

# Dialogue, Heterogeneity, and *An Essay on Criticism* by Alexander Pope

Zhang Denghan

## ABSTRACT

This article, based on Bakhtinian dialogism, explores the disparity between Nature proposed in Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* on the one hand and his practices of criticisms on the other, a disparity brought about by the use of dialogue and heterogeneous voices. Pope assumes that Nature, the universal and transcendental standard, guides literary creativity and criticism; to understand Nature demands the laborious study of the classics and of the critical rules developed from ancient times by European critics. However, irreconcilable voices are found in Pope's discourses, which render ridiculous his self-assumed, taken-for-granted unity between Nature and criticism. The heterogeneity of his discourse is demonstrated in three aspects: (1) the ambiguous state of Nature: Popean Nature is never universally accepted, clearly defined, and faithfully practiced, but represents his monologic voice surrounded by many others; (2) the critical rules and tradition: tradition is too polyphonic and heterogeneous to be synthesized in a systematic, monologic discourse, whereas Pope's imitation of the classics and his endorsement of critical rules display the dialogue between the ancient and modern—the ancient can offer some examples for the modern, while the modern can reinterpret the classics in a new light; (3) Pope's dialogue with his contemporaries: in the *Essay* he apparently speaks as an authority, but he also paid painful attention to the response of contemporary readers and would revise his poetry accordingly—with the intention not to follow Nature but to retaliate. Thus, Pope's criticisms manifest the gist of Bakhtinian dialogism to some extent. Pope's discourses, incorporating ancient and modern voices, demonstrate the inevitability of polyphony and heterogeneity.

**KEYWORDS:** Alexander Pope, Mikhail Bakhtin, *An Essay on Criticism*, dialogism, Nature, tradition

\* Received: June 17, 2010; Accepted: November 17, 2011

Zhang Denghan, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

E-mail: zhangdenghan@yahoo.com.tw

# 對話、異質性、及亞歷山大·波普 之《批評論》

張登翰\*

## 摘 要

本文借巴克汀 (Mikhail Bakhtin) 之對話理論 (dialogism), 探討波普 (Alexander Pope) 在其《批評論》 (*An Essay on Criticism*) 中所標榜之「模仿」說。波普認為創作和批評必須遵循一普遍超然之法則, 亦即「天道」 (Nature); 而欲明白天道, 必須勤奮鑽研傳統經典, 以及學習歐陸批評家自古以來所發展出之批評法則。然而, 根據《批評論》中之論述, 以及波普之創作經驗, 所謂「模仿古人」說實則問題重重, 矛盾百出。從對話理論之觀點, 問題可從三個層面討論: (一) 天道之本質: 天道並未如波普所言, 發揮普遍超然之影響力, 且波普一生也未遵循之; (二) 波普對傳統之論述: 傳統實為一錯綜複雜、充滿異質元素之大雜燴, 不能以單一純粹之系統化理論予以定位; 所謂學習傳統, 實際上是今人與古人產生「對話」——不單是古人能提供今人創作典範, 今人亦能重新詮釋古人經典、賦予新的意義; (三) 波普與其當代之對話: 波普表面上說話口氣有如權威, 但實際上他並非一言堂式的批評家; 他相當重視當代讀者對其詩作之反應, 且常常據以修改自己詩作。波普之「模仿古人」說, 其實某種程度上符合巴克汀之對話論。《批評論》中揉合古今理論, 更印證了「眾聲喧嘩」 (polyphony) 和「異質性」 (heterogeneity) 之必然。

**關鍵詞:** 波普、巴克汀、《批評論》、對話理論、天道、傳統

---

\* 張登翰, 文藻外語學院英文系專任助理教授。  
E-mail: zhangdenghan@yahoo.com.tw

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 . . . .  
 (Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* 161-65)

“What! Leave the combat out!” exclaims the knight;  
 Yes, or we must renounce the Stagyrite.  
 “Not so, by heav'n!” he answers in a rage,  
 “Knights, squires, and steeds, must enter on the stage.”  
 So vast a throng the stage can ne'er contain.  
 “Then build a new, or act it in a plain.”  
 (Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* 279-84)

## I. Introduction: Pope's Ambivalent Discourse

### A. Pope's “Challenge” to the Absolute Critical Rules

Alexander Pope recognizes the insufficiency of the critical rules developed by European critics, rules which he affirms as “nature methodized” (89)<sup>1</sup> and which, therefore, are supposed to be universally applicable and accepted. The ancients might violate their own rules, however, while moderns can do the same on rare occasions (161-65). In the fabricated dialogue between Don Quixote and John Dennis in *An Essay on Criticism* the latter, speaking like a clownish pedant, proclaims the authority of Aristotle and sticks to the dramatic conventions, while the former holds a more flexible view and asserts the necessity of conforming to the need of actual performances. Pope's ambivalent attitude toward the classical rules emerges here—in principle, Pope must agree with Dennis, since he elevates the status of those rules to that of Nature. Yet Quixote's represents Pope's true voice: deviation from the universal, unchanged Nature/rules becomes indispensable in actual performances—a situation that emerges only when artists are “compelled by need.”

This “license” contradicts Pope's apotheosis of the critical rules. In order to regulate literary expression, theorists from the ancient ages to the modern have devised “rules,” and to copy Nature, Pope asserts, is to obey

---

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from Alexander Pope in my discussion, if the source is not specifically marked, are taken from *An Essay on Criticism*.

these rules (140). Consequently, the rules must be as universal, unchanged, unified, and all-embracing as Nature. Generally speaking, Pope places the ancient above the modern in terms of importance, since the former can discover “nature methodized” for the latter to follow. Yet culture for him degenerates because writers and critics fail to follow transcendental, unmoved Nature.

## **B. Ambivalent Discourse and Ancient-Modern Dialogue**

Pope’s reverence of critical rules reveals his reliance on imitation with regard to literary creation and critical judgment. Imitation prevailed as the major creative mode in neoclassical Britain: all poets and critics, as Pope argues in *An Essay on Criticism*, are supposed to study the classics day and night in order to understand “unerring Nature”—“the source, and end, and test of art”—and frame their own critical judgment accordingly (68-73, 118-40). He praises the sacredness of the ancient classics (181-84). For most of the so-called “conservative” writers like Pope, this sacredness was beyond dispute, and it was presumptuous to attempt to transcend the achievement of Homer or Virgil. Theoretically speaking, a culture with such a guide for creativity and judgment would treat the Quixote-Dennis episode in the *Essay* merely as a comic relief, a rare exception to the rules. The ancient masters exhibit the universal, harmonious essence of Nature, while critics in practice must sometimes “[n]eglect the rules” and disregard some “trifles” in order to achieve a valid and sound evaluation (261-62). Evidently some disparity looms between Nature and critical rules. The existence of this “exception” to the rules confirms their insufficiency to cover all aspects of creativity and criticism.

The exaltation of the ancient was often accompanied by the negation of the modern.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, some neoclassical critics took a moderate stance

---

<sup>2</sup> With the publication of “An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning” (1690), Sir William Temple brought the critical issue of the contrast between the ancient and the modern to England (Sutherland 394, D. Griffin 48). Henry Reynolds complains that the greatest disparity between the ancient and the modern writers lies in the latter’s “general ignorance . . . in any of the mysteries and hidden properties of nature” (193). The prominent supporters of the ancient also include William Wotton (*Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* [1694]), Jonathan Swift (*The Battle of the Books* [1704]), and Joseph Addison (*The Spectator*, No. 62 [1711]). For them, the classical writers offer people “the two Noblest of Things, which are Sweetness and Light” (Swift 103).

in this debate.<sup>3</sup> The diverse responses to the ancient-modern debate manifest the multiplicity and heterogeneity of neoclassical culture, and the interaction of such various voices testifies to the contemporary prevalence of “dialogue.” This “dialogue” contains two aspects: that between the ancient and modern on the one hand, and that among contemporaries on the other. Whether they took an extreme or moderate stance, the neoclassical critics always began by comparing the ancient and the modern, and they would respond to their antagonists. Enmeshed in “an intricate web of social and political connections,” therefore, neoclassical writers produced mostly “occasional” works which were prompted by public events (D. Griffin 37). Writing at that time was “an essentially social practice, at every stage of literary production,” while “conversation primed the writer’s pump” (D. Griffin 38). Poetry “was near the centre of conversation in a variety of public places and among a range of social groups” (Hunter 163). Neoclassical literature was neither dominated by those who spoke as authorities, nor by some transcendental standard which regulated all poets and critics; rather, the reader was “spoken to as an equal” and dialogue became a vogue (Dobrée 3, 8). In Restoration England “the tradition of the gentleman writer” prevailed—such a writer did not push individuality too far; he was always conscious of his readers and demanded “easy and unimpeded communication”—consequently, even much of the contemporary verse was dialogic and this period became an “age of discussion” (Sutherland 414-15).

