do not, advocating some combination of scientific or mystical investigation of nature, Christian commitment, and, of paramount importance, study of the knowledge conveyed in the classical writers, in addition to the necessary but insufficient poetic imagination. While one might hope for a more coherent description of true poetry, the presence of these disjunctive elements is itself evidence that Reynolds has, overtly or not, taken up Sidney's challenge to investigate the poetic act. Eschewing the conventional wisdom about imitation and inspiration, he has attempted to apply what seem to be his deeply held convictions to his discussion of the poetic process (and perhaps it is not so surprising to find unintegrated science, Platonism, and Christianity among his convictions in the intellectually turbulent early seventeenth century). Looking forward to the controversies over the relative value of things ancient and modern of the end of the century, Mythomystes does more than any previously published work--except perhaps Sidney's Apology--to bring to the fore the issues surrounding the creative work of the poet. And, like Sidney, Reynolds recognizes the partiality of his contribution and solicits further discussion, hoping to "awake some abler vnderstanding then my owne to the pursute, if they please, of a theame I conceiue well worthy a greater industry and happyer leisures then I my selfe

possesse" (143).

At about the time Reynolds was writing Mythomystes, poets of the camp he attacks were also reflecting on the composition of poetry. In Anacrisis: Or, A Censure of some Poets Ancient and Modern,⁸ Sir William Alexander takes up a number of issues relevant to poetic composition. Without mentioning Mythomystes, he disagrees with Reynolds, finding modern authors "no Way inferior" (181) to ancient authors. He finds instead that each author, ancient or modern, excels at some but not all parts of the poetic process, remarking on a large number of poets thus: "I like the Phrase, Stile, Method and discreet Carriage of Virgil; the Vigour and Variety of Invention in Ovid; the deep Judgement and grave Sentences of Horace and Juvenal; the Heroical Conceptions, showing an innate Generosity, in Statius Papinianus and Lucan" (183). After a good bit of this sort of evaluation, he reiterates "That every Author hath his own Genius, directing him by a secret Inspiration to that wherein he may most excell" (185). In this individualistic approach to the poetic gift Alexander certainly gives earlier affirmations of divine inspiration a new emphasis.

He also approaches other issues in a markedly modern way. Far from feeling he must defend the fictive character of poetic composition, he argues that the ancients thought their poetry was true, though moderns recognize it as mythic, and that moderns are equally permitted to write

historically true poetry (186). It is interesting to note that, in a similar departure from the concerns of the sixteenth century, Drummond reports that Jonson condemned Bartas as a Verser and not a Poet because "he wrote not fiction."⁴

Alexander's understanding of poetry-writing as a recreational pastime also directly confronts a sixteenth-century assumption. He begins Anacrisis with a mention of the politically born fatigue that led to his retirement for a time "to recreate myself with the Muses," recalling Sidney, and, particularly, Moffet's description of poetry as "mere recreation" for Sidney. But Alexander quickly elaborates: "I may justly say recreate, since they create new Spirits, which shaking off gross Affections, diving into the Depths, reaching the Heights, and contemplating both, are transported with these Things which are only worthy to Entertain so noble a Thing as the Mind of Man" (181). Sidney's conflict between public service and poetry seems simply not to exist for this courtier-poet.

Another interest in Anacrisis is the relationship of language to the ideas of poetry. "Language," says Alexander, "is but the Apparel of Poesy, which may give Beauty, but not Strength: And when I censure any Poet, I first dissolve the general Contexture of his work in several Pieces, to see what Sinews it hath, and to mark what will remain behind, when that external Gorgeousness, consisting

in the Choice or placing of Words, as if it would bribe the Ear to corrupt the Judgment, is first removed, or at least only marshalled in its own Degree. I value Language as a Conduit, the Variety thereof to several Shapes, and adorned Truth or witty Inventions that which it should deliver"

(182). Here Alexander's position seems correlative to Jonson's; using the apparel motif common in Jonson's plays (in which, however, apparel is often transformed into disguise and the whole matter of revealing and concealing takes on much more complexity than Alexander expresses), Alexander tacitly affirms the attitude underlying Jonson's practice--according to Drummond--of writing his works in prose then casting them in verse.⁷

Like Reynolds, Alexander has offered no systematic analysis of the poetic process; rather he offers hints of the issues that will absorb poets to come. It seems ironic that Anacrisis was dedicated to William Drummond of Hawthornden, who in "A Letter on the True Nature of Poetry, Addressed to Dr. Arthur Jonston," probably of the 1630s, specifically takes issue with this last, philosophically most substantive point in Alexander's essay. Drummond denounces those who have "of late . . . consulted upon [poetry's] reformation, and endeavored to abstracte her to Metaphysicall Ideas and Scholasticall Quiddities, denuding her of her own Habites and those ornamentes with which shee hath amused the World some thousand yeeres."⁸ Besides disputing Alexander's

position on language, Drummond here implicitly also attacks his countryman's acceptance of different poets' different skills. But Drummond says nothing directly about what the poet does when he writes poetry; this brief work scarcely conveys the probable importance of Drummond to the growing dialogue among poets about their poetic techniques. Like Drayton, Drummond knew most of his peers, though in Drummond's case that knowledge came from reading more than from personal acquaintance, from correspondence more than from conversation. It is difficult to imagine Alexander or Jonson composing their remarks on poetic composition without any sort of application to Drummond for his opinions.

2

Informative about the climate of the early seventeenth century and the specific topics to concern subsequent writers as the works of Reynolds, Alexander, and Drummond may be, no one in the early seventeenth century, not Drayton, not Drummond, surely not Reynolds or Alexander, wrote so extensively about the poetic process or had so much influence as Ben Jonson. Of the seventeenth-century writers with whom we are concerned, only Jonson approaches the magnitude of Sidney as poet or critic, and it is only comparatively recently that we have begun to appreciate any other early-seventeenth-century criticism. In the opinion of Thomas Rymer in 1674, in the early part of the century "many great wits flourished, but Ben Johnson, I think, had all the

Critical learning to himself; and till of late years England was as free from Criticks as it is from Wolves.⁹

Born only twenty years after Sidney, Jonson came from a middle-class family and, after a bricklaying apprenticeship, earned his living by writing poetry. As a middle-class professional poet, Jonson is very different from Sidney the courtier-poet; yet the audiences of their poetry have much in common. Jonson clearly knew and wrote for Sidney's nieces and nephews and on at least one occasion was Robert Sidney's guest at Penshurst. Like his contemporaries, Jonson also apparently read Sidney's Apology for Poetry soon after its publication in 1595.

His remarks on poetic theory, apart from those in the plays and poems, occur in the Discoveries and in Conversations with Drummond, especially the former.¹⁰ Within the Discoveries, a number of passages concern poetic creation, and, more broadly, the poet's formation. Jonson's ideas are as different from Sidney's as the forms the two men's remarks take, conveying a stronger element of reflection about his own processes, and taking up issues more like those of Reynolds, Alexander, and Drummond.

Published in 1640, three years after Jonson's death, Timber: or, Discoveries consists of random jottings, some brief and aphoristic, some lengthy mini-essays. Although the discussion of poetry in the Discoveries occurs in discrete pieces, Jonson's opinions are fairly consistent

throughout the collection, and are in many regards closely related to the opinions of his contemporaries whom we considered above. Jonson advocates in the first place a rather intellectual approach to poetry, somewhat like that of Reynolds, condemning as "the Wretcheder" any poets who pride themselves in their ignorance. He frequently admonishes the would-be poet to study: "Very few men are wise by their owne counsell; or learned by their owne teaching," he says; "for hee that was onely taught by himselfe, had a foole to his Master" (563). He goes on to speak highly of reading the ancients (567), and in a passage replete with classical references of his own, says that "the third requisite in our Poet, or Maker, is Imitation, to bee able to convert the substance, or Riches of an other Poet, to his owne use" (and, driving home the point of the third requisite, the fourth is "Study," 638).

"Convert," however, is the key word in understanding the place Jonson gives to the study of authorities, and Jonson does not deify the ancients after the manner of Reynolds. "To all the observations of the Ancients, we have our owne experience: which, if wee will use, and apply, wee have better meanes to pronounce. It is true they open'd the gates, and made the way, that went before us; but as Guides, not Commanders: . . . Truth lyes open to all, it is no mans severall" (567). He condemns indiscriminate use of authorities, invention of authorities, and outright copying from

other authors (585-586); they are to be read, studied, and digested into something new--and here Jonson uses the common apian metaphor (638). To be sure, Reynolds too mentions the scientists of his age, but his equivocal stance on the merit of anything modern man can discover is quite different from Jonson's pragmatic, balanced view of the interaction of study and experience.

Jonson elsewhere specifies precisely the way the poet is to generate something new on the basis of his digestion of the authorities:

For a man to write well, there are required three Necessaries. To reade the best Authors, observe the best Speakers: and much exercise of his own style. In style to consider, what ought to be written; and after what manner; Hee must first thinke, and excogitate his matter; then choose his words, and examine the weight of either. Then take care in placing, and ranking both matter, and words, that the composition be comely; and to doe this with diligence, and often. No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be labour'd, and accurate: seeke the best, and be not glad of the forward conceits, or first words, that offer themselves to us, but judge of what wee invent; and order what wee approve. Repeat often, what wee have formerly written; which beside, that it helpes the consequence, and makes the juncture better, it quickens the heate of imagination, that often cooles in the time of setting downe, and gives it new strength, as if it grew lustier, by the going back. . . . For all that wee invent doth please us in the conception, or birth; else we would never set it downe. But the safest is to returne to our Judgement, and handle over againe those things, the easinesse of which might make them justly suspected. So did the best Writers in their beginnings; they impos'd upon themselves care, and industry. They did nothing rashly. They obtain'd first to write well, and then custome made it easie, and a habit. By little and little, their matter shew'd it selfe to 'hem more plentifully; their words answer'd, their composition followed; and all, as in a well-order'd family, presented it selfe in the place. So that the summe of all is: Ready writing

makes not good writing; but good writing brings on ready writing. (615-616)

Thus Jonson, unlike Reynolds, believes that the poet should rely on his reading to teach him good style as well as for ideas, but this reliance on the ancients involves no simplistic copying. Rather, the poet must transform his reading of others' work with his own good judgment and a great deal of practice. In the opinion of C.A. Patrides, that is what Jonson himself has done in this passage. Taking issue with the value of the advice Jonson offers in itself, Patrides says that despite its naivete and mechanical character, the passage demonstrates what it tries to express, "the virtue of economy that terminates in clarity."¹¹

Ultimately, however, for all the attention he has gotten as the learned poet, Jonson regards learning, study, and practice as inadequate by themselves: "There is no doctrine will doe good, where nature is wanting" (584). Again and again in the Discoveries, "nature" takes precedence over everything else. In this regard Jonson departs from his contemporaries and anticipates the concerns of the Restoration and eighteenth century, thus perhaps earning the commonly offered appellation "the first neo-classical English poet." Jonson uses the term nature in two distinct senses: to refer to the poet's innate abilities, and to refer to external reality as well; both are important to his understanding of the poetic process.¹²

In his list of the requirements of the poet, Jonson places first "a goodnes of natural wit," saying that "the Poet must bee able by nature, and instinct, to powre out the Treasure of his minde" (637). Only in this passage do Jonson's terms even approximate the sixteenth-century emphasis on furor poeticus; he speaks of the poet working "as by a divine instinct" and speaking "somewhat above a mortall mouth" (637)--but Jonson's commitment to this line is questionable because of his qualifying "as by" and "somewhat" as well as because he is merely quoting and interpreting a remark of Seneca's on this point. He quickly follows it up with further admonitions to practice, "Exercise of those parts, and frequent" being his second requisite for the poet. Going on to describe the third and fourth requisites of the poet (Imitation and Study, which I cite above), Jonson warns against the poet's thinking that "hee can leape forth suddainely a Poet, by dreaming hee hath been in Parnassus" (639). His final word on the subject of the poet's required activities takes us back to nature again: "all this in vaine, without a naturall wit, and a Poeticall nature in chiefe. For, no man, so soone as hee knowes this, or reades it, shall be able to write the better; but as he is adapted to it by Nature, he shall grow the perfecter Writer" (640). Nature, for Jonson, seems to have replaced divine inspiration, but Jonson develops only somewhat randomly what will be an important topic of concern in later

seventeenth-century discussion of poetic composition. To import a Wordsworthian sense of the poet as having a "more comprehensive soul" than other men¹³ to Jonson's term "Poeticall nature" would be painfully anachronistic; certainly there is little evidence for an early-seventeenth-century conception of the poet as prophet specially set apart from the common man. And yet, whatever limited idea of the poet's "nature" Jonson's situation in the first half of the seventeenth century may afford, this brief parenthesis in his poetics of study and practice suggests a reflection on his art that goes beyond the commonplace assumptions of his day and paves the way for subsequent discussions of poetic "genius."

Not only must the poet have a "poetic nature," according to Jonson, he also must imitate with an eye to nature. Speaking of poetry and picture, Jonson says that both "are busie about imitation. . . . For they both invent, faine, and devise many things, and accommodate all they invent to the use, and service of nature" (609-10). Then he slips back into the other sense of nature and says that the poet and painter are both born, not made; "nature is more powerful in them then study," he says, the isolated quotation typifying the equivocation on the term nature common throughout the Discoveries. Whether by nature Jonson means innate characteristics or the regulatory power of the universe (both definitions dating back at least to the

middle ages, according to the OED), it is pretty clear that he does not mean by it the observable phenomenal world. The OED offers confirmation of that usage beginning only in the mid-seventeenth-century; speaking of natural phenomena Jonson does not use the term nature: "The conceits of the mind are Pictures of things, and the tongue is the Interpreter of those Pictures. The order of Gods creatures in themselves, is not only admirable, and glorious, but eloquent; Then he who could apprehend the consequence of things in their truth, and utter his apprehensions as truly, were the best Writer, or Speaker" (628). Here Jonson makes clear his strong sense that the work of the poet is tied to the phenomenal world, but he does not label it "imitation of nature" as later poets will do.

While the term "imitation" figures in Jonson's comments on poetic composition, his use of it is curious, or, as Thomas Greene puts it, "strikingly ambivalent."¹⁴ Again and again (like Sidney) he fails to tell us what the poet imitates. Poetry and picture are "both busie about imitation" (609); the poet's art is "an Art of imitation, or faining; expressing the life of man" (635); the poet's third requirement is "Imitation, to bee able to convert the substance, or Riches of an other Poet" (638). Never does Jonson explicitly say that the poet imitates nature or even, in so many words, that he imitates other authors. He describes the task of poetry and picture (following the first

quotation) as to "invent, faine, and devise many things, and accomodate all they invent to the use, and service of nature" (609-610), and he follows his second mention of imitation with the injunction to express the life of man. In the third case, imitation seems to mean converting the substance of another poet's work. Taken together, these three uses of the term imply no strong single sense of imitation at all and suggest that imitation was a fluid concept for Jonson, one that generally fit the poet's work without prescribing specific activities, in contrast with earlier or later critical uses of the term, in which it tends to be used quite precisely.

The ambiguous character of Jonson's use of the term is the more surprising given the straightforward treatment of imitation in Ascham's Schoolmaster, a text--and a tradition--Jonson surely knew. Most of Book 2 of The Schoolmaster is directly concerned with imitation, of which, Ascham says, "there be three kinds . . . in matters of learning." The first kind, pertaining to the imitation of nature, belongs to tragedy and comedy and is "a perfit imitation, or fair, lively painted picture of the life of every degree of man"; the second and third, "to follow for learning of tongues and sciences the best authors" and to follow their techniques of acquiring and conveying knowledge pertain to the imitation of authors.¹⁰ Overlaying Ascham upon Jonson immediately provides a schema for understanding

most of what Jonson says about the work of the poet and, to a point, justifies our critical assumptions about Jonson's reliance on and place in the Renaissance tradition. What is curious, however, is the way that Jonson has scrambled Ascham's tidy system; he means nothing new by imitation, but he has separated and elaborated the three activities described by Ascham as kinds of imitation so that they are not reducible back to his straightforward terms.

In fact, Jonson's position on imitation has been the focus of the only real critical disagreement on his literary theory. In Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style, Wesley Trimpi describes Jonson as uninterested in imitation, and attributes a general declining interest in the topic to anti-Ciceronianism; like other proponents of the plain style, Jonson was concerned with things rather than with words, so imitating another author was of negligible value.¹⁴ This description, however applicable to Jonson, certainly suits Alexander's attitude toward language. With respect to Jonson, however, Richard S. Peterson implicitly disputes Trimpi's position by regarding imitation as a key concept for Jonson. He argues that the passage on the "third requisite" is "a crucial passage" that "contains in little several ideas and verbal motifs central to Jonson's views on imitation."¹⁷ Similarly, Daniel Calder spent an article on defense of Jonson's Aristotelianism (with a Platonic twist) in his concept of imitation, defending the

poet against J.W. Atkins' opinion that by imitation he meant mere copying of appearances.¹⁸ The general position of Peterson and Calder has been the basis for other essays demonstrating that Jonson's expression of imitation in the Discoveries grounds his practice of it in specific poems.¹⁹ Each of these positions (except Atkins' as Calder expresses it) seems tenable in light of different passages from the Discoveries; what they suggest to me is what I have already asserted, that Jonson's understanding of imitation was very fluid, grounded though it is in Renaissance tradition as expressed by Ascham.

As a whole Jonson's comments on poetic composition seem to be motivated less by ideology than by practice, a circumstance that would explain his equivocal uses of the terms nature and imitation and his failure to attempt systematic definition of his terms. Reflecting in snippets on his craft, Jonson may have been influenced more by his own day's work than by philosophers,²⁰ and, practically, what he wrote may be more useful to poet-aspirants than a philosophical treatise, despite the scorn heaped on him by so many contemporary and subsequent poets. One imagines, reading the Discoveries, that Jonson studied widely, wrote carefully, and edited at length. As a professional poet, he seems to have had neither leisure nor inclination for high-flown musings on the poet's lofty calling, although he does at least have some sense of possessing an inborn ability to

think poetically, but by taking up the challenge of Sidney's Apology he, along with Reynolds, Alexander, and Drummond, has moved beyond the concerns of the late sixteenth century and set the stage for the substantive debates among poets about their creative processes later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

3

Missing from these critical remarks of the early seventeenth century is any serious treatment of the previously much-invoked term inspiration. In the critical discussions of the sixteenth century, writers often held the ideas of imitation and inspiration together, without any sense of discomfort at their apparent disjuncture, as explaining what the poet does--or what happens to the poet--when he writes. Sidney expressed reservations about inspiration, however, and in the discussions by Jonson and most other critics of the early seventeenth century the topic has almost completely disappeared, except in such works as Peacham's, which appeal to traditional wisdom rather than attempt to break new ground. The wellsprings of poetry, for these seventeenth-century writers, seem to be within the poet himself, the poetry of Greece and Rome, and nature; as a concept, inspiration almost ceases to be, leaving only its shadow in the conventional invocation of a muse in individual poems.

Intuitively one might expect some appeal to and belief in heavenly inspiration in a century marked by religious

discourse and controversy, and there is historical support for such an expectation since during the church-dominated Middle Ages inspiration had certainly been a key term in describing the production of poetry. Although scripture was considered to be "more inspired" than subsequent poetry and certain kinds of poetry more inspired than others, the poet was generally held to be inspired by God, who, in his infinite wisdom, took into account the particular talents of the man he inspired, according to A.J. Minnis.²¹

The absence of the religious "metaphysical" poets in a discussion of seventeenth-century poets' consciousness of the poetic process would thus seem unlikely, on these grounds as well as in light of the powerful self-awareness conveyed in their poems. Surely the sense of poetic vocation motivating a Donne or Herbert to write intimate conversations with God differs from the self-understanding behind Jonson's worldly, practical remarks on the composing process, and surely these poets who wrote so much of their own spiritual experiences would have something to say about writing poetry. Unfortunately, none of them left a direct statement of his personal practice or of his advice to aspiring poets, although Louis Martz has extrapolated considerable insight into their "poetry of meditation" from the poems themselves.

In fact, the religious poetry of the metaphysicals is in a sense so religious as to exclude any evidence of a belief

that God inspires their work. Because God, rather than a human audience, is directly addressed in so many of their poems, there is no occasion for inspiration in the conventional sense of God revealing truth to humanity through the poet. And, aside from the rhetorical situation, the poets are concerned with their own religious experience, which seems almost incidentally expressed in poetry, rather than with the nature of writing poetry or a sense of themselves as poets.

In "Jordan (II)" George Herbert offers the most explicit renunciation of conventional poetics available:

When first my lines of heav'nly joyes made mention,
Such was their lustre, they did so excell,
That I sought out quaint words, and trim invention;
My thoughts began to burnish, sprout, and swell,
Curling with metaphors a plain intention,
Decking the sense, as if it were to sell.

Thousands of notions in my brain did runne,
Off'ring their service, if I were not sped:
I often blotted what I had begunne;
This was not quick enough, and that was dead.
Nothing could seem too rich to clothe the sunne,
Much lesse those joyes which trample on his head.

As flames do work and winde, when they ascend,
So did I weave my self into the sense.
But while I bustled, I might heare a friend
Whisper, How wide is all this long pretence!
There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd:
Copie out only that, and save expense.²²

Thus Herbert dismisses the activities typical of the poet on which Jonson spent so much descriptive effort. Every would-be poetic move--addition of decorative and figurative language, the play of fancy, careful revision--is

counter-poetic; as in his more oblique "The Posie," Herbert here denigrates his own abilities in deference to the overshadowing perfection of God.

