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ALEXANDER POPE: ORIGINS OF PERSONAL LITERARY CRITICISMS IN SELECTED WORKS

By

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DEDICATION

To my darling four year old son, Frank William Owens, Jr., to my husband, Frank W. Owens, Sr. to my five sisters, and my two brothers, Mrs. Marcella L. Wilhite, Mrs. Corine Hall, Mrs. Itasca Lewis, Mrs. Marie White, Mrs. Apple M. White, Mr. Fred D. Cavil and Mr. Marta J. Cavil, this thesis is dedicated.

C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION

Often a definitive explanation of a writer is to be found in the best works he has written, or in those works in which at the very touch, in a greater or lesser degree, vividly portray the personality he verily is. But this study seeks to find the work in the man.

There is much belief that Alexander Pope did permit his personal feelings to dictate his literary criteria found in his works. Possibly, this called forth the fullness of the power of Alexander Pope as a literary genius of his age. But to be sure that Pope's literary criticisms were the result of his personal feelings, it will be well to study the life and literary relationships of Alexander Pope during his age. Through this study, one seeks a better understanding of Pope and his place in English literature, not only as a poet, but also as a critic and as a personality upon his literary criticisms in the selected works used in this study. A determination of the personal origins of his criticisms becomes therefore the focus of the present study.

To achieve this purpose, a thorough examination of Pope's life and work is necessary. The incidents and details used in this study are taken from the works of recognized critics, from Pope's correspondence, and from his poems.

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND: AN INFLUENTIAL FACTOR ON ALEXANDER POPE'S ENTRY INTO THE LITERARY FIELD

Unfortunately, the date of Alexander Pope's birth and the pedigree of his parents have been and still are controversial issues. Pope's biographers have stated "This lack of knowledge concerning his birth and parents may be accounted for in two ways: (1) the parish register did not take any cognizance of the baptism of the children of the Roman Catholic parents during that time: (2) Pope, through the habit of revising, altering, and combining various periods of his writings, and making one epistle out of two or more, often let his own lines cloud the facts of his birth and ancestry."[1] Perhaps it is no fault of Pope's that the literature of his age may have some inaccurate information regarding his life and works. Certainly, a time element controversy does not necessarily mean a misrepresentation by Pope. As Dr. Griffith said, "Before 1752, a man was free to choose whether he should consider his new year as a beginning on January 1, or March 25; if a publisher issued a book . . . January, February, or March of the same year 1733, he could date it either 1732, or 1733, with as much fact and truth for one date as for the other."[2]

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[1] Robert Carruthers, The Life of Alexander Pope. Second Edition, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854, pp. 3-4.

[2] Harvey R. Griffith, Pope: A Bibliography. Vol. 1, London: C. A. Bathurst and Company, p. xix.

Carruthers quotes Owen Ruffhead, a biographer of Pope, as saying, "He, Pope, was born in London, May 31, in the memorable year of the Revolution, 1688."[3] Ruffhead's opinion was based on manuscripts concerning Pope that were in the possession of Warburton, Pope's friend, commentator, and literary executor.[4] Carruthers points out, that "Spence, a warm friend and admirer of Pope, gave in his 'Anecdotes' the same date and place of birth for the poet, and the combined testimony of Ruffhead and Spence seems rather conclusive."[5]

It appears that Pope's parents were of "gentle blood", which is the expression used by the poet himself in describing them. He wrote in his "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot",

> Of gentle blood, (part shed in honour's cause)
> While yet in Britain honour had applause,
> Each parent sprung, what fortune, Pray?
> And better got, than Bestia's from the throne,
> Born to no pride, inheriting no strife,
> Nor marrying discord in a noble wife.[6]

In his controversy with Lord Hervey, Vice Chamberlain in the Court of George 11, and Lady Montague, Pope wrote these impressive lines in answer to their accusation of the

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[3] Carruthers, op. cit., p. 530.

[4] Ibid., p. 531.

[5] Ibid., p. 561.

[6] Alexander Pope, "The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot", The Complete Works of Alexander Pope. Globe Ed., London: 1889, 11. 388-393.

low birth of his parents:

> ...I think it enough,
> That my parents, such as they were,
> Never cost me a blush;
> And that their son, such as he is,
> Never cost them a tear.[7]

According to Pope's biographers, his parents were of the middle class and were members of the Roman Catholic Church-his father by conversion and his mother by hereditary faith.[8]

Of Pope's remote ancestry very little is known. His early biographers have not been able to trace his parental lines further than his grandfather.[9] Oddly enough, considering the popery of the descendants, his grandfather was a clergyman of the Established Church in Hampshire. Pope's father is recorded in literature as being a linen merchant who dealt with Hollands Wholesale, and had accumulated by 1688, a small fortune of 10,000 pounds. About the year 1700, he retired from London to Binfield, in Windsor Forest, about nine miles from Windsor.[10]

Concerning Pope's mother, Edith Turner Pope, it is known that "She was one of a family of seven children; her

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[7] Carruthers, op. cit., p. 5.

[8] Thomas De Quincey, Biographical Essays, (Boston: Tickner, Reed, and Fields. 1853), p. 103.

[9] Ibid., p. 104.

[10] Carruthers, op. cit., p. 30.

father, William Turner, was a small landowner in Yorkshire. She was the second wife of the poet's father. She survived all the other members of the Turner family and experienced the rare joy of seeing her son - her only child - crowned with the highest literary honors, and become the champion of nobles, the first poet of his age; and most of all, she enjoyed his giving to her respect and sincere and generous affection."[11]

The poet often revealed in his various poems his unbounded affection for his mother. A very fine example of this is seen in his "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot",

> Oh Friend! may each domestic bliss be thine!
> Be no unpleasing melancholy mine:
> Me, let the tender office long engage,
> To rock the cradle of reposing age,
> With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,
> Make langour smile and smooth the bed of death,
> Explore the thought explain the asking eye,
> And keep a while one parent from the sky.[12]

The circumstances of Pope's early life were in many ways peculiar. Boynton states, "One of the main reasons for the family's choice of living in Binfield was that a number of Roman Catholic families lived in that neighborhood, and they formed a little set sufficiently agreeable for social purposes; but if to be a Catholic meant to move

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[11] Ibid., p. 10-13.

[12] Pope, "The Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 406-413.

into narrow social circles, it also carried with it a more serious limitation. Catholics were barred from public schools and universities."[13] Thus, beyond the instruction afforded by the small Catholic schools which Pope attended until his twelfth year, Pope had no formal education. According to Carruthers, Spence said, "Pope's first education was extremely loose and disconcerted. The family priest, Banister, taught him the accidence and first parts of grammar by a method used in Jesuit schools of teaching Latin and Greek together; he next attended a Catholic Seminary at Twyford, near Winchester, where after twelve months he received a severe flogging for lampooning some faults which he found in the schoolmaster, and for which flogging his indulgent father, bitter in resentment, took young Pope out of school. Pope was at this time sent to Winchester to a London school, kept by Thomas Deane, a vain controversialist, under whom Pope's progress was also limited."[14] Carruthers quotes Pope as saying, "On leaving this school I was only able to construe a little of Tully's 'Offices'."[15] Thus Pope ended his period of exposure to public schools and diligently assumed his task of self-tuition. Carruthers

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[13]Henry W. Boynton, editor, The Complete Poetical Works of Pope. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931, p. xi.

[14]Carruthers, op. cit., p. 20.

[15]Ibid., p. 21.

recorded Pope as saying, "I began writing verses farther back than I can remember. Ogilby's translation of Homer was one of the first large poems I read. I was then about eight years old. This led me to Sandy's Ovid, which I liked extremely, and so I did a translation of part of Statius by some very bad hand. When I was twelve, I wrote a kind of play which I got to be acted by some schoolfellows".[16] Pope claimed in reality to have taught himself Latin, French, and Greek, and to have acquired the knowledge of these languages by translations. Boynton quotes Pope as having told Spence, "When I had done with my priests, I took to reading by myself, for which I had a very great eagerness and enthusiasm, especially for poetry; and in a very few years, I dipped into a great number of English, French, Italian, Latin and Greeks poets. This I did without any design but that of pleasing myself, and I got the language by hunting after the stories in several authors I read rather than the books."[17]

De Quincey stamps as entirely wrong Voltaire's statement, "Pope could not read, much less speak one word of the French language."[18] De Quincey gives the following reasons to show that Voltaire was mistaken in his decision concerning Pope's not being able to read French. (1) "Pope natu-

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[16]Carruthers, op. cit., p. 530.

[17]Boynton, op. cit., "Introduction", p. xi-xii.

