1

Getting Noticed

Biographies conventionally begin with their subject's birth and at least a little family background. While readers can certainly grasp the significance of early domestic circumstances for a writer's development, the writer's exact date of birth rarely seems important to what follows. We dutifully read the expected detail, waiting to arrive at facts that seem more germane to the adult that the child became. Alexander Pope's date of birth on 21 May 1688 is worth pausing over since close to a political flashpoint that would change the trajectory of British history and would inform the social and cultural framework of Pope's life. On 10 June 1688, just twenty days after linen merchant Alexander Pope's second wife, Edith, gave birth to his namesake, the King's second wife, Mary of Modena, gave birth to a son who was also his father's namesake: James II welcomed James Francis Edward Stuart as his heir. Both newborns were Catholic. While faith is, by its nature, an intensely personal matter, the faith of the British monarch was of public concern. James II had succeeded to the throne of Britain and Ireland in 1685, upon the death of his brother Charles II, who had at least 12 illegitimate children but no legitimate heir. While Charles II had been accepted into the Catholic Church on his deathbed (thereby confirming suspicions that he had long favored his mother's Catholicism over the Anglican Church of which the British monarch is titular head), his brother James converted to Catholicism in 1673. When crowned in 1685, James began to flex the power that he saw as his by Divine Right and set about replacing leading office holders across government, the military, and universities with Catholic appointees. Parliamentarians who might have been willing to work with James had he had his late brother's affability and preference for pleasure over ideology saw their power, influence, and cosy sinecures fast disappearing. The birth of James Francis Edward Stuart in June 1688 focused

The Life of the Author: Alexander Pope, First Edition. Glynis Ridley.

Published 2026 by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

discontented minds on their individual and collective prospects under a Catholic succession. Eighteenth-century popular British culture would come to call the King's son by various names: "The Old Pretender," "The Chevalier," and "The warming pan baby," the latter in reference to a malicious rumor that the heir apparent was no child of the royal couple's, but had been smuggled into the queen's bedchamber in one of the sealed round bed warmers used to convey hot coals between cold sheets. But this royal heir, whose birth was so close to Pope's own, would never be crowned James III. Following anti-Catholic riots in Britain in the summer of 1688, leading parliamentarians seized the moment to invite William of Orange to assume the British throne. By December, James II had fled to France, replaced as British head of state by his eldest daughter from his first marriage, Mary, and her husband William, both Protestant. It was not the first time that Parliament had dethroned a king: James's father Charles I had been executed in 1649 after a period of Civil War. The exile of James and the ascension of William and Mary were, however, unprecedented situations whose ramifications would shape Pope's life. Just as the 1701 Act of Settlement would exclude Catholics from the throne, denying the boy born within a month of Pope his royal inheritance, so a raft of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century anti-Catholic legislation would deny ordinary Catholics some basic rights afforded to their Protestant neighbors. The Pope family could not live within ten miles of either of the then-separate power hubs of the cities of London and of Westminster, and Alexander Pope Snr. could not aspire to any government, legal, or military career for his newborn son, nor could he hope to send the boy to university: the family's faith put all such ambitions out of reach. To enforce anti-Catholic legislation, the government offered monetary incentives to those who reported breaches of the law, and Justices of the Peace were empowered to authorize parish constables to enter Catholic homes in search of evidence of seditious intent. The culture was one that not only rewarded neighbor reporting neighbor, but that gave any Catholic child who rejected their parents' faith and embraced the Anglican church the right to inherit their parents' property over any other Catholic siblings. The implicit message was that Catholics were not to be trusted; their allegiance supposedly lying with the deposed Stuart line and the Catholic European powers. William and Mary would die without any legitimate heirs, and the throne would pass to Mary's youngest sister Anne, during whose reign (1702–14) two parliamentary acts (the Union with Scotland Act passed by the English Parliament in 1706 and the Union with England Act passed by the Scottish Parliament in 1707) would formally unite England and Scotland in the newly created entity of "Great Britain." Even those who had been instrumental in promoting the union might have been at a loss to define what it was to be a British subject. As historian Linda Colley observes, if it was impossible to say what Great Britain was, it was easier to say what it was not, and after the events of 1688 and its aftermath, Great Britain was not Catholic:

> men and women decide who they are by reference to who and what they are not. Once confronted with an obviously alien 'Them,' an otherwise diverse community can become a reassuring or merely desperate 'Us.'" This was how it was with the British after 1707. They came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores.
>
> *(Colley, 1992, p. 6)*

Throughout Pope's life, anti-Catholic sentiments provided the Protestant British establishment with an alien "other" used to stoke fear and mobilize public opinion. The boys Alexander and James, born within a month of each other in 1688, would both live with exclusion. Both would grow up to rail against the status quo, and the manner in which James Francis Edward Stuart protested his exclusion would significantly impact the circumstances of Alexander Pope's life.

What events shaped Pope's development and made him the author he became? Pope himself offers no clues about his early years, a reticence which Mack attributed to the prevailing eighteenth-century belief that childhood was an unproductive time, noting that "when Pope sits down at the age of fifty-one to reminisce about his past with his good friend Jonathan Richardson, the portrait painter, taking notes, it is characteristic both of the age and the man that his first sentence gets him born, his second educated, and his third launched on his career as a poet" (Mack, 1985, p. 13). Pope's mother, Edith, was forty-five when Pope was born and his half-sister Magdalen was twelve years older than him. Forty-year-old Mary Beach joined the household as Pope's wet nurse (and would stay with the family until her death aged 77 in 1725). Edith Pope's unmarried sister, Elizabeth Turner, also took up residence (and would stay until her death aged 74 in 1710). That the family commissioned a portrait of Pope when he was a child, variously described as aged 7 or 10 (Wimsatt, 1965, p. 5), and that this styles him regally, clothed in blue and red silks, readily suggests family pride and places Pope at the adored center of a household which, with the exception of Pope's father, was dominated by women. Priest William Mannick would later recollect of the poet "I have often heard Mrs. Pope say, that he was then exactly like that picture: as I have often been myself told that it was the perpetual application he fell into, about two years afterwards, that change'd his form; and ruin'd his constitution" (qtd. Wimsatt, 1965, p. 5). What Mannick makes explicit is that the family needed a story to tell themselves about why the healthy-looking child in the portrait became an ailing man. According to Mannick, there was some family lore that blamed the boy's "perpetual application" to his studies for the ill-health that began to plague Pope from about the age of 12, though it is now accepted that Pope suffered from Pott's disease, a tuberculosis of the bone that caused curvature of the spine and debilitating headaches, among other symptoms. The "perpetual application" of