### **C. Bakhtinian Theory as a Possible Strategy for Interpreting Pope’s Heterogeneous Voices**

In this “age of discussion,” Pope’s literary creativity and criticism did not emerge—and should not have been regarded—as a sheer monologic

---

<sup>3</sup> In the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* (1668), Dryden, with Neander as his mouthpiece, does not separate the ancient and the modern as antithetical or opposing categories. He believes that modern poets can benefit from their imitation of the classics, and he never belittles the achievement of his contemporaries. For him, “imitation” does not render the modern as inferior to the ancient in terms of literary achievement. Johnson argues that it is prejudice to praise the ancient and denounce the modern unreservedly, and that the merits of literary works appear only through comparisons—of both the ancient and the modern (“Preface” 320). Edward Young considers that the ancient is not necessarily superior to the modern: “by the bounty of nature we are as strong as our predecessors”; it is unnecessary to worship the ancients blindly because this will restrain our genius (332). Joshua Reynolds believes it necessary for artists to learn from the ancients because it teaches them something which may escape their observation while they study nature alone; he also encourages them to learn from both the ancient and the modern (346).

process; they were both involved in incessant negotiation, appropriation, and confrontation between/among various voices, including the ancient and the modern. His elevation of the Greek and Roman classics did not suppress all other voices to be silent, nor drive him to go behind his predecessors as if he were listening to God's revelation. In other words, his "imitation" succeeded as a dialogue between ancient and modern voices, not as a direct, unconditional copy of a transcendental, universal, ideal model. In this light it is no wonder that we find exceptions to the critical rules in the Quixote-Dennis episode. From the Bakhtinian viewpoint, our verbal performance "inevitably orients itself with respect to previous performances in the same sphere, both those by the same author and those by other authors" (Voloshinov 95). An idea begins to exist "only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas . . ." The realm of the existence of an idea "is not individual consciousness but dialogic communion *between* consciousnesses" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 88). "To understand an utterance means to understand it in its contemporary context and our own"; without such an understanding, meaning does not exist (Bakhtin and Medvedev 121-22). True understanding "is inherently responsive" (Bakhtin, "Problem of Speech Genres" 68) and "dialogic in nature" (Voloshinov 102). This "dialogue" will continue and form the cultural heritage: "individual voices take shape and character in response to and in anticipation of other voices" (Bialostosky 214). In a true dialogue, all voices exist on equal terms, without any transcendental standard to guide or even predetermine them.

This dialogic condition contradicts our general understanding of Pope's arguments in *An Essay on Criticism*. He affirms a universal, unified, and unitary power which governs wit and judgment, be it Nature or tradition. Yet his absorption of heterogeneous voices—both ancient and modern—and his responsiveness to contemporary voices negate the claim for a transcendental poetic/aesthetic standard, and invite a Bakhtinian reading. Fusing the ancient and the modern, the *Essay*—the demonstration of Pope's laborious study of classics and responses to contemporary issues in the humanistic, dialogic culture—is necessarily multiple-voiced and resistant to any synthetic interpretation. I intend to discuss in three sections the disparity between Popean Nature and his practices of criticisms, all of them concerning: (1) the ambiguous state of Nature, (2) Pope's ambiguous attitude towards tradition, and (3) Pope's dialogue with contemporary society. This discussion will not

end in resolving the aforementioned disparity between his ideal and his practices, but, rather, in highlighting the inevitability of polyphony and heterogeneity.

## II. The Ambiguous State of Nature: The Tension between Poepan Nature and His Dialogic Inclination

### A. Pope's Monologic Tendency: His Belief in Nature and the Canon

Pope in *An Essay on Criticism* assumes Nature as universal and unchanged. Nature “[w]hich from the first has shone on ages past, / Enlightens the present, and shall warm the last” (402-03). She always sheds the same true light on all ages: “Regard not then if wit be old or new, / But blame the False and value still the True” (406-07). In order to learn the essence of Nature, Pope encourages the arduous study of the canon (124); “True ease in writing comes from Art, not Chance” (362). Besides, he considers that a poet can express nothing new but what “oft was thought” (298).<sup>4</sup>

Strictly speaking, Pope never constructs a “theory” of Nature in the modern sense. He merely highlights some of her vague features (68-73), identifies her as “Homer” (135), “critical rules” (140), and “what oft was thought” (298), but leaves her undefined and unexplained—perhaps she is too holy to be defined: “All nature is but art unknown to thee” (“An Essay on Man” 1.289). It is nevertheless incredible that an unknown standard may function as universally accepted truth. This contradicts his assertion of Nature as “what oft was thought.” Far from being a theoretical contradiction, it actually exposes the coexistence of heterogeneous voices in Pope’s *opus magnum*. Therefore, the “center” of his arguments—the essence of Nature *per*

---

<sup>4</sup> This view deviates from Sidney’s theory of imitation, and verifies the existence of heterogeneous voices in tradition: Sidney insinuates the necessity of creative imitation as well as the possibility of dialogue between poet and Nature by declaring that “Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done . . . Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden” (145)—a statement which might be regarded as presumptuous by Pope. Sidney’s view stems from Renaissance humanism, which affirms the potential and status of human beings. Pope’s poetics, however, belittles individual creativity, which must yield to the direction of universal and stable Nature/classics. The purpose of studying the classics is to grasp the eternal, transcendental critical principles. Pope’s disagreement with Sidney also reveals the heterogeneity of the “essence” of Nature: the pure, unified, and consistent interpretation of Nature can be achieved only by negating and silencing various voices. No two critics may hold exactly the same view on Nature; the essence of the so-called “eternal truths” remains unclear. Nature is consequently rendered in an ambiguous state: the supposedly ultimate and unchanged guide of art fails to maintain consistency, and her guidance looms questionable.

se—becomes a mystery, a void, yielding to no evaluation from the mundane world but assuming to subordinate all discourses to her evaluation. The only way for poets and critics to “know” Nature must come indirectly from the study of the classics and of the critical rules. At best these are nothing but limited reflections of Nature, not Nature herself.

After all, Pope composes not *An Essay on Nature*, but *An Essay on “Criticism”*—this title indicates that he concentrates on practice (criticism) itself, not on the explication of the inexplicable ideal (Nature). He portrays the picture of an ideal critic, argues for the proper relationship of wit and judgment, criticizes the decline and fall of contemporary culture, and comments on the arch-critics in western civilization—all of these are related to practice, not to Nature herself. Though he acknowledges some exceptions to the so-called “nature methodized” in the Quixote-Dennis episode, he generally takes for granted the perfect match between Nature and criticism. Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Erasmus, and William Walsh—Pope believes—exemplify such a match. He denies the disparity between “things-as-they-ought-to-be” and “things-as-they-are,” because Nature is the unchanged One, the power which reconciles all discourses in “oughtness”: “All discord, harmony not understood; / All partial evil, universal good . . . Whatever is, is right” (“An Essay on Man” 1.291-92, 294). Under the guidance of Nature, poets and critics will necessarily maintain a harmonious relationship and demonstrate an essentially unified and coherent voice. Nevertheless, Popean Nature (“things-as-they-ought-to-be”) is neither universally accepted like the sunshine (470-73) nor practiced by Pope himself.

So apparently monologic is Pope’s belief in transcendental Nature/truth(s), and so authoritative are Pope’s tone and language: he means to indoctrinate the “eternal truths” to his readers, and anticipates their unconditional acceptance of his teachings. A monologic discourse, from the Bakhtinian perspective, takes for granted a static condition, in which all voices must yield to an absolute one, which is found in the epic world.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Bakhtin devoted all his life to rejecting monologism and proposing dialogism. Actually “the epic world of the absolute past is inaccessible to personal experience and does not permit an individual, personal point of view or evaluation. One cannot glimpse it, grope for it, touch it; one cannot look at it from just any point of view . . .” (“Epic and Novel” 16). In contrasting epic with novel, Bakhtin argues that the former concentrates on the past, while the latter, the present (“Epic and Novel” 13-14). In the epic and all the “high” genres as well, everything about the past is “valorized to an extreme degree” (“Epic and Novel” 15), while contemporaneity “was reality of a ‘lower’ order in comparison with the epic past. Least of all could it serve as the starting point for artistic ideation or evaluation” because “it



Monologism, however, is doomed to fail because the human being “is always intrinsically chronotopic” (“Forms of Time” 85)—that is, we always think in terms of time and space, and expect responses from others. Dialogue prevails in all cultures even though monologism attempts to suppress it.

In this light, it is no wonder that Pope appreciated Homer and Virgil, who, in Bakhtin’s words, valorized the past “to an extreme degree” and hence negated the possibility of evolution and dialogue. Pope’s presupposition of the existence of an ultimate guide (Nature) in the *Essay* parallels his exaltation of the classical epics. For the epic world, it “is impossible to change, to re-think, to re-evaluate anything in it. . . . One can only accept the epic world with reverence. . . . [I]t is beyond the realm of human activity, the realm in which everything humans touch is altered and re-thought” (Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel” 17)—a statement which reminds us of the “[f]irst follow Nature” stanza (68-73): the “clear, unchanged, universal light” is “still the same.” According to the *Essay*, since Nature the eternal standard does not change, and will necessarily bestow “[I]ife, force, and beauty” on all writers, her true followers must therefore maintain a consistent, homogenous view on wit and judgment. Even with limited potential, such followers are presumed to learn gradually the mystery of Nature and intensify their belief in her. The more writers know her, the more they should agree with each other in their critical opinions, since Nature does not contradict herself.

