

AMBIGUITY AND AMBIVALENCE IN THE POETRY OF SAMUEL  
JOHNSON: HIS RELATION TO THE TRADITION  
OF NEOCLASSICAL IMITATION

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## PREFACE

All good poetry encourages the reader to peruse it more than once, for it holds the promise of new meanings and new emotional experiences every time it is read. The student's challenge is to identify what the writer does with the English language in order to create such meanings and experiences. Several approaches are helpful. They include analysis of all the lexical meanings the poet employs; of the impact some of his words receive because they absorb the accents in his metrical pattern, or because he has arranged them in a certain sequence; and of the manner in which the words affect each other, either in their grammatical relationships or through the interweaving of connotations--the sensations and memories they awaken within the readers' minds.

I follow all these avenues of approach to the heroic couplet works of Samuel Johnson, whose poetry did not draw attention until this century although he had been well known for his prose writings since his own time. The project has led not only to an understanding of the poetic techniques and attitudes current in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, but also to some appreciation of the classical Roman writers Johnson and his contemporaries admired and imitated, to a glimpse of the great traditions the English writers inherited.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all the people who have assisted me. I am especially indebted to my adviser, Dr. Samuel H. Woods, Jr., for his intelligent guidance, patience, and concern, and for suggesting sources both published and unpublished that were of great help



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: AMBIGUITY AND AMBIVALENCE IN VERSE

Analysis of ambiguity and ambivalence in the heroic couplet poetry of Samuel Johnson and of his relation to the tradition of neoclassical imitation will require several preliminary steps, for Johnson, with the exception of Goldsmith the last of the great heroic couplet poets, inherited literary forms and techniques popular with his predecessors as well as their interest in the serious aspects of human life and in classical observations about it. Some of these initial study areas will demand extensive pursuit; for example, one of them, the mode of imitation, is in itself a literary genre with special characteristics.

The project has several purposes. It will determine Johnson's management of the heroic couplet and his approach to imitation; it will identify sources of ambiguity and ambivalence in his poetry as compared to such elements in Dryden and Pope and show how these qualities expand the poet's message; it will determine whether techniques of ambiguity are merely idiosyncracies of major heroic couplet poets or whether the sources of ambiguity are inherent in the couplet itself; and it will establish whether or not Johnson improved as a poet during his long career and whether or not his skill in projecting ambiguity was a factor in that improvement. Such goals will require a very close analysis--almost line-by-line--of all of Johnson's heroic couplet works, some eighteen poems,

as well as a few of his non-heroic compositions. The poet's total output in the couplet included the two great imitations London and The Vanity of Human Wishes, six prologues and an epilogue, and several shorter works, most of them occasional verses written very quickly, as was his habit, in response to the urging of friends.

This first chapter will discuss four subjects: definitions of the terms ambiguity and ambivalence and a summary of twentieth-century comment on them; examples of ambiguity critics have found in the works of Shakespeare and Milton; the development and the technical features of the heroic couplet; background on the mode of imitation, which was extremely popular during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and the handling of the couplet and the imitation by Dryden and Pope, for Johnson's works will be considered later in relation to the poems of these two authors.

#### Definitions: Ambiguity and Ambivalence

As it pertains to literature, ambiguity is defined by most lexical authorities as duplexity or complexity of meaning; intricacy, or complication; the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as the capability of a literary work to be understood in two or more ways; double signification; or susceptibility of more than one interpretation. Dictionaries explain ambivalence as simultaneous attraction toward or repulsion from an "object," which in literature can be a word, a subject, a predicate, a sentence, or even a larger unit; thus ambivalence refers to the tension created by certain expressions as they interact. Application of these definitions to poetry shows first that ambiguity is the quality encouraging readers to interpret a line or verse paragraph--or even an entire

work--in several different ways or to understand it as a reference to several different subjects or human conditions. Such a complexity might arise from sequential arrangements of words, from the fall of accents in a metrical system, from the several meanings of single words, or from the repetition of terms in new contexts to take advantage of their various projections of meanings. The second element, ambivalence, would allow the reader's mind to fluctuate between two or more possibilities in the relationships of poetic words or phrases; such possibilities would stem from the tension words or larger units of language exert upon each other. Ambivalence, then, can originate in syntax; for example, a single pronoun can refer to either of two possible antecedents even in separate lines, and a prepositional phrase or a dependent clause can modify two different words or phrases, in each case offering an interpretation acceptable in context to expand meaning. Ambivalence can also develop from the tendency of the reverberations of several words within a certain verse paragraph--or even within an entire work--to cluster about one central idea.

Even though "ambiguity" and "ambivalence" have distinct meanings, this brief explanation of their literary application strongly suggests their blending. Ambiguity means complication and expansion of meaning, but certainly ambivalence--the attraction of words or phrases one to another or the tensions built up between meanings or nuances--contributes to such complexity. Ambivalence, then, can be seen as one element in ambiguity, and the term ambiguity can apply to any poetic force or technique, including the element of ambivalence, that widens or multiplies meaning, and it appears in this broad sense throughout the following discussions and analyses.

William Van O'Connor in The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics gives William Empson credit for the first critical application of the word ambiguity.<sup>1</sup> M. H. Abrams defines the technique as the use of a single word or phrase to point to two distinct references or to signify opposing attitudes or emotions.<sup>2</sup> Recent texts introducing college students to poetry amplify this definition. In his text, An Introduction to Poetry, X. J. Kennedy describes ambiguity as both a term and a poetic device which influences the meaning of an entire work. Its major thrust is the organization of words, for it is based on the premise that "English word order, being rigid, challenges the poet to defy it . . . to achieve special effects."<sup>3</sup> Kennedy notes that ambiguity widens approaches to poetry, but he urges readers to distinguish between irrelevant responses and those the poem truly demands. He echoes a warning by both Abrams and O'Connor against overly-intensive application of Empson's theories, an action which O'Connor believes could lead to ingenious readings.

Since 1960, studies in ambiguity and ambivalence have emphasized two aspects: the range of sources and the manner of approaching the area of criticism these two terms have recently created. John Spencer and Michael Gregory are among critics who stress patterns of syntax as a source:

Ambiguity is not restricted to lexis . . . verse, however 'free,' has a double set of units: those of the line and stanza, and those of syntax. Often one set is used in counterpoint with the other; in the same way that, at the phonological level, metrical patterns are often counterpointed with the rhythms of speech. It is therefore possible for a poet, by juxtaposing grammatical boundaries with those of the metrical line, to make use of syntactical expectancy, followed by syntactical resolution or surprise. In this way alternative syntactical patterns are able to coexist, thus contributing to the complexity of verse.<sup>4</sup>

The manner in which context contributes to ambiguity has also drawn the interest of critics. For example, I. A. Richards notes that portions

of a work that immediately precede or follow a passage can affect the reader's qualification of meaning.<sup>5</sup> During the 1970s, Stanley Fish, identifying a technique he called "progressive decertainization," explained the interaction between the reader's mind and the printed word,<sup>6</sup> and Roger Fowler stated that the range of ambiguity in all words is controlled by what the reader knows about context through his own experience.<sup>7</sup>

Besides these studies centering on syntax and context, another aspect of discussion has weighed the feasibility of a linguistic approach to analysis of syntax in poetry. Fowler dates this controversy from 1951, when Harold Whitehall asserted that "no criticism can go beyond linguistics."<sup>8</sup> Critics commented through the years on both sides of the question until the matter was settled in 1969 at a symposium attended by S. R. Levin, Rene Wellek, Nils Erik Enkvist, Richard Ohmann, M. A. K. Halliday, and others. As Seymour Chatman writes in the Introduction to his report on the sessions, the group's answer on the sufficiency of linguistics to describe literary style was a thundering "No."<sup>9</sup>

In accord with the decision of these critics, this study will apply traditional methods of analysis and employ traditional grammatical terminology in determining the presence of ambiguity and ambivalence in Johnson's poetry. Although there are severe limitations, to a certain extent syntactical structure in Juvenal, the Roman poet after whom Johnson modeled his imitations, can be compared to that of the English poet. The limitations are founded of course on the nature of Latin and English: classical Latin is a highly inflected language in which syntax can be manipulated to a high degree, and English has some residual inflections but depends heavily on a syntactical norm from which deviations become more striking in effect than they probably would be in Latin. Each

language, however, does have a conventional syntactical arrangement; for example, in Latin the verb falls near the end of the clause, and in conversational English speech it appears near the subject. It is possible to determine major differences between Johnson's handling of the heroic couplet in his imitations of Juvenal and the management by Dryden and other poets who imitated the classics.

Since Empson was the first scholar to apply the term ambiguity critically, his views deserve attention. His thesis is that "poetry has a powerful means of imposing its own assumptions" and that such elements work in a manner independent of the reader's habitual thought processes.<sup>10</sup> (It should be noted here that Empson's approach has been questioned by Ralph W. Rader. His assertion is that critics who emphasize the "contralogicality of poetic statement, its lack of meaning in the ordinary sense, are in error."<sup>11</sup> Doctrines such as Empson's on ambiguity "in effect deny semantic coherence to literary structures and eliminate the principle of excluded contradiction from critical discourse itself." Such approaches allow students and some scholars to consider as valid any interpretation, no matter how arbitrary. The danger is that if literary works may mean anything the reader wishes, they tend to mean nothing. In effect, these "positivists" have "reduced literature to nonsense.")