Pope's that Mannick referred to was as both a reader and writer. Pope would later insist that the work that made him "catch the itch of poetry" was a translation by John Ogilby (1600–1676) of Homer's *Iliad*. The title page of Ogilby's 1660 *Iliad* promised the reader an *Iliad* not simply "translated" but "adorn'd with sculpture, and illustrated with annotations." When Pope would later publish his own translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and would have clear ideas as to how every aspect of his text should appear, it is easy to see the man's remembrance of what the boy found engaging and what he found off-putting about Ogilby's text (accompanying engravings met with approval while Ogilby's textual annotations that vied for attention with the translation did not). Mack believes Pope was absorbed in Ogilby's translation of *The Iliad* as young as eight (Mack, 1985, p. 44), though Ogilby's work was emphatically not designed as a child's book. As the young Pope read, he also wrote, though his mother's later recollection for Joseph Spence was that this could be at his father's behest and was not always a comfortable experience: "Mr. Pope's father (who was an honest merchant ...) was no poet, but he used to set him to make English verses when very young. He was pretty difficult in being pleased and used often to send him back to new turn them. 'These are not good rhimes,' he would say, for that was my husband's word for verses" (Spence, 1966, no. 11). From an early age, then, Pope's reading made him familiar with classical epic in which heroes battle for causes at once intensely personal and also of consequence for their entire civilization, while he formed a writing habit in which revision was often a given part of the process. Both of these would become features of Pope's work.

At some point in 1696 or 1697, Pope was sent to one of a few Catholic schools in operation, the very existence of which was in defiance of the official policy of the British state. He told Joseph Spence that the stay was "only one year": his withdrawal (or perhaps expulsion) prompted by a satire Pope wrote "on some faults of his master" that resulted in the punishment of a whipping (Mack, 1985, p. 48). Pope's account of this has proved impossible to either verify or disprove, and only the discovery of the offending manuscript could quash the suspicion that the story is a little too neat in its foreshadowing of the rage the adult would inspire in those he identified as fools and frauds. From this school at Twyford, he was sent to the school of Thomas Deane (1651–1735) at Marylebone. The importance of a Catholic school is again in evidence for Pope's parents, for Deane had converted to Catholicism in March 1685 and had not only stayed with his newfound faith despite the accession of William and Mary in 1688, but was sentenced to stand in the pillory at Charing Cross on 18 December 1691 for the offence of "concealing a libel" (Mack, 1985, p. 49): a seditious anti-government pamphlet written by a lodger in the same house. While this happened before Pope was his pupil, it was surely part of Deane's reputation with all his pupils' Catholic parents and underscored for all associated with Catholic schooling the power of the printed word.

While Pope seems to have spent only two to three years at Deane's school, two things about his time there seem more worth our consideration than details of the standard seventeenth-century schoolday that consisted of endless parsing of the sentences of classical writers and translation of their works. Such syllabi can readily be reconstructed from a variety of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century schools and would tell us nothing about Pope's response to what he was required to read. Of more interest is how Pope experienced Deane being forced to move the school from Marylebone to Hyde Park Corner in an attempt to stay one step ahead of unwelcome scrutiny from a local "busy Justice" (Mack, 1985, p. 49). It was perhaps the most tangible evidence Pope had had up to that point of how his religion was something forced into the shadows of his society; its adherents expecting to be punished for their faith. Certainly, Pope developed enough of a bond with some of his fellow classmates that he felt able to approach them decades later for a monetary contribution when Deane was again facing a charge of "sedition" and was subsisting on the charity of friends and supporters. Deane may have been the first person Pope knew who was imprisoned for his beliefs, but he would not be the last. Around the age of 12, Pope left Deane's establishment, his formal schooling concluded. Pope's Catholicism prevented any later consideration of university. His return to the family home seems to have coincided with their move to the village of Binfield in Berkshire, which put them under ten miles from Windsor Castle and about thirty miles from what would today be considered central London. Pope's father had quit his business in 1688, the year of Pope's birth, of anti-Catholic riots, and the attempted cementing of a Protestant ascendancy. A move to Binfield kept the Pope family in compliance with anti-Catholic legislation that prohibited their living within ten miles of London and Westminster city centers. In the few years following the move it is possible to find evidence for the beginning or development of virtually all aspects of Pope's life that might be considered central to his written work, as Pope began a series of correspondences (some parts of which would later find their way to publication); circulated and received compositions in manuscript, giving and receiving criticism; made some of what would prove to be the most significant relationships of his life; and wrote poetry, while still in his teens, that would find acclaim upon publication and make the literary world take note. Outside the world of books, Pope's father discovered joy in gardening, including the growing of produce and Pope's passion for the hobby and the later fame of his own garden at Twickenham probably has its roots in this time. But as all of this happened, Pope was starting to feel more of the effects of the disease that would, literally, shape his life.

The quantity and breadth of Pope's writing in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and the number of connections he started to make among peers, elders, and mentors, is easily capable of sustaining a book-length study and, for those interested in the detail of this period, Joseph Hone's *Alexander Pope in the Making*

(2021) shows the possibilities of continuing to find new information about Pope's early circles of acquaintance, including individuals now largely lost to histories of the period, and how they helped his development as a writer. Yet in any overview of Pope's life and work, it is impossible to namecheck every poem, every correspondent, and every event that may have influenced him in a given period. What follows in relation to Pope's early written output and friendships is, therefore, necessarily selective; the proximity of the family home of Binfield to Windsor suggests one path we might take through all the available material.

William and Mary, childless, were succeeded on the throne in 1702 by Mary's younger sister, Anne, whose preferred residence was an eighteenth-century house on the south side of Windsor Castle, and one of whose favorite entertainments was hunting in what is now Windsor Great Park but was then Windsor Forest. By no stretch of the imagination could this "forest" be considered untamed nature: an ancient hunting ground of English kings, it perfectly met the early eighteenth-century ideal of a landscape shaped to serve practical needs and aesthetic fashions. Today, the Park is notable for a number of ancient oak trees, with the oldest perhaps now 1300–1500 years old. To walk here in the early 1700s, even though major avenues of trees in the Park that now look mature were then relatively recently planted, was still to experience tangible reminders of the closeness of past and present, whether looking at Windsor Castle, or at oaks already at their millennia. Outside the area of the Park, between Binfield and Windsor (separated by only 11 miles), managed nature was all around, from farmland to the grassy expanses of gentlemen's estates. It is little wonder, then, that two of Pope's earliest celebrated works from this period would be his *Pastorals* and the poem "Windsor Forest," both of which speak directly to Pope's youthful experience of the Binfield – Windsor area.

