# “Between th’extremes to move”: Antithesis in Alexander Pope’s Art

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## Abstract

Alexander Pope places antithetical terms in heroic couplets, emphasizing the relationship between opposing terms and holding them in a productive tension that prevents a misuse or perversion of each term. Such tension is made possible by the framework within which an antithesis exists: Nature serves as a whole that encompasses both parts, reinforcing the proper boundaries of each term but insisting on a relationship between them. Pope's view of antithesis determined his stance on several key eighteenth century debates and was reflected in his taste in both poetry and gardening. The external antitheses he recognized and affirmed in nature were mirrored by internal antitheses in man's being, particularly his reason and imagination. Pope affirmed the proper, tempered use of each half of an antithesis, and recognized that a harmony, rather than a synthesis, is cultivated by a perpetual antithetical relationship between them. His acceptance of paradoxical truths is reflected in his affirmation of antithetical ideas. The productive coexistence of such ideas, the harmony that results, and man's inability to fully understand either through reason, all indicate the existence of mystery.

## Introduction: "Order in Variety We See":
## Pope, Antithesis, and "The World Harmoniously Confus'd"

Alexander Pope (1688-1744), while best known for his poetry, believed, as he writes to Edward, the Earl of Oxford in 1724, that "Gardening . . . is nearer God's own work than Poetry" (Sherburn II. 264) and is often considered as influential in the development of the landscape gardening movement of the early eighteenth century as he was in the cultivation of literary taste. In the latter half of his life, he tended his own garden at Twickenham, finding in it solace and inspiration for his poetry. Through letters, poetry, visits and extended stays with friends, and a steady stream of visitors through his own garden, he played an active role in designing the gardens of many of his friends and neighbors and in the dispersion of the principles of landscape gardening. Both his couplet writing and landscape gardening, while vastly different crafts, reflect Pope's understanding of antithesis and paradox and the transcendent, mysterious truths at which they hint; man's capacity to create and appreciate poetry and gardens in turn indicated to Pope antitheses within man and in his understanding of the world around him.

The structure of the heroic couplet assisted Pope as he expressed his understanding of truth: it enabled him to posit opposing ideas as harmonious relationships and to affirm the tempered application of each. Even at the most basic level, the couplet is composed of contrasting pairs and opposites that work together in relationship: two metrically identical lines, each with five iambs consisting of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented, are juxtaposed and held together by a rhyme, yet the two lines are clearly separated by the line break, and the ten syllables divided by the caesura, or the smallest pause within a couplet. For example, in *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), Pope

writes of critics who praise writers more for the category into which they fall than for the quality of their work: "Some foreign writers, some our own despise; / The Ancients only, or the Moderns prize" (394-95).[1] The caesura in each line of this couplet is clearly marked with a comma and falls exactly mid-point in the line: after five syllables. As a result, each line is neatly divided into two opposing parts: "foreign writers" are contrasted with local, and "Ancients" with "Moderns." The distinctions between terms in each line are strengthened further by the parallel distinctions in the other line. The oppositions in both lines, however, serve the same purpose: to demonstrate the arbitrary and extreme allegiances sworn by critics. Each of the four parts of this couplet contains a single category of authors that, in the context of the entire couplet, is contrasted with those who are attentive to categories but concerned with a more nuanced approach to criticism. The rhyme further serves a dual purpose, both to maintain the unity of the couplet as a whole and to differentiate the lines: "despise" is the opposite of "prize." The rhyme contributes to the contrast between the concepts, for, while the rhyme holds them in relationship, the definition of each term sets it in firm opposition to the other. Extreme reactions such as "despise" and "prize" to an entire group of authors reflect failure to consider each work as a whole, just as the fragments within the couplet, reinforced by the caesuras and the line break, stand in stark contrast to the whole.

While the caesura serves to preserve distinctions, it also serves to emphasize each idea to the extent that the author believed it necessary to do so, thereby guaranteeing not only a *sustained* relationship between ideas but also an *appropriate* relationship between them. By manipulating the placement of this pause, couplet poets can shift the emphasis

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[1] Unless otherwise indicated, quotes are taken from the Twickenham edition of Pope's works.

within a line, thus drawing a reader's attention to certain phrases or concepts more so than others. For example, in the following set of couplets from his description of summer in his *Pastorals* (1709), Pope effectively shifts the placement of the caesura in the fourth line in order to emphasize the whole of the flourishing setting:

> Where-e're you walk, cool Gales shall fan the Glade,
> Trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a Shade,
> Where'e're you tread, the blushing Flow'rs shall rise,
> And all things flourish where you turn your Eyes. (lines 73-76)

In the first three lines, Pope indicates a pause after the second foot and fourth syllable, the most typical caesura in couplet poetry, with a comma. Each pause, Piper writes of this passage, "is so sharply marked after the fourth syllable of each of the first three lines, indeed, that Pope's shifting it to the fifth syllable in the fourth line helps him assert this line's climactic force" (*Heroic Couplet* 7). Furthermore, Pope employs a feminine caesura after an unstressed syllable and breaks the pattern of the preceding lines, effectively causing his readers to "turn [their] Eyes" from the individual gales and trees to the landscape of "all things [that] flourish." A similar movement has occurred in each line, as multiple gales have combined to cool a single glade and many individual trees together have formed a deeper shade than each one individually. The movement of the caesura from the fourth syllable to the fifth in the last line, then, echoes the smaller shifts that have taken place in the second half of earlier lines. The final line, with its feminine caesura, is a culmination of these earlier shifts. The overall effect of the whole scene is emphasized over the beauty of each individual part of the garden, but the contribution of each part is not diminished. By employing the heroic couplet, Pope is able to emphasize

the distinctions between each term and at the same time place them in a cooperative relationship.

The tightly structured couplet[2] confines each set of terms within a rigid framework, encouraging opposing terms to exert tension on each other. Such tension is productive, as we will see, for it achieves a purpose outside of itself. Tension ensues when neither term is given precedence over the other and instead is held in perpetual relationship with its opposite. In *The Oxford English Dictionary,* tension is defined as "the conflict created by interplay of the constituent elements of a work of art" (def. 2d). The presence of opposing ideas in a work of art, much like the use of multiple poetic devices, causes a conflict that creates tension. For Pope, the parallelism of a couplet requires "setting up the strongest possible tensions and then balancing and confining them in the strongest way possible" (Parkin, *Poetic Workmanship* 66). Tensions underlie the structure of the couplet as well as the ideas Pope presents within his couplets, and Pope deliberately encourages tension in order to hold each term in place and maintain order, which is best achieved, he believed, through the juxtaposition of oppositions: "To establish such order in art—as well as in life or criticism—Pope attempts to mediate between or balance the potentially disintegrating opposing forces by maintaining a constant but *equal* tension between them" (Kallich 58). Even as Pope uses the breaks in his meter to emphasize one term over another, he does not give either undue prominence. Thus the tension each exerts is appropriate to its relationship to the other, and while the tension is "equal" insofar as it does not diminish either term and both terms must

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[2] In "Tension in Alexander Pope's Poetry," Rebecca Price Parkin notes that the regularity of the couplet, established through the rhythm, rhyme, and sometimes alliteration, creates anticipation and expectation in the reader, increasing tension. The form of Pope's poetry cultivated tension as did the ideas he presented through his form.

contribute to it, such tension does permit a difference in *emphasis* when it brings the two terms into proper relationship.

Antithesis is a culmination of the dual form and the parallel ideas within a couplet. Pope's use of antithesis embodies his recognition that opposing ideas can both be encompassed and affirmed within a larger whole.[3] Tension underlies productive antithetical relationships, enabling a stable coexistence of ideas. "An antithesis," Bailey writes, "should never be a simple [single entity] but should guard the individualism of its parts as they share in the proposed relationship." Because antithesis is "a productive tension of opposing forces" (439), distinctions are crucial. Antithesis emphasizes the fact that maintaining proper boundaries between terms is an essential safeguard of identity. Clear boundaries, in turn, enable the tension between terms, for an indefinite term exerts no pressure on its antithesis. Productive tension is contingent on the proper distinctions and boundaries between terms, which antithesis cultivates. Antithesis places two terms in a position that allows each to have its say—to express itself fully and exert a pull on the other.

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[3] In *The Heroic Couplet,* William Bowman Piper demonstrates how Pope emphasized the "extracouplet patterns of thought" to a greater extent as his career progressed. Pope continues to maintain the individual entity of each couplet, but, in his later works, he grows more focused on the relationships between couplets and the overarching ideas that connect them (129-30). A similar pattern seems to emerge in his gardening theory. As it developed throughout his correspondence and in his own garden at Twickenham, he grew to admire a more natural style with fewer rigid distinctions between the individual parts of a garden. He became increasingly critical of towering walls, exaggerated forms, and artificial plant shapes, all of which attracted the attention of a viewer to the individual elements rather than directing his eyes to the overarching landscape. Thus, while Pope's earlier poetry and letters may differ somewhat from his later preferences, this paper will deal primarily with his taste later in his career when his ideas were most fully developed and exercised.

By affirming antithetical ideas as simultaneously true, Pope presents paradoxes. Antithesis, Bailey writes, is for Pope "the ideal form for the display of the greatest paradox": the paradox of man's position as an individual working within a larger universe (443), a paradox reflected in man's own work, particularly his artistic capacities as poet or critic. In his article, "Formalism and History: Binarism and the Anglophone Couplet," J. Paul Hunter notes that eighteenth-century thinkers did not insist on a synthesis of antithetical terms; instead, they "seem to have been able to suspend opposing viewpoints—to keep them both in play—without choosing between them, and couplet poets . . . almost always asked them to do it" (116). If both terms are true, synthesis is not the goal, for synthesis intrinsically blurs boundaries and thus diminishes the expression of each idea individually. Failing to maintain the distinctions between terms increases the likelihood that, as the terms are synthesized, the synthesis will replace a duality with a unity or swing to an extreme and rely primarily on only one term. Because Pope recognizes the co-existence of antithetical terms and the paradoxical nature of truth, he does not choose between terms or merge them.

Pope does not affirm the use of every type of antithesis, however. In *Peri Bathous* (1727), he describes "the Art of Sinking in Poetry," an ironic inversion of Longinus's *On the Sublime.* The work parodies "the influential *Peri Hypsous,* a guide to the high style," by "converting praise of the sublime into mock-praise of the profound" (Rogers 631n). In the treatise, Pope satirically praises antithesis as a tactic employed only by those poets who strive to achieve a low style: "But for the variegation and confusion of objects, nothing is more useful than the Antithesis, or See-Saw, whereby contraries and oppositions are balanced in such a way, as to cause a reader to remain suspended between

them" (217). The problem here is the *way* in which antithesis is used. Authors who encourage "sinking in poetry" employ antithesis to create a "confusion of objects," which is not harmonious. Although superficially balanced, these antitheses are balanced in "such a way" that discourages distinctions, synthesizes ideas, and renders harmony impossible. Readers suspend judgment not because each term is placed in proper relationship with its opposition but because each term remains vague and undefined. Suspension assumes the possibility of resolution; attempts to resolve the tension between antithetical terms, however, pervert the true nature of each term. Like a seesaw in motion, the suspension such a reader extends does not achieve true harmony. Instead, the reader swings from side to side, pausing only briefly, unable to maintain a steady position because of the improper relationship between the terms themselves. "Swinging" occurs between extremes, whereas a deliberate, tempered motion maintains the relationship between two terms that are opposites but not an extreme that perverts either term. In *An Essay on Criticism,* Pope advises critics to "[a]void *extremes*, and shun the fault of such, / Who are still pleased too little or too much" (185-86). Such critics swing from "too little" to "too much," making excessive, wavering movements in order to affirm literary expressions that fail to maintain a harmonious tension. Healthy suspension sustains itself without denying the essence of either term. In the argument of the first epistle of *Essay on Man* (1733), Pope writes, "If I could flatter myself that this Essay has any merit, it is in steering between doctrines seemingly opposite" (7). The concept of "steering" implies that Pope deliberately moves between distinct terms; he remains in motion as he actively tempers extremes of doctrine. Properly posited antitheses require a firm stance in

affirmation of both sides; the middle way must be sought and maintained, for a reader will naturally tend toward a perversion of each idea.

The coexistence of productive antitheses, in Pope's view, creates harmony rather than synthesis or disunity, for each term is stabilized and tempered by its relationship to the other term. Harmony does not dissolve tension but is in fact contingent on it, a balance of discordant elements. In *An Essay on Criticism,* Pope posits many literary terms and ideas as oppositions, such as critics and poets, art and Nature, the ancients and moderns, or the rules and "nameless graces." Within contiguous couplets, as within a landscape garden, there is much "stability and movement, unity and diversity, and, to use Pope's words, order and variety" (Piper, *Heroic Couplet* 13), all of which become harmonious when viewed as a whole. Pope's description of Eden in *Windsor Forest* (1713) reflects an underlying unity that acknowledges distinctions and demonstrates tension:

> The Groves of *Eden,* vanish'd now so long,
> Live in Description, and look green in Song:
> *These,* were my Breast inspir'd with equal Flame,
> Like them in Beauty, should be like in Fame.
> Here Hills and Vales, the Woodland and the Plain,
> Here Earth and Water seem to strive again,
> Not *Chaos*-like together crush'd and bruis'd,
> But as the World, harmoniously confus'd:
> Where Order in Variety we see,
> And where, tho' all things differ, all agree. (7-16)

Pope recognizes the existence of tension in the prelapsarian world; when properly understood and expressed, then, it is not the consequence of sin and a corruption of harmony but rather a component of original creation and the source of harmony. When Pope places two antithetical terms in couplets, he places them in a relationship of productive tension of "Order and Variety" where "all things differ." Thus he emphasizes the distinctions and the "harmonious" confusion that results. Pope's conception of tension is intertwined with his understanding of unity in variety, of coexisting opposites exerting simultaneous pulls, or *concordia discors,* the "variety" he describes in Eden. Ronald Paulson equates such tension with *concordia discors* (*Emblem and Expression* 55), recognizing that tension is inescapable when opposites simultaneously thrive. Such tension is not chaotic, however, and Pope recognizes that despite distinctions, and within the framework of the garden, "all agree." In the physical universe, as in his art, Pope is attentive to the harmony that results from the proper ordering and weighing of oppositions.

Pope's vision of a "harmoniously confus'd" but chaos-free world reflects "the Augustan appeal to the traditional concept of *concordia discors*" wherein "harmony is simply a special condition of discordance" (Edwards, "Mighty Maze" 43) and also reflects a Christian understanding of harmony by affirming many seeming opposites: "Christians teach both God's judgment and His mercy, His holiness and His love, His severity and His grace . . . [Christianity] takes two opposite extremes and exalts them both" (Veith 140). Pope incorporates both traditions as he makes use of antithesis to portray harmony. The couplet which closes the above passage, "Where Order in Variety we see, / And where, tho' all things differ, all agree" (15-16), serves, according to Piper,

to demonstrate the classical idea of *concordia discors*, of "unity in diversity, of order in variety, of actual pattern in apparent chaos" (*Heroic Couplet* 145). In his article "Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony," Leo Spitzer traces the idea to the Greeks who were the first to emphasize "harmony in discord, to see the triumph of 'symphony' over the discordant voices" (415). Spitzer traces the etymology of the German word for harmony, *Stimmung*, which more fully expresses the traditional concept than does its derivatives in other languages, back to the Latin words *temperamentum* and *consonantia (concordia):* words that refer to "a harmonious state of mind" and encompass "what in ancient and medieval thought was woven together: the ideas of the 'well-tempered mixture' and of the 'harmonious consonance'" (413-14).

Pope's understanding of harmony also reflects his Catholic faith, and it is this framework of faith, rather than the author's own, that will be assumed throughout this examination of Pope's views on antithesis. [4] Empirical analysis will be valued in an

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[4] Pope leaves ample evidence of his Catholicism in his own correspondence. While the authorship of *Essay on Man* was still anonymous, Pope wrote a letter to John Caryll in October 1733 in which he discussed the anonymous author of the poem, defending him against charges of paganism. Pope insisted that tn the passage in question the author "proves him[self] quite Christian in his system, from *Man* up to *Seraphim*" (Sherburn III). He defends his own orthodoxy against accusations to the contrary. Similarly, in *An Essay on Criticism,* Pope writes that Erasmus "that *great injur'd Name*" is both "the *Glory* of Priesthood, and the *Shame*!" (693-94). Erasmus, Chester Chapin argues, influenced Pope more so than most other religious thinkers, and, despite the criticism Pope received even from his fellow Catholics for his praise of Erasmus, Pope again elevates Erasmus as "an apostle of moderation" (424) in his "First Satire of the Second Book of Horace":

> Papist or Protestant, or both between,
> Like good *Erasmus* in an honest mean
> In Moderation placing all my Glory,
> While Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory. (63-68)

In a letter to Swift, Pope explicitly aligns himself with Erasmus's religious beliefs: "Yet am I of the Religion of Erasmus, a Catholick; so I live; so I shall die" (qtd. in Chapin 424). Pope repeatedly affirmed his allegiance to the Catholic church and the Christian

especially prominent way in an effort to present Pope's position[5] rather than downplay the role divine revelation plays in human understanding. In *Orthodoxy,* G. K. Chesterton, speaking from the same Catholic foundation as Pope, describes the Christian understanding of paradox. He argues that "Christianity got over the difficulty of combining furious opposites, by keeping them both, and keeping them both furious" (Chesterton 249). Indistinct terms, or those that compromise boundaries, are "a mixture of two things" and a "dilution of two things; neither present in its full strength" (248); in contrast, the "furious" expression of one side of an antithesis is not weakened by compromise or synthesis but rather the truest and strongest representation of the term itself. Pope's view of the paradoxical nature of truth and his simultaneous affirmation of oppositions is rooted in a Christian understanding of harmony, for while "paganism declared that virtue was in a balance; Christianity declared it was in a conflict: the collision of two passions apparently opposite" (Chesterton 247). In Pope's view, the tension that results from such conflict contributes to harmony; the proper expression of each term—and its appropriate exertion of tension on the other as is true to its nature—remains more important than a balanced affirmation of both terms. For, while the terms exist in productive relationships, the context of the whole does not always permit each equal emphasis. Balance, as an inescapable element of the couplet, remains crucial in Pope's presentation of antitheses, but he seeks balance of a different nature: harmonious and attentive to distinctions rather than the merged result of synthesis. Just as the

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faith, but, at the same time—as his admiration for Erasmus, the scholar who at once firmly adhered to both Catholic and classical ideas, demonstrates—he affirmed classical ideas and saw himself writing within the framework of the classical tradition.