Empson points out that not only may a word have several meanings, some in connection with or in dependence upon each other, but ambiguity itself may refer to the reader's indecision as to what the poet means, the author's intention toward multiple meaning or the probability that he does have several meanings in mind. Beyond that, the critic deals with a word as a "member of the language," or of the sentence and its various relationships as "the juice in which they [the words] are



sustained." His essay considers a series of "definite and detachable" ambiguities in which several large and wide meanings can be separated. He also examines the many various meanings which may lie in the symbolism of the sounds of a literary line. And finally, he admits that analysis of the effect of verse "must be one of altogether impossible complexity."<sup>12</sup>

He asserts that ambiguity may appear to be more elaborate in poetry than in prose simply because the reader is trained to look for it. Another contributing factor, though, is the "presence of meter and rhyme." These two elements do nothing to aid the bald task of composing a statement, but in verse they lead to a divergence from the ordinary conversational method of presenting information or emotion and so lead the reader to consider several possible original ideas from which the verse could have grown.

#### Ambiguity in Shakespeare and Milton

The next step in an approach to ambiguity in Johnson is to review critical comment on this element in Shakespeare and Milton. Empson is one of the critics who have entered this field. As he examines Shakespeare's sonnets, he uses one of his own techniques; his premise is based on the probability of multiple meanings intended by the author. Most of the work in Chapter IV of his Seven Types of Ambiguity is done with Sonnet 83, "I Never Saw That You Did Painting Need," which he describes as a "noble compound of eulogy and apology":

I never saw that you did painting need,  
And therefore to your fair no painting set,  
I found (or thought I found) you did exceed,  
The barren tender of a Poet's debt:  
And therefore have I slept in your report,  
That you yourself being extant well might show,

How far a modern quill doth come too short,  
 Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow,  
 This silence for my sin you did impute,  
 Which shall be most my glory being dumb,  
 For I impair not beauty being mute,  
 When others would give life, and bring a tomb.  
     There lives more life in one of your fair eyes,  
     Than both your Poets can in praise devise.<sup>13</sup>

Empson shows that the meaning of line 2 may go either with line 1 or line

3:

Taking it line 1, Shakespeare was concerned only for the young man's best interests: "I did not praise you in verse because I could not see that your reputation could be set any higher by my praise." Even for this the primary meaning, there are two implications; either never 'until I found you out'; 'At one time I had not discovered that your cheeks needed rouge, and your character whitewash'; When I first loved you I did not realize that you had this simple and touching desire for flattery.<sup>14</sup>

Empson next examines other lines as to the multiple meanings of words such as tender, debt, and exceed as they apply to the poet's relationship with W. H. He notes the parallels, And therefore, and the grammatical possibilities of their reference, with their various reverberations of meanings and their possible supports to the poet's mood or atmosphere. He also discusses the ambiguity created by antithesis in line 12: "When others would give life, and bring a tomb." This line has several possibilities:

'When others would bring life, I in fact bring a tomb.' This might be Shakespeare's tomb; 'I do not flatter you but I bring you the devotion of a lifetime.' More probably it is W. H.'s; 'I do not attempt to flatter you at the moment. I bring you the sad and reserved gift of eternal praise.'<sup>15</sup>

Other ways of reading the syntax would eliminate the antithesis altogether and lead the reader down an entirely different avenue of thought. The artistry of the sonnet is that the composite sentiment of the whole work "never falls apart among the ambiguities; it is . . . pained, bitter, tender, and admiring; Shakespeare is being abandoned by W. H., and stiffly

apologizing for not having been servile to him."<sup>16</sup> Shakespeare covers "the whole ambiguity" in savoring the situation.

Donald Davie also analyzes syntactical ambiguity in Shakespeare, applying the principles of Ernest Fenollosa, author of the essay, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, which was discovered and published by Ezra Pound after the death of Fenollosa in 1908.<sup>17</sup> Fenollosa's principles are that the best poets use full sentences with transitive verbs, avoid forms of to be, emphasize all verbs, tie in abstract words to their background in some concrete act, and relate all parts of speech other than verbs to their verbal elements of origin.<sup>18</sup> Davie finds that Shakespeare's poetry and plays illustrate most of Fenollosa's theories, but concedes "there are . . . syntactical elements for which Fenollosa makes no provision."<sup>19</sup> Davie classifies the poet's questions, particularly in his plays, as "the empty or emptied forms" of pseudo-syntax. The true syntax would be narrative, but the questions create an opposite one. Such interplay of techniques of rhetoric in syntax can lead to multiplicity of meaning.

Spencer and Gregory have found syntactical patterns common in Shakespeare's plays. For example, incomplete sentences often portray characters under duress. Such patterns typical of spoken language "give the impression of a character intellectualizing under strain or a condition of emotional shock."<sup>20</sup>

Ruth Salvaggio has noted that several recent critics, among them Louis L. Martz and Stanley Fish, have examined ambiguity in Milton's Paradise Lost.<sup>21</sup> Martz works with Satan's earliest view of Hell in Book I in comparison to the description of Paradise in Book IV and also with Adam's vision of the future in Book IX. Fish compares syntactical

approaches in the speeches of God and Satan. As Salvaggio shows, Martz is concerned mainly with style as he studies the excerpts from Milton to be dealt with here, and he notes the "allusions to biblical and classical matters . . . the frequent clustered similies, and strange effect of foreign idiom."<sup>22</sup> The style expands and diminishes as "the mind moves backward and inward." As an example of style "tormented" by ambiguity and shifting syntax, Martz discusses Satan's introduction to Hell in Book I:

At once as far as Angels kenn he views  
 The dismal Situation waste and wilde,  
 A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round  
 As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames  
 No light, but rather darkness visible  
 Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,  
 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
 And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
 That comes to all; but torture without end  
 Still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed  
 With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd: (59-69).<sup>23</sup>

Martz comments on the effect of ambiguity:

One cannot say whether kenn is a verb or noun, or whether Angels is a plural subject, or a possessive, either singular or plural. Dungeon horrible at first may seem to be in opposition to dismal situation, but the phrase then veers about to become, perhaps, the subject of the verb flam'd--or is flam'd perhaps a participle modifying Furnace? So it goes throughout the passage.<sup>24</sup>

Milton's juggling of grammatical possibilities is a good technique to show the "strenuous agonies" of Hell, but it must be changed as the poet describes Paradise. Such a passage needs "purer style," one leaving behind the high epic manner in order to approach almost pastoral simplicity. Martz finds no ambiguity intended in the Paradise passage in the fourth Book, beginning with these lines:

Under a tuft of shade that on a green  
 Stood whispering soft, by a fresh Fountain side  
 They sat them down. . . (325-27).

Here, the orderliness of the syntax and the profuse but moderated style convey the peace of the idyllic life.

Martz also finds ambiguity in Book XI in which Adam climbs a hill to obtain a vision of the future. The reader is allowed to see the world's kingdom from two points of view. The critic works with these lines:

Not higher that Hill nor wider looking round,  
Whereon for different cause the Tempter set  
Our second Adam in the Wilderness,  
To shew him all Earths Kingdomes and their Glory.  
His eye might there command wherever stood  
City of old or modern Fame, the Seat  
Of mightiest Empire, from the destin'd Walls  
of Cambalu, seat of Cataian Can  
And Samarchand by Oxus, Temirs Throne,  
To Paquin of Sinaean Kings, and thence  
To Agra and Lahor of great Mogul  
Down to the golden Chersonese, or where  
The Persian in Ebatan sate. . . (381-93).

Martz comments as follows:

As Adam ascends the hill . . . Milton skillfully brings in the means of redemption, through alluding to Christ's temptation in the Wilderness and using an ambiguous syntax that for a time allows us to see the kingdoms of the world through the eyes of both the second Adam and the first.<sup>25</sup>

In his analysis of Milton, as Salvaggio has shown, Fish works from the premise that the reader's relationship with written material constantly undergoes change. Milton's syntax in the pronouncements of God are full of vigor and clarity, but speeches of Satan are puzzling and falsely enticing. He explains the characteristics of Satan's discourse:

Satan's fallacies are wrapped in serpentine trains of false beginnings, faulty pronoun references, missing verbs and verbal schemes, which sacrifice sense to sound . . . it is a loose style, irresponsibly digressive, moving steadily away from logical coherence . . . and calling attention finally to the virtuosity of the speaker.

In contrast, God's mode of speech is austere:

His syntax is close and sinewy, adhering to the ideal of brevity by employing only what is strictly necessary for making the matter clear; the intrusion of personality is minimal, the figures of speech are unobtrusive and to the point, and one has little sense of style apart from thought.<sup>26</sup>

Fish also analyzes a line describing the fallen angels' lack of understanding as they arrive in Hell: "Nor did they not perceive the evil plight." The first word leads the reader to expect "a negative statement completed by a subject and verb, an anticipation strengthened by the auxiliary did and the pronoun they."<sup>27</sup> The reader looks for a verb close behind. Instead he confronts a second negative which confounds his original concept of the statement's form. He must halt his progress and conciliate with the unexpected not. The syntactical uncertainty is never solved; the reader is suspended. Fish points out that the ambiguity also is lexical:

Milton is exploiting (and calling attention to) the two senses of 'perceive': they (the fallen angels) do perceive the fire, the pain, the gloom; physically they see it; however they are blind to the moral significance of their situation; and in that sense they do not perceive the evil plight in which they are.<sup>28</sup>

The literature of other predecessors of the Augustans also has been examined for ambiguity and ambivalence. For example, Empson analyzes Ben Jonson, Donne, and Marvell, showing that as early as the Elizabethan period, lines "went both ways," attaching themselves either to the preceding line with one plausible meaning or to the immediately following line with a separate but equally valid meaning. Discussing Jonson, Empson warns readers to watch for words selected for "vivid detail" as examples of a general principle, and to surmise reasons for the poet's choice. He works with these lines from Pan's Anniversary:

Pan is our All, by him we breathe, we live,  
We move, we are . . .  
But when he frowns, the sheep, alas,  
The shepherds wither, and the grass (170-71; 177-78).<sup>29</sup>

Empson's comments follow:

Alas . . . belongs to the sheep by proximity and the break in the line, to the grass by rhyming . . . and to the shepherds . . . by the process of human judgment. . . . The Biblical suggestion of grass as symbolic of the life of man . . . adds to the solemnity, or . . . makes the passage absurdly blasphemous, because Pan here is James.<sup>30</sup>

There is also in these Jonsonian lines another Biblical allusion, to Acts 17; here blasphemy applies.