As a literary form, pastoral has one of the most revered histories. Its essence is a celebration of and yearning to return to an imagined idyllic state: a supposedly simple rural life free from the cares of society. As early as 750–650 BCE, the Greek writer Hesiod wrote in his *Works and Days* of a yearning to return to a mythical golden age, while Virgil (70–19 BCE) eulogized life in the countryside in his *Eclogues*, even as he surveyed both the grandeur and terror of Rome under Caesar Augustus. Virgil's contemporary Horace (65–8 BCE), whose satires Pope would later imitate, also contrasted life in the Imperial City with the pleasure to be expected from rural retreat. An escape to the countryside seems to be an age-old impulse, albeit that the countryside of town-dwelling artists' dreams has typically been an idealized one, free from hard labor and hard choices, and unconcerned with the vagaries of the seasons. In classic pastoral, shepherds express their longing for beautiful "nymphs" in extravagant compliments. The form has its mirror image in mock-pastoral, perhaps best exemplified by Pope's friend Jonathan Swift, whose poem "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed" shows the gulf between appearance and reality as an aging prostitute "For whom no Shepherd sighs in

vain" climbs into her bed, exhausted, and unable to escape her life's harsh realities, even in her sleep.

Even as pastoral's lack of realism was evident, a demonstration of mastery of the form was a statement of intent from any eighteenth-century poet, acknowledging an understanding of tradition but also providing an opportunity to show if something new and original could be done with this most established of literary forms. Pope's *Pastorals* were published in a miscellany collection in 1709 when he was 21, but his own printed annotations insist upon their earlier composition and that they circulated among men of influence and taste with whom, by implication, Pope was evidently already upon corresponding terms. (A letter from the publisher Jacob Tonson to Pope, and dated 20 April 1706, offering to print the *Pastorals*, confirms the poem's gestation hinted at by Pope himself.) One of Pope's printed annotations to the *Pastorals* is worth quoting at length for the astonishing number of things going on in the passage all at once and for the sheer audacity of Pope's self-presentation. Pope later gave us the phrase "damn with faint praise," but here is an unconstrained trumpeting of achievement:

> These Pastorals were written at the age of sixteen, and then passed through the hands of Mr Walsh, Mr Wycherley, G. Granville afterwards Lord Landsdowne, Sir William Trumbull, Dr Garth, Lord Halifax, Lord Somers, Mr Mainwaring, and others. All these gave our author the greatest encouragement, and particularly Mr Walsh (whom Mr Dryden, in his Postscript to Virgil, calls the best critic of his age.) 'The author (says he) seems to have a particular genius for this kind of Poetry ... It is not flattery at all to say that Virgil had written nothing so good at his age. His Preface is very judicious and learned' ... The Lord Landsdowne about the same time, mentioning the youth of our poet, says ... 'that if [Pope] goes on as he has begun in the pastoral way, as Virgil first tried his strength, we may hope to see English poetry vie with the Roman,' ... In a letter of [Pope's] to Mr Walsh about this time we find an enumeration of several niceties in versification, which perhaps have never been strictly observed in any English poem, expect in these Pastorals. They were not printed till 1709.
>
> *("Spring," Pope's annotation, TE, i, p. 59)*

All of the following is implicit or explicit in this passage: the teenage Pope already had a wide circle of correspondence, which included men such as the playwright William Wycherley (1641–1716), who, in his heyday, had been one of the most celebrated writers entertaining audiences in Charles II's London. Pope's correspondents included not only men known for their creative work, such as Wycherley, but men such as William Walsh (1662–1708), whom a poet of John Dryden's stature complimented as a critic (though Dryden's friendship with Walsh

probably needs to be factored into the praise). Pope's correspondents included older literary lions, doubtless flattered that they were being sought out in a literary world that had already moved on, but also aristocrats such as George Montagu, 1st Earl Halifax (1684–1739), who was a member of the Commons before his elevation to the House of Lords. More than one of those who saw the *Pastorals* in manuscript, prior to publication, compared Pope to Virgil, with Landsdowne expressing the jingoistic sentiment that English poetry could soon rival that of classical Rome. (Fulfillment of Landsdowne's hopes would not be quite as he expected since the satirists and politicians who were finally arrayed against Walpole's government saw their age as equal to that of Rome under Augustus in terms of its corruption and moral bankruptcy.) Finally, the quoted excerpt refers to a letter in which Pope (writing to Walsh) was evidently anxious to show that he understood accepted ideas of "niceties in versification:" what would meet with approbation on the grounds of demonstrable technical skill.

The *Pastorals* were first published in 1709 in the sixth volume of Jacob Tonson's *Poetical Miscellanies* and Pope had, perhaps, less control over the appearance of this text in Tonson's collection than he would have over any of his other works. Pope shapes the reader's expectations by reporting others' views on the merits of his work. Readers may find this crass or a canny commercial move: books of the period were bought "in papers," that is, printed sheets that had to be taken to a bookbinder, and Pope's report of the praise his work had received from a range of readers is the closest an eighteenth-century author could get to the blurbs we now take for granted as a feature of book covers. As for the *Pastorals* that were the subject of so much praise, readers today may find themselves already familiar with lines from "Summer The Second Pastoral," for they were incorporated into Handel's *Semele* (1744) and provide the words for the opera's most famous aria as Jupiter woos the mortal Semele: "Where-e'er you walk, cool Gales shall fan the Glade,/Trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a Shade,/Where-e'er you tread, the blushing Flow'rs shall rise,/And all things flourish where you turn your Eyes" ("Summer," ll. 73–76, *TE*, i, pp. 77–78). Since the early twentieth century, *Semele* has enjoyed a new lease of life with opera companies large and small, and multiple recordings of this aria that showcases Pope's words set to Handel's music can readily be viewed online. Beyond this afterlife for lines from the *Pastorals*, the poems are notable for Pope's transportation of the classical machinery of pastoral, its shepherds and nymphs, to "*Windsor's* blissful Plains," while the Muses also find themselves far from their traditional home of Mount Helicon and on the banks of the "Fair *Thames*" that flows from a "sacred Spring" ("Spring," ll.2–3, *TE*, i, p. 59). This wholesale relocation of the world of classical pastoral to the eighteenth-century countryside around London is intended as a bold move: Pope claims his country as the inheritor of a rich artistic tradition and positions himself as its latest exponent. As four separate pastorals move sequentially through the