## B. Pope’s Deviation from Nature

Yet the disparity between Popean Nature and his actual criticisms is too evident to be neglected or denied. The existence of the ultimate and all-embracing Nature basically rejects the possibility of the decline and fall of culture and humanity, because she actively brings “[I]ife, force, and beauty” to all human beings like the sun. Nevertheless, Pope’s career and changing ideas contradict this belief. He was optimistic about the future of human beings in his early poetry such as *Messiah* and *Windsor Forest*. Sometimes he held the progress of literature: he considered that Milton was better than Homer, and Shakespeare than Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus (Weinbrot 80)—a consideration which runs counter to his own belief in the *Essay*. In his

---

is denied an authentic conclusiveness and consequently lacks an essence as well” (“Epic and Novel” 19-20). Bakhtin rejects the possibility of learning from the “absolute past” in the epic world—this “learning” would destroy the absoluteness of the past.

eyes Shakespeare “is not so much an imitator as an instrument of Nature; and it is not just to say that he speaks from her as that she speaks through him” (Pope, “Preface” 535). In other words, Shakespeare achieved what the great Greek dramatists had not done: without much education he “transcended” his predecessors and could contact Nature directly. The glorification of Shakespeare’s inherent creativity belittles the necessity of arduous learning. Besides, the so-called “eternal truths” must exist beyond the flow of time, while the idea of progress, which presupposes the deficiency of Nature, opposes (1) Pope’s reverence of the ancients and (2) the transcendental status of Nature.

However, turning pessimistic and stubbornly presumptuous, he betrayed Nature later in his life. In “Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,” he insists on attacking vice and folly (283-304), insinuating the prevalence of “dunces” and the failure of Nature to guide them. His own criticism, nevertheless, does not shine in “[o]ne clear, unchanged, and universal light,” nor impart “[I]ife, force, and beauty” to his enemies. When Lewis Theobald pointed out certain critical errors in Pope’s edition of *Shakespeare*, the infuriated poet, instead of humbly confessing and amending his own faults, anointed Theobald the King of Dunces in his *Dunciad* (1728). Later on, Colley Cibber offended Pope and consequently became the new King of Dunces in a new version of the *Dunciad* (1743). In the *Dunciad*, he even concludes with the image that dullness presides over the universe—while Nature, the universal light, retreats and disappears. As time went by, dark reality caused Pope to metamorphose into a bitter cynic and destroyed his faith in Nature.

For all the fumbling of many of Pope’s contemporaries, Nature remained a mystery, undefined and unexplained while assumed to be universally acknowledged. Yet his eagerness to disgrace his enemies testifies to the disparity between his ideal and practice. His loss of faith in Nature resulted from his interaction—or “dialogue”—with his contemporaries. The more he interacted with them, the more he blasphemed Nature. Pope’s dismissal of the so-called “dunces” exposes at least two problems: (1) if he blames them for their failure to capture Nature, then Pope violates his own belief that Nature *actively* blesses all poets and critics like the sun—the apotheosis of Nature depends more on her power than on the individual ability to capture her; (2) if Pope laments the decline of humanity and culture, then he negates indirectly the universal and irresistible force of Nature. Besides, an

ideal critic, following the guide of Nature/rules, must not be biased “by favour, or by spite” (633), and can “gladly praise the merit of a foe” (638). He did not judge Dennis, Theobald, and Cibber according to this ideal, and the “satires” worked as a means for his retaliation, not for the defense and propagation of Nature. While he denounced his enemies, he violated his own declaration that “All discord, harmony not understood; / All partial evil, universal good” and that “Whatever is, is right” (“An Essay on Man” 1.291-92, 294)—the “discord” and “partial evil” of his foes were never treated as “right.” He even looked down on Daniel Defoe the novelist, and ranked him as a “dunce” in the *Dunciad* (103, 147). With his “ideal,” he exalts William Walsh, his mentor in writing poetry, to the status of Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Erasmus; with his “ideal,” he reproaches the followers of Don Scotus and Thomas Aquinas for their academic arguments, which are treated as examples of deviation from Nature (444). However, these judgments from the spokesman of Nature were/are not universally accepted. This leads us to doubt the validity of Pope’s declaration of her universal influence. The self-appointed prophet of Nature evidently did not “guide” his foes with absolutely just, standard and reasonable instructions, but continuously vented his anger in sour and vicious satires in the same way as the mad critics whom he criticizes in the *Essay* (610-15) or like the dunces whom he mocks in the *Dunciad*. Pope failed to practice this standard, which he should have had understood most deeply, but he still urged all other poets and critics to follow “unerring Nature.” His criticisms actually humiliate Nature.

From the Bakhtinian perspective, the transcendence of Nature is downgraded in Pope’s attack on his contemporaries, an attack from the spokesman of Nature. In addition to studying the classics, Pope aims to “teach” his contemporaries proper criticism. The targets of his criticism are usually contemporary issues and figures. Whenever one reads the epic, generally speaking, one always understands and interprets it from present perspectives and personal experiences. This is the dialogue between the ancient and the modern. However, Pope presumes the existence of a timeless, universal, and transcendental critical standard, while simultaneously announcing the applicability of this standard to all generations without truly following her himself. Like the epic world described by Bakhtin, Nature can only sustain her sacredness in closedness by holding a distance from human beings. Pope downgrades this sacredness by incorporating his personal

grudges into his discussion and by mediating between the ancient and the modern as well. Consequently, Pope's advice to follow Nature turns out to be an impossible, ironic dream. What truly guided his career was dialogism.

The simultaneous exalting and downgrading of Nature may be owing to the heritage of the Renaissance, the rebirth of the classical culture and the invention of a new one. Such simultaneity does not split Nature into "things-as-they-ought-to-be" and "things-as-they-are"; rather, it questions her absolute transcendence, disrupts Pope's assumed unity between "ideal" and practice, and challenges his "Whatever is, is right"—a statement which claims to reconcile all disharmonious voices. According to Bakhtin, "[i]t was in the Renaissance that the present first began to feel with great clarity and awareness an incomparably closer proximity and kinship to the future than to the past" ("Epic and Novel" 40). This movement initiated the dialogic relationship between the old and the new, while Pope, following its heritage, continued the dialogism which had already been at work. In dialogue, he could no longer "confine" himself to the past; he had to mediate continually between the past and the present, or among his contemporaries. Nature the static model did not truly guide Pope's dynamic career. "Dialogism cannot be resolved; it has no teleology. It is unfinalizable and open ended. . . . [It] defines itself by its refusal of all forms of transcendence, all attempts to unify" (R. Young 76, 80). As he devoted himself to the rebirth of tradition, Pope facilitated the ancient-modern dialogue—and turned down the finalized, self-enclosed status of Nature as well; as he debased his foes by distorting their true images, he betrayed Nature. Guided by Nature, a poet can only express "what oft was thought" at most, but in dialogism the poet's creativity—in Pope's case, it is a sour and bitter creativity—flourishes with endless possibility. Pope yearns for an absolute standard for literary creativity and judgment in the *Essay*, unaware that such a standard cannot emerge from a heterogeneous cultural heritage, nor that he benefited more from dialogue than from unknown Nature.

### III. Multi-Voiced Critical Rules and the Heterogeneous Tradition: Pope's Ambiguous Attitude towards Tradition

#### A. Pope's Polyphonic Arguments on Criticism and the Canon

Pope's affirmation of the universal influence of Nature coexists with his recognition of the limited applicability of critical rules. If such rules, as Pope proclaims, exist as "nature methodized," then the above-mentioned coexistence challenges this proclamation

The lifelong career of Pope consisted of a long series of "dialogues" with the ancient and modern. He embraced whole-heartedly the classics; his advocacy of the Greek and Roman heritage and his translation of Homeric epics demonstrate his self-taught humanist education. He summarizes the essential ideas of (neo)classical poetics in the *Essay*—his ambitious integration of the major ancient Western theories for the benefit of modern poets and critics. It

displays such extent of comprehension, such nicety of distinction, such acquaintance with mankind, and such knowledge both of ancient and modern learning as are not often attained by the mature age and longest experience"; he "consulted the living as well as the dead; he read his compositions to his friends, and was never content with mediocrity when excellence could be attained." (Johnson, "The Life of Pope")

His equation of Nature and Homer serves to justify the authority of literary tradition and the necessity of imitation as well. Moreover, "Pope's best writing . . . is the essence of conversation. It has the quick movement, the boldness and brilliance, which we suppose to be the attributes of the best talk" (Stephen). Following the classical teachings of Aristotle and Horace, he affirms poetry as an imitation and avers the necessity of studying the classical texts laboriously. Imitation for him served as a means to foster his "dialogue" with the ancient masters. His "creative imitation" used the canonized texts "both as grounds for invention and participation." Therefore, his learning

paved the way for his polyphonic discourses.<sup>6</sup>

Although antiquity in the *Essay* is “a source of inspiration, a nature to be imitated and built on, a star to steer by” (Peterson 437), and Pope acknowledged that “the spirit of Homer is alive and well and still speaks powerfully to those who possess generous literary minds” (Shankman 74), he did not follow this spirit blindly and unreservedly. Holding a critical view of the ancient achievements, he discerned their “moral limits” and “the need to be adapted to the modern world” (Weinbrot 77). He did not appreciate Greek morality and theology: for him the Trojan War exemplifies nothing but the barbarity and cruelty of Greek people (Weinbrot 78-79). Therefore, Homer and Nature in fact cannot be identified *as* the same. Homer’s epics must “be adapted to the modern world”—a judgment which indicates their changing values and interpretations—while Nature is supposed to be unchanging and is to be followed wholeheartedly. In addition, Pope divorced himself from “the shameful Horace and Virgil” because “each had been labeled the complicit agent of tyranny” (Weinbrot 84). Even in the acknowledged canon, Pope still found that something must be rejected. This attitude echoes his advice for all would-be critics:

You then whose judgment the right course would steer,  
 Know well each ancient’s proper character;  
 His fable, subject, scope in every page;  
 Religion, country, genius of his age:  
 Without all these at once before your eyes,

---

<sup>6</sup> Pope was deeply influenced by Horace, and the so-called “Horatian style” was prominent in the neoclassical period. He selected Horace, not Homer, as his model. Despite his veneration of Homer, he did not cultivate a Homeric style, nor compose original epics. “Art” for Horace and for Pope includes knowing the best that has been thought and written in the past and knowing life and human character at first hand” (Brower 204). It can be inferred that “the best that has been thought and written in the past” refers to Nature or tradition in Pope’s poetics, and that the Horatian style can best represent Nature for Pope. Compared with Homer, Horace possesses more conversational ease and more awareness of different readers. Brower identifies four aspects of the Horatian style in Pope’s poetry: (1) “the fine poise of urbanity and feeling in poems on love and patriotic themes”; (2) “the style of public address and instruction”; (3) the “satirical-epistolary mode”; and (4) Pope’s Horatian mode, a variation on Dryden’s style of public address and the manner of Horace himself” (165). *An Essay on Criticism* “announces itself as a conversation in the Horatian manner . . .” (Brower 191). In other words, Pope’s style, following Horace’s, is dialogic in nature. His urbanity and feeling establish his image as a gentleman speaker, while his style of public address or epistolary mode assumes the existence of addressees. With this assumption, Pope attempts to persuade his readers in the *Essay* to follow Nature, to study hard, and to imitate the ancient.