[5] In *The Imaginative World of Alexander Pope,* Leopold Damrosch describes Pope's "world of truth" as "empiricist, not Platonic" (291).

harmonious result achieved by Pope's use of paradox "is itself paradoxical: motion in stance" (Parkin, *Poetic Workmanship* 66), so the integration of classical and Christian ideas about harmony creates a tension: "The harmonizing of the Christian with the older pagan view is in itself a kind of *concordia discors*" (Huntley 107), for, while both traditions acknowledge harmony in discord, *concordia discors* emphasizes a delicate balance between the terms while Christianity affirms a violent, productive clash.

Pope's couplets affirm the truth expressed through antithesis. But, just as he does not affirm every type of antithesis as equally valuable, he does not find the tension between every set of antitheses equally productive: a relationship between a term at its perversion, aside from revealing the unseemliness of the perversion, is not as productive as the relationship between two healthy, tempered terms. The juxtaposition of half of an antithesis with an untempered extreme still effectively emphasizes the proper relationship between the two terms, but the relationship is neither harmonious nor affirming. If one term in an antithetical relationship is merely an extreme expression of the other and thus contrary to nature—such as the dunces and hacks in *An Essay on Man* who are contrasted with authors who remain true to their nature, or the contrast between "false Learning" and "good Sense" in *Essay on Criticism* (25)—the tension between them does not productively create harmony. When "false Learning" is juxtaposed with "good Sense," it is clearly seen as a perversion of "good Sense." Pope affirms intellectual exercise that acknowledges limitation and does not overstep its own boundaries and take on an unfitting expression—in this case "good Sense"—as he criticizes its perversion. The tension between them reveals the unharmonious relationship rather than a productive harmony.

A familiar Christian paradox illustrates this well: Christianity affirms both fasting and feasting (Veith 140), but it despises starvation and gluttony. Fasting and feasting are antithetical opposites, exerting productive tension as a result of distinct boundaries; starvation, however, is a perversion of fasting, gluttony of eating. Chesterton writes that "all sane men can see that sanity is some kind of equilibrium; that one may be mad and eat too much, or mad and eat too little" (*Orthodoxy* 247). But, even as Chesterton recognizes that extremes that misuse the proper expression of an idea must somehow be balanced, he questions the nature of such balance. It affirms the tempered expression of antithetical ideas, but views the abuse of either antithesis as sin. The enjoyment found in food, and the pleasure a Christian receives from obediently sacrificing food in order to bring glory to God, are both healthy expressions of antithetical concepts and both reflect truth, but unhealthy expressions—while closer to the term they distort than it is to its antithesis—are the true dangers.

True harmony, when enabled by productive tensions between ideas, assumes a constant pull from each side of the antithesis, for each term is well-developed, but such balance does not assume a seesaw movement. When the antithetical terms Pope discusses are clear oppositions, he places them in a relationship of productive tension: such tension prevents the distortion of each term and positions it properly in the universe. Through the couplet form of his poetry and the landscape style of his gardens, then, Pope provides a framework wherein he affirms the productive co-existence of contradictory ideas; the tension between such ideas creates a harmony that reflects Pope's view of truth, which is reflected in his taste in poetry and gardening, mirrored in man's own being, and indicative of mystery.

## Chapter One: "To Advantage Drest":

## Nature as "The Source, and End, and Test of Art"

By distinguishing the true expression of antithetical ideas from its perversions, Pope acknowledges a transcendent standard against which ideas are measured. In Epistle I of *An Essay on Man,* he argues that it is "absurd for any part" of man's body or any element in the universe "to claim / To be another in this gen'ral frame" (263-64). But immediately after upholding the boundaries of individual parts, he insists that "[a]ll are but parts of one stupendous whole, / Whose body Nature is, and God the soul" (I.267-68). For Pope, Nature, as well as the wholeness it represents, serves as the framework that undergirds antithetical relationships. In the context of Nature, antitheses are tempered as tension is exerted from each term in its proper place. Pope sees Nature as a framework that brings order out of chaos; it is the standard that determines the proper expression of each of its elements and allows antithetical truths to co-exist. But, at the same time, Nature itself must be placed in its own context in relationship to God, the creator of Nature. In "Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony," Leo Spitzer, echoing the ideas of Gregory of Nyssa in *De hominis opificio*, describes Nature as a reflection of the order and wholeness of God: "The soul informs the different organs like a musician eliciting different tones from different strings. The soul living in, and endowing with life, the whole of the body is the microcosmic analogy to the soul of God in the world; this is everywhere present as is shown by the all-binding, invisible harmony of the contrasting elements in this world" (424). God is distinct from the physical world, but as its Creator, he has endowed his creation with a unity that is reflective of who He is. Nature is the tangible expression of the beauty and order of its creator, encompassing the distinctions

between its parts in a harmonious way. It owes its integrity to God even as it provides a tangible suggestion of God's integrity. Only in its proper relationship to God is Nature capable of its greatest glories—determining and maintaining boundaries, enabling productive tensions and cultivating harmony—and serving at once as "The Source, End, and Test of Art" (*Essay on Criticism* II. 73).

## At once a "Glimmering" and "Universal" Light

Throughout Pope's poems, Nature assumes many different functions: it serves as the standard or "heaven" from which both poets and critics "derive their light" (*Essay on Criticism* 13); it plants "the seeds of judgment in [men's] minds" and "affords a glimmering light," which ensures that boundary "lines, though touched but faintly, are drawn right" (20-22), and it "to all things fix'd the limits fit" (53); it is at once a "just Standard" and "*Universal* Light" (*Essay on Man* II. 69, 71); and it is "chang'd thro' all, and yet in all the same" (I. 269). Pope's use of one word to encompass multiple functions reflects the struggle to define Nature and describe its essence, as reflected in the multiple and sometimes contradictory definitions of the term. "Nature has, of course," Arthur O. Lovejoy writes, "been the chief and the most pregnant word in the terminology of all the normative provinces of thought in the West," particularly during the eighteenth century (69). In Pope's day, conceptions of Nature were debatable not only because of its changing role in philosophical and religious explanations of man and the universe, but also because its paradoxical nature is inherently elusive to man's understanding. Pope characteristically affirms multiple functions of Nature in ways that emphasize man's limitations as well as the vastness of Nature itself. Nature's multiple functions, according to Park, serve as the basis for many of the antitheses in *An Essay on Criticism:* "The

double image of framework and inspiration, of illumination and limitation, obviously suggests the central tensions and divisions in the poem: between critic and artist, judgment and wit, taste and genius, the rules and 'a *Grace* beyond the Reach of Art'" (861). Ultimately, productive tension results from these divisions, for within the framework of Nature both are strengthened and thrive. By affirming Nature as the source of many antithetical concepts, Pope reveals the role of Nature in the cultivation of harmony. Nature as a whole provides a framework and inspiration to those who seek to imitate it; its parts illuminate the attributes of the whole, require the limitations of boundaries, and reflect man's limitations. When Nature transcends its parts and inheres in them, both God's transcendence and his immanence are evident in its paradoxical functions.

Ideally, Nature plays many roles at once, as Pope's interchanging of the definitions indicates. But when he employs the same term in multiple ways, he also recognizes Nature in its perversions and weaker expressions. The distinction between ideal Nature and incomplete and fallen Nature is the most significant in Pope's interchanging of its definitions. Basil Willey, in *The Eighteenth Century Background,* notes a bifurcation in uses of the term:

> Perhaps the safest clue through this labyrinth is to bear in mind . . . the two fundamental senses of "Nature": we may call them the "historical" and the "philosophical". In the historical sense, Nature means "things as they now are or have become", *natura naturate*; in the other sense, "things as they may become", *natura naturans*. The "nature" of anything may be conceived either as its "original" state when fresh from the hands of God

> and before it had acquired any "artificial" accretions, or as its final state, when it has attained the fullest development of which it is capable, and realized most perfectly its own inner principle. (205)

The distinction Willey draws is evident throughout Pope's works: *natura naturans,* or Nature in its perfect state, provides a "*Universal* light," while *natura naturate,* or Nature given incomplete expression in its parts, serves as a "glimmering light." But for Pope, the "original Creation" and the final perfected state of a being are one and the same, for perfection is determined by any created thing's adherence to its original state. He sees a primary distinction not between the uncorrupted "source" and the perfected "end," as does Willey, but rather between prelapsarian and postlapsarian Nature: between Nature as original creation, perfect and beyond man's comprehension, and the Nature that is imprinted on men's minds, accessible through reason, fallen and incomplete, but still a reflection of the greater Nature. In the lines already quoted in *Windsor Forest,* he draws this distinction: "The groves of Eden, vanished now so long, / Live in description, and look green in song" (7-8). The perfect garden no longer exists, but in human art—in "description" and "song"—glimpses of it live on. Later in the passage, Pope again distinguishes the original state of creation ("Here") with its present state ("There"):

> Here waving Groves a checquer'd Scene display,
> And part admit and part exclude the Day;
> ……..
> There, interspers'd in Lawns and opening Glades,
> Thin Trees arise that shun each other's Shades. (17-18, 21-22)

Unlike the ideal forest Pope described in his *Pastorals*, where trees work together to "crowd into a Shade" (74), and the groves of the original Eden, where trees work together to create a delightful mixture of sun and shade, these individual trees do not function as a whole. Rather than working together to create one shade—whether speckled or deep—each tree shuns the purpose of every other. In its fallen state, then, the parts of Nature do not achieve perfect harmony as they once did and as they will again one day.

Three of Lovejoy's definitions in particular describe Pope's usage. The first describes Pope's concept of prelapsarian Nature, the manifestation of God's characteristics: "Nature in general, i.e., the cosmical order as a whole, or a half-personified power (*natura naturans*) manifested therein, as exemplar, of which the attributes or modes of working should characterize also human art" (72). The second suggests a Nature untouched by man but within his empirical understanding: "Nature as antithetic to man and his works; the part of empirical reality which has not been transformed (or corrupted) by human art; hence, the out-of-doors, 'natural' sights and sounds" (71). A third defines the point where these two come together: "Nature as the essence or Platonic Idea of a kind, imperfectly realized in empirical reality" (71). Tension exists in each conception of Nature, although its source differs: in the first, tension is a result of the limitations placed around each element of Nature and Nature herself—for Nature, Pope writes, characteristically juxtaposing two different functions of Nature and resolving them in a grander image of order, "is but restrain'd / By the same laws which first herself ordain'd" (*Essay on Criticism* 90-91)—limitations divinely designed. In the second, tensions reflect divine design and aid each part in adhering to its original state, but these tensions still serve primarily to temper and correct perversions that resulted

since the fall. The third is contingent on the first to maintain the second. Before the fall, a harmonious tension existed between all of the elements of the garden in their perfected states; after the fall, this harmony is closest to being restored when each half of an antithesis exerts on the other a tension that works to restore its original identity.

## The "Highest Pitch of Each": Nature, Art, and Human Limitation

In the second definition above, Lovejoy conceives of Nature as antithetical to art, and at times Pope clearly opposes the two. In his theories of both gardening and literature, he entered into the Augustan debate over whether art improves Nature or Nature is best expressed before channeled into Art by man, and characteristically affirmed the proper function of both. He believed that when men create art, imitating Nature and reflecting their Creator, they interact with both perfect and imperfect forms of Nature. Bogue recognizes that Pope strives towards both in his theory of gardening:

> [I]f Pope shares with his fellow Augustan gardeners the difficulty of determining whether Nature means for him "the sum of visible phenomena not made by artifice" or the "ideal form, theoretically achievable," it might be because Pope believes, as did Renaissance theorists before him, that the ideal is knowable only through an observation of its imperfect embodiment in the real, and thus that gardeners must imitate both visible phenomena and ideal forms. (169)

As a gardener and poet, Pope sought to reflect principles he believed existed in prelapsarian Nature. Ideally, as the "source" of art, Nature furnishes the material, both tangible and intangible, from which man creates; Nature is then realized in the harmony that is the "end" of art, and the transcendent standard of Nature serves as the "test" of art.

For Nature, Pope writes in the preface to his translation of *The Iliad* (1715), bestows creative ability on "all great geniuses" and "furnishes art with all her materials . . . for art is only like a prudent steward that lives on managing the riches of nature" (n. pag.). But Pope relied on the imperfect supply of materials—physical nature for gardening and language and poetic form for poetry—furnished by a fallen earth. He recognized the limitations of "visible phenomena," and he also recognized the limitations of his own vision. While he believed that Nature serves as "the Source, End, and Test of Art," he recognized that man's limitations, and particularly the limitations of human reason, often prevent the perfect realization of Nature in art. Although in the overarching framework of things, Nature subsumes art, Nature must be kept in a productive relationship to art from man's perspective because, first, art can make the ideals in prelapsarian nature more readily accessible despite man's limited understanding, and second, the imposition of human reason can often serve as a corrective for fallen Nature. "*Unerring* Nature" is not contingent on art for its perfect existence, although man's comprehension of it is aided by art. At the same time, Pope believed that fallen Nature, in the human conception of things, must be placed in a productive antithetical relationship with art.

The relationship between Nature and art that Pope envisions gives the fullest expression possible to both. In *The Guardian* 173, he writes that "it is no wrong observation that persons of genius, and those who are most capable of art, are always fond of Nature, as such are chiefly sensible, that all art consists in the imitation and study of Nature" (355). Those who cultivate sensitivity toward Nature are best able to create good art. *The Newcastle General Magazine* published "An Epistolary Description *of the late Mr.* Pope's House *and* Gardens *at* Twickenham" in the January 1748 issue that

provides a description of Pope's achievement of this relationship in his garden: "Nothing can excel the fine Views and Scenes about this great Town: Every Thing within the Compass of Art and Nature is carried to the highest Pitch: The Hills and Lawns, Woods and Fields, are cultivated and displayed to the utmost of Skill and Industry; and such a Multitude of elegant Seats and Villas rising on all Sides, amaze a new Spectator with their various Design and Grandeur" (237). From the viewer's perspective, art and Nature work together to achieve the "highest Pitch" of each.

What sort of Nature Pope is discussing determines the interaction Nature has with art. The "ideal forms" of prelapsarian Nature must be systematized by the rules of art or the constructs of language; otherwise, they remain inaccessible to human comprehension. Such invisible forms are contingent on expression to be made visible, and thus imitate only by translating. The Nature that entails "visible phenomena," corrupted by the fall and providing only a "glimmering light," cannot be imitated in its entirety and thus requires dressing and covering as the artist observes human limitation. In the passage below from *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope describes the relationship between ideal Nature and art:

> First follow NATURE, and your Judgment frame
> By her just Standard, which is still the same:
> *Unerring Nature,* still divinely bright,
> One *clear, unchang'd,* and *Universal* Light,
> Life, Force, and Beauty, must to all impart,
> At once the *Source,* and *End,* and *Test* of *Art.* (69-74)

Life-imparting Nature creates beauty and serves as an absolute standard. Art receives its purpose and principles from the invisible Light:

> *Art* from that Fund each *just Supply* provides,
> Works *without Show,* and *without Pomp* presides:
> In some fair Body thus th' informing Soul
> With Spirits feeds, with Vigour fills the whole,
> Each Motion guides, and ev'ry Nerve sustains;
> *Itself unseen,* but in th' *Effects,* remains. (75-80)

Nature is the framework that works through art, much like God works through Nature, as "th' informing Soul," providing inspiration and sustaining the parts. But just as the prelapsarian "Groves of *Eden*" live only in "description," so intangible "*Unerring* Nature" is accessible to man only after it is given expression: it is in "*Itself unseen*" but remains in the "*Effects*"—or expression—of art.

## Reason and the Rules of Art: Nature Methodized

In order to best reflect the ideal forms of Nature, imitations must systematize it, primarily through the rules of art. In *An Essay on Criticism,* Pope writes, "The rules of old discovered, not devised, / Are Nature still, but Nature methodized" (89-90). Nature on its own is properly ordered, but the rules of Nature "methodize" such order so that it becomes clear to man's reason. Apart from rules, Nature, nebulous, immense, and transcendent, remains too detached from man's understanding to be applied in art. The parameters of a couplet juxtapose ideas that simply coexist separately in Nature, but by placing them side by side in art, man is forced to accept both at once. Likewise, the rules of art reflect the elements of order, beauty, and system that are present in Nature but have

not been expressed, again confronting the human mind with them in ways that Nature does not. Thus, through the methodical placement of ideas that exist with greater distance between them in the vastness of Nature, the rules of art confront man's reason with paradox.