seasons of the year, one pastoral for each, not only does the dedicatee change, but so do the formal features of the verses. "Spring the First Pastoral" is explicitly dedicated to Sir William Trumbull and another of Pope's annotations tells us that he is imitating Virgil; "Summer the Second Pastoral" is dedicated to Dr Samuel Garth and the annotation tells us that Pope "imitates expressly" Spenser; "Autumn the Third Pastoral" is dedicated to William Wycherley and Virgil is again the inspiration for this poem's opening; finally, "Winter the Fourth Pastoral" is dedicated to "the Memory of Mrs Tempest" (an acquaintance admired by Pope's friend Walsh) and Pope cites Theocritus, often credited as the creator of Greek pastoral poetry, as this pastoral's touchstone. What Pope gives us is a virtuoso performance, signaling that he understands the tradition in which he is working and can readily turn verses in the manner of any notable predecessors in this literary form. His succeeding works would leave no doubt that he was also conscious of what constituted a work of genuine originality.

While Pope's *Pastorals* are linked, thematically, with the poem *Windsor Forest*, his most notable work to follow publication of the *Pastorals* (1709) was *An Essay on Criticism* (1711). Just as Pope's own annotations to the *Pastorals* framed them for their first readers as works that had already met with critical approbation, so *An Essay on Criticism* also provides direction as to how it should be judged, though here Pope's primer on how to read his work is embedded in that work itself, rather than being presented in the form of annotations upon it. Since an understanding of how to read Pope's verse is central to all that follows, *An Essay on Criticism* is worth pausing over en route to "Windsor Forest." In the course of the *Essay on Criticism*'s 744 lines, Pope takes aim at both bad writers and at those who set themselves up as critics, identifying his targets in the opening two lines: "'Tis hard to say, if greater Want of Skill/Appear in *Writing* or in *Judging* ill" (*An Essay on Criticism*, ll.1–2, *TE*, i, p. 239). Given that one piece of writing can spawn multiple critical reviews, the poem quickly suggests that poorly informed criticism is more pernicious, because more prevalent, than bad poetry: "A *Fool* might once *himself* alone expose,/Now *One* in *Verse* makes many more in *Prose*" (*An Essay on Criticism*, ll.7–8, *TE*, i, p. 239). But what makes one poem "bad" and another "good"? When *An Essay on Criticism* was first published, Pope was only 23 and yet was setting himself up as a judge of both poetry and the professional criticism to which it was increasingly giving rise. It is one thing to claim the artistic and moral high ground; quite another to demonstrate that the claim has merit. What Pope does in *An Essay on Criticism* is to offer a masterclass in how to distinguish a good poem from a bad one: the poem itself tells us how to read it and evaluate its merits. Because Pope's culture valued one form of poetry, the heroic couplet, above all others, and because Pope's claim to be an outstanding poet rests on his demonstrable skill with this form, the next few pages are going to give a crash course in reading heroic couplets. Readers familiar with analyzing poetry may wish to skip this

section. For everyone else, from those who loathe parsing lines of poetry but who are working through a college course, to those who are simply couplet curious and who want to know why Pope enjoys his reputation as a pre-eminent British poet, Pope's own lines from *An Essay on Criticism* lay bare what he is doing and why he thinks readers should take notice.

To begin with, Pope offers reassurance that readers are typically better at making judgments about artistic merit than they believe themselves to be: "Yet if we look more closely, we shall find/Most have the *Seeds* of Judgment in their Mind" (*An Essay on Criticism*, ll.19–20, *TE*, i, p. 241). This quote offers a useful touchstone for reading quantities of the ten-syllable line that Pope's age viewed as the epitome of the poet's art: indeed, from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in the fourteenth century, through the plays of Shakespeare, from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, all the way to nineteenth-century poets such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson, every poet in English who aspired to recognition worked within the constraints, and possibilities, of a ten syllable-line. Counting syllables in a line of poetry will not, in and of itself, help a reader make value judgments about a poem, and it is a tediously joyless task to reduce line after line to a syllable count and stress pattern. Fortunately, we don't have to; as Pope insists, we have the seeds of judgment in our mind and, once the rhythm of a poem has been established (both syllable count and stress pattern), we instinctively know what is needed to complete the verse. (Anyone who has ever tried to finish a limerick will agree that its metrical and rhyming demands can be instantly understood, without the need laboriously to count syllables.) The mere act of maintaining a poem's rhythm and rhyme scheme may, however, backfire on a poet if readers start to predict with regularity what is coming next, as Pope insists, may happen in the works of those he considers inferior poets:

> Where-e'er you find *the cooling Western Breeze*,
> In the next Line, it *whispers thro' the Trees*;
> If *Chrystal Streams with pleasing Murmurs creep*,
> The Reader's threaten'd (not in vain) with *Sleep*.
> Then, at the *last*, and only Couplet fraught
> With some *unmeaning* Thing they call a *Thought*,
> A *needless Alexandrine* ends the Song,
> That, like a wounded Snake, drags its slow length along.
> *(*An Essay on Criticism*, ll.350–357,* TE*, i, pp. 279–80)*

The first four lines in this excerpt not only deploy predictable rhymes to criticize those who cannot manage anything more original, but the stress pattern is an unvarying series of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Pope invites us to see bad poetry as something in which the form so insistently draws attention to itself that we cannot focus on content. In analyzing poetry, it is

conventional to refer to any regularly recurring stress pattern as a poetic foot: an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable is technically an "iamb" and five of these feet in a line of poetry (five repetitions of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable) is an iambic pentameter. Successive lines of unrhymed iambic pentameter are known as "blank verse," while lines of end-rhymed iambic pentameter so dominant in eighteenth-century English verse are known as "heroic couplets." Crucially, none of those authors whom we think of as great exemplars of blank verse (such as Shakespeare or Milton) would have seen the form as constraining; to the contrary, a poet demonstrated skill by the ability to work within the "rules" of the form, showing how those rules could be bent to achieve effects of which an unimaginative writer could not even conceive.