[18]De Quincey, op. cit., p. 112-114.

rally hesitated to speak aloud a language that he had no occasion to use in the real intercourse of life; (2) the extensive use that Pope made of Madame Dacier's labors on the 'Iliad'; and (3) the critical reading he made of his own 'Essay on Man'; 'Essay on Criticism' and 'Rape of the Lock' required some knowledge of French."[19]

Pope's far-sighted parents realized early the tremendous effect that seclusion could have on Pope's personality. They moved to Windsor Forest because they felt that it was a better environment for a child of his nature. Pope was very young when he moved to Windsor Forest with his parents, and he soon sat down with an earnest desire to the task of studying for a number of years.[20] In his own words he told how he conducted his study in Windsor Forest. "My mornings were occupied with desultory rambles through English, Latin, Greek, and Italian literature; my afternoons were spent in long walks either alone or with my dog, while I would meditate on what I had just read; and each day closed with an attempt to reduce to writing the thoughts that crowded my imagination."[21]

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[19] Ibid., p. 114.

[20] Carruthers, op. cit., p. 23.

[21] Alexander Pope, Works. Vol. V, new ed., (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 15.

Carruthers focuses attention on the pleasant environment that Pope enjoyed in Windsor Forest.

> His recollections of Windsor Forest, and of the mornings and sunsets, he enjoyed within its broad circumference of shade, or from the "stately brow" of its historic heights, may be tracked like the fresh green of spring along the fiery course of his satire, and through the mazes of his metaphysics.[22]

While living in Windsor Forest, Pope had his most impressive contacts with nature. He eventually reached the opinion that the poet should not copy nature as he found it, but that his art was to help nature realize its perfection.[23]

In his "Ode to Solitude", one sees him charming his parents with his poetical talent and affectionate sweetness, and contemplating a life of leisure and study in his forest solitude.[24]

Thus, the education of Alexander Pope formed one of the most influential periods in his life as a poet. Though socially and civilly restricted and almost entirely self-educated, he achieved success at the young age of sixteen. He continued his literary growth, and became a social asset to many of his prominent literary friends. Critics have attached much importance to the self-education of this eminent poet. (1) It reveals both the sincerity of his parents'

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[22]Carruther's, op. cit., p. 18.

[23]Ibid., p. 22.

[24]Ibid., p. 29.

thoughtfulness in moving to Windsor Forest in order that their physically and civilly handicapped child might acquire the learning best suited for him, as they believed he was destined to absolute social seclusion; (2) it increases a student's appreciation for Pope as a child-poet who adapted genius to the scheme of isolation chosen for him by his parents; and (3) it suggests a comparative study of the advantages of the school system for the gifted individual.[25]

The significance of Pope's self-education is revealed in his life and works in at least three ways. (1) His mind was not so fertile in original thoughts as it was equipped with an exquisite sense of form and order, and such a nature required the conceptions of others to stimulate its development. (2) His self-tuition forced him, as he said, "... to read for sense, whereas school boys generally read for words;"[26] and so, with his judgment naturally strong and penetrating, and his education self-directed, Pope's tastes and discernment were scarcely ever at fault. (3) The early denial of group classwork must have increased his determination to cultivate the original powers which he felt stirring within, and to neglect such studies as the

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[25]Samuel Johnson, The Life of Pope, London: G. Bell & Sons, 1753, p. 10.

[26]Pope, op. cit., (Murray Edition). p. 10-11.

thousands could pursue no less successfully than he.[27]

One finds Pope's predilection for satire manifested very early in his life. It was back at Twyford, when he lampooned his teacher, that Pope assumed the character of a critic and satirist.[28] It is true that Pope never gained distinction as a scholar, but the praise of his contemporaries naturally awakened in him a longing for fame, though he lacked that background of the classroom which might have enabled him better to meet his literary competitors. No one doubts that with a better education Pope would have achieved a distinguished classical background. He is known to have found his self-tuition unsuited to the learning of modern languages, in which pronunciation is such an essential element, and to have gone in his fifteenth year to London to learn French and Italian. His progress in these subjects while in London is not definitely known; but he told Spence, "From the date of my return from London to Windsor Forest, I spent seven years unlearning what I had learned, and that was the happiest time of my life."[29]

Pope united the genius which he recognized within himself to heroic patience and industry, and achieved a permanent place in English literature as an ethical and satiri-

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[27] De Quincey, op. cit., p. 119.

[28] Carruthers, op. cit., p. 20-24.

[29] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

cal poet. As Courthope points out, "English society and especially men of letters owed Pope the tribute of generous admiration."[30]

According to Boynton, whatever may have been the importance, for good or for ill, of Pope's early method of education, a far more potent factor in determining the conduct of his life and the nature of his work lay in his bodily limitations.[31] "The Pope whom the world knew was stunted to dwarfishness, thin to emaciation, crooked and feeble, so that he had to wear stays, and padding, and was all of his life subject to severe bodily pain; his relations with men were seriously affected by this condition."[32] Pope believed, as expressed in the lines that follow, if he wrote, he would be helped through his long disease of life!

> The muse but serve to ease some friend, not wife,
> To help me through this long disease, my life,[33]

Although Pope was physically handicapped, he always charmed the household by his gentleness and sensibility, and, in consequence of his sweet voice, his parents called him "the little nightingale".[34]

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[30] "Introduction", Pope, op. cit., p. xi.

[31] Boynton, op. cit., p. x.

[32] Ibid., p. xi.

[33] Pope, "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 131-132.

[34] Carruthers, op. cit., pp. 19-29.

Pope's biographical background reveals that even as a child he had a profound interest in literary attainments. This interest was motivated first by his immediate family. Pope's father died in 1717; the poet said of his father's death in the "Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot",

> His life though long, to sickness passed unknown
> His death was instant, and without a groan.[35]

And in a letter to Bishop Atterbury, Pope wrote:

> It is true, that I have lost a parent
> For whom no gains I could make
> Would be equivalent.[36]

His mother died in 1733, and he wrote to Richardson on the day of death,

> I thank God her death was easy as her life was innocent; and it cost her not a groan, nor even a sigh. There is yet upon her countenance such expression of tranquility, nay, almost a pleasure that it is amiable to behold it.[37]

Pope further requested of Richardson, "Come and draw a portrait of her before this winter flower is faded."[38] He erected at Twickenham churchyard a large obelisk in memory of his revered parents and on the pedestal was inscribed,

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[35]Pope, op. cit., "Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 402-403.

[36]Ibid., p. 162.

[37]Ibid., p. 303.

[38]Ibid., p. 304.

Ah Editha!

Matrvm Optima!

Muliervm Amentissima!

Vale[39]

Brodribb said, "Pope's father should never be forgotten, for he was his precocious son's earliest critic, who read his 'juvenilia' and pointed out where his metrical faults lay."[40] Often he told Pope, "Take these lines and rehammer them until they are correct."[41]

His aunt, observing the young lad's great potentialities, sought to be an incentive to him too. She taught him his first letters and encouraged his reading the best of literature. She bought books for him to read, and at her death her library of the best Latin, Greek, and French works was willed to Pope.[42]

Pope had always associated with great literary figures of his age. Besides his father's careful guidance and his aunt's interest in him, he had the good fortune to have as a neighbor an elderly retired diplomat, Sir William Trum-

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[39] The phrase translated takes this meaning, "Oh Edith, the best of mothers, the most loving of women, oh, how worthy you are!"

[40] C. W. Brodribb, Pope: His Friendships And His Poetry, London: National Home Reading Union Pamphlets, p. 20.

[41] Ibid., p. 19.

[42] Ibid., p. 36.

bull, who encouraged him to write the Pastorals. Pope circulated among men of established literary reputation, such as Sir Samuel Garth, William Congreve, William Wycherley and William Walsh, and such patrons of letters as George Granville, Sir George Halifax, and John Somers. To Walsh in particular Pope afterwards expressed his obligation. In a letter to Spence the poet said, "He used to encourage me much and used to tell me there was only one way left of excelling; for though we have had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct."[43] Through Walsh, Pope was introduced to Wycherley, a dramatist, who not only read through Pope's poems and translations, but also introduced the young poet to literary society in London. So the young poet could hardly have launched into his poetical career under better influence.[44]

Pope's works may be divided into three periods. The first period included the early pieces written during the reign of Queen Anne, the Pastorals, An Essay on Criticism, Rape of the Lock, and Windsor Forest (1709 - 1714). The second period is marked by his translations of Homer, (1715-1728). And, his final period is the one in which his greatest works were produced - his Moral Essays and Satires.

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[43]Boynton, op. cit., p. xvi.

[44]Brodribb, op. cit., p. 10.

Critics are fairly well agreed as to Pope's place in the literary field during his time. He was considered the literary, dictator of his age, and the very essence of all that was in the tastes and ideals of the Queen Anne Age.[45]

From this study of Pope's biographical background, one gathers that his parental guidance, his desultory education, the environmental conditions in Windsor Forest, his personal desire for fame, his bodily limitations, and the encouragement of his friends had great bearing on Pope's entry into the literary field. Concrete evidence of this is seen in The "Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", when Pope asked,

> Why did I write? What sin to me unknown
> Dipped me in ink, My parents, or my own?
> As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
> I lisped in numbers, for numbers came.
> I left no calling for this idle trade,
> No duty broke, no father disobeyed,
> The Muse served to ease some friend, not wife,
> To help me through this long disease, my life,
> The second, Arbuthnot! thy art and care,
> And teach the being you preserved, to bear.
> But why then polish? Granville the polite,
> And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;
> Well natured Garth inflamed with every praise,
> And Congreve loved, and Swift endured my lays;
> The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,
> E'en mitred Rochester would nod the head,
> And St. John's self (great Dryden's friends before)
> With opened arms and received one poet more.[46]

In the latter lines one views his anticipated reception into the literary field.