From man's point of view, then, art is necessary to comprehend fundamental aspects of truth. Art exerts tension on and reveals at tension in Nature as it imposes a structure on ideas that are structured on too vast a scale for man. But Nature is still the source of art and exerts a tension as it "tests" the rule in order to determine how faithfully any set of rules reflects its source. In *An Essay on Criticism,* Pope affirms the rules of the ancients, who model the proper imitation of Nature: he urges poet and critic to "[l]earn hence for ancient rules a just esteem; / To copy Nature is to copy them" (139-40). But he finds fault with other sets of rules, for when they are misapplied, they obscure the truth from men's minds rather than elucidate it. When such application is deliberate and stems from selfish motives, Pope finds it particularly dangerous. In *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope describes a contemporary controversy between apothecaries and physicians; the physicians sought a public dispensary but the apothecaries disagreed, primarily because it would disrupt their profitable business (Rogers 581n). Pope describes the results of such motives for rule-making:

> So modern 'pothecaries, taught the art
> By doctor's bills to play the doctor's part,
> Bold in the practice of mistaken rules,
> Prescribe, apply, and call their masters fools. (108-11)

Rules of this sort contradict Nature rather than making it more evident to human understanding. "Devised" rather than "discovered," they reflect the human desire to overstep boundaries rather than "discover" them in Nature. Rules that are not made "but to promote their end" (147) coincide with Nature and further man's understanding of it. Nature paradoxically remains the standard, though. In *Epistle to Burlington* (1731)*,* Pope argues that gardeners should lay plans for gardens, using the materials furnished by Nature, and extract beauties from them, but to remember Nature as the source:

> To build, to plant, whatever you intend,
>
> To rear the Column, or the Arch to bend,
>
> To swell the Terras, or to sink the Grot;
>
> In all, let Nature never be forgot. (47-50)

The rules clarify and systemize Nature, but they do so only when Nature is remembered. In *The Figure in the Landscape,* John Dixon Hunt writes that in this passage the "human, artificial activity (built, column, arch, terrace) is controlled always by a natural agency and idiom (plant, rear, bend, swell); yet both work in conjunction to the same end" (79). Human limitation necessitates a relationship between the two. In the following passage from *An Essay on Man,* Pope conflates the two terms, emphasizing at once the relationship between them and the limitations of human perspective:

> All Nature is but Art unknown to thee;
>
> All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;
>
> All Discord, Harmony, not understood;
>
> All partial Evil, universal Good. (I.289-92)

Art makes Nature knowable to man; the rules of art, while reflective of something outside of themselves, are fully knowable by man. To God, Nature is fully known and to its Creator appears systematic and regulated. He sees the order, beauty, and method in Nature that man sees best in art. Thus Nature appears as art to God, as harmony in apparent discord, although such order often is invisible to man.

## The Landscape Garden as Art and Nature

In his *Epistle To Burlington,* Pope praises the landscape garden of his friend, the Earl of Burlington, for it presents an ideal relationship between art and Nature. The inherent features of a landscape garden enable it to reflect this relationship more explicitly than other art forms. Bogue writes that "the garden has advantage over other art forms of imitating Nature in both form and matter. It is at once an imitation of Nature and Nature itself" (171), and Brewer describes the garden as a piece of a larger Nature and as a representation of it (621). Both functions require man's involvement to some extent—both to set apart a piece of Nature, much like a couplet sets apart and juxtaposes opposing ideas, and to create the representation wherein the orderly principles of Nature are displayed. Pope instructs the gardener at Burlington to uphold the or character of the existing landscape in order to best channel Nature into art:

> He gains all points, who pleasingly confounds,
> Surprizes, varies, and conceals the Bounds.
> Consult the Genius of the Place in all;
> That tells the Waters to rise or fall,
> Or helps the ambitious Hill the heav'n to scale,
> Or scoops in circling theatres the Vale,

> Calls in the Country, catches opening glades,
> Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
> Now breaks or now directs, th' intending Lines;
> Plants as you plant, and, as you work, designs. (55-64)

"Consult[ing] the Genius of the Place," Ronald Paulson writes, "involves first a knowledge of the capabilities of the terrain, that is, its climate as well as its soil, from which its beauty and utility can be drawn out by the skillful gardener" (*Breaking and Remaking* 49). Nature, or the existing landscape itself, should guide a gardener in determining features that are fitting for a garden. As the gardener works to implement the principles he perceives in the landscape, Nature exerts itself back on his artistry: it "plants as [he] plant[s], and, as [he] work[s], designs," creating, according to Paulson, a reciprocal relationship (50). The artificial ruin at the entrance to the grotto in Pope's garden at Twickenham, which Oswald Spengler considers "the most astonishing bizarrerie ever perpetrated" (qtd. in Brownell 144), demonstrates the simultaneous pulls of art and Nature. In a letter to Ralph Allen in 1741, Pope writes that he has finished his grotto and that "now all that wants to the Completion of my Garden is the Frontispiece to it, of your rude Stones to build a sort of ruinous Arch at the Entry into it on the Garden side" (Sherburn IV. 343). Pope's gardener John Serle, who wrote "A Plan of Mr. Pope's Garden: As It Was Left at His Death: With a Plan and Perspective View of the Grotto" in 1745, described the artificial ruin: "At the Entrance of the Grotto, next the Garden, are various sorts of Stones thrown promiscuously together, in imitation of an old Ruine; some full of Holes, others like Honey-combs, which came from Ralph Allen's, Esq; at Widcomb near Bath" (qtd. in Brownell 144). Pope deliberately created a ruin and placed

it at the entrance of one of the places dearest to him in his garden. Regardless of the political implications of ruins found in landscape gardens at the time, Pope's inclusion of an ancient ruin[6] reflects the simultaneous tension exerted by art and Nature. Man first built the structure and created art from Nature; Nature, over time, has imposed itself back onto art: man has altered Nature and Nature in turn has altered the workings of man, so that what is left is worth emulating.

A gardener who follows the "Genius of the Place" and maintains the proper relationship between art and Nature will "[call] in the country" and catch "opening glades." One of the most significant developments of the landscape garden, the ha-ha, or "sunk fence or fosse" (Brownell 163), served to effectively "call in the country" surrounding the garden. The anonymous 1748 visitor to Twickenham described the appearance of the ha-ha in "Gardens, whose bounds are of an irregular Form, not encompassed with Walls, but Hedges" (238). By removing the walls common in earlier English gardens, landscape gardeners suggest that a visitor's experience of beauty in a garden is not complete without a view of the surrounding landscape, which visibly situates the garden in the larger framework of Nature. In the late eighteenth century, Horace Walpole, in his *On Modern Gardening,* described the ha-ha as the "capital stroke" of the landscape garden (qtd. Brownell 211) because, Brownell continues, "while

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[6] In *Alexander Pope: The Poet and The Landscape,* Mavis Batey describes the satirical nature of many features of landscape gardens, for the statues of ancient artists and politicians maintained a "pristine condition," whereas the "Temple of Modern Virtue" lay in ruins (107). Ruins often reflected the belief in the superiority of ancient ways of thinking over modern, but Pope's use of the ruin better reflects his position on the relationship between Nature and art, as he otherwise tends to side with the ancients in matters of taste. Stephanie Ross expands on the political implications of the ruins in landscape gardens in "Ut Hortus Poesis—Gardening and Her Sister Arts in Eighteenth-Century England" in the *British Journal of Aesthetics* 25.1 (Winter 1985): 18-19.

permitting the boundaries of a garden to be concealed at the same time as they were preserved, the 'ha-ha' let into the garden the various views of surrounding countryside" (211). In Pope's garden, boundaries are preserved as the parts of art and the whole of Nature are fused into one landscape. The parameters of the garden are maintained even as hedges hide the ditch that separates the garden from the surrounding scene of Nature. The relationship of the untouched countryside to the artistry of the garden provides the viewer with a greater appreciation for both, for "to call in the country, to conceal the boundaries of a garden," Hunt writes, "allows the mind even further territory" (*Figure* 80). The physical juxtaposition of art and Nature enabled a productive tension between them—allowing them to "relate freely"—in the broadened perspective of the viewer: "Walls could impose rigid constraints upon the entire garden layout by isolating the pictorial interplay of features within the garden and not allowing them to relate freely with the landscape outside" (Brownell 212).

Aside from Burlington's gardens at Chiswick and his own at Twickenham, Pope was influenced by and had fond affection for several other early landscape gardens, particularly William Lord Digby's estate at Sherborne and the influences of William Kent, painter, architect, and protégé of Lord Burlington, on Lord Cobham's Elysian Fields at Stowe. The ha-ha in its developing form was a key feature in both of these gardens. Early in the formation of his gardening taste, Pope wrote to Martha Blount as he enjoyed a visit at Sherborne. The beauty of the gardens, he writes, "rises from [their] Irregularity, for not only the Several parts of the Garden itself make the better Contraste by these sudden Rises, Falls, and Turns of ground; but the Views about it are lett in, & hang over the Walls, in very different figures and aspects" (II. 237). He continues, first

emphasizing the immediate view that "hangs over the walls" and then the distant view of the town and the broader landscape: "You come first out of the house into a green Walk of Standard Lymes with a hedge behind them that makes a Colonnade, thence into a little triangular wilderness, from whose Centre you see the town of Sherborne in a valley, interspersd with trees" (237). By drawing a distinction between the tidy walks of a garden and the small "wildernesses," Pope notes the contrast between the "artificial" and "natural" elements of a garden, but insists that the landscape garden accommodates both. In the *Epistle to Burlington,* after describing the joint effort required from Nature and artist in the creation of a garden, Pope continues, "Nature shall join you, Time shall make it grow / A work to wonder at—perhaps a STOW" (69-70). According to F. W. Bateson in the Twickenham edition of the text, Pope visited Stowe just before writing the *Epistle to Burlington.* In August of 1731, Pope wrote to John Knight that "if any thing under Paradise could set me beyond all Earthly Cogitations; Stowe might do it" (III. 217). The ha-ha was such a prominent feature at Stowe that, according to Batey, "Walpole called Kent's ha-ha, which followed the contours and united the garden and the countryside unobstrusively, a Kent-fence" (122). Kent was involved in the designing of Pope's shell temple, and Pope once wrote of "the affection I bear him, and the respect I pay his genius" (Sherburn IV. 44). Horace Walpole describes Kent's influence on the landscape gardening movement as a whole: "At that moment appeared Kent, painter enough to taste the charms of landscape, bold and opinionative enough to dare to dictate, and born with a genius to strike out a great system from the twilight of imperfect essays. He leaped the fence, and saw that all nature was a garden" (qtd. in Batey 98). The ha-ha served to

"conceal the bounds" and maintain the proper relationship between art and Nature, both central aims of Pope's landscape garden.

Because the main garden at Twickenham sat almost entirely on flat land when Pope first acquired the property, "there were really no commanding views of surrounding countryside from the garden" (Martin 49). The usefulness of a ha-ha, and the visual leaping of a fence to discover all of nature a garden, was contingent on a variety of elevations within a garden. Thus Pope went to work to create such variety, imposing manmade art on Nature in order to turn the minds of those who visited his garden more fully back on Nature itself. In 1720, he constructed a large mount at the eastern end of the Great Walk, and he later added two smaller mounts where the Great Walk entered the Bowling Green on the west side. A visitor to Twickenham in 1742 described the mounts: "'A hillock on the right side' surprised one 'with an opening [prospect] to Richmond and a place or 2 more'" (qtd. in Martin 49). Although the large mount stood conspicuously above the land around it, its appearance was still far more "natural" than "artificial," as the writer of the letter in *The Newcastle General Magazine* describes: "Among the hillocks . . . rises a Mount much higher than the rest, and is composed of more rude and indigested Materials; it is covered with Bushes and Trees of a wilder Growth, and more confused Order, rising as it were out of Clefts of Rocks, and Heaps of rugged and mossy Stones" (241). In addition to allowing the distant countryside into the landscape of the garden, the mounts, Martin notes, also enabled a more comprehensive view of the garden itself. They permitted a viewer to see the whole and thus comprehend the placement of the parts in relationship.

Pope arranged his gardens so that from an elevated viewpoint a visitor's eyes followed a progression from the middle of the garden outward with a lovely intermixing of art and Nature throughout. According to the 1748 Newcastle visitor,

> The sides of the Court, or Parterre, are bounded by deep Thickets of Trees, Hedges, and various Evergreens and Shrubs, ascending into a wild, but delightful Slope, beginning with these of the humblest Growth, and gradually rising, ending with lofty Elms and other Forest Trees. . . . The Middle of the Garden approaches nearest to a Lawn or open Green, but is delightfully diversified with Banks and Hillocks; which are entirely cover'd with Thickets of Lawrel, Bay, Holly, and many other Evergreens and Shrubs, rising one above another in beautiful Slopes and Intermixtures, where Nature freely lays forth the branches, and disports uncontroul'd; except what may be entirely prun'd away for more Decency and Convenience to the surrounding Grass-plots. (238, 40-41)

As the slopes progress away from the bowling green and toward the outskirts of the garden, the plants and trees grow thicker, working in conjunction with the ha-ha to set the garden apart from the landscape in a natural way. The anonymous visitor continues, "Near the Bounds of the Garden, the Trees unite themselves more closely together, and cover the Hedges with a thick Shade, which prevents all prying from without, and preserves the Privacy of the interior parts" (240). The garden remains a private place but the outside landscape is still visible to the viewer.

Pope did not believe that a panoramic view of the entire landscape should present itself undisturbed to a garden visitor, however. With nothing in the foreground to disrupt

the viewer's perspective, even when Nature might dictate otherwise, art is imposed too thoroughly on Nature. If what is in the foreground is over-systematized, then its capacity to reflect the larger nature in the background diminishes. At times, systemizing beauties in Nature diminish their true identity; in such cases, Pope insists, following Nature requires that the rules be transgressed:

> In prospects thus, some objects please our eyes,
> Which out of nature's common order rise,
> The shapeless rock, or hanging precipice.
> But though the Ancients thus their rules invade,
> (As kings dispense with laws themselves have made)
> Moderns, beware! Or if you must offend
> Against the precept, ne'er transgress its end;
> Let it be seldom, and compelled by need;
> And have, at least, their precedent to plead. (*Epistle to Burlington* 158-66)

Here Pope warns against "transgressing a precept's end," which is to reflect Nature, but imposing the rules too firmly denies Nature its truest expression. The same is true in poetry:

> Some beauties yet no precepts can declare,
> For there's a happiness as well as care.
> Music resembles poetry, in each
> Are nameless graces which no methods teach,
> And which a master-hand along can reach. (*An Essay on Criticism* 141-45)

"Nameless graces" cannot be captured without diminishing their purpose—hence their "namelessness"—but art can hint at them by breaking the rules or interrupting the landscape. Only within the stable framework of a couplet or a garden does a transgression of the rules cultivate rather than detract from beauty. In the passage above, Pope uses a triplet, breaking a pattern of couplets, to describe the nameless graces that "no methods teach." The rules of a poem, like the elements of a garden, systemize what is inside to reflect the greater nature that is outside, but rule-breaking is sometimes necessary, dictated by Nature herself.

## Art and the Revealing and Concealing of Nature

The features inside a garden serve to reflect and systematize what is outside, the whole landscape of which the garden is a part, just as a piece of art indicates an order and beauty beyond itself. Since the fall, the intangible elements of Nature—the transcendent principles that are not given expression in the material world—require systematizing before they are accessible to man; once given expression, the tangible aspects, as well as those that already exist materially, require covering, for man can no longer perceive the whole truth without overstepping his position as man and diminishing the very truth he seeks to understand. Since, as Pope recognizes, "'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole" (*Essay on Man* I.60), dressing fallen pieces of Nature reflects an acceptance of man's limitations and at the same time better reflects the transcendent whole than does man's limited glimpse of undressed Nature. Thus, while Nature in this sense is visible, it is visible only in part. In *An Essay on Criticism,* Pope reiterates the idea that "dressing" and "gilding" fallen Nature is a necessary function of artistic expression:

> But true expression, like th' unchanging sun,
> Clears, and improves whate'ver it shines upon,
> It gilds all objects but alters none.
> Expression is the dress of thought, and still
> Appears more decent, as more suitable;
> A vile conceit in pompous words expressed,
> Is like a clown in regal purple dressed. (315-21)

Art is to be reflective of Nature in its *full* state, which man's mind cannot encompass. Thus art both "clears" and "improves" the parts of Nature that are readily graspable to man's faculties and reflects the order of the entire framework of Nature, which cannot be immediately apparent to man. Artistic expression must "dress" thought in such a way that reflects an unchanging standard. "True expression" is considered "true" because of its connection to Nature. Bogue writes, "Expression improves by clarifying, but making things more what they are" (174). The relationship between art and Nature creates a tension, in part because of man's inability to comprehend all of transcendent Nature, and such tension productively "gilds all objects but alters none." The beauty becomes more evident to man's perspective but Nature remains unchanged.