Like the metaphysical poets, John Milton had a strong sense of writing poetry to glorify God; unlike them, he also had rather a lot to say about writing poetry. Milton is the only poet in the seventeenth century who conveys an explicit belief in inspiration of the poet by God; his appeal to the "Heav'nly Muse" at the opening of Paradise Lost and again in Paradise Regained is among the very few genuinely felt invocations of a muse in English poetry.

Of more interest to me here, however, are Milton's remarks on poetry in The Reason of Church Government. Nowhere in previous English criticism had anyone committed so personal an account of becoming a poet to print, as Milton's long excuses for doing so would indicate. Describing his education and the reception of his earliest verses, Milton says, "I began thus farre to assent both to them [Italian admirers] and divers of my friends here at home, and not lesse to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labour and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life), joyn'd with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die. These thoughts at once possess me . . ." ²³ This of course is the famous passage in which Milton announces his intention to

write in English and to do for England what the great ancient writers did for their countries, but it is the description of his experience that seems relevant to my inquiry. Milton did not simply decide to write poetry; he was "prompted" and "possessed." Later he identifies poetic abilities as "the inspired guift of God rarely bestow'd, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every Nation."²⁴

Clearly Milton has a strong sense of divine intervention in his life, an awareness of a poetic, even prophetic, calling. That Milton writes these words in a politico-religious tract rather than in an "essay on poetry" itself seems indicative of the marked difference between his poetic self-understanding and those of his contemporaries or, for that matter, any other English poets. Yet, unlike the self-consciously self-effacing metaphysical poets, he describes his poetic activity in terms much like Jonson's, emphasizing labor and study, attributing his talent to "the strong propensity of nature." Even in his invocation of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of Paradise Lost Milton's directive human voice is clear. Simple inspiration is not what Milton wants; he asks the muse to sing "Of Man's First Disobedience . . ." because he has already determined that his song "with no middle flight intends to soar / Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues / Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme" in order "to justify the ways of God to men."²⁵ In his understanding of poetic work as well as in the product of it, Milton is a curious mix of prophet and classicist.

Forthcoming as he is about the process of deciding to become a poet, Milton does not offer us a report of the activities of his mind "at home in the spacious circuits of her musings"²⁴ during the actual composition of his poetry. He anticipates, however, still in Reason of Church Government, that his poems will come not from "the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine, . . . nor . . . the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that eternall Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallow'd fire of his Altar to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases," quickly augmenting his religious fervor with the more controllable elements of much reading, observation, and insight.²⁷

After Milton, only the occasional religious poet places any faith in divine inspiration of his work. Isaac Watts, the eighteenth-century hymnist, offers the fullest remarks on the subject between Milton and William Blake: "if the heart were first inflamed from Heaven, and the muse were not left alone to form the devotion and pursue a cold scent, but only called in as an assistant to the worship, then the song would end where the inspiration ceases."²⁸ The conflation of heavenly inspiration and some other, presumably secular, muse here does little to encourage any belief that Watts subscribed to a well-defined view of inspiration.

Essentially, then, inspiration as a serious element in poetic composition ends with Milton, except for Blake, who

does not enter into this discussion. One might argue that Milton is as much an aberration from the norm in this regard as is Blake, since he alone in the seventeenth century makes a strong case for inspiration; however, the force of Hobbes' objection to poets' claiming inspiration suggests that a general tendency to believe in inspiration lingered, though generally not in print, into the seventeenth century. "But why a Christian should think it an ornament to his poem, either to profane the true God or invoke a false one, I can imagine no cause but a reasonless imitation of custom, of a foolish custom, by which a man, enabled to speak wisely from the principles of nature and his own meditation, loves rather to be thought to speak by inspiration, like a bagpipe."²⁹ Thus Hobbes, to whom I give the last word on inspiration, transforms the happy coexistence of imitation and inspiration in the sixteenth century into the poet's foolish imitation of the wrongheaded notion of inspiration, which never again surfaces, in its medieval sense, in the mainstream of English poetic theory.

Chapter 3

Building with Jonson's Timber:

The Latter Half of the Seventeenth Century

Like the poetic theory of the first half of the seventeenth century, that of the second is dominated by a single major figure propounding his view of the poet's work, namely John Dryden. In a long career of essays and prefaces, Dryden seems to have discussed all the issues relevant to poetic invention that Jonson raised in the Discoveries, as well the more specifically "neoclassical" concerns expressed by other Restoration poets. Unlike Jonson's contemporaries, most of Dryden's had at least a little to say about their poetic processes. It is remarkable, in fact, that in an age of public, occasional poetry, before self-consciousness and psychological introspection as we know them were apparently even systematically possible, so many moments of poetic introspection burst through an otherwise audience- and nature-centered criticism. The very act of writing poetry and sending it out into the world seems to have been sufficiently problematic, as we have already seen especially in the case of Sir Philip Sidney, to occasion self-doubt and, as a result, self-examination, even in the process of promulgating, explicating, and qualifying the newly imported "Rules," as literary historians have traditionally regarded the critical work of the so-called neo-classical poets.

The issue of imitation is probably the most critical in the poets' understanding of the poetic process during the second half of the century. The breadth of Jonson's positions on imitation is still present, but these later writers on poetic invention attempt explicitly to define and explain what they mean by imitation, what is and what is not acceptable imitation, and what precisely is to be imitated--all tasks that Jonson failed to take up, perhaps because for him they were not yet differentiated issues, perhaps for some other reason. In Jonson's writing, we saw that the verb to imitate almost never took a grammatical object, though other authors and nature were implicitly understood in some unspecified way to be the objects of imitation. In the latter half of the century, what was implicit and undeveloped becomes explicit and more carefully developed. In fact, the imitation of nature is the central tenet of poetic theory, in which all discussions of other critical topics are ultimately grounded.

On the imitation of nature specifically Dryden has a good deal to say, although in no single place does he fully explicate his "theory" of the imitation of nature. The famous definition of a play established in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," "A just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind,"¹ which mentions neither imitation nor

general nature specifically, is interpreted without challenge by Neander later in the essay to mean precisely imitation of nature: "For the lively imitation of Nature being in the definition of a play, those which best fulfil that law ought to be esteemed superior to the others" (1:68).² Similarly, in his "Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles," he simply assumes as unquestionable truth that "the imitation of Nature [is] the business of a poet" (1:233). Likewise in "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting" he at least twice asserts, without apparently feeling a need to prove, that "the way to please [is] to imitate nature" (2:133) or that "to imitate Nature well in whatsoever subject, is the perfection of both arts; and that picture, and that poem, which comes nearest to the resemblance of Nature, is the best" (2:136). Examples of the phrase "imitate nature" could be piled up almost endlessly, but these suffice to indicate its unchallenged place in the general scheme of critical argumentation.

In each of the passages I cite above, the imitation of nature is the principle underlying Dryden's opinion on some issue actually in dispute, invoked to give credence, or at least ground, to his opinion. The general principle that the poet imitates nature does not in itself provide any insight into how poets understood their creative processes at the end of the seventeenth century. Their application of it to essentially every disputed issue of poetic practice,

however, is suggestive of their cast of mind. This principle grounds the more pervasive discussion of ancient vs. modern writing, encompassing such related issues as what constitutes acceptable imitation of authors--i.e., "servile" copying as opposed to some imitation of the spirit of others--and whether it is ideas, words, or both that the poet imitates. Appeals to and explanations of such concepts as fancy, judgment, wit, genius, and imagination also come, explicitly or not, in terms of the imitation of nature, and it is to the discussion of these issues that we would have to look to more fully understand what the period means by the imitation of nature.

The normal mode of critical discourse about the poetics of this or any period is to isolate terms such as I have just listed, define them, consider them in relation to one another, and ultimately formulate a coherent system of them. The analytical temptation is strong, but I believe that constructing a system is, for my purposes, reductive and counterproductive of an understanding of the poets' felt sense of the poetic task (although I recognize, of course, the value of analysis and synthesis for understanding an age not our own and for determining earlier meanings of terms we now use differently). Working out of what amounts to Dryden's assumption that nature's dress changes but nature stays the same, I find it difficult to conceive that an impersonal critical system, largely extrapolated by later

thinkers, adequately explains what poets did, or thought they did, in the late seventeenth century because I do not think that any system accounts for what late twentieth century poets do or think they do. Having noted the concept on which all others rest, I am going to resist the systematizing impulse by examining individual passages from a number of late seventeenth-century critical works rather than citing a variety of appearances of the remaining relevant critical terms.

Breaking with the Past: Sir William Davenant

Davenant, besides having written the earliest piece of criticism in the second half of the century, provides a fortuitous starting place in view of the virtual disappearance of inspiration as a serious critical term in the first half of the century. Describing the composition of Gondibert as time-consuming and painful, he rails against the thought that poetic composition is a simple matter of inspiration:

Yet to such painfull Poets some upbraid the want of extemporary fury, or rather inspiration, a dangerous word which many have of late successfully us'd; and inspiration is a spiritual Fitt, deriv'd from the ancient Ethnick Poets, who then, as they were Priests, were Statesmen too, and probably lov'd dominion; and as their well dissembling of inspiration begot them reverence then equall to that which was paid to Laws, so these who now profess the same fury may perhaps by such authentick example pretend authority over the people, . . . yet these, who also fro the chief to the meanest are Statesmen and Priests, but have not the luck to be

Poets, should not assume such saucy familiarity with a true God.³

Davenant's statement against inspiration in poetry is only slightly weaker than that of Hobbes in his "Answer to Davenant." Unlike Hobbes, however, Davenant has given us a reasonably full picture of what, for him, replaces inspiration. That replacement is

Wit: And Wit is the laborious and the lucky resultances of thought, having towards its excellence, as we say of the strokes of Painting, as well a happinesse as care. It is a Webb consisting of the subt'lest threds; and like that of the Spider is considerately woven out of our selves; for a Spider may be said to consider, not only respecting his solemnesse and tacit posture (like a grave Scout in ambush for his Enemy), but because all things done are either from consideration or chance, and the works of Chance are accomplishments of an instant, having commonly a dissimilitude, but hers are the works of time, and have their contextures alike.

Wit is not only the luck and labour, but also the dexterity of thought, rounding the world, like the Sun, with unimaginable motion, and bringing swiftly home to the memory universall surveys. It is the Souls Powder, which when supprest, as forbidden from flying upward, blows up the restraint, and loseth all force in a farther ascension towards Heaven (the region of God), and yet by nature is much less able to make any inquisition downward towards Hell, the Cell of the Devill; But breaks through all about it as farr as the utmost it can reach, removes, uncovers, makes way for Light where darkness was inclos'd, till great bodies are more examinable by being scatter'd into parcels, and till all that find its strength (but most of mankind are strangers to Wit as Indians are to Powder) worship it for the effects as deriv'd from the Deity. It is in Divines, Humility, Exemplarinesse, and Moderation; in Statesmen, Gravity, Vigilance, Benigne Complacency, Secrecy, Patience, and Dispatch; in Leaders of Armies, Valor, Painfulness, Temperance, Bounty, Dexterity in punishing and rewarding, and a sacred Certitude of promise. It is in Poets a full comprehension of all recited in all these, and an ability to bring those comprehensions into action, when they shall so far forget the true measure of what is of greatest consequence to

humanity (which are things righteous, pleasant, and usefull) as to think the delights of greatness equall to that of Poesy, or the Chiefs of any Profession more necessary to the world then excellent Poets.⁴

A definition of wit in Davenant's usage would obviously include time, labor, and luck; summarizing these elements, however, would overlook the images in which the term is conveyed. Wit is as self-sufficient as a spider, spinning out of itself. It is as omniscient as the sun, if the sun could see. It is as powerful as gunpowder. Wit blows up, breaks through, uncovers--and it is wit, not the poet, doing these things. There is a strong sense in this passage of wit's being not wholly under the conscious control of the poet, divine, statesman, or army leader possessing it.

That Davenant's arachnoid wit calls to mind the spider in Swift's The Battle of the Books is wholly appropriate. Swift distinguishes Gondibert by having Homer slay him first, saying that he "had never once seen [Homer], nor understood his strength."⁵ Swift's charge certainly has its foundation in the "Preface to Gondibert." Davenant criticizes numerous ancient poets, and argues that everyone from Homer to Spenser has made the same errors because of poets' tendency to imitate those who came before them, although he admits that imitating other authors also keeps a poet from defective, unnatural excesses. As Thomas Rymer says of him, Davenant "is for unbeaten tracks, and new wayes of thinking: but certainly in his untry'd Seas he is no

great discoverer."⁶ Davenant does, however, credit his own "friends" with affecting his poem, claiming to be unlike most writers, who "are apter to be beholding to Bookes then to men."⁷

Davenant, then, has set forth a number of explanatory remarks about his own composing process. Reliant on wit rather than inspiration, he attributes his poems chiefly to time, labor, luck, and the contributions of his friends. Although he does not provide a systematic guide for writing poetry, he clearly has reflected at some length on his own writing process and, except for the term wit, in large part presents his poetic self-portrait without invoking what we normally regard as typical mid-century critical terminology.

The Shameful Imitations of Thomas Shadwell

In his "Preface to The Sullen Lovers, or The Impertinents, A Comedy," Thomas Shadwell describes the way in which he got the idea for The Sullen Lovers:

The first hint I receiv'd was from the report of a Play of Molieres of three Acts, called Les Fascheux, upon which I wrote a great part of this before I read that; and after it came to my hands, I found so little for my use (having before upon that hint design'd the fittest Characters I could for my purpose) that I have made use of but two short Scenes, . . . both of them so vary'd you would not know them. But I freely confess my Theft, and am asham'd on 't, though I have the example of some that never yet wrote Play without stealing most of it; And (like Men that lye so long, till they believe themselves) at length, by continual Thieving, reckon their stolne goods their own, too: which is so ignoble a

thing, that I cannot but believe that he that makes a common practice of stealing other mens Witt, would, if he could with the same safety, steale any thing else."

Imitating other authors, not necessarily classical ones, is apparently a primary mode of invention for Shadwell. The characters he claims to have designed he subsequently attributes to imitation of Jonson: "I have endeavour'd to represent variety of Humours, most of the persons of the Play differing in their Characters from one another, which was the practise of Ben Johnson, whom I think all Drammatick Poets ought to imitate, though none are like to come near; he being the onely person that appears to me to have made perfect Representations of Humane Life."

Implicit in his praise of Jonson is Shadwell's conviction that his work is to represent human life in the form of the humors. We get, in the long quotation about Moliere's play, some sense of his thought processes: Shadwell receives an "idea," formulates characters to suit the idea, and contrives scenes to carry out the idea. A simpler characterization of the drama-writing process is difficult to conceive, but the elements of composition he sees fit to mention are perhaps an indicator of the depth (or shallowness) of his thought.

Thomas Rymer on the Rules

Rymer did not, so far as I know, make any penetrating remarks about his own poetic processes. He deserves a place in this survey, however, as the most consistent purveyor of the Rules and as Aristotle's most faithful disciple. Of particular interest to me are his remarks justifying Aristotle as a rule-maker:

The truth is, what Aristotle writes on this Subject are not the dictates of his own magisterial will or dry deductions of his Metaphysicks: But the Poets were his Masters, and what was their practice he reduced to principles. Nor would the modern Poets blindly resign to this practice of the Ancients, were not the Reasons convincing and clear as any demonstration in Mathe-
matics. 'Tis only needful that we understand them for our consent to the truth of them. The Arabians, 'tis confess'd, who glory in their Poets and Poetry more than all the world besides, and who, I suppose, first brought the art of Riming into Europe, observe but little these Laws of Aristotle: yet Averois rather chooses to blame the practice of his Countreymen as vicious than to allow any imputation on the doctrine of this Philosopher as imperfect. Fancy with them is predominant, is wild, vast, and unbridled, o're which their judgment has little command or authority: hence their conceptions are monstrous, and have nothing of exactness, nothing of resemblance or proportion.¹⁰

Rymer is well known among his contemporaries as the exceedingly correct champion of the Rules, but Dryden, in a letter to John Dennis, censured him for being too much so: "Shakespear had a Genius for it [tragedy]; and we know, in spite of Mr. R-- that Genius alone is a greater Virtue (if I may so call it) than all other Qualifications put together. You see what success this Learned Critick has found in the

World, after his Blaspheming Shakespear. Almost all the Faults which he has discover'd are truly ther; yet who will read Mr. Rym-- or not read Shakespear?"¹¹ The assumption about the moderns blindly resigning themselves to Aristotle's rules (via Rapin) that Rymer makes is obviously inaccurate, given the external evidence of Dryden's specific contradiction.

Rymer undercuts himself in this passage as well. Describing Aristotle's work as "reducing" the work of the poets to principles has the double effect of suggesting not only synthesis but also diminution; as I have suggested about modern analysis of neoclassical "principles," Dryden asserts that these principles are inadequate to the poetic act and cannot wholly constrain it. In another way, Rymer demonstrates the limitations of the Aristotelian poetic by letting in the Baconian sense of fancy and judgment in his description of Arabian poetry. Still, Rymer takes a line that others generally grant their assent; the unarticulated premise of Rymer's enthymeme in justification of the rules is, as we shall see elsewhere, that the ancients' poetry, from which Aristotle derived his principles, is the most perfect expression of the imitation of nature and thus the most perfect poetry.

Wit's Sun Beneath a Cloud:

John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave

John Sheffield's "Essay upon Poetry" has never been highly valued as a piece of criticism or as poetry. Although it is in no danger here of being "discovered" as either, the piece is in fact quite informative about Sheffield's reflection on his craft. Reminiscent of Davenant's remarks, it employs the same sort of strong verb and simile to describe wit.

'Tis not a Flash of Fancy which sometimes
 Dasling our Minds, sets off the slightest Rimes,
 Bright as a blaze, but in a moment done;
 True Wit is everlasting, like the Sun,
 Which though sometimes beneath a cloud retir'd,
 Breaks out again, and is by all admir'd.
 Number, and Rime, and that harmonious sound,
 Which never does the Ear with harshness wound,
 Are necessary, yet but vulgar Arts,
 For all in vain these superficial parts
 Contribute to the structure of the whole
 Without a Genius too, for that's the Soul,--
 A Spirit which inspires the work throughout,
 As that of Nature moves this World about:
 A heat that glows in every word that's writ,
 That's something of Divine, and more than Wit;
 It self unseen, yet all things by it shown
 Describing all men, but describ'd by none:
 Where dost thou dwell? what caverns of the Brain
 Can such a vast and mighty thing contain?
 When I at idle hours in vain thy absence mourn,
 O where dost thou retire? and why dost thou return,
 Sometimes with powerful charms to hurry me away
 From pleasures of the night and business of the day?
 E'en now, too far transported, I am fain
 To check thy course, and use the needfull rein:
 As all is dullness, when the Fancy's bad,
 So without Judgment, Fancy is but mad;
 And Judgment has a boundless influence,
 Not upon words alone, or only sence,
 But on the world, or manners, and of men:

Fancy is but the Feather of the Pen;
Reason is that substantial, useful part,
Which gains the Head, while t'other wins the Heart.¹²

Like Davenant, Sheffield compares wit to the sun, though in this case the comparison is based on everlastingness rather than breadth of coverage. Wit gives way to genius in importance, however, genius being equated with the soul, spirit, or heat of the work which inspires it as the spirit of nature moves the world. Yet genius fades into fancy, presumably a far lesser term, and Sheffield's exploration of terms becomes a conventional explication of fancy and judgment. Later in the poem he is equally ambiguous about the place of the ancients in modern invention.

The most interesting lines here, from the perspective of asking what poets think they do when they write poetry, are the query lines in which he describes his amazement that the human mind can contain the genius of a poem and bewails the fickleness of his own poetic abilities. It is abundantly clear from his vague and shifting use of terminology that Sheffield does not possess a systematic explanation of his own poetic processes--but it is equally clear that he has attempted to reflect on them and found them largely undescrivable.

Sheffield is not explicit about the meaning of the term wit, although it seems to refer to something akin to genius or fancy if not quite either. Davenant too offered a

relatively broad definition of wit, in contrast with the later famous definition of Pope which has its precursors in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Robert Wolsey, for example, defines "Wit . . . in Poetry, or poetical wit . . . to be nothing else but a true and lively expression of Nature. By Nature I do not only mean all sorts of material Objects and every species of Substance whatsoever, but also general Notions and abstracted Truths, such as exist only in the Minds of men and in the property and relation of things one to another,--in short, whatever has a Being of any kind."¹³ Dryden uses the term in a number of ways, his most famous definition being "a propriety of thought and words," which he reiterates a number of times; elsewhere, especially in his earliest critical writings, he uses wit synonymously with imagination.

Ancients and Moderns:

Sir William Temple and William Wotton

Like Rymer, Sir William Temple is included here as a representative of a point of view often argued against by poets. He has nothing personal to say about poetic invention, but he takes an attitude about the imitation of the ancients which often serves as the opponent of poets' discussions of imitating models--an attitude almost never espoused by practicing poets.

Temple's position is, in short, that modern poets cannot write as well as the ancients because they merely copy them: these modern writings "have little of esteem but what they receive from the Wit, Learning, or Genius of the Authors, and are seldom met with of any excellency, because they do but trace over the Paths that have been beaten by the Ancients, or Comment, Critick, and Flourish upon them, and are at best but Copies after those Originals, unless upon Subjects never touched by them."¹⁴ Arguing against the idea that moderns have more knowledge than the ancients because the former learned from the latter and added to that knowledge the fruit of their own investigations, Temple goes on in the Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning to suggest that the ancients known to his contemporaries benefitted similarly from now-unknown more ancient writers.