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[45]Boynton, op. cit., "Introduction", p. xvii.

[46]Pope, "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 125-142.

Happy my studies when by these approved!
Happier thy author when by these beloved!
From these the world will judge of men and books
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cookes.[47]

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[47] Ibid., ll. 143-146.

CHAPTER II

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AUGUSTAN AGE AND POPE'S RELATION TO IT

During the days of Emperor Augustus, Rome had had her greatest period of literature. The writers of the Queen Anne Age in England were highly impressed with this period of Roman literature. In an effort to imitate the Roman writers, Pope and his contemporaries referred to themselves as forming a new "Augustan Age" in English literature.

The conformity overcasting the literature of this period makes it fairly easy to summarize some of its general characteristics. The respect for cities, which began in the Renaissance, reached its height at this time as a result of the new importance of industry. The Augustan writers considered it catastrophic to be forced to live in the country away from the intellectual excitement of London. Mountain scenery and the sight of the meadow or brooks were only a bore to them. When they tolerated nature at all, it was only when it was tamed as in the garden of Versailles in neighboring France.[1]

"Pope and his contemporaries had little interest with the concerns of individuals; they were far more interested in the general laws of conduct for urban society as a whole. With their proudly rationalistic view of the world, they tended to be chiefly interested in satire as a form of expression, for in satire one attacked those individuals or institutions which did not conform to the order of society.

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[1]William Long, A History of English Literature. New York: Ginn Company, 1919, p. 112.

Wit was at premium; good manners were required in writing as in conduct; and the world in which they lived and the concerns of contemporary life were their chief interest. They were classicists only in the sense that they imitated the literary forms of the ancients. Their subject-matter was always the life of their own times."[2]

The literary "Age of Pope" was one of Neo-classicism. The period was one of the most notable in English literature; the prose writers learned a serviceable style that was needed, and they left an unforgettable imprint on English literature. The writers of Pope's age represent a middle ground between Puritan strictness and Restoration licenticusness. Their works are imitations of the ancients; and as originality in their literary works became less important, their interest in order, regularity, and critical authority increased. The classicists refined their expressions and followed a set of rules in their composition. They emphasized class rather than the individual, and intellect rather than emotion; and they restrained imagination and passion in order that expression might be highly polished.[3] In other words, the effort of the authors of Pope's day was not to say something new, but to say it better than it had been said before.

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[2] John Dennis, The Age of Pope. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1712 p. 10-20

[3] Ibid., p. 21.

The general tendency of the literature of the age of which Pope's literary career formed the axis was, therefore, to look at life critically and portray its problems in precise and elegant diction.[4]

The idea of "Classic" in Pope's Age was modified to mean the critical intellectual spirit of writers; it meant the fine polish of heroic couplets or the elegance of their expressions. Critics of this age did not show any resemblance which their works bore to the traditional or true classic literature.[5]

Pope was born during the "Annus Mirabilis", which introduced a new political era in England, and it was fatal to the ardent Catholics. The religion of Pope's family made his seclusion from the world even more rigid. According to Dennis, "Catholics were harassed by a legislation which would be condemned by an modern standard as intolerably tyrannical. A Catholic was not only a member of a hated minority regarded by the rest of his countrymen as representing the evil principles in politics and religion, but rigorously excluded from any public career and from every position of honor or authority. In times of excitement the severer laws might be put in force. Public exer-

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[4]Emile Legouis, et. al. The History of English Literature. New York: MacMillan Company, 1928, p. 650-660.

[5]Legouis, op. cit., p. 352.

cise of the Catholic religion was forbidden. To be a Catholic was to be predisposed to the various Jacobite intrigues which still had many chances in their favor. The Pretender, a proclamation which Pope thought deserved obedience, forbade the appearance of Catholics within ten miles of London."[6] Catholics had to pay double taxes and were prohibited from acquiring real property. Thus Pope's character was affected in many ways by his belonging to a sect thus harassed and restrained.[7]

If we are to judge Pope fairly, these three features of his time must be kept in mind: (1) character of political strife in those days; (2) political relations of men of letters; (3) personalities of men of letters.[8]

The "Augustan Age" was pre-eminently an age of intrigue. In the first place, the government was almost as unsettled as in the early days of personal monarchy, but it was a policy rather than force upon which men depended for keeping their positions. Secondly, men of letters were admitted to the inner circles of intrigues as they had never been before and as they have never been since; and the

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[6]Dennis, op. cit., pp. 30-41.

[7]Henry Boynton, "Introduction", in The Complete Poetical Works of Alexander Pope. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931, p. x.

[8]Encyclopaedia Britannica, The, Vol. 18, Chicago: Encyclopaedia, Inc.

Augustan statesmen paid their principal literary champions with social privileges and honorable public appointments. Hence, men of letters were directly affected by the law of political morality of the unsettled times.[9]

During Pope's first years of London experience, he probably knew Richard Steele more intimately than anyone else. Through Steele, he was presented to Addison and later became a frequenter of the Button's Club. Pope allowed himself to associate freely with the Whigs; but he had no intention of taking rank as a Whig partisan. Later, he became acquainted with Swift and joined the Scriblerus Club, along with John Gay, John Arbuthnot, William Congreve, Francis Atterbury, and Thomas Parnell, who were all Tories.[10] Dennis said, "The amusing thing about Pope's early experience at the Button's Club was that he was known to have commended verses of Addison's satellites, Budgell, Tickell, and Ambrose Philips, whom he later attacked so bitterly."[11]

The first daily newspaper, the Daily Courant, appeared in London in 1703; the Spectator, a journal to which Addison was the chief contributor, appeared in 1711; the Tatler appeared in 1712; and Coffee-houses, which were the

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[9] Ibid., p. 42.

[10] Encyclopaedia Britannica, The, op. cit., p. 516.

[11] Dennis, op. cit., p. 102.

center of sociability in Pope's day, sprang up by the thousands in England.[12] Under William and Mary, restrictions on the publication of books, pamphlets, and newspapers were removed; and men became free to not only think, but to print and circulate their thoughts. They could bring the government more directly before the bar of public opinion.[13]

According to MacDonald, "The portrayal of personalities was a well-marked characteristic of much of the general literature of the Augustan Age. Whether the term personality was used in the sense that people and their activities form the chief topic of letters or in the later sense of offensive remarks about persons, it was a much and often used term."[14] In all the writings which concerned Alexander Pope during the "Augustan Age" personalities in a large measure monopolized attention. Many critics have agreed that none of our major authors compared with Pope in respect to "petty secrets and third rate problems."[15]

Personalities were the very soul of the contemporary pamphlets. Some of the exponents of the gentle art of mudslinging themselves lamented the bitterness of personal

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[12] Legouis, op. cit., p. 160.

[13] W. L. MacDonald, Pope and His Critics. New York: J. M. Dent & Sons LTD, 1951, pp. 53-56.

[14] Ibid., p. 2.

[15] Ibid., p. 6.

spite which animated political discussions. Bolingbroke, a superb pamphleteer of the Augustan Age, observed, "Formerly criticisms were much more about persons than about things, or at least about particular points in which an agreement could easily have been reached if personalities had had less play."[16]

The chief aim of the Augustan pamphleteers was defamation. Personalities were gaining popularity over principles.[17] Evidences of this are seen in Bolingbroke's unremitting attacks upon Walpole in The Craftsman. And Swift, prince of the pamphleteers, frequently remarked on the proneness of principle to sink into personalities. On the other side of the political fence, "Addison deplored the animosities of factions which impel a man to write of a recent deceased friend or enemy in the spirit of a partisanship; he complained that neither a Whig nor a Tory was permitted by his political opposite to have the qualities of an honest man."[18]

Clarendon's History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England has a distinguished place in the development of formal personality characterization. After the publication of

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[16] Ibid., p. 36.

[17] Ibid., p. 37.

[18] Joseph Addison, Freeholder, No. 35, in Works edited by Hurd. Vol. V, p. 30.

Clarendon's work, no Augustan history was complete without its set of personal character drawings.[19]

Bishop Burnet's History Of My Time, like Clarendon's great work, throws light on the Augustan's absorption in themselves and their contemporaries. As Burnet was revising his autobiography for publication, Clarendon's History made its appearance and profoundly affected Burnet's plan. Specifically, he added character sketches as the occasion arose. Swift said, "Burnet was the most partial of all the Augustan writers". Burnet's censures, Swift says, may be attributed to personal malice. Swift criticized his low diction, claimed his history was generally made up of coffee-house scandals or, at the best, from reports at third, fourth, or fifth hand and Swift said, "Burnet frequently vented his spleen in epithets like 'vile Scot rogue' and 'Scotch dog'."[20] Pope's line:

"And public faction doubles private hate",

certainly strikes a keynote here.