Since the Fall, Nature requires dressing, but such clothing must further accentuate the beauty of "glimmering" Nature, as the rules do "*Unerring*" Nature, while revealing only in part:

> Poets like painters, thus, unskill'd to trace
> The *naked Nature* and the *living Grace,*

> With *Gold* and *Jewels* cover ev'ry Part,
> And hide with *Ornaments* their *Want of Art.*
> *True Wit* is *Nature* to advantage drest,
> What oft was *Thought* but ne'er so well *Exprest.* (*Essay on Criticism* 293-98)

"*Naked Nature,*" as it exists materially, does not need systematizing to be seen but rather modesty to be appropriately covered. When held within the confines of art, Nature "appears more decent" and "more suitable," just as antithesis, as Pope posits it in his couplets and hints in his gardening principles, is especially suited for containing the paradoxical truths of Nature. Art should not hide Nature with ornaments and excessive jewelry, or leave it entirely uncovered and inaccessible to human reason, but it should dress Nature to advantage, making it readily recognizable in men's minds. Pope continues,

> *Something,* whose Truth convin'd at Sight we find,
> That gives us back the Image of our Mind:
> As Shades more sweetly recommend the Light,
> So modest Plainness sets off sprightly Wit:
> For *Works* may have more *Wit* than does 'em good,
> As *Bodies* perish through Excess of *Blood.* (*Essay on Criticism* 299-304)

Art that appropriately dresses Nature "gives . . . back the Image" that already exists in man's mind. Pope's description places emphasis on the visible, tangible image of Nature, which does not need to be ordered by principles that appeal to man's reason. This image exists in man's mind before it is given expression or translated into a rational system.

Although it is, since the fall, fallen and imperfect, this image still provides man with aspects of truth outside the realm of reason. It hearkens back to the mysterious elements of truth that the mind cannot encompass, yet it must work in conjunction with reason, as the "nameless graces" become visible only in the context of rules.

While Pope draws a crucial distinction between reason and sight—between "What oft was *Thought*" and the "Image of our Mind"—he insists on keeping them in relationship. Systematized expression reflects back on an image that has not been expressed and serves to "more sweetly recommend" it; Nature is dressed to advantage through both intangible rules and tangible art, each reflecting a faculty of man, unique to his position in the universe, but fallen. In the passage in *Epistle To Burlington* where Pope describes the capacity of the Genius of the Place, he makes "the making of a garden and a poem . . . analogous acts" (*Emblem*, Paulson 49). The poet's medium, language, primarily exercises the rational faculty while the gardener's medium, the physical earth, primarily exercises man's image-making faculty, but "both involve the human inability to create out of a whole cloth, by means of either mathematical ratios or the unaided imagination" (Paulson 50). The intertwining of the functions reflects the inability of either to conceive of the whole of truth. Thus art that receives its "Fund" from Nature reflects back on and gives expression to the image of Nature that inheres in man, hinting imperfectly at the Creator. To dress such truths is to recognize man's limitations and ability to see only in part while simultaneously regaining the image hidden in his mind.

Creation in its perfection was understandable and expressible by prelapsarian man, but, because of the limitations of man's station, still only in part. Man walked with God and saw what God declared good—he saw the proper relationships between created

beings, peaceful relationships between greater and lesser creatures, a perfect relationship between man and wife—but understood only in part. His interaction with Nature—especially evident when he named the lesser creatures—perfectly reflected his position; he expressed what he saw in language without misusing such language or overstepping his own boundaries. After the Fall, man experienced good and evil. E. M. W. Tillyard describes the perfection man once knew as "at once that of the Platonic Good and the Garden of Eden, while Adam's fall from it is also the measure of the distance separating created things from their Platonic archetypes" (22). If opposites and clear boundaries existed before the fall and are good, perversions and blurred boundaries are evil and mark the distance between man's fallen state and the ideal. After the fall, perhaps, man experienced not only a productive tension between antitheses but knew also the tension that results between half of an antithesis and its perversion. Enmity and bitterness between beasts and brothers, conflict between man and woman, and strife in man's being replaced productive tensions that existed before the fall without the tendency toward perversions. After the fall, man's attempt to cover himself served only to further reveal his sinfulness. While man's purpose for clothing himself was to cover his shame, this clothing can perhaps be considered the first instance, although inadvertent, of human artistic expression, an attempt to cover his own nature, to impose manmade artifice on God's creation. Man could not, on his own, properly dress his fallen nature while denying it. God, working through the transcendent principles of Nature, determined the proper covering for man's sins and made provision for his fallenness as He dressed them himself, and now, in his art, man best observes his limitations when he traces such principles rather than attempts to dress Nature on his own. Man is susceptible to

perversions in his art and must constantly fight them by placing them in relationship with Nature.

Since the fall, Nature is not accessible to man as it once was, just as after the fall man can no longer communicate directly with God apart from Christ. God's clothing of man is a metaphor for the way Christ's blood covers man; it is necessitated by man's limitations and his sinfulness. Postlapsarian man can no longer comprehend truth fully, nor communicate directly with God, the perfect source of order and beauty, nor see the perfection of the original garden. Paul J. Griffiths describes man's current state: "[O]ur desires have been removed from their proper arrangement, their properly harmonious response to the fact that we are *created* beings. After the Fall, we suffer from derangement" (n. pag.). Harmony is disrupted because man, in his pride, overstepped his position in the universe, desiring knowledge not becoming to him. Griffiths continues to describe postlapsarian man, suggesting two "apparently opposed meanings" of derangement, both of which clarify Pope's view of the relationship between art and Nature:

> [Derangement] has its standard sense of removing arrangement, order, and beauty. But we might also use the word to mean an enclosing, a restricting—a limiting of what is properly a larger range. . . . Derangements in the direction of openness—as when our desires are set free to wander in an open range without limits—necessarily cause a second derangement, this time in the direction of discipline and enclosure. (n. pag.)

Thus, just as man's body must be covered as a reflection of his sin and inability to stand naked before God of his own accord, so his artistic creations—the expressions of his fallen mind and body—can reveal only in part and must "clothe" or "enclose" Nature in order to best reflect it. "Dressing" keeps hidden what is beyond man and unfitting to his position in the universe. Such clothing of Nature through art takes the limitations of both artist and viewer into account. When men try to see or imitate Nature that is beyond their reach—beyond the imprint left on their fallen minds—they inevitably create a perversion of it, for men best comprehend the original form of Nature only when seeing in part. Because of man's fallen state, then, art comes closest to the *truest* expression of Nature by dressing Nature. Man's artistic expressions, as imitations of the work of the Creator, must be limited in the same way that man must be covered. The antithetical relationship between art and Nature, then, was necessitated by sin and the limitations of man's perspective, as was clothing.

In gardening, as in art, Pope recognizes, the key to the proper dressing of Nature is to create an "artful wildness" without revealing too much or hiding Nature entirely. Timon's Villa, which Pope contrasts with Stowe, lacks this ideal in gardening: "No pleasing Intricacies intervene, / No artful wildness to perplex the scene" (*Burlington* 121-22). Pope strives for an "artful wildness" in his work—a reflection of Nature that takes into account man's limited understanding and need for art. In addition to concealing the bounds, a gardener should, Pope reminds Burlington as he praises him, "pleasingly confound" through surprise and variety (56). In a conversation with Joseph Spence, recorded by Spence in *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters, of Books and Men*, Pope explains these principles: "All the rules of gardening are reducible to three heads:

the contrasts, the management of surprises, and the concealment of the bounds. 'Pray, what is it you mean by the contrasts?'—'The disposition of lights and shades.' . . . 'Should not variety be one of the rules?'—'Certainly, one of the chief; but that is included mostly in the contrasts. I have expressed them all, in two verses; (after my manner, in very little compass)" (299). Distinctions between parts, which cultivate contrasts, remain important, and Pope sees contrasts—the juxtaposition of opposites—as encompassing and cultivating variety. The co-existence of antitheses informs his gardening theory in much the same way as his poetry does, for he sees that true variety appreciates oppositions. Still, boundaries are not overemphasized to an extent where they seem artificial and each part elaborately dressed, so starkly drawn that they detract from the whole. The landscape, even with the "concealment of bounds," provides a framework that permits surprises, such as a "shapeless rock" or "hanging precipice." Viewers' eyes are startled by something "pleasingly confounding" that differs from the rest of the garden in a noticeable—yet not overly ornamental—way.

The proper dressing of Nature requires a right relationship of the whole to the individual parts within a garden, and the parts should, much like the rules of art, reveal truths about the larger framework without imposing on it. The relationship of parts to whole within a garden reflects the relationship of the work itself to the larger whole and is indicative of transcendent truths beyond both the created work and its creator. From man's perspective, such truths are most evident when appropriately broken into parts and dressed. Such truths appear to man as a maze. In Epistle I of *An Essay on Man,* Pope likens all of the world to a garden, "A mighty maze! but not without a plan" (6). Landscape gardens create a maze-like experience for viewers as they move through the

garden. Paulson describes this maze-like effect as a primary distinction between formal gardens and the natural landscape garden at Stowe:

> The geometrical French garden was meant to be seen from the house or from a raised terrace on the garden's axis; it was an extension of the house first as a view from it, then as a continuation of its coherent architectural structure, ordered like a periodic sentence with all its members subordinated to one end. The natural garden is more intimate and paratactic—one scene follows another, apparently unsubordinated but in fact clever juxtapositions. In this sort of structure, perhaps ultimately in extrapolation of the maze (a microcosm of the world as "mighty maze! but not without a plan"), the visitor lacks a sense of the whole and does not know exactly where he is in the total structure until he has reached the end. The general feeling of *going down into,* of *being in* and *moving through.* You do not know what is over the hill or around the bend until you see it.. . . (*Emblem* 22).

A landscape garden consisted of a progression of scenes as a viewer made his way down the garden path. The juxtaposition of many smaller scenes within a garden, each one becoming visible only as a viewer leaves the previous scene, creates a maze-like progression through the garden, cultivating surprises. In a letter to Daniel Dering in 1724, Lord Perceval describes Cobham's garden:

> The gardens by good contrivance of the walks, seem to be three times as large as they are. They contain but 28 acres, yet took us up to two hours. . . . You think 20 times you have no more to see and of a sudden find

> yourself in some new garden or walk, as finis'd and adorn'd as that you left. Nothing is more irregular in the whole, nothing more regular in the parts, which totally differ the one from the other. . . . What adds to the bewty of this garden is, that it is not bounded by walls, but by a Ha-hah, which leaves you the sight of a bewtiful woody country, and makes you ignorant how far the high planted walks extend. (qtd. in Brownell 197)

The individual parts of a garden are like the rules of art: they are fully systematized, for "nothing is more regular in the parts," and comprehensible to man. Yet, at the same time, "nothing is more irregular in the whole." The whole appears irregular both because man's mind cannot comprehend the full orderliness of the Creator who sees all of Nature as art, and because the parts, by maintaining their distinctions, contribute to the whole in a way that is not fully evident to garden visitors as they wind through maze-like paths.

Martin's description of Pope's "Great Walk" depicts the garden path as a "controlling element" amidst scenes of variety, serving, in much the same way as the framework of a poem, to unite the elements of the garden while cultivating appreciation for their distinctness:

> The walk provided the central east-west axis in the garden, logically one of the first priorities in the layout since it established the dominating axial symmetry that such a long and narrow garden needed as a controlling element. . . . What the Great Walk achieved was a dominant line along which or from which sections of the garden unfolded with startling variety. With the groves on both sides of the walk, and at either end of it, Pope emphasized the irregular and pictorial. (48)

A garden juxtaposes images that reflect a larger Nature in much the same way that Pope's heroic couplets juxtapose systemized truths reflective of Nature. Paulson compares the individual scenes of a garden to individual couplets within a poem: "The garden scene, like the Popean couplet, is formally closed but open as a generator of allusions and as a participant in not always rational relationships with adjacent scenes (couplets)" (*Emblem* 21). If a gardener has faithfully followed the "Genius of the Place," the succession of views transcends man's reason. Although both poet and gardener must achieve a proper relationship between whole and parts in order to best reflect Nature in art, their medium requires them to do so in slightly different ways, as Paulson notes: "While the couplet is a form that contains, or creates a tension with, the irrational materials it describes, the garden scene in its context embodies an imbalance in favour of the accidental and irrational. Whereas the closed couplet was Pope's norm, the relatively unstructured larger natural expanse is the norm of each garden scene" (21). But, Martin continues, "the axis itself was broken—by groups of trees, a bowling green, a large mount perhaps for watching bowls, two lesser mounts, and urns and statues—into sections that followed each other in quick succession. As Horace Walpole put it, variety was added by 'the retiring and again assembling shades'" (48). The garden path provides unity in diversity, and allows, as Pope writes in his *Epistle to Burlington*, "parts answering parts" to "slide into the whole" (66), but it is not contained at once in the viewer's mind any more than the entire landscape is; it serves, as the garden itself does, to indicate something greater, more orderly and with greater variety, than itself. Walpole depicts Kent as a master at creating such interruptions: "Groups of trees broke too uniform of extensive a lawn, evergreens and woods were opposed to the glare of the champain [battlefield or open

plain], and where the view was less fortunate, or so much exposed as to be beheld at once, he blotted out some parts by thick shades, to divide it into variety, or to make the richest scene more enchanting by reserving it to a farther advance of the spectator's step" (qtd. in Batey 98). Each surprise, which informs the mind of something new, further reveals the limitations of the mind and how much is still unknown. A landscape garden, then, constantly turns the visitor's mind back to the whole of Nature even as it takes human limitation seriously. As the garden path winds through the garden, it permits a reader to see the same scene from several directions, encouraging multiple perspectives of the same view. These varying perspectives permit man to best approach an understanding of the whole. Even from elevated positions in the garden, the scene is disrupted by Nature's own transgressions, reminding viewers of their inability to comprehend the whole.

While Nature should "never be forgot" as its individual parts are given expression, it should be dressed as a "modest fair," its parts decently hidden in order to cultivate the mysteriousness of Nature as a whole. The improper dressing of Nature reflects either a denial of its unity or variety: "The extremes of nakedness and ostentation in landscape design correspond to two possible distortions of Nature's order, one through exaggeration of Nature's unity, the other through exaggeration of its variety" (173). As Pope writes, "Tis one thing to be tricked up, and another not to be dress'd at all. Simplicity is the Mean between Ostentation and Rusticity" ("Introduction" to *The Iliad*). When neither overdressed nor bare, Nature is most fully expressed and best understood in a garden. "The dress metaphor," Bogue writes, "apparently offers three possible forms in which Nature can be imitated: naked, elaborately ornamented, or modestly attired" (173).

Naked Nature is untouched by human hands; it remains a transcendent whole and does not permeate human artistic endeavors. Elaborately ornamented Nature, in contrast, emphasizes the parts to an extent that "nothing's just or fit"; such parts are held in improper tensions which do not reflect proper relationships or boundaries between them. A few parts—those the artist most fully understands and feels most comfortable portraying—are emphasized at the expense of the whole. Each one is exaggerated, oversteps its place in the whole, and thus detracts from Nature. Such ornamentation of individual parts magnifies each, depicting it so largely that nothing mysterious about that single element remains. Elaborately ornamented Nature is dressed to an extent that it becomes unrecognizable in a chaos of parts. Modestly attired Nature, however, keeps parts in the proper relationship to the whole, clarifying Nature in such a way that it "gives us back the Image of our Mind."

For example, Homer achieves an "artful wildness" in *The Iliad,* as Pope describes in the preface to his translation: "As in the most regular Gardens, Art can only reduce the beauties of Nature to more regularity, and such a Figure as the common Eye may better take in . . . [Homer's] Work is a wild Paradise, where if we cannot see all the Beauties so distinctly as in an order'd Garden, it is only because the Number of them is infinitely greater" (n. pag.). Homer is perhaps more able to "conceal the bounds" and reveal beauties as less distinct yet "infinitely greater" than many other poets. He provides an example of Pope's rules of gardening on an exaggerated scale, which makes them more understandable. In Homer's work, many parts, creating much harmonious tension, are presented to an extent where the view of the whole diminishes the distinctions of the parts—although they are still there, ensuring variety. Because "we cannot see all the

Beauties so distinctly," the beauty of the whole subsumes them all. In *An Essay on Criticism,* Pope writes that in Nature

> . . . what affects our Hearts
> Is not th' Exactness of peculiar Parts;
> 'Tis not a *Lip,* or *Eye,* we Beauty call,
> But the joint Force and full *Result* of *all.*
> Thus when we view some well-proportion'd Dome,
> (The *World's* just Wonder, and ev'n *thine* O *Rome*!) (243-48)

When each part is "well-proportion'd" and exerting a "joint Force" in relationship to every other, it is most fully expressed and the greatest harmony results, and, paradoxically, the parts become less distinct within the whole. Homer cultivates such wholeness through the "artful wildness" of his works and the end result is "at once . . . *Bold,* and *Regular*":

> No single Parts unequally surprize;
> All comes *united* to th'admiring Eyes;
> No monstrous Height, or Breadth, or Length appear;
> The *Whole* at once is *Bold,* and *Regular.* (249-52)

With a proper relationship of parts to whole, Homer's works, Pope argues, were "modestly attired."