The end-rhyme demands of the heroic couplet place another constraint on its composers, or provide a further opportunity to display technical skill, depending upon one's facility with the form. In the example Pope gives us, dull writers grasp at familiar rhymes, begetting clichéd sentiments. But Pope is also scornful of lesser poets' inability to be creative with punctuation: the unvarying stress pattern of the first four lines, each building to a predictable rhyme that seals a hackneyed image, is only underscored by the fact that the first four lines are all end-stopped. Read the verse aloud, taking the commas, semicolons and stops as directions to pause and take a breath, and the end-stopping of the first four lines only serves to further highlight a lack of imagination on the part of those Pope considers lesser writers, as he parodies the grinding out of couplets and almost audible relief of a bad writer in making it to the end of another line. In the last four lines of this excerpt, Pope suggests that when bad writers do prioritize sense over sound, they typically find it impossible to keep within the metrical constraints of the poem as attempts at conveying original thought result in "a *needless Alexandrine*" (the technical term for a twelve-syllable line), "that, like a wounded Snake, drags its slow length along." Both on the page and read aloud or subvocally, the final line clearly does not scan: "song" and "along" are full rhymes, but the final line jars because the poem has, up to this point, established a ten-syllable line as its norm and it is easy to both see and hear that the line about a "wounded Snake" is longer; indeed, it is twelve syllables, or the "*needless Alexandrine*" already described. In the space of eight lines, then, Pope produces a pitch-perfect parody of all the sins against the heroic couplet that he sees bad writers committing: their rhymes are predictable, their rhythms insistent, and scansion is liable to become a casualty of their forlorn pursuit of an original thought. It is, of course, easy to criticize others' efforts, and the poem's mockery of hack writers implicitly cries out for Pope to demonstrate that he can do something better. In the lines that follow, Pope encapsulates his poetic philosophy and puts it into action:

> True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance,
> As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

> 'Tis not enough no Harshness gives Offence,
> The *Sound* must seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*.
> *Soft* is the Strain when *Zephyr* gently blows,
> And the *smooth Stream* in *smoother Numbers* flows;
> But when loud Surges lash the sounding Shore,
> The *hoarse, rough Verse* shou'd like the *Torrent* roar.
> When *Ajax* strives, some Rock's vast Weight to throw,
> The line too *labours*, and the words move *slow*;
> Not so, when swift *Camilla* scours the Plain,
> Flies o'er th' unbending Corn, and skims along the Main.
> *(*An Essay on Criticism*, ll. 362–373,* TE*, i, pp. 281–283)*

In the opening couplet of this excerpt, it is easy to see the sentiment that practice makes perfect, originating in the experience of the boy whose mother would recollect was made to rewrite verses by his father. But it is the succeeding assertion that "the *Sound* must seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*" that perhaps brings us closest to understanding how Pope views the goal and end of poetry. In the first extract from *An Essay on Criticism*, when Pope was parodying the productions of inferior poets, he claimed that their reaching after a "thought" might be achieved at the expense of a poem's scansion, and demonstrated this by incorporating an Alexandrine into his verse: here he insists that good writers are in command of *both* sound and sense though, if one predominates, it has to be "sense" to which "sound" is an "echo," a reiteration or underscoring of the original. What distinguishes the good poet from the bad, then, according to Pope, is that good poets are not straining after a rhyme: uppermost in their minds is the sense they communicate for which they have skill enough to find the perfect sound, unexpected, devoid of cliché. And "sound" should not be understood here merely as the end-rhyme of a line but as including all the auditory qualities of the verse as Pope goes on to demonstrate.

Having asserted that the hallmark of superior poetry is a symbiotic relationship between sound and sense, each of the following four couplets showcases a different way that the poet can manipulate the sound of a line. The couplet beginning "*Soft* is the Strain" is dominated by sibilant ("s") sounds, which we associate with quiet ("ssh"), wholly appropriate given that Pope is describing both a gently blowing wind and a smoothly flowing stream. This is immediately contrasted with a demonstration of how the poet can suggest noise: both "loud Surges lash" and "*hoarse, rough Verse*" require some deliberation on the part of anyone reading the verse aloud, as this couplet builds to the growl of "*Torrent* roar." But Pope is not done with sound effects, and if he can make lines sound quiet or loud, as may be appropriate to what they describe, he can also give the illusion of slowness or speed. If you are able, right at this minute, to say out loud "when *Ajax* strives,

some Rock's vast Weight to throw," a number of things will immediately be apparent; like a tongue-twister, the consonant clusters (particularly in moving between the words "*Ajax* strives") force a slowdown, making focus on enunciation necessary in order not to garble the words; furthermore, the comma between "strives" and "some" is advising a brief pause, again in the interests of making words distinct that would otherwise run together. The same principle applies to the distinct beats of "Rock's vast Weight;" just as Ajax concentrates all his attention, so the reader is forced to focus. Within the constraints of the ten-syllable line, Pope is free, delighting in what he can make poetry do. And just as quiet was contrasted with noise, so slowness is now complemented by speed as "swift *Camilla*" demonstrates her super-human abilities, "Flies o'er th'unbending Corn, and skims along the Main." For those who are counting, this line is not a regular iambic pentameter; rather, Pope is giving us the twelve-syllable line he previously complained about when demonstrating inferior poets' ability to manage sense and sound at the same time. But the elision marks in "o'er th' unbending" quicken the movement of this twelve syllable line so that, read aloud, paying due attention to the elision marks' invitation to run these words together at speed, the line does not seem out of place in the way that the previous "*needless Alexandrine* ... drags its slow length along," devoid of the punctuation marks and auditory properties that would speed up the reading experience to mirror the rapid movement described. Pope's audacity as a 23-year-old writer is astonishing, for the *Essay on Criticism* is a poetic high-wire act, compelling attention and leaving no room for error. And the literary world took notice.