The most curious effect of Temple's veneration of the ancients is his attitude toward poetry. In the essay Of Poetry, he too, like Davenant and Sheffield, associates the source of poetry with the sun, explaining that the erroneous idea of inspiration is explained by appeal to the god who supposedly inspired, "Apollo, or the Sun," because poetry requires "a certain Noble and Vital Heat of Temper."¹⁵ This heat effects "that Elevation of Genius which can never be produced by any Art of study, by Pains or by Industry, which cannot be taught by Precepts or Examples."¹⁶ Temple goes on to discuss the additions the poet must make to genius--care,

exactness, elegance, industry, art, application, severity, labor, time, and "a spritely Imagination or Fancy, fertile in a thousand Productions, ranging over infinite Ground, piercing into every Corner, and by the Light of that true Poetical Fire discovering a thousand little Bodies or Images in the World, and Similitudes among them, unseen to common Eyes, and which could not be discovered without the Rays of that Sun."¹⁷

Never once in his discourse on the work of the poet does Temple suggest that he should study the ancient poets, nor does he suggest following the rules extrapolated from their practice. The absence of these admonitions from the champion of ancient over modern learning is surprising, but Temple explains them reasonably enough. As it turns out, modern poets partake of only a ghost of the genius that filled the ancients; true poetry died with Virgil, and Temple's remarks on poetic invention can be taken to refer only remotely to modern poets, if at all. About the Rules, Temple is scornful: "It would be too much Mortification to these great Arbitrary Rules among the French Writers or our own to Observe the worthy Productions that have been formed by their Rules, the Honour they have received in the World, or the Pleasures they have given Mankind. But to comfort them, I do not know there was any great Poet in Greece after the Rules of that Art layd down by Aristotle, not in Rome, after those by Horace, which yet none of our Moderns pretend

to have out-done. . . . After all, the utmost that can be achieved or, I think, pretended by any Rules in this Art is but to hinder some men from being very ill Poets, but not to make any man a very good one."¹⁰

It is remarkable that William Wotton, writing in response to Temple's remarks, comes to such a different conclusion about the moderns' relation to the ancients while agreeing with Temple about the ancients' superiority. Wotton argues that "the best in their kind among the Moderns have been those who have read the Ancients with greatest Care and endeavoured to imitate them with the greatest Accuracy. The Masters of Writing in all these several Ways to this Day appeal to the Ancients as their Guides, and still fetch Rules from them for the Art of Writing. Homer, and Aristotle, and Virgil, and Horace, and Ovid, and Terence are now studied as Teachers, not barely out of Curiosity, by Modern Poets."¹¹ It is not surprising, in light of this view, that Wotton also believes that a modern poet could arise who would surpass the ancients.

Moral Cautions:

Sir Richard Blackmore and George Granville, Lord Lansdowne

The moral purpose of the poet, while not wholly disappearing, is submerged beneath the sea of new terminology in much of the criticism of the later seventeenth century. Just after mid-century Abraham Cowley had urged poets to

look to scripture for invention purposes, arguing that poetry need--indeed should--not be fictional, but for the most part the moral fervor of William of Drummond or Henry Reynolds has disappeared in the work of later critics. Two exceptions come at the end of the century, Sir Richard Blackmore and George Granville.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the author of a heroic poem about King Arthur is anxious to focus on virtue and vice in poetry. Blackmore devotes a lengthy section of his preface to the poem to discussing the high aims of tragedy and epic for the ancients, explaining that poets were in part thought inspired because their work was "to represent Vice as the most odious, and Virtue as the most desirable thing in the World."²⁰

Later, speaking more generally about the work of the poet, Blackmore's final concern is still moral:

A Poet should imploy all his Judgment and Wit, exhaust all the Riches of his Fancy, and abound in Beautiful and Noble Expression, to divert and entertain others; but then it must be with this Prospect, that he may hereby engage their Attention, insinuate more easily into their Minds, and more effectually convey to them wise Instructions. 'Tis below the Dignity of a true Poet to take his Aim at any inferiour End. They are Men of little Genius, of mean and poor Design, that imploy their Wit for no higher Purpose than to please the Imagination of vain and wanton People.²¹

Not for Blackmore are the rhapsodies of Davenant or Sheffield; he employs the standard terminology of the age as if by now (1695) it is indeed standard, but only in service of

Poets are Limners of another kind,
To copy out Idæas in the Mind;
Words are the paint by which their thoughts are shown,
And Nature is their Object to be drawn;
The written Picture we applaud or blame,
But as the just proportions are the same.

But Poetry in fiction takes delight,
And mounting up in Figures out of Sight,
Leaves Truth behind in her audacious flight.²²

Both of these moralistic approaches to poetry are rejected by Dryden at various points in his critical career; that he will reject them in places and advocate them in others is a

part of a general tendency on his part toward what critics have called doubleness, reflecting an all-encompassing flexibility that comes as a part of more poetic self-understanding than has been evidenced by the critical writings of any poet we have yet considered.

John Dryden

The opening remarks of Dryden's earliest piece of criticism reflect an awareness of his own poetic processes that characterizes Dryden's prefaces and critical essays throughout his career:

My Lord, This worthless present was designed you, long before it was a play; when it was only a confused mass of thoughts, tumbling over one another in the dark; when the fancy was yet in its first work, moving the sleeping images of things towards the light, there to be distinguished, and then either chosen or rejected by the judgment; it was yours, my Lord, before I could call it mine. And, I confess, in that first tumult of my thoughts, there appeared a disorderly kind of beauty in some of them, which gave me hope, something worthy my Lord of Orrery might be drawn from them: but I was then in that eagerness of imagination, which, by overpleasing fanciful men, flatters them into the danger of writing; so that, when I had moulded it into that shape it now bears, I looked with such disgust upon it, that the censures of our severest critics are charitable to what I thought (and still think) of it myself.²³

Wrapped in the conventional modesty of poet to patron, the description of his play's unfolding is nevertheless one of the most explicit descriptions of the poet's mental processes we have yet seen. Here the commonly used term

fancy takes on a more concrete sense than is usual, that of sifting through an unorganized body of thought, as does the term judgment, which chooses and rejects the thoughts brought to light by the fancy. This description is not incompatible with other poets' usage of the terms, but it gives a much clearer indication of Dryden's genuine reliance on something he calls fancy and something he calls judgment than do such remarks as Blackmore's admonition to the poet to "Exhaust all the Riches of his Fancy."

Dryden does share with other poets of his age the attitude that fancy is an attribute that requires constant surveillance and repression. In the same essay in which this piece of poetic self-awareness occurs, Dryden speaks of the fancy as needing bounds. He justifies the use of rhyme rather than blank verse on the grounds that rhyme "bounds and circumscribes the fancy. For imagination in a poet is a faculty so wild and lawless, that like an high-ranging spaniel, it must have clogs tied to it, lest it outrun the judgment. The great easiness of blank verse renders the poet too luxuriant; he is tempted to say many things, which might better be omitted, or at least shut up in fewer words; but when the difficulty of artful rhyming is interposed, where the poet commonly confines his sense to his couplet, and must contrive that sense into such words, that the rhyme shall naturally follow them, not they the rhyme; the fancy then gives leisure to the judgment to come in, which, seeing

so heavy a tax imposed, is ready to cut off all unnecessary expenses."²⁴

Fancy and imagination are synonymous in this passage, but a couple of years later, in the Preface to Annus Mirabilis, Dryden separates them and considers imagination to contain both fancy and judgment as well as other poetic attributes, using the spaniel again, now without clogs, to illustrate his sense of the imagination, which is now synonymous with wit.

"The composition of all poems is, or ought to be, of wit; and wit in the poet, or Wit writing, (if you will give me leave to use a school-distinction), is no other than the faculty of imagination in the writer, which, like a nimble spaniel, beats over and ranges through the field of memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after; or, without metaphor, which searches over all the memory for the species or ideas of those things which it designs to represent. Wit written is that which is well defined, the happy result of thought, or product of imagination. But to proceed from wit, in the general notion of it, to the proper wit of an Heroic or Historical Poem, I judge it chiefly to consist in the delightful imagining of persons, actions, passions, or things. 'Tis not the jerk or sting of an epigram, nor the seeming contradiction of a poor antithesis (the delight of an ill-judging audience in a play of rhyme), nor the jingle of a more poor paronomasia; neither is it so much the morality of a grave sentence, affected by Lucan, but more sparingly used by Virgil; but it is some lively and apt description, dressed in such colours of speech, that it sets before your eyes the absent object, as perfectly, and more delightfully than nature. So then the first happiness of the poet's imagination is properly invention, or finding of the thought; the second is fancy, or the variation, deriving, or moulding, of that thought, as the judgment represents it proper to the subject; the third is ilocution, or the art of clothing and adorning that thought, so found and varied, in apt, significant, and sounding words: the quickness of the imagination is seen in the invention, the fertility in the fancy, and the accuracy in the expression."²⁵

No longer is imagination a wild and lawless faculty; now that Dryden is not attempting to justify rhyme he builds the checking function of judgment into poetic wit or imagination and requires no externally imposed boundary. Now fancy and judgment together comprise only one of three aspects of poetic composition.

On the first aspect, invention, Dryden has more to say elsewhere. Although in the 1666 passage he offers a traditional rhetorical definition of invention, which seems rather like the fancy of his Epistle Dedicatory to Orrery, later he comes to associate the term with genius:

Invention is the first part, and absolutely necessary to them both [the painter and the poet]; yet no rule ever was or ever can be given, how to compass it. A happy genius is the gift of nature: it depends on the influence of the stars, say the astrologers; on the organs of the body, say the naturalists; it is the particular gift of Heaven, say the divines, both Christian and heathens. How to improve it, many books can teach us; how to obtain it, none; that nothing can be done without it, all agree . . . Without invention, a painter is but a copier, and a poet but a plagiary of others. Both are allowed sometimes to copy, and translate; but, as our author tells you, that is not the best part of their reputation. Imitators are but a servile kind of cattle, says the poet; or at best, the keepers of cattle for other men: they have nothing which is properly their own: that is a sufficient mortification for me, while I am translating Virgil. But to copy the best author is a kind of praise, if I perform it as I ought; as a copy after Raphael is more to be commended than an original of an indifferent painter.

Under this head of Invention is placed the disposition of the work; to put all things in a beautiful order and harmony, that the whole may be of a piece. The compositions of a painter should be conformable to the text of ancient authors, to the customs, and the times. And this is exactly the same in Poetry; Homer and Virgil are to be our guides in the Epic; . . . in all things we

are to imitate the customs and the times of those persons and things we represent: not to make new rules of the drama, . . . but to be content to follow our masters, who understood Nature better than we. But if the story which we treat be modern, we are to vary the customs, according to the time and the country where the scene of action lies; for this is still to imitate Nature, which is always the same, though in a different dress.²⁶

The transformation of invention by the end of this passage into what seems more like the arrangement or dispositio of classical rhetoric is an indicator of the fluidity of Dryden's terms. As John C. Sherwood has pointed out, Dryden's use of the term invention was particularly shifty, traceable in part to his purpose in invoking the term.²⁷ This fluidity, what Ker labels scepticism, tentativeness, disengagement, Edward Pechter doubleness, Ralph Cohen adaptation, refinement, overexpansion, and redefinition, and Ruth Salvaggio dualities,²⁸ is a strong indicator to me that the work of the poet genuinely was under constant investigation by Dryden, more so than for any of his predecessors, although certainly there is precedent for self-investigation.

This passage also illustrates another "problem" with Dryden's criticism, namely the impossibility of separating out critical issues for identification and discussion. Present here, and interwoven, are invention, genius, imitation of nature, good and bad imitation of the ancients, the relationship of nature and culture, and the Rules. Almost every

passage in which Dryden discusses the poetic process in general (as opposed to his discussions of specific works or writers) is thus entangled, so that sorting Dryden's "thought" into tidy categories is a gargantuan task that one can only admire a Hume or a Pechter or a Cohen for attempting. For the purposes of determining Dryden's level of introspection about his poetic processes, however, this entanglement is informative in itself. Clearly he does not ask himself about imitating other authors in a vacuum; instead, he is sufficiently self-aware to see that his exploration of that question impinges upon his understanding of the workings of his own fancy and judgment, but that the revision of those concepts affect his ideas about the relationship between the work and nature, which in turn influence his attitude toward the use of other authors' works. What Dryden does in his criticism thus amounts not to a project of defining key terms toward a poetic manifesto so much as to a number of turns around the hermeneutic circle, with the whole process of poetic composition (and reception, but that is not my topic here) the object of interpretation. Hence I reiterate the undesirability, given the question of poetic self-understanding, of trying to sort out Dryden's concepts and relate them categorically to those of his contemporaries, and I return to a more or less chronological and holistic examination of the passages from his criticism most relevant to this question.

The implications of the passage cited above for imitation need to be sorted out. Dryden begins with the notion that copying is not the best work of the poet, and that imitators are keepers of the ideas of others. But imitation of the best authors is a kind of praise, if done correctly, and, in fact, in composition it is a positive virtue to follow the guide of the ancient poets or painters. Following them in this matter is in fact to follow nature, because the ancients understood nature better than the moderns understand it, but imitation of the ancients breaks off when the poet comes to represent customs in a story set in the present, since these are the dress of nature and not nature itself. Although it has not occurred to him that what he takes for nature has been culturally transmitted, Dryden is clearly aware of the tension between nature and culture in the admonition to imitate the ancients. Still, he offers no specific breakdown of matters of nature and matters of custom. This problem of imitating an ancient writer while writing a modern poem is one that, as we shall see, receives more systematic consideration in the eighteenth century.

Dryden has not been coy about his own imitations of ancient poets--Shadwell's approach is not for him. Speaking of Annus Mirabilis, he admits that Virgil

has been my master in this poem. I have followed him everywhere, I know not with what success, but I am sure with diligence enough; my images are many of them copied from him, and the rest are imitations of him. My expressions also are as near as the idioms of the two

languages would admit of in translation. And this, Sir, I have done with that boldness, for which I will stand accomptable to any of our little critics, who, perhaps, are not better acquainted with him than I am. . . . In some places, where either the fancy or the words were his, or any other's, I have noted it in the margin, that I might not seem a plagiarist; in others I have neglected it, to avoid as well tediousness, as the affectation of doing it too often."²⁹

Dryden admits to both copying and imitating the images of Virgil, an interesting distinction between letter and spirit, as well as following his language and adopting his "fancy" in places. As was the case with his discussion of the terms fancy and judgment, Dryden's practical, personal treatment of the imitation of another author is much more concrete than his more theoretical discussions of the issue. His exposure of the motivation for noting or not noting imitations seems a further indication of a growing poetic self-consciousness.

If we could take Crites in the essay "Of Dramatick Poesy" to speak for Dryden, we could adduce "much labour and long study" as part of Dryden's claim to poetic skill, for such is required "to imitate the Ancients well," he says, quickly following with the proposition that the ancients were "faithful imitators and wise observers of that Nature which is so torn and ill represented in our plays."³⁰ The interplay among the speakers in the essay, especially as their various concerns and opinions relate to the imitation of nature, through or beside the ancients and the Rules,

seems more to the point of Dryden's interest in the poetic process than does any single speaker's position on any topic, although Eugenius and Neander do arguably have the favored positions--i.e., the last word. It seems significant that Eugenius does not deny the truth of what Crites says but rather adds to it: admitting that modern writers have profitted by the rules and example of the ancients, he points out that

to these assistances we have joined our own industry; for, had we sat down with a dull imitation of them, we might then have lost somewhat of the old perfection, but never acquired any that was new. We draw not therefore after their lines, but those of Nature; and having the life before us, besides the experience of all they knew, it is no wonder if we hit some airs and features which they have missed. I deny not what you urge of arts and sciences, that they have flourished in some ages more than others; but your instance in philosophy makes for me: for if natural causes be more known now than in the time of Aristotle, because more studied, it follows that poesy and other arts may, with the same pains, arrive still nearer to perfection; and, that granted, it will rest for you to prove that they wrought more perfect images of human life than we; which seeing in your discourse you have avoided to make good, it shall now be my task to show you some part of their defects, and some few excellencies of the Moderns.³¹

In a few decades, Pope will dismiss the debate between imitating the ancients and imitating nature directly with the enigmatic "to imitate nature is to imitate them," but for Dryden the two are still fundamentally in conflict and deserve exploration.

Although imitation is the starting point for any discussion of what the poet does, Dryden does not allow it to be

taken too literally or applied indiscriminately. Admitting that rhyming talk among characters is "unnatural," he argues that "'tis true, that to imitate well is a poet's work; but to affect the soul, and excite the passions, and, above all, to move admiration (which is the delight of serious plays), a bare imitation will not serve. The converse, therefore, which a poet is to imitate, must be heightened with all the arts and ornaments of poesy; and must be such as, strictly considered, could never be supposed spoken by any without premeditation." In fact, writing dramatic dialogue in prose would be too natural: "one great reason why prose is not to be used in serious plays, is, because it is too near the nature of converse: there may be too great a likeness; as the most skilful painters affirm, that there may be too near a resemblance in a picture: to take every lineament and feature is not to make an excellent piece, but to take so much only as will make a beautiful resemblance of the whole: and, with an ingenious flattery of nature, to heighten the beauties of some parts, and hide the deformities of the rest."³² Thus, in the process of preventing nature from deterring him in his sense of what should be done in the drama, Dryden hits upon the distinction, though he does not so name it here, between particular and general nature. Still, even imitation of general nature does not adequately account for the poet's purpose, "for moral truth is the mistress of the poet as much as of the philosopher; Poesy

must resemble natural truth, but it must be ethical."³³

In his Preface to An Evening's Love; or, The Mock Astrologer, Dryden again takes up the question of his own reliance on other poets in response to contemporary attacks on him for adapting the stories of others:

But these little critics do not well consider what is the work of a poet, and what the graces of a poem: the story is the least part of either: I mean the foundation of it, before it is modelled by the art of him who writes it; who forms it with more care, by exposing only the beautiful parts of it to view, than a skilful lapidary sets a jewel. On this foundation of the story, the characters are raised: and, since no story can afford characters enough for the variety of the English stage, it follows, that it is to be altered and enlarged with new persons, accidents, and designs, which will almost make it new. When this is done, the forming it into acts and scenes, disposing of actions and passions into their proper places, and beautifying both with descriptions, similitudes, and propriety of language, is the principal employment of the poet; as being the largest field of fancy, which is the principal quality required in him: for so much the word [poietés] implies. Judgment, indeed, is necessary in him; but 'tis fancy that gives the life-touches, and the secret graces to it; especially in serious plays, which depend not much on observation. For, to write humour in comedy (which is the theft of poets from mankind), little of fancy is required; the poet observes only what is ridiculous and pleasant folly, and by judging exactly what is so, he pleases in the representation of it.³⁴

Dryden speaks in similar terms in the Preface to Troilus and Cressida, in which he describes his excavation of

Shakespeare's "heap of rubbish": "I new-modelled the plot, . . . improved . . . characters, . . . made . . . an order and connexion of all the scenes . . . [and] refined his language." Although Dryden has certainly waxed poetical on the finding of ideas elsewhere, in this passage and the previous

one his focus of poetic activity seems to be the disposition or arrangement of elements.

The idea that the poet is a maker like God has its precedent in Sidney but has been generally absent from English criticism since the Apology. It arises again in Dryden's "Parallel of Poetry and Painting": "the artful painter and the sculptor, imitating the Divine Maker, form to themselves, as well as they are able, a model of the superior beauties; and reflecting on them, endeavour to correct and amend the common nature, and to represent it as it was at first created, without fault, either in colour, or in lineament."³³ But Dryden is quoting Bellori here, and comments wryly on these ideas that "in these pompous expressions, or such as these, the Italian has given you his Idea of a Painter; and though I cannot much commend the style, I must needs say, there is somewhat in the matter. Plato himself is accustomed to write loftily, imitating, as the critics tell us, the manner of Homer; but surely that inimitable poet had not so much of smoke in his writing, though not less of fire. But in short, this is the present genius of Italy."³⁴ Dryden goes on to cite Philostratus as "somewhat plainer," advocating that the painter must understand and represent human nature. It is curious that Dryden neither elaborates on nor argues against the position of Bellori; he seems concept-deaf, so to speak, to the

difference between imitation of nature and imitation of God creating nature.

Later in this essay Dryden offers perhaps his longest explication of the imitation of nature in relation to pleasing the audience:

To imitate Nature well in whatsoever subject, is the perfection of both arts; and that picture, and that poem, which comes nearest to the resemblance of Nature, is the best. But it follows not, that what pleases most in either kind is therefore good, but what ought to please. Our depraved appetites, and ignorance of the arts, mislead our judgments, and cause us often to take that for true imitation of Nature which has no resemblance of Nature in it. To inform our judgments, and to reform our tastes, rules were invented, that by them we might discern when Nature was imitated, and how nearly. I have been forced to recapitulate these things, because mankind is not more liable to deceit, than it is willing to continue in a pleasing error, strengthened by a long habitude. The imitation of Nature is therefore justly constituted as the general, and indeed the only, rule of pleasing, both in Poetry and Painting. Aristotle tells us, that imitation pleases, because it affords matter for a reasoner to inquire into the truth or falsehood of imitation, by comparing its likeness, or unlikeness, with the original; but by this rule every speculation in nature, whose truth falls under the inquiry of a philosopher, must produce the same delight; which is not true. I should rather assign another reason. Truth is the object of our understanding, as good is of our will; and the understanding can no more be delighted with a lie, than the will can choose an apparent evil. As truth is the end of all our speculations, so the discovery of it is the pleasure of them; and since a true knowledge of Nature gives us pleasure, a lively imitation of it, either in Poetry or Painting, must of necessity produce a must greater: for both these arts, as I said before, are not only true imitations of Nature, but of the best Nature, of that which is wrought up to a nobler pitch. They present us with images more perfect than the life in any individual; and we have the pleasure to see all the scattered beauties of Nature united by a happy chemistry, without its deformities or faults. They are imitations of the passions, which always move, and therefore consequently please; for

without motion there can be no delight, which cannot be considered but as an active passion." 37

Here Dryden regards the imitation of nature as the only rule of pleasing, but says that the rules have been created to help us recognize the true imitation that should please. Recipients of art are prone to misjudgment of whether nature has been truly imitated because, essentially, they are fallen, yet somehow artists, presumably also fallen, are able to discern the perfect image of general nature. Without even introducing the external conflict of Dryden's assertion in the Preface to Ovid that readers, who feel human passions, are perfectly suited to judge whether they have been imitated accurately,³⁸ one may conclude that in his reflection on poetic creation and reception Dryden's reach has exceeded his grasp.