In *The Epistle to Burlington,* Pope contrasts Timon's Villa to Stowe, for Timon does not maintain the proper relationship between art and Nature or the parts and the whole in his garden, unlike the garden at Stowe. Like the formal French gardens of Pope's day, Timon's garden was separated from the surrounding landscape with high

walls: “His Gardens next your admiration call, / On ev’ry side you look, behold the Wall!” (114-15). Inside the garden, art is imposed on Nature in much the same way: “Grove nods at grove, each Alley has a brother, / And half the platform just reflects the other” (118-19). Symmetry is not reflective of the “Genius of the Place” but instead is fully accommodated by human reason. According to Bogue, “The French formal garden is eminently ordered, but it is that of man’s limited mind, of a Nature reduced to the level of human weakness” (172). Pope’s poetry, despite its formal couplets, corresponds more fully with those gardeners who “follow Nature,” for he does the same thing with slight-rhymes as gardeners do with the ideas already present in Nature: he insists that perfect parallelism is not necessary but rather an antithetical framework that holds the two in relationship. The two in coexistence, like the variety in a garden, affirms transcendent truths beyond man. Man’s response to art should recognize that man’s proper field is in the systemizing of the parts, not the over-systematizing of the whole by imposing symmetry. Timon, in contrast, over-systematizes. He likewise alters plants and trees, creating topiaries, until they lose their identity: “The suff’ring eye inverted Nature sees, / Trees cut to Statues thick as trees” (120-21). In the *Spectator* 173, Pope criticizes the unnaturalness of this practice:

> How contrary to this Simplicity is the modern Practice of Gardening; we seem to make it our Study to recede from Nature, not only in the various Tonsure of Greens into the most regular and formal shapes, but even in monstrous Attempts beyond the reach of art itself; We run into Sculpture, and are better pleas’d to have our Trees in the most awkward Figures of Men and Animals than in the most regular of their own. (n. pag.)

As he "recedes from Nature" and imposes artifice on his garden, Timon also presents to his visitors the whole of the Nature:

> So proud, so grand, of that stupendous air,
> Soft and Agreeable come never there.
> Greatness, with Timon, dwells in such a draught
> As brings all Brobdignag before your throught.
> To compass this, his building is a Town,
> His pond an Ocean, his parterre a Down:
> Who but must laugh, the Master when he sees,
> A puny insect, shiv'ring at a breeze! (*Burlington* 103-09)

In his pride, Timon attempts to put too much in man's reach: he brings "all Brobdingnag before your thought" and presents the sublime beauties of an Ocean-like pond and entire town rather than those more fitting to his Villa. He fails to maintain a proper relationship between whole and parts or between art and Nature.

Although expressed differently, the same principles formed the foundation for Pope's gardening as his literary art: his seemingly artificial form in his poetry serves as the best expression of Pope's view of Nature. Willey notes that from the nineteenth century onward, Pope has been regarded as "the chief exemplar of an 'artificial' poetry" (27), for his antithetical lines seem deliberate and contrived, constricted within the confines of a couplet, rather than "natural" and uninhibited by form. But G. K. Chesterton disagrees, noting that the structure of Pope's poetry is reflective of his understanding of truth and best gives expression to the harmonious paradoxes he recognizes in the universe and in man: "Certainly antithesis is not artificial. An element of paradox runs through the

whole of existence itself. . . . If Pope and his followers caught this echo of natural irrationality, they were not any the more artificial. Their antitheses were fully in harmony with existence, which is itself a contradiction in terms" ("Art of Satire" 583). Pope believed that heroic couplets properly "dress" paradoxes by juxtaposing opposing ideas so that man can comprehend them at once. Both ideas are affirmed, if appropriate, but they remain paradoxical and the relationship between them is no more accessible than it was when the terms remained abstract in Nature. Couplets merely insist that such a relationship is there; man must confront it and accommodate the paradoxical ideas in his understanding of truth. Similarly, a garden confines within a narrow piece of Nature the transcendent truths at which all of Nature hints, making them more visible to man without diminishing their beauty. When antitheses are working properly, they reproduce or represent what is natural even as they transcend man's full understanding. Antithesis in both gardens and poetry, Pope believed, best reflects paradox.

## Chapter Two:

## Mercurial Man: "All Subsists By Elemental Strife"

In *The Spectator* No. 408, Pope describes the human condition: "As Nature has framed the several Species of Beings as it were in a Chain, so Man seems to be placed as the middle Link between Angels and Brutes: Hence he participates both of Flesh and Spirit by an Admirable Tie, which in him occasions perpetual War of Passions" (16). Because of man's middle nature on the Great Chain of Being, Pope saw two natures at war within him: flesh and spirit. The "admirable tie" which holds them in relationship, Pope believed, creates a "perpetual war," much like the opposing ideas that are placed in relationship within a single couplet. In *An Essay on Man,* Pope describes the paradoxical state of man as a result of his "middle state":

> He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
> In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
> In doubt his mind or body to prefer,
> Born but to die, and reasoning but to err; (II.7-10)

In this passage, Pope describes the many tensions that exist within man, tensions between the godlike and animal aspects of his nature, between his mind and body, and between his thoughts and passions. As he "hangs between" the antithetical aspects of his being, chaos ensues:

> Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
> Still by himself abused, or disabused;
> Created half to rise, and half to fall;
> Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all; (II.13-16)

Man's "doubt" over which part of his own nature "to prefer" causes confusion as he tries to act; the proper relationships between the elements of his being are likewise "all confused."

Yet, man should embrace the tension between the different elements of his being. In the first epistle of *Essay on Man,* Pope writes,

> Better for Us, perhaps, it might appear,
> Were there all harmony, all virtue here;
> That never air or ocean felt the wind;
> That never passion discompos'd the mind:
> But ALL subsists by elemental strife;
> And passions are the elements of Life.
> The gen'ral ORDER, since the world began,
> Is kept in Nature, and is kept in Man. (I.165-72)

Men may presume to think that a superficial harmony that downplays distinctions and discourages tension is a preferable state. This sort of harmony, however, only *appears* to be a better state, for it denies the true nature of man. Man, like all other beings, "subsists by elemental strife." To deny such strife is contrary to the order God has instituted through Nature. The unity in diversity and order in variety that enable Nature to function properly is reflected in man's being. Order is kept in man as it is kept in Nature through recognition of the larger framework that honors distinctions and necessitates tension.

Man does not achieve true harmony by permitting each of the contradictory elements of his being equal preference. Rather, each part within man, like each being in

the Great Chain of Being, should exert tension as is fitting for its position in relationship to all others:

> The less, or greater, set so justly true,
> That touching one must strike the other too;
> 'Till jarring int'rests of themselves create
> Th'according music of a well-mix'd State. (*Essay on Man* III.291-94)

The positioning of both the "less" and the "greater" is fitting for each, and thus "justly true," and if a being in either position oversteps its proper bounds, it affects every other. The "jarring int'rests" of each individual being in its proper place in the universe, in contrast, ultimately create a "well-mix'd State" that is musical and harmonious:

> Such is the World's great harmony, that springs
> From Order, Union, full Consent of things!
> Where small and great, where weak and mighty, made
> To serve, not suffer, strengthen, not invade,
> More pow'rful each as needful to the rest,
> And, in proportion as it blesses, blest, (III.295-300)

Here Pope emphasizes the relationships between each level of the Great Chain, relationships that ultimately hold the chain together as a single entity. Harmony stems from the "full Consent" of each to its position. Consent includes exerting a tension as is fitting to one's proper place and enables "great and small," "weak and mighty" to "serve," "strengthen," and "bless" every other. Such tension is thus productive, for it cultivates the distinctions between beings and benefits them all. The harmony that is

cultivated through tension when antithetical ideas are held in relationship by Nature is also cultivated in men when antithetical aspects of man's being are held together.

## Ideal Man: "Strong Grows the Virtue with His Nature Mixed"

In Epistle II of *An Essay on Man,* Pope writes that the "best principle" of man is his capacity to place the otherwise shifting elements of his nature into a fixed relationship: "'Tis thus the mercury of Man is fixed, / Strong grows the virtue with his nature mixed" (II. 176-78). Man's virtue increases as a result of the tensions within his own nature, for a stable relationship between his body and soul productively situates each: "The dross cements what else were too refined, / And in one interest body acts with mind" (179-80). Thus when man acts with a unified nature, he acts as is fitting for man: the elements of his nature remain distinct and the identity of both mind and body is preserved, exerting contrary pulls but acting as one. When he describes man's ideal nature, Pope conceives of "mercury," as Pat Rogers notes, in a positive sense, although he would have been familiar with the susceptibility of its inconstant nature:

> All metals were supposed to be based on a primal constituent of mercury; the word 'mercury' also carries the sense of elusiveness, capriciousness. In combination with the word 'virtue' in the next line, however, there is a clear additional reference to alchemy; this would provide the sense, 'thus, by the alchemy of Providence, a mysterious harmony is achieved in the life of the passions.' (648n)

"Strength of mind," Pope writes, "is Exercise, not rest" (II.104). When body and mind act in one interest, a deliberate motion ensues. As we saw in the introduction, "steering" rather than "swinging" between the two halves of an antithesis enables productivity or

virtue. Thus, exercise is required, for steering necessitates activity and discourages a passivity that permits the mind to be pulled too sharply and swing from one extreme or another. When man cultivates a productive tension between the elements of his being, he channels conflicting passions into a single action that does not over- or under-indulge any of them. Pope continues,

> Passions, like Elements, tho' born to fight,
> Yet, mix'd and soften'd, in his work unite,
> These 'tis enough to temper and employ;
> But what composes Man, can Man destroy? (II.111-14)

Pope recognizes the contentious potential of the elements, but when they are held in relationship and "mix'd" in man's being, they are also "soften'd" so that man can steer between them. If man will actively "employ" his passions, he will preserve them in tempered expressions. He will not deny or favor any one element of his being beyond what is fitting. Ideally, man permits both natures that comprise his "middle" nature full expression in his being, cultivating productive tension between them.

Man can respond to his position in the universe either through acceptance or denial of his true nature. Examples of improper responses can be seen in many of Pope's descriptions of women. Pope had a fond affection for women, and he believed they possessed the greatest capacity to integrate their two natures and thus were also most affected by a failure to integrate the two. Depicting the inconstant character of women, he believed, enabled him to magnify mankind's innate tendency toward extremes, much like his description of Homer's works allowed him to present the ideal, although magnified, relationship between Nature and art. In a footnote to *An Epistle to a Lady,* which he

dedicated to Martha Blount, he writes that the "particular characters" of women "are not so strongly marked as those of men, seldom so fixed, and still more inconsistent with themselves" (46n). After depicting many such "variegated tulips" (line 41), he presents "the picture of an estimable woman, with the best kind of contrarieties" (72n). Such a woman does not deny the struggle within her nature or seek to escape from tension; rather, she is at her best when she accepts both the godlike and the animal-like aspects of her being and permits each its proper place. Thus, while she remains a "contradiction" much like the other women, the contrarieties within her nature cultivate tension and elevate her: "And yet, believe me, good as well as ill, / Woman's at best a contradiction still" (269-79). Pope describes her at her best:

> Reserve with frankness, art with truth allied,
> Courage with softness, modesty with pride,
> Fixed principles, with fancy ever new;
> Shakes all together, and produces—You. (277-80)

Contradictions co-exist within the woman Pope addresses: softness complements courage just as modesty does pride. In her exists, Mack notes, "the notion of a harmony achieved from things and forces disparate or conflicting, a *concordia discors*" (*A Life* 634). This woman possesses such contrarieties simultaneously, which serves to temper otherwise severe qualities and in turn enables her to assume her proper place above the beasts but beneath the angels.

## Perversions of the Ideal: "Created Half to Rise and Half to Fall"

Man's denial of his true nature can take several forms, for he can deny either the lower or higher aspect of his being, or distort the relationship between them. In *An Essay*

*on Man,* Pope describes man's condition as a "being darkly wise, and rudely great" (II.4). His wisdom is tainted with darkness, his greatness intertwined with the ruder elements of his being. As we saw in the passage quoted above, such confliction in his being renders action difficult:

> With too much knowledge for the Skeptic side,
> With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
> He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
> In doubt to deem himself a God, or Beast; (5-8)

Man "hangs between" his godlike and animal natures, sometimes paralyzed by the limitations of each: "In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer, / Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err" (9-10). When men seek to "prefer" one part of their being to another, they are confronted more severely with the limitations of each: they know acutely that the body is "born but to die" and the "reas'ning but to err." When, rather than give preference to one, man accepts the contrary pulls of both mind and body, he can overcome the limitations of each most effectively. Otherwise, he easily falls prey to the same qualities that are most unique to his position in the universe: "Created half to rise, and half to fall; / Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all" (15-16).

Because of his dual nature, man is created to feel a pull upward and downward as he remains in the middle. But each of his capacities—both in the lower and higher aspects of his being—has the potential to pull him up or down. A proper use of any faculty elevates his being; an improper use distorts it. Thus even his reason and spirit, things he shares with those above him on the chain, can pull him down when used wrongly. Mack writes, "Though human beings have affinities with the Godlike-rational,

they must recognize in themselves (as the Stoics failed to do: hence their 'pride') equally strong affinities with the animal-sensitive, realizing that the task laid on them is to reconcile both characters" (*A Life* 532). Although it is a perversion of human nature to cater too much to the whims of the body, it is also a perversion to deny the body altogether, for, as we saw above, man contains "too much weakness for the Stoic's pride" (6). The stoic perversion oversteps man's proper bounds through a prideful faith in reason. A writer, Pope insists in *An Essay on Criticism,* "might his servile province well command, / Would all but stoop to what they understand" (66-67). Man, too, can best command the province of his identity by "stooping" to accommodate the lower elements of his being. According to Mack, a pervasive theme in *An Essay on Man* applies to authors and critics as it does to any who seek understanding: "we excel by giving up—not only what is inappropriate to the individual self but what is inappropriate to man as man" (Introduction lxx-lxxi). Pride ignores the boundaries established by man's very nature. In the first epistle of *An Essay on Man*, Pope describes the effects of pride on man's nature:

> In pride, in reas'ning Pride, our error lies;
> All quit their sphere, and rush into the skies.
> Pride still is aiming at the blessed abodes,
> Men would be Angels, Angels would be Gods.
> Aspiring to be Gods, if Angels fell,
> Aspiring to be Angels, Men rebel;
> And who but wishes to invert the laws,
> Or ORDER, sins against th' eternal cause. (I.123-30)

A stoic denial of the body attempts to place man on equal footing with the angels, which, Pope recognizes, is a sinful breach of his nature. Pope argues that the godlike half of man's nature cannot consistently be elevated over his animal nature; to do so would be a denial of his *true* nature.

Likewise, the skeptic, who would deny man's godlike nature, deviates from truth, for man has "too much knowledge for the Skeptic side" (5). Skeptics deny the power of reason in the pursuit of truth, refusing to give proper credence to the godlike-rational half of man's being. Piper argues that the form of the couplet reflects a proper relationship between both natures and a humble but accurate view of human reason: "The mere regularity and polish of the couplet, as Pope achieved it from the beginning, carries a philosophical, a didactic, implication: that it is necessary for limits to be put on human intellectual ambitions and, contrariwise, that the human mind, working within its proper limits, has tremendous powers" (*Heroic Couplet* 137). Skeptics insist on the limitations of human reason without recognizing its simultaneous glories. Thus they elevate man's animal nature, which, while necessary for the proper functioning of his godlike faculties, is still subservient to them. As Mack writes, "man's affective nature is inferior to the best that is in him—but a contributory cause of what is best" (Introduction xxxviii). Only when man cultivates the tension between the two aspects of his being, not denying or indulging either, does he reach his true potential as man.

In addition, man can at times recognize both natures at work in him but still respond incorrectly, experiencing either too much or too little tension and thus not cultivating a productive relationship between them. When man is "in doubt to act, or rest," he is swinging between extremes, tempering neither and thus misusing both, rather

than deliberately steering between them. He exerts too little action or too much. When he is "In doubt to deem himself a God, or Beast," he seeks to obliterate one while focusing on the other, again failing to cultivate the tension between them. According to Mack, "The contrast in [these two lines] is between Stoic and Epicurean alternatives: *Rest* is Stoic apathy, and *act* is apparently Epicurean hedonism, which Pope seems to have identified, a la Hobbes, with ceaseless appetitive agitation" (54n.). Although they recognize clear distinctions between man's material and spiritual nature, Stoics overemphasize the distinctions until the two natures are too far apart to create any sort of tension; their attempt to ignore one aspect of their own nature prevents them from using the other properly. The Epicureans, in contrast, experience too great a tension between mind and body and allow their appetites to exert a constant pull on their higher nature, creating an overly agitated swinging motion rather than an active steering between two tempered natures. Either extreme, activity or passivity, perverts man's true nature.

## The Soul and the Imagination: Frameworks that Enable Tension

Just as Pope believed that God was the soul and Nature the body unifying the antithetical elements in the physical universe, so he believed man's soul and body serve to unify the discordant elements within man. Mack likens the tensions within man to the "comely agreement of warring opposites" outside of him: "the contrary motions of the Ptolemaic spheres, the poise of the planets against each other's influence, the clashing elements, the mixture of hostile humors in the body, the strife of reason and passion in the soul, the skill of painter and musician, who shape conflicting sounds and colours into harmony" each reflect the principle of *concors discordia* ("Introduction" xlix). As Mack notes, the body serves as the physical framework wherein man's warring passions co-

exist; the soul, in contrast, serves as the framework for the "strife of reason and passion." In a letter to Caryll on August 14, 1713, Pope writes, "What an Incongruous being is Man? How unsettled in his best part, his soul; and how changing and variable in his frame of body? The constancy of one, shook by every notion, the temperament of the other, affected by every blast of wind. What an April weather in the mind! In a word, what is Man altogether, but one mighty Inconsistency" (I.185-86). Even as Pope elevates the soul over the body and considers it the "best part" of man, he recognizes the tensions that exist between each. Much like Nature, the body serves as a frame, and the functions and desires of the body must be placed in proper relationship with the other elements of man's being, including his mind and his soul. When the body functions in a healthy way, it enables and contains the proper tension between the "hostile humors" it contains.