In Donne, too, Empson finds lines that relate either backward or forward. In the poet's chain of sonnets, Corona, the technique is obvious, for each sonnet begins with the final line of the preceding poem. Donne employs another technique for ambiguity, rhetorical figures, which later became a hallmark of the Augustans. Comparing specific passages in Donne with some in Pope, Empson finds Donne lacking: his device does not show the "neatness and conciseness" of Pope's. He refers particularly to the rhetorical figure of zeugma in these lines from Donne:

By vertue's beam by fame derived from you  
May apt soules, and the worst may, vertue know.

Empson believes Donne's first may could mean "be expected to be," and the second, "can if they choose." The second by may be read either as a parallel to the first, "so that the beams of vertue are its fame," or may be dependent, to show how beams of vertue are passed on; if this is true, it is an improvement."<sup>31</sup>

Critics have various attitudes toward ambiguity in Augustan poetry. Typical of the most widely-held belief--that eighteenth-century poetry is the poetry of statement--is Maynard Mack's comment that Augustan poetry has the virtue of "perspicuity and ease," characteristics of prose discourse. He discusses its foundation in logic:

It utilizes the denotative emphasis of Augustan diction, its precision and conciseness; the logical emphasis inherent in couplet rhetoric, its parallelism and antithesis. And it honors a whole body of reticences, reserves, restraints . . . which tend to subdue and generalize its feelings and wit. On the other hand, every reader of Pope is conscious of a host of qualities that look the other way.<sup>32</sup>

Other critics, however, emphasize ambiguity in Augustan works, some asserting that the verse reflects the dichotomy of the age. Empson classifies Augustan ambiguity as an implication of several ways rather than only one way of judging or feeling about a subject. In contrast to the strain shown by the earlier writers, the ambiguity of the eighteenth century is superior because it is "easy and colloquial," proceeding with "reason and good sense" and employing the "resources of spoken language."<sup>33</sup> W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., believes that Augustan ambiguity stems from an attitude of declining "dissociation of sensibilities" on the one hand along with an appearance of trying to participate on the other.

#### The Heroic Couplet

The heroic couplet, the next consideration in an approach to Johnson, is the major poetic form of the Augustan period. One of the purposes of this discussion is to determine whether ambiguity is inherent in the couplet itself--especially in Johnson's couplet--or whether it is cultivated and deliberate. The best comprehensive study of the couplet is William Bowman Piper's, and unless otherwise noted, my quotations concerning the couplet will come from his work and will be noted parenthetically only by page number.<sup>34</sup>

The tradition of the Augustan couplet had its roots in classical times when Roman authors used poetry, though not in couplet form, as a public voice. Abrams explains that the English heroic couplet, employed



since Chaucer, consisted of lines of iambic pentameter rhyming in pairs.<sup>35</sup> Some English critics believed Chaucer's verse lacked dignity because he neglected the mid-line pause, and they wished that the ancient classical metrical principles could be applied more carefully to the English line. Piper explains that during the Elizabethan period the staple English poetic line, iambic pentameter with a regular pause in the middle of the line, became "defined by rhyme and worked into rhyming stanzas" for poetry, although blank verse became the standard for drama. He notes the advantages the English poets gained by this addition:

Rhyme, which furnishes a one-syllable metrical brake, allowed English poets to define their materials as neatly and precisely as the Latin poets had done with the metrical mechanics of the elegaic distich and yet permitted them to retain the flexibility of their lines and couplets (p. 30).

Neoclassical poets--those from Dryden through Johnson--wrote in the closed couplet--one in which the ending of each couplet coincided with the end of a sentence or of some other syntactical unit; thus two lines came to function almost as a stanza.<sup>36</sup> Neoclassical writers often endstopped their first lines and broke each line into two sections separated by a mid-line pause or caesura. Piper points out that rhyme allowed this English closed couplet, "which began as an imitation of a narrowly neat and pretty Latin form," to become a tool of major poetry, works that challenge sense and reason (p. 30).

The "new" elegaic couplet began to influence English poetry between 1585 and 1600 when the English writers studied the Latin elegaic distich employed by Ovid and Martial. As described by Piper, this line is "a pair of lines, the first six feet long and the second five," strongly endstopped. Through a series of rules on metrical substitution and on word-ending requirements, this distich offered "a regular hierarchy of

pauses--the strongest at the close of the distich, the next strongest at the end of the first line, the third strongest at the midpoints of the two lines" (p. 34). The distich thus was composed of two lines, each divided into two parts. It should be noted here that Latin verse is unrhymed and that it is based on long and short syllables, whereas English is accentual. Most of the poets who tried to adapt Ovid's and Martial's techniques to the English couplet, however, were able roughly to equate long syllables of Latin with the stressed syllables in English.

The poetry of Ovid and Martial employed three main rhetorical devices--inversion, balance, and parallelism, which the English poets adopted. These practices were more easily used by the Latin writers, however, because the Latin language was inflected. Thus, for emphasis, a Latin poet could move nouns or verbs to the end of a line, or to a position just before the caesura, and not lose the sense or sequence of his thought; such a practice in English, where word order is important to meaning, would either result in an awkward construction or would destroy sense. The Latin poet had another advantage: the metrical structure of Ovid's and Martial's elegaic distich allowed him to place up to seventeen syllables in his first line and as many as fourteen in the second. The English, before the influence of the "new" elegaic Latin distich, had already learned that a longer Latin line--the dactylic hexameter, a favorite of earlier classical Latin writers, particularly Juvenal, Vergil, and Lucretius--did not fall easily on English ears, and had settled for iambic pentameter in both lines; thus they were confined to ten syllables per line. To compensate for his handicap, the English poet drew on the many monosyllabic words he had in his own language. In later development of the couplet, poets such as Pope would play Latin polysyllabic

words against short Anglo-Saxon derivatives to achieve what Piper judges to be "combined smoothness and bite" (p. 41).

Conversational tone was another feature of Latin poetry inherited by the closed couplet writers; Piper gives major credit for this transfer to Ben Jonson in his translations of Martial, the classical epigrammist. Martial looked upon his epigrams as a method of direct public address, and this informal element carried over, through Johnson's translations, into the English couplet. Martial's epigrams were marked, as Piper notes, with "an intensely talky quality . . . an I-you form . . . scornful parody in the speaker's tone." Throughout, the reader can recognize the speaker's "exasperated and incredulous voice." Although the English poet did not perfectly combine the different attitudes, Jonson in his translation tried to project Martial's witty and detached speaking along with Jonson's own more dramatic address.

Piper shows that the influence of the Latin elegaic distich of Ovid and Martial on the English heroic couplet existed throughout the eighteenth century, down to the time of William Cowper, through Latin poetry studied in the schools. In the hands of the Englishmen the couplet grew to include subjects far beyond the scope of the Latin form. Explaining the general nature of the closed couplet through its long use, Piper quotes a description of the hierarchy of metrical pauses given by John Dennis, the eighteenth-century critic:

The Pause at the end of a Verse [that is, at the end of the first line] ought to be greater than any Pause that may precede it in the same Verse [that is, the mid-line pause] and the Pause at the end of the Couplet ought to be greater than that which is at the End of the first Verse (brackets are Piper's).<sup>37</sup>

This hierarchy of pauses carries over to a hierarchy of emphasis in the four segments of the couplet. Although the caesura divides the line, the

iambic pentameter produces a greater amount of emphasis at the end of the second line than at the end of the first. Further, if the mid-line pause occurs following the fourth syllable, the second half of the line, now being longer, receives the emphasis. Should the mid-line pause follow the fifth syllable--in other words, come at the exact center of the ten-syllable line--three stresses of the iambic pentameter would fall in the second half of the line as compared to two in the first. A pause after the sixth syllable would have the effect of lending more scope and power to the first half of the line, since the first half would be longer. A pause after only four syllables would aid the force of the second half of the line. Piper explains that in general the second line of the couplet is climactic, and the second half of each line is "prevaillingly so" (p. 8). The stresses and the caesura give the poet the freedom either to balance his statements or subtly to tip them.

Yvor Winters also has pointed out the couplet's flexibility. It has the power to suggest, through imitation, the effects of almost any desired technique. In rhymed verse, identity of line has more strength than it does in unrhymed verse because emphasis is strong at the conclusion of every other line. Similarly, the line is more definitely identified in the couplet than in other stanza forms because of the couplet's simplicity. The poet, working with a mathematical and nearly mechanical repetition of line and stanza, has the advantage of an obvious foundation and a center of connotation over which he may play his poetic variations. In spite of such a regular basic scheme, the variation is not "confined." The poet may "move in any direction whatever, and his movement will be almost automatically graduated by the metronomic undercurrent of regularity."<sup>38</sup>

Despite its flexibility, the heroic couplet did confine the poet to metrical groups of twenty, ten, and sometimes five syllables in English, and he was always prompted to balance these, even to observe balances within balances.

Piper, explaining thrust and momentum, shows that first lines vary, sometimes completing a thought, sometimes moving past the anticipated pause at mid-line and by enjambement pushing the reader immediately to the second line. Yet even if the couplet's first line is a complete thought, it always carries some forward impulse, some momentum toward the larger unit. On the other hand, no first line ever is so enjambed that it fails to have some sense of degree of closure, of "definitive integrity." Piper applies the same principle to pauses at mid-line and at the couplet's end.

