‘WIT’S WILD DANCING LIGHT’

READING THE POEMS OF ALEXANDER POPE

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3. *An Essay on Criticism*

Examples: Lines 68–79, 88–91, 152–57, 223–32, 243–52, 289–300, 729–34

It is wonderful how rapidly Pope progressed from the *Pastorals*, an apprentice-piece designed to show off his grasp of traditional forms and his own particular style, to his first unarguable masterpiece, *An Essay on Criticism*, published in 1711. Or perhaps it is not so surprising, given the scale of his ambition and the proof of his technical command. *Windsor Forest* (1713) will endeavour to demonstrate a contemporary version of Virgil's amalgamation in his *Georgics* of national progress and rural activities, but *An Essay on Criticism* is an example of practical, didactic poetry with, as principal parts of its brief, the aim of tracing a lineage for its topic and setting out a methodology for its successful implementation.

And yet it is much more. Its academic and intellectual subject necessitated, or at least admitted, an extension of classical models to the Horatian—the *Ars Poetica*, the third of the epistles that constitute Horace's second book—and of time-scale to acknowledge and include the recent past, notably Boileau's *L'Art Poétique* (1674) and essays in verse by seventeenth-century English poets such as Dryden and Roscommon. Joseph Addison's laudatory notice of Pope's poem in *The Spectator* compared its manner of argument to Horace's (no. 253, 20 December 1711; Bond, II, pp. 481–86; Barnard, pp. 77–80). An expansion of models is a mark of contemporary engagement with tradition. Further, the quality that distinguishes Pope's poem is its expressive and imaginative force. Its title may sound, at first, somewhat arid and prescriptive, but it is worth recalling the root meaning of essay in the French 'essayer': *essai*

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means a trial, an attempt, an endeavour. Experimentation is as much a part of the term's signification as are statement and argument.

Lines 68–79

> First follow *Nature*, and your judgment frame
> By her just standard, which is still the same:
> Unerring NATURE, still divinely bright,
> One clear, unchanged, and universal light,
> Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
> At once the source, and end, and test of art.
> Art from that fund each just supply provides,
> Works without show, and without pomp presides:
> In some fair body thus the informing soul
> With spirits feeds, with vigour fills the whole,
> Each motion guides, and every nerve sustains;
> Itself unseen, but in the effects, remains.

'First follow Nature'. *An Essay on Criticism* did indeed follow on chronologically from the *Pastorals*, where the natural world—however idealized and mythologized—dictated the course of the poem as it does the course of the seasons. The *Essay* now asserts, in the aphoristic manner that will also characterize sections of Pope's later *An Essay on Man*, that a true critic takes the lead from the same source. As with similar imperatives there, such as 'Know then thyself', there is nothing remotely original about the injunction. On the contrary, its force and reliability derive from its status as a crisp, no-nonsense reiteration of an age-old adage. 'What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed' (line 298), we might say; or at least seldom so well expressed. As the art historian Hugh Honour wrote in an appropriately concise and disarming commentary on the term 'Nature', '[p]ractically every eighteenth-century belief, whether religious, moral, philosophical, economic or artistic, was supported by an appeal to the law of nature' (1977, p. 105).

But what exactly does it mean? Honour goes on in the same paragraph to assert that the primary connotation of Nature for the Enlightenment was uniformity, universality. *An Essay on Criticism* invokes this fundamental idea in order to set out rules for all judgment of poetry. Pope's own artistry then demonstrates how these rules may be, and should be, creatively applied.

'First follow *Nature*, and your judgment frame'. The opening clause is strongly marked and accented, with three stresses in five syllables ('Fírst follow Náture'), forceful alliteration, and imperative mood. The second half of the line is more relaxed in rhythm, with just two stresses ('and your judgment fráme'), and moves the topic from 'Nature' to 'judgment'. In the context of a poem entitled *An Essay on Criticism*—not 'An Essay on Nature'—this second clause represents firmer territory. What else is 'criticism' but the exercise of one's judgment on a work of art? Pope reverses normal word order here, with the verb 'frame' *following* its object 'judgment', so that the line encloses its two abstract nouns within two imperative verbs. To 'frame' in this transferred sense means to 'shape', 'construct', 'direct' thoughts or ideas to a certain purpose (see *OED*, 'frame' v. 5c), with a distinct implication of 'combination and fitting together of parts' (*OED*, 'frame' v. 7). The metaphor derives from a structure made by joining parts to form a whole window or building. The principal point, then, is not the 'meaning' of nature, but how judgment connects with nature to form a shape. And the line is itself formed as a 'frame': verb/noun/noun/verb. The two half-lines are connected in mood (imperative), and phonetically (the long vowels in 'nature' and 'frame' as well as the alliteration), and so 'fit together'. Take the whole line, and Pope's subject becomes, as David B. Morris writes, not the praise of nature but how to 'frame' one's judgment (Morris 1984, p. 53).