The soul likewise, although it must be kept in proper relationship both to God's spirit and man's body, has the potential to accommodate and temper "the strife of reason and passion." Fairer argues that Pope assumed three degrees of the soul which Aristotle first outlined, and which were generally recognized in the Renaissance: the nutritive soul, the sensitive soul, and the rational soul. The rational soul, which included man's mind, reason, and will, set him apart from other creatures; the nutritive soul he shared with all living things. His sensitive soul, which housed the imagination, "carried on its functions as the brain's image-making sensorium" (27). In short, the sensitive soul translated the perceptions of the senses, which were considered part of the nutritive soul, into images, the results of which were then examined by the rational soul. The sensitive soul, then, served to temper the other parts of the brain, exerting tension on each and enabling them to function appropriately. All three functions, however, are expressions of the soul. The

soul undergirds each of man's faculties and permeates them much like God exists immanently in all of Nature. Man's soul, then, like Nature's soul, exerts the tension necessary to keep the whole of man's being in its proper position in the universe so that discordant elements co-exist in harmony.

While for Pope the body provides a physical framework, much like the couplet, wherein antithetical "humors" are held in relationship, the imagination, or sensitive soul, provides an intangible framework, much like the framework of Nature, which serves to hold contradictory elements of man in place. In Pope's day, Fairer argues, no distinction was drawn between fancy and imagination: the imagination's creative abilities as well as its tendency toward delusion were recognized as the expressions of a single faculty (2-5). In a 1712 essay in *The Spectator* on the "Pleasures of the Imagination," Addison describes "the Imagination or Fancy (which I shall use promiscuously)" (497). Pope likewise conflates the two, Fairer notes, for in his "poetry the word 'fancy' was metrically more useful, but in both verse and prose the two terms could be used synonymously to avoid repetition" (3). Like Pope's deliberate use of a single word, such as Nature, to describe various expressions of a single idea, his interchanging of words such as invention, fancy, and imagination to describe the different manifestations of man's sensitive soul demonstrates his recognition of its simultaneous glories and perversions. In his preface to *The Iliad of Homer,* which Mack calls "a paean to the supremacy of the imagination" (*Collected in Himself* 255), Pope interchanges several different words as he describes Homer's imagination:

> It is to the Strength of this amazing *Invention* we are to attribute that unequal'd Fire and Rapture, which is so forcible in *Homer*, that no Man of

> true Poetical Spirit is Master of himself while he reads him . . . the Reader is hurry'd out of himself by the Force of the Poet's *Imagination*. . . . 'Tis however remarkable that his *Fancy*, which is every where vigorous, is not discover'd immediately at the beginning of his Poem in its fullest Splendor: It grows in the Progress both upon himself and others, and becomes on Fire like a Chariot-Wheel, by its own Rapidity. Exact Disposition, just Thought, correct Elocution, polish'd Numbers, may have been found in a thousand; but this Poetical *Fire,* this *Vivida vis animi,* in a very few. (qtd. in Fairer 4, *emphasis his*)

When describing Homer's use of the imagination, Pope draws no distinctions between "invention," "imagination," "fancy," or "poetical fire." Indeed, Fairer argues, "it is more important for his purposes to distinguish the power of the imaginative faculty . . . from the controllable, conscious, discriminating faculty" (4) of the rational soul.

Like other faculties, the imagination, if not held in correct antithetical relationships with man's reason, body, or soul, is used corruptly; but when properly tempered, it enables man to function as a fully integrated being. It aids both the intellect and the senses, for apart from the imagination the senses cannot translate their perceptions into usable knowledge. In the second epistle of *An Essay on Man,* after discussing the "passions," "which are born to fight" but are "softened" in man's nature, Pope immediately places them in relationship with reason:

> Suffice that reason keep to Nature's road,
> Subject, compound them, follow her and God.

Love, Hope, and Joy, fair pleasure's smiling train,

Hate, Fear, and Grief, the family of pain. (II. 115-18)

Man's affections are best controlled by reason when reason keeps to "Nature's road," and, Pope continues, it is the imagination that permits this relationship:

These mix'd with Art, and to due bounds confin'd,

Make and maintain the balance of the mind:

The lights and shades, whose well-accorded strife

Gives all the strength and color of our life. (II. 119-22)

Such emotions, when "Mix'd with Art" or the part of the soul that translates baser passions and images into human artistic creation, contribute to the "well-accorded strife" that permits a balance of the mind. Within its "due bounds" and in relationship with reason, the sensitive soul is manifested in many ways; outside of such bounds it is quickly misused.

In his preface to the *Iliad of Homer,* Pope continues to describe Homer's imagination: "How fertile will that imagination appear, which as able to clothe all the properties of elements, the qualifications of the mind, the virtues and vices, in forms and persons, and to introduce them into actions agreeable to the nature of the things they shadowed!" (n. pag.). Homer's imagination expresses the complexity of both the intangible mind and the tangible body of his characters and permits the tension between them, thus aptly reflecting the reality of men. Similarly, man's imagination keeps other faculties positioned properly and functioning as is fitting to their nature. The Renaissance writers who grappled with the idea of the imagination as Pope understood it were often

tempted to downplay the imagination in favor of reason. But even Gianrancesco Pico, who was extremely wary of the use of the imagination, believed it necessary to contemplation, that state wherein both mind and body grapple with an idea transcendent over them both: "Imagination enters into alliance with all the superior powers, inasmuch as they would fail in that function into which nature has bestowed upon each of them unless imagination support and assist them. Nor could the soul, fettered as it is to the body, opine, know, or comprehend at all, if phantasy were not constantly to supply it with the images themselves" (qtd. in Fairer 43). The sensitive soul, which man shares with creatures beneath him on the Great Chain, serves a different function in man than it does in the other creatures, for it works in conjunction with his rational soul, which is unique to man. Fairer writes, "The neoplatonic duality of body and soul, and the consequent placing of man between the angel and the beast, naturally encouraged the conviction that the imagination reflected man's paradoxical nature. It could raise him higher or pull him down according to the extent to which it followed the spirit or the flesh" (28-29). Imagination has the potential to be the framework in the brain wherein the tension between man's two natures is cultivated.

## Perversions of the Imagination: "One Vile Antithesis"

In *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,* Pope satirically attacks Sporus, the castrated boy Nero kept for pleasure and eventually married. Sporus's character represents Lord Hervey, a bisexual whose "character was a chaos of obsessive impulses" (Mack, *A Life* 648). His wit, the expression of his imagination in his writing, reflects the perversion of his character:

His Wit all see-saw, between *that* and *this,*

Now high, now low, now Master up, now Miss,

And he himself one vile Antithesis. (323-25)

Pope again interrupts a pattern of couplets with a triplet, this time to indicate a negative perversion of a healthy pattern. Sporus's imagination, rather than serving both the flesh and the spirit—the parts of man that permit him linguistic expression and contribute to literary endeavors—becomes an end in itself as it swings back and forth, "all see-saw," from one extreme to the next. The emphasis is on his imagination and its distracting movements. Piper notes that "[t]here are in Pope's *mature* verse . . . double antitheses within single lines: 'Now high, now low, now Master up, now Miss'" (*Heroic Couplet* 132). Pope's mastery of his craft enables him to portray a rapid swinging motion as Sporus alternates between identities. Ian Donaldson argues that the repetition of "now" serves the same purpose: "the repeated word dramatizes this uncertainty, precipitating us from one possibility to another" (193) and emphasizing a sideways movement but diminishing the strength of couplets to move forward with a steering motion. The ineffectiveness of Sporus's imagination, Donaldson notes, is also emphasized in Pope's repetition of words such as "whether," "or," and "half" (193) in the following passage:

Whether in florid impotence he speaks,

And, as the Prompter breathes, the Puppet squeaks;

Or at the Ear of *Eve,* familiar Toad,

Half Froth, half Venom, spits himself abroad,

In Puns, or Politicks, or Tales, or Lyes,

Or spite, or Smut, or Rymes, or Blasphemies. (317-322)

His use of language—in his "Puns" and "Tales" and "Lyes" and "Rymes"—is a perversion, for he uses it to deceive others and to attempt to make himself look appealing, much like the serpent in the garden. He uses his imaginative faculty in a way unfitting for man and as a result is unable to temper extremes in his nature or his expression. Stable antitheses reflect and affirm a Christian understanding of "both-and" paradoxes, wherein opposing ideas are elevated, whereas the shifting implied by the repetitive "or" and "now" in the passages above diminishes such paradox as Sporus corrupts the tensions in his being. Sporus's appearance further reflects unproductive antithetical extremes between his godlike and animal-like natures: "A Cherub's face, a Reptile all the rest" (331). He lacks productive tension within his being and indulges extremes on both sides and in doing so becomes incoherent. Neither his head nor his heart is true to his nature as a man. He is an "Amphibious Thing! that acting either Part, / The trifling Head, or the corrupted Heart" (326-27). In Sporus's image, then, Pope demonstrates the differences between a useful antithetical relationship and a "pseudo-antithesis" (Bailey 439). When Sporus "[oscillates] between the empty deictics of 'that' and 'this'" (439), such antitheses blur boundaries and disregard proper distinctions, perverting each side of the antithesis while increasing the unproductive movement between them. In Sporus, Pope assumes a duality between man's mind and body and shows man's tendency to place each in an improper relationship with his imagination.

## The Servant as Master: Unfixed Natures and the Misuse of the Imagination

In contrast to the ideal woman in *Epistle to a Lady*, Pope presents two other women, Eloisa in *Eloisa to Abelard* and Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock,* who are unable to achieve an integrated being. Each is passionate and possesses a strong imagination,

and, like Sporus, each misuses her imagination. Indeed, as Fairer writes, "Pope associated women with the imaginative faculty, partly because he accepted the widely-held view of his day that woman was by nature more 'fanciful' than man, but also because of a deeper fascination which frequently led him to direct his imagination towards them in intriguing ways" (17). While Pope saw women, such as Martha Blount, as possessing the greatest potential to cultivate the imagination, he also recognized in them the greatest likelihood to apply it unfittingly, as the "variegated tulips" in *An Epistle to a Lady* show. Belinda and Eloisa each represent a perversion of the imagination in some way, and, because the imagination is crucial in maintaining the proper relationship between man's lower and higher natures, the antithetical aspects of humanity do not exist in proper tension in each woman: Belinda cultivates too great a tension between the parts of her being as she attempts to keep each half distant and unaffected by the other, thus swinging from one expression of her imagination to the next; Eloisa, on the other hand, desires to resolve the tension altogether as she fails to draw proper boundaries between the two halves of her being and merges them.

Belinda's imagination never requires her to confront the truth about her own nature; instead, it distances her from it. For Addison and many other contemporaries of Pope, the imagination was opposed to judgment; man's judgment expressed truth while the imagination was, at its best, purely fanciful, and, more frequently, contradictory of truth.[7] As we have seen, however, Pope saw in the imagination the potential to lift man

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[7] For a more extensive look at the progression of the idea of the imagination from the early eighteenth century through the nineteenth, see "Wit and Imagination in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics" by M. A. Goldberg. Goldberg traces the shift from viewing imagination as "reason's antithesis," serving only to corrupt man's understanding of truth, to imagination as purely "ornamental, associational, and pleasurable," contributing

upward or bring him downward as it interacted with the other elements of man's being. Imagination was for Pope, Fairer argues, "a good servant but a bad master" (28). It could drive man to truth or turn him from it, serve the other elements of his being or turn inward and deny the other elements their full expression. In *The Rape of the Lock,* Belinda's mind and body are both subservient to her imagination. The extensive additions to the poem serve to emphasize Belinda's imagination: the most significant changes between the two canto version published in 1712 and the five canto version of 1714 was the addition of the machinery of the poem, particularly the sylphs, that lies outside the realm of reality. Belinda's association with the sylphs also emphasizes her attraction to the immaterial: "Fairest of Mortals, thou distinguish'd Care / Of thousand bright Inhabitants of Air!" (I.27-28). Belinda is placed in the care of the sylphs in much the same was as she is controlled by her imagination.

Since the sylphs lie outside the realm of reality, they also, for Fairer, lie outside the moral realm. The world of the sylphs, he argues, is "removed from the world of moral judgments" and represents "neither 'good' nor 'bad,'" thus "exploit[ing] the inherent ambiguity of the imagination itself" (62-64). Because, he continues, the sylphs escape moral judgment from readers, they "[enact] the amoral role of the imagination by dissolving the tidy human boundaries between virtue and vice" (64-65). But rather than dissolving the categories, perhaps Pope's use of the imagination suggests that it has the capacity to go both ways—to be pulled upward or downward—and create virtue or vice in the one who possesses it. The sylphs may remain outside the human realm with its

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to man's experience of beauty but completely outside the moral realm of truth, to, finally, imagination as a crucial faculty in the pursuit of truth (503-09).

inescapable vices, and thus, unable to sin, remain also unable to achieve virtue, but Belinda's response to the sylphs—and her corresponding use of her imagination, as the fundamental faculty that enables the integration of her being—occurs in the moral plane on which humans live their lives. The sylphs, while representative of Belinda's imagination, are not its equivalent, in much the same way as the Genius of the Place is not the equivalent of the artistic expression within a garden itself. A gardener is required to elucidate the principles hidden in the landscape. The Genius of the Place simply exists, but the way a gardener follows it and cultivates it in a plot of land determines, for Pope, the artfulness of the garden. There are both right and wrong ways to trace the genius, just as there are right and wrong expressions of the intangible imagination the sylphs manifest. In humans, the use of the imagination is inescapably moral, for its position between reason and passion, between the mind and body, necessitates its involvement in either a prideful or a proper response to human nature.

Pope himself offers a helpful distinction between the moral realm and the role the sylphs play in the poem, but he does so without diminishing Belinda's responsibility. First, the actions of the sylphs are not confined to the immaterial, although their nature remains such. Le Bossu, who was, according to Dryden, "one of the best modern critics" (qtd. in Tillotson, "Introduction" 109), was also one of the earliest critics to outline the crucial characteristics of mock epics, and he discusses the machinery crucial to both epics and mock epics. Such machinery, he argues, can represent the God-like aspects or material aspects of men; it can represent virtue or vice (Tillotson 109). Because the machinery is merely representative, though, its existence can in itself remain morally neutral. For, Tillotson notes in his introduction in the Twickeham edition of the text,

"Pope sees to it that the additions include specimens of all the three kinds of machine noted by Le Bossu: the sylphs are 'theological' (they represented 'good' and 'bad'), 'physical,' (they roll planets and attend to the weather), and 'allegorical' or 'moral' (the machines include Spleen)" (121). The sylphs, while remaining invisible, can interact with every realm, just as the imagination should, and do not merely serve themselves.

Second, when he responded to Dennis's critical *Remarks on Mr. Pope's Rape of the Lock,* printed in 1728, Pope further clarified his conception of the sylphs. When Belinda hears Ariel speak to her in a "Morning-Dream" (I.22), he describes "The light *Militia* of the lower Sky" as "These, tho' unseen, are ever on the Wing, / Hand o'er the *Box,* and hover round the *Ring*" (I.42-45). Pope's placing of the sylphs in the "Lower Sky" here is significant, Tillotson notes, for it draws a distinction between the "aerial sylphs" and "ethereal" (148n). Dennis was particularly critical of Ariel's speech where he describes the types of sylphs:

> Ye know the Spheres and various Tasks assign'd,
> By Laws Eternal, to th' Aerial Kind.
> Some in the Fields of purest *Aether* play,
> And bask and whiten in the Blaze of Day.
> Some guide the Course of wandring Orbs on high,
> Or roll the Planets thro' the boundless Sky. (II. 75-80)

In his notes, Dennis asks, "Did you ever hear before that the Planets were roll'd by the aerial Kind?" (qtd. in Tillotson 372n). Pope's later annotations perhaps address Dennis's question, for he blots out several notes in the margin and then, seemingly overcoming indecision, footnotes "Aether" and in the margin writes "aetheri[al]" (Tillotson 372n).

Pope makes another note to point out that "Aerial Substances" are those beneath the moon who primarily serve humans and whose actions are evident in the physical realm Le Bossu discusses (Tillotson 372-73n). Pope assumes ranks among the sylphs, and recognizes that many in this immaterial realm are not necessarily "heavenly." Pope could, Tillotson argues, have upheld Le Bossu's categories and have been "roughly within his rights if lines 77-80 were understood as a parenthesis ('You know the tasks assigned to the sylphs of the air—there is, of course, a superior kind of sylph, not aerial but ethereal, who rolls the planets . . .')" (373n). There are, then, many sylphs, particularly those who are assigned to work among humans, who are immaterial but not necessarily an ideal projection of the crux of man's sensitive soul. The imagination likewise can serve different functions, but an objective standard—Nature and Nature's God—is still in place that determines which function of the imagination raises man to his "highest." Some uses of the imagination are morally superior to others, just as some sylphs are placed in a higher position in the universe than others.

Belinda's response to the influence of the sylphs, then, is not morally neutral. Her use of her imagination, revealed in her involvement with the sylphs, negatively affects her identity, and Pope sees such use as a misuse because of her failure to "steer" rather than "swing" between extremes. At the beginning of the poem, she is entirely absorbed with immaterial ideals and denies the true nature of her material being. Ariel encourages her to focus her attention only on higher things: "Hear and believe! thy own Importance know, / Nor bound thy narrow Views to Things below" (I.35-36). Ariel, speaking to her in a dream, even communicates with her in an other-worldly fashion, turning her thoughts from the real into the invisible world of the imagination. Ariel entices Belinda into

believing a denial of her humanity is noble; he tells her to "Know farther yet; Whoever fair and chaste / Rejects Mankind, is by some *Sylph* embraced" (I. 66-67). As she is "embraced" by a Sylph, she also becomes possessed by her imagination; she is slave to it rather than master over it.