One sees that personal character drawing was a dominating characteristic of the Augustan Age.

This interchange of animosities, typical of the literary belligerency, characterized the criticisms of Pope for almost two centuries. However, Pope's writings connected

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[19]George Saintsbury, A History of English Criticism. London: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1911, p. 115.

[20]Ibid., p. 4.

with personalities did not stand alone; everyone who was conversant with the first half of the eighteenth century was struck with personality entanglement. Pope had many parallels, but it is believed by critics that Pope excelled his contemporaries in his satirical approach. For at least a century and a half, the criticism of the Augustan poets had many of the aspects of an obstacle race, the goal of which was presumably, the appraisal of Pope's poetry. The main hurdle was the personality of Pope and the obstacles multiplied as the critics one after another entered into the contest. The complaint has often been heard that critics reacted to Pope's poetry according to the sympathy or hostility that they regarded the poet as a man. It is reasonably clear that the uncivil things that the writers of the "Augustan Age" had to say about each other reveal something of the characters of the men themselves, and it should be apparent to even those who have not read very far in the criticism of Pope that this cardinal characteristic of the Augustan Age is disclosed in him by the churlish way in which he spoke of his antagonists.

CHAPTER III

ALEXANDER POPE: ORIGINS OF PERSONAL LITERARY CRITICISMS IN SELECTED WORKS

According to MacDonald, Alexander Pope was not often able to divert himself of that irritable degree of sensibility or vanity which makes the poetical race miserable and ridiculous. The records of Pope's life clearly show that his attitude toward some men of letters was not always what it should have been. In one respect, the study of Pope's contemporaries shows nothing better than his satirical turn of mind. On the other hand, Pope's friendship with many of his contemporaries shows that he counted among his friends some of the greatest men of his age. Pope reacted to his contemporaries poetry according to his friendship with or his hostility toward the writer.[1] But regardless to his relationship with his fellow craftsmen one finds across almost every critique, long or short, the element of human personality cuts sharply in Alexander Pope's literary criticisms.

POPE AND AMBROSE PHILIPS

The Pastorals were the earliest poems of Pope which occasioned controversy, "A controversy not important in it-

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[1] W. L. MacDonald, Pope and His Critics. New York: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1951, p. 101.

self, but sufficient of the spreading and intensifying of personalities in the Popean criticisms."[2] These Pastorals called forth Pope's earliest personal criticisms. In 1709, Tonson published as Miscellany which contained two sets of Pastorals. One set was written by Pope and the other set was written by Ambrose Philips. Pope commended Philips's Pastorals and even said, "There were no better ecologues in the English language."[3] Later, Joseph Addison printed an extended copy of the two sets of Pastorals written by Pope and Philips in the Spectator, and Addison pronounced the second-rate poet, Ambrose Philips's Pastorals the better of the two sets.[4] This was for Pope the real sting of the criticism. His ardor was somewhat cooled, and he was converted to a cold rage by the position which the Spectator took. He became both jealous and resentful of the appraisal of Philips's Pastorals; he promptly sent an anonymous paper to the Guardian in mock praise of Philips's Pastorals. Needless to say, the praise was ironical from the beginning to the end.[5]

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[2]W. C. Brodribb, Pope: His Friendships and His Poetry. London: National Home Reading Union, p. 15.

[3]Henry W. Boynton, editor, Complete Poetical Works Of Alexander Pope. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931, p. xiv.

[4]Ibid., p. xvi.

[5]David Patrick, Chamber's Encyclopaedia of English Literature. New Ed., Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1902, p. 239.

He quoted all of his rival's worst passages for his best, and he placed by the side of them his own finest lines which, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, he said, "want rusticity and deviate into downright poetry."[6] Pope damned Philips's Pastorals by fulsome praise and ridiculed the Guardian's principles.[7]

Pope, ever faithful to the maxim that a man never forgives another whom he has injured, continued to pursue Philips with hateful and satirical lines. Evidence of this is seen in the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.

> The bard whom pilfer'd Pastorals renown,
> Who turns a persian tale for half-a-crown,
> Just writes to make his barrenness appear,
> And strains from hard-bound brains eight lines a year;
> He who still wanting, tho' he lives on theft,
> Steals much, spends little, yet has nothing left,[8]

Pope further showed his dislike for Philips by characterizing him as a "slow" poet in these verses in the Dunciad.

> She saw slow Philips creep like Tate's poor page,[9]
> .....

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[6] Encyclopaedia Britannica, The, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1768, p. 223.

[7] Ibid., p. 223.

[8] Alexander Pope, "The Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", in The Complete Works of Alexander Pope. Globe Ed., London: John Murray, 1701, ll. 179-185.

[9] Pope, op. cit., "The Dunciad", Bk. 1, l. 105.

She snatched a sheet of Thule from her bed;
Sudden she flies, and whelms it o'er the pyre;
Down sink the flames, and with a hiss expire.[10]

Once more, in the same work, Pope wrote a parody on Philips's lines in his letter to Copenhagen:

Silence, ye wolves, while Ralph to Cynthia howls,
And makes night hideous!
Answer him ye owls![11]

These excerpts illustrate how Pope permitted his personal feelings to enter into his critical judgment.

POPE AND JOSEPH ADDISON

One finds it extremely difficult ot read Pope's _Pastorals_ without giving some thought to Joseph Addison, for it is in this connection that the first of a long series of personal enmities which embittered Pope's life and criticisms began. As it has been pointed out, Addison printed an extended comparison of Pope's and Philips's _Pastorals_ in the _Spectator_; he expressed his preference for Philips's _Pastorals_ to those of Pope. Pope resented this depreciation of his poetry by Addison and the "subtlety and ingenuity of his method of retort was an interesting indication of his disingenuousness which became a settled quality of his writings."[12]

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[10] Pope, _op. cit._, "The Dunciad", Bk. 1, ll. 258-260.

[11] Pope, _op. cit._, "The Dunciad", Bk. 111, ll. 164-65.

[12] Patrick, _op. cit._, p. 10.

Pope's Pastorals were highly praised by his friends, such as, Walsh and Wycherley. He was, however, expecting great commendation from the members of the Addison coterie, but so little was said about the Pastorals by them that critics have concluded that there was a conspiracy of silence by the Addison coterie to prohibit Pope from gaining too much public recognition.[13] Johnson stated, "It could hardly be doubted that the 'little senate' at Button's Club was influenced by their political loyalties in their judgment that Philips's Pastorals showed superior merit to Pope's Pastorals. Philips was a staunch Whig Party man while Pope moved only about the periphery of the group and even showed some signs of detaching himself from it altogether. It was in this connection that Pope's links attached to the Tory Party became strengthened."[14]

However, up until 1714, whatever irritation Pope felt toward Addison, he took it out on his followers rather than Addison himself. In 1711, Joseph Spence recorded Pope as saying, "I like Addison as well as I do any man, and I am very fond of his conversation."[15] During their early ac-

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[13]MacDonald, op. cit., p. 35.

[14]Samuel Johnson, The Life Of Pope. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1753, p. 70.

[15]Joseph Spence, Anecdotes, Observations, And Characters Of Men And Books. London: Constable and Company, 1820 sec. Vol. 11, pp. 1742-43.

quaintanceship, Addison's works were frequently quoted or alluded to in Pope's poetry; this, within itself, showed that Pope liked Addison. Pope further expressed his admiration for Addison's contribution to the Guardian, Tatler, and Spectator, in his letters written during the years of (1711-13). In writing to Caryll about the Guardian in 1713, Pope stated, "The grand difference in the paper is caused by the want of Mr. Addison's assistance."[16] And in writing to Broome in February, 1714, Pope declared, "That which is published is not by the former hand, Addison's, but a paper of no sort of reputation in town";[17] and in the same year, Pope wrote Addison stating, "I have spent part of the Christmas holidays with some honest country gentlemen who had wit enough to be good natured, but no manner of relish for criticism or polite writing, as one would bear on their never having read the Spectator."[18] Pope again showed his profound respect for Addison's critical judgment in this same letter. He made favorable comments on the criticisms that Addison had made on the "Essay On Criticism" in the Spectator, and he promised Addison, "If the Essay is worthy of a second edition, I will be glad to strike out all lines that you think advisable."[19] Addison had warmly praised

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[16] Alexander Pope. Correspondence, Edited by John Courthope, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1878, p. 20.

[17] Ibid., p. 107.

[18] Ibid., p. 141.

[19] Ibid., p. 141-42.

the Essay On Criticism in the Spectator; he was, in a large measure, responsible for the successful sales of the "Essay".