The remainder of the paragraph provides an explanation of what such a process entails. Now, this inevitably involves some consideration of what the qualities of 'nature' are; but the direction of travel is throughout towards the central questions: what is art, and how does one judge it? And 'nature' is defined not by the generalities and abstractions of *Rasselas*'s philosopher, but by artistic means: images and verbal dynamics. These work together to shape an essential paradox: that an entity which is in a state of perpetual rest ('still the same'—that is, always in the same state) is also and at the same time the cause and source of all motion and vitality. Nature's static being, its 'stillness'—the adverb, signifying 'always', is repeated in lines 69 and 70—is rendered by adjectives and adverbs: 'still divinely bright', 'clear', 'unchanged', 'universal'. Its production of vitality is rendered by verbs: 'impart', 'provides', 'works', 'presides', 'feeds', 'fills', 'guides', 'sustains'.

Description by itself is static, like nature itself; verbs inject it with active energy. Put the two together, conjoin them as in a frame, and one has the paradoxical whole. Nature thus operates as an unmoved mover. As the Twickenham editors, E. Audra and Aubrey Williams, note in their concise and authoritative review of the classical and medieval sources behind the implied cosmology, Pope is relying on a 'scarcely veiled analogy' between Nature and God, defined as a first cause (I, 1961, pp. 219–23).

At the heart of these lines Pope couples his two sentences together by repeating 'art'. Rhetoricians term this repetition of a word or phrase across a punctuation mark *anadiplosis*, from the Greek for 'doubling back':

> At once the source, and end, and test of art.
> Art from that fund each just supply provides.

The first of these lines sums up the role of Nature as the ordering principle operating cosmologically, and so at the heart of all endeavour, including human efforts. It is the source of everything: if there is no Nature, nothing exists. It is the end of everything, in the sense that it represents the goal of all endeavour, the model to which all activity aspires. And it is the test of all enterprise, in that it guides our judgment of activity. True artists, then, seek illumination ('light'), vitality ('Life'), energy ('force', quietly setting up an internal rhyme with 'source'), and aesthetic attraction and coherence ('beauty'). For critics, these are the 'test'; the paradigms against which they judge what they read. Does a poem cast light on what it presents? Does it present this energetically, so that it communicates vitally with the reader? Does it attract the reader with the beauty of its language and form?

Subsequent lines expand on how art, at its finest, operates and so define the principles by which we judge it. Great art possesses, like life itself, an 'informing soul'. The adjectival participle carries much weight here. To 'inform' means to impart life or spirit to; to inspire, animate, actuate. It is to fill the body with its 'anima', its spirit. But it is also to give form to, to provide it with its shape. This, indeed, is its earliest meaning, deriving from scholastic Latin 'informare' (*OED*, 'inform' v. ii 3). Pope's art fulfils both functions. He begins with a prepositional phrase containing the static object ('fair body'). Then he releases the subject

('informing soul') which governs all the invigorating verbs, beginning with 'feeds' and 'fills'. These verbs animate the object. The syntax of the sentence (object/subject/actions) follows the contours of the process, so that its form exemplifies on the page the action being described.

Lines 88–91

> Those RULES of old discovered, not devised,
> Are Nature still, but Nature methodized;
> Nature, like liberty, is but restrained
> By the same laws which first herself ordained.