Cavil you may, but never criticise. (118-23)

In short, a qualified critic must learn the background of the works deeply and thoroughly before criticizing them; it is the first step of the “dialogue” with the ancient. With a clear and correct understanding of the historical background, a critic will never praise the ancient indiscriminately, but will choose the best that has been known and thought. “Tradition” itself—or the “canon,” to be more specific, represented by Homer in the *Essay* and treated as Nature incarnated—does not include all of the ancient discourses; it emerges after careful meditation and selection by critics in all ages, and yields to endless reconstruction. The necessity of selective imitation exposes (1) the existence of some deficiencies in tradition as well as (2) the incompatibility of an unchanged Nature and a changing canon. In the *Essay*, Nature the “divinely bright” essentially bears no blemish, such as the barbarity, cruelty, or tyranny found in the Homeric and Virgilian epics. Homer, Horace, and Virgil all fail to display the perfect image of Nature despite Pope’s praise of their achievement, a fact which challenges the identification of tradition/canon as Nature that claims to govern literature and criticism in harmony and consistency.

The *Essay* signifies Pope’s “participation in the eighteenth-century literary criticism, itself a dialogue with the classical tradition that . . . Pope sought to reinvigorate” (Bellanca 67). His selection of the canonized critics in Part III of the *Essay* presumes a process of “dialogue” between the ancient and the modern: the former “speaks” to the latter, while the latter in response decides what discourses can be canonized. All neoclassical critics had similar “dialogues” with the ancient, but they did not reach a definite, unified conclusion—a condition that contradicts Pope’s premise that Nature “must to all impart” the same “[l]ife, force, and beauty.” Individual differences among various writers, which may contribute to different understandings of Nature, did not count for much—the neoclassical poetics valued “generality” or “universality” more than “individuality,” and one was supposed to subordinate his/her individual taste to the so-called universal experience of humanity. However, Pope’s career demonstrates more his unique “taste” than the universal standard in his mock of Dennis, Theobald, and Cibber and in his glorification of William Walsh, his mentor. He denounces all his enemies as “dunces” and intends to speak with an authoritative voice in the *Dunciad*. However, it does not follow that Pope *was* the authority among his

contemporaries. Their conflicts, stemming from their different tastes and understandings of the classics, divulge the absence of a universally accepted standard—Nature or tradition does not bring forward a consensus or homogenous views in literary criticism. In the “dialogue” with the ancient, the neoclassicists always selected and canonized what they considered the best. Certainly their judgments, like their watches, never “[g]o just alike” (9-10)—the various interpretations about tradition/canon manifest the work of dialogues, not that of Nature. Polyphony and heterogeneity prevail as the “norm.”

Nevertheless, Pope does not embrace polyphony whole-heartedly; rather, he wavers between monologism and dialogism. Although he maintains a dialogic relationship with the ancient and his contemporaries to some extent, he still yearns for a stable, ultimate, and transcendental standard, and expects at the same time that all poets and critics to follow it. Pope “in Bakhtin’s terms is . . . a strongly monological poet” (Morris 22) who “maintains . . . dialogical relations” chiefly with classical texts (Morris 9), but who, however, finds “diverse uses for the discourse of the other” (Morris 22).

In the Quixote-Dennis dialogue, Pope means to arouse laughter, which “destroys any hierarchical (distancing and valorized) distance” between the genre and the reader (Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel” 23). The serio-comical narration, from a Bakhtinian view, threatens the closedness of tradition by bringing Pope’s contemporary reality into the argument. “Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides. . . . Laughter is a vital factor in laying down that prerequisite for fearlessness without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically” (“Epic and Novel” 23). In reality, the critical rules such as the three unities brought more inconvenience for dramatists than pleasure for the audience—a situation which the conservative critics would not or perhaps dare not challenge. Yet laughter may shatter this bondage; in a comic world there is nothing for tradition to do (“Epic and Novel” 23). Traditional critical rules, when applied strictly to modern literary works, may appear awkward and ridiculous—a fact which monologic discourses either neglect or reject, and which becomes carnivalized in the serio-comic scene.

Bakhtin points out that the “most ancient forms for representing



language were organized by laughter” (“From the Prehistory” 50).<sup>7</sup> Pope’s comic description subverts the loftiness of tradition (represented by the critical rules), but at the same time he owes this subversion to tradition. His fabrication of the serio-comic scene involving Don Quixote and John Dennis derives from the serio-comic heritage and also manifests the dialogue between the ancient and modern. The one-sided seriousness of traditional critical theories crumples in laughter. *An Essay on Criticism*, traditionally considered a didactic work, contains in fact more than one voice. The comic Quixote-Dennis scene implies that the traditional critical rules cannot survive in closedness or “transcendence,” and that their application must take the modern situation into consideration. “Laughter is essentially not an external but an interior form of truth: it cannot be transformed into seriousness without destroying and distorting the very contents of the truth which it unveils” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 94). In laughter, Pope discloses the truth that the ancient rules do not “guide” the creation and interpretation of modern literature; rather, modern perspectives may modify our understanding and evaluation of those rules. The laughter aroused in the Quixote-Dennis episode discloses the instability of critical rules (which are treated as “nature methodized”) and the irresistibility of dialogue as well. Such rules must change in order to meet the need of different generations; an unchanged and universal standard will always be ridiculed in dialogism. This expectation for a timeless, universal norm was criticized by Bakhtin: “The Enlighteners had a lack of historical sense, an abstract and rationalist utopianism, a mechanic conception of matter, a tendency to abstract generalization . . .” (*Rabelais* 116). Pope’s “rationalist utopianism” is epitomized in Nature, the application of which brings more problems than solutions in literary criticism.

---

<sup>7</sup> “Laughter” has a long history in Western literature, and Bakhtin pays special attention to its use in serio-comic works. The Greek tragedians—Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus—wrote “satyr plays,” the so-called “fourth drama” which follows the tragic trilogy and shows comic or parodic versions of the preceding tragedy; even the epic hero Odysseus is presented in the image of a clown (“From the Prehistory” 53-54). Greeks did not view the parodic-travesty works as profanation, and the parodic piece “War between the Mice and the Frogs” (“From the Prehistory” 55) is attributed to Homer. Romans had Atellan farces and Saturnalian literature and are included in Bakhtin’s theory of carnival. Laughter itself, together with the culture of folk humor, is also the heritage of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. “A boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations” opposes the serious tone of medieval culture (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 4). Simultaneously, all the humorous forms are “based on laughter and consecrated by tradition” (*Rabelais* 5). “Antique tragedy did not fear laughter and parody and even demanded it as a corrective and a complement” (*Rabelais* 121). The contrast between the official and unofficial cultures was also crucial to the Middle Ages and Renaissance (*Rabelais* 6). The appearance of laughter in serious works was prominent and popular. *Don Quixote* and *Gargantua and Pantagruel* belong to serio-comic literature.

Only through dialogue with the modern can the ancient exert a continual influence. Pope's glorification of the ancient critical rules presumes an essential separation of the past and the present: the present continues to decline, while the past was a golden age. The "eternal truths" flow from the past to the present, not vice versa. Yet Bakhtin values the "essential and living vestige of the past in the present" ("*Bildungsroman*" 32). Like Goethe, he "wanted to see *necessary connections* between this past and the living present, to understand the *necessary place* of this past in the *unbroken line of historical development*" ("*Bildungsroman*" 33). Such "necessary connections" must be built based on the dialogue between the ancient and the modern. The past must have a *creative effect* in the present, so that it can produce "a particular direction for the future" ("*Bildungsroman*" 34). When a text comes into contact with another text and forms a dialogic relationship, this contact or dialogue will illuminate "both the posterior and anterior" (Bakhtin, "Methodology" 162). The dialogic context "extends into the boundless past and the boundless future," and therefore a text anticipates no ultimate, stable, and transcendental meaning (Bakhtin, "Methodology" 170), but will arouse more responses, questionings, negotiations, or disagreements. The process of the dialogue between the ancient and modern will incessantly entail the revision of the meaning and the significance of both. This corresponds, yet to a very limited degree, to Pope's gesture to "guide" critics with the principles generalized from the ancient Greek and Roman heritages: the continual creation of literature in the future depends on the "boundless" achievement in the past. However, it may never have occurred to him that "the boundless future" of literature is not fully represented by Nature or critical rules.