It was also at this time that Pope wrote one of the noblest prologues in our language for Addison's "Cato"; and in commenting on the play, Pope said,

> It drew tears from my eyes in several places. Especially parts of the fourth and fifth acts, where the beauty of virtue appeared so charmingly that I believe if put on the stage, the audience would enjoy the greatest pleasure an exalted soul could be capable of enjoying, a view of virtue itself dressed in person, color, and action. The emotion which the mind will feel from this character, and the sentiments of humanity which the distress of such a person as "Cato" will stir up in us must necessarily fill and audience with so glorious a disposition and sovereign love of virtue that I question if any play has ever been conduced so immediately to morals as this.20

Such in effect was Pope's early critical view of Addison.

Later, however, Pope's critical judgment of Addison changed and it gradually grew intensely bitter. Evidence of this is seen in Pope's political works, such as, Rape Of The Lock and Windsor Forest, which have no distinct place in the treatment of this paper since this discussion is concerned only with selected critical work. However, Pope's complete estrangement with Addison did not come until Pope's translation of the Iliad. A minor incident connected with the translation of the Iliad led to some misunderstanding

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20Pope, op. cit., "Correspondence", p. 208.

between the translator and Addison, and it gave rise to the personal enmities which had been brewing for a number of years between the two.[21] "Pope's frailty of constitution easily led him to magnify 'mole hills into mountains' and his literary susceptibilities were painfully morbid."[22] His relation with Addison had already been strained when Addison deprecated the recasting of the Rape Of The Lock and depreciated Pope's Pastorals. Finally, by an unfortunate coincidence, when Pope's Iliad was published, a rival version was brought forward by Addison's bosom friend, Thomas Tickell (1686-1740), which Pope, perhaps not unnaturally, regarded as prompted, if not edited, by Addison himself. And, for this, plus the cumulative result of Pope's irritations over a period of years, he avenged himself by cruelly, but cleverly, portraying Addison as "Atticus". Eighteen years after Addison's death[23] this portrait found its final place

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[21] Encyclopaedia Americana, The. Vol. 22, New York: American Corporation, 1951, p. 358.

[22] Ibid., p. 358.

[23] Upon the faith of Spence's Anecdotes pp. 148-149, it was long held that Pope, in his first anger with Addison had actually sent these lines to him, but this is now held not to be probable. Courthope's Life of Pope, 1889, p. 161, indicates that Spence's entire account is conjectured to be fabrication by Pope arising out of his desire to establish beyond doubt that fact that the character "Atticus" was created not after Addison's death, but during his lifetime. In any case, Courthope says, 'Atticus' is a dreadful resemblance of the original.

in the prologue to the Satire, The Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot.[24]

> Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
> True genius kindles and fair fame inspires,
> Bless'd with each talent and each art to please,
> And born to write, converse and live with ease;
> Should such a man, too fond of rule alone,
> Bear like the Turks, no brother near the throne;
> View him with scornful, yet jealous eyes
> And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise;
> Damn faint praise, assent with civil leer,
> And without sneering teach others to sneer;
> Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
> Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike;
> Alike reserv'd the blame or to commend,
> A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend;
> Dreading ev'n fools by flatters besieged,
> And so obliging that he ne'er obliged
> Like Cato, gives his little Senate laws,
> And sit attentive to his own applause;
> While wits and Templars ev'ry sentence raise,
> And wonder with foolish face of praise-
> Who must not laugh if such a man there be?
> Who would not weep, if Atticus were he? 25

MacDonald pointed out that there is some truth in the charge Pope made against Addison relative to his teaching others to sneer! These sneers mainly concerned Pope's inability to translate Homer, and Pope's chief complaint against the sneers seemed to have lain in the fact that Pope believed that Addison instigated and aided Thomas Tickell in his translating the first book of the Iliad and published it simultaneously with Pope's translation.[26]

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[24] Encyclopaedia Americana, The, op. cit., 148-149.

[25] Pope, "The Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 193-214.

[26] MacDonald, op. cit., p. 26.

This may or may not be true, but modern criticism has failed to find any valid ground for the supposition that Addison actually influenced Tickell in his publication of the Iliad. The real significance of the whole episode is an interesting interplay of personalities pointing directly to the fact that in the "Augustan Age" personal bias was the chief element in critical thinking when the poetry of Alexander Pope was concerned.[27]

One still sees a continuity of personal animus in Pope for Addison as late as 1738. Pope had said commendable things to Addison about his play "Cato" in 1713, when it was first written and when he and Addison were on friendly terms. But in 1738, Joseph Spence quoted him as saying quite a different thing. "I, Pope, gave him, Addison, my opinion that I thought he had better not act, it, 'Cato', and that he would get enough reputation only by printing it. This I said, thinking the lines were well written, but not theatrical enough. Afterwards, Mr. Addison said, 'his opinion was the same as mine, but some particular friends of his whom he could not disoblige insisted on its being acted', and it was with the greatest applaud. Pope also asserted that the love part of the play was just flung in to comply with the popular demand and taste of the audience."[28]

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[27]Norman Ault, New Light On Pope. London: Methuen and Company, 1949, 1. pp. 379-382.

[28]Spence, op. cit., sec. V, p. 1738.

In the Dunciad, Pope had this to say of Addison:

> Dulness, good queen, repeat the jest again.
> Three wicked imps, of her Grub-street choir,
> She deck'd like Congreve, Addison and Prior;
> Breval, Warner, Wilkins, run: delusive thought![29]

Pope placed Addison in the court of "Dulness," but he did not require "Dulness" to give him too much attention because he felt that such writers as Congreve, Addison and Prior would reach posterity and he pleaded with Dulness to proceed with those whom he felt would of necessity be severely ridiculed.

POPE AND JOHN DENNIS

It is thought by some of the English critics that Pope's strictures on John Dennis were also occasioned by the same unfavorable remarks made by Dennis on Pope's Pastorals.[30] Dennis' Observation On Windsor Forest compared the poem with its model, Cooper Hill, written by Denham. The crux of the bitter onslaught for Pope was, according to Dennis, "Pope's effort miserably failed in every line of the comparison."[31] According to Carruthers, "More than two-thirds of Dennis's review was devoted to hyperbolical praise of Denham's eulogy which stressed the dignity of style and matter as against

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[29] Pope, "The Dunciad", Bk. 11, 11. 123-26

[30] MacDonald, op. cit., p. 73.

[31] John Dennis, The Age Of Pope. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1712, p. 260

the trivialities of Pope's Pastorals."[32] Because of the slashing approach which Dennis employed in reviewing the Pastorals, Pope provoked one bitter personal enemy in Dennis, the author of Appius and Virginia, by describing him as "Appius" in the Essay On Criticism.[33]

> Appius reddens at each word you speak,
> And stares tremendous with a threat'ning eye,
> Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry.[34]

Pope again took occasion for revenge in the Essay by directing his description of the progressive decline of men of letters to Dennis in the following verses:

> In search of wit these lose their common sense,
> And then turn critics in their own defence;
> Each burns alike, who can or can not write,
> Or with rival's or an eunuch's spite.
> All fools still have an itching to deride,
> And fain would be upon the laughing side.
> If Maevius scribble in Appollo's spite.
> There are who judge still worse than he can write.
> Some have at first for wits, then poets pass'd;
> Turn'd critics next and prov'd plain fools at last.[35]

Dennis had a great admiration for Aristotle, and in his Preface To Advancement And Reformation Of Modern Poetry, he explained why he preferred one of the Grecian tragedies, as, for example, Oedipus The King of Sophocles, to an Eng-

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[32]Robert Carruthers, The Life Of Alexander Pope, Second Edition, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854, p. 96.

[33]Edward Bliss Reed, Selection From The Poetry Of Alexander Pope. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1901, p. 164.

[34]Pope, op. cit., "An Essay On Criticism", ll. 585-588.

[35]Ibid., ll. 28-27.

lish tragedy, as, for example, the Julius Caesar of Shakespeare. Dennis concluded that all were "sots and fools" who depart from the Aristotlean rule.[36] Pope ridiculed Dennis' idea that a writer should be confined by law to the Stagirite. He said,

> Once on a time, La Mancha's knight, they say,
> A certain bard encount'ring on the way,
> Discours'd in terms as just, with looks as sage,
> As e'er could Dennis, of the Grecian stage.
> Concluding that all were desperate sots and fools-
> Who durst depart from Aristotle's rule.[37]

Dennis retorted in "Reflections Upon A Late Rhapsody" ... in 1711, abusing Pope for many things, particularly, his personal deformity;[38] Pope never forgot this brutal attack. Dennis had also attacked Pope's "Prologue" to Addison's Cato. However, Pope made no immediate reply to Dennis. He very sensibly took the position in his correspondence with Caryll, "If the poem could not answer for itself to the pub-

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[36]Reed, op. cit., p. 164.

[37]Pope, "An Essay On Criticism", ll. pp. 67-72.

