



‘WIT’S WILD DANCING LIGHT’
READING THE POEMS OF ALEXANDER POPE

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16. *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated*

Examples: Lines 111–22, 1–14, 23–28, 45–52, 91–100, 123–28

Pope wrote his imitation of the first satire in Horace's second book in January 1733, while recovering from an illness at the London home of Edward Harley, Second Earl of Oxford (1689–1741). He was prompted to do so by Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, who observed that an English imitation would, as Pope reported to Spence, 'hit my case' (Spence, ed. by Osborne, I, 1966, p. 143). Pope clearly responded to the idea with alacrity, for it was published in February; and it initiated his series of such imitations running through to 1738. Here, then, is another group of poems contributing generously to the creative cornucopia of this decade in his career.

Horace wrote his poem as an introduction to the book, and it has been generally accepted as marking a completion of his work in this genre as he moved on to writing epistles. Pope followed this sequence, choosing first three of Horace's satires, then four of his epistles (1733–34 and 1737–38, respectively).

This first poem is set in the form of a conversation between the author and a legal adviser. In Horace's case, this role is played by C. Trebatius Testa, a distinguished jurist who enjoyed the esteem of the emperor Augustus but was also—or so he comes across in the letters of Cicero—a likeable man who enjoyed activities as varied as swimming and social drinking. He would, therefore, have been likely to appreciate the joking tone of much of Horace's poem, while also being well equipped to offer a sobering legal perspective from which to advise his informal client

on the risks incurred in writing rather too freely about public figures (Rudd, 1966).

Pope chooses as his interlocutor William Fortescue (1687–1749), a friend of long standing, whose legal career took him to senior positions within the Walpole administration. Like Trebatius, then, Fortescue is able to join in a friendly conversation while speaking with authority when Pope ventures into dangerous territory. However, there are significant differences between Trebatius and Fortescue. Trebatius was by twenty years or so Horace's senior, whereas Fortescue and Pope were near contemporaries. Fortescue is closer to Pope: he contributed to a spoof law case written by Pope in the 1710s (*Stradling versus Stiles*) and became a neighbour at Richmond. He was still in the early stages of his legal career at that point, having been called to the bar in 1715 and appointed King's Counsel and attorney-general to the Prince of Wales in 1730. He would later achieve the heights of becoming Master of the Rolls in 1741. At the same time, he had also become directly associated with Robert Walpole, serving as his private secretary in 1715. Fortescue's ambiguous—or double—situation, then, makes him an intriguing figure in the poem. In the text, Pope and Fortescue appear as P. and F.

Pope published his *Imitations* with the Latin original on the verso (left-hand) pages and his English version on the recto (right-hand) pages facing them. Readers were thus presented with three poems at once. They were invited to read (or re-read) Horace's original, to read Pope's imitation and, by reading across double pages, to read an amalgam of both. This complex process pointed readers in the direction of observing and reflecting on how similar to or dissimilar from the Horatian model were Pope's lines. The very fact of turning Latin into English did, of course, necessitate basic variation. For a start, Latin is a much more concise language than English, with an elaborate system of case-endings and verb conjugations delineating relationships between words that English has to spell out by longer means, such as prepositional phrases and auxiliary verbs. It therefore takes Pope 156 lines to render Horace's 86.

However, these and other dissimilarities, familiar problems to all translators, were used artistically by Pope as means of articulating a complex dialogue between the poems' arguments, at the levels of detail and superstructure. Frank Stack's definitive study, *Pope and Horace*:

Studies in Imitation (1985), states clearly and precisely: 'The parallel texts repeatedly underline the essential point: that as an imitator Pope's relationship with Horace is profoundly paradoxical, involving both the minutest connections of word, tone, and nuance and the greatest freedom and individuality of expression.' By these means, 'Pope's identification with Horace and his texts in the *Imitations* involves at once an appreciation of Horace's forms, language and vision, a criticism of their limitations, and an imaginative and creative extension of their possibilities' (Stack, pp. 23–24, 25).