Sometimes, however, Dryden suggests, a poet's grasp may exceed his reach. In a return to very personal description of his own poetic activity (which characterizes both his earliest and his latest critical writing, with years of more objective commentary in between), Dryden opens the "Preface to the Fables" on that note: "'Tis with a Poet, as with a man who designs to build, and is very exact, as he supposes, in casting up the cost beforehand; but, generally speaking, he is mistaken in his account, and recons short of the expense he first intended. He alters his mind as the work proceeds, and will have this or that convenience more, of

which he had not thought when he began. So has it happened to me; I have built a house, where I intended but a lodge."³⁹ We are back, in reverse, to the spaniel of the Preface to Rival Ladies; this time the imagination breaks out of initially imposed control. Dryden's subsequent remarks in this essay confirm the suggestion that his judgment and his fancy have redistributed themselves in his makeup and also comprise a poignant finale to a long career of critical reflection on his own poetic processes:

I think myself as vigorous as ever in the faculties of my soul, excepting only my memory, which is not impaired to any great degree; and if I lose not more of it, I have no great reason to complain. What judgment I had, increases rather than diminishes; and thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to choose or to reject, to run them into verse, or to give them the other harmony of prose: I have so long studied and practised both, that they are grown into a habit, and become familiar to me.⁴⁰

Aside from explicit remarks in his critical essays and what may be inferred from poems such as "MacFlecknoe," we have information about Dryden's understanding of the poet's work only in a few of his letters to young poets. The only sustained piece of advice comes from very late in his life, in a letter addressed to Elizabeth Thomas, which reads

The great Desire which I observe in you to write well, and those good Parts which God Almighty and Nature have bestowed on you, make me not to doubt that by Application to Study, and the Reading of the best Authors, you may be absolute Mistress of Poetry. 'Tis an unprofitable Art, to those who profess it; but you, who write only for your Diversion, may pass your Hours with Pleasure in it, and without Prejudice, always

avoiding (as I know you will) the Licenses which Mrs. Behn allowed herself, of writing loosely, and giving (if I may have leave to say so) some Scandal to the Modesty of her sex. . . .

In the mean Time, I would advise you not to trust too much to Virgil's Pastorals; for as excellent as they are, yet, Theocritus is far before him, both in Softness of Thought, and Simplicity of Expression.⁴¹

What Dryden has to say here is quite conventional, adding nothing to our knowledge of his views on writing poetry in its sketchy adherence to the basic pattern of natural genius added to consultation of the ancient poets. The character of the advice, coupled with the moralizing about Aphra Behn, suggests that Thomas's gender was a constraint on Dryden's remarks.

To William Walsh in 1691 Dryden offers considerable specific critique of a work, admiring the "easy and naturall" style, the "correctness of the English," the "disposition of the piece," and its "thoughts." He discusses specific word choices and grammatical constructions in Walsh's work but tells Thomas he has no time for that sort of critique.⁴² Later he thanks Walsh on behalf of all present and future poets in England for "freeing them from the too servile imitation of the Ancients" in a preface of his.⁴³

It should be evident that Dryden exhibits in his criticism a much higher level of poetic introspection than any poet before him. As John L. Mahoney puts it, "although he lived and moved in the great tradition of neoclassicism

and knew something of 'the burden of the past' and 'the anxiety of influence,' he is a critic more liberal, more flexible, and more searching than any in the Renaissance and seventeenth century."⁴⁴ But Mahoney goes too far in resigning Sidney, Jonson, and Rymer to "the tradition of authority" against which we measure Dryden,⁴⁵ for each of these poets--along with many others--has investigated the act of writing poetry in some way that makes Dryden's more thorough discussion possible. Edward Pechter comes closer, I believe, to an accurate assessment of Dryden's relationship to the past: "Though Jonson, in deflecting criticism from its metaphysical concerns, brought it closer to conversation and specificity, he only suggested possibilities which, the exchange between Davenant and Hobbes notwithstanding, were not realized until Dryden. Dryden organized these possibilities into a fully working assumption, a new assumption, that the intelligent discussion and evaluation of literature based upon an understanding of its internal proprieties--the 'rules' if you wish--was a pursuit justifiable in its own terms."⁴⁶ And Dryden in turn, I should like to think, made possible the yet greater poetic self-knowledge of the eighteenth century and, eventually, that of the Romantic Movement.

Chapter 4

Living in the House that Dryden Built: Poetic Self-Awareness in the Eighteenth Century

If the intensity of Dryden's reflection on his craft is anomalous in his century, it nevertheless anticipates the century to come. Until his career, the amount of concern poets showed for their own composing processes increased very gradually over the decades from the late sixteenth century through the seventeenth; as T. S. Eliot remarked, "Dryden was the first poet to theorize, on any large scale, about his own craft."¹ But after Dryden, reflection on the work of the poet suddenly proliferated in exponential relation to its previous growth.

In fact, the role of the poet in describing the poetic process becomes an explicit issue early in the eighteenth century. In his "Discourse Upon Comedy" of 1702, George Farquhar argues, against the authority of Aristotle, that poets ought to be responsible for determining the principles of poetic composition. Aristotle was not a poet, he points out again and again, and only supposedly based his poetic principles on the poetry of Homer. "Had Homer himself by the same inspiration that he wrote his poem left us any rules for such a performance, all the world must have owned it for authentic. But he was too much a poet to give rules to that whose excellence he knew consisted in a free and

unlimited flight of imagination; and to describe the spirit of poetry, which alone is the true art of poetry, he knew to be as impossible as for human reason to teach the gift of prophecy by a definition."²

Even if rules for composing poetry could be enunciated, argues Farquhar, no set of rules for writing poetry could conceivably apply to both Homer and the eighteenth-century poet since their cultural circumstances are so different. Taking to heart his own arguments, Farquhar describes his dramatic aims but does not pretend to provide universal rules for writing comedy; for his own day he prescribes writing "a well-framed tale handsomely told as an agreeable vehicle for counsel or reproof" while taking the English audience into consideration and following English common sense.³

Writing four years later, Isaac Watts provides an amusing counterpoint to Farquhar's self-sufficient poetic composition. Watts considers poetry to be essentially a divine gift and bewails its secularization. By their poetry, the first poets--David, Solomon, Isaiah--"brought so much of heaven down to this lower world as the darkness of that dispensation would admit, and now and then a divine and poetic rapture lifted their souls far above the level of that economy of shadows, bore them away far into a brighter region, and gave them a glimpse of evangelic day."⁴ Working from this definition of poetry as inspired, Watts condemns those

who denounce poetry and prefer the "driest translation of the psalm" as well as the secular poets such as Dryden who could "with little toil and expense . . . furnish out a Christian poem" rather than "a modern play."⁸ He also bases his judgment of specific poetic practices--e.g. the use of visions or machines--on their presence or absence in scripture.

Watts has a good bit to say about his own composing processes as well, although he unfortunately does not describe the sensation of being divinely inspired. Poetry is only leisure for him, he says, but he has written to "assist the meditations and worship of vulgar Christians." To this end he has attempted to avoid any sentiments that might be interpreted as referring to "wanton passions," and he has attempted to speak straightforwardly and gently: "When I have felt a slight inclination to satire or burlesque, I thought it proper to suppress it. The grinning and the growling Muses are not hard to be obtained; but I would disdain their assistance where a manly invitation to virtue and a friendly smile may be successfully employed."⁹ After explaining his choice of rhyme and meter and apologizing for the imperfections of his poems, Watts ends his remarks on an apocalyptic note with the prediction that poetic perfection will never be possible until "the seventh angel has sounded his awful trumpet, till the victory be complete over the beast and his image, when the natives of heaven shall join

in consort with prophets and saints, and sing to their golden harps, 'salvation, honor, and glory to Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, forever.'"⁷

Also standing in opposition--though of a different sort from Watts'--to Farquhar in the first decade of the eighteenth century is Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury. In his "Soliloquy: Or Advice to an Author" of 1710, later included in his Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, Shaftesbury argues that writers ought to ignore the taste of the age because truth is universal and to be found in nature, though "nature methodiz'd." The poet is first to enact the principle "know thyself," then to discern the universal principles of beauty and truth by studying nature as universally acclaimed artists such as Homer and the philosophers interpret it. He offers a long explanation of what the poet does (and does not do):

I must confess there is hardly anywhere to be found a more insipid race of mortals than those whom moderns are contented to call poets for having attained the chiming faculty of a language with an injudicious random use of wit and fancy. But for the man who truly and in a just sense deserves the name of poet and who, as real master or architect in the kind, can describe both men and manners and give to an action its just body and proportions, he will be found, if I mistake not, a very different creature. Such a poet is indeed a second maker, . . . he forms a whole, coherent and proportioned in itself, with due subjection and subordinancy of constituent parts. He notes the boundaries of the passions and knows their exact tones and measures, . . . distinguishes the beautiful from the deformed, the amiable from the odious. The moral artist who can thus imitate the Creator, and is thus knowing in the inward form and structure of his fellow creature, will hardly . . . be

found unknowing in himself or at a loss in those numbers which make the harmony of a mind.■

That the dramatist, religionist, and moralist should have such differing yet well-defined opinions about the writing of poetry in the first decade of the eighteenth century hints at the pervasive character of prose reflection on the poetic process throughout the rest of the century. Indeed, the years immediately following the publication of Shaftesbury's Characteristics see the publication of numerous pieces on the poetic process--in general or in regard to particular poets--in the periodicals as well as in the prefaces of poets, editors, and translators. This state of affairs implies a "common reader" more taken with the work of poetry, and poets more confident of poetry as a vocation rather than an avocation, than ever before in the history of English letters.

The periodical remarks of Addison on the poetic process exemplify both the high level of concern with poetic theory and the presence of a broad-based reading public. Writing as the Spectator, Addison generally concerns himself more with forming and improving the taste of his readers than with describing the poetic process. Hence several issues of The Spectator, beginning with No. 58, treat the discernment of true and false wit; it is only as an aside that Addison consigns Dryden's definition of wit to the "too general" category and suggests that it is an appropriate description

of good writing. Within that overriding concern for the audience and for taste (which is not atypical of the century), however, he does touch on the poet's work to some extent.

While Addison offers no systematic explanation of the poetic process, his various opinions scattered through the essays of The Spectator comprise a fairly coherent whole. His definition of true wit is a good starting point: citing Locke's definition of wit as "the Assemblage of Ideas . . . wherein can be found any Resemblance or Congruity" in The Spectator, No. 62, he goes on to explicate and illustrate this definition as it applies to poetry.⁹ Here Addison taps into the growing eighteenth-century psychology of the association of ideas, to which Martin Kallich has attributed a shift away from "the traditional classical ideas of imitation." As Kallich goes on to say, "the analysis of the plastic imagination upon which genius and the poetic process depend, together with that of the passive imagination upon which the esthetic response and taste depend, is a major contribution of the associationist approach."¹⁰

And indeed it is the case that the concept of genius looms large in Addison's scattered remarks about the poetic process, as it does in writing throughout the century. Later in The Spectator, No. 62, Addison explores the consequences of his concept of wit for poetic composition, saying

That the Basis of all Wit is Truth; and that no Thought can be valuable, of which good Sense is not the Ground-work. . . . This is the natural Way of Writing, that beautiful Simplicity, which we so much admire in the Compositions of the Ancients; and which no Body deviates from, but those who want Strength of Genius to make a Thought shine in its own natural Beauties. Poets who want this Strength of Genius to give that Majestick Simplicity to Nature, which we so much admire in the Works of the Ancients, are forced to hunt after foreign Ornaments, and not to let any Piece of Wit of what Kind soever escape them.¹¹

Addison devotes the whole of The Spectator, No. 160, to the question of genius. "My Design in this Paper," he says, "is to consider what is properly a great Genius, and to throw some Thoughts together on so uncommon a subject."¹² He identifies two classes of great geniuses, a distinction that becomes commonplace later in the century, those who "by the meer Strength of natural Parts, and without any Assistance of Art or Learning, have produced Works that were the Delight of their own Times and the Wonder of Posterity"¹³--exemplified by Homer, Solomon, and Shakespeare--and "those that have formed themselves by Rules, and submitted the Greatness of their natural Talents to the Corrections and Restraints of Art"¹⁴--exemplified by Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Tully, Milton, and Bacon.

Genius for Addison seems clearly to depend on innate ability, and he warns poets against ignoring their own abilities in favor of imitating others--unlike Jonson, for whom following tradition carried the greater importance. "The great Danger in these latter kind of Genius," says

Addison, "is, lest they cramp their own Abilities too much by Imitation, and form themselves altogether upon Models, without giving the full Play to their own natural Parts. An Imitation of the best Authors, is not to compare with a good Original; and I believe we may observe that very few Writers make an extraordinary Figure in the World, who have not something in their Way of thinking or expressing themselves that is peculiar to them and entirely their own."¹⁹

Imagination takes precedence over imitation for Addison. His only remarks about imitation involve warnings such as that cited above, although he does assume that poetry in some way presents or represents nature; in fact in this essay on genius he explicitly denounces imitating without being true to one's own imagination. Pindar was a great genius, he says, and a poet "who was hurried on by a natural Fire and Impetuosity to vast Conceptions of things, and noble Sallies of Imagination." But modern poets, "Men of a sober and moderate Fancy," who imitate Pindar's "singular" and "inimitable" works, "following Irregularities by Rule, and by the little Tricks of Art straining after the most unbounded Flights of Nature" are simply ridiculous. However great the poets of the past, their genius is not reproducible; modern poets must attend to their own imaginations.

In the seventh of his essays on "The Pleasures of the Imagination," Addison offers some reasonably direct remarks on the workings of the imagination within the poetic mind:

It would be in vain to inquire whether the power of imagining things strongly proceeds from any greater perfection in the soul, or from any nicer texture in the brain, of one man than of another. But this is certain: that a noble writer should be born with this faculty in its full strength and vigor, so as to be able to receive lively ideas from outward objects, to retain them long, and to range them together, upon occasion, in such figures and representations as are most likely to hit the fancy of the reader. A poet should take as much pains in forming his imagination as a philosopher in cultivating his understanding. He must gain a due relish of the works of nature, and be thoroughly conversant in the various scenery of country life.

When he is stored with country images, if he would go beyond pastoral and the lower kinds of poetry, he ought to acquaint himself with the pomp and magnificence of courts. . . . Such advantages as these help to open a man's thoughts and to enlarge his imagination, and will therefore have their influence on all kinds of writing if the author knows how to make right use of them.¹⁶

Near the end of this essay, he ties the imagination explicitly to the idea of genius, saying that Milton is "a perfect master in all these arts of working on the imagination," and that any defects in Paradise Lost are the fault of the English language and not of Milton's genius.¹⁷

Thus for Addison the key concepts in understanding the composition of poetry are wit, genius, and imagination, in contrast to the more prominent nature and imitation in the critical theory of the previous century. And unlike any of the poets of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, Addison grounds his remarks in very distinct explanations of the way

the mind works. While previous poets clearly were working out of some understanding of imagination as mediator between sensory impressions and reason, none of them ventured to explicate that connection with reference to poetry beyond Puttenham's and Sidney's defensive remarks relevant to poetry as lying. By contrast Addison repeatedly cites Locke or appeals to his readers' psychological experience in his discussion of the imagination and tries, if in ways that now sounds naive, to explore the concept more thoroughly. Despite the attempt at a physiological explanation of imagination as a product of brain texture, Addison's discussion has much more in common with a Romantic sensibility than with that of the Renaissance.¹⁰

Like Addison, Pope is very much concerned with the effect of poetry upon its audience. As a prolific poet, however, he devotes himself much more intensely than does Addison to contemplating the production of poetry by the poet. In fact, within the narrow scholarly world of Pope studies, it is unnecessary to establish Pope's habit of reflection about his work as a poet. At least since the late 1960s this matter has been under investigation; indeed, a number of recent books are predicated on the assumption that Pope was poetically quite self-aware and at the same time less committed to the carefully delineated "neoclassicism" than earlier critics supposed.¹¹ Thus Dustin H. Griffin devotes Alexander Pope: The Poet in the Poems to

"recover[ing] some of the personal energy that invigorates Pope's greatest poems and makes them vividly self-expressive products of an imagination intrigued with and often at odds with itself, and yet more sharply at odds with the world,"²⁰ and Leopold Damrosch considers Pope "an early instance of the modern poet" in The Imaginative World of Alexander Pope, arguing that he "consciously put together a self, with much planning and revision."²¹ The existence of such critical works about Pope and no other poets before him suggests not that modern Pope scholars have been unusually perceptive about his self-understanding, but that there is simply more in Pope to perceive than there is in any previous writers other than Dryden.

Modern students of Pope, however, aware of his self-consciousness as they are, tend to dwell on his poetry in their discussions, or to pay more attention to the poet's overall self-awareness than to the narrower issue of his understanding of his own poetic processes. Lillian Feder, for example, has considered "Pope's Definition of his Art," arguing that "in one respect his whole career can be regarded as an attempt to establish and define the art of satire as he practiced it."²² As might be expected, she dwells on the satirical poetry in developing her argument.

The very fact that Pope felt able to convey his understanding of the art of poetry satirically strongly suggests that he held a well-developed view of that art. (So

much of Pope's poetry is in a sense "about" poetry, indeed, that carrying out my intention to consider prose about poetry rather than poetry that may be obliquely about poetry is justifiable here only because others--notably Griffin and Damrosch--have already done so good a job on the poet in the poetry.) In the satirical Art of Sinking in Poetry, Pope's discussion of the "true Profound" incorporates such terms as genius and imagination in such a way as to identify not just wrongheaded poetry-writing but the norm for poetic composition as well. "If we search the Authors of Antiquity, we shall find as few to have been distinguish'd in the true Profound, as in the true Sublime. And the very same thing (as it appears from Longinus) had been imagin'd of that, as now of this; namely, that it was entirely the Gift of Nature. I grant, that to excel in the Bathos a Genius is requisite; yet the Rules of Art must be allow'd so far useful, as to add Weight, or as I may say, hang on Lead, to facilitate and enforce our Descent, to guide us to the most advantageous Declivities, and habituate our Imagination to a Depth of thinking."²³ Genius and imagination are, apparently, the primary elements of poetry, but must be informed by art in order to function appropriately and well.

In his discussion of Shakespeare Pope provides a more straightforward description of the poetic process, or at least of Shakespeare's as he sees it. "If ever any Author deserved the name of an Original, it was Shakespeare. . . .

The Poetry of Shakespear was inspiration indeed: he is not so much an Imitator, as an Instrument, of Nature; and 'tis not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks thro' him."²⁴ This passage is curiously anomalous; nowhere else does Pope treat inspiration or originality as poetic ideals, nor does he in theory or practice generally shun imitation of authors or of nature.

To some extent Pope's purpose in this passage may elucidate his remarks; he is, after all, writing a preface about a writer whose works he has collected in a book he hopes to sell--praise is to be expected. Such a departure from what we think of as standard Popean terminology, however, is inadequately explained by commercial motives. It may also be the case that Pope's thinking about the poetic process is moving away from "neoclassical" ideas and terminology, but, if that is so, his thinking moves back toward those ideas and that terminology rather rapidly.

The most relevant passage to hold up in explanation of these remarks on Shakespeare, I think, is the following from An Essay on Criticism:

When first young Maro in his boundless mind
A Work t' outlast Immortal Rome design'd,
Perhaps he seem'd above the Critick's Law,
And but from Nature's Fountains scorn'd to draw:
But when t' examine ev'ry Part he came,
Nature and Homer were, he found, the same:
Learn hence for Ancient Rules a just Esteem;
To copy Nature is to copy Them.²⁵

The difficulty that I cite in Pope's Preface to The Works of Shakespeare is perhaps a function of temporal and psychological distance rather than a radical disparity in Pope's thought. Although imitation was a conscious activity in the work of eighteenth-century (and earlier) poets, it was more than that, as we may have extrapolated from Ascham's description of the third kind of imitation and as Howard Weinbrot explains in The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire.²⁶ Imitation involved being steeped in tradition and grew naturally out of the way that the eighteenth-century person perceived the world. It seems, to judge from Addison's remarks so early in the century, that empirical philosophy and the new science gradually undermine this cast of mind over the course of the eighteenth century, although to some extent classically educated poets persist in it into the twentieth century despite the predominance of romantic poetic theory. This immersion in other poets' ways of thinking is difficult to appropriate in the wholly different late twentieth century, although the most recent critical theory has come back around, with a difference, to a similar perspective.²⁷ Indeed, Pope's statement that to copy nature is to copy the ancients remarkably anticipates late twentieth-century views on the "enlanguaged" character of reality as expressed by such theorists as E. H. Gombrich in his Art and Illusion.