While *An Essay on Criticism* offers a blazing display of Pope's technical skill as a poet, it would be remarkable if its 744-line exploration of creativity and critics did not contain some contradictions and irritations. Pope has a tendency to venerate classical poets, such as Homer, Virgil, and Horace, to the point where the reader may wonder if he could allow a modern writer might be as great within different literary kinds; Pope can be dismissive of critics who have not proved themselves as creative artists and yet he lauds classical critics such as Aristotle and Quintilian even though their fame rests on analysis of the frameworks within which others' creations exist. In other words, the poem is like any work of art: we can find things to criticize if that is how we approach the world around us, constantly looking for something that is wrong rather than taking pleasure in all that seems right. Yet one of the overriding sentiments of the poem is that we should approach art, and life, with a generosity of spirit, for the wise reader and judicious critic is one who fulfils the classical ideal of the good citizen:

> Who to a *Friend* his Faults can freely show,
> And gladly praise the Merit of a *Foe*?
> Blest with a *Taste* exact, yet unconfin'd;

A *Knowledge* both of *Book*s and *Humankind*.
*(*An Essay on Criticism*, ll. 637–40,* TE*, i, p. 311)*

Fundamental to the eighteenth-century educated mindset is the belief that the health of the creative arts offers a mirror image of the health of the state. Furthermore, the *Essay*'s highest ideal is not a retreat into the world of the creative arts and criticism, but rather an active engagement with "books *and* humankind" (emphasis mine): abstraction and messy reality. With the publication of *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope experienced just how far some of his contemporaries were from his ideal of the generous reader and critic.

An Essay on Criticism was published on 15 May 1711. For any of its first readers who thought they knew Pope's style and typical subject matter on the basis of his *Pastorals* in Tonson's *Miscellany Poems* of 1709, the *Essay* must have been surprisingly modish, inviting consideration of how both readers and writers should navigate the contemporary literary scene and the criticism to which it gave rise. On 20 June, writer and critic John Dennis published the pamphlet *Reflections Critical and Satyrical, upon a late Rhapsody, call'd an Essay upon Criticism*. Dennis was 53 in contrast to Pope's age of 23 and no longer one of the London literary in-crowd, as he had been in his youth. Dennis was, however, still a recognizable figure about town, so much so that William Hogarth could give an engraving of a scowling, sour-faced man trying to light a pipe the title "Mr D____ the Critick" and be confident the curmudgeonly likeness would cause amusement. One of Dennis's theatrical flops was *Appius and Virginia*, which had premiered in 1709 and quickly closed. (Anecdotally, Dennis had supposedly been incensed to find that the thunder machine intended for use in his tragedy had been hastily repurposed for *Macbeth* and had complained "they steal my thunder:" Ironically, now the most quoted of all his words.) In the *Essay on Criticism*, Pope had given the name "Appius" to a type of easily outraged critic and had also put Dennis's much overused verbal tic "tremendous" in his sketch:

But *Appius* reddens at each Word you speak,
And *stares, Tremendous!* With a *threatning Eye*,
Like some *fierce Tyrant* in *Old Tapestry*!
*(*An Essay on Criticism*, ll. 585–87,* TE*, i, pp. 306–7)*

Though Dennis's pamphlet denied he had any personal acquaintance with Pope, Mack points out that their mutual friend, Henry Cromwell, had introduced the two men and they had met perhaps three times before the *Essay on Criticism* was published. The *Essay's* brief allusion to Appius suggests that, on one of the occasions Dennis and Pope met, Pope may have said something not to Dennis's liking, and Dennis made no attempt to hide his feelings, glowering at the younger man.

Pope's revenge was to transform Dennis into Appius. For those of Pope's contemporaries who knew Dennis, the characterization worked in terms of its specifics; for everyone else, it works as a specific instantiation of a recognizable generic type; we have all had the unfortunate experience of finding ourselves in conversation with an Appius.

Dennis's pamphlet response to the *Essay* was out of all proportion to its three-line characterization of him, but it is worth considering as sadly characteristic of the type of criticism Pope would have to endure for the rest of his life. It is not simply that Dennis finds Pope's sentiments in the *Essay* "very often crude and abortive, his Expressions absurd ... without Cadence and without Variety, his Rhimes trivial and common" but, having eviscerated Pope's work, Dennis sets about doing the same to Pope:

> as there is no Creature so venomous, there is nothing so stupid and impotent as a hunch-back'd Toad ... This little Author may extol the Ancients as much and as long as he pleases, but he has reason to thank the good Gods that he was born a Modern. For had he been born of Graecian Parents, and his Father by consequence had by Law had the absolute Disposal of him, his Life had been no longer than that of one of his Poems, the Life of half a Day.
>
> *(Dennis, 1711, pp. 24–5, 29)*

Dennis's vitriolic verbal attack assumed that Pope had been born displaying all the symptoms of Pott's disease that had started to become apparent in Pope's adolescence, and alludes to the ancient Spartan custom that sanctioned infanticide for male children judged unlikely ever to be soldiers. For the first but certainly not the last time in Pope's life, someone who felt maligned by him decided that criticizing his writing was far less cathartic than ridiculing his person, and Dennis clearly delights in twisting the knife by suggesting that the "impotent ... toad" of 1711 would have been considered less than a man by any classical Grecian father.

To imagine that such sentiments did not achieve their desired effect of enraging and deeply wounding Pope is to suppose Pope differently emotionally constituted than the average person, yet there is a noticeable tendency on the part of twentieth-century critics to consider him some sort of outwardly stoic specimen who will not embarrass himself or us with any messy display of his true feelings. As Nicolson and Rousseau put it, "realizing his sensitivity, we should not expect to find an extended account, in his own words, of his deformity and puny stature" (Nicolson and Rousseau, 1968, p. 8). If the wording of this judgment from 1968 has not aged well, then its implication that Pope sublimated whatever feelings he had about his appearance is the antithesis of a medical professional's 1989 take on Pope's lived experience. Commenting on Pope's prose satires, "The Club of Little

Men" and "To the fictitious Nestor Ironside, Esq." E.M. Papper states, "In some of Pope's prose writings, he described with great, good humour his infirmities ... one searches in vain for any evidence of self-pity or bitterness about his severe physical disabilities. In fact, Pope uses his dwarf-like stature to produce hilarious and simultaneously tragic humour ... he writes about short stature in a most amusing manner" (Papper, 1989, p. 360). Perhaps the most generous thing that can be said about such views is that they blithely refuse to countenance the possibility that Pope played the part that he felt would put others most at ease. The reason Dennis shaped his verbal attack on Pope as an attack on Pope's appearance was that he knew it had to cut to Pope's heart. Though only 23 when the *Essay on Criticism* was published (and newly turned 24 when Dennis spewed forth his attack), the curvature of the spine characteristic of Pott's disease had given Pope an adult height of 4'6," the hunched back referred to by Dennis was real, and the resulting compression of Pope's chest gave him asthmatic-like breathing difficulties. Additionally, he suffered from debilitating migraine attacks and eye issues that included myopia. The only one of these conditions that was not a permanent feature of Pope's daily lived experience was his migraines. It is telling that the sculptor Louis-François Roubiliac (1702–1762), responsible for the most famous bust of Pope, and someone who used to study his subjects' faces intently, remarked that Pope's facial muscles and skin betrayed his constant battle with pain, as reported in the following anecdote told by the painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792):