Writing two years following publication of Piper's book, Samuel R. Levin comments further on the caesura and on enjambement. The accepted definition of the caesura, a syntactic break occurring near the middle of the line, does not explain why such a break should produce an effect different from the break at the end. His argument follows:

Given the line as an autonomous unit . . . just as its end occasions a pause, so its length exacts a forward movement. The line exerts a pressure for completion upon which the syntactic break obtrudes. In rhyming verse the impulse to move forward is augmented by the anticipation of hearing the rhyme at the end of the line.<sup>39</sup>

The tendency to regard the caesura as a syntactic break jeopardizes one of the meter's most important aspects, the tension between the abstract metrical pattern and the dynamics of natural language. Enjambement is "syntactic running over" of the line. Often, critics speak of "tension or interplay between the onward movement demanded by the syntax and the sense of completion signalled by the endline." The size of the

grammatical unit involved has an effect on the force of the enjambement. The smaller the grammatical unit, the greater the resistance to enjambement; as the enjambed unit grows in grammatical size,

the opposition between the pause and . . . bonding and juncture is lowered, until when clauses are tested it is completely neutralized by the syntactic juncture and loses most of its effect.<sup>40</sup>

Piper comments on the stabilizing effects of rhyming words in the English couplet. Most are strong in sense and sound; about nine-tenths of them are substantives or verbals and the rest adverbs and adjectival modifiers. In most instances rhyme words are monosyllables; less commonly they have two syllables with the accent on the second, the only syllable that rhymes (pp. 13-14). Most rhyme words, being nouns or verbs of one syllable, create a strong emphasis on the end of the couplet and a secondary emphasis at the end of the first line, thus supporting the primary and secondary nature of the hierarchy of pauses.

Piper also discusses the effect of inversion, parallelism, and antithesis on the English couplet. Inversion, unlike rhyme, has an ambivalent effect, usually strengthening a strong pause and modifying a weaker one. The reader always has a strong desire for the verb; inverting normal English word order by withholding the verb to the end of the line upholds the line's integrity and compresses the mid-line pause, and the delay gives the reader a sense of fulfillment once he finally encounters what he has awaited. Inversion of any word group draws the reader toward the conclusion of the statement, but it also makes him aware of the inverted elements--the segments of speech themselves and the juncture of hinges, which are the points at which those segments can be broken apart or joined together. Such opposing impulses create the ambivalent effect he desires. Piper offers as an example Pope's line from Windsor Forest,

"Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display." In it, the reader is drawn by the strength of the verb in its inverted position to the end of the line, but he is also very conscious of the gap after groves because Pope usually places the mid-line pause near the middle of the line, and the reader is aware that it is missing.

Parallelism and antithesis, the other two rhetorical patterns inherited by the seventeenth-century English poets from Ovid and Martial, affect the closed couplet's unity and order in ways that are both ambivalent and complex. These balances "integrate and stabilize any metrical unit" (p. 15). Sometimes a poet may also employ alliteration, repetition, or inversion to support balance. But Piper shows that within textures of balance, the closed couplet may contain features of unity and diversity: "Thus parallels and balances . . . allow the poet to accommodate varieties in the details of his utterances and yet to integrate them into larger units" (p. 16).

Rhetorical balances, however, may be "given metrically oblique articulations"; used in this way they can modify the couplet's order and stability. Piper illustrates this point with another quotation from Windsor Forest:

Let India boast her Plants, nor envy we  
The weeping Amber or the balmy Tree  
(ll. 29-30).

Here the speaker suggests two courses of action, to let India boast and not to let England envy--the first spanning six syllables and the second, fourteen. The major rhetorical pivot falls at the pause in the middle of the first line rather than at a normally stronger pause--the end of the first line. In this manner the poet sets up a "brief tension between

metrical and rhetorical promptings." Piper's second example is from Absalom and Achitophel:

For Laws are onely made to Punish Those  
Who serve the King and to protect his foes  
(ll. 610-11).

Here the first pair of balanced infinitive phrases thrusts past the end of the first line so that the rhetorical pivot coincides with the caesura in the second line.

Like the rhetorical techniques, syntactical elements also have a two-way effect on the closed couplet's metrical pattern. For example, a complete clause, and to a lesser extent a phrase, can hold together the length of syllables covered. In general, meter and syntax in the closed couplet lend force to each other. Normally, syntax coincides with rhetoric, too, just as it does with meter, though sometimes it may support rhetoric that runs oblique to the meter. All such possibilities give the poet great freedom of choice. Within the couplet he has many techniques to interplay for variety and order as well as for movement and stability.

Piper explains how the dynamics just described apply also to larger units or "supracouplets":

This dynamics prevailed in the larger elements of closed-couplet poetry too. The couplet pause, while always formally observed, was subject to modification, just like the pause at the end of the first line and the mid-line pause. It was, indeed, the dynamic handling of the couplet closure, that is, the yoking together of highly individualized couplets into highly integrated paragraphs . . . that made possible Dryden's and Pope's employment of the closed couplet to articulate their own and their age's most vital and most controversial problems (p. 19).

William Edinger also has commented on couplet dynamics, summarizing briefly the eighteenth-century attitude toward verbal sequence or syntax as an index to meaning, and treating mainly the poet's interest in rhetorical schemes inherited from the Greeks and Romans as a means of



invigorating verse. He explains the Augustan approach to word order:

Most eighteenth-century critics took a practical approach to the subject. . . . What is the problem of style? Put negatively, it is avoiding dullness at all costs. Put positively, it is learning to exploit all possible sources of compatible literary pleasures. The classical theory of composition had taught them [the poets] to think of stylistic distinction in musical terms, as a matter of significant deviation from an implied norm, and they knew that the great variety of syntactical patternings, dislocations, and rearrangements that the Greek and Roman rhetoricians had described . . . could help them underline meaning, distribute emphasis, intensify effects of rhythm or sound . . . and offer pleasure in pure variety.<sup>41</sup>

Edinger asserts that the poet's major problem is to get the most possible energy or vividness into his lines. His main sources are sense, trope, figure, sound, rhythm, word order, and voice or tone. An example of verse which welds most of these sources together is this couplet from Goldsmith's The Deserted Village:

Ill faires the land, to hastening illls a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates and men decay (ll. 50-  
(51).<sup>42</sup>

Three syntactical figures aid the poet. The first is hyperbaton, rearrangement of normal word order, which is demonstrated in the phrasing "Ill fares the land" instead of "the land fares ill" and by "to hastening illls a prey" instead of "a prey to hastening illls." The figure of words used by the poet places the emphasis on ill and "on the important sense and rime-word prey."<sup>43</sup> The second is polyptoton, employment of the same word in various cases or in different parts of speech as in "ill . . . illls." The third is antithesis, one of the figures of parallelism, demonstrated by the second line in the quotation "in which the grammatical similarity between the two clauses heightens a contrast in sense."<sup>44</sup>

Edinger compares the poetic effects of antithesis and hyperbaton. Antithesis may be founded on clauses, phrases, or other parts of speech. Operating through the conciseness it permits, it clarifies structure and

creates an effect that is "taut, perspicuous, controlled." On the other hand, hyperbaton works in any rearranging in any of the elements of a sentence: "It need not be, and frequently isn't, subordinate to any logical or grammatical function." Since it is not bound to sense or structure, the poet may employ it for a great range of effects, lyrical to comical.

Edinger also explains the changes in attitude toward the classical word schemes from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. In Donne's Songs and Sonets a playful quality which had been exploited by the Elizabethans remained to some extent, but was achieved with the conceit, "a logical rather than schematic procedure."<sup>45</sup> Poetic consensus was that ornaments should be part and parcel of meaning, "tropes rather than schemes," and elaborate syntax began to give way to a plain style. In the eighteenth century, however, such a style was looked upon as flat; and the baroque manner as ostentatious. Meantime the decasyllabic couplet had added conciseness, energy, and clarity. Edinger explains that it became "noticeably, but not too noticeably," elegant:

This reform required a revival of the schemes and perhaps an increased use of inversion, mainly to preserve the identity of each verse line by capping it with a verb or other strong masculine rime-word. But the schemes employed were mostly those of logic and grammar, the family of parallelism; for syntax and ornament were to be not playful but everywhere subordinate to sense.<sup>46</sup>

Although the couplet held sway for a century and a half among the best poetic talent, it came under attack as early as 1690, when Dryden was still at the height of his career. At this period the "new orthodoxies," the harbingers of the Romantic period, were already exerting power over "second-rate talents." But Edinger shows that Dryden, Pope, and Johnson "held aloof from what 'everybody' knew to be right or wrong,

preserving . . . their individual preferences."<sup>47</sup> Each trusted his own experience more than the new theory, and each knew that in the couplet he had a dependable and manageable form.

This chapter has surveyed the study of ambiguity, particularly in the current century, noting several advanced critical theories on this subject as they have applied to poetry. It has explained the reasons for the failure of a move around the middle of the present century to approach literary analysis through structural linguistics. Critics have found ambiguity in the works of Shakespeare, Milton, and other English authors, particularly in Shakespeare's sonnets and in Milton's Paradise Lost, and in the poetry of the Augustan Age, especially the heroic couplet poetry, and have pointed out the effect of the elegaic Latin distich of Ovid and Martial on English writers. Finally, among the characteristics of the couplet is its dependence upon classical word schemes.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>William Van O'Connor, "Ambiguity," in Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton, 1974), pp. 18-19.

<sup>2</sup>M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 4th ed. (New York, 1981), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>X. J. Kennedy, An Introduction of Poetry (Boston, 1966), p. 52.

<sup>4</sup>John Spencer and Michael Gregory, "An Approach to the Study of Style," in Linguistics and Style, ed. John Spencer (London, 1964), p. 94.

<sup>5</sup>Poetries, Their Media and Ends: A collection of essays by I. A. Richards published to celebrate his 80th birthday, ed. Trevor Eaton (The Hague, 1974), p. 10.

<sup>6</sup>Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," NLH, 2 (1970), 124.

<sup>7</sup>Roger Fowler, The Language of Literature (New York, 1971), p. 111.