'Rules' is the kind of word that can intimidate a modern reader, whose view of poetry is likely to favour imaginative freedom over regulations. But Pope has in mind a more profound and subtle meaning of what at first may sound unduly restrictive. Nature is the fundamental, always ('still': cf. 'her just standard, which is still the same', line 69, in the first extract discussed). Since Nature underlies everything, all else derives its existence and its vitality from Nature. This includes art, poetry and criticism (which is the judgment of art). Any 'rules' or 'laws' which art or criticism might extract from their activity must, therefore, also derive from Nature. This cultural circle may be likened to political processes: all laws derive their authority from their source; from a constitution that—written or derived from custom and tradition—is their foundation. Those laws, then, may be judged only with reference to that foundation. Just as laws are the principles of a society, put in order, arranged, reduced to method, so the principles of art are 'Nature methodized' (*OED*, 'methodize' v. 1 *trans*: 'To reduce to method or order; to arrange (thoughts, ideas, expression etc.) in an orderly manner'). Art is 'human skill as an agent, human workmanship (*OED*, 'art' sb. 2; adding: 'opposed to nature'). Art is the area of human craftsmanship, but, as human beings are actually part of Nature, its operations are not so much 'opposed' to Nature as constructed by processes analogous to Nature. Humanity is a synecdoche of nature, a part of a wider whole.

Each new work of art derives from the same source. But each new work also *adds* to the store of 'art'. It is a 'new' creation. Art is not a static entity, but an eternally increasing and developing one—at least, as long as humanity survives and goes on creating. Having reference to

first principles is not a recipe for stasis. This is the paradox underlying all forms and expressions of art: they are both 'new' and derive their existence from antiquity, from tradition. Proper neo-classicism recognizes this union as the source of all creativity. Principles, such as verbal precision and respect for structural integrity, underlie every new engagement with the shifting materials of time, language development and increasing variety. Fluidity, like the eternal processes of Nature, is 'methodized' within art. So, Pope's own mastery of structure, syntax, couplet form, rhetorical and stylistic devices, and his constant respect for the roots, significance and development of words are the means by which he methodizes the shifting world that he observes around him. This is his intellectual and artistic life.

Lines 152–57

> Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
> And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;
> From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part
> And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
> Which without passing through the judgment, gains
> The heart, and all its end at once attains.

The oft-quoted fourth line here should itself be sufficient to show that Pope is offering no pallid version of what the term 'neo-classicism' is too often taken to imply. This is not a poem setting out static, absolute 'rules'. Rather, it is about how art may be created by means of imaginative energy, animating spirits. 'Snatch' is the *mot juste* here: its verbal energy is directed at those 'nameless graces' of expression that lie beyond the normal reach of the trained artist. Dull forms of 'neo-classicism' do not snatch, as well-bred people should not. Pope's startling couplet inverts the norms: the boundaries of expected behaviour are 'vulgar' in its original, non-derogatory sense of 'common'. Daring lies in the near-oxymoron of 'brave disorder', where 'brave' may be glossed as 'intrepid'. 'Gloriously offend' occupies similar territory; and underlying the entire passage is the dizzying physical image of 'rise to faults'. Pope may well have had Milton in mind when writing here. *Paradise Lost* (the previous century's great epic, from 1667) plays on the resonant implications of the words 'fall' and 'fault'. In book 9, Adam describes how the serpent's

prophecy had been a lie clothed in partial truth: 'true in our Fall, / False in our promised rising' (lines 1069–70). In book 3, God is explicit, even to the extent of some slight tetchiness, when linking Adam and Eve's 'Fall' to all fault: 'So will fall/He and his faithless progeny: whose fault?' (lines 95–96; see Ricks 1963, p. 9).

Herein lies a warning. Only 'great wits' can judge when and how it is appropriate to breach the norms. Pope's line 'And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art' follows on from a more explicit message:

> Music resembles poetry, in each
> Are nameless graces which no methods teach,
> And which a master-hand alone can reach.
>
> lines 143–45

Pope combines in the word 'grace' a sense of bestowed blessing with all the human aesthetic force of elegant writing. Triplets are relatively rare in Pope's writings, much more so than in Dryden's. Here, he appropriately makes an exception to his customary couplet mode to express such a venture: the third line itself 'reaches' out towards exceptional events. These are the province of 'a master hand alone': intrepid actions, which only those who have mastered the fundamental arts of composition can dare. Yet such do exist, and the true critic should recognize and celebrate this.

These poetic achievements are events that, once properly corroborated, take their place within the body of accepted experience. They extend knowledge, rather than challenging the basis of knowledge. Pope writes:

> If, where the rules not far enough extend,
> (Since rules were made but to promote their end)
> Some lucky licence answers to the full
> The intent proposed, that licence is a rule.
>
> lines 146–49

Just as empiricist epistemology embraces the role of new discoveries, and sees knowledge as constantly open to revision when properly responding to scientific principles, so art and criticism can and should rise to the power of fresh imaginative sallies. Some new planet may, if we are well trained and fortunate, swim into our ken.