In fact, Pope had already dealt with the relationship between the ancients and a person's own ideas in the Preface to *The Works of 1717*:

All that is left us is to recommend our productions by the imitation of the Ancients: and it will be found true, that in every age, the highest character for sense and learning has been obtain'd by those who have been most indebted to them. For to say truth, whatever is very good sense must have been common sense in all times; and what we call Learning, is but the knowledge of the sense of our predecessors. Therefore they who say our thoughts are not our own because they resemble the Ancients, may as well say our faces are not our own, because they are like our Fathers: And indeed it is very unreasonable, that people should expect us to be Scholars, and yet be angry to find us so.²⁰

Similarly, as Weinbrot points out, Pope had connected imitation of the ancients with inspiration as early as 1712 in a letter to Steele. Speaking of his "Dying Christian to his Soul," he says "You have it (as Cowley calls it) just warm from the brain. It came to me the first moment I waked this morning: Yet you'll see it was not so absolutely inspiration, but that I had in my head not only the verses of Adrian, but the fine fragments of Sapho."²¹ These explanations must be understood to temper Pope's remarks on Shakespeare's originality; it seems more the case that Shakespeare either bypassed the ordinary studious route to truth or that he imitated less consciously than most of his contemporaries and successors than that he had access to some "truer truth" than anyone else; Pope's use of the terms "originality" and "inspiration" should probably not be

construed as the high praise that would be implicit in modern usage, nor can they fairly be regarded as the groundless invention meant by casual modern speakers.

Pope has something to say about what is not the poetic process in reference to the work of Crashaw. In a letter to Henry Cromwell in 1710, he remarks that "I take him to have writ like a Gentleman, that is at leisure hours, and more to keep out of idleness, than to establish a reputation: so that nothing regular or just can be expected from him. All that regards design, form, fable, (which is the Soul of Poetry) all that concerns exactness, or consent of parts, (which is the body) will probably be wanting . . . no man can be a great Poet, who writes for diversion only. These Authors should be consider'd as Versifiers, and witty men, rather than as Poets."³⁰ Thus Pope seems to share with Jonson a sense that writing poetry requires long hours of hard work, and to value a balance, in seventeenth century terms, of fancy and judgment.

Pope must have forgotten his implicit censure of Crashaw when he wrote the opening lines of his own poetic self-defense in the Preface to The Works of 1717, although by the second paragraph of it he has again asserted the importance of taking adequate time and pain in the production of poetry:

I confess it was want of consideration that made me an author; I writ because it amused me; I corrected because

it was as pleasant to me to correct as to write; and I publish'd because I was told I might please such as it was a credit to please. To what degree I have done this, I am really ignorant; I had too much fondness for my productions to judge of them at first, and too much judgment to be pleas'd with them at last. But I have reason to think they can have no reputation which will continue long, or which deserves to do so: for they have always fallen short not only of what I read of others, but even of my own Ideas of Poetry.

If any one should imagine I am not in earnest, I desire him to reflect, that the Ancients (to say the least of them) had as much Genius as we; and that to take more pains, and employ more time, cannot fail to produce more complete pieces. They constantly apply'd themselves not only to that art, but to that single branch of an art, to which their talent was most powerfully bent; and it was the business of their lives to correct and finish their works for posterity. If we can pretend to have used the same industry, let us expect the same immortality: Tho' if we took the same care, we should still lie under a farther misfortune: they writ in languages that became universal and everlasting, while ours are extremely limited both in extent, and in duration. A mighty foundation for our pride! when the utmost we can hope, is but to be read in one Island, and to be thrown aside at the end of one Age.

. . . . I fairly confess that I have serv'd my self all I could by reading; that I made use of the judgment of authors dead and living; that I omitted no means in my power to be inform'd of my errors, both by my friends and enemies; and that I expect not to be excus'd in any negligence on account of youth, want of leisure, or any other idle allegations: But the true reason these pieces are not more correct, is owing to the consideration how short a time they, and I, have to live: One may be ashamed to consume half one's days in bringing sense and rhyme together; and what Critic can be so unreasonable as not to leave a man time enough for any more serious employment, or more agreeable amusement?³¹

A recurrent theme in Pope's remarks on the poetic process is the interplay of genius and hard work. In this passage Pope seems to assume that innate poetic ability underlies a successful career as a poet, but he emphasizes reading and revision to a much greater extent--perhaps because those are

matters in his control, as the quality of his genius is not. Ten years earlier Pope had written to Wycherly on the very problem of weighing method against art³²; in that letter as in this Preface, he essentially prefers to discuss method. The problem with genius, he says, is that it "is hard to be distinguish'd by a man himself, from a strong inclination, and if it be never so great, he can not at first discover it any other way, than by that prevalent propensity which renders him the more liable to be mistaken. The only method he has, is to make the experiment by writing, and appealing to the judgment of others."³³

Although Pope problematizes such terms as imitation and genius in a way that Dryden did not, his career of introspection in prose very much resembles Dryden's. Through remarks on poetic composition generally, evaluations of other poets, and descriptions of his own motivation and habits of composition, he sketches out a fairly complete picture of his understanding of the poetic process in his critical essays and letters. And, like Dryden, his sense of himself as a poet led to retrospective evaluations of himself late in life. Like Dryden writing in the Preface to The Fables, Pope writes what amounts to a slightly premature post mortem on his career to Swift in 1736:

My understanding indeed, such as it is, is extended rather than diminish'd: I see things more in the whole, more consistent, and more clearly deduced from, and related to, each other. But what I gain on the side of

philosophy, I lose on the side of poetry: the flowers are gone, when the fruits begin to ripen, and the fruits perhaps will never ripen perfectly. The climate (under our Heaven of a Court) is but cold and uncertain: the winds rise, and the winter comes on. I find myself but little disposed to build a new house; I have nothing left but to gather up the reliques of a wreck, and look about me to see how few friends I have left. Pray whose esteem or admiration should I desire now to procure by my writings? whose friendship or conversation to obtain by 'em? I am a man of desperate fortunes, that is a man whose friends are dead: for I never aim'd at any other fortune than in friends.³⁴

The types of writing done by Pope and Addison are typical of eighteenth-century poetic theory. No longer do remarks on the poetic process come primarily in self-justifying prefaces or in privately disseminated pieces, although, as Pope's Preface to The Works of 1717 and his letters demonstrate, those occasions for reflection on the poetic process are still available. Prefaces to another poet's works and periodical essays, however, present so many opportunities for reflection on the composing process to so wide an audience--and writers clearly avail themselves of these opportunities--that it seems reasonable to assume a higher level of interest than ever before among poets and their audience in the writing process itself.

Attempting to find and discuss every published mention of the poetic process in the eighteenth century is a task beyond the scope of this chapter, but I should like to examine a few examples from early in the century, apart from those of the better-known Addison and Pope, as an indicator of the prevalence of such remarks. In his six-volume

edition of the works of Spenser (1715), John Hughes included his own "Remarks on the Fairy Queen," and "Remarks on the Shepherd's Calendar, etc." A poet himself, Hughes allows something of his own understanding of the poetic process to filter through his discussion of Spenser. Perhaps not surprisingly, Hughes emphasizes the issues of imagination, genius, and imitation in his discussion, opening his "Remarks on the Fairy Queen" by saying that the poem's "chief merit" is "that surprising vein of fabulous invention which runs through it." Working out of the rhetorical tradition, in which Spenser was certainly at least partially situated, we might interpret "fabulous invention" to mean the finding of appropriate fables, but the rhetorical tradition has been tempered enough in Hughes that he goes on to attribute possession by "a kind of poetical magic" and "torrent[s] of . . . imagination" to him.³⁸ This "range of fancy which was so remarkably his talent," this "genius," accounts for Spenser's choice of models in the Faerie Queene, as Hughes explains at some length:

It may seem strange indeed, since Spenser appears to have been well acquainted with the best writers of antiquity, that he has not imitated them in the structure of his story. Two reasons may be given for this. The first is that at the time when he wrote, the Italian poets, whom he has chiefly imitated, and who were the first revivers of this art among the moderns, were in the highest vogue and were universally read and admired. But the chief reason was probably that he chose to frame his fable after a model which might give the greatest scope to that range of fancy which was so remarkably his talent. There is a bent in nature which is apt to determine men that particular way in which they are most

capable of excelling and though it is certain he might have formed a better plan, it is to be questioned whether he could have executed any other so well.

It is probably for the same reason that among the Italian poets he rather followed Ariosto, whom he found more agreeable to his genius, than Tasso, who had formed a better plan, and from whom he has only borrowed some particular ornaments; yet it is but justice to say that his plan is much more regular than that of Ariosto. In the Orlando Furioso we everywhere meet with an exuberant invention joined with great liveliness and facility of description, yet debased by frequent mixtures of the comic genius, as well as many shocking indecorums. Besides, in the huddle and distraction of the adventures we are for the most part only amused with extravagant stories, without being instructed in any moral. On the other hand, Spenser's fable, though often wild, is, as I have observed, always emblematical, and this may very much excuse likewise that air of romance in which he has followed the Italian author.³⁶

Aside from the remarks about genius as a "bent in nature," what interests me here is Hughes' implicit awareness of his readers' expectations. "It may seem strange" that Spenser does not imitate Greek and Roman writers; in the preceding paragraph Hughes had dealt with what he perceived to be an issue in Spenser's departure from the "rules" of an epic as practiced by Homer and Virgil. Apparently, then, thanks perhaps to Dryden and his contemporaries as well as to the poets of the early eighteenth century, the reading public had its own sense of what poets were to do in writing poetry, and Hughes felt an obligation to attend to his readers' expectations yet to educate them further.³⁷

The terms genius and imitation do not always fall into mutually supportive positions as they do in the thought of Hughes or of Pope. For Leonard Welsted, imitation is the

bane of genius. In the "Dissertation Concerning the Perfection of the English Language, the State of Poetry, etc." (1724), he blames the practice of imitating other authors for the underdevelopment of the English genius. Further, the Rules as derived from other poets are useless, because writing poetry simply cannot be taught. Welsted takes his contemporaries to task for attempting to describe the poetic process--and, in doing so, offers his own implicit version of that process:

As to the numerous treatises, essays, arts, etc., both in verse and prose, that have been written by the moderns on this groundwork, they do but hackney the same thoughts over again, making them still more trite. Most of these pieces are nothing but a pert insipid heap of commonplace; nor do any, or all of them put together, contribute in any considerable degree, if they contribute at all, towards the raising or finishing a good genius. The truth is they touch only the externals or form of the thing, without entering into the spirit of it; they play about the surface of poetry but never dive into its depths; the secret, the soul, of good writing is not to be come at through such mechanic laws; the main graces and the cardinal beauties of this charming art lie too retired within the bosom of nature, and are of too fine and subtle an essence to fall under the discussion of pedants, commentators, or trading critics, whether they be heavy prose-drudges, or more sprightly essayers in rhyme. These beauties, in a word, are rather to be felt than described. By what precepts shall a writer be taught only to think poetically, or to trace out among the various powers of thought that particular vein or feature of it which poetry loves, and to distinguish between the good sense which may have its weight and justness in prose and that which is of the nature of verse. What instruction shall convey to him that flame which can alone animate a work and give it the glow of poetry? And how, or by what industry, shall be learned, among a thousand other charms, that delicate contexture in writing by which the colors, as in the rainbow, grow out of one another, and every beauty owes its luster to a former and gives being to a succeeding one? Could certain methods be laid down for attaining

these excellencies, everyone that pleased might be a poet, as everyone that pleases may be a geometrician if he will but have due patience and attention. Many of the graces in poetry may, I grant, be talked of in very intelligible language, but intelligible only to those who have a natural taste for it, or are born with the talent of judging.³⁸

Welsted apparently has no sympathy with the idea that following time-honored guidelines improves the products of the poet's imagination. A bit later in the essay he provides specific examples of these rules he denounces: "What I contend against is the common traditional rules; such as, for example: 'Poetry is an imitation. It has nature for its object. As an art it has some end, and consequently means or rules to attain that end. . . . Be not witty in the wrong place. Correct and alter incessantly. And so on.'"³⁹ Here for almost the first time in print (attacks to inspiration excepted) is direct confrontation between differing opinions about poetic composition; although unanimity has never characterized poets' opinions, they have previously tended to write as if in a vacuum.

Of the "journalists," Lewis Theobald deserves at least a mention here since his famous censurer receives so much attention above. In fact, Theobald is not nearly so dull as Pope would like us to believe, and the criticism he published in The Censor does indicate, if obliquely, his understanding of the poetic process. The poet's chief aim, apparently, should be to instruct his reader or hearer in

morality while presenting plausible characters; it is in these terms that he discusses Shakespeare's artistry in King Lear, for example, and on these grounds that he argues in favor of "mixed" tragic characters rather than wholly good or evil ones.⁴⁰

The most important document from the middle years of the eighteenth century is surely Edward Young's Conjectures on Original Composition, which summarizes the interests of the whole century in the poet's composing process and represents the fullest, most singleminded "answer" to Sidney's challenge to poets to "know what they do" before the Romantic movement. Indeed, the very origin and dissemination of the Conjectures epitomize the character of reflection on the poetic process in the eighteenth century. The project was apparently suggested to Young by his friend Samuel Richardson, and Richardson was closely involved in the production and revision of the work, as his letters to Young--which include numerous specific revisions--indicate. In fact, the essay itself occurs in the context of a letter to Richardson. Once written, the essay was read in the company of Samuel Johnson, as Boswell reports in The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides.⁴¹ The conversation about poetry that I hypothesize in Drayton's time, to which we have testimony but of which no specific details in Dryden's time, is thus clearly documented in the mid-eighteenth century.

Opening the Conjectures itself, Young conveys the same lack of awareness that others have covered this ground that

we have seen again and again. "I begin with Original Composition; and the more willingly, as it seems an original subject to me, who have seen nothing hitherto written on it."⁴² Difficult as it is to believe that Young had seen nothing on originality, given the numerous remarks as early as Pope's on Shakespeare, he writes as if everyone in the eighteenth century shares the assumption that the whole work of the poet is to imitate works of classical poets, as if there has been no debate, internal or public, about what imitating may involve.

Young's task in the essay is twofold; he describes the poetic process as he believes it should occur, and he admonishes poets to be more introspective about their writing. In regard to the first, and more weighty, part of his task, he works primarily by definition, contrast, and analogy to establish what he means by genius and how it operates, with or without the aid of learning, to produce works of originality rather than of imitation.

His earliest explanation of genius suggests that the poet is completely independent of external stimuli. "How independent of the world is he, who can daily find new acquaintance, that at once entertain and improve him, in the little world, the minute but fruitful creation, of his own mind?" (5). Later, in the same vein, he distinguishes originals from imitations on the basis of the materials from which they are made: "An Original may be said to be of a

vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it grows, it is not made: Imitations are often a sort of manufacture wrought up by those mechanics, art, and labour, out of preexistent materials not their own" (7). In both cases, Young implies almost creatio ex nihilo by the poet of genius. Between these two remarks, however, he has tied originality to imitation of nature: "The mind of a man of genius is a fertile and pleasant field . . .; it enjoys a perpetual spring. Of that spring, Originals are the fairest flowers: Imitations are of quicker growth, but fainter bloom. Imitations are of two kinds; one of nature, one of authors: The first we call Originals, and confine the term Imitation to the second" (6). Hence, presumably, originals are imitations, and Young introduces--inadvertently, it seems--an unresolvable conflict in what he presents as a coherent system.

The proposition that poets ought to imitate nature and not the ancients is of course old news in the history of poetic theory, but Young seems to expect it to startle his audience, so much so that he devotes quite a number of pages to explaining precisely what the relationship of modern to ancient writers ought to be. In the first place, he says, arguing that the classical writers were originals and therefore better than modern imitators is invalid: the non-imitators only were so because they had no predecessors to imitate, and many who seem to write originals actually

imitated other works now lost (8-10). In the second place, Young seems to regard all men, ancient and modern, as equally capable of the kind of genius and exertion necessary to the best writing, but argues that moderns have the advantage of greater learning: "Consider, my friend! knowledge physical, mathematical, moral, and divine, increases; all arts and sciences are making considerable advance; with them, all the accommodations, ornaments, delights, and glories of human life; and these are new food to the genius of a polite writer; these are as the root, and composition, as the flower; and as the root spreads, and thrives, shall the flower fail?" (33).

But Young does not advocate ignoring the ancients. He devotes a long passage to explaining how to put them to the best use (which he later summarizes as emulating rather than imitating [29]) and to answering the questions he imagines his opponents putting to him:

Let us be as far from neglecting, as from copying, their admirable compositions: Sacred be their rights, and inviolable their fame. Let our understanding feed on theirs; they afford the noblest nourishment; But let them nourish, not annihilate, our own. When we read, let our imagination kindle at their charms; when we write, let our judgment shut them out of our thoughts; treat even Homer himself as his royal admirer was treated by the cynic; bid him stand aside, nor shade our Composition from the beams of our own genius; for nothing Original can rise, nothing immortal can ripen, in any other sun.

Must we then, you say, not imitate antient authors? Imitate them, by all means; but imitate aright. He that imitates the divine Iliad, does not imitate Homer; but he who takes the same method, which Homer took, for arriving at a capacity of accomplishing a work so great.

Tread in his steps to the sole fountain of immortality; drink where he drank, at the true Helicon, that is, at the breast of nature: Imitate; but imitate not the Composition, but the Man. For may not this paradox pass into a maxim? viz. 'The less we copy the renowned antients, we shall resemble them the more.'

But possibly you may reply, that you must either imitate Homer, or depart from nature. Not so: For suppose you was to change place, in time, with Homer; then, if you write naturally, you might as well charge Homer with an imitation of you. Can you be said to imitate Homer for writing so, as you would have written, if Homer had never been? As far as a regard to nature, and sound sense, will permit a departure from your great predecessors; so far, ambitiously, depart from them; the farther you are from them in similitude, the nearer are you to them in excellence; you rise by it into an Original; become a noble collateral, not an humble descendant from them. Let us build our Compositions with the spirit, and in the taste, of the antients; but not with their materials . . . All eminence, and distinction, lies out of the beaten road; excursion, and deviation, are necessary to find it; and the more remote your path from the highway, the more reputable. (10-12)

It is difficult to imagine that Young could be writing the last paragraph of this passage with anything more in mind than Pope's "to copy Nature is to copy them." Underlying his answer to this hypothetical objection seems to be the assumption that human perception is always the same, that we need not copy the ancients because we are as capable of understanding nature as they are and in the same way; the sense that I have suggested Pope conveys seems not to be possible any longer, at least for Young, in the middle of the scientific eighteenth century.

Learning, then, is not to be eschewed by the poet, but neither is it to be overvalued, and Young launches into an explanation of the relative merits of genius and learning.

"By the praise of genius we detract not from learning; we detract not from the value of gold, by saying that diamond has greater still. He who disregards learning, shows that he wants its aid; and he that overvalues it, shows that its aid has done him harm. Overvalued indeed it cannot be, if genius, as to Composition, is valued more. Learning we thank, genius we revere; That gives us pleasure, This gives us rapture; That informs, This inspires; and is itself inspired; for genius is from heaven, learning from man: . . . Learning is borrowed knowlege; genius is knowlege innate, and quite our own" (17). Throughout this section of the essay, he depends heavily on analogy for his discussion. Genius is to learning as virtue is to riches. Genius is to learning as physical strength is to arms. Genius is to the intellectual world as conscience is to the moral world. All this, however, is simply to say that genius is innate and therefore essentially better than supplementary learning, which is superseded entirely when "heaven, . . . rejecting all human means, assumes the whole glory to itself" (13).

The equivocal nature of originality--pure inner world or imitation of nature?--for Young takes a new twist in this contrast of genius and learning as he introduces the term inspiration into his definition of genius. Genius is from heaven; it is inspired. Yet Young seems not actually to trust the inspiration of the poet, for he warns against trying to portray heavenly things in poetry: "In the

fairyland of fancy, genius may wander wild; there it has a creative power, and may reign arbitrarily over its own empire of chimeras. The wide field of nature also lies open before it, where it may range unconfined, make what discoveries it can, and sport with its infinite objects uncontrouled, as far as visible nature extends, painting them as wantonly as it will: But what painter of the most unbounded and exalted genius can give us the true portrait of a seraph? He can give us only what by his own or others eyes, has been seen" (18). It seems curious that Young should espouse inspiration by God and then immediately limit what it can produce.

The internal conflicts in Young's understanding of imitation, originality, and genius undermine the sense he conveys (despite his title) that he alone has discovered how poetry ought to be composed. Like the rest of the poets we have seen theorizing about their own processes, Young offers his ideas without grounding them in a coherent epistemology. In fact, Young seems to have done what he most ardently warns against doing--imitate another author. That "wild field of nature" where genius "may range unconfined" bears a striking verbal resemblance to the "field of nature" where Dryden's spaniel-imagination "ranges"⁴³; whatever Young may think about original composition, his tenets seem more difficult to enact than to enunciate.

Despite its failings as a definitive program for the work of the poet, Young's Conjectures on Original Composi-

tion certainly takes up the relevant issues scattered through the other works of poetic theory in the eighteenth century. It serves the additional purpose of showing us how early the stereotypic conception of neoclassical thought developed; considering what Pope, Addison, Johnson, and the others actually have to say, I am not sure whether to accuse Young of creating a straw man to attack or to conclude that the consensus of the reading public, despite the complex views espoused by poets over a period of nearly two hundred years, was that "servile copying" pretty well summed up what poets do.⁴⁴

The specific issues that absorb Young and his generation differ markedly from those of concern to Sir Philip Sidney. But Young takes up the call for poetic introspection that Sidney first issued. Some people, he says, must imitate because they have inadequate genius for originality, but others have enough "inventive genius" to avoid imitation.