> the muscles that run across the cheek were so strongly marked [in Pope] as to appear like small cords. Roubiliac, who made a bust of him from life, observed that his countenance was that of a person who had been much afflicted with headache, and he should have known the fact from the contracted appearance of the skin between his eyebrows.
>
> *(Prior, 1860, p. 429)*

To imagine that Pope was ever not conscious of his own physical state, and never self-conscious when others drew attention to it, defies belief. While Dennis's comments on Pope's appearance were surely intended, first and foremost, to hurt Pope's own feelings, further extracts from Dennis's pamphlet find him disparaging Pope's faith and, having raised the issue of Pope's Catholicism, suggesting that Pope was hoping for the return and enthronement of James Francis Edward Stuart. This vitriolic assertion that Pope harbored treasonous sentiments had the potential to hurt Pope materially.

When the *Essay on Criticism* and Dennis's response appeared in the summer of 1711, the War of the Spanish Succession had already been consuming the European powers for a decade. Whoever acceded to the throne of Spain would control its imperial possessions in the Americas, the Spanish Netherlands

(roughly corresponding to present-day Belgium and Luxembourg), the Philippines, and many of the regions that now help comprise Italy. As alliances were forged and broken across the duration of the conflict, localized conflicts and formal, multination battles resulted in casualties variously estimated as between 700,000 and 1,250,000 fighting men, to say nothing of all the other lives destroyed that do not form part of the military statistics. Among the numerous, interrelated diplomatic calculations made throughout the War, Britain sought to contain the global expansion of French influence, but also to manage potential Dutch encroachment into Spanish territories. In 1708, seeing an opportunity to force Britain to divert forces to fight at home as well as abroad, Louis XIV put French money, 6000 troops and 30 of his navy's ships at the disposal of James Francis Edward Stuart, who mounted an invasion attempt to reclaim his late father's lost throne. Though the attempt failed, it gifted the British government a propaganda coup; the Jacobite threat was real. And in 1711, it was alive enough in recent memory that any individual accused of harboring Jacobite sympathies must have felt vulnerable. Dennis surely understood this when he described Pope as waiting for another, more successful, invasion, "politickly setting up for Poet-Laureat against the coming over of the Pretender, which by his Insolence he seems to believe approaching" (Dennis, 1711, p. 27). Out of all that Pope published in the two years following the *Essay on Criticism*, it is notable that the two works regarded as poetic highlights of these years, *The Rape of the Lock* (first published in 1712 and revised and expanded in 1714 and again in 1717) and *Windsor Forest* (1713), both contain overt praise of Queen Anne. Whether we wish to see these as direct responses to Dennis's insinuation that Pope harbored Jacobite sympathies, or simply as statements that Pope thought it politic to make at the time, Pope's praise of the Stuart on the throne as opposed to the deposed Stuart-in-waiting is clearly a reflection of his concern that he not be thought a propagandist for James Edward Stuart.

As many modern editions of *Windsor Forest* will explain, the poem's concluding line, "First in these fields I sung the Sylvan Strains" is a variant on the first line of the *Pastorals*, "First in these Fields I try the Sylvan Strains," and Pope surely intended a parallel to Virgil, who closed his *Georgics* by reprising the first line of his *Eclogues*. Pope's *Pastorals* and *Windsor Forest* therefore seem connected in his mind and, as this chapter opened with the *Pastorals*, it seems fitting that it concludes with *Windsor Forest*, which has become a site of some of the most hotly debated readings of Pope in recent years. It is doubtful that any Pope scholar would disagree with David Wheeler's claim that "*Windsor Forest* is ambitious; Pope, politicizing his verse for the first time in his career," (Wheeler, 2010, p. 2). It is the nature of the politicization of the verse that is in contention; for Laura Brown, the poem advances an imperial ideology; for Murray Pittock, it promotes a Jacobite agenda; for Pat Rogers, *Windsor Forest* is rich in symbolism

associated with the Stuarts but may be primarily a celebration of their cultural legacy rather than an overtly political statement; while for Maynard Mack, the poem is indebted to Pope's boyhood experiences in and around Binfield (Wheeler, 2010). Clearly, any message that a reader takes from the poem will determine that reader's view of Pope the man, his morals and politics, even more than Pope the poet.

Pope claimed that *Windsor Forest* was composed in two parts: "the first part of it which relates to the country, in the year 1704, at the same time with the *Pastorals*; the latter part was not added till the year 1713, in which it was published." The claim originates in a 1736 edition of Pope's *Works*, where Pope also identifies line 290 as marking the end of the 1704 section. If we take his claim as largely true (for Pope was an inveterate reviser of his own work and we could easily get sidetracked here by evidence of a Windsor poem in a manuscript from 1712), then lines 291–434 are the later addition, concomitant with peace in Europe, as from April 1713–September 1714, successive Treaties of Utrecht gradually imposed compromise solutions on all interested parties and finally brought the War of the Spanish Succession to an end. By provisions of one of the treaties agreed in 1713, Spain ceded to Britain the strategically important Mediterranean headland of Gibraltar and also granted Britain the Asiento de Negros: the exclusive right to ship slaves from Africa to ports claimed by Spain in present-day Central and South America, and the Caribbean. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, this looks like moral bankruptcy rather than a peace dividend. If the politicians and financiers who celebrated the grant of the Asiento to Britain could not conceive the scale of the transatlantic slave trade in the years ahead, they certainly anticipated profit: the transportation of human souls tendered as a trading perk. And imperialism is central to the poem, even in its first part, supposedly completed by 1704.