## **B. The Heterogeneity of Tradition**

Pope's comic description of Don Quixote and Dennis highlights that tradition itself, as well as the canon, is not a homogenous and stable entity. In fact, Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, and all the other leading critics listed by Pope (643-744) have their individual and diverse styles and assertions. Aristotle and Horace, for example, emphasize the importance of a norm for wit and judgment, but Longinus argues for poetic license and extols sublimity, which resists the regulation of any "norm." To treat the three critics as the spokesmen of Nature, one must attempt to settle their disparate ideas. Pope recognizes this disparity, but he leaves it unexplained. Pegasus's deviation

from the common track—such as Longinian sublimity—can “snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,” but such poetical license, treated as nothing else but “a rule,” can occur only rarely (149-65). If such a deviation can be incorporated into the rules, then Pope in fact acquiesces in the coexistence of contradictory voices in them. In addition, if critical rules are identified as Nature, then they must also “shine” on all occasions like the sun (i.e., be universally applied and accepted). The existence of a rarely applicable rule upsets Pope’s own premise. Therefore, the demand to study traditional masterpieces and to follow ancient critical rules led Pope essentially to polyphony and heterogeneity. It is fantastic to generalize a transcendental and unitary standard from the works of various poets and critics.

Pope’s problematic argument about Nature/rules perhaps derives from his own ambivalent stance toward the relationship between old and new values. Humanist education was originally the privilege of courtiers in the Renaissance, and it meant to teach them the art of serving the monarch. Pope’s attempt to mediate between the values of the old gentry, based on status and blood, and the modern notion of virtue and politeness (that “worth makes the man”) reflected the decline of the old aristocratic ideology he wanted to represent, and became a myth (Woodman 30-54). With the gradual decline of the court as the cultural center in the Restoration, it became ironic for Pope the marginalized figure<sup>8</sup> to learn the art of being a courtier. This art, “the old aristocratic ideology,” he redefines in the *Essay* as the ultimate and universal guide for all ages. This redefinition, which bestows new significance on the old values, verifies the heteroglossia that Bakhtin continues to emphasize. Pope’s aesthetics, rejecting the decline of traditional values on the one hand, presupposes some transcendent Nature which permanently governs wit and judgment; yet on the other hand he must accept this all-too-evident decline and claim to maintain, in Matthew Arnold’s phrase, the best that has been known and thought in the world. Ironically, his effort to preach the importance of Nature/tradition exposes the limit and weakness of this source and the end of Art. Far from being self-evident, the power of Nature/tradition is a fabricated myth. His imposition of order on old ideology contributes not to the establishment of a pure, self-enclosed system, but to the manifestation of polyphonic discourses.

Pope proposes the necessity of learning from tradition because tradition

---

<sup>8</sup> For the discussion of Pope as a marginalized figure in the neoclassical age, see Brown and Spahr.

is presumed to carry the universality, consistency, and stability of Nature. Both Homer and critical rules, the synecdochical expressions for tradition in the *Essay*, are referred to as Nature herself. Nevertheless, he also notices the inevitability of change and conflict in literary creation and judgment. Paralleling his heteroglot argument on tradition, his advice for critics also appears contradictory. On the one hand, “Be thou the first true merit to befriend; / His praise is lost who stays till all commend” (474-75). In other words, a good critic must discern the true value before other people can, and his critical ability will be questioned if he only follows popular ideas. This statement insinuates that Nature cannot bestow an equal capacity in critical judgment to all critics, and that critics may be in conflict with each other despite the “harmonious” influence of the “universal light.” All of the major neoclassical critics studied the classical works, but in Pope’s eyes the true followers of Nature always seem lonely and must fight against the other voices alone (554-59). Ironically, on the other hand, Pope also attempts to dissuade his reader from affirming the value of a new work too soon, and thus denies the aforementioned announcement: “Be not the first by whom the new are tried, / Nor yet the last to lay the old aside” (335-36). Still, Pope’s self-contradiction here belongs to the level of practice, not to that of theory; however, this indeed questions the validity of Nature as an unchanged standard if Pope maintains that both contradictory statements derive from the same source—unerring Nature.

### **C. The Significance of Pope’s Dialogue with the Ancients**

Pope’s self-contradiction here indicates that double-voicedness still exists in a discourse which exalts the absolute, unitary, and unchanged voice, and that a self-styled follower of Nature may speak in heterogeneous voices unawares. Pope’s proclamation (335-36) affirms the evolution of taste as well as the contrast between the old and the new trends. The supposed predominance of Nature in the literary world, as Pope believes, must render both the “old” and the “new” in harmony, and thence the merits of all new literary works will not yield to different and even paradoxical interpretations. “But true expression, like th’ unchanging sun, / Clears and improves whate’er it shines upon” (315-16). The value of classics depends on their permanence, which also characterizes Nature. The warning that critics must “lay the old aside”—i.e., reject out-of-date literary works and concepts—presupposes the

mutability of traditional value judgment. This mutability, in addition, negates the transcendence and permanence of the so-called canonical works—the value of which lies in their demonstration of unchanged Nature—and of the ancient critical rules, which exist as “Nature methodized.”

Furthermore, Pope indicates, owing to the change in language, that a writer can hardly enjoy enduring fame. As Pope’s contemporaries could not understand Chaucer, Pope predicts that the later generation would not appreciate Dryden (480-83). In his eyes the future is doomed: “No longer now that Golden Age appears” (478). This pessimism directly challenges the universality and eternity of Nature, and also the canonicity of the classics. The alpha and omega of Art appears powerless at the mercy of ruthless Time, while heterogeneity and polyphony prevail throughout history. Although he claims to worship Nature, Pope seems to lack faith in her by recognizing the mutability of taste, or else betrays his own claim unawares. In either case, Pope speaks with at least two voices: (1) that of a follower of Nature, and (2) that of a skeptic of Nature. Not that Pope splits Nature into two spheres, but that he discerns the discrepancy between his ideal and reality. He composed the *Essay* in his early twenties, and seemed to measure the deterioration of culture and taste with an ultimate, perfect—but unexplained and undefined—standard. This self-appointed prophet of Nature, moreover, blames Dennis and all the other “dunces” in the *Dunciad* for this deterioration, not knowing that his vicious satires also contribute to the disappearance of the Golden Age, the downgrading of Nature, and the disparity between things-as-they-ought-to-be and things-as-they-are. His satires highlight not the universal truth and the glory of Nature, but his own prejudice and viciousness. He did not stand apart from those “dunces,” but was one of them. Apparently Nature did not exert her “universal” influence on her spokesman.

The co-existence of these two antithetical voices—that of a follower of Nature and that of a skeptic—is taken for granted in Bakhtinian dialogism.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> This issue may be considered by examining the significance of understanding and interpretation. First, to understand a text “requires that we form a conceptual bridge between the tradition within which the text itself was generated and our own” (Gardiner 108). Secondly, understanding itself never sticks to a specific standpoint since it is in a constant state of becoming (Gardiner 108; Gadamer 271). It is not a matter of obtaining objective knowledge of another tradition, but “depends on our ability to mediate between at least two pre-existing traditions” (Gardiner 109). Therefore, we must respect the “foreignness” of other texts with open-mindedness, and achieve a successful interpretation—in Gadamer’s words, a “fusion of horizons” (Gardiner 109). The coexistence of antithetical voices can foster the continuing of dialogues. Since tradition is “the mode through which our understanding of the world evolved,” each period interprets past texts in different ways, and consequently meaning is

Bakhtin emphasizes the communicative interaction between subjects. Meaning emerges as the co-creation of subjects. Poets and critics are not supposed to absorb the cultural heritage from the former generations and then to pass it on intact to the next; rather, they must always mediate between the ancient and the modern. Besides, Bakhtin is hostile to the legacy of scientific rationalism, which proposes a “reasonable,” “systematic” discourse on the world; he stresses continually the unfinalized nature of our relation to the world. Reflection and self-understanding are possible because of the distance of one’s consciousness and tradition(s) (Gardiner 111-14). Pope’s problem results from his assumptions of (1) the closedness of Nature, (2) the consistency of tradition, and (3) the “self-evident” correspondence of Nature and tradition. Not that we should follow Nature or tradition, but that we must *mediate* between the ancient and the modern, and always anticipate the *becoming* of meaning with open-mindedness. The meaning of the Homeric epics, for example, must be co-determined by Homer and his readers. Consequently there is no final, authoritative version of a single meaning. For Bakhtin, truth comes from this mediation, neither existing in nor revealed from Nature and tradition. Understanding and interpretation are always dynamic, interactive, and continual. Pope’s voices as those of a follower and a skeptic of Nature manifest the power of heteroglossia and the endless evolution of value judgment.

Besides, the so-called authoritative text faces a dilemma: its authority derives from its distance from everyday, colloquial voices; however, if it is to survive from generation to generation, its contact with the “lower grade” modern discourse is inevitable. In other words, if the ancient maintains a “distance” from the modern, then its authority and influence will cease to be. As indicated earlier, Renaissance humanist ideology was redefined by Pope and consequently the urge to be an ideal courtier diminished. The ancient was “modernized” and thence lost its original distance from the modern. “No earlier poetry that continues to be read in later periods is so simply in the past. The historical past lives for us mainly by virtue of analogies with the present . . .” (Brower 107). The authority of the ancient relies on its influence, and this influence defies the ancient-modern “distance.”