Whether our own genius be such, or not, we should diligently inquire; that we may not go a begging with gold in our purse. For there is a mine in man, which must be deeply dug ere we can conjecture its contents. Another often sees that in us, which we see not in ourselves; and may there not be that in us which is unseen by both?" . . .

Since it is plain that men may be strangers to their own abilities; and by thinking meanly of them without just cause, may possibly lose a name, perhaps a name immortal; I would find some means to prevent these evils. Whatever promotes virtue, promotes something more, and carries its good influence beyond the moral man: To prevent these evils, I borrow two golden rules from ethics, which are no less golden in Composition, than in life. I. Know thyself; 2dly, Reverence thyself: . . . [With regard to the first,] dive deep

into thy bosom; learn the depth, extent, bias, and full fort of thy mind; contract full intimacy with the stranger within thee; excite and cherish every spark of intellectual light and heat, however smothered under former negligence or scattered through the dull, dark mass of common thoughts; and collecting them into a body, let thy genius rise (if a genius thou hast) as the sun from chaos; and if I should then say, like an Indian, Worship it, (though too bold) yet should I say little more than my second rule enjoins, (viz.) Reverence thyself.

That is, let not great examples, or authorities, browbeat thy reason into too great a diffidence of thyself: Thyself so reverence, as to prefer the native growth of thy own mind to the richest import from abroad; such borrowed riches make us poor. (20-24)

The nature of poetry continues to receive considerable attention throughout the second half of the century; the hypothetical "neoclassical" definition is as elusive in poets' remarks as ever. Sir William Jones takes on the assumption that poetry (along with painting and music) is essentially mimetic in his essay "On the Arts Commonly Called Imitative" (1772); instead, he argues, poetry originates in expression of the passions, imitating secondarily but not necessarily.⁴⁰ Two years later, Alexander Gerard devotes himself to An Essay on Genius, arguing, based on association psychology, that the necessity of imitating arises from a weak genius. Dealing with the balance of fancy and judgment in the imagination and with the role of the passions, he derives his opinions in large part from Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding, but unfortunately for our purposes here he is concerned with genius in general and not with its strictly poetic

manifestation, a distinction which Dr. Johnson also makes but then allows to break down.

Imitation is not dead as a governing principle for the production of poetry, however, and the interest in Aristotle's rules is almost as strong as ever. Bishop Hurd wishes to do for "universal poetry" what Aristotle did for tragedy, and Thomas Twining, in Aristotle's Treatise on Poetry (1789), attempts to sort out what is meant by imitation in poetry as opposed to painting or music.

Henry MacKenzie's first essay on Falstaff in The Lounger epitomizes the amalgam of genius and imitation of nature that characterizes the late-eighteenth-century idea of the poetic process. MacKenzie opens by simply assuming "that 'poet and creator are the same' . . . and that without the powers of invention and imagination nothing great or highly delightful in poetry can be achieved."⁴⁶ Further, he says, "of all poets Shakespeare appears to have possessed a fancy the most prolific, an imagination the most luxuriantly fertile."⁴⁷ It is not only in creating imaginary unearthly beings, however, that Shakespeare exhibits this remarkable genius; "by a very singular felicity of invention he has produced in the beaten field of ordinary life characters of such perfect originality that we look on them with no less wonder at his invention than on those preternatural beings. . . , and yet they speak a language so purely that of common society that we have but to step abroad into the world to

hear every expression of which it is composed."⁴⁸ MacKenzie offers no explanation for the juxtaposition of, essentially, Pope's famous remarks on Shakespeare and Johnson's.

Instead, he throws them together and expects us to believe--as may be the case--that the perfect manifestation of originality is in the representation of general nature. Little wonder that the Romantic poets felt a need to begin afresh with the project of describing the work of the poet (although part of the purpose of my enterprise is to provide evidence that they are no more original in their poetic theory than Shakespeare is in his plays).

But the dominant figure of the second half of the eighteenth century was of course Samuel Johnson. Just as Addison and Pope dominate the early years of the eighteenth century, so Samuel Johnson takes precedence, in output and in importance, over anybody else in the middle and later years of the century. Indeed, Johnson's contributions to criticism are immeasurable, at least in this context, and have been the subject of a number of recent studies, notable among them Weinsheimer's Imitation, cited above, Leopold Damrosch's The Uses of Johnson's Criticism (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), and Paul Fussell's Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971). Although I regard Johnson's reflection on widely diverse topics not directly concerned with literary production as enormously relevant to his

self-understanding as a poet, he has plenty to say specifically about the poet's composing processes, offering characterizations of different poets' habits of mind, analysis of key terms for discussion of the invention process, and judgments about the moral obligations of poets which affect the composition of poetry.

About his own composing process Johnson has very little explicit to say. He eschews the confessional mode in his letters as well as in his periodical essays; even his prayers belong more to the Book of Common Prayer than to self-revelation.⁴⁹ The closest he comes to describing his own writing process is in The Adventurer No. 138, where he speaks neither in the first person nor specifically of poetry but rather in the third person about "the writer." Nevertheless, this passage provides a clear view of the nuts and bolts of composition for Johnson. The pleasures of being an author

may sometimes be indulged to those, who come to a subject of disquisition with minds full of ideas, and with fancies so vigorous, as easily to excite, select, and arrange them. To write, is, indeed, no unpleasing employment, when one sentiment readily produces another, and both ideas and expressions present themselves at the first summons: but such happiness, the greatest genius does not always obtain; and common writers know it only to such a degree, as to credit its possibility. Composition is, for the most part, an effort of slow diligence and steady perseverance, to which the mind is dragged by necessity or resolution, and from which the attention is every moment starting to more delightful amusements.

It frequently happens, that a design which, when considered at a distance, gave flattering hopes of facility, mocks us in the execution with unexpected difficul-

ties; the mind which, while it considered it in the gross, imagined itself amply furnished with materials, finds sometimes an unexpected barrenness and vacuity, and wonders whither all those ideas are vanished, which a little before seemed struggling for emission.

Sometimes many thoughts present themselves; but so confused and unconnected, that they are not without difficulty reduced to method, or concatenated in a regular and dependent series: the mind falls at once into a labyrinth, of which neither the beginning nor end can be discovered, and toils and struggles without progress or extrication.⁸⁰

Here we get a glimpse of the day-to-day work of the poet, the joys of the full mind and ready fancy as well as the frustrations of vanishing ideas, ideas so numerous and interrelated that they are difficult to sort out, struggles without progress. Both luck and diligence seem to play a part in his work, and one apparently can write from either internal or external compunction.

Johnson comments extensively on the work of composition in his Lives of the English Poets. In the life of Milton he claims to do so simply for entertainment, saying that there could be no "more delightful entertainment than to trace [great works'] gradual growth and expansion, and to observe how they are sometimes suddenly advanced by accidental hints, and sometimes improved by steady meditation."⁸¹ In the life of Pope he similarly attributes desire to understand the poet's work to "literary curiosity," noting that "of such an intellectual process the knowledge has very rarely been attainable."⁸² Implicit, however, in his examination of poets' peculiar habits of mind, is the idea

of the poet as model, for Johnson is now approving, now condemning in his remarks about specific behaviors or traits.

On several poets' particular invention processes he remarked at length. With respect to Milton Johnson notes that "invention is almost the only literary labour which blindness cannot obstruct, and therefore he naturally solaced his solitude by the indulgence of his fancy, and the melody of his numbers." Besides indulging his fancy, Milton prepared to write by study of "seemly arts and affairs," by learning many languages, and by reading and writing a great deal in English.⁸³ As far as putting words on paper, according to Johnson,

Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition, we have little account, and there was perhaps little to be told. Richardson, who seems to have been very diligent in his enquiries, but discovers always a wish to find Milton discriminated from other men, relates, that "he would sometimes lie awake whole nights, but not a verse could he make; and on a sudden his poetical faculty would rush upon him with an impetus or oestrus, and his daughter was immediately called to secure what came. At other times he would dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath, and then reduce them to half the number."⁸⁴

Johnson does not regard these circumstances with the awe he attributes to Richardson, pointing out that any person doing any job manages it better at some times than at others. Furthermore, he notes that Milton's daughters apparently did not know how to write, and, while admitting that all writers of "fertile and copious mind" have to edit, Johnson discredits the particulars of Richardson's final sentence.⁸⁵

Of Dryden's poetic mind, Johnson offers a tersely worded summary:

In a general survey of Dryden's labours, he appears to have a mind very comprehensive by nature, and much enriched with acquired knowledge. His compositions are the effects of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials.

The power that predominated in his intellectual operations, was rather strong reason than quick sensibility. Upon all occasions that were presented, he studied rather than felt, and produced sentiments not such as Nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions, as they spring separate in the mind, he seems not much acquainted; and seldom describes them but as they are complicated by the various relations of society, and confused in the tumults and agitations of life.⁶⁶

Dryden's comprehensive mind is responsible for his acquired knowledge, though, lest one suppose that he has studied diligently. Johnson says "I rather believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various conversation, by a quick apprehension, a judicious selection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge, and a powerful digestion; by vigilance that permitted nothing to pass without notice" rather than by "the silent progress of solitary reading."⁶⁷ Johnson goes on to describe Dryden's fondness for disputation in a way that recalls Johnson himself "talking for victory." Finally, Johnson remarks on Dryden's impatience as a poet. Satisfied that he was the greatest poet, Dryden did not care "to rise by contending with himself but while there was no name above his own, was willing to enjoy fame on the easiest

terms." Johnson points out that there is no evidence of Dryden's correcting or improving his works after publication and concludes that "he was no lover of labour."³⁸

Not surprisingly, the nearer his own time Johnson comes in the Lives, the more he finds to say about the composing processes of the poets. Of Pope's he knows an enormous amount. He notes Pope's childhood desire to be a poet and his distinction of Dryden as the best model.³⁹ But where Dryden's favorite habit of mind was ratiocination, Pope's intellectual character was marked by "the constituent and fundamental principle [of] Good Sense, a prompt and intuitive perception of consonance and propriety." (Johnson had also remarked, without the elaboration we find about Dryden and Pope, on the particular talents of earlier poets. Of Cowley he notes simply that "if he was formed by nature for one kind of writing more than for another, his power seems to have been greatest in the familiar and the festive."⁴⁰ Similarly, he argues that imagination was Milton's great strength and that its fruit was sublimity.⁴¹) Despite his predominating good sense, Pope did not lack genius, according to Johnson, for he had "a mind active, ambitious, and adventurous, always investigating, always aspiring; in its widest searches still longing to go forward, in its highest flights still wishing to be higher," as well as "great strength and exactness of memory" to assist his genius and good sense.⁴²

As for Pope's actual writing, Johnson says that "the method of Pope, as may be collected from his translation, was to write his first thoughts in his first words, and gradually to amplify, decorate, rectify, and refine them."⁴³ Unlike Dryden, he goes on, Pope was not satisfied with his productions at first:

He is said to have sent nothing to the press till it had lain two years under his inspection: it is at least certain, that he ventured nothing without nice examination. He suffered the tumult of imagination to subside, and the novelties of invention to grow familiar. He knew that the mind is always enamoured of its own productions, and did not trust his first fondness. He consulted his friends, and listened with great willingness to criticism; and, what was of more importance, he consulted himself, and let nothing pass against his own judgment.⁴⁴

Johnson seems here to have preserved the vestiges of the seventeenth-century bifurcation of fancy and judgment, but it is with revision that he is particularly concerned. Earlier in the life of Pope he examines in detail Pope's revisions of his translation of the Iliad, finding, as with Milton's Paradise Lost, that the changes an author makes are most instructive about his composing processes.

Revision appears again as Johnson's chief interest in describing the composing processes of Thomas Gray. Unlike Pope, Gray "had this peculiarity, that he did not write his pieces first rudely, and then correct them, but laboured every line as it arose in the train of composition; and he had a notion not very peculiar, that he could not write but

at certain times, or at happy moments; a fantastick foppery, to which my kindness for a man of learning and of virtue wishes him to have been superior."⁴⁵

Johnson has more to say about forces not relevant to the composing process in the life of Milton. In the space of a few paragraphs, he takes up and dismisses the common seventeenth-century beliefs about the influence of weather, the decay of nature, and the degree of latitude on poetry. All of these Johnson regards as unreasonable fancies, but he acknowledges that what we believe governs what we can do: "while this notion has possession of the head, it produces the inability which it supposes."⁴⁶ On the other hand, Johnson does admit some external forces in the composing process. Speaking of some lines of Pope on Gay, he remarks that

As Gay was the favourite of our author, this epitaph was probably written with an uncommon degree of attention; yet it is not more successfully executed than the rest, for it will not always happen that the success of a poet is proportionate to his labour. The same observation may be extended to all works of imagination, which are often influenced by causes wholly out of the performer's power, by hints of which he perceives not the origin, by sudden elevations of mind which he cannot produce in himself, and which sometimes rise when he expects them least.⁴⁷

For all he professes to know about how poets in general work and how his subjects in particular worked, Johnson still allows that the poetic process is ultimately mysterious.

Besides his efforts to describe the composing habits of poets and to elucidate the habits of mind that characterize the poets, Johnson contributes to our understanding of the poetic act by discussing topics common in eighteenth-century discussions of literary theory. Genius is the most widely recurrent of such topics. Johnson uses the word to refer to poetic abilities again and again in the Lives of the Poets, but he also explains what he means by it, incorporating into his explanation other common terms such as invention, imagination, fancy, and wit.

The life of Cowley offers a definition of genius very early on. Describing Cowley's youthful interest in The Faerie Queene, which purportedly led to his becoming a poet, Johnson elaborates: "Such are the accidents, which, sometimes remembered, and perhaps sometimes forgotten, produce that particular designation of mind, and propensity for some certain science or employment, which is commonly called Genius. The true Genius is a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction."⁴⁰ Here he suggests that we are to understand genius as a general label for intellectual excellence, and not as a peculiarly designated attribute, as genius-for-something, but later in the life of Cowley he seems to take the opposite position. Milton and Cowley, he says, are "two great Poets, . . . of dissimilar genius, of opposite principles,"⁴¹ In the life of Pope, he overtly changes his definition of

genius: "Of genius, that power which constitutes a poet; that quality without which judgement is cold and knowledge is inert; that energy which collects, combines, amplifies, and animates; the superiority must, with some hesitation, be allowed to Dryden [over Pope]." And, later in the life of Pope, he offers a veritable catalog of the sub-qualities that comprise genius:

Pope had, in proportions very nicely adjusted to each other, all the qualities that constitute genius. He had Invention, by which new trains of events are formed, and new scenes of imagery displayed, as in the Rape of the Lock; and by which extrinsick and adventitious embellishments and illustrations are connected with a known subject, as in the Essay on Criticism. He had Imagination, which strongly impresses on the writer's mind, and enables him to convey to the reader, the various forms of nature, incidents of life, and energies of passion, as in his Eloisa, Windsor Forest, and the Ethick Epistles. He had Judgement 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: and he had colours of language always before him, ready to decorate his matter with every grace of elegant expression, as when he accommodates his diction to the wonderful multiplicity of Homer's sentiments and descriptions.⁷²

In the life of Thomson, Johnson associates genius with originality. "As a writer," he says, Thomson "is entitled to one praise of the highest kind: his mode of thinking, and of expressing his thoughts, is original." With regard to that mode of thinking, "he thinks in a peculiar train, and he thinks always as a man of genius; he looks round on Nature and on Life, with the eye which Nature bestows only on a poet; the eye that distinguishes, in every thing pre-

sented to its view, whatever there is on which imagination can delight to be detained, and with a mind that at once comprehends the vast, and attends to the minute."⁷¹ Indeed, this passage contains similar sentiments to those in the analysis of Pope's genius, except for the term "original," which until the life of Thomson does not figure in Johnson's discussion of the poetic process.

Other terms concern Johnson earlier in the Lives, however. Not surprisingly, in discussing the seventeenth-century poets he interests himself in the term wit, offering a lengthy discussion of it in the life of Cowley, where he considers the "metaphysical poets and their claim to wit." Finding Pope's famous definition of wit erroneous and reductive, Johnson offers his own musings on the subject:

If by a more noble and more adequate conception that be considered as Wit, which is at once natural and new, that which, though not obvious, is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that, which he that never found it, wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.

But Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of discordia concors; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough.⁷²

If Johnson sounds indecisive about the meaning of the term wit, he confirms his indecision some pages later: "It was

about the time of Cowley that Wit, which had been till then used for Intellection, in contradistinction to Will, took the meaning, whatever it be, which it now bears."⁷³

Other issues which have preoccupied critical theorists over the centuries also interest Johnson. The issue of imitating other authors arises from time to time, although in light of Johnson's Vanity of Human Wishes, it may seem that his critical remarks on it are somewhat disingenuous. Of Cowley he remarks "He read much, and yet borrowed little" in a context of approbation; he goes on to undermine this praise by noting that "his character of writing was indeed not his own: he unhappily adopted that which was predominant."⁷⁴ Similarly, he remarks of Dryden that "what he had of humorous or passionate, he seems to have had not from nature, but from other poets; if not always as a plagiarist, at least as an imitator."⁷⁵

Along with genius, the other critical term sprinkled most liberally through the Lives of the English Poets is nature, particularly the imitation of nature, which we see here contrasted (as so often before) with the imitation of other poets. But we must look elsewhere for Johnson's elaboration of the imitation of nature. The chief feature of Johnson's position on this subject is the much-cited admonition to imitate general rather than particular nature. Indeed, this issue dominates his thought on the poetic process throughout the 1750s, beginning with a sneer in

Rambler No. 4 at works of pure "imagination": authors were long willing to write out of a "wild strain of imagination, . . . for when a man had by practice gained some fluency of language, he had no further care than to retire from his closet, let loose his invention, and heat his mind with incredibilities," thus producing a book "without fear of criticism, without the toil of study, without knowledge of nature, or acquaintance with life," unlike the works of contemporary writers, whose works "must arise from general converse and accurate observation of the living world."⁷⁶

Rambler 4, of course, goes on to consider the menace of "mixed" heroes; we must turn to The Adventurer No. 95 for an explanation of the imitation of nature. Here Johnson devotes himself to the general vs. particular imitation of nature in the context of discussing plagiarism. He opens with a statement of the "problem" of imitation: "It is often charged upon writers, that with all their pretensions to genius and discoveries, they do little more than copy one another; and that compositions obtruded upon the world with the pomp of novelty, contain only tedious repetitions of common sentiments, or at best exhibit a transposition of known images, and give a new appearance to truth only by some slight difference of dress and decoration."⁷⁷ This accusation is true, he goes on to say, but it is not therefore true to conclude that all poets are plagiarists. "We do not wonder, that historians, relating the same facts,

agree in their narration; or that authors delivering the elements of science, advance the same theorems . . . The same indulgence is to be shewn to the writers of morality: right and wrong are immutable."⁷⁰ The relations of social life--duties, passions--are always the same in every age; only in particular niceties does the writer have any freedom to depart from his predecessors. Thus, his apparent deprecation of imitating authors in the Lives notwithstanding, Johnson would seem to agree with Pope that nature and Homer are the same.

At the end of the decade, Johnson put the matter more succinctly in the words of Imlac: "'The business of a poet,' said Imlac, 'is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances: he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features, as recall the original to every mind.'"⁷¹

It is this standard of the representation of nature by which Johnson judged Shakespeare as well. In the Preface to Shakespeare (1765), he argues that "nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature," and "Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of

life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places . . . studies or professions . . .; they are the genuine progeny of common humanity"---Shakespeare's "mirror" apparently comes from a different glassworks than the one in Rambler No. 4 which is as indiscriminating as the naked eye.

Johnson's stand on general and particular nature is one of his most famous positions, but his character as a moralist is perhaps even more widely known and, like his stand on imitating nature, has bearing on his description of the poet's work. Of course, most of his moral judgments about literary works are most directly applicable to audiences rather than to poets, but his remarks on fiction and truth, on the political lives of poets, and on the use of biblical stories in modern poems concern the work of the poet as well.

Early in the life of Cowley Johnson states a principle for poetic creation that he adheres to at least through the life of Milton. The poet, he argues, should not write about what he has not experienced. "The basis of all excellence is truth: he that professes love ought to feel its power It is surely not difficult, in the solitude of a college, or in the bustle of the world, to find useful studies and serious employment. No man needs to be so burthened with life as to squander it in voluntary dreams of fictitious occurrences." Cowley, therefore, is to be less

esteemed for writing so much about love because he experienced it only once and did not have "resolution to tell his passion" even then.¹

Milton receives similar censure for Lycidas. A poem engendered by real passion would not, in Johnson's opinion, contain "remote allusions and obscure opinions." In fact, nothing is right with this work: "In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting: whatever images it can supply, are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind."² Whereas in Cowley's case biographical data demonstrated the fictionality of the poetry, here it is the poetry that calls into question the truth of Milton's avowed feelings.

Johnson is not, despite appearances to the contrary in the lives of Cowley and Milton, against the use of fiction entirely. Of course, he devotes much of Rambler No. 4 to the proper use of fiction, but he summarizes his position in the life of Waller as well. "Poets, indeed, profess fiction; but the legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth; and he that has flattery ready for all whom the vicissitudes of the world happen to exalt, must be scorned as a prostituted mind, that may retain the glitter of wit, but has lost the dignity of virtue."³ The fault of Cowley in his love poetry and Milton in Lycidas, then, would seem to be that their fictions did not convey truth.