<sup>8</sup>Review of J. L. Trager and H. L. Smith, Outline of English Structure in Kenyon Review, 13 (1951), 713, quoted by Fowler, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>Literary Style: A Symposium, ed. Seymour Chatman (New York, 1971), Introd., p. xiv.

<sup>10</sup>William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, 3rd ed. (London, 1963), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>Ralph W. Rader, "The Concept of Genre and Eighteenth-Century Studies," in New Approaches to 18th Century Literature: English Institute Essays (New York, 1978), p. 81.

<sup>12</sup>Empson, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup>Shakespeare: The Complete Works, ed. G. B. Harrison (New York, 1968), p. 1610.

- <sup>14</sup>Empson, p. 134.
- <sup>15</sup>Empson, p. 137.
- <sup>16</sup>Empson, p. 139.
- <sup>17</sup>Donald Davie, Articulate Energy: An Inquiry Into the Syntax of English Poetry (New York, 1955), p. 63. Pound prepared Fenollosa's essay for publication subtitling it "An Ars Poetica." Davie quotes it from Poetry of Ezra Pound, ed. Hugh Kenner (New York, n.d.).
- <sup>18</sup>Davie, p. 39.
- <sup>19</sup>Davie, p. 51.
- <sup>20</sup>Spencer and Gregory, p. 95.
- <sup>21</sup>Ruth Salvaggio, "Dryden's Syntax: A Reappraisal of His Couplet Verse and His Public Poetry" (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Rice University, 1979).
- <sup>22</sup>Louis L. Martz, The Paradise Within: Studies in Vaughan, Traherne, and Milton (New Haven, 1964), p. 117.
- <sup>23</sup>John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis, 1976), p. 213. All further references to Milton will be to this text.
- <sup>24</sup>Martz, p. 119.
- <sup>25</sup>Martz, p. 148.
- <sup>26</sup>Fish, Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost (New York, 1967), p. 75.
- <sup>27</sup>Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," 125.
- <sup>28</sup>Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," 126.
- <sup>29</sup>"Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques," ed. Stephen Orgel, in The Yale Ben Jonson (New Haven, 1969), p. 313.
- <sup>30</sup>Empson, p. 27.
- <sup>31</sup>Empson, p. 71.

<sup>32</sup>Maynard Mack, "Wit and Poetry and Pope: Some Observations on His Imagery," in Pope and His Contemporaries: Essays Presented to George Sherburn, ed. James L. Clifford and Louis A. Landa (New York, 1968), p. 20.

<sup>33</sup>Empson, p. 71.

<sup>34</sup>William Bowman Piper, The Heroic Couplet (Cleveland, 1969).

<sup>35</sup>Abrams, p. 71.

<sup>36</sup>Abrams, p. 71.

<sup>37</sup>John Dennis, The Critical Works, ed. E. N. Hooker (Baltimore, 1943), p. 329, quoted in Piper, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup>Yvor Winters, "The Heroic Couplet and Its Recent Rivals," in In Defense of Reason (New York, 1947), p. 142.

<sup>39</sup>Samuel R. Levin, "The Conventions of Poetry," in Literary Style: A Symposium, ed. Seymour Chatman (New York, 1971), p. 184.

<sup>40</sup>Levin, p. 184.

<sup>41</sup>William Edinger, "The 'French School' in Eighteenth-Century England: Some Critical Reactions Against Pope and Their Implications," paper read at a meeting of the American Association for Eighteenth Century Studies, Houston, Texas, March, 1982, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup>The Vicar of Wakefield, Poems, and Mystery Revealed, Vol. IV of The Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford, 1966), p. 289.

<sup>43</sup>Edinger, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup>Edinger, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup>Edinger, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup>Edinger, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup>Edinger, p. 8.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MODE OF IMITATION

As a poet whose career began early in the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson inherited an heroic couplet whose norms were well established, and a form he would employ throughout his long life of writing. But he also inherited another convention, the mode of imitation of classical authors. In this mode he would write his two long poems, using the Satires of Juvenal as his models. Johnson's first imitation, London, appeared in 1738. His second, The Vanity of Human Wishes, was published ten years later; it is considered the finest of his poetic works.

Although an analysis of the conventions of imitation is necessary because Johnson's two major poems are written in this mode, it is also important to this discussion in another way: to provide insight into sources of ambiguity. Horace and Juvenal were the most popular models for eighteenth-century English writers; the ancient satirical approaches and poetic techniques, reflected in Augustan imitations, often helped to expand the meaning of the adaptations.

Assessment of the part Roman classical conventions play as a technique in ambiguity in Johnson will require several preliminary steps: examining imitations written by his predecessors in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, noting to what extent his Augustan contemporaries, particularly Dryden and Pope, employed the classical forms and operated within the Augustan ideal of the imitation, and differentiating

between various categories of translation and between the satirical approaches of the Roman masters.

### The Background of Imitation

The term imitation has a long history in literary criticism. It was first used to define the nature of literary art, and later to show how one work relates to an earlier one--its model. The second interpretation was employed continuously from ancient times through Johnson's day, although M. H. Abrams explains that most authorities specified that "mere copying" was not appropriate and that any work of merit should imitate the form and spiritual essence rather than the detail of the model.<sup>1</sup> The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries developed a specialized definition: a work of literature which intentionally reflected an earlier one but adapted its meaning for readers in the later writer's own age. This interpretation applies to Johnson's period.

Distinguishing the mode of imitation from mere borrowing is one of the concerns of Howard D. Weinbrot, who warns that following the Restoration, the practice of imitation had a wide range. Poets often combined several techniques; thus it is difficult to place a certain poem within any one category. It is possible, though, to trace the general principles of imitation in many major works appearing between 1660 and 1748, the date of the last of the great imitations, The Vanity of Human Wishes.

Weinbrot distinguishes five causes of a favorable climate for developing the imitation during this era: the idea of general nature, the classical basis of education, the acceptance of a free rather than a close theory of translation, the rise of Restoration burlesque or parody, and the diversity of the application of the term imitation. Three of



these--the prevailing theory of general or unchanging human nature, the influence of parody, and the various uses of the term imitation, need detailed examination.

During the Restoration and the Augustan Age, most men believed that the nature of mankind never changes. If this is true, then the shortcomings and follies of ancient Rome were the same as those of modern London, and the means of castigation should be the same. Sir Robert Stapylton presented this idea in 1647, and Dryden employed it in 1695 as the basis of his system of criticism. Since modern men deplore the same attitudes and actions as the ancients did, the English writers reasoned, it would be wise to copy their observations and their techniques, directing blame, and to a lesser extent praise, as they did. This practice was not looked upon as plagiaristic but as sensible; further, it could aid the poet in avoiding the superfluities of modern approaches or views which could cloud the eternal truth, and it could hold him at the heart of the real or unchanging nature of men. One method the English writers used to present ancient truth to modern men was simply to substitute contemporary names, places, or manners for classical ones. The theory of general nature thus fostered literary borrowing and "encouraged modernization of ancient names, places, and so on";<sup>2</sup> however, it also assumed that the reader should be encouraged to recognize what the imitator had done with his ancient material. The classical authors themselves followed such a practice. Roman authors had imitated Greek writers to improve style, followed established genres except in satire, and modernized, and they proudly admitted they were disciples of a particular master. They believed that rather than stagnation, growth was fostered in the imitator, particularly if he could surpass the style of the original. After

Boileau translated Longinus into French in 1674, following Longinus' "discovery" during the Renaissance, the English ranked Longinus with Aristotle and Horace as an outstanding critic, and Longinus had shown that Plato first recommended imitation of the best poets and orators of the past as a pathway to greatness. Accepting the ancient habit, English authors had no reservations about pointing to passages of their works modeled after the ancients. Whether such passages were modernization, employment of a genre, or mere emanation, they all reflected respect for classical authors.

The second major factor encouraging imitation as a mode of writing was English education in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the student was taught to admire classical techniques. Later, when he viewed a subject himself, he tended to consider it as a classical author might have done and to write about it in a manner reflecting the master. The task of composing Latin verse forced English schoolboys into close contact with ancient thinking and ways to present ideas.

The acceptance of a free theory of translation as opposed to word-for-word literal reproduction is another factor in the development of Augustan imitation. Even in ancient times, Horace had warned against close translation; early in the Restoration John Denham and Abraham Cowley followed his advice. Although imitation is a kind of translation, it allows the poet to take many more liberties than the common close definition of translation implies. One kind of imitation is defined in Johnson's Dictionary as "a method of translation looser than paraphrase, in which modern examples and illustrations are used for ancient, or domestic for foreign." But Weinbrot argues that the Augustan ideal went further. It demanded that the contemporary reader see the original in

order to enjoy the modern counterpart completely; thus the modern poet incorporated part or all of his model into the new work. The difference between these two meanings of imitation lies in the importance of familiarity with the original. Both groups of poets, the translators and those who merely modernized on the one hand, and the "independent" imitators on the other, tried to preserve the original sense and meaning, and both used modern names and places as they discussed parallel moral or social problems. Both desired to reflect the style and thinking of the original. But only the "independent" imitator presumed that the reader would know the original and that much of the reader's pleasure would stem from such familiarity. As illustration, Weinbrot compares Oldham's version of Horace's Ars Poetica with imitations of Roman classics by Swift, Pope, and Johnson. Oldham's work includes modern allusions and faithfully reflects the author's intention, but it does not demand that the reader know the original or perceive the manner in which the modern author changes it. On the other hand, Swift, Pope, and Johnson do require that the reader recognize the original; they do consider the earlier author's meaning a part of the modern work, and they do believe the contrast between the two helps the reader to appreciate the modern author's effort.