---

always changing (Gardiner 109). This viewpoint rejects the existence of a transcendental, ultimate aesthetic/poetic standard, which is believed by Pope to predetermine creativity and judgment. The true value of literary works is gradually engendered in the “dialogue” between the ancient and the modern; this value, moreover, will change and evolve as the “dialogue” continues.

Indeed, Pope's advice on imitation encourages the dialogue between the ancient and the modern, but he errs in identifying the literary canon and critical rules as Nature and thereby assuming the closedness and immovability of classical texts—an assumption that he contradicts by lamenting the decline of literature (452-83). In the *Essay*, Nature/canon always sheds light on all generations like the sun does to the earth, so the decline of literature or the deviation from “the source” of art is presumed to be fundamentally impossible and incredible. Yet the status quo did not (and still does not) follow his theory, and thence he devoted most of his energy to satirizing the “dunces,” a devotion that disguised his personal grudges and prejudices in the name of Nature. He compares “true expression” to “th’ unchanging sun” which “gilds all objects” (315-17)—that is, he considers the language of great literary works to be universal and stable, “uncontaminated” by any heterogeneous voices. From the Bakhtinian perspective, however, language

is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the coexistence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth . . . . (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 291)

No wonder that Pope attacked the heteroglot voices (those of Dennis, Theobald, Cibber, Blackmore, Melbourne, and Zoilus) that are alien to his taste; he is regarded as monologic since he holds his “poetics” absolute. Bakhtinian dialogism takes for granted “the intrinsic orientation of all discourse to the utterances of others” since “meaning is always brought to the object from outside, through the ‘social accentuation of the word’” (Gardiner 37). On the one hand, Pope benefited from learning “the utterances of others” and “the social accentuation of word,” but on the other hand he deified Nature and summoned writers to follow her. Paradoxically Pope, as a follower of the Renaissance, intends to unify and reconcile various voices that characterize “tradition,” rejecting the heterogeneity which nourishes his wit and judgment.

## IV. Pope's Dialogue with His Generation

### A. The Coexistence of the Authoritative Voice and the Dialogic Character

Creative imitation involves the “appropriation” of the classics. Pope canonizes some specific texts, an authoritative and monologic endeavor that anticipates the unconditional acceptance of all poets and critics. He reformulates the authoritative discourses in his own words, and by doing so establishes his own authority to his readers. To a certain extent, he demonstrates creative imitation in *An Essay on Criticism*. Pope speaks like an authoritative figure, a reasonable critic, who tries to convince his readers with seemingly cogent and persuasive argument. Bakhtin declares that the endeavor to appropriate another's discourse will “determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior; it performs here as authoritative discourse, and an internally persuasive discourse” (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 342). Nowadays our recognition of Pope as a major neoclassical poet may be due partly to his “appropriation” of the ancient authoritative discourses. “The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own . . . . The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. . . . Its authority was already acknowledged in the past” (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 342). Pope's encouragement of imitation, therefore, will naturally lead us to assume that he means to impose the “hierarchically higher” standard on all writers.

Yet Pope cannot be purely monologic. Pope's language in the *Essay* may sound authoritative and monologic, but in practice he learns from ancient and modern, friend and foe. His continual and laborious revision of his poetry testifies to his careful consideration of various voices, even those of his enemies. *An Essay on Criticism* in fact echoes Bakhtin's viewpoint that centripetal and centrifugal voices coexist and conflict with each other. Pope's achievement lies in “his blending of the heroic with other literary styles and non-literary idioms into the complex modes” (Brower 13). He “imitates” the poetry by awkward poets who pay attention only to rhymes:

Where'er you find “the cooling western breeze,”  
In the next line, it “whispers through the trees”:



If crystal streams “with pleasing murmurs creep,”  
The reader’s threatened (not in vain) with “sleep.” (350-53)

He mocks third-rate poets by “copying” their stale and lifeless idioms—this mimic “appropriation” is double-voiced: he integrates his voice and that of poor rhymers. By employing the language he detests, he warns his readers to avoid the faults in writing poetry—a centrifugal gesture that challenges his centripetal argument.<sup>10</sup>

Pope’s career attests to Bakhtin’s dialogism: his awareness of “the utterances of others” always prompted him to revise his poetry or to counterattack. He initiated, for instance, in *An Essay on Criticism* the quarrel with John Dennis, whose retorts invited more counterattacks from Pope later on. Pope’s humanistic learning propels him to embrace diverse and heterogeneous perspectives and styles. His awareness of the responses of his contemporary readers is given the same weight as his respect for Homer and Virgil. Pope attempts to speak in an authoritative voice; however, his dialogic tendency forces him to consider and incorporate various voices from contemporary readers, and consequently invites heterogeneity into his poetry.<sup>11</sup> In practice, therefore, Pope interacted with his readers, carefully listened to their voices, and responded with the consciousness of his cultural heritage<sup>12</sup> and of his personal grudges. No wonder that his work “was long a

---

<sup>10</sup> For the further discussion of Pope’s manipulation of centripetal and centrifugal voices, see the next section.

<sup>11</sup> This is evident in his translation of Homer, in which he intended “to find meaningful analogies within his own culture, more particularly within the body of literature familiar to his readers” (Brower 107). He bridged the disparity between the ancient and modern in his translation, yet this achievement metamorphosed the epic world into one that was “familiar to his readers.” By translating and imitating classical texts, moreover, Pope created an ideal world which he could control, but at the same time he revealed “the impossibility of Britain having an Augustan age” (Hammond 152). In brief, Pope created a hybrid epic world—a modernized Greece congenial to Pope’s contemporaries—in his translation of Homer’s epics. He noticed the unbridgeable gap between his contemporary world and the classical past, and in his satirical works he profaned the ideal world that he had established. He spoke to his reader about the ancient world, but this “mediated” world was no longer one that Homer would know. Pope attempted to meet “the demands both of his audience and of Homer”: his reader expected to see “a certain standard of aristocratic manners” which did not stem from the heritage of Homer’s age (Brower 106) but from that of his contemporaries.

<sup>12</sup> Pope’s awareness of contemporary readers may owe much to Dryden’s. Like Dryden, he “deployed the subscription system so as to exchange compliments with his noble subscribers . . .” (D. Griffin 57). Dryden argues that a writer must resist “a dull imitation” of the ancients, and that nature must guide the creation of the poet (219); all his critical writings “are addressed to the polite” and to “the well-informed and cultured reader” (Sutherland 412). Learning eagerly from Dryden in practicing his

battle field of criticism” (Sampson 383).

In fact, many Augustan poets emphasized the importance of “man in his public aspects—general human nature—the permanent relations of human beings in society” (Mack, *Augustans* 2). Pope describes the quality of the conversation of an ideal critic:

Still pleased to teach, and yet not proud to know  
 .....  
 Who to a friend his faults can freely show,  
 And gladly praise the merit of a foe  
 Blessed with a taste exact, yet unconfined;  
 A knowledge both of books and humankind;  
 Gen’rous converse; a soul exempt from pride. (632, 637-41)

This ideal critic actively communicates with various targets (“books and mankind”); his taste will develop (be “unconfined”). Pope “was an eager recipient of all current rumours.” Personal grudge and contemporary issues drove him to write satires. A satirist “must frequent society” and “must describe the gossip of the day” (Stephen).<sup>13</sup> Commenting on Wordsworth’s theory of writing “in the language really used by men,” Auden indicates that “[s]hould one compare Pope at his best with any of the Romantics, including Wordsworth, at their best, it is Pope who writes as men normally speak to each other and the latter who go in for ‘poetic’ language” (136). Living in an age when “contemporary poetry had power enough to alter men’s thinking” (R. Griffin 446), he was “one of the most socially relevant poets of all times” (Rousseau 57). Pope does not speak with a pure, unitary voice; learning from

---

own art and simultaneously preparing for its reception (Zwicker, “Dryden and the poetic career” 151), Pope “enjoyed an easy commerce with the poetry of the past and present”—such as Homer, Virgil, Horace, Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, and Dryden (Brower 1, Knoepflmacher 455, Wyrick 41). In his imitation of ancient poetry, Pope still maintained his own voice and originality, finding “his relation to the poetry of the European past and to the mind of Europe” (Brower 1-2). His career as a poet was to “connect the old world of Homer and Virgil and Horace, or of Spenser and Milton, with the actual society of eighteenth-century London . . .” (Brower 2).

<sup>13</sup> Such an image corresponds to the dialogic model of Dryden: by exalting a satirical mode, a poet may engage “the most lively concerns of his readers” (Brower 3). Dryden’s success depended on his ability to integrate English and European literary traditions while “‘speaking home’ to this audience of Court and City” (Brower 3). Horace, another major model for Pope, usually speaks with the tones of (1) a moral teacher, (2) an urbane gentleman, and (3) a political poet—all these three identities can be found in Pope and each anticipates a certain response from the addressees (Brown 97-98).

the ancient and the modern, he actually carries polyphonic, heteroglot, and biased accents. In the *Essay*, he promotes dialogues with authoritative gestures; or, he manipulates centripetal and centrifugal voices, and therefore highlights the irresistible force of dialogism.