[38]Less than six weeks after Pope's attack on Dennis he retaliated with Reflections Upon A Late Rhapsody, Called An Essay Upon Criticism. The attack Pope made on Dennis in the Essay weighed so heavily on Dennis's mind that in his Reflections, he address himself in his usual butchery fashion to relieve the pressure. Personal spite caused Pope to censure Dennis; Dennis, impelled by anger, retaliated by vilifying not only the poem, but the poet as well. The animosity in Dennis was quick to find weaknesses in his enemy's argument, but after probing defects of logic, the enraged critic attacked first, the physical deformity of the 'hunch'd-back'd toad', and also his Jacobite politics, suggesting that Pope was grooming himself for poet-laureateship against the Pretender.

lic defense, it was futile."[39] Dennis' onslaught had been of the most violent kind, and even his pointed critical Reflections had been incidental to the deep personal hatred he had displayed. Pope, being sure of his superiority over an enemy at whom the critical world was ready to laugh, produced, two years later, one of the cruelest satires that he ever wrote, The Narrative Of Dr. Robert Norris, Concerning The Strange And Deplorable Frenzy Of Mr. John Dennis.[40]

Pope's vein of hatred for John Dennis also runs through the Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot. In these lines, Pope referred to the criticisms that Dennis had previously made of his works.

> Soft were my numbers; who could take offence,
> While pure description held the place of sense?
> ...Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret
> I never answered - I was not in debt.[41]

Dennis, in his old age, was poverty-stricken and destitute. Three weeks before his death a benefit play was given in his interest. Pope wrote the Prologue to the play,

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[39] Pope, op. cit., "Correspondence", p. 786.

[40] Samuel Johnson, in the Life Of Pope, said, "This pamphlet was the more devastating because it was written in a strain of general good humor throughout, so that however one may sympathize with the old critic, one can not forbear laughing with Pope at the hilarious fun he has at Dennis' expense. The most ridiculing and humorous touch is in the passage in which Dennis represents the victim as reading the Essay On Criticism in Lintot's bookshop, and finding himself attacked in the verses which described the progressive decline of men of letter from wits...to plain fools. "By God, he means me", yelled Dennis, in a fury as he dashed the book on the floor.

[41] Pope, "Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 147-48, 153-54

and he could not refrain from introducing it in sarcastic allusions to his old enemy.[42] It is in this connection that Pope commented on Dennis again in the Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot. Even with Dennis' life coming to a distressful close, Pope still permitted his personal feelings to occupy a place in his critical views of Dennis.

> Yet soft by nature, more a dupe than wit
> Sappho can tell you this man was bit;
> This dreaded Satirist Dennis will confess
> Foe to his pride, but friend to his distress;[43]

As a result of the cumulative censures Dennis made on Pope's personal deformity, as well as writings, Pope placed Dennis among the little wits on the throne of "Dulness" in the Dunciad.

> And all the mighty made Dennis rage,
> Should Dennis publish you had stabb'd your brother,
> Lampoon'd your monarch, or debauch'd your mother;
> Say, what revenge on Dennis can be had?
> Too dull for laughter, for reply too mad:
> On one so poor, you could not take the law;
> On one so old, your sword you scorn to draw,
> Uncaged then let the harmless monster rage,
> Secure in dulness, madness, want and age.[44]

Pope expressed bitterly his contempt for writers who produced merely because they had to meet unpaid bills. Any poet who wrote for ulterior motives was worthy of ridicule

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[42] Reed, op. cit., p. 212.

[43] Pope, "The Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 368-371.

[44] Pope, "The Dunciad," Bk. 1, ll. 106-114.

by a man who never "set genius a sale",[45] and Pope declared, "Much of Mr. Dennis' work afforded us notable examples of a poet writing for ulterior reasons."[46]

> He that would pun, would pick a pocket,
> Here one poor word a hundred clenches make.[47]

Pope's attacks on Dennis, whether innocently or maliciously intended, and Dennis's savage replies were the strong shots in a war of personalities which was waged intermittently between the two until Dennis' death.

POPE AND RICHARD BENTLEY

Richard Bentley, the famous master of Trinity and emender of Horace and Milton, was one of Pope's most provocative contemporaries.

Reed quotes Bentley as saying, he incurred Pope's personal criticisms because he spoke against his Iliad.[48] Brodribb recorded Bentley as having told Pope, "A pretty poem Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer."[49] This vexed Pope, and in the Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot, Pope vengefully attacked Bentley's edition of Milton, which was published

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[45] Alexander Pope, The Works Of Alexander Pope, with a memior of the author, notes, and critical notes on the Dunciad, by Rev. G. Croly, London: A. J. Vaply, M. A., 1835, p. 66.

[46] Ibid., p. 66.

[47] Pope, "The Dunciad", ll. 63-64.

[48] Reed, op. cit., p. 206.

[49] Brodribb, op. cit., p. 10.

in Bentley's old age as a literary curiosity. Pope's attack implied that the blind poet, Milton, had employed an amanuensis, who had made numerous involuntary mistakes, and an editor who not only did likewise, but also deliberately interpolated bad verses of his own.

> From slashing Bentley to Piddling Tibbalds:
> Each wight, who reads not, but scans and spells,
> Each word-catcher that lives on syllables
> E'en such small critics some regard may claim
> preserved in Milton's and Shakespeare's name.[50]

Bentley's criticism on the Iliad was not meant as a condemnation,[51] but Pope did not relish it; and years afterwards, Pope again took revenge by placing Bentley among the little wits in the court of Dulness in the Dunciad.

> To lull the sons of Margret and Clare - hall,
> Where Bentley late tempestuous wont to sport
> In troubled waters, but now sleeps in port.
> Before them marched that awful Aristarch;
> Plough'd with his front with many a deep remark;
> His hat, which never wail'd to human pride,
> Walker with reverence took, and laid aside.
> Low bow'd the rest: he kingly, did but nod:
> So upright quakers please both man and God.
> 'Mistress! dimiss that rabble from your throne!
> Avant: is Aristarchus yet unknown?
> Mighty scholiast, whose unweariest pains
> Made Hoarce dull, and humbled Milton's strains.
> Turn what they will to verse, their toil is vain;
> Critic like me shall make it prose again.
> Roman and Greek Grammarians! Know you better;
> While tow'ring over your alphabet, like Saul,
> Stand for digamma, and o'er tops them all.

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[50] Pope, "Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 164-168.

[51] Brodribb, op. cit., p. 143.

.....
'Ah, think not, mistress! more true dulness lies
In folly's cap than wisdom's grave disguise.
Like bouys that never sink into the flood,
On learning's surface but we lie and nod.
...For thee we dim the eyes, and stuff the head
with all such reading as was never read;
For thee explain a thing till all men doubt it:
And write about it, goddess, and about it:
So spins the sil-worm small its slender store,
And labors till it clouds itself all o'er.[52]

In these lines, one sees some truth in the statement that Bentley made about Pope when he was first attacked by him - "The portentous old cub never forgives."[53]

The practice of dedicating a poem or a work to somebody of note had degenerated into a way of buying the favor or the patronage of the person to whom the poem was dedicated. Pope ridiculed this practice as an exercise of "tickling"; it was in this connection that he again assailed Bentley in his last reference to him in the Dunciad.

His honor's meaning Dulness thus express'd:-
' He wins his patron who can tickle best'
He chinks his purse, and takes his seat of state:
With ready quills the dedicators wait:
Now at his head the dexterous task commence,
And, instant, fancy feels the imputed sense:
Now gentle touches wanton o'er his face;
He struts Adonis, and affects grimace:
Roll the feather to his ear conveys;
Then his nice taste directs our operas:
Bentley, his mouth with classic flattery opes
And the puff'd orator bursts out in tropes.[54]

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[52]Pope, "The Dunciad", Bk. IV, ll. 200-254.

[53]Reed, op. cit., p. 206.

[54]Pope, "The Dunciad", Bk. II, ll. 196-206.

From these severe attacks waged on Bentley, it is easily observed that Pope's personal bitterness constantly conditioned his critical judgment of Bentley as a poet.

POPE AND LOUIS THEOBALD

Pope's "Shakespeare" appeared in the year 1725, and the following year Louis Theobald published his Shakespeare Restored, the full title of which was Shakespeare Restored or A Specimen of the Many Errors, As Well Committed, As Unamended by Mr. Pope in His Late Edition of the Poet.[55] Pope found a rigorous critic in Theobald, and his resentment expressed itself characteristically. "In 1728, Pope brought out a second edition of his own Shakespeare in which he incorporated the greater part of Theobald's best conjectures and regulations of the text."[56] In the Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot Pope said of Theobald,

> ...piddling Tibbalds:
> Each wight, who reads not, and but scans and spells,
> Each-word-catcher, that lives on syllables,
> E'en such small critics some regard may claim,
> Preserved in Milton's and Shakespeare's name.[57]

In the same year, as a carryover of Pope's indignation, he savagely avenged himself by not only ridiculing Theobald

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[55] Reed, op. cit., p. 207.

[56] Dictionary of National Biography, "The Life of Theobald", edited by Leslie Stephen, London: 1885, p. 266.

[57] Pope, "Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 164-68.

in the Bathos as a "skimming, sallow, writer, but he also made him the hero in the original Dunciad.[58] After Pope made Theobald hero in the "Dunciad" and placed him on the throne of Dulness, he gave him credit for having no original ability for writing and thereby, classified him as a plagiarist.