Windsor Forest opens with a vision of verdant plenty and invites the reader to survey the well-managed landscape around Windsor with satisfaction. The reader is told not to envy those countries assumed to have a lusher vegetation, such as India's "weeping Amber" or "balmy Tree" for "by our Oaks the precious Loads are born,/And Realms commanded which those Trees adorn" (*Windsor Forest*, ll.30–32, *TE*, i. p. 151). Where Pope's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British readers could nod with satisfaction at the idea of British naval ships, made of oak, bringing the world's natural resources and manufactured goods to them, a wider twenty-first-century audience is likely to note the casual imperial assumptions packed into the lines: global produce, including fragrant woods from India, finds its way to London from "realms commanded." Pope's use of "commanded" implies a colonial imperative that the colonized provide rather than any invitation to trade. To be sure, when *Windsor Forest* was first published, Britain had not yet laid claim to the vast inland territories ruled by India's Mughal emperors (and this

would not happen until 1765), but the British East Indian Company (founded in 1600 as the English East India Company) had already fortified its bases in the port cities of Chennai, Kolkata, and Mumbai and, as a joint stock company, it invited early eighteenth-century investors to buy shares in its enterprise. Recognizably modern financial instruments were created to underwrite and sustain colonial expansion. From the perspective of any of the first readers of *Windsor Forest* able to drink in or imagine the scene Pope described, there could be little dissent to the same verse paragraph's conclusion that "Rich Industry sits smiling on the Plains,/ And Peace and Plenty tell, a STUART reigns" (*Windsor Forest*, ll. 41–2, *TE*, i, p. 152).

Anne was the reigning Stuart, but for those determined to see Pope as harboring Jacobite sympathies, one could argue that the idealized scene is located in the reign of "a Stuart" and Pope's wishful thinking about the landscape might extend to a wish for a different sovereign; James Francis Edward was a Stuart, too. Is Pope pandering to the establishment or musing on its overthrow?

As the poem develops, the idealized vision of a beneficent Stuart reign, what is and what might be, is followed by an invitation to consider all that came before. The creation of Windsor Forest as a royal hunting ground becomes a vehicle for exploring different types of bloodshed, from the Norman invasion of Britain in 1066 when William the Conqueror "makes his trembling Slaves the Royal Game" to the siege of a foreign city "When *Albion* sends her eager Sons to War" (*Windsor Forest*, ll. 64, 106, *TE*, i, p. 155, 161). It is little wonder that the poem has been the focus of renewed critical interest in the last decades as it engages with so many current debates: the hunting activities described act as metaphors for conquest and warfare but they are also poignant, literal descriptions that hint at Pope's sympathy for the hunted: "Oft as the mounting Larks their Notes prepare,/They fall, and leave their little Lives in Air" (*Windsor Forest*, ll. 133–34, *TE*, i, p. 162). The hunting ground is similarly literal and metaphorical; the appearance of a natural landscape is a fiction built on centuries of managing nature to serve particular human ends. The Thames and its tributaries unite both the 1704 and 1713 parts of the poem, but even the river is associated with violence and conquest; in an origin story that seems to have stepped straight out of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pope declares the Loddon to originate in the tears of the nymph Lodona who, pursued by Pan and unable to escape, begs for divine intervention and it is granted by Lodona's dissolution, "melting as in Tears she lay,/In a soft, silver Stream dissolv'd away" (*Windsor Forest*, ll. 203–4, *TE*, i, p. 168).

Violence in the poem is both mythic and real, with Lodona's tears finding their mirror image in the poem's second-half statement, "what Tears has *Albion* shed" (l. 321), as a catalogue of English kings touches on the Civil War and the execution of Charles I. Once again, Pope makes the Queen the source and guarantor of stability, but here her sphere of influence extends beyond Windsor: "At length great

ANNA said – Let Discord cease!/She said, the World obey'd, and all was *Peace*!" (*Windsor Forest*, ll. 327–8, *TE*, i, p. 181). There is no ambiguity as to which Stuart is being praised here. In contrast to the poem's opening, where "realms commanded" send goods to London, the words of the Queen here usher in a Pax Britannica in which

> Whole Nations enter with each swelling Tyde,
> And Seas but join the Regions they divide;
> Earth's distant Ends our Glory shall behold,
> And the new World launch forth to seek the Old (399–402).
> ... Oh stretch thy Reign, fair *Peace*! from Shore to Shore,
> Till Conquest cease, and Slav'ry be no more.
> (Windsor Forest, *ll. 399–402, 407–8,* TE*, i, pp. 191–2)*

Pope captured the sentiment prevailing in Tory government circles that Britain had gained from the Treaties of Utrecht and had blocked French imperial ambitions. The aspiration of a peaceful world without "conquest" or "slavery" is, inarguably, to be wished for, yet the poem's vision frames fulfillment of that wish as the culmination of a process in which the global population voluntarily yields to the centripetal force of London. Pope looks forward to a free and prosperous world, but one in which Britain has the upper hand. His readers across the globe today may find *Windsor Forest* to be many things, including excessively jingoistic and fawning in its overt praise of the Queen and, by extension, her ministers who had helped engineer European peace. (The poem is dedicated to George Granville, 1st Baron Landsdowne, who was granted one of twelve new peerages created by the Tory administration of Robert Harley at the end of 1711 to ensure passage of Tory proposals in the House of Lords in respect of the Treatises of Utrecht.) Remembering that Dennis had accused Pope of harboring treasonous wishes for the overthrow of Anne and the succession of James Francis Edward Stuart, any judgment we make about *Windsor Forest* should also recognize that it is a superb piece of propaganda for the ruling establishment; unabashed in its repeated declarations that there could be no better sovereign to ensure peace and prosperity. If one of Pope's intentions in writing *Windsor Forest* was to declare himself a patriotic subject of the Crown and its ministers, he succeeded. At the center of the poem, Pope had considered the conditions under which an individual might achieve contentment:

> Happy the Man whom this bright Court approves,
> His Sov'reign favours, and his Country loves;
> Happy next him who to these Shades retires,
> Whom Nature charms, and whom the Muse inspires.
> (Windsor Forest, *ll. 235–238,* TE*, i, p. 171)*

Editing this poem for The Twickenham Pope, E. Audra and Aubrey Williams consider whether these lines are Pope's praise of his correspondent, Sir William Trumbull, who retired to the environs of Windsor, but there is surely no need to see them as referring to anyone other than Pope himself. While it might have been diplomatic for Pope to state that the inspiring pleasure of a walk in Windsor Forest was second only to enjoying the favor of the Court, it was also shrewdly pragmatic: without the favor of at least some of those in power, an eighteenth-century writer could easily have been in a precarious position. By the close of 1713, Pope's position within the literary world was assured.