Lines III–22

Could pensioned Boileau lash in honest strain
 Flatterers and bigots even in Louis' reign?
 Could Laureate Dryden pimp and friar engage,
 Yet neither Charles nor James be in a rage?
 And I not strip the gilding off a knave,
 Unplaced, unpensioned, no man's heir, or slave?
 I will, or perish in the generous cause:
 Hear this, and tremble! You, who 'scape the Laws.
 Yes, while I live, no rich or noble knave
 Shall walk the world, in credit, to his grave.
 TO VIRTUE ONLY and HER FRIENDS, A FRIEND,
 The world beside may murmur, or commend.

Pope's lines are strongly assertive, from an opening rhetorical question, through the simple and clear 'I will', and the imperative 'Hear this, and tremble', to the reiterated determination of 'Yes, while I live, no ... knave / Shall walk ...'. The 'virtue' line (121), then, has behind it the force of personal moral outrage and it is in this context that we read Pope's linguistic and syntactic changes to it. Horace's equivalent line runs: 'scilicet uni aequus atque eius amicis' [evidently well-disposed to virtue alone and her friends]. In the original printing of Pope's imitation, the six words after 'scilicet' are also given capital letters. So, Pope draws specific attention in both Horace and his own version to virtue and friendship. He thereby aligns himself with the ethical touchstones of Horace's satire.

Horace provides a compact, epigrammatic single hexameter in which the adjective 'aequus' bears the weight of meaning and defines

an attitude and, beyond that, a whole philosophical world-view. It denotes balance, impartiality, self-control, fairness, a good disposition. This range of meanings derives from its literal significance: a level, flat place (it is the root of English 'equal'). Horace uses it elsewhere: in the opening lines of *Odes*, book 2, ode 3, where it describes keeping a level (or balanced, controlled) mind ('mentem'); and in the last line of *Epistles*, book 1, epistle 18, where it qualifies 'animus', that is, the rational part of a person, their intellect, reason, understanding. In line 9 of the same epistle, Horace defines virtue as a mean between vices: 'virtus est medium vitiorum'. These extremes are servility, an unthinking acceptance of doing what you are told, and a nit-picking, argumentative engagement with the most trivial of issues. 'Aequus', then, sums up a broadly philosophical attitude to life.

Pope's line 121 converts Horace's balanced statement into a more dynamically charged version of the same fundamental outlook, an ability to look even-handedly only on virtue and her friends. He renders Horace's adjective 'aequus', which admits 'friendly' as one of its range of possible meanings, by repeating the noun 'friend' and deferring it to the end of his line by means of one of his favourite figures, hyperbaton: transposition of the normal order of words for the sake of emphasis. The energy of the line derives from the resulting striking repetition: it is both semantically balanced ('a friend to virtue and her friends') and rhythmically wildly unbalanced, its caesura being withheld until after the eighth syllable, leaving 'a friend' strongly foregrounded. That element of aggression follows on from the preceding assertive lines, while the meaning remains fundamentally well-proportioned: 'any true friend of virtue is a friend of mine'. A change in syntax and word-order signifies Pope's desire to highlight comradeship as a positive quality in the context of satire, a genre which cannot but make enemies. So, Pope sounds both friendly and hostile. Horace's more laid-back attitude is commendable and philosophically attractive, but do the present times demand more vigorously committed writing?

Pope also changes the context of the line. In Horace, it forms the climax of a passage (lines 62–70) in praise of the satiric method of an earlier writer, Gaius Lucilius, who had been writing during the last third of the second century BCE (about 133–102). Niall Rudd's translation reads:

When Lucilius first had the courage
 to write this kind of poetry and remove the glossy skin
 in which people were parading before the world and concealing
 their ugliness, was Laelius offended by his wit or the man who rightly
 took on the name of the African city which he overthrew?
 Or did they feel any pain when Metellus was wounded and Lupus
 was smothered in a shower of abusive verse? And yet Lucilius
 indicted the foremost citizens and the whole populace, tribe
 by tribe, showing indulgence only to Worth and her friends.

Lines 62–70. (Rudd 1979, p. 87)

Horace's point may be summarized: 'my predecessor Lucilius fearlessly attacked all people in society, including by name the great and the powerful, sparing only the virtuous; so why do people complain when I do the same? 'He thereby neatly combines justification of his own satires through reference to precedent with an implied satirical dig: 'people were tougher in those days'.