Johnson's stricture against flattering those whom the world has favored reveals another ongoing moral concern in his writing about the work of the poet. In evaluating the works of Cowley and Dryden, in particular, he expends considerable effort determining the extent of their sincerity in praising the Puritans, concerning himself as well with the degree to which Cowley entered into complicity with the Puritans and with Dryden's sincerity in religious conversions.⁸⁴ It is very clear that, for Johnson, the poet's life and work are to be marked by sincerity and virtue; insincere, virtueless works may be wit, but they are not poetry.

Given his preference for truth over fiction, we might expect Johnson to advocate, with John Dennis, the adoption of sacred history for poetic matter. But Johnson does not. His primary reason is that readers cannot enter stories from scriptures imaginatively--life itself is so utterly different now that modern people are unable to feel the emotions appropriate to the tale being told. Further, Johnson regards the poet's attempt to amplify such stories as "frivolous and vain, . . . not only useless, but in some degree profane."⁸⁵ Here again Johnson's belief that the poet should not write what he has not felt surfaces. Against Milton's subject in Paradise Lost, he remarks that "pleasure and terrour are indeed the genuine sources of poetry; but poetical pleasure must be such as human imagination can at least conceive."⁸⁶

Against poetic devotion (a contradiction in terms for Johnson) he has something to say as well.

Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topics of devotion are few, and being few are universally known; but, few as they are, they can be made no more; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment and very little from novelty of expression.

Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel the imagination: but religion must be shewn as it is; suppression and addition equally corrupt it; and such as it is, it is known already.²⁷

Rather than detract from his reputation as a religious man, Johnson's manner of excluding religious topics from the province of poetry demonstrates his sense of propriety and, if anything, heightens our sense of his piety.

If Young's Conjectures on Original Composition represents the single most direct "response" to Sidney's advice to poets to "know what they do and how they do," the career of Samuel Johnson, as a whole, most thoroughly demonstrates the development, over two hundred years, of Sidney's skeletal poetic program. In Johnson we find filled out the inquiry into the mind of the poet that Sidney only projected, and we see explicitly carried out the investiga-

tion of the poet's responsibility with respect to truth-telling and moral persuasion that Sidney only began.

Chapter 5

Additions to the Neighborhood:

The Ivory Tower and the Factory

The poets' great outpouring of poetic theory in the eighteenth century and the accompanying interest of the "common reader" in the work of the poet represent what might be considered the fulfillment of Sidney's (and Farquhar's) injunction to poets to "know themselves," and of Jonson and Milton's vision of the poet's proper place in public life. Ironically, however, this exaltation of poets brings with it consequences that will eventually displace or undermine their authority.

The first of these consequences is the academization of poetry. Not only does the poetic process receive considerable discussion among poets of the first few decades of the eighteenth century; this interest is formalized in English life with the establishment of the first chair of poetry at Oxford in 1708. Joseph Trapp, the first professor of poetry, was required to lecture five times per year on his subject, and these lectures were printed several times in the eighteenth century (first in Latin in 1711).

Trapp's ideas about the poetic process, and about poetry in general, are generally categorized as "Aristotelian," which seems a fitting appellation since his appointment represents the return of poetic theory to the Academy, from which, according to Farquhar, it had so recently been

wrested. A poet himself, Trapp nevertheless does not offer any startling new insight into the poetic process in his Oxford lectures; rather his aim seems to have been to recapitulate the whole history of critical inquiry in English, beginning with the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin understandings of the name "poet."

Inquiring into the origins of poetry, Trapp argues for "the Love implanted in Mankind of Imitation and Harmony."¹ Unlike the poets presumably writing to their readers, he feels obliged to look into the origins of these loves of mankind and to refute other positions on the origins of poetry. On the idea of some "poetic fire," for example, he argues that "it may be reckoned a Concomitant of Poetry, but not the Cause of it. No more can an Attempt to write Verses, which is rather the Thing itself in its first State of Imperfection; much less can the Perfection of any Thing be the Cause of its being perfected; that's absurd, and a mere Contradiction in Terms."² Throughout his lectures, Trapp demonstrates considerably more attention to logic and "scientific" investigation into his topic than any poet since the rhetorical school of the sixteenth century.³

Another topic of particular interest to Trapp is whether the poet is made or born. With Horace, he finds that the poet is both made and born, and argues that the proverb (poeta nascitur, etc.) only means that "the Strength of Genius enters more into the Composition of a Poet, than the Refinements of Art."⁴ And, he suggests, it is this

necessary genius which has been interpreted as inspiration in preceding ages, but "that this was no real Inspiration in the ancient Poets, (except in those sacred ones that communicated God's Will to Mankind) nor is now so in the Moderns, I suppose needs no proof."⁵ Trapp's interests clearly coincide with those of the other poets of his day; however, his techniques of investigation seem more deliberately historical and logical.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the poetry professors at Oxford continue to lecture on poetry, though not necessarily on the poetic process, and, like Trapp, they tend to be men who first established their reputations as poets. Of particular importance, according to D. Fairer, is Robert Lowth, who moved criticism a long way toward romanticism in his interest in the lyric and in Hebrew poetry.⁶ Other prominent occupants of the chair include Thomas Warton the elder and his son Thomas. The careers of these men do not bring with them the divorce of writing poetry from theorizing about it that we see in the twentieth century, nor does poetry become the almost-exclusive province of the scholar in its early years in the university curriculum. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the eighteenth-century poetry chair at Oxford is at least a contributing cause of the twentieth-century relegation of poetry to English teachers and poetic theory to philosophers, a state of affairs particularly ironic since the popularity of poets and poetry with the general reading public seems to have inspired the

creation of the chair in the first place.

The second contributor to the decline of poets' musings on the poetic process might be called the commercialization of poetry, although this issue is extremely complex--involving both the actual publishing industry and the beginnings of industrialization in general--and its repercussions for poetic theory ambiguous. At first it seems that the rise in popularity of poetry inspired more poets to write about their own composing processes, and the increasing honor accompanying the title "poet" inclined them to treat their work with high seriousness, but ultimately the concomitant revolution in the publishing industry and demand for widely available books of poetry make it difficult for poets to resist the financial rewards of saying what the public wanted to hear.

From Sidney's time through the eighteenth century, being a poet had come to be seen more and more as a "calling," a vocation in the strong sense, and poets emphasized their perception of being compelled to write poetry; my assessment of the Apology in Chapter 1 was essentially that Sidney first raises the possibility that writing poetry may be a calling and not merely diversion or means of earning a living. Pope censured Crashaw for writing verse as a leisure activity, arguing that a real poet writes from a nobler motivation than diversion alone. Yet Pope is on the declining edge of the more Miltonic sense of vocation; despite his remarks to Swift that he wrote poetry only to

procure friends, there is considerable verbal and historical evidence (chronicled elsewhere) that what he really wrote for were fame and money.

It is not as though poets had never before earned a livelihood by writing, but until the eighteenth century doing so was a straightforward matter, predicated on need and involving no dissembling. But as poets evolved their theories of the creative process and the distinction between aristocratic dabblers in poetry and wage-earning playwrights blurred, poets lost sight of their simple economic necessity and emphasized the vocational aspect of their work instead. At the same time, however, the patronage system was giving way to the publishing trade, and the great poets developed a different kind of commercial value than before.

This new financial aspect of writing poetry is a factor at least as early as Dryden. In his life of Dryden, Johnson notes the commercial value of the famous poet, remarking that "his reputation in time was such, that his name was thought necessary to the success of every poetical or literary performance, and therefore he was engaged to contribute something, whatever it might be, to many publications."⁷

But in Pope we see the first as well as the paradigmatic example of real conflict between the poet's sense of calling and his financial motivation. Of the commercial value of Pope's reputation Johnson provides more specifics:

He gave the same year (1721) an edition of Shakespeare. His name was now of so much authority, that Tonson thought himself entitled, by annexing it, to demand a subscription of six guineas for Shakespeare's plays in six quarto volumes; nor did his expectation much deceive him; for of seven hundred and fifty which he printed, he dispersed a great number at the price proposed. The reputation of that edition indeed sunk afterwards so low, that one hundred and forty copies were sold at sixteen shillings each.

On this undertaking, to which Pope was induced by a reward of two hundred and seventeen pounds twelve shillings, he seemed never to have reflected afterwards without vexation; for Theobald, a man of heavy diligence, with very slender powers, first, in a book called Shakespeare Restored, and then in a formal edition, detected his deficiencies with all the insolence of victory; and, as he was now high enough to be feared and hated, Theobald had from others all the help that could be supplied, by the desire of humbling a haughty character.■

Pope's edition of Shakespeare, considered as a publisher's ploy to sell books, is merely a precursor to the more elaborate schemes of the latter part of the eighteenth century. Indeed, Johnson's own Lives of the English Poets originated in the desire of a group of booksellers to attach a great name to their series entitled Works of the English Poets so that it might better compete with John Bell's series The Poets of Great Britain.⁹ Whatever part the rise of publishing played in establishing the English canon, and Thomas Bonnell suggests that its role was enormous, the fact remains that the poets were skeptical about the value of industrializing poetry, even as they profited by it.

If Johnson's description of Pope's experience seems a cautionary tale, it agrees with the attitudes expressed by Edward Young and by Pope himself. That the sense of "vocation" in many poets was shifting from something like

"vocation to the priesthood" toward something like the vocation implied in "vocational training" is evidenced by the commercial imagery they use to denounce certain kinds of poetry. Not surprisingly, Young condemns imitation as "manufacture," remarking that "an Original may be said to be of a vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it grows, it is not made: Imitations are often a sort of manufacture wrought up by those mechanics, art, and labour, out of preexistent materials not their own."¹⁰

Pope employs the same imagery in a much more extended fashion in his condemnation of the "profound" in The Art of Sinking in Poetry. Identifying himself satirically with the poets of profundity, he opens with remarks on "the flourishing state of our Trade, and the plenty of our Manufacture."¹¹ In fact, he goes on, "I doubt not but we shall shortly be able to level the Highlanders [who, he notes, "have often committed Petty Larcenies upon our borders . . . and carried off at once whole Cart-loads of our manufacture], and procure a farther vent for our own product, which is already so much relished, encouraged, and rewarded, by the Nobility and Gentry of Great Britain" (376).

The complicity of the nobility and gentry of Great Britain in the production of bad poetry is clear to Pope, and he apparently deplores the power of popular taste to govern poetic production. "If the intent of all Poetry be to divert and instruct, certainly that kind which diverts

and instructs the greatest number, is to be preferred. Let us look round among the Admirers of Poetry, we shall find those who have a taste of the Sublime to be very few; but the Profund strikes universally" (377).

If we have not yet gotten the point, Pope spells it out for us. Speaking of "our wiser authors," he states that "their true design is Profit or Gain; in order to acquire which, 'tis necessary to procure applause by administering pleasure to the reader: From whence it follows demonstrably, that their productions must be suited to the present Taste" (377-78). These satirical remarks come perilously close to Johnson's assessment of Pope's own motivation for his edition of Shakespeare, but Pope seems oblivious to his own apparent hypocrisy.

Pope drops the industry metaphor in order to catalog his rules for writing profoundly, but at the end of Peri Bathous he returns to it emphatically. In Chapter XIII, "A Project for the Advancement of the Bathos," he advocates that

every individual of the Bathos do enter into a firm association, and incorporate into One regular Body, whereof every member, even the meanest, will some way contribute to the support of the whole; in like manner, as the weakest reeds, when joined in one bundle, become infrangible. To which end our Art out to be put upon the same foot with other Arts of this age. The vast improvement of modern manufactures ariseth from their being divided into several branches, and parcelled out to several trades: For instance, in Clock-making one artist makes the balance, another the spring, another the crown-wheels, a fourth the case, and the principal workman puts all together: To this economy we owe the perfection of our modern watches, and doubtless we also might that of our modern Poetry and Rhetoric, were the several parts branched out in the like manner. (414)

Here Pope facetiously elaborates the profit motive and the leveling of poetry-writing to manufacture into a proposal to form a poetry-producing corporation and operate it as a rudimentary assembly line.

Sorting out Pope's expressed opinions from his publishing history is the work of another essay, as is untangling the relationships among publishing, the establishment of the poetic canon, and the rise of the academic poetry industry. It is tempting--if premature--to conclude that the academization and the commercialization of poetry are intimately connected, and that somehow the eighteenth-century popularity of poetry results in its twentieth-century unpopularity, as its philosophical substance is divorced from its commercial value.

In any case, there seems more to be gleaned from the ideas of poets about their composing processes than generalized definitions of the key terms of literary theory, and more at work in what they say about those processes than some general understanding of poetic production held by consensus in the "Renaissance" or "neoclassical" age. Realizing the impossibility of our knowing what poets "really thought" through the inevitable linguistic, cultural, and temporal filters, I have nevertheless attempted, as much as possible, to let them speak for themselves, after establishing that there is indeed a self-consciousness about their poetic work operative in the poets' critical remarks beginning with Sir Philip Sidney. I have resisted the

impulse to derive a new systematic interpretation of poets' understanding of the poetic process from Sidney to Johnson, although new interpretations are certainly warranted.

Indeed, while I find the poets' concern with their own processes and the specific discussions of their work of intrinsic interest and value, the chief aim of my enterprise has been to lay the groundwork for new interpretations and inquiries. The academization and commercialization of poetry in the eighteenth century and their apparent repercussions for poetic self-understanding certainly deserve further investigation, as does the role of expected readership in the whole process of poetic production; these issues might profitably be pursued back to the Renaissance and into the twentieth century. In a broader frame of reference, the development of poetic self-consciousness might be held up against the development of self-consciousness in general, or the discussions by poets of their own poetic processes might contribute significantly to an understanding of the experience of being a poet in a given age. Whatever specific inquiries a careful study of the poets writing on their composing processes may inspire, clearly their discussions reveal less consistency from poet to poet, less internal coherence within the thought of a given poet, and less adherence to the poetic program critics have attributed to each age than has heretofore been generally acknowledged, and therefore deserve fresh attention in new contexts.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. For a full survey of source and thematic studies of the Apology, see A. Leigh DeNeef, "Rereading Sidney's Apology." Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 10 (1980), 155-191.

2. See for example Ronald Levao, Renaissance Minds and their Fictions: Cusanus, Sidney, Shakespeare (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), and Alan Hager, "'Sweet Smoke of Rhetoric': The 'Eiron' and His Irony in the 'Defense of Poesie' and Book I of the '1590 Arcadia'" (Ph.D. Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1978).

3. Lewis Soens, for example, explains any disparaging remarks about poetry in the Apology as "Renaissance commonplaces" in his edition of Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesy (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970). Andrew Weiner, on the other hand, acknowledges Sidney's doubts in his introduction to Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism: A Study of Contexts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1978), but goes on to treat his works as the productions of a confirmed and singleminded poet with specific public positions to take through his poetry, as does Neil L. Rudenstine in his Sidney's Poetic Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967). But James M. Osborn, biographer, in Young Philip Sidney 1572-1577 (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Elizabethan Club, 1972), essentially dismisses Sidney as a poet at least during those years because his loyalties were to the political arena.

4. Sir Philip Sidney, An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (London: Nelson, 1965), 95. Subsequent references to this edition of the Apology will appear parenthetically in the text.

5. "To My Dear Lady and Sister, The Countess of Pembroke," in Sir Philip Sidney, The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, ed. Maurice Evans (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1977).

6. Thomas Moffet, Nobilis or A View of the Life and Death of a Sidney and Lessus Lugubris (1592), intro., trans., and notes by Virgil B. Heltzel and Hoyt H. Hudson (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1940), 91. Subsequent citations will appear parenthetically in the text.

7. Dorothy Connell, The Maker's Mind (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 51 and 71-72.

8. Osborn, 143.
9. Soens, x-xv.
10. Irene Samuels, "The Influence of Plato on Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesy," Modern Language Quarterly 1 (1940):383-91. See also Cornell March Dowlin, in "Sidney's Two Definitions of Poetry," Modern Language Quarterly 3 (1942):573-581, who agrees with Samuels that it is Platonism, not Puritanism, against which Sidney argues.
11. Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), 400.
12. Sidney did write briefly about the use of reading poetry to his brother Robert in advising him about his education.
13. Osborn, 504, and Roger Howell, Sir Philip Sidney: The Shepherd Knight (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968), 153.
14. George Puttenham, The Art of English Poesie, intro. by Baxter Hathaway (N.P.: The Kent State University Press, 1970), 36.
15. Alan Hager says that "Thomas Moffet's Nobilis . . . is largely a treatise on University learning, where the dead Sidney serves, as best he can, the function of exemplum for his own nephew, William Herbert," 4.
16. Sidney to Languet, March 1, 1578, in [get ref.] Elsewhere, early in their epistolary relationship, Languet talks about encouraging Sidney to practice writing, "believing that the habit of writing was an important part of your studies. . . I am aware that you were not overfond of writing when you had more leisure" he concludes (Languet to Sidney, Midsummer 1575), 95.
17. DeNeef, 187-188. Although I disagree with DeNeef's suggestion, I am sympathetic with the note about it: "There is, of course, no direct evidence of such an intention, but we have been stymied so long by assuming that Sidney is simply answering Gosson that some speculation about his larger motives seems in order" (188).
18. Norman Egbert McClure, The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harington together with The Praise of Private Life (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930), 86-87.
19. Levao, 184.

20. Kenneth Myrick, Sir Philip Sidney as a Literary Craftsman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1935), 42.

21. Leslie Donley Foster, "Sidney's Praise of Man: A Reassessment of the Nature of the Literary Theory in The Defence of Poesie" (Ph.D. Diss, University of Notre Dame, 1974), 23.

22. DeNeef, 190.

23. Frank B. Evans, "The Concept of the Fall in Sidney's Apologie," Renaissance Papers 1969:9-14; Weiner; and Rudenstine.

24. Levao, 139.

25. Hager, 176.

26. For an extended discussion of the term "imagination" in the Renaissance, see Puttenham's modern editor, Hathaway; William Rossky, "Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic," Studies in the Renaissance 5 (1958):49-73; and Murray Wright Bundy, The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Medieval Thought (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1927) and "'Invention' and 'Imagination' in the Renaissance," Journal of English and Germanic Philology 29 (1930):535-545.

27. George Gascoigne, "Certayne Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse or Ryme in English" (1575), in English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance, ed. O.B. Hardison (London: Peter Owen, 1963).

28. John Webster, ed. and trans. William Temple's "Analysis" of Sir Philip Sidney's "Apology for Poetry" (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1984), 30.

29. O.B. Hardison, Jr., "The Two Voices of Sidney's Apology for Poetry," English Literary Renaissance 2 (1972):83-99; Arthur F. Kinney, "Parody and Its Implications in Sidney's Defense of Poesie," SEL 12 (1972):1-19; Rudenstine, 47. Kinney goes so far as to argue that Sidney parodies "The Schoole of Abuse" in order to disguise his actual agreement with Gosson.

30. Weiner, 28.

31. Geoffrey Shepherd, "Introduction," in his edition of An Apology for Poetry, 3. As Shepherd puts it: "What Gosson was attacking, Sidney was not defending."

32. Thomas Lodge, A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole

of Abuse in defence of Poetry Musick and Stage Plays (1580?) In The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge, vol. 1 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 48 (each work separately paginated).

33. Sir Philip Sidney, "Defence of the Earl of Leicester," in The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Albert Feuillerat, vol. 3 (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1962), 61 and 71.

34. This point of view seems to have been particularly popular in the 1940s. See especially Samuels and Dowlin.

35. T.G.A. Nelson, "Sir John Harington as a Critic of Sir Philip Sidney," Modern Philology 67 (1970):41-56. Nelson shows that Harington borrows from Sidney, and catalogs their disagreements, none of them relevant to the question of the poetic imagination itself.

36. The only "answer" anyone seems to have unearthed is Edmund Bolton's The Cabanet Royal (1627), discussed as a defense of history against Sidney by Thomas H. Blackburn in "Edmund Bolton's The Cabanet Royal: A Belated Reply to Sidney's Apology for Poetry," Studies in the Renaissance, 14 (1967), 159-171.

37. I do not believe that Sidney means to convey "ironic modesty" at all in this passage. He was modest, clearly, about his poetry; I simply do not think that he had the feelings of poetic pride necessary to be ironically modest. The passage is modest, and it is ironic, but in my view it is not ironically modest.

38. Aubrey's Brief Lives, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), 279.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Ben Jonson, Timber: or, Discoveries, in Ben Jonson, ed. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, vol. 8: The Poems, The Prose Works (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947), 583. Subsequent references to this work occur parenthetically by page number in the text.

2. Sir Philip Sidney, An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (London: Nelson, 165), 132.

3. See Bernard H. Newdigate, Michael Drayton and his Circle (Oxford: Printed at the Shakespeare Head St Aldates & Published for the Press by Basil Blackwell, 1941).

4. Henry Reynolds, Mythomystes, Wherein a Short Survey is Taken of the Nature and Value of True Poesy and Depth of the Ancients Above Our Modern Poets, in Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. J. E. Spingarn, Volume I: 1605-1650 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), 141-179. References to this work appear parenthetically in my text.

5. Sir William Alexander, Anacrisis: Or, A Censure of Some Poets Ancient and Modern, in Spingarn, 1:180-89. References appear parenthetically in my text.

6. From The Conversations of Ben Jonson and William Drummond of Hawthornden (1619), in Spingarn, 1:211.

7. Conversations, in Spingarn, 1:214.

8. William Drummond, "A Letter on the True Nature of Poetry, Addressed to Dr. Arthur Jonston," in William Drummond of Hawthornden: Poems and Prose, ed. Robert H. Macdonald (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976), 191.