Lines 223–32

Samuel Johnson in his life of Pope celebrated *An Essay on Criticism* as a work which, 'if he had written nothing else, would have placed him among the first critics and the first poets (Archer-Hind 1925, II, p. 218). It has puzzled some readers that Johnson went on to pick out, and comment at some length on, Pope's Alps simile for the experience of a student's progress in knowledge. At first, we see only 'short views' of what is immediately before us; we cannot see 'the lengths behind'.

> But, more advanced, behold with strange surprise
> New distant scenes of endless science rise!
> So pleased at first the towering Alps we try,
> Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
> The eternal snows appear already past,
> And the first clouds and mountains seem the last:
> But, those attained, we tremble to survey
> The growing labours of the lengthened way,
> The increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes,
> Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

Johnson praises the simile as having 'no useless parts' and yet affording 'a striking picture by itself'. It 'makes the foregoing position better understood, and enables it to take faster hold on the attention; it assists the apprehension and elevates the fancy' (Archer-Hind 1925, II, pp. 218–19). It fulfils, that is to say, Johnson's recipe for a 'perfect simile', one that both illustrates and ennobles the subject, showing it 'to the understanding in a clearer view' and 'to the fancy with greater dignity' (Ibid., p. 218). It clarifies by visualizing sharply the idea being presented: that each discovery reveals beyond it an even steeper challenge. It dignifies the idea by referencing it to the grandest of the works of Nature. It is, indeed, 'Nature methodized'.

With equal precision, David B. Morris directs us to how Pope's Alps lines represent and ennoble the heart of his endeavour. The critical method Pope is so illuminating is cognate with the artistic method. The act of reading and the act of criticism lie in our constantly evolving skills of judgment. 'Judgment' is the poem's key term. Variations of the word (noun, verb etc.) occur no fewer than twenty-four times, six within the first thirty-five lines. Judgment is an art, a skill, like any other; and, like any other, it is constantly confronted with new challenges, new peaks

to scale. It is a process, not a static application of a slide-rule. It exists, like art, in 'the fluctuating realm of time and change' (Morris 1984, pp. 55–56). It is, therefore, an aspect of what lies at the very core of Enlightenment epistemology. It is, Morris adds, 'a method of reasoning appropriate to a science of uncertainties'. We do not know what will open up beyond that with which we are presently engaged. That is the challenge, but also the excitement, of criticism.

We have now entered what Pope himself in his introductory analysis of the contents of the poem (added later, in 1736) designates as part two of a tripartite structure: lines 1–200, 201–559, and 560–744. The observations on Nature with which we have been principally concerned so far are the necessary spring from which flow the later sections. Now Pope provides us with the consequences for the practice of criticism.

Lines 243–52

In wit, as nature, what affects our hearts
Is not the exactness of peculiar parts;
'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.
Thus when we view some well-proportioned dome,
(The world's just wonder, and even thine, O Rome!)
No single parts unequally surprise,
All comes united to the admiring eyes;
No monstrous height, or breadth, or length appear;
The whole at once is bold, and regular.

Just as complete works of art should harmonize with the world around them, so each component of a work of art should combine with its fellow parts. Johnson proposes that every word should contribute seamlessly to make up a perfect simile. Nothing should be superfluous. The degree to which a writer's conception is realised in the work of literature is a reflection of the degree to which her or his expression is integrated. The core principle is linguistic and intellectual harmony: the 'propriety' of the work, its fitness to the purpose of communication. As Pope will put it later in his *Epistle to Burlington*, 'Parts answering parts shall slide into a whole' (line 66). The very line in which this assertion is made proceeds effortlessly, 'slides' with a sense of natural ease, towards its final word, 'whole'.

In this *Essay on Criticism* passage, the same argument is made more extensively. The word 'parts' occurs twice, but not in the balanced and tight integrity of a single phrase along the lines of 'parts answering parts'. Rather, Pope separates them so that each appears once in the two sentences (lines 244 and 249). 'Wit' is a simple word with a complex linguistic and significant history. Its source lies in synonyms and reflections of words meaning 'to know; knowledge'. Works of wit are thus expressions of the general knowledge of humankind. In the first sentence, human beauty is his brief analogy for the operation of wit. In the second sentence he switches to architecture for his comparison. In both sentences, the phrasing of 'parts' is made semantically similar through a repeated pattern of negative/adjective/noun: 'not ... peculiar [particular] parts'; 'No single parts'.