Pope retains Horace's historical perspective, naming two seventeenth-century satirical poets, Boileau in France and Dryden in England, as writers who freely and directly attacked 'flatterers and bigots' and Catholic clergy, respectively, without enraging the monarchs of the time. However, these examples are rapidly given, each in a couplet, while the weight of the passage shifts to Pope himself, incorporating the climactic line we have been scrutinizing in a powerful statement of his own rights and independence.

Pope is thus engaging implicitly in a conversation with his original source. By noting this, as one can only do by reading horizontally across the two pages, a reader is drawn into the problem. How does, or should, satire adjust to the conditions within which it appears? What does the modern age demand of a writer? Does, indeed, our definition of 'virtue'—the moral excellence that becomes a person, the duty of goodness—have to adjust, or does and should it remain rooted in a timeless mean, a medium? Add to these questions Pope's firm adherence to the value of friendship, its force for good, and we are nearing the heart of the quest for what constitutes ethically responsible personal and social action; the quest that energizes the whole of Pope's poetry of the 1730s.

Lines 1-14

P. There are (I scarce can think it, but am told)
 There are, to whom my satire seems too bold:
 Scarce to wise Peter complaisant enough,
 And something said of Chartres much too rough.
 The lines are weak, another's pleased to say,
 Lord Fanny spins a thousand such a day.
 Timorous by nature, of the rich in awe,
 I come to counsel learned in the law:
 You'll give me, like a friend both sage and free,
 Advice; and (as you use) without a fee.
 F. I'd write no more.

P. Not write? But then I think,
 And for my soul I cannot sleep a wink.
 I nod in company, I wake at night,
 Fools rush into my head, and so I write.

To summarize: 'We satirists just can't get it right, can we? Some people say I'm not polite ('complaisant') enough to those whom I write about, while others say my verses are too feeble.' Peter Walter ('Peter') and Francis Charteris ('Chartres') had both been referred to in Pope's *Epistle to Bathurst*, and both in unflattering terms. The colonel and adventurer Charteris was a frequent object of attack on account of his rakish lifestyle and his complicity with the Walpole administration. In *Bathurst*, Pope rhetorically asked whether riches could restore his (sexual?) 'vigour' (line 86). Since he had died in 1732, the year before *Bathurst* was published, this could be seen as a little tactless, to say the least: kicking a man when he is well and truly not only down but out. Perhaps Pope had not heard of the death, or, as he wrote the poem over a couple of years or so, had not checked up. Peter Walter was also a regular object of critical observations by writers. For, he was known as a man who made a fortune as a money-lender or 'money scrivener', defined as one who receives money 'to place out at interest' and supplies 'those who wanted to raise money on security' (*OED* 'scrivener', sb., sense 3). Henry Fielding portrayed Walter as Peter Pounce in his novel *Joseph Andrews* (1742). In *Bathurst*, Pope had, pretty sharply and sarcastically, described him as one who wisely 'sees the world's respect for gold, / And therefore hopes this nation may be sold' (lines 123-24). Fielding has his Peter Pounce state that, in his view, 'the greatest fault in our constitution

is the provision made for the poor' (chapter 48). But does Pope go rather too far by virtually attributing to him treasonable sentiments?

Then, even when he turns to those who find his satire too 'weak', Pope cannot resist a jibe at another prominent Walpole supporter, Lord Hervey, vice-chamberlain and confidential adviser to Queen Caroline. Indeed, Pope goes out of his way to make a personal insult. In Horace, the poet simply complains that people have censured him for producing the kind of feeble, wishy-washy verses that anyone could spin out in the thousands. Pope introduces the name of 'Lord Fanny' as one who does just that. Hervey certainly saw this as a reference to himself and quickly responded by assisting Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to write *Verses addressed to the Imitator of Horace* (1733), a vicious no-holds-barred attack on Pope's physical and moral 'deformities'. Pope could hardly complain. Later in his dialogue with Fortescue, he throws down a scarcely concealed and unpleasant jibe at Montagu: 'From furious Sappho scarce a milder fate, / Poxed by her love, or libelled by her hate' (lines 83–84). If you dish it out, you have to be ready to take it. 'Fanny' probably did not yet have its modern vulgar sense, but Pope's use of a female name (prompted, perhaps, by the references to 'Fannius' in Horace's *Satires* 4 (line 21) and 10 (line 80) as a poet and critic of him) could only be interpreted as a snide comment on Hervey's sexual proclivities. Rather undignified all round? Where lies Pope's vaunted virtue in all this?