## **B. Pope's Manipulation of the Centripetal and the Centrifugal Voices**

In Bakhtinian terms, Pope attempts to formulate his ideas by manipulating “the centripetal forces of language”—the imposition of order on an essentially heterogeneous world (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 270-71; Morson and Emerson 30). The centripetal forces, hostile to heteroglossia and ignorant of the disunity of language, can be found in the poetics of Aristotle, Augustine, the medieval church, and neoclassicism (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 271). However, the “centrifugal forces of language” always resist the hegemony of the centripetal forces and expose the problem of “verbal-ideological centralization and unification” (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 272). *An Essay on Criticism* demonstrates the war between these two forces: while Pope affirms the unifying and transcendental power of Nature/rules (a centripetal force), he also recognizes that poetical license (a centrifugal force) is still working. Both forces stem from tradition, but do not cancel each other out in the *Essay*. This may also explain Pope's self-contradiction in urging critics to recognize merits in new works soon and simultaneously not to do so (335-36; 474-75). This situation corresponds to Bakhtin's argument that centralization and decentralization intersect in all utterance (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 272). Bakhtin would not encourage us to eliminate the centripetal forces and exalt the centrifugal ones—since it is another form of tyranny—but to retain both. To eliminate Pope's disrupted voices in the *Essay* does not make his argument more “reasonable” or “logical,” but will distort the truth that tradition itself is heterogeneous and inconsistent.

*An Essay on Criticism* indeed reveals Pope's wavering between the centripetal (authoritative) discourse and the centrifugal (dialogic). He uses “the language of polite conversation to express a fairly complex sense of the relationship between the poet, the critic, and the man of the world” (Brower 199). As a Roman Catholic, a sufferer of Pott's disease, and a man without a university education, Pope was socially excluded from the court, the major literary circles, and the publishers in his early years. So it is carnivalesque for

Pope as a marginalized figure to speak as the authority to his contemporaries, while the publication of the *Essay* pokes fun at the social hierarchy—a young, nameless poet speaks as if he were the authority. In addition to the discussion of the application of principles derived from unknown Nature and heterogeneous tradition, the criticism of contemporary issues in fact constitutes a far larger portion of the *Essay*. Bakhtin points out that the starting point of the carnival “is the living *present*, often even the very day” (*Problems* 108). Pope speaks directly to his contemporary readers with the hope to win their support, and to amuse them if possible, and to debase his foes by fair means or foul. He laments the great number of “half-learned witlings” in Great Britain (36-45), ridicules the pedantry of John Dennis (267-84), attacks the decline of English theater (328-32, 526-43) and of literature (337-57, 458-69), and shows his gratitude to William Walsh (729-44)—all contemporary issues. Thus Pope’s authoritative voice functions as a mask, which disguises his humble background and his prejudiced judgments in favor of his mentor and against his enemies, and he may mock his own “authority” unintentionally by subverting or questioning his own belief.

The *Essay* is “ultimately the reformulation of traditional Christian humanist ideas for a new age. Yet this is a remarkably modern poem as well as a traditional one . . .” (Mack, “Introduction” lxviii). The term “Christian humanist,” emerging in the Renaissance, is ambivalent and double-voiced: “Christian” thinking is God-centered, whereas humanist is man-centered. Pope’s assumed “reverence” for Nature may ironically parallel the Christian’s belief in God, while his admiration of the cultural heritage belongs to the humanist tradition. The former emphasizes universal, eternal, and centripetal values, while the latter, changing and centrifugal trends. Pope claims to find order out of disorder, consistency out of variety, homogeneity out of heterogeneity—while his “reconciliation” of disparate elements in fact incorporates heterogeneous voices in his “rationalist utopianism” and consequently mocks his own monological ideal.

### **C. Pope’s Demonstration of Carnival Laughter**

The Quixote-Dennis episode exhibits Pope’s carnival spirit most vividly. Carnival does not aim at overthrowing one authority and replacing it with a new one; rather, it is characterized by the coexistence of mutually

contradictory forces. Dennis may represent the centripetal force, and Quixote, the centrifugal. Pope mocks his own authoritative discourse, leaving the discrepancy between ideal and practice unexplained. Furthermore, his ridicule of Dennis does not deny the significance of critical rules or Nature in the *Essay*. He retains both the centripetal and the centrifugal in his discourse, and this dual image matches Bakhtinian carnival: carnival “asserts and denies, it buries and revives” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 12)—this may characterize Pope’s attitude towards tradition better than mimetic theory. “Carnival celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world” (*Rabelais* 410). Tradition is presented with a death-rebirth image—death of its closedness and immobility, and rebirth in its dialogue with the modern.

Of course Pope does not fully endorse dialogism and carnival. “All the symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity or prevailing truths and authorities” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 11). He does not accept the “gay relativity” of Nature and tradition. Despite his serio-comic tone, he generally holds a serious view toward Nature though he betrays her, and the comic scene of Quixote and Dennis presents only a weakness in the application of the critical rules, not the total subversion of the western critical tradition. The demand for a norm still dominates *Essay*, while his sense of humor in talking about the deviation from the traditional critical rules serves not as a dissident force, but merely as the expression of his “gentlemanly” conversational ease. Besides, carnival “does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 7). Pope clearly maintains his separation from his audience. Although he laughs at his contemporary “dunces” as a satirist, he does not regard himself as one of them. “The satirist whose laughter is negative places himself above the object of his mockery, he is opposed to it”; the carnival laughter, however, is directed toward everyone, including those who laugh (*Rabelais* 12). Pope the satirist always devotes his artistry to ridiculing his enemies, and intentional self-mockery is alien to his discourses.

In addition, Pope does not use the abusive language of the marketplace, nor does he demonstrate the “material bodily principle.” Carnival carries a binary function: it kills and rejuvenates at the same time. The material bodily principle emphasizes the human body, food, drink, defecation, and sex—yet Pope never talks about them in the *Essay*. Carnivalistic degradation will

destroy and regenerate; Pope merely satirizes his enemies without “regenerating” them. He manipulates literature, especially satire, as a means of retaliation for personal offenses against himself, acting like a vicious clown under the disguise of a well-bred gentleman. His laughter turns out to be cold humor, irony, and sarcasm, while the positive regenerating power is not found at all. Pope may show some dialogic spirit and partially subvert monologism, yet he never plunges into carnival wholeheartedly. He benefited from his dialogue with the ancient and modern; nevertheless, the problematic declaration to follow Nature and tradition on the one hand and his violation of his ideal on the other expose all the more clearly that disruption, heterogeneity and dialogue indeed governed his career and discourses.

## V. Conclusion: Finding “Truth” in Dialogue

Regard not then if wit be old or new,  
But blame the false, and value still the true. (406-07)

On the one hand, Pope may appear monologic, authoritative, and eager to seize the transcendental standard; yet on the other hand, he tends to be dialogic, conversational, and practical. The disparity between Popean Nature and his criticisms highlights the power of dialogue which abounds in heterogeneous voices. He declares that he finds a harmony “between ancient wisdom and modern English taste” (Lipking 484); he intends to establish a universal order for literary creativity and judgment, and to resolve or wipe out the differences between the ancient and the modern. This declaration itself, however, insinuates that the status quo was/is/will be chaotic and unsystematic. He does not bridge the gap between his ideal and practice (manifested in the limited applicability of the critical rules [141-45, 161-64, 261-62]), nor practice what he preaches. Announcing that “To err is human, to forgive, divine” (525), he still denounced John Dennis, Colley Cibber, and Lewis Theobald out of a personal grudge. The self-appointed seer of Nature ironically failed to follow her. Owing to such a failure, we are even led to doubt the very existence of Popean Nature. Since Pope does not formulate her essence *per se*, it is impossible for us to understand this absolute, unchanged standard directly, to explain consequently the limit of critical rules, or to synthesize all conflicts in literary criticism. It is even illogical to state that he is torn between things-as-they-ought-to-be and things-as-they-are,

since this “oughtness,” the so-called absolute standard, remains an unknown, indefinite ideal. His affirmation of such an impracticable, mysterious ideal approximates a religious belief, and none of his works throughout his life manifest any attempt to reach this ideal.

This failure verifies Bakhtin’s views on discourses. “Order needs justification, disorder does not. The natural state of things is mess”; Bakhtin presumes that “mess was the normal, and at times even the healthy, state” (Morson and Emerson 30). Though assuming the existence of a transcendental, unchanged being, Pope still struggled in the “messy” state of contemporary society. Moreover, tradition, literature, and criticism always anticipate change and embrace heterogeneity, resisting to “be located in a system of laws” (Morson and Emerson 39). In other words, neither the ancient nor the modern can be treated as an essentially homogenous, consistent, and unitary category, while the development of literary history does not presuppose the negation of the former and the affirmation of the latter. Both the old and the new voices do not reach a static synthesis of contradictory elements like that in Hegelian dialectic, but continue in a dynamic dialogue without being resolved in a harmonious entity. It is “pseudo-dialectic” to study each phenomenon in literary history as the negation of its predecessors (Bahktin and Medvedev 92). Pope claims that we must value “the true” no matter whether it comes from the old or the new (406-07). In the Bakhtinian view, “the true” appears in the dialogue between the old and the new, between texts and critics—not in a transcendental power.