> All that on folly frenzy could beget,
> Fruits of dull heat, and sooterkins of wit.
> Next o'er his books his eyes began to rool,
> In pleading memory of all he stole,
> How here he sipped, how there he plunder'd smug,
> And suck'd all o'er, like an industrious bug.
> Here lay poor Fletcher's half-eat scenes, and here
> The frippery of crucified Moliere;
> There hapless Shakespeare, yet Tibbald sore,
> Wish'd he had blotted for himself before:[59]

Tibbald's last act was to fall asleep in Dulness' lap. Thus,

> But in her temple's last recess inclosed,
> On Dulness' lap th' anoint'd head repose
> Him close she curtained round with vapours blue,
> And soft besprinkle with Cimmerian dew.[60]

POPE AND JAMES MOORE SMYTHE

James Moore Smythe,[61] "the object of Pope's implacable

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[58] Reed, op. cit., p. 203.

[59] Pope, "The Dunciad", Bk. 1, ll. 125-134.

[60] Ibid., Bk. 111, ll. 1-4.

[61] James Moore is the son of Arthur Moore. His maternal grandfather, William Smythe, at his death, left his fortune to James with the direction that he should take the name Smythe for his family name. In writing about him, he is, at times referred to as Moore, and other times as Smythe. The references made of his name in this thesis will be duplicate copies from the authors quoted.

hatred,"[62] wrote a comedy called the Rival Modes. Reed states, "Smythe asked Pope's permission to use eight lines of poetry composed by him in the second act of his play. Pope gave Smythe his consent to use the eight verses of his poetry, and at the last minute, Pope withdrew his consent. Smythe used the verses anyway without even commenting on the fact that they were written by Pope. Pope became furiously angry with Smythe and often assailed him in the Daily Journals, but Smythe never did reply to any of Pope's attacks."[63] A good illustration of this is seen in the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot":

> ...May has rhymed for Moore.
> Full ten years slandered, did he once reply?[64]

Smythe was often in the company of Arbuthnot, who was also a very dear friend of Pope. Likewise was Smythe an intimate friend of the Blount family with whom Pope was also closely associated. Critics have inferred that Pope was jealous of Smythe's association with both Dr. Arbuthnot and the members of the Blount family.[65] Pope still continued to make sarcastic allusions to Smythe in the Daily Journals which showed that Pope's enmity was being nursed and stirred

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[62] Carruthers, op. cit., p. 70

[63] Reed, op. cit., p. 212

[64] Pope, "The Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot" ll. 373-374

[65] Carruthers, op. cit., p. 71

by some undisclosed affront or injury. Years afterwards, the plot against Smythe in Pope's mind was unfolded in the enlarged edition of the Dunciad. In 1729, Smythe became the 'Phantom[66] of the Dunciad', and Pope filed a charge of plagiarism against him on the basis that Smythe used the eight lines of his poetry after he, Pope, had withdrawn his permission. Pope never forgave Smythe for this act; evidence of this is seen in the following lines:

> Empty words she gave, and sounding strain,
> But senseless, lifeless; idol void, and vain
> Never was dash'd out, at one lucky hit,
> A fool, so just a copy of wit;
> So like that, critics said, and courtiers swore,
> A wit it was, and called Phantom Moore.[67]

POPE AND COLLEY CIBBER

The earliest notation of Pope making personal criticisms of Colley Cibber is seen in the Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot.

> There (thank my stars) my whole commission ends,
> The players and I are, luckily, no friends.[68]

This personal attack was meant for Cibber, and it was caused

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[66]In the "Dunciad" Moore is referred to as "Phantom Moore" which means that Moore does not represent a real person, but rather something abstract - more or less the folly of plagiary.

[67]Pope, "The Dunciad", Bk. 11, ll. 45-50.

[68]Pope, "The Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 60-61.

by a play,[69] Three Hours After Marriage, written by Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot. This play, when produced on the stage at the Drury Lane Theater, of which Colley Cibber was the manager, was considered a failure and hissed off the stage.[70] The most important result of this unfortunate play was the fact that it led to the quarrel and enmity between Pope and Cibber, that was extinguished only by Pope's death. Cibber was the dictator of the Drury Lane Theater, and he was accustomed to making suggestions regarding the alterations of plays presented at the theater. This is where the friction began. Pope, an acknowledged master of the higher forms of art, had a very low opinion of the actor's judgment, and in an interview with Cibber, Pope made this known.[71]

Carruthers quotes Cibber as stating the chief cause of Pope's lasting hostility:

> I criticized the play severely in a satirical manner, and received a huge applause from the audience. Pope became enraged at my impudence, and in the swelling of his heart, after the play was over, he came behind the scenes with pale lips and trembling voice, and asked me to account

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[69]This play is really not one of the selected works and will not be discussed at length; but it cannot be overlooked because it is in this connection that Pope's bitterest censures were made. It also resulted in his revising the Dunciad, placing Cibber on the throne of Dulness as the hero.

[70]Reed, op. cit., p. 202.

[71]Thomas Davies, Dramatic Miscellaneous. Vol. III, London: The Laureat Publishing Company, 1784, p. 67.

> for the insult; and accordingly fell upon me with all the foul language that a wit out of his senses could be capable of...When he was almost choked with the foam of his passion, I was enough recovered from my amazement to make him this reply: 'Mr. Pope, you are so particular a man. that I must be ashamed to return your language as I ought to do; but since you have attacked me in so monstrous a manner, this you may depend upon, that as long as the play continues to be acted, I will never fail to repeat the same words over and over again'. Pope found that I kept my word several days following. I am afraid that Pope decided that his pen was a sharper weapon than his tongue to trust his revenge with; and however just the cause may be for his doing so, it is, at least the only cause my conscience can be charged with.[72]

This feeling of animosity for Cibber continued throughout Pope's life and in his works for a period of thirty years. It culminated in Pope's revising the Dunciad in order to make Cibber the hero.[73]

Among the many new pieces of "critical furniture" which embellished the Dunciad in Four Books of 1743, there was an essay entitled, "Ricardus Aristarchus". Ricardus was the hero of the poem. In these lines Cibber becomes Ricardus.

> The good Scriblerus, indeed, nay, the world itself, might be imposed on, in the late spurious editions by all I can't tell what sham hero, or phantom; but it was not so easy to impose on him whom this egregious error most of all concerned: for no sooner had the fourth book laid open the high and swelling scene, but he recognized his

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[72] Carruthers, op. cit., pp. 157-58.

[73] George Saintsbury, A History Of English Criticism, London: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1911, p. 115.

> own heroic acts; and when he came to the words,
> 'soft on her lap her laureat son reclines,
> he roared like a lion and vindicated his right
> of fame:[74]

One sees here the springing of the trap to set Cibber on the throne of Dulness in the New Dunciad.

The second allusion to Cibber in the New Dunciad is comparatively unimportant. Cibber had devoted much time in defending the Licensing Act[75] of 1737, a measure which Pope had personal as well as political reasons for disliking. In Line 49[76] he voiced his disapproval, and concluded with a mock-serious regret that certain circumstances prevented him from reprinting all that the "Noble Author" Cibber had said on the subject.

In Line 97[77] of New Dunciad Cibber is referred to again, this time indirectly. In enumerating those who made up the court of Dulness, Pope included those patrons who "gave from fool to fool the laurel of crown." Carruthers states, "Fool to fool referred to Cibber and Eusden; the former was made laureate by the Duke of Grafton, and the latter by the Duke of Newcastle."[78]

For a great number of verses Pope seemed to have forgotten Cibber. Not until Line 315 does he mention him

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[75]The Licensing Act permitted poets to publish what they wrote.

[76]Pope, "The Dunciad", Bk.IV.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Carruthers, op. cit., p. 203.

again. In these lines we are told that the typical fashionable rake of the day has,

> As much estate, and principle and wit,
> As Ja-s-n, Fl--tw--d, c-bb-r, shall think fit.[79]

To the last line the following note was appended:

> Three very eminent persons, all managers of plays; who though not governors by profession, had each in his way concerned themselves in the education of youths, and regulated their wits, their morals, or their finances, at a period of their age which is most important, their entrance into the polite world.[80]

Later in the poem Pope spoke of those who rhymed for hire and patronized for pride. Those writers who sought favors came in for their share of ridicule. And when one reads the history of eighteenth century literature and sees to what extent this practice had grown, he feels that Pope was justified in his satires of it. Reed states, "Colley Cibber is a representative of this class. He was made poet laureate as a result of such a favor,"[81]

> Thou, Cibber! thou, his laurel shalt support:
> Folly, my son, has still a friend at court.
> Lift up your gates, ye princes, see him come!
> ....Light-arm'd with points, antitheses, an puns:[82]

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[79] Pope, op. cit., "The Dunciad", Bk. IV.

[80] Ibid., Bk. IV, p. 291.

[81] Reed, op. cit., p. 89.

[82] Pope, "The Dunciad", Book 1, ll. 297-302.