Or would this be to react too preciously and primly? Satire in the eighteenth century was a rough trade in all its forms—theatrical, literary, and artistic. It was so because corruption at both personal and public levels was as endemic then as it usually is in human society, finance, and governance. As Juvenal, a Roman satirist from a later generation than Horace's, put it, 'difficile est saturam non scribere' [it is difficult not to write satire] (*Satire* I). Francis Charteris, it seems, was indeed a notably unpleasant character, a gambler, usurer, pimp, and convicted rapist. Peter Walter did very well out of his financial activities, acquiring a large amount of property in Dorset and leaving £300,000 at his death (Butt, ed. *TE*, IV, 2nd ed. (1953), pp. 353 and 392). Better a society in which it is possible to attack vices with vehemence than one that represses opposition? Should not virtue, as it were, join battle even if it risks becoming to some degree compromised?

These are the very questions raised and explored with vigour in this poem, as in other of Pope's satires. As Stack observes: for Pope, 'the central question of *Horace's* poem, to be explored in his *Imitation*, was, how far the energy of satiric writing is fundamentally moral' (1985, p. 31). These opening lines, with their deliberate invocation of specific cases, challenge the reader and challenge the Horatian original, too. 'Horace thinks of himself in relation to a general public; Pope's lines bristle with living personalities. From the beginning we realize that the power of Pope's satire lies in its power to offend, and if it is to be defended, it has to be defended in those terms' (Stack, p. 34).

Pope's opening is also brilliantly versatile, lexically and metrically virtuosic, and just plain funny. The very first couplet, 'There are (I scarce can think it, but am told), / There are to whom my satire seems too bold', adds to Horace an outrageously mock air of disbelief. 'How could anyone find my satire too bold?' He has to repeat 'There are', whereas Horace writes a single 'Sunt quibus' [there are to whom]. Pope's tongue is firmly in his cheek when he describes himself as 'Timorous by nature, of the rich in awe'. After all, the risks he repeatedly takes in his satire are hardly the mark of a diffident faint heart; and, far from being awestruck by power and riches, he is going out of his way to call out those who prosper by morally dubious actions. There is a vital, energetic, and ironic voice at play here.

The scene is, as it is in Horace, amusingly comic and dramatic. Trebatius's legal authority is expressed in what Rudd calls the 'sententious brevity of a jurist' (1966, p. 130), blunt one-word responses. 'Quid faciam?' asks Horace; 'Quiescas' [Keep quiet] replies Trebatius. 'Are you telling me not to write poetry?' asks an incredulous Horace. 'Aio' [Yes], replies Trebatius. English, alas, does not permit quite such economy of expression, but Pope uses Fortescue's slightly longer reply to slide wittily into a marvellously comic extension of Horace's protest that he just cannot sleep (lines 11–14):

F. I'd write no more.

P. Not write? but then I think,
And for my soul I cannot sleep a wink.
I nod in company, I wake at night,
Fools rush into my head, and so I write.

Pope simply is a man of words; if he cannot write them, he has to think them. Refreshing one of his memorable lines, 'For fools rush in where angels fear to tread' (*An Essay on Criticism*, line 625), Pope creates a picture that is as lively as it is engaging.

His comedy is increased by extension of his witty, tongue-in-cheek satirical edge to the very legal profession whose advice he is seeking. 'I come to counsel learned in the law' treads a fine line between deference and jokiness. However, Pope steps over that line with an additional nudge in lines 9–10:

You'll give me, like a friend both sage and free,
Advice; and (as you use) without a fee.