Weinbrot believes that parody, which echoes the serious idea of a work or the style of its author and applies it to a lowly or contrary subject, is probably responsible for the physical appearance of Augustan imitation on the page. Although imitation existed as a form as early as the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods in English literature, its handling during these periods has little bearing on Johnson. But Restoration burlesque does. Around 1660, parody writers began printing original lines along with their modernized versions. Thus they developed the concept

that the reader might receive more pleasure from a modern work if he had the original at hand. Weinbrot credits Charles Cotton with setting the trend of printing parodied passages beside burlesqued modern versions. In Cotton's Scarronides: or Virgile Travestie (1664), portions of the Aeneid were placed in Latin italics at the bottom of the page and readers were urged to read a Letter of Direction (footnote) before making comparisons. In the same year James Scudamore, in the Preface to his Homer a là Mode: A Mock Poem upon the First and Second Books of Homer's Iliad,<sup>3</sup> advises his readers to compare texts; the Greek appears at the bottom of the page. In like manner some twenty years later, formal imitations demanded that the reader recognize the original classical satire. Thomas Wood, for example, prints Latin originals at the bottom of the page in Juvenal Redivivus, or the First Satyr of Juvenal Taught to Speak Plain English (1683).<sup>4</sup> Wood's work may not be the first in the field of formal imitation, but it is certainly an example of the influence of parody on the physical appearance of imitation.

The practice of printing the original along with the modern poem continued into the eighteenth century. Swift writes that modern poems depend upon the parent poem for effect.<sup>5</sup> Aubrey L. Williams points out that Pope printed the Latin texts on facing pages of his Imitations, which are

studded with italicized words or phrases . . . obviously designed for the reader's particular attention. . . . [They] seem to have had one of two purposes: first, they signal moments when Pope apparently wants it remarked that he is following hard upon Horace, perhaps in order to gain consent to what in the Imitation might seem a novel idea or phrasing; second, but equally important, the italics signal moments when Pope wishes it to be noticed that he has deliberately forsaken the original.<sup>6</sup>

Johnson asked Edward Cave, his publisher, to print Latin passages below the text of his London on the lower part of the page since part of the

"beauty" of the effect would be to see how the poet had adapted the original.<sup>7</sup>

Weinbrot presents three major classes or "modes of Imitation." In the first, the original is "overly cited, freely translated and truncated, thereby altering the meaning of the poem";<sup>8</sup> it is "paraphrase and use of part of the poem."<sup>9</sup> The second is paraphrase and consistent modernization, a "consecutive modernization of a complete poem."<sup>9</sup> The third is very free imitation of an unrevealed source which, however, the poet believed the reader would recognize, a free adapting of both content and form. Weinbrot attributes development of the first two to Cowley; they are basically translations, not original poems. The third, as exemplified by Rochester's Saytr Against Reason and Mankind (1679), is so different from the original Boileau work that it is impossible for the reader to compare.

In the preface of the 1668 folio of Cowley's poems, the author writes concerning his versions of Pindar's Odes that he has not recorded "precisely" the words the original writer wrote, but rather his "manner of speaking."<sup>11</sup> In this confession, the basis for Weinbrot's first classification of imitation, Cowley shows that the reader is not expected to know the original or to contrast the two works; neither is he to move Pindar to a modern situation. The basis for Weinbrot's second grouping is also the works of Cowley. In his version of Horace's "Epodon" (Epode II) and in "The Country Mouse. A Paraphrase upon Horace 2 Book, Satyr 6" first published in 1663, Cowley introduces modernization. In the "Epodon" he also alters extensively, excluding the speaker's profession and the poem's last stanza and changing the tone of the original. Disciples of Cowley, among them Alexander Brome, Thomas Sprat, Nahum Tate, and

Rochester, soon began to paraphrase more freely and to modernize. Thus the cultural habits of the age, the theory of translation made popular by Cowley, and the practices of Cowley and his contemporaries, were responsible to a great extent for Augustan imitation.

Weinbrot attributes his third classification to Rochester, or perhaps more properly to Boileau, a major influence on English authors. Boileau's works depend for effect upon the reader's familiarity with the original. The French author sometimes chooses to work with only parts of classical satires, and sometimes he fails to follow sequentially through a work. He does depend on a source, but sometimes does not clearly proclaim it. Rochester also is casual about his sources and fails to follow exactly the structure of the originals in "Timon," a free imitation of Boileau's Third Satire which itself is an imitation of Horace's Satires, ii.8, and in Satyr Against Reason and Mankind, an imitation of Boileau's Eighth Satire. The major difference between Boileau and Rochester is that the French author often works with more than one source and that the English poet usually works with a single poem.

Techniques from all three of these classifications spread rapidly within the next twenty years. Jonathan Swift's works as well as those of Pope are "partial imitation," for they sometimes leave out parts of poems and sometimes alter meaning. Cowley's second grouping, modernization and fairly close translation, influenced both Pope and Johnson. Such "Cowleyian partial imitation," Weinbrot states, continued through the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup>

In general, the three classes had two common characteristics: they recognized and published the original, and they remained close to its meaning so the reader could appreciate the parallels. In following them,

Swift, Pope, and Johnson either change the master's work or parallel it exactly without accusing themselves of copying. Swift and Johnson also follow Cowley's modernization but do not print the entire original line by line with their imitation; instead they reproduce only pertinent sections as Rochester does in his Satyr. They do, however, "point to" the sections imitated, as Rochester does not do, and Weinbrot believes they show more originality than he does in handling themes.<sup>13</sup> Eighteenth-century as well as Restoration poets were likely to draw from more than one approach as they worked with original poems. They could translate closely, paraphrase, or handle freely; they could cut or expand; or they could modernize or adapt.

Weinbrot argues that the idea that imitation was "unoriginal and limiting" is wrong. Instead, it is liberating. It offers the poet a chance for metaphor; it demands that the reader notice his own place in history and the relation of his own time to other periods, and it presents an attitude international in scope rather than a merely isolationist viewpoint.

In delineating the genealogy and major qualities of Augustan imitation, Weinbrot emphasizes the importance of the Latin originals. Not only were the Augustan poems related to the original Latin ones in general subject matter, but they were truly direct descendants, carrying into the later period the essence of tone, imagery, and form.

Raman Selden, who cites Weinbrot as an authority on modern theories of translation and imitation and who recommends Weinbrot's book for supplemental reading on Augustan satire, also has considered the effect of the ancient verse conventions on English works of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>14</sup> Selden points out that even before the Civil War,

English authors, among them Chaucer working with Boccaccio, Wyatt with Alamanni, and Ben Jonson with Catullus, had "casually" modernized foreign works. Horace began to appear as a cavalier image during and after the Civil War, his popularity resting to a great extent on the work of Cowley, a "cavalier exile." Selden asserts, as Weinbrot does, that the theories developed by Denham and Cowley mark the beginning of the Augustan mode of "direct assimilation of classical literature."<sup>15</sup> Denham worked out the theory of modernizing, but Cowley put it into practice with his imitation of Horace's Odes and Satires.

#### Restoration Imitation

The practices of their predecessors in the genre should help to explain the accomplishments of Dryden and Pope, the major Augustan exponents of imitation. In the works of Restoration poets Selden sees the first evidence of Augustan principles of moderation, common sense, clarity, and naturalness, ideals most often associated with Horace. But to trace such principles to Horace alone would be a mistake, for both Horace and Juvenal were widely studied from the early Restoration period. Horace certainly and Juvenal to a lesser extent were part of the common curriculum in grammar and public schools and universities in the last half of the seventeenth century. During the same period, the two masters were also translated and imitated. Horace was translated in 1666 by Alexander Brome and in 1684 by Thomas Creech; Juvenal was translated in 1647 by Sir Robert Stapylton, in 1673 by Barton Holyday, and in 1693 by Dryden and others.

A hallmark of Restoration satire as opposed to that of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods is a shift from attack on general types of



humans to a castigation of particular persons or situations--a trend which reached its climax in the great satires of Dryden and Pope. The gradual growth of the neoclassical literary principles did not smother the variety and expansion of satire, but instead merely forced it into a stricter set of stylistic rules which in a way parallels the rigid set of values men of the period held concerning rationality and the social organization.

Major Restoration satirists are John Oldham, Samuel Butler, and Rochester, as well as Dryden. In Oldham, Selden sees qualities he classifies as "un-Augustan." Oldham took Juvenal as a model, but in the breadth and roughness of his treatment surpassed the extent and harshness of the satire of his predecessors. His style, which revived the Elizabethan theory of satire as a "vituperative and rugged genre," appeared to follow the ancient idea of satire as a curse.<sup>16</sup> His Juvenalian vehemence as opposed to Dryden's eclectic approach stressed the social difficulties of his era. One of Oldham's major contributions is his modernization, his removal of scenes from Rome to London and his use of English names and customs, but Selden shows that his importance also depends on his extensive use of Juvenal's voice. This technique involves inversion of the satiric persona so that the speaker abuses virtue rather than righteously upholding it. The effect is partly ironic ridicule and partly witty playfulness. Using a language of courtly manners, Oldham lashes out against goodness. The technique should be distinguished from mock-heroic style in which knaves and fools are given heroic proportions and then ridiculed; instead, Oldham's knaves speak, castigating virtue in an ironic but heroic manner. Selden explains that in mock-heroic, "the hero

is normative"; in ironic-heroic, "the libertine perspective is presented as if it were normative."<sup>17</sup>

Oldham uses a knavish persona in his major work, Satyrs Upon the Jesuits (1697). However, it may be significant that he employs Elizabethan direct abuse in only one of this group. At a time when attitudes were changing to neoclassical tastes, an abusive approach might not have been appropriate. Heeding the trend, Oldham probably shaped the Juvenalian vehemence of his Satyrs to fit the new literary demands. Instead of Elizabethan roughness, he employs irony and indirection.

Digressing briefly, we may note here that the works of Swift and Pope are frequently scatological or suggestive sexually through double entendre. The major attack on the "low" approach seems to stem from Addison, but Pope, Fielding, and later Goldsmith, also objected to it. Some genres, however, were considered acceptable for "low" materials in accord with Aristotle's definition of comedy.