9. Thomas Rymer, "Preface to the Translation of Rapin's Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie" (1674), in Spingarn, 2:164.

10. The Conversations, while informative and entertaining, consist chiefly of Jonson's opinions of other poets and their works.

11. C.A. Patrides, "A Poet Nearly Anonymous," in Classic and Cavalier: Essays on Jonson and the Sons of Ben, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), 4.

12. I am not unaware of the importance of the term

nature, or Natura, in the earlier history of philosophy and literary studies. Jonson's garbled, or at least unselfconsciously ambiguous, use of the term, however, along with the brevity of his amplification of it, suggests that loading the term's history onto his usage would be unwarranted.

13. William Wordsworth, "Preface to the Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads," in William Wordsworth: Selected Poems and Prefaces, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 453.

14. Thomas M. Greene, The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 274.

15. Roger Ascham, The Schoolmaster, in The Renaissance in England, ed. Hyder E. Rollins and Herschel Baker (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1954), 838.

16. Wesley Trimpi, Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962), 43.

17. Richard S. Peterson, Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 6.

18. Daniel G. Calder, "The Meaning of 'Imitation' in Jonson's Discoveries," Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 70 (1969):435-40.

19. See Ira Clark, "Ben Jonson's Imitation," Criticism 20 (1978):107-27, on the way in which the Epigrammes transform Martial; and Mary I. Oates, "Jonson's 'Ode Pindarick' and the Doctrine of Imitation," Papers on Language and Literature 11 (1975):126-48 on Jonson's "discriminating imitation" in the "Cary-Morison Ode."

20. I do not dispute the general critical sense of Jonson's philosophical concern with language and the poet's use of it, especially as it appears in the plays, nor do I doubt the heavy influence of other thinkers, Vives and Aristotle in particular, on Jonson. However, I would stress that Jonson's use of their ideas is practical; while I agree with Martin Elsky's embroidery of critical language around the fragments of Timber ("Words, Things, and Names: Jonson's Poetry and Philosophical Grammar," in Summers and Peabworth, 91-104), for example, I imagine that the articulation would surprise Jonson very much.

21. A.J. Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages (London: Scholar Press, 1984), 83-84.

22. George Herbert, "Jordan (II)," in The English Poems of George Herbert, ed. C.A. Patrides (London: Dent; Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), 116-117.

23. John Milton, From the Second Book of The Reason of Church-Government Urg'd Against Prelaty (1641), in Spingarn, 1:195.

24. Milton, Church-Government, in Spingarn, 1:197.

25. John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book I, ll. 1-25, in John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: The Odyssey Press, 1957), 211-212.

26. Milton, Church-Government, in Spingarn, 1:196.

27. Milton, Church-Government, Spingarn, 1: 199.

28. Isaac Watts, "Preface to Horae Lyricae," in Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays, ed. Scott Elledge (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), 1:157-158.

29. Thomas Hobbes, "Answer to Davenant's Preface to Gondibert" (1650), in Spingarn, 2:59.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. John Dryden, "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," in Essays of John Dryden, ed. W. P. Ker (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961), 1:36. Subsequent references to this essay will appear parenthetically in the text by Ker's volume and page numbers.

2. Whenever Dryden elaborates on nature, it turns out to be human, not general, nature that the poet is to imitate, as Ralph Cohen has implicitly pointed out in his classification of the meanings of nature for Dryden. The first two, he says, are "human nature, that which was shared by all mankind" and "human potentiality fulfilled, distorted, characterized, or suppressed by a particular culture." (Ralph Cohen, "The Critic: John Dryden's Literary Criticism," in Philip Harth, Alan Fisher, and Ralph Cohen, New Homage to John Dryden [Los Angeles: The Williams Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1983], 64. Cohen's third category is "a writer's style that expresses his own genius"--irrelevant in a discussion of nature as imitated.)

3. Sir William Davenant, "Preface to Gondibert" (1650), in Spingarn, 2:1-53.

4. Davenant, 20.

5. Jonathan Swift, "A Full and True Account of the Bat-tel Fought last FRIDAY, between the Ancient and the Modern BOOKS in ST. JAMES'S LIBRARY," in Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings by Jonathan Swift, ed. Ricardo Quintana (New York: Modern Library, 1958), 383.

6. Thomas Rymer, "Preface to the Translation of Rapin's Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie" (1674), in Spingarn, 2:168.

7. Davenant, 26-27.

8. Thomas Shadwell, "Preface to The Sullen Lovers, or The Impertinents, A Comedy" (1668), in Spingarn, 2:148.

9. Shadwell, "Preface to Sullen Lovers," Spingarn, 2:150. Shadwell also advocates imitating Jonson, who had "fewer failings than all the English Poets, which implies he was the most perfect and best Poet" in the "Preface to The Humorists" (1671), Spingarn, 2:158.

10. Thomas Rymer, "Preface to the Translation of Rapin's Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie" (1674), in Spingarn, 2:165.

11. Letter 31, Dryden to Dennis, [March 1693/4], in The Letters of John Dryden, With Letters Addressed to Him, collected and edited by Charles E. Ward (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1942), 71-72.

12. John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, Duke of Buckinghamshire, An Essay upon Poetry (1682), in Spingarn, 2:286-87.

13. Robert Wolseley, "Preface to Rochester's Valentinian" (1685), in Spingarn, 3:1-31.

14. Sir William Temple, An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning (1690), in Spingarn, 3:32.

15. Sir William Temple, Of Poetry (1690), in Spingarn, 3:80.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 80-81.

18. Ibid., 84-85.

19. William Wotton, from Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning (1694), in Spingarn, 3:203.

20. Sir Richard Blackmore, "Preface to Prince Arthur, An Heroick Poem" (1695), in Spingarn, 3:227.

21. Ibid., 229.

22. George Granville, Lord Lansdowne, An Essay upon Unnatural Flights in Poetry (1701), in Spingarn, 3:292.

23. John Dryden, "Epistle Dedicatory of The Rival Ladies, A Tragi-Comedy [1664]: To the Right Honourable Roger, Earl of Orrery," Ker, 1:1.

24. Ibid., 1:8.

25. Dryden, "Preface to Annus Mirabilis: The Year of Wonders MDCLXVI, Ker, 1:14-15.

26. Dryden, "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting, Prefixed to the Version of Du Fresnoy De Arte Graphica" (1695), in Ker, 2:138.

27. John C. Sherwood, "Precept and Practice in Dryden's Criticism," Journal of English and Germanic Philology 68 (1969):433.

28. Ker, Introduction, 1:xv; Edward Pechter, Dryden's Classical Theory of Literature (London and New York: Cam-

bridge University Press, 1975); Cohen, 84; Ruth Salvaggio, Dryden's Dualities, no. 29, ELS: English Literary Studies, University of Victoria (Victoria, British Columbia: University of Victoria, 1983).

29. Dryden, "Preface to Annus Mirabilis," in Ker, 1:17.

30. Dryden, "Of Dramatick Poesie, An Essay," in Ker, 1:37.

31. Ibid., 43.

32. Dryden, "A Defence of An Essay of Dramatic Poesy, Being an Answer to the Preface of 'The Great Favourite, or, The Duke of Lerma' (Prefixed to the Second Edition of The Indian Emperor, 1668), in Ker, 1:113-114.

33. Ibid., 121. Dryden goes on in this passage to say that it "is not the best poesy which resembles notions of things that are not, to things that are: though the fancy may be great and the words flowing, yet the soul is but half satisfied when there is not truth in the foundation." It is a mark of the doubleness or flexibility--or contradictoriness--of his ideas from essay to essay that in the essay "Of Heroic Plays" he asserts almost the opposite: "if any man object the improbabilities of a spirit appearing, or of a palace raised by magic; I boldly answer him, that an heroic poet is not tied to a bare representation of what is true, or exceeding probable; but that he may let himself loose to visionary objects, and to the representation of such things as depending not on sense, and therefore not to be comprehended by knowledge, may give him a freer scope for imagination. . . . their [philosophers'] speculations on this subject are wholly poetical; they have only their fancy for their guide; and that, being sharper in an excellent poet, than it is likely it should in a phlegmatic, heavy gownman, will see further in its own empire, and produce more satisfactory notions on those dark and doubtful problems" (Ker, 1:153).

34. Dryden, "Preface to An Evening's Love; or, The Mock Astrologer," in Ker, 1:146.

35. Dryden, "A Parallel of Poetry and Painting, Prefixed to the Version of Du Fresnoy De Arte Graphica," in Ker, 2:118.

36. Ibid., 2:123.

37. Ibid., 2:136-37.

38. Dryden, "Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles" (1680), in Ker, 1:233.

39. Dryden, "Preface to the Fables" (1700), in Ker, 2:246.

40. Ibid., 2:249.

41. Letter 68, Dryden to Elizabeth Thomas [Nov. 12, 1699], in Ward, 127.

42. Letter 17, Dryden to Walsh, [early 1691], in Ward, 33-36.

43. Letter 28, Dryden to Walsh, Dec. 12th [1693], in Ward, 61.

44. John L. Mahoney, The Whole Internal Universe: Imitation and the New Defense of Poetry in British Criticism 1660-1830 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985), 22.

45. Ibid., 23.

46. Pechter, 2-3.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. T. S. Eliot, John Dryden: The Poet, The Dramatist, The Critic (New York: Terence & Elsa Holliday, 1932), 55.

2. George Farquhar, "A Discourse Upon Comedy, in Reference to the English State. In a Letter to a Friend" (1702), in Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays, ed. Scott Elledge (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961), 1:89. The distance of Farquhar's understanding of imagination from that of, say, Puttenham, is perhaps an appropriate index of the amount of reflection upon the creative process that has transpired in the intervening years, although it is difficult to credit Farquhar's description of Homer's "knowledge."

3. Ibid., 91.

4. Isaac Watts, "Preface to Horae Lyricae" (1706), in Elledge, 1:148.

5. Ibid., 150 and 156.

6. Ibid., 158-159.

7. Ibid., 163.

8. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, From Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times (1711), in Elledge, 1: 183. For a thorough discussion of Shaftesbury's ideas about poetic creation, see Robert W. Uphaus, "Shaftesbury on Art: The Rhapsodic Aesthetic," in Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 27 (1969): 341-348.

9. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, Selected Essays from "The Tatler," "The Spectator," and "The Guardian," ed. Daniel McDonald (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), 221-223.

10. Martin Kallich, The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory in Eighteenth-Century England: A History of a Psychological Method in English Criticism (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 271.

11. Ibid., 226.

12. Ibid., 327.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 330.

15. Ibid.

16. Addison, The Spectator, No. 417, June 28, 1712, in Elledge, 1: 62-63.

17. Ibid., 64.

18. I do not by any means intend to suggest that Addison is a "pre-Romantic" thinker. John Mahoney offers a helpful corrective on this point: "often there is a tendency, while exploring the subjective drift of aesthetics in Addison and for that matter in the age generally, to suggest that the new emphasis is on the non-representational, on art as escapist, on the artist as self-indulgent creator of his own world, a world increasingly remote from reality. Although there is no denying the subjective emphases of Addison's ideas on imitation and imagination, at the same time he never, in turning the focus of criticism inward, loses sight of art's fundamental mission to capture the persisting truths of nature." (The Whole Internal Universe: Imitation and the New Defense of Poetry in British Criticism 1660-1830 [New York: Fordham University Press, 1985], 38.)

19. B. H. Bronson describes the breakdown of critical consensus about neoclassicism in his essay "When Was Neoclassicism?" in Studies in Criticism and Aesthetics, 1660-1800, Essays in Honor of Samuel Holt Monk, ed. Howard Anderson and John S. Shea (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), 15-16:

However the debt may lie, certain it is that the century no longer looks so placid as formerly, whether because we have done more reading, or because events of recent decades have affected our eyesight, or because the newer telescopic lenses have altered the range of visibility and brought things into sharper focus. . . . Wherever we pause, we are bewildered by the diversity that surrounds us: not alone in the conflict of opinion but shot through the very texture of every considerable author's or artist's work. Of even the chief spokesmen this is probably true. Pope is no exception. The difficulty of making a consistent pattern of Johnson's thinking is notorious. Yet when we look at the authoritative surveys of critical historians, such is not the impression we receive. Their momentum bears us stoutly forward, and at any point they tell us where we are, how many miles we have traveled, how far we have still to go . . .

All the authoritative guides tell us--and we believe them, do we not?--that the road sets out from "Neoclassicism" and in due course arrives at "Romanticism," taking roughly a century to cover the distance. As we trace it, the landscape visibly alters: it grows less cultivated, more picturesque, wilder . . .

But we have been snatched aloft on the wings of metaphor. Let us decline from the resulting oversimplification and try to regain our composure. And first, returning to Neoclassicism, let us acknowledge that, if regarded as a distinct phase of Art, separate in time and visible effects, in England it never really existed. Or, if it ever took palpable shape, that was only in the pages of certain bloodless theorists, whose formulations, when themselves regarded as efforts of the imagination or works of art, are the sole extant examples of its wholehearted enforcement.

20. Dustin H. Griffin, Alexander Pope: The Poet in the Poems (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), xiv.

21. Leopold Damrosch, Jr., The Imaginative World of Alexander Pope (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 4 and 20.

22. Lillian Feder, "Sermo or Satire: Pope's Definition of his Art," in Anderson and Shea, 140.

23. Alexander Pope, The Art of Sinking in Poetry, in Selected Prose of Alexander Pope, ed. Paul Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 175.

24. Pope, "Preface to The Works of Shakespeare," in Hammond, 158.

25. Pope, An Essay on Criticism, in The Poems of Alexander Pope, A One-Volume Edition of the Twickenham Text with Selected Annotations, ed. John Butt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963), 148, ll. 130-140.

26. Howard Weinbrot, The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1969).

27. See, however, for an enactment of Dr. Johnson's imitative work, Joel Weinsheimer, Imitation (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984); by imitating Johnson in the way that Johnson imitates others, Weinsheimer offers implicit explication of this imitation that is more than simply holding up a mirror as well as some provocative reservations about explicit "explications."

28. Pope, "Preface to The Works of 1717," in Hammond, 149.

29. Cited in Weinbrot, 4-5.

30. Pope, Letter to Henry Cromwell, 17 December 1710, in Hammond, 240.

31. Pope, Preface to Works, in Hammond, 149-150.

32. Pope, Letter to William Wycherley, 29 November 1707, in Hammond, 237.

33. Pope, Preface to Works, 147.

34. Pope, Letter to Swift, 25 March 1736, in Hammond, 285.

35. John Hughes, "Remarks on the Fairy Queen" (1715), in Elledge, 1:301.

36. Ibid., 1:302.

37. Almost forty years later, Thomas Warton the younger published his Observations on the "Fairy Queen" (1754). Like Hughes before him, Warton is preoccupied with Spenser's "failure" to write by "the rules":

We who live in the days of writing by rule are apt to try every composition by those laws which we have been taught to think the sole criterion of excellence. . . . Spenser . . . did not live in an age of planning. His poetry is the careless exuberance of a warm imagination and a strong sensibility. It was his business to engage the fancy and to interest the attention by bold and striking images, in the formation and the disposition of which little labor or art was applied. The various and the marvelous were the chief sources of delight. . . . Born in such an age, Spenser wrote rapidly from his own feelings, which at the same time were naturally noble. (In Elledge, 2:771)

38. Leonard Welsted, "Dissertation Concerning the Perfection of the English Language, the State of Poetry, etc." (1724), in Elledge, 1:326-327.

39. Ibid., 330.

40. Lewis Theobald, The Censor, Nos. 10 and 36, in Elledge, 1:309-315.

41. Henry Pettit, ed., The Correspondence of Edward Young 1683-1765 (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1971), 445-451 and 452n.

42. Edward Young's Conjectures on Original Composition, ed. Edith J. Morley (Manchester: At the University Press, 1918), 4. Subsequent references to this work appear

parenthetically in the text.

43. John Dryden, "Preface to Annus Mirabilis: The Year of Wonders MDCLXVI", Ker, 1:14.

44. In his 1754 Observations on the Fairie Queene, Thomas Warton also characterizes the eighteenth century as rule-bound, giving credence, perhaps, to the idea that the stereotype was already in place. (See note 36 above.)

45. Sir William Jones, "On the Arts Commonly Called Imitative," in Elledge, 2:872-881.

46. Henry MacKenzie, The Lounger (1785-1787), No. 68, May 20, 1786. in Elledge, 2:971.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., 972.

49. Johnson's reticence about his composing process is not entirely inexplicable. Aside from the obvious possibility of personal privacy, John Wain conjectures that Johnson is not very self-analytical in print since it is the similarities among men, not individual particularities, that interest him. Further, despite Johnson's mention of the part genius plays in writing, according to Wain he does not mean specific genius "for" something by the term; he believes in general genius that enables its possessor to do just about anything well, so that the production of poetry would seem to be justifiably formulaic. See John Wain, ed., Johnson on Johnson: A Selection of the Personal and Autobiographical Writings of Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976), v-vii.

50. Samuel Johnson, The Adventurer No. 138, in "The Idler" and "The Adventurer", ed. W. J. Bate, John M. Bul-litt, and L. F. Powell, vol. 2 of The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963), 494.

51. Samuel Johnson, "Milton," in his Lives of the English Poets, introd. Arthur Waugh, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1906), 1:88.

52. Johnson, "Pope," Lives, 2:245.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., 97.

55. Ibid., 97-98.

56. Johnson, "Dryden," in Lives, 1:323.

57. Ibid., 1:292.
58. Ibid., 1:328-29.
59. Johnson, "Pope," Lives, 2:225.
60. Johnson, "Cowley," Lives, 1:32.
61. Johnson, "Milton," Lives, 1:122-23.
62. Ibid., 2:304.
63. Ibid., 2:305.
64. Ibid., 2:306.
65. Johnson, "Gray," Lives, 2:459.
66. Johnson, "Milton," Lives, 1:96-97.
67. Johnson, "Pope," Lives, 2:341.
68. Johnson, "Cowley," Lives, 1:2.
69. Johnson, "Cowley," Lives, 1:8.
70. Ibid., 2:325.
71. Johnson, "Thomson," Lives, 2:358.
72. Johnson, "Cowley," Lives, 1:13-14. Just prior to this passage Johnson remarks that the metaphysical poets, "instead of writing poetry, . . . only wrote verses." Similarly, Joseph Warton had remarked that

We do not, it should seem, sufficiently attend to the difference there is betwixt a man of wit, a man of sense,, and a true poet. Donne and Swift were undoubtedly men of wit and men of sense, but what traces have they left of pure 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 . . ., and that it is a creative and glowing imagination, acer spirits ac vis, and that alone, that can stamp a writer with this exalted and very uncommon character which so few possess and of which so few can properly judge. ("An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope," in Elledge, 2:717-718.)

73. Ibid., 1:29.

74. Johnson, "Cowley," Lives, 1:46.
75. Johnson, "Dryden," Lives, 1:325.
76. Johnson, Rambler No. 4, in Johnson as Critic, ed. John Wain (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 67-68.
77. Johnson, Adventurer No. 95, in Bate, Bullit, and Powell, 424-425.
78. *Ibid.*, 425.
79. Johnson, Rasselas, in Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, 3rd ed., ed. Bertrand H. Bronson (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 628. Cf. Johnson's discussion of Gray's Elegy in the Life of Gray.
80. Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare," in Wain, Johnson as Critic, 151.
81. Johnson, "Cowley," Lives, 1:4-5.
82. Johnson, "Milton," Lives, 1:112.
83. Johnson, "Waller," Lives, 1:186.
84. Johnson's political concerns, like so much of his critical approach, are carried on in present-day critical circles; the ongoing concern with the World War II loyalties of such thinkers as Martin Heidegger and Paul DeMan reflects assumptions similar to Johnson's.
85. Johnson, "Cowley," Lives, 1:40-41.
86. Johnson, "Milton," Lives, 1:126.
87. Johnson, "Waller," Lives, 1:202-203.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. Joseph Trapp, Lectures on Poetry 1742, introd. Malcolm Kelsall (Menston, England: The Scholar Press, 1973), 29.
2. Ibid.
3. Since the relationship between academic poetics and poets' poetics--not, I admit, mutually exclusive categories--is a minor theme of my own study, I find the marked difference in argumentative style between Trapp and, say, Pope, of particular relevance to the subsequent widening of the gap between poets and critics, although to trace the development of that gap is unfortunately beyond the scope of the present work.
4. Trapp, 32.
5. Ibid.
6. David Fairer, "Oxford and the Literary World," in The Eighteenth Century, ed. L. S. Sutherland and L. G. Mitchell, vol. 5 of The History of the University of Oxford, ed. T. H. Aston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 799.
7. Samuel Johnson, "Dryden," in Lives of the English Poets, 2 vols., ed. Arthur Waugh (London: Oxford University Press, 1906), 1:262.
8. Samuel Johnson, "Pope," in Lives, 2:259.
9. See Thomas F. Bonnell, "John Bell's Poets of Great Britain: The 'Little Trifling Edition' Revisited," in Modern Philology (November 1987):128-152.
10. Edward Young's Conjectures on Original Composition, ed. Edith J. Morley (Manchester: At the University Press, 1918), 7.
11. Alexander Pope, "Martinus Scriblerus, Peri Bathous: or of the Art of Sinking in Poetry," in Alexander Pope: Selected Poetry & Prose, 2nd ed., ed. William K. Wimsatt (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 375. Subsequent parenthetical page references are to this edition.

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