Fortescue does not rise to a response: non-committal, these legal types. Or is Fortescue actually playing up to his role as straight man to Pope's humour? When we compare the scenes in the two poems, Horace's and Pope's, we can see that they share qualities and yet differ. Pope does not simply follow his original; but nor does he leave him behind. Both writers are clearly enjoying the drama, the comedy, the opportunity for a creative display of their talent to amuse. Frank Stack again: 'Every point in Pope has been inspired by Horace, and yet every point is different. And it is this lively, endlessly open, play between the texts which makes reading the poem as an Imitation so invigorating. Each poetry seems to open up the other and give it new vitality. What we are aware of is the endless play of similarity and disparity, re-creation and transgression' (1985, p. 33).

If you have to write, advises Fortescue, why not write verses in praise of 'Caesar' (i.e., George II)? You will be well rewarded with a knighthood or the poet laureateship. This is teasing advice, as George's aversion to poetry was well known. Pope rises to the occasion:

What? like Sir Richard, rumbling, rough, and fierce,
With ARMS, and GEORGE, and BRUNSWICK crowd the verse,
Rend with tremendous sound your ears asunder,
With gun, drum, trumpet, blunderbuss, and thunder?
Or nobly wild, with Budgell's fire and force,
Paint angels trembling round his falling horse?

lines 23–28

Horace responds to Trebatius's equivalent advice with a few parodies of epic images, such as 'battle columns bristling with javelins'. Pope turns up the temperature, offering two actual models of poetic heroism. Eustace Budgell, a cousin of Joseph Addison and a contributor to the *Spectator*, had written a *Poem upon His Majesty's Late Journey to Cambridge and Newmarket* (1728), which celebrated George, as Prince of Hanover, for leading a cavalry charge at the Battle of Oudenarde (1708) even as his horse was shot from under him. This represents a twist on another of Horace's examples, a wounded Parthian falling from his horse. Pope adds the trembling angels as a further parodic touch.

'Sir Richard' Blackmore had long been a butt of Pope's derision. Most notably, he furnishes *Peri Bathous*, Pope's comic essay on how to write anti-climactic 'heroic' poetry, more instances than anyone else. For example, Blackmore thus describes a warrior's noble action:

The mighty Stuffa threw a massy spear,
Which, with its errand pleased, sung through the air.

The second line's assertion that the huge spear was actually mightily pleased with itself, and shows it by singing like an errand-boy whistling as he goes, presents, not epic grandeur, but inept anti-climax. This couplet is just one of many others in Blackmore's attempts to achieve the high style of epic, but which actually sink into absurdity. (The lines, incidentally, are from Blackmore's *King Arthur* (1697), not, as Pope's note states, *Prince Arthur*. See Cowler 1986, p. 264.) Pope now stuffs his lines full of onomatopoeia in a bravura display of fatuous hyperbole. Line 26 is the highpoint: 'With gun, drum, trumpet, blunderbuss, and thunder'. Six reverberant short /u/ vowels, mouthfuls of clashing consonants and a lineful of commas result in a proper plethora of painful panegyric. Arise, Sir Alexander?

After the comic bravura of Pope's demonstration of how to praise the royal family as they deserve, Fortescue (enjoying the joke or despairing of getting his client to take anything seriously?) explains that the more satire he (Pope) writes the more enemies he is making. 'Look, you may mock,' a paraphrase of Fortescue's advice might run, 'but it's really better to toe the line like Colley Cibber'—the actual poet laureate, frequent butt of Pope's mockery, and future anti-hero of the revised, four-book *Dunciad*—'than to "Abuse the city's best good men in metre,

/ And laugh at peers that put their trust in Peter''' (lines 39–40). This is a reference, again, to Peter Walter. 'And it's no good making up names because, if you do, you manage to rile even more people by encouraging them to imagine they must be the intended victim of the fictitious name.' But Pope goes blithely on, mixing real and invented names with the ease and delight of a poet really enjoying himself.