Late in his career, Oldham was influenced by the neoclassicism of Boileau and Dryden, and his satiric voice lost its vigor. After Oldham's time, personae who scourged villainy began to disappear, and the speakers in satire tended to show a broader range, mainly toward the gentler principles of Horace.

Following categories outlined in 1932 by R. P. Bond, Selden classifies the works of another leading Restoration satirist, Samuel Butler, as low burlesque, or general parody of the heroic attained through use of low style and a low subject in heroic disguise.<sup>18</sup> Butler's major work Hudibras (1663-78) is an example. The setting is the world of chivalry; the hero is a Presbyterian knight full of blind faith and hypocrisy who with his enthusiastic squire Ralpho satirizes the defeated enemies of

the restored monarchy. In an anti-heroic posture, Butler attempts to prove that beliefs of Puritans and republicans are irrational. He parallels Puritan principles with chivalric romance, carrying elements of Cervantes' Don Quixote into his work. The choice of the allegorical vehicle allowed Butler to imply that Puritan principles were as outmoded as the trappings of romantic narrative and in the process to develop double-edged satire. As he satirizes the utilitarianism of some Puritan beliefs, Butler presents his hero as an antithesis of Milton's Christ in Paradise Lost. The poet attacks scientific investigation as well as all theology and all ethics, creating a satire that lacks positive ideals, that is completely negative. Reflecting man's distorted reason, Butler employs distorted language, "doggerel rhythms, deformed rhymes, cant idioms, and indecorous diction."<sup>19</sup> Other twentieth-century critics have pointed out that the seventeenth century produced many a travesty in which an heroic ideal was treated in vulgar style. The travesty proper, however, was an imitation, whereas Hudibras has as its subject the doctrines of church and state during the author's time.

The last of the leading satirists of the Restoration is Rochester, an advocate of Hobbes' materialism. Although Rochester is biting, spiteful, and primitive in his anger and disgust, Selden believes he does not fit Dryden's concept of Juvenal's reprehension. In some ways, in fact, particularly in his acknowledgment of his own faults, he is Horatian. But unlike Horace he projects a double image of aristocratic rank and in-born taste for courtly wit, as well as the Hobbesian naturalism which appears mainly in the obscenity spoken by a rake, one of his characters. In most of his works Rochester follows Horace's pattern and employs several personae. In the Satyr Against Reason and Mankind the interplay of

these personae is unambiguous: "The qualified Hobbsian voice eclipses entirely the Puritan 'formal band and beard,' the antagonist."<sup>20</sup> Such a stance is typical of the factors which prevented Rochester from attaining the poise of the Augustans. Selden states that Rochester's work projects the elegance and decorum of the Augustans, but also the "artless 'Nature' of the plays of a contemporary, Thomas Shadwell."<sup>21</sup>

Andrew Marvell is the probable author of several Restoration satires mocking the work of Edmund Waller, who wrote grandiose verse celebrating the victory of the Duke of York over the Dutch in 1665. With the pose of a poet advising a painter how to portray a scene on canvas, Waller emphasized the power, grandeur, and heroism of the victory in his Instructions to a Painter (1665). Within the next two years Marvell and others found it easy to ridicule his approach. They wrote a series of "Painter" poems; Marvell's Last Instructions to a Painter (1667) is considered best among them. In its blend of Horatian urbane raillery and Juvenalian majesty and invective, it anticipates Dryden. Marvell's verse reproduces the dignity and pathos of the Roman author and projects greater poise and irony than Butler's explicitness had demanded.

After the British expulsion of the Catholic James II and their invitation to William and Mary to take the throne, a new generation of poets appeared including Garth, Congreve, and Granville. Sir Samuel Garth, a physician, noticed the plight of people who could not pay prices demanded for medicine and in 1669 published a mock-heroic poem The Dispensary ridiculing the apothecaries and their allies among the doctors. William Congreve, a collaborator in Dryden's translation of Juvenal, was among the first to react against the excesses of style in the early Restoration theater and to argue that disapproval and sour satire did not belong

in social comedy. His comments appear in his Prologues to Love for Love (1695) and The Way of the World (1700). A few years later, in 1712, George Granville in "An Essay upon Unnatural Flights in Poetry" also reacted against the Restoration theater, commenting that the muse had run mad.<sup>22</sup> Selden states that these authors neglected satire "in favour of more sober poetic kinds in a spirit of conformity to a new regime, whose establishment marked the final stilling of the echoes and reverberations of the Civil War."<sup>23</sup>

#### Young and Swift

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the major verse satirists, Edward Young and Jonathan Swift, followed Horace's principles, complicating a voice of good-natured satire in different ways. Weinbrot and Selden examine their management of the classical satirical conventions.

Weinbrot writes that although Young's satires had lost their public appeal by the 1760s, they were the most important satires between the death of Dryden in 1700 and the appearance of Pope's Essay to Burlington (1731). Young, best known for his meditation Night Thoughts, is the author of Love of Fame, the Universal Passion: In Seven Characteristical Satires (1725-28), which presents public and private social groups, all guilty of a desire for fame. Weinbrot considers the verse worthy of Pope. During the author's lifetime the satires were admired by Samuel Johnson, Aaron Hill, Joseph Warton, and others, but today they are read mainly for their influence on Pope, and critics agree that they have serious flaws. Weinbrot believes Young's temperament and psychological character probably affected his literary effort; the poet had a passionate

desire for a position insuring financial reward; during the writing of Love of Fame he was obsessed with patronage. He dedicated his satires to important people, particularly to Queen Caroline, King George, and Walpole, praising them effusively. Such flattery in itself is not out of place in verse satire; in fact, it may aid the praise section of a praise-and-blame pattern. But some of Young's contemporaries as well as many of his later critics found that he offered an overdose of both good nature and flattery. Swift, who criticized Young also on poetic grounds, suggested that his financial desires had contaminated his art.<sup>24</sup> Although he defends Young's use of flattery, Weinbrot points out that the poet's praise of powerful figures of his time undermines his logic because these leaders are also shown presiding over a country filled with whores and fools. At the basis of the satire's failure may be Young's attempt to uplift his patrons while trying to fit them into satire's praise-and-blame pattern. Further, the poem does not project clearly whether the author visualizes a happy Augustan world or an apocalypse. Weinbrot explains that other poets, particularly Shakespeare, Swift, and Pope, gaze unflinchingly at man's evil, but that Young sees it and retreats.

Selden blames Young's failure on his attempt to weave together two incompatible attitudes in satire and to his ambition to perform two different roles as a satirist. Dealing first with contradictory attitudes, Selden notes that Young states in the preface to his work that the favors "laughing Satire," or the maintaining of good humor while censoring, a posture inherited from Horace. Juvenal, Young asserts, is always in a passion and projects an image of eloquence and morality. Young hoped to mold together these incongruous elements, to write genteel and amiable satire while lashing out in Juvenalian manner against vice. But Selden

says the author failed because of the wide sweep of his ambition: "He wanted to be both a public scourge and a man of feeling, but only succeeded in undermining the credibility of both roles."<sup>25</sup> The major contradictions in the satires are not only that the poet's apparent promise of good nature conflicts with his righteous indignation, but also that his fulsome display of praise opposes his pessimism. Young portrays British leaders as possessing almost superhuman virtues while England is overrun with all kinds of vice. Throughout the work, his attempt to display Augustan wit of attack along with the ideal of good humor results in a negation of both roles. Splashes of Juvenalism rhetoric fail to coincide with the tone of "laughing Satire" and produce a divided approach.

The third of the major eighteenth-century satirists, Jonathan Swift, has often been called the Juvenal of his own century, but Selden argues that this may be an exaggeration because Swift was committed to "laughing" satire as Young was. Swift's performance, however, shows a clarity and consistency that Young's lacks. Like several earlier Restoration verse satirists, notably Rochester and Butler, Swift remained faithful to a "low" style. His favorite vehicle, the mock-poem, takes many forms including the elegy, pastoral, rural ode, panegyric, and progress poem; like Hudibras all employ irony or doggerel. But Swift's works are more than simply a return to the tradition of Butler. Although his poems have a "jocoseness" that never marks Juvenal's verse, they display a kinship with the Roman author, one that is not present in Butler's poetry. In many of Swift's low-style poems, as well as in his prose, particularly the fourth book of Gulliver's Travels, Swift demonstrates a "Juvenalian grandeur." In one way the poet is unique: he is acutely aware of man's

duality--his possession of a sanctified soul in a soiling body. Selden believes Swift's emphasis on the scatological detail probably stems from the tradition he inherited not only from Juvenal but also from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers such as Donne, Shakespeare, and the Jacobean dramatists who were concerned with the repulsive image of death, the memento mori. The graveyard scene at the beginning of the fifth act of Hamlet is an example of this tradition.

If Swift is like Juvenal in this way, he certainly follows Horace in another, his extension of the satirical voice. Like Rochester and Pope, Swift has the ability to give his reader a strong sensation of "autobiographical immediacy."<sup>26</sup> Particularly in Swift's imitation of Horace (Satires, II, vi, 1712), in which the poet describes his attempts to obtain an interview with Robert Harley, earl of Oxford, a leading member of the Tory ministry, the author presents situations in intensely personal terms. These elements, of course, help Swift to show great diversity in managing the Horatian voice, which appears most extensively in his autobiographical poetry. Often his speaker is an "ironic third-person" through which he actually attacks other people while appearing on the surface to ridicule his own follies. In "An Apology to Lady Carteret," for example, Swift speaks as a socially inept but learned cleric apologizing for his own shortcomings, but in reality he satirizes the lady's pretensions. In neatly contrived raillery the poet employs a tone of refinement in opposition to Horace's simplicity. The same poem demonstrates the author's masterful control of irony, his command of allusion, and his skillful handling of point of view. In other poems too he shows he is able to see himself as if from a distance with a vision that is both ironic and unromantic. Selden believes that Swift's projection of



his roles as poet, priest, friend, and politician "extend the scope of the autobiographical Horatian voice by multiplying points of view and by introducing an existential bitterness into Horatian candour."<sup>27</sup>

Some of this bitter element appears in the best examples of Swift's satiric verse imitation, his "Baucis and Philemon."<sup>28</sup> The story presents an aged couple visited by saints. The couple's home is transformed into a church, the man's clothing becomes a vestment, and the woman's "home-spun" dress turns into satin and lace. In the end, at death, the two humans become yew trees. Some of Swift's disillusionment appears in his handling of the tale. The chairs in the little house turn into pews; Swift's lines reflect his observation of human failings as he comments on these church furnishings:

Which still their antient nature keep  
By lodging folks dispos'd to sleep  
(ll. 105-06).