The last allusion to Cibber in the Dunciad comes in Line 520. Pope told us that Dulness sent to each of her various children whatever qualities they seemed to lack, as follows:

> Firm impudence, or stupefaction mild;
> And strait succeeded, leaving shame no room,
> Cibberian forehead, or Cimmerian gloom.[83]

POPE AND JOHN DRYDEN

None of the English poets excited so much of Pope's admiration as did John Dryden whose genius is akin to his own. This admiration was always expressed in affectionate terms. It began when Pope was a boy and attended the theater where he saw Dryden's plays produced and perhaps saw the poet himself. Pope told Spence, "I saw Dryden when I was twelve years old. I remembered his face well. I looked upon him even then with veneration."[84] Pope always considered Dryden a true poet and he valued Dryden's authority above that of twenty critics or commentators.

Pope's admiration for Dryden led him into a minute study of Dryden's works. A mere looking through the index of Pope's works will show how well Pope knew Dryden and how often he borrowed and copied from his works. This is a very good indication that Dryden's tastes pleased Pope.

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[83] Ibid., Bk. IV, p. 301.

[84] Spence, op. cit., p. 100.

Because of Pope's personal like for Dryden, it was hard for Pope to agree with critics who criticized any of Dryden's works - particularly, his dramas. Pope said to Spence, "Dryden is not so bad a dramatic writer as you think he is. There are many things as finely said in his plays as by anyone else's plays."[85] Thus, "All For Love" in which Dryden imitates the style of Shakespeare, but the dramatic techniques of a French tragedian, is given first place by Pope. The "Spanish Fryar" which is bright and amusing inspite of its coarseness, receives commendation by Pope. "Don Sebastian" which was written later and shows no progress in either style or dramatic theory, is the third play that Pope mentions among Dryden's best.[86] Pope, on the other hand criticizes Dryden for writing with contempt of other dramas. "The Wild Gallant", written in Dryden's youth is not thought to be a good play by Pope, but Pope thinks that Dryden was too young when he wrote the play and he dismisses its worthlessness on the grounds of the author's age.[87] In Pope's preface to Homer he praises Dryden and gives his real estimate of Dryden's translation of the "Aeneid". Pope speaks of it as "The noble and excellent translation by Mr. Dryden. It is the most noble and spirited translation in any language

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[85] Ibid., p. 101.

[86] Brodribb, op. cit., p. 35.

[87] Ibid., p. 36.

and had Dryden given a translation of the 'Iliad' I would never have been induced to attempt one."[88] In Pope's final critical estimate of Dryden, he had this to say, "Dryden's fire is like the sun's shine clearest toward its setting. Other wits that have risen since Dryden's day are but like the stars appearing when the sun is set, that twinkle only in Dryden's absence and with the rays they have gotten from him."[89] In this account of Pope and Dryden, it is apparent that Pope's critical judgment of Dryden was conditioned by his personal regards for him.

POPE AND THOMAS PARNELL

Thomas Parnell, a Scriblerus member of both genius and scholarship, wrote the Essay On Homer for Pope's translation of the Iliad, and he was frequently consulted by Pope on various difficult passages during his translation. Pope trusted both Parnell's classical knowledge and friendship.[90] Howard Williams states that, "Pope praised Parnell's Pandora and the Ecologues Upon Health in a letter to him in 1716 as two of the most beautiful things he ever read, and he would like to see Parnell's Zoilus along with his Pervigilium Venerris both which were masterpieces of their kind."[91]

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[88] Ibid., p. 37.

[89] Ibid., p. 38.

[90] Carruthers, op. cit., p. 105.

[91] Howard Williams, English Letters and Writers of the Eighteenth Century. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1789, p. 654.

Carruthers recorded Pope as saying, "The translation of Parnell's Bathrochomuoma is an excellent piece and everybody knows it. There is not one man of taste who does not approve of the whole, and I myself like it. I am more in Parnell's debt than the rest of the world because it had been done at my desire!"[92]

Out of Pope's personal friendship and regard for Parnell, Pope edited a selection of his works which were published in 1722. And in a letter to Jervas in 1718, Pope stated, "What he, Parnell, gave me to publish was but a small part what he left behind, but it was the best."[93]

POPE AND JOHN GAY

According to Carruthers "John Gay was the most congenial and best beloved of Pope's literary associates. Their friendship began in 1711, and it was cemented by Gay's appraisal of Pope's works."[94]

In discussing Gay with Spence in 1737-39, Pope complimented Gay "For being a man who spoke just what he thought, and what he spoke, he thought it."[95]

Reed states that, "Pope wrote plays in conjunction with

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[92]Carruthers, op. cit., p. 106.
[93]Pope, Correspondence, op. cit., p. 965.
[94]Carruthers, op. cit., p. 58.
[95]Spence, op. cit., p. 1723.

Gay and Arbuthnot, and Pope always found Gay to be an easy-going, indolent, person, who had a most profound respect for him. He further states that the reason that Pope made very few criticisms, if any, on Gay's works was because Gay always humbly submitted himself to Pope, and Gay too, was one of the Scriblerus wits."[96]

Pope, in commenting on the death of some of his literary friends in the Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot, expressed his happiness that Gay was yet alive.

> Blessed be the great! For those they take away,
> And those they left me; for they left me Gay;[97]

Carruthers quotes Pope in his appraisal of Gay's Beggar's Opera, and its supplement, Polly, as saying, "These works of Gay enabled him to shine in silver loops and garments blue.[98]

Carruthers also recorded Pope as saying in a letter to Swift pertinent to the death of Gay,

> Would to God, the man we have just lost had not been so amiable nor so good! But that is a wish for our own sakes, not for his. Sure, if innocence and integrity can deserve happiness, it must be his.[99]

These lines are a very good testimony as to how much Pope liked Gay.

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[96] Reed, op. cit., p. 208.

[97] Pope, "Epistle To Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 254-255.

[98] Carruthers, op. cit., p. 93.

[99] Carruthers, op. cit., 300.

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

An analytical study of the question of the extent to which Alexander Pope permitted his personal feelings to dictate the literary criteria found in his works reveals that Pope, a literary dictator of his age, was not far removed from the petty jealousies, enmities, and animosities that so often mark men of lesser literary attainment. From this study, one finds that Pope deliberately cherished and cultivated his venom against the little wit of his age. However, not only the little wits of his age shared his bitter satire, but anyone who was loud in his praises of another poet's work preferable to the work of Pope was likely to feel his wrath.

Having achieved distinction as an outstanding poet and critic of his age, and believing his judgment to be just and reasonable, Pope possibly minimized the effects of personal elements on his criticism. But the study reveals that the presence of these elements did to a great extent, affect the entire status of his criticism. Pope's natural jealousy and pettishness, his quarrelsomeness and inability to stand even unintentional attacks, his lastingly hostile attitude toward certain of his contemporaries are definite and major factors motivating his personal criticism. Pope was morbidly sensitive and personally spiteful, but, according to this study, the combination in him of wit and venom

prompted the most successful personal satires in English literature.

It is evident from this research that Pope allowed his critical judgment of his fellow-craftsmen to be conditioned by his likes or his dislikes from them. Writers whom Pope liked personally, were seldom, if ever, harshly censured by him. On the other hand, writers whom he did not like, or had spoken unfavorably about his work received severe strictures and censures. Concrete evidence of Pope's reaction to his contemporaries' poetry according to his friendship with or his hostility toward the writer is seen in Pope's relationship with Addison.

In this research, one finds Pope basically subjective in his critical judgment. He always wanted his work to surpass the works of other poets. He was never able to divert himself of that irritable degree of sensibility or vanity which made the personality of the poet unhappy and vindictive.

The study shows that Pope was never a happy man. He lived in a period of political strife, literary antagonism and intrigue. Pope's sensitivity and vanity led him into excesses of criticism of his inferior fellow-craftsmen and indeed he did say some bitter things, but when all of his references to any one poet are brought together, they will be found, with few exceptions, to characterize the writer fairly. If Pope's judgments are read in the light of one

another, in the light of the accepted principles of criticism, and with a thorough knowledge of his age, they do not seem too excessive. Being tempermentally careful in his work, especially his versification, Pope was consequently exacting in his judgment of others; and these two qualities coupled with the fact that Pope was the very epitome and perfect reflector of his age, gave him an entirely different standard from other writers of his age.

The analysis of this research leaves little doubt that the origins of the literary criticisms of individual writers of England's Augustan Age made by the great classic poet, Alexander Pope, had their beginnings, for the most part, in personal feelings. Perhaps it was pride, perhaps vanity, or perhaps even an inferiority complex which touched off the pen of Pope. Whatever the cause was, it always called for a severe tongue-lashing or an almost fulsome praise by way of pen.

Whether we agree or disagree with Pope for allowing his personal feelings to play such an important part in his role as a literary critic, we have these feelings to thank for some of the best of literary criticisms in all English literature-beautiful in style, consistent in form, and wealthy in information and quotations.

It is definitely apparent that the critical works of Alexander Pope even though motivated by his personal feel-

ings, placed him in a status of unquestionable prominence among the great critics of the world.

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