The relationship between Pope’s ideal and practice, viewed as a whole, emanates a dialogic flavor and demonstrates the conflict and co-working of centripetal and centrifugal forces. He means to impose a universal standard on literature and criticism, but at the same time he exposes the insufficiency of this standard—be it Nature, tradition, or critical rules. He urges his readers to imitate classical works and then apply their learning to their writing—this approximates to Bakhtinian dialogism. Bakhtin also emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage: literature “extends its roots into the distant past. Great literary works are prepared for by centuries . . . . Trying to understand and explain a work solely in terms of the most immediate time, will never enable us to penetrate into its semantic depth” (“Response” 4). With an abundant understanding of the cultural heritage, Pope also continues to speak to his contemporaries, and thus incorporates the ancient and the

modern in his discourse. An attempt to clearly separate the ancient and the modern in Pope's voice(s) unreasonable is futile. For Bakhtin, again, "[e]verything that belongs only to the present dies along with the present" ("Response" 4). *An Essay on Criticism*, when it comes to the discussion of its significance, flourishes now not as an eighteenth-century masterpiece, but more as an exemplification of dialogue. It survives not by following Nature, but by exemplifying continual "dialogue." What counts is the interaction of the ancient and the modern and of the contemporaries as well—not the supremacy of the ancient over the modern, or vice versa.

In order to practice Nature, an unknown but universal ideal, Pope identifies her as critical rules, but simultaneously recognizes their limit (261-62, 279-84). Yet masterpieces do not emerge by receiving divine light from Nature, but from the interpretations of various critics, ancient and modern. The eternity of classical works is "the uninterrupted process of their social and ideological re-accentuation. . . . [S]uch works have proved capable of uncovering in each era and against ever new dialogizing backgrounds ever newer aspects of meaning . . ." (Bakhtin, "Discourse" 421). "True understanding in literature and literary scholarship is always historical and personified" (Bakhtin, "Methodology" 162). "*To be means to communicate*. Absolute death (non-being) is the state of being unheard, unrecognized" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 287). For Pope, the ancient literary achievements, which manifest transcendental Nature, can and must influence the present and the future writers and critics. What he intends to demonstrate in the *Essay* is to highlight and justify the "creative effect" of the past. He "revives" the classical texts by fostering the ancient-modern dialogue. A style withers when it is used "merely as a tradition, and not as the best mode of producing the desired impression; and when, therefore, it represents a rule imposed from without, and is not an expression of the spontaneous working of minds in which the corresponding impulse is thoroughly incarnated" (Stephen). Our speech "is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others' individual utterances." In other words, our speech "is filled with others' words" (Bakhtin, "Problem of Speech Genres" 89). Pope absorbed the marrow of ancient writers and articulated the principles of writing not in the hope of creating a brand new poetics, but of expressing what had already been talked about. This nothing-new-under-the-sun stance corresponds to the Bakhtinian viewpoint which holds that the objects of all utterances have



already been articulated and elucidated in various forms (“Problem of Speech Genres” 93). The cultural heritage will continue to exist or even prevail because of this “dialogue”: “The word wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond to the response, and so forth *ad infinitum*” (“Problem of the Text” 127).

Pope’s advice for all poets or critics—to imitate the Greek and Roman masters—means a continual dialogue between the ancient and the modern; to understand the past will benefit our understanding of the present, and vice versa. Tradition and critical rules may retain their values not in a transcendental, self-enclosed, and monologic world, but in continual dialogues. Pope himself practiced dialogues with the past and the present, not the static guidelines derived from unknown Nature.

### Works Cited

- Adams, Hazard. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Rev. ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt, 1992. Print.
- Addison, Joseph. "The Spectator, No. 62." Leitch 419-23.
- Auden, W. H. "A Civilized Voice." Rev. of *Alexander Pope*, by Peter Quennell. *New Yorker* 22 Feb. 1969: 128-40. Print.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M. "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism [Toward a historical Typology of the Novel]." *Emerson and Holquist* 10-59.
- . "Discourse in the Novel." *Holquist* 259-422.
- . "Epic and Novel." *Holquist* 3-40.
- . "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel." *Holquist* 84-258.
- . "Towards a Methodology for the Human Sciences." *Emerson and Holquist* 159-72.
- . "The Problem of Speech Genres." *Emerson and Holquist* 60-102.
- . "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis" *Emerson and Holquist* 103-31.
- . "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse." *Holquist* 41-83.
- . *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1984. Trans. of *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*. 1961. Print.
- . *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984. Trans. of *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura srednevekov'ia i Renessansa*. 1965. Print.
- . "Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff." *Emerson and Holquist* 1-9.
- Bakhtin, M. M. and P. N. Medvedev. *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*. Trans. Albert J. Wehrle. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978. Print.
- Bellanca, Mary Ellen. "Alien Voices, Ancient Echoes: Bakhtin, Dialogism, and Pope's *Essay on Criticism*." *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 30.1 (1994): 57-72. Print.
- Bialostosky, Don. "Dialogic Criticism." *Contemporary Literary Theory*. Ed. G. Douglas Atkins and Laura Morrow. Amherst: Massachusetts UP, 1989.

- Print.
- Brower, Reuben A. *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1959. Print.
- Brown, M. Elaine Dolan. "The Horatian View of the Poet." Jackson and Yoder 96-100.
- Brown, Murray and Heather Spahr, eds. *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 38.1 (2000).
- Dobrée, Botamy. *The Early Eighteenth Century 1700-1740: Swift, Defoe, and Pope*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1959. Print.
- Elwin, Whitwell and William John Courthope, eds. *The Works of Alexander Pope*. 10 vols. New York: Gordian, 1967. Print.
- Emerson, Caryl and Michael Holquist, eds. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: Texas UP, 1994. Print.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. 2nd ed. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London: Sheed and Ward, 1975. Print.
- Gardiner, Michael. *The Dialogics of Critique*. London: Routledge, 1992. Print.
- Griffin, Dustin. "The social world of authorship 1660-1714." Richetti 37-60.
- Griffin, Robert. "Pope, the Prophets, and *The Dunciad*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 23.3 (1983): 435-46. Print.
- Hammond, Paul. "Classical texts: translations and transformations." Zwicker 143-61.
- Holquist, Michael, ed. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holoquist. Austin: Texas UP, 1981. Print.
- Hunter, J. Paul. "Political, satirical, didactic and lyric poetry (I): from the Restoration to the death of Pope." Richetti 160-208.
- Jackson, Wallace and R. Paul Yoder, eds. *Approaches to Teaching Pope's Poetry*. New York: MLA, 1993. Print.
- Johnson, Samuel. "The Life of Pope." *Lives of the English Poets*. Rutgers Newark. Jack Lynch, n.d. Web. 28 July 2005.
- . "Preface to *Shakespeare*." Adams 320-27.
- Knoepflmacher, U. C. "Impersonations of Alexander Pope: Current Views Within a Nineteenth-Century Perspective." *Modern Language Quarterly* 34 (1973): 448-61. Print.
- Leitch, Vincent B., ed. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New

- York: Norton, 2001. Print.
- Lipking, Lawrence. "Literary criticism and the rise of national literary history." Richetti 471-97.
- Mack, Maynard. *The Augustans*. Englewood: Prentice Hall, 1953. Print.
- . Introduction. *An Essay on Man*. Twickenham Edition of *the Poems of Alexander Pope*. Ed. John Butt. Vol. 3-1. London: Methuen, 1951-69. xi-lxxx. Print.
- Morris, David B. "Burns and Heteroglossia." *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 28.1 (1987): 3-27. Print.
- Morson, Gary Saul and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaic*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990.
- Peterson, R. G. "Renaissance Classicism in Pope's *Dunciad*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 15.3 (1975): 431-45. Print.
- Pope, Alexander. "Dunciad." Elwin and Courthope Vol. 4. 3-380.
- . "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot." Elwin and Courthope Vol. 3. 229-74.
- . "An Essay on Criticism." Elwin and Courthope Vol. 2. 3-111.
- . "An Essay on Man." Elwin and Courthope Vol. 2. 259-456.
- . "Preface to the Works of Shakespear." Elwin and Courthope Vol. 10. 534-49.
- Rawson, Claude and Ian Higgins, eds. *The Essential Writings of Jonathan Swift*. New York: Norton, 2010. Print.
- Reynolds, Henry. "Mythomystes." Adams 186-99.
- Reynolds, Joshua. "Discourse on Art." Adams 343-63.
- Richetti, John, ed. *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660-1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print.
- Rogers, Pat, ed. *Cambridge Companion to Alexander Pope*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.
- Rousseau, G. S. "Autobiographical Reflections on Teaching Pope Critically." Jackson and Yoder 51-63.
- Sampson, George. *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970. Print.
- Shankman, Steven. "Pope's Homer and his poetic career." Rogers 63-75.
- Sidney, Philip. "An Apology for Poetry." Adams 143-62.
- Sitter, John. *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth Century Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print.
- Stephen, Leslie. "Alexander Pope." *The Project of Gutenberg EBook*. Barbara

- Tozier, Bill Tozier, Lisa Reigel and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team, 29 Oct. 2006. Web. 15 March 2009.
- Sutherland, James. *Restoration Literature 1660-1700: Dryden, Bunyan, and Pepys*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1969. Print.
- Swift, Jonathan. "The Battel of the Books." Rawson and Higgins 95-111.
- Voloshinov, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1973. Print.
- Weinbrot, Howard D. "Pope and the classics." Rogers 76-88.
- Woodman, Thomas. *Politeness and Poetry in the Age of Pope*. Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson UP, 1989. Print.
- Wyrick, Deborah Baker. "Imitating Pope." Jackson and Yoder 40-50.
- Young, Edward. "Conjectures on Original Composition." Adams 329-37.
- Young, Robert. "Back to Bakhtin." *Cultural Critique* 2 (1985/86): 71-92. Print.
- Zwicker, Steven N., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1650-1740*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. Print.
- . "Dryden and the poetic career." Richetti 132-59.