Belinda's inaccurate self-understanding reflects the control her imagination has over her and is evident almost immediately after she awakes from the dream as she stands at her toilet admiring herself:

> And now, unveil'd, the *Toilet* stands display'd,
> Each Silver Vase in mystic Order laid.
> First, rob'd in White, the Nymph intent adores
> With Head uncover'd, the *Cosmetic* Pow'rs.
> A heav'nly Image in the Glass appears,
> To that she bends, to that her Eyes she rears;
> Th'inferior Priestess, at her Altar's side,
> Trembling, begins the sacred Rites of Pride. (I.121-28)

She sees only the heavenly half of her being, and she is subsumed by an image of herself that is detached from reality. Even her use of make-up is a denial rather than an affirmation of the materiality of her body, for she uses it to conceal rather than accentuate her true nature:

> Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and here
> The various Off'rings of the World appear;
> From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,
> And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil. (I.129-132)

She dresses herself as is fitting for a Goddess rather than a maiden and uses the "Off'rings" of the physical "World" only to disguise the traces of that same world in her being:

> Yet graceful Ease, and Sweetness void of Pride,
> Might hide her Faults, if *Belles* had Faults to hide:
> If to her share some Female Errors fall,
> Look on her Face, and you'll forget 'em all. (II.15-18)

Her social and physical graces hide any imperfections, and the falsity of appearance is used purely to deny the physicality of her being, setting her apart from others as she "Rejects Mankind." As Belinda stands at her toilet, an observer can "See by Degrees a purer blush arise / And keener Lightnings quicken in her Eyes" (I.137-144). She uses art to contradict her nature, and this becomes particularly evident as she applies blush. In *Breaking and Remaking: Aesthetic Practice in England, 1700-1820*, Ronald Paulson discusses these lines:

> The "purer" blush is, of course, the "blush" made by cosmetics, which replace, augment, and fix the color at a point where an impure thought could produce a *natural* blush that is in fact less pure than one created by art: but art requires the basis of fact, Belinda's natural beauty, thought fallen and so in need of "correcting" by art. (In Belinda's case a blush would only give her away, revealing the crucial fact that she is in love and with whom . . .). (52)

Make-up, like clothing, is necessitated by man's fallen nature, and here, Belinda's "donning of make-up assumes an Eve already fallen" (51). The blush she applies is

"purer" in her mind than a natural blush because a natural blush affirms the passions of her lower nature and reveals her love. The artfulness of her blush is not properly reflective of her nature because, even if it is rooted in fact, it is an attempt to hide the truth. At its root, Belinda's denial of her humanity results in an unfixed nature: "Her lively Looks a sprightly Mind disclose, / Quick as her Eyes, and as unfix'd as those" (II. 9-10).

When the lock is cut, however, Belinda is brought out of the realm of the purely immaterial. Indeed, it is not until moments before her lock is taken that even Ariel senses in Belinda "in spite of all her Art, / An Earthly Lover lurking at her Heart" (III.143-44). She has effectively hidden her material desires even from the sylph who should safeguard her soul. Her imagination is detached from the rest of her being so effectively that the primary source of her despair over the Baron's action "is that he treats the lock as a thing rather than an idea" and "thus challenges Belinda to descend from the metaphorical into the realm of truth" (Fairer 74). Just as in *An Essay on Criticism* Pope reminds authors and critics that "all must stoop to what they understand," Belinda is here forced to assume her proper place as a human being. Because her imagination is misused, however, she does not integrate her lower nature more fully into who she is but rather indulges her material nature, swinging to the other extreme. Even in her immediate response to the loss of her lock, Belinda plunges into a deluge of emotions:

> Then flash'd the living Lightning from her Eyes,
> And Screams of Horror rend th' affighted Skies.
> Not louder Shrieks to pitying Heav'n are cast,
> When Husbands or when Lap-dogs breathe their last,

Or when rich *China* Vessels, fal'n from high,

In glittering Dust and painted Fragments lie! (III. 155-160)

To the unfixed nature of her mind, the death of a husband or a broken China dish—or the loss of a lock of hair—are all equally worthy of the horror she feels. Once in the material realm, she does not temper her emotions: she equates noble sorrows with petty as she fails to cultivate tension between her passions and her immaterial nature.

She descends into the Cave of Spleen, but remains solely at the mercy of her imagination: "The flattering sylphs have left her, to be replaced by the imaginative world of the guilt-ridden and prudish gnomes, the sad mental landscape of the melancholic" (Fairer 77). Indeed, Fairer defines the Spleen as "the seedbed of the base imagination, the melancholy fancy which in women can lead to self-delusions and hysteria" (76). The truth of the outside world seems far removed from such a place:

A constant *Vapour* o'er the Palace flies;

Strange Phantoms rising as the Mists arise;

Dreadful, as Hermit's Dreams in haunted Shades,

Or bright as Visions of expiring Maids. (IV. 40-43)

Once there, Belinda regrets that she ever brought her lock, so significant in her imagination, into the daylight of reality:

Oh had I rather un-admir'd remain'd

In some lone Isle, or distant *Northern* Land;

. . . . . .

There kept my Charms conceal'd from mortal Eye,

Like Roses that in Desarts bloom and die. (IV. 153-54, 57-58)

In the twilight of her melancholy, she laments that the two aspects of her being were ever brought close enough for any sort of tension. She also regrets that she did not better heed Ariel's prophetic words in her dream: "A *Sylph* too warn'd me of the Threats of Fate, / In mystic Visions, now believ'd too late!" (IV.165-66). Here she recognizes that she believed such "mystic Visions" were completely removed from reality; she knows now that the two are inescapably intertwined, but she insists on keeping them separate. The Cave of Spleen has the same effects on all its inhabitants:

> Unnumber'd Throngs on ev'ry side are seen
> Of bodies chang'd to various Forms by *Spleen*.
> Here living *Teapots* stand, one Arm held out,
> One bent; the Handle this, and that the Spout:
> A Pinkin there like *Homer's Tripod* walks;
> Here sighs a Jar, and there a Goose-pye talks;
> Men prove with Child, as pow'rful Fancy works,
> And Maids turn'd Bottels, call aloud for Corks. (IV. 47-54)

Tillotson notes that the corruptions Pope lists here "represent illusions commonly suffered by the splenetic" and that those with melancholy personalities, according to Burton's *Anatomy,* often consider themselves "pots, glasses, &c." The "metamorphoses" (Tillotson 184n) these beings undergo and the perversions of their physical bodies demonstrates an improper use of "pow'rful Fancy," for it serves its own interests rather than strengthening the other aspects of man. The "metamorphosis" caused by such use of the imagination usurps each individual's true identity.

Belinda, then, remains controlled by her imagination, although in that instant, when "The meeting Points" of the scissors "the sacred Hair dissever / From the fair Head" (III.153-54), her imagination swings to an opposite extreme, from the airy sylphs to the earthy gnomes. Fairer describes the bondage of her imagination:

> The imagination has again transformed the scene, and for the lighter-than-air fancy of the sylphs has submitted ideas of oppressive weight and constriction. The act of imagination that created her lock is now seen (equally wrongly) as a ritual of bondage. The dressing-table has become a torture chamber. Belinda cannot break out of her imagination, only migrate from one image to another. (79)

The images themselves—instead of the parts of her body they represent—remain of utmost importance to Belinda. Rather than serve her body and her mind and bring them into a healthy tension, the images control her. Her imagination is master rather than servant, leaving her less able to function in the real world outside of her mind rather than equipping her better for it.

While it seems as though Belinda is embracing both natures, her failure to do so simultaneously renders tension unproductive. Her swinging from one extreme to the other keeps each part of her nature too far removed from the other to become integrated. Her retreat into the realm of the imagination and denial of her passions, Parkin argues, creates in her the "desire not to be violated and yet explicit preparation for it" (*Poetic Workmanship* 51). Either extreme is more attractive to her than the work of steering between them: "Just as generic man loses if he tries to be either god or beast, so does generic woman, represented by Belinda. If Belinda remains inviolate, she will lose in one

sense; if she does not, she will lose in another" (51). Neither extreme holds for Belinda what her self-serving imagination promises. Instead,

> A woman wins the war between the sexes by losing it under the proper conditions—by honorable surrender. For Belinda, either spinsterhood or dishonorable surrender is advantageous, just as either angelhood or animality would be for mankind in general. And just as mankind can escape these disadvantageous extremes by recognizing his middle nature and souring humbly, so Belinda can to some extent combine the advantages of her two extremes by the middle course of lawful marriage. (52)

Her imagination causes her to swing between these extremes and ultimately corrupts her human nature.

In *Eloisa to Abelard,* Eloisa likewise misuses her imagination. She retreats into a convent in an attempt to obliterate her feelings for the castrated Abelard, and, while there, where she acquires a letter Abelard wrote that tells his story, and as she reads it withdraws further into her imagination: "In these deep solitudes and awful cells, / Where heav'nly-pensive, contemplation dwells, / And ever-musing melancholy reigns" (1-3). Visited by Melancholy and torn between the passion for Abelard she experiences in her lower nature and the pursuit of God she seeks with her higher nature, Eloisa, like Belinda, at times swings to an extreme, indulging only half her nature. Ultimately, though, she is unable to maintain the distinctions between each half, for, as her imagination controls her, increasing her melancholy and despair, she grows less and less able to see her desire for God and her desire for Abelard as separate passions. She too withdraws from

humanity to the solace of her imagination, but she withdraws to seek God, whom she identifies with Abelard. In contrast to Belinda, who diminishes the tension in her nature by maintaining too great a distance between parts, Eloisa attempts to escape tension by merging elements of her being. In *The Argument* of *Eloisa to Abelard,* Pope describes Eloisa's story as "a picture of the struggles of grace and nature, virtue and passion" (298). The struggle ultimately takes place in her imagination: nature, in the sense Pope is using it here, encompasses human emotion and the desires of the animal-like nature that contrast with reason, while grace is accessible in part because of the God-like functions of man's being. Similarly, virtue cannot exist apart from human volition, and the will is part of man's God-like nature, while passion he shares with those beneath him on the Great Chain of Being. Eloisa struggles to keep two distinct natures at work together in her imagination, fusing them into a perversion.

As she imagines speaking to Abelard, Eloisa reminds him that when she took the vows, she was thinking only of him:

> Heav'n scarce believ'd the conquest it survey'd,
> And Saints with wonder heard the vows I made.
> Yet then, to those dread altars as I drew,
> Not on the Cross my eyes were fix'd, but you;
> Not grace, or zeal, love only was my call,
> And if I lose thy love, I lose my all. (113-18)

In her mind, Abelard's name is intertwined with God's, and she asks her heart to disguise her passion for Abelard with her understanding of God: "Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise, / Where mix'd with God's, his lov'd Idea lies" (11-12). She pleads that

she might, like the other women in the convent, learn to escape any passions other than a love for God:

> Ah no! instruct me other joys to prize,
> With other beauties charm my partial eyes,
> Full in my view set all the bright abode,
> And make my soul quit *Abelard* for God. (127-28)

Her sisters in the convent have, in her perception, subsumed the lower half of their nature into the noble life of their higher natures inside the convent walls:

> Relentless walls! whose darksom round contains
> Repentant sighs, and voluntary pains:
> Ye rugged rocks! which holy knees have worn;
> Ye grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn! (17-20)

The "voluntary pains" of the others in the convent suggest that their physical suffering—or the control of their passions—is subjected entirely to the mind and the will; for Eloisa, however, the passion is not quieted, despite her attempts to escape it. Her goal in entering the monastery was to encourage her love for Abelard to cease as she learned love for God:

> Now warm in love, now with'ring in thy bloom,
> Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!
> There stern religion quench'd th' unwilling flame,
> There dy'd the best of passions, Love and Flame. (37-40)

She hopes, as she takes the vows, that religion will "quench" her romantic love. She imagines that to "fill [her] fond heart with God alone" will enable her to subdue her emotions:

> Unequal task! a passion to resign,
> For hearts so touch'd, so pierc'd, so lost as mine.
> Ere such a soul regains its peaceful state,
> How often must it love, how often hate!
> . . . . . .
> Oh come! oh teach me nature to subdue,
> Renounce my love, my life, my self—and you.
> Fill my fond heart with God alone, for he
> Alone can rival, can succeed to thee. (192-98, 203-06)

She longs to overcome her desires and ignore the tensions inevitable in her middle state, and believes that if her feelings for God can "succeed" those she feels for Abelard she can escape the tension.

But, unlike her religious sisters, she is unable to suppress the passions of her lower nature with the will of her higher nature. Instead, she writes,

> Tho' cold like you, unmov'd, and silent grown,
> I have not yet forgot my self to stone.
> All is not Heav'n while *Abelard* has part,
> Still rebel nature holds out half my heart. (23-26)

She cannot commit her whole being to the service of God while Abelard is still alive, for her "rebel nature" controls half her heart. Indeed, her physical desire for Abelard renders

any service to God senseless and hollow; she can apply neither her mind nor her heart fully to her spiritual tasks as Abelard continues to exist in her imagination:

> I waste the Matin lamp in sighs for thee,
> Thy image steals between my God and me,
> Thy voice I seem in ev'ry hymn to hear,
> With ev'ry bead I drop too soft a tear. (267-70)

In Eloisa's subjective perspective, Parkin argues, "God and Abelard are parallel" (*Poetic Workmanship* 72). Her desire to diminish the tension between her love for Abelard and her love for God has fused the images of them in her mind, but rather than escape tension altogether she has merely cultivated an unproductive tension. She pleads with Abelard first to

> Come, if thou dar'st, all charming as thou art!
> Oppose thy self to heav'n; dispute my heart;
> Come, with one glance of those deluding eyes,
> Blot out each idea of the skies. (281-84)

She longs for him to return to her so that she can renounce her duties as a nun entirely:

> Take back that grace, those sorrows, and those tears,
> Take back my fruitless penitence and pray'rs,
> Snatch me, just mounting, from the blest abode,
> Assist the Fiends and tear me from my God! (285-88)

So desperate is she to resolve the tension that she wants Abelard to replace her service to God entirely, to obviate the need for her prayers—which were never genuine but rather rooted in her despair over the loss of her lover—and, essentially to be her god, fulfilling

her spiritual and material needs. But, in the very next line, she insists in her passion that she would rather him leave her entirely, even in her memory, so that she can live without tension:

> No, fly me, fly me! far as Pole from Pole;
> Rise *Alps* between us! and whole oceans roll!
> Ah come not, write not, think not once of me,
> Nor share one pang of all I felt for thee.
> Thy oaths I quit, thy memory resign,
> Forget, renounce me, hate whate'er was mine. (289-94)

She would be almost as content if he vanished entirely as her imagination conceives of no distinction between God and Abelard; it has turned inward and desires only to escape tension by having one image entirely dominate the other. Indeed, Fairer writes, it seems "almost as though it hardly mattered which of the two images fully possessed her" (45). Because she will not accept the tension that best becomes her, she is unable to live in a way that affirms her identity. At the end of the poem, she longs for death, as she believes it to be the only way to escape her passions, but, as Parkin notes, death "can bring [her struggle] to an end" but it is only "an end, not a solution" (*Poetic Workmanship* 73).

To love both God and Abelard properly, Eloisa needs an integrated being that responds to both as is fitting for her human nature. When she combines her desire for each of them into one passion, she fails to observe the crucial distinctions between them—and between the lower and higher elements of her own being. She diminishes her own identity as she seeks to escape the tension, for "we acknowledge the uneasy paradox hidden at the very center of our nature, and which we are always tempted to dissolve in

the interests of a more stable, though limited and false, identity" (Bogel 121). Mark writes that to give up either part of her nature, "though it would end her torment, would be a surrender of some part of her reality, a partial denial of the identity that defines her . . ." (*A Life* 326). In her pride, Eloisa, like Belinda, attempts to dissolve the tension that is an inherent part of her nature. She attempts to merge both her natures into one, thereby diminishing the distinctions between them, while Belinda swings entirely from one extreme to the next, passionately embracing one and then the other but never cultivating a productive tension between them. Both misuse the imagination, and the imagination, for Pope, is one of mankind's greatest glories, for, as it affirms both halves of his nature, it can raise him to the highest stature as becomes his status as man.

## Chapter Three: A Safeguard of Mystery:

## "Look On Heav'n With More than Mortal Eyes"

Ultimately, Pope recognized, to know oneself is to accept paradox: the paradox of one's own nature. Man's middle position on the Great Chain of Being consists of both spiritual and material qualities, and he must integrate both aspects of his being, holding them in productive tension in order to best possess each. In order to best understand truth and maintain a unified nature, man must accept the tension between the two parts of his being and give thorough expression to each. Chesterton's examination of the relationship between the martyr and the suicide is helpful here; he notes that, while they may look superficially the same, one demonstrates acceptance of the nature of man, the other the denial of it. "Obviously," he writes, "the suicide is the opposite of the martyr. A martyr is a man who cares so much for something outside of him that he forgets his own personal life. A suicide is a man who cares so little for anything outside him, that he wants to see that last of everything" (*Orthodoxy* 230). The martyr recognizes the paradoxes that comprise his nature and embraces them, affirming life despite inescapable tensions. The suicide, who despairs rather than confesses, cannot live with such tension and instead destroys himself. Man's acceptance of his position gives the fullest expression to all the parts of his nature; a suicide's action is a perversion of a martyr's action because he is not expressing his true nature.

In the second epistle of *Essay on Man,* Pope describes the mystery that results from the tension within man that stems from his dual nature:

> This light and darkness in our chaos join'd,
>
> What shall divide? The God within the mind.