Lines 45–52

P. Each mortal has his pleasure: none deny
 Scarsdale his bottle, Darty his ham-pie;
 Ridotta sips and dances, till she see
 The doubling lustres dance as fast as she;
 Fox loves the senate, Hockley Hole his brother,
 Like in all else, as one egg to another.
 I love to pour out all myself, as plain
 As downright SHIPPEN, or as old Montaigne:

The Fox brothers, Stephen and the later more-famous Henry, are nonchalantly caught in a chiasmus that places Parliament ('the senate') alongside Hockley Hole, a celebrated bear-baiting garden in Clerkenwell, near the Fleet, a river long converted into a stinking sewer (see Rogers 1980, pp. 146–47). 'Ridotta', meanwhile, is a generalised name for a society woman frequenting a *ridotto*, a social assembly for dancing and music, introduced into England in 1722. She trips along in a couplet that exuberantly dances with her. With it, Pope conveys the message, 'You see, everyone takes innocent pleasure in some activity. Mine just happens to be writing a stream of verses in which I make no attempt to hide or pretend to be what I'm not.' Rather, he names his models as 'downright SHIPPEN' and 'old Montaigne'. William Shippen was a long-standing MP, an uncompromising and unrelenting critic of the Walpole administration who had strongly attacked the financial corruption of the South-Sea Company and who was admired by all political sides for his principled stand. Montaigne is the sixteenth-century French writer whose free-thinking and wide-ranging *Essais* had established him as a model for honest self-examination and independent investigation of ethical, social, and religious questions and problems. Pope's couplet here has the direct ('plain') lucidity and rhythmic limpity of a clear

stream. Better this than a foul ditch: Pope is, with graceful, lightly-worn facility, building a moral case whose natural product is satirical poetry.

Lines 91–100

Then, learned Sir! (to cut the matter short)
 Whate'er my fate, or well or ill at court,
 Whether old age, with faint but cheerful ray,
 Attends to gild the evening of my day,
 Or death's black wing already be displayed,
 To wrap me in the universal shade;
 Whether the darkened room to muse invite,
 Or whitened wall provoke the skewer to write:
 In durance, exile, Bedlam, or the Mint,
 Like Lee or Budgell, I will rhyme and print.

Line 45 begins the longest speech in the poem, placed at its heart. This verse-paragraph is its climax, its peroration. The half-line that ends it, 'I will rhyme and print', is Pope's most resonant declaration of the satirist's intent. The paragraph's structure is based on Horace's syntax and its assertive conclusion:

Ne longum faciam: seu me tranquilla senectus
 Exspectat, seu mors atris circumvolat alis;
 Dives inops, Romae seu fors ita iusserit, exul,
 Quisquis erit vitae, scribam, color.

lines 57–60

[In brief: whether a peaceful old age
 awaits me, or whether death with black wings hovers round;
 rich or poor; whether in Rome or, if chance so orders, in exile;
 whatever will be the 'colour' [that is, condition] of my life, I will write].

Pope extends and intensifies Horace's rhetoric. The first unknown, whether his later days will be peaceful or be haunted by the ominous bird of death hovering above, becomes two couplets in Pope, and is given additional metaphorical warmth (in the former case) and sombreness (in the latter). Is there a touch of sentimentality, of basking in the sunlight of the 'evening of my day'? If there is, then surely it would be a hard critic who would deny a man a little self-indulgence as he contemplates the future? Pope is depicting himself as a genuine,

frank conversationalist, opening his heart and mind to his critical friend. And he is honest enough to balance such a rosy picture with the rather gruesome alternative, that Horace's black-winged bird might not just be hovering but be all set to 'wrap' him—a shiver of physical contact with mortality here—in the finality of the classical idea of death as an eternal darkness. No trembling angels here.

Pope then adds a further dimension. The prospect that a darkening room will at least provide an archetypal environment friendly to meditation and the contemplative poetry which might result is set against, in the second line of the couplet, a far less welcome picture of a madman scrawling on the blank walls of whatever Bedlam might await. Better a comfortable darkening room than the bright lights of lunacy is a wry inversion of the usual light/dark antithesis. Lest the reader should wonder whether the forceful satirist is growing a little too soft-centred, at least this less appealing image of the isolation of old age allows a quick re-emergence of the poet for whom fools rush into his head. He name-checks the Restoration dramatist Nathaniel Lee, who did indeed spend five years in Bethlehem Hospital ('Bedlam') and, once again, poor old Eustace Budgell.