In each sentence, Pope's wording is made appropriate to his meaning. He breaks the line 'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call' into three parts to form a four/two/four syllabic structure. The first comma separates two facial details from each other; the second separates both from the abstract noun 'beauty', which denotes totality. By contrast, its rhyming line 'But the joint force and full result of all' contains no divisive punctuation. Instead, it 'forcefully' combines rhythmically strong adjective/noun phrases before coming to rest at 'all': striding rather than sliding to a whole. The longer second sentence locates its version of the 'single'/'all' antithesis in the two lines of its middle couplet, between a euphonious presentation of its image ('when we ... well-proportioned ... world's ... wonder') and a final couplet which gathers the three dimensions (height/breadth/length) into a conclusive 'whole' uniting energy ('bold') with harmony ('regular'). Contrarieties are located within an entity concise and yet extensive enough to contain them. The two images together combine nature (facial, human beauty) and art (the dome of St Peter's), the sphere of human activity.

Lines 289–300

Some to *conceit* alone their taste confine,
And glittering thoughts struck out at every line;
Pleased with a work where nothing's just or fit;
One glaring chaos and wild heap of wit.
Poets like painters, thus, unskilled to trace

> The naked nature and the living grace,
> With gold and jewels cover every part,
> And hide with ornaments their want of art.
> True wit is nature to advantage dressed,
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed;
> Something, whose truth convinced at sight we find,
> That gives us back the image of our mind.

The second part of *An Essay on Criticism* (lines 201–560) lists the kinds of details which critics with poor judgment pick out. Here Pope properly criticizes those who go to a poem looking only ('alone') for striking *conceits*: elaborate or fanciful images and figures of speech that aim to surprise and engage the reader's attention by means of their ingenuity. Such critics admire poems for their showiness, their 'glittering thoughts', which try to blind the reader by their 'glaring' self-consciousness. Poets who write like this are like painters who, lacking the skill to depict truthfully nature as it really is ('naked nature'), attempt to cover up their deficiencies with shiny jewel-like ornamentation. Perhaps Pope has at the back of his mind the fallen Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*, who, now ashamed of their naked innocence, try to cover themselves up with leaves.

Throughout, Pope defines the alternative to such selectivity or partiality. A 'work where nothing's just or fit' concisely defines the ideal qualities: rightness—truth to nature—and appropriateness—the harmonious relationship between parts and the whole. The positive words 'wit' and 'art' are placed at key points in the unfolding argument: simultaneously at the ends of lines, couplets, quartets, and sentences (see how 'wit' chimes with 'fit' in lines 291–92; and how 'art' concludes the second quartet of lines). Line 297 then begins the third quartet by picking up 'wit' and transforming it from its discordant perversion 'wild heap of wit' ('heap' here guides 'wild' to its sense of 'disorderly') to 'True wit'.

These four lines, 297–300, constitute a central statement of the nature of art, and so the foundation of positive criticism. They have frequently been misread. They are not advocating anything as simple and restricted as 'dressing up' commonplaces to make them look good. The word 'dressed' derives from the Old French verb *dresser*, meaning 'to arrange', 'to order'. In common usage, the verb has tended to move towards a more simple sense of merely putting on clothes or ornaments. But its

foundational significance is more complex. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'dress' (v. 5) as to 'make ready or prepare for any purpose; to order, arrange, draw up', as dressed crab is food carefully prepared for presentation at table. Pope is continuing to develop his original nature/art distinction: the former is the source of everything; the latter is the sphere of human activity and creativity, whose aim is to reflect in forms of expression (painting, poetry etc.) the essential principles of nature. Dressing nature to advantage is bringing out the order, the energy, and the beauty of nature. Only a good knowledge ('wit') of nature can provide the basis for such an artistic activity. Good knowledge can only derive from often repeated experience of nature and frequent reflection on that experience: 'what oft was thought'. The really fine artist will look for the best and most accurate language: 'ne'er so well expressed'. When such a union of deep reflection, multiple experience and a high level of artistry is achieved, it strikes the reader (the critic) with immediate conviction: 'truth convinced at sight we find'. The poetry and the reader are thus brought into an intensely powerful imaginative harmony: poetry 'gives us back the image of our mind'. Compare what Samuel Johnson says about Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751): it 'abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo'. He then adds that four stanzas of the poem 'are to me original: I have never seen the notions in any other place; yet he that reads them here, persuades himself that he has always felt them' (Archer-Hind 1925, II, p. 392). The poet has seen further into nature than the reader has. The truth he has seen is one that strikes the reader as both fresh and true. The critic acknowledges the dynamic quality of this artistic engagement in terms which are a tribute to humility, truth, and imagination: great art and great criticism.