Extremes in Nature equal ends produce,

In Man they join to some mysterious use. (II.203-06)

In his "Epistle to Bathurst" (1733), Pope alters the lines to describe the relationship of men within society:

Hear then the truth: "Tis Heav'n each Passion sends,

"And diff'rent men directs to diff'rent ends.

**"**Extremes in Nature equal good produce,

"Extremes in Man concur to gen'ral use." (161-64)

While his focus shifts and the extremes he is discussing differ, Pope repeats himself almost exactly in order to draw attention to the relationship itself, which remains unchanged. In a footnote to *Essay on Man* in the Twickenham edition of the text, Maynard Mack notes the relationship between the two passages. In *An Essay on Man,* "the emphasis is on man the individual, and the paradox is the co-operation between vice and virtue in a particular person. [In the "Epistle to Bathurst"] Pope is thinking in terms of society, e.g. that the spendthrift is balanced by the miser" (80n). Thus he emphasizes the productivity of such tension in man's communal and individual actions; it is present in the objective world and in man's subjective understanding. Pope recognizes in all of life the same framework of antithetical tension he presents in individual couplets in his poetry. Such tension reflects mystery, which is a crucial part of his understanding of truth. In *Windsor Forest,* Pope depicts the good life of one who "observe[s] a mean" and "follows Nature" (251-52): he "looks on Heav'n with more than mortal Eyes" (253). The more integrated one's being is, the closer one comes to understanding all of truth that is

accessible to man. He is also best able to transcend his limitations and to look on the aspects of truth that reflect heaven: mysterious truths beyond man's reason.[8]

Self-knowledge requires knowledge of one's limitations, but it also requires acceptance of one's glories and the proper cultivation of them. Properly tempered and expressed, reason is one of man's greatest glories. An individual must "follow Nature" in responding to his own "ruling passion," and, Pope writes, "Reason is here no guide, but still a guard: / 'Tis hers to rectify, not overthrow, / And treat this passion more as friend than foe" (*Essay on Man* II. 161-63). Reason ought to stand as a guard over an individual's ruling passion, but not guide and dominate it. Reason can temper the passions and "rectify" them when they tend toward extremes. But reason must remain a "friend" to other faculties and be tempered by them in order to function at its fullest capacity. Critics who write "drily plain, without invention's aid" ultimately "leave the sense, their learning to display, / And those explain the meaning quite away" (*Essay on Criticism* 114, 116-17). Part of the whole truth is lost—its meaning is explained "quite away"—if it is subjected entirely to reason. Likewise, critics who fail to observe the proper relationship of whole to parts in the criticism, like a gardener who fails to cultivate the proper relationship between the two in a garden, pridefully attempt to over-systematize the parts. Full understanding of a single part, which is attainable through reason, is preferred to an understanding of the whole, which requires man to confront that the whole truth is beyond his understanding. Any preference to one "one small sect" in

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[8] In "'See Mystery to Mathematics fly!': Pope's *Dunciad* and the Critique of Religious Rationalism," B. W. Young argues that Book IV of Pope's *Dunciad* is as much a critique of the Christian Rationalism of philosophers such as Descartes and Leibniz that denies mystery as it is a critique of deism. Pope's critique reveals his concern with the downplaying of mysterious truths whatever the source of such disregard.

criticism leads a prideful critic—who fails to cultivate the integration of his own being, prioritizing his reason—to conclude that "All are damn'd beside" (*Essay on Criticism* 397). The result of such criticism, Pope concludes, is illumination of only partial truths or the distortion of truth: "Meanly they seek the Blessing to confine, / And force that Sun but on a Part to Shine" (398-99). Misuse of reason disrupts in man the "blessing" of understanding. Even at its full capacity, reason cannot reveal the mysterious aspects of truth that are hinted at in Nature and reflected in art. As Pascal argues, "Reason's last step is the recognition that there are an infinite number of things which are beyond it" (qtd. in Kreeft 238). Kreeft continues, expounding on Pascal's idea: "Reason itself tells us that God transcends reason" (239). Reason can recognize the existence of paradox but cannot describe how paradox works. Gene Edward Veith defines paradox as "a statement that contains two apparently contradictory ideas, both of which taken together are true" (137). Just as antithesis juxtaposes two ideas without conflating them, man's reason can grasp contradictory ideas and accept both as true. But the relationship between the two ideas remains outside the grasp of reason. Antithesis, like paradox, systemizes contradictory ideas, making them evident to human reason without diminishing the mystery that underlies them. In his artistry, Pope both safeguards and hints at mystery.

Pope's recognition of mystery influenced his gardening design. One significant manifestation of mystery in Pope's garden was the hermitage. Hunt has pointed out that the hermitage and the suggestion of a hermit were significant in eighteenth-century landscape gardens (*Figure in the Landscape* 58-59). Rooted in classical tradition, a hermitage ultimately stood as the guardian of mystery. Pope's grotto, where he spent much time in solitude, working to the sound of flowing water, was initially a necessity,

for it connected the grassy stretch between his house and the river Thames to his garden, which was on the other side of the road. But it soon became one of the dearest places in the garden for Pope. Like the grottoes in the gardens of many of his contemporaries, it served a double function as both hermitage and nymphaeum, a "natural cave with a spring," which, in classical tradition, was home to nymphs and the Muses. Pope referred to himself as "the hermit of Twickenham" and William Kent, in his sketches of the garden at Twickenham, drew Pope ensconced in his grotto (Hunt, "What's Water" 10). Yet Pope also frequently had visitors to his grotto, enjoying the exchange of ideas with them as they shared in the beauty and the seclusion. Pope's response to Fortescue in *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated* (1733), Hunt notes, reveals Pope's delight in the solitude as well as the quiet community his grotto provided him:

> Know, all the distant din that world can keep
> Rolls o 'er my grotto, and but soothes my sleep.
> There, my retreat the best companions grace,
> Chiefs out of war, and Statesman, out of place.
> There St John mingles with my friendly bowl,
> The feast of reason and the flow of soul. (123-28)

From his grotto, Pope received inspiration from the great minds of his contemporaries who visited his garden, and, at the same time, from the Muses, who were "protectors of the arts and sciences" (Batey 55) and provided inspiration to an individual artist as he traced nameless graces or pursued the genius of a place.

When a hermit sits in his hermitage, cultivating his soul and preserving spiritual mysteries, or an artist sits in his cave, receiving inspiration from the Muses and creating

art out of natural elements, each effectively serves his work only if the God-like and animal-like elements of his being are properly integrated. Withdrawal, which encourages considerable attention to the sensitive soul or the imagination, can, as it did for Belinda and Eloisa, diminish the full functioning of mind and body; or, it can do the opposite and increase self-knowledge as one accurately perceives and responds to one's reflection. Thus, although the existence of a hermit in a garden hints at the existence of mysterious truths, a hermit is not privy to mysteries that are hidden from man; rather, he is functioning as is most fitting to his nature and, as a result, is best able to overcome his limitations and use reason appropriately. Pope worked on poetry or gardening plans in his grotto, revealing truths attainable by reason without attempting to grasp those beyond it. Both what he revealed and what he concealed were in accordance with man's nature, so that his expressions of truth at once overcome human weakness and observe human limitation. He knew that nameless graces beyond man's full understanding could be hinted at through artistry, but that their full source and end remained hidden.

Pope believed the atmosphere he cultivated in his grotto and garden provided the potential for the greatest development of the private self and in turn enabled visitors to best live their public lives. Self-knowledge that entails an acceptance of paradox, in Pope's view, increases one's sensitivity to mysterious truths. Hunt argues that the "conflation of outer and inner worlds is one of the most fascinating achievements of the whole landscape movement" ("What's Water" 7) for the world outside of the garden becomes more visible from within the garden, and a full view of the beauties inside a garden is intertwined with a perspective of the larger landscape. Further, landscape gardeners deliberately cultivated variety and arranged multiple perspectives of a single

object and multiple views of the larger landscape in order to reflect the complexity—and subjectivity—of the human mind. Pope does not dismiss the significance of subjective perceptions, for in his *Epistle to Cobham* he notes that "the diff'rence is as great between / The optics seeing, as the objects seen" (23-24). But, with his understanding of principles drawn from a universal Nature, Pope never believed that subjective perceptions overrode the capacity a gardener or an author had to demand certain turns of mind. Even as he recognized the interrelation between public and private, a common distinction in the eighteenth century, in his grotto as in his garden as a whole, he preserved the boundaries between the two rather than conflated them. Hunt describes the "intermediary" role of the grotto between the two worlds, even as the views it permitted upheld the distinctions between the two:

> Between the ever-moving river with its transient scenes and figures and the garden with its quiet temple, the poet in his cave—whatever that cave may have represented to him—was intermediary. On the garden side, he had assembled all the instruments and emblems of the life of contemplation . . .. On the other side lay the traffic of the river, the great world seen in a passing show (*Figure in the Landscape* 50-51).

Pope describes the view from his grotto in a letter to Edward Blount in June 1725: "From the River Thames, you see thro' my arch up a walk of the wilderness to a kind of open temple, wholly composed of shells in the rustic manner; and from that distance under the Temple you look down thro' a sloping arcade of trees, and see the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing, as thro' a perspective glass" (Sherburn II.296). The

grotto provides a glimpse of both the private garden and public riverbank. Its function was to unite them, but the contrasting images remained distinct.

Ultimately, Pope recognized, an individual is effective publicly only if his passions are rightly ordered with his reason and if both are in proper relationship to his soul; in turn, the outer space of the grotto helps him to order his inner life rightly. The design of Pope's grotto cultivated this wholeness in its visitors and in Pope himself, permitting a "feast of reason" and a "flow of soul," most significantly through the use of water. Water, Hunt notes, is from Neoplatonism onward "identified as the emblem of the soul in generation, the spiritually active and manifest through the natural world" ("What's Water" 4). The soul, as we have seen, enables man to maintain a proper relationship between his two natures. Functioning much like the soul, the water in Pope's cave both calmed and stimulated the mind: it prevented over-activity unfitting to man's nature but also provided diversity to keep the mind of the viewer engaged. In the letter to Edward Blount, Pope describes the gentle echoes created throughout the grotto: "I found a spring of the clearest water, which falls in a perpetual rill, that echoes thro' the cavern day and night" (Sherburn II.296). Pope frequently spoke of the solace the sound of water in the grotto provided him. In 1720, in the early stages of his development of the grotto, Pope composed these verses to Lady Montagu:

> What are the falling rills, the pendant Shades,
> The morning Bow'rs, the Evening Colonnades?
> But soft Recesses for th' uneasy mind.
> To sigh un-heard in, to the passing Wind. (2.142)

Even as it provided a sanctuary, the water in the grotto also displayed Pope's ability to trace the Genius of the Place and cultivate creativity. The 1748 visitor to Pope's garden describes the "Diversity of Purposes" to which the "Spring of Water is distributed": Here it gurgles in a gushing Rill thro' fractur'd Ores and Flints; there it drips from depending Moss and Shells; here again, washing Beds of Sand and Pebbles, it rolls in Silver Streamlets; and there it rushes out in Jets and Fountains; while the Caverns of the Grot incessantly echo with the soothing Murmur of aquatick Sounds" (239). As the anonymous visitor continues, he likens the source of Pope's cultivation of diversity in his grotto to the source of the nameless graces in poetry: "supernal Powers and incorporeal Beings" who reflect the soul and encourage a response from the God-like aspects of man's being even as creating enjoyment for the animal-like half. He writes,

> To multiply this Diversity, and still more increase the Delight, *Mr. Pope's* poetick Genius has introduced a kind of Machinery, which performs the same Part in the Grotto that the supernal Powers and incorporeal Beings act in the heroick Species of Poetry: This is effected by disposing Plates of Looking glass in the obscure Parts of the Roof and Sides of the Cave, where a sufficient Force of Light is wanting to discover the Deception, while the other Parts, the Rills, Fountains, Flints, Pebbles, &c. being duly illuminated, are so reflected by the various posited Mirrors, as, without exposing the Cause, every Object is multiplied, and its Position represented in a surprising Diversity. Cast your eyes upward, and you half shudder to see Cataracts of Water precipitating over your Head, from impending Stones and Rocks, while salient Spouts rise in rapid Streams at

> your Feet: Around, you are equally surprised with flowing Rivulets and rolling Waters, that rush over airey Precipices, and break amongst Heaps of ideal Flints and Spar. Thus, by a fine Taste and happy Management of Nature, you are presented with an undistinguishable Mixture of Realities and Imagery. (239)

Pope's use of water cultivates surprise; its soul-like capacity engages the mind as it soothes it, and provides a haven for man's body as it appeals to his senses. The design of the grotto encourages the man who is willing to respond to the beauty around him with his whole being. For Pope, the distinction between "Realities" and "Imagery" remained crucial, but his artistry accommodated both. The imagery is indicative of mystery; much like dressing, it covers even as it accentuates. Realities are magnified so that, even to the subjective perception of his viewer, they are more easily recognized. The water follows the Genius of the Place, expressing its immaterial presence in the material but not making the source itself visible, for it multiplies the diversity of the water "without exposing the Cause." Richard Grave's description of Pope's influence on Prior Park reflects a similar use of water: "Good use is made of the various rills of water which appear to issue from a rock, stricken by the wand of Moses, (a statue of whom is plac'd above it) and trickling down the precipice, are collected below into a serpentine river, which is ornamented by a fictitious bridge, designed by Mr. Pope, to conceal its termination" (qtd. in Brownell 210). Pope's deliberate placement of a bridge conceals the end of the water; his artistry again observes human limitations, reflecting the source and end of art but not fully revealing symbolically what should remain hidden from man.

Pope magnifies the diversity of his water effects partly through the use of mirrors and reflections. But unlike the mirror in which Belinda sees herself, these mirrors serve not to reflect Pope himself or his visitors themselves and thus do not become more subject to a skewed interpretation. Instead, they enlarge the truths outside of man suggested by the atmosphere of the cave itself. Pope published *Verses on a Grotto by the River Thames at Twickenham, composed of Marbles, Spars, and Minerals* in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in January 1741. He writes,

> Thou who shalt stop, where *Thames'* translucent Wave
> Shines a broad Mirrour thro' the Shadowy Cave;
> Where lingering Drops from Mineral Roofs distill,
> And pointed Crystals break the sparkling Rill,
> Unpolish'd Gemms no Ray on Pride bestow,
> And latent Metals innocently glow:
> Approach. Great NATURE studiously behold!
> And eye the Mine without a Wish for Gold.
> Approach: But aweful! Lo th' Aegerian Grott,
> Where, nobly-pensive, ST. JOHN sate and thought. (qtd. in Batey 54)

The mirrors in the "Shadowy Cave" cause "latent Metals"—what is hidden in the darkness of the cave—to "innocently glow." Pope is clear about what sort of response the effects of his grotto ought to elicit from visitors, for he says that his "Unpolish'd Gemms no Ray on Pride bestow." Although Pope imported many of his gems, he left them unpolished with a rough, natural look. They do not appeal to the superficial taste of those who pridefully would impose artifice too greatly on Nature. Rather, Pope insists, visitors

should “Approach” full of awe at the glories of Nature that are revealed in his dim cave. In the 1725 letter to Edward Blount, after describing the view of the outside world from the Grotto, Pope transitions to discuss the view of the inside:

> When you shut the doors of the Grotto, it becomes on the instant, from a luminous Room, a *Camera obscura;* on the Walls of which the objects of the River, Hill, Woods, and Boats, are forming a moving picture in their visible Radiations: And when you have a mind to light it up, it affords you a very different Scene; it is finished with Shells interspersed with Pieces of Looking-glass in angular forms; and in the Cieling is a Star of the same Material, at which when a Lamp (of an orbicular Figure of thin Alabaster) is hung in the Middle, a thousand pointed Rays glitter and are reflected over the Place. (Sherburn II.296-97)

When he closed the door of his Grotto, Pope could withdraw entirely inward. He could attend to his own soul or misuse his imagination, serving it rather than relying on it to cultivate unity in his being as he observed the mysteries that surround him. The mirrors observed man’s limitations and indicated a strong relationship between beauty and mystery. A hermit—like any individual, Pope believed—best attains self-knowledge in the context of larger truths outside of himself. Such truths are often paradoxical, outside the reach of reason, and remain mysterious to man.

Pope uses antitheses in his poetry to present contrasting ideas in much the same way the succession of scenes in a garden juxtaposes contrasts. When Pope places antithetical terms in a state of tension, he assumes the existence of a transcendent standard and depicts truth that neither term can reflect on its own; such a standard is the

source, test, and end of art, and, while reason can reveal to man that such a standard exists, it is ultimately beyond man's purely rational comprehension. A fully-integrated man, who cultivates a productive tension between his reason and passions, between his mind and body, and between his private and public life, is best able to pursue truth, for he does not diminish mystery in his quest to grasp it. In both his life and his art, he cultivates the tension rather than seeking to diminish it. The antitheses in Pope's poetry are "not artificial," as Chesterton argues, for they reflect the "element of paradox [that] runs through the whole of existence itself" ("Art of Satire" 583). The form of Pope's poetry, he believed, enabled him to snatch a "Grace beyond the Reach of Art." Antitheses in creation are reflective of man's nature and traceable by man; paradoxes are best understood by men with an accurate self-understanding. The order in variety that Pope affirms, the harmony he upholds through tension, and the nameless graces he depicts in his poetry and garden are all indicative of his understanding of mystery—of transcendent truths beyond man's understanding but not beyond his recognition.

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