Pope saves his final expansion of the original Latin for the very end. Horace's 'quisquis erit vitae, scribam, color' is brilliantly effective as a terse (Latin's facilitation of brevity again) assertion of his resolution, despite all of Trebatius's warnings and advice ('quiescas'), to carry on writing: 'scribam'. Latin's system of defining grammar through forms of words rather than syntactic conventions of word-order enables ready employment of hyperbaton. 'Scribam' occupies a central place in the full line in Horace's poem:

HOR. Quisquis erit vitae, scribam, color.

TREB. O puer, ut sis

Vitalis, metuo

[HOR. Whatever will be the condition of my life, I will write.

TREB. O young man, that you are

Likely to live, I fear]

Horace's assertion induces Trebatius to interrupt the full line. Pope marks the ending of his speech in another way, by doubling the verbs so that he completes his full line: 'I will write and print'. There are no limits to

production and dissemination in eighteenth-century England. Printing allows for a huge extension of the reach of literature when compared with the pre-Caxton world. This can only strengthen its potential to exert influence. And printing is, of course, the medium through which we are reading Pope's satire.

The line we began with, 'TO VIRTUE ONLY and HER FRIENDS, A FRIEND', is the climax of Pope's next speech, which occupies most of the final third of the poem. Straight after it comes a calm passage, expressing a mood of comfortable and undisturbed pleasure in the company of friends gained through friendship to virtue.

Lines 123–28

Know, all the distant din that world can keep,
 Rolls o'er my grotto, and but soothes my sleep.
 There, my retreat the best companions grace,
 Chiefs out of war, and statesmen out of place.
 There ST JOHN mingles with my friendly bowl
 The feast of reason and the flow of soul:

Enter Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke. He is the poem's progenitor and, hence, instigator of the entire series of *Imitations* as well as the addressee of *An Essay on Man*, which sits alongside them and the other epistles as the great achievement of Pope's fifth decade of life. There is a philosophical air to these lines, rendered in smooth rhythms, euphony, seamless lines and couplets, and the balanced language that is Pope's stylistic embodiment of Horace's 'aequus'. The line 'The feast of reason and the flow of soul' encapsulates all these qualities. The stressed syllables ('feast', 'réason', 'flow', 'soul') form a justly famous résumé of a life, a mind and body, a whole being, at ease with itself. Long open vowels internally chime, spreading the line out in agreeably luxurious length.

From such heights the less than ethically perfect world beyond may be contemplated with a mixture of Horace's Epicurean contentment and a Stoicism which motivates Pope's determination to engage actively in the social and political life of the nation. Satire is his means to that end, and this—whatever its flaws, its descents into demeaning ways, its dyer's-hand involvement in the corruption of which it treats—must be its justification.

One further note needs to be sounded or, rather, re-sounded. Both Horace and Pope end their poems by returning to the comic dialogue with which they began. The lawyers give their clients one last warning: 'There are laws and courts, there are statutes against libel; so do be careful.' The poets reply: 'But if we poets compose works that Caesar himself must judge as good (Horace), that a King might read and Sir Robert [Walpole] approve (Pope), then, surely...'. The relieved lawyers respond: 'Oh, well, in that case, any legal action will collapse'. Pope renders this: 'In such a cause the plaintiff will be hissed, / My lords the judges laugh, and you're dismissed' (lines 155–56). Pope here follows Richard Bentley's allocation, in the latter's 1711 translated edition, of the last line of Horace's poem to Trebatius: 'The case will dissolve in laughter, and you'll be dismissed and walk away'. Modern texts all accept this reading. So, the two lawyers cannot resist having the last word, which draws attention to the influence of the great and powerful (Caesar Augustus, Robert Walpole) over the courts. However, by so doing, the lawyers end up actually exemplifying the poets' sceptical commentary on the 'independence' of the law. They thus inadvertently become the satirists they have been counselling their clients all along not to be. The truth will out; and the poets have the last laugh.