Lines 729–34

Such late was Walsh—the Muse's judge and friend,
Who justly knew to blame or to commend;
To failings mild, but zealous for desert;
The clearest head, and the sincerest heart.
This humble praise, lamented shade! receive,
This praise at least a grateful Muse may give.

Talking of humility, this is the note Pope strikes in the concluding paragraph of *An Essay on Criticism*. William Walsh, a politician, poet and critic twenty-five years his senior, befriended and supported Pope when he was beginning his writing career (see Chapter 1). Walsh was a member of the Whig Kit Cat Club, and sufficiently well known to be included in the anthology of poets to which Johnson's *Lives* were written as prefaces; though, in truth, Johnson's life of Walsh is briefer than most, and is largely given over to Pope's gratitude to and respect for him. In August 1707, the nineteen-year-old Pope undertook the lengthy journey from Binfield to Abberley Lodge in Worcestershire, the Walsh family home. He stayed there several weeks, and then returned in September for what would prove to be a final opportunity (Walsh died in 1708) to converse at length and benefit from the older man's knowledge and advice (See Mack 1985, p. 116).

Pope's eulogy of Walsh at the close of *An Essay on Criticism* may be seen as fit tribute to a genuine counsellor and mentor. The lines possess the economy, clarity, and elegance of a heartfelt and truthful epitaph. This is not the time for self-indulgence. Rather, Pope exemplifies the straightforward virtue of true gratitude to one whose advice, we gather, was the gift of an honourable and thoughtful man and teacher. Consider the exact placing of 'justly' in line 730, given quiet prominence before the verb it qualifies; the simple balance of 'to blame or to commend'; the extension of these antitheses into the following line's chiastic form, where 'mild' softens any potential for animosity implicit in 'blame' and 'failings', and 'zealous' corrects any tendency to deem directness in criticism a sign of coolness; and the limpid balance combined with utmost praise in 'The clearest head, and the sincerest heart'. This is tactful writing, not in any negative or even neutral sense, but in its adoption of the qualities of the man whom it defines.

At the same time, Pope's lines demonstrate phonetic artistry, which shapes them into a duly graceful testimony. Repeated, but not excessively prominent, /d/ and /t/ plosive consonants are softened by voiced /z/ sounds ('failings mild', 'zealous for desert'), which themselves culminate in the final couplet's concise version of a peroration's forceful repetition: 'This humble praise ... This praise ... a grateful Muse'. Note also the decorous manner in which a personal tribute is channelled through the voice of a generalized and personified Muse. Pope does not

simply assert his gratitude; he demonstrates that he has learnt decorum, and learnt it well.

But why does Pope conclude in this deferential and serene manner a long poem which has aspired to more ambitious and far-reaching aims? The answer is that the second and third sections of the poem are deeply concerned to connect human judgment with a moral dimension in which friendship, candour, and loyalty are key defining qualities. This has immense consequences for the way in which Pope will shape his whole career, in which ethics lie philosophically central. The second section opens with a paragraph (lines 201–14) locating pride (the converse of humility) as the key cause of poor judgment. The third section begins by asserting that critics should observe a moral propriety: 'tis but half a judge's task, to know. / 'Tis not enough, taste, judgment, learning, join; / In all you speak, let truth and candour shine' (lines 561–63). Pope proceeds to map out a history of criticism from classical times to the present; and, in this roll-call of the greats, friendship is a surprisingly dominant quality. Horace, for example, 'Will, like a friend, familiarly convey / The truest notions in the easiest way' (lines 655–56). So, when Pope comes right up to date with his own experience, it is as 'the Muse's judge and friend' that he praises his mentor. Later, it will be Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, who takes over the role of Pope's 'guide, philosopher and friend'. For a poet whose reputation in later years would become more and more indelibly associated with the art of satire, friendship was actually his recurrent theme and aim—however overtaken at times by opposite forces: 'Fools rush into my head, and so I write'. In *An Essay on Criticism* as a whole entity—and to see objects steadily and see them whole is its recurrent requirement—a good writer is one who holds everything together, is inclusive, and welcoming.