The ending of the story receives Swift's touch of realism. One of the yew trees, after years of admiration from villagers who knew the reincarnation legend, is chopped down "to mend a barn" by "a parson of our town." The other becomes "stubby" and "stunted" so "the next parson stubbed it and burnt it." It is difficult to miss the irony of the two parsons' destruction of living things recreated by visiting saints. On this tone the imitation ends, leaving the reader to ponder the sour contrast between the ending and the lofty transformations occurring early in the tale.

Several minor Restoration and Augustan satirists should be mentioned briefly here. The Restoration poets are Charles Cotton, James Scudamore, Tom D'Urfey, James Farewell, and James Smith. Cotton and Scudamore were discussed earlier in connection with their practice of printing the

original Latin or Greek along with their parodies of Virgil and Homer. D'Urfey was a song writer and parodist, author of Butler's Ghost, or Hudibras, the Fourth Part (1682); Farewell, also a parodist, wrote The Irish Hudibras, or Fingallian Prince (1689), and Smith's work is Scaronides, or Virgile Travestie (1692). From the Augustan period the minor satirists are Nicolas Rowe, whose first play The Ambitious Stepmother (1700) has its setting in Persepolis; William Congreve (1670-1729), dramatist who was among the translators enlisted by Dryden in his work with Juvenal; Henry Higden, author of imitations of Juvenal's Tenth and Thirteenth Satires, and Matthew Prior, probably the most important as a poet among these men, who is best known for his lyrics in the tradition associated with the Greek poet Anacreon. Weinbrot classifies Higden as a modernizer; his method is partly translation and partly paraphrase.<sup>29</sup>

The flourishing of the technique of imitation, as illustrated in the preceding section dealing with major and minor authors of the periods under consideration, resulted in the satiric masterpieces of Dryden and Pope. These poets' particular handling of classical works within the spectrum of the genre is the next consideration of this discussion. Although Pope along with Samuel Johnson is the best known among all the Augustans in this field, Dryden should also be treated in some detail because his poetry, like Johnson's, is considered by most critics as Juvenalian. It should be made clear, however, that Johnson's work is imitation, and Dryden's is translation.

#### Dryden

Besides Dryden's verse, which is a blend of heroic style with the

more informal Horatian approach to public address, his prose commentary is important. His divisions of translation are often quoted, and his description of satire is respected as the outstanding early theoretical statement of the types and purposes of the art. As a classicist Dryden did extensive work; either he himself translated or he supervised the translations of Ovid, Theocritus, Lucretius, Horace, Juvenal, Persius, Homer, and Virgil. In prefaces to these works and in his famous essay Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire (1692) he presents his major premises.

The preface to the first edition of Ovid's Epistles (1680) contains Dryden's three categories of translation:

All Translation I suppose may be reduced to these three heads. First, that of Metaphrase or turning an Authour word by word, and Line by Line, from one language to another. . . . The Second way is that of Paraphrase, or Translation with Latitude, where the Authour is kept in view by the Translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sence, and that too is admitted to be amplyfied, but not alter'd. . . . The Third way is that of Imitation, where the Translator . . . assumes the liberty not only to vary from word and sence, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the Original, to run division on the groundwork, as he pleases.<sup>30</sup>

Dryden offers Ben Jonson's work with Horace's Art of Poetry as an example of metaphrase, Edmund Waller's with Virgil's Aeneid as paraphrase, and Cowley's with Pindar and Horace as imitation. He quotes a line from Horace often cited by imitators during the Restoration: Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus / Interpres--"Nor word for word too faithfully translate" (Vol. I, p. 115). To translate word for word and well at the same time is almost impossible, Dryden writes, because Latin, "a most severe and compendious Language," often compresses into one word meaning that cannot be reproduced even in several words in English, a tongue of "Barbarity" and "narrowness" (Vol. I, p. 115). Latin turns of expression

also are often lost by the close translator, for how can an Englishman express a Latin thought in a literal translation and at the same time preserve the wit and rhetorical skill of the original author? In short, Dryden explains, the "verbal Copyer" or close translator faces so many problems that he cannot handle them all at once; he must weigh the author's thoughts and words as well as fitting them into a particular number of syllables and placing them in rhymes. Dryden compares his situation to "dancing on ropes with fetter'd Leggs" (Vol. I, p. 116). The translator may never fall but neither will he attain a graceful motion. Translation as imitation, as proposed and practiced by Denham and Cowley, is "an endeavor of a later Poet to write like one who has written before him . . . to write, as he supposes, that Authour would have done, had he lived in our Age, and in our Country (Vol. I, p. 116). Dryden warns, however, of "mischief" that might arise from Cowley's altering of the original meaning. Cowley might have given Pindar "better of his own [Cowley's] thoughts by this kind of imitation," and he was able to "make Pindar speak English," but had he worked with other classical authors such as Virgil or Ovid his method might have produced less satisfactory results. When an author's original work is treated in this way, the regenerated manuscript can hardly be called his own "when neither the thoughts nor words are drawn from the original." Such imitation may give the translator the freedom to present his own thinking, but the technique may bring about "the greatest wrong which can be done to the Memory and Reputation of the dead" (Vol. I, p. 117). Taking a middle ground, Dryden would like to avoid the extremes of reproducing poetry in a new language, those of imitation and exact "verbal Version," and to that intent has "propos'd the mean between them" (Vol. I, p. 118). The mean,

of course, is paraphrase. He further argues that the translator must first be a poet himself, a master of both the original author's language and of his own native tongue: "'Tis only best for a Poet to Translate a Poet."<sup>31</sup> He must understand not just the meaning of words appearing in the original but the author's "particular turn of Thoughts, and of Expression," the characteristics which differentiate him from all other poets. He must consider saving the original's sense, taking liberty only with the outward ornaments, the words, rhythms, and lines. He should follow the original author "at a . . . distance; tho' not Step by Step." No ancient writer should be pursued too closely: "We lose his Spirit, when we think to take his Body. The grosser Part remains with us, but the Soul is flown away." The translator never has the right to remove parts of a work that he considers superfluous. And if he is tempted to take liberties with a work that appears trivial or dishonest, he had better not translate it at all (Vol. I, p. 119).

A brief digression here may recreate for twentieth-century readers a portrait of Dryden at work. It was presented by J. McG. Bottkol in "Dryden's Latin Scholarship" (1943) in answer to critics who had condemned the poet's habits of translation.<sup>32</sup> Bottkol, whose comments are often noted by contemporary critics, reconstructs this picture of Dryden at work:

He sat with a favorite edition open before him (Prateus, Ruaseus, Casaubon, or Cnipping), read the original carefully . . . and invariably studied the accompanying annotations. When he came to a difficult or disputed passage, he repeatedly turned to other editors, studied and compared their varying opinions, and then chose to follow one authority or another or even to make a new interpretation for himself. Also he had open before him . . . one or more earlier English translations, particularly those which were written in heroic couplets.<sup>33</sup>

Bottkol's conclusion is that Dryden's errors were few and his intentional

changes many, and that his purpose was to reinterpret the classics for his contemporaries, so "he wrote within a convention which demanded (not allowed) . . . license."<sup>34</sup>

Some of the challenges facing Dryden--and other translators of Latin--may be inferred from the comments of modern critics, most of whom argue that translation of poetry is impossible. Rolfe Humphries treats the difficulty of converting quantitative Latin verse into accentual English meter. A possible "easing" factor may be that Latin meters do contain accentual elements and that English poetry shows "a considerable use of quantity."<sup>35</sup> Stress in English often falls on syllables that sound long to human ears, if not long by mathematical measurement. In Latin, a long syllable is defined as one containing a long vowel or a diphthong or a short vowel followed by two or more consonants; in English there are some rules but also many exceptions, so that confusion may result. Humphries argues that "playing it loosely, or strictly by ear, we can . . . feel reasonably sure that the effects of quantitative verse . . . can be found in English."<sup>36</sup> The handicap for the translator further develops from the fact that classical Latin allows greater variety among the poetic feet. Once the English poet starts a line of iambic pentameter, Humphries says, "every foot is going to be an iamb; dactylic hexameter means five dactyls one after the other, and probably a trochee . . . at the end of the verse."<sup>37</sup> Classical Latin can combine subject and predicate into one word, and it does not force a poet to contend with articles, some pronouns, or some prepositions; the English translator thus must use more words than the original contains. Latin's strong inflection also permits poetic effects that cannot be recreated. As Humphries points out,

Words not in agreement can be placed side by side for ironic effect; images can carry from one word to the next, the memory, the lingering overtone of the first making a chord, a prism, with the second; the line, or the stanza, can be full of ambiguities or surprises, matters held in suspense, judgment on them changed as we go along, and the restoration not coming to the very end.<sup>38</sup>

Another of the translator's responsibilities, which Dryden also notes, is preservation of the sound of the ancient language. Latin has a proportion of not more than two consonants to one vowel or diphthong, whereas English can, as Humphries explains, "pile things up," amassing a higher ratio of consonants and resulting in an ugly, guttural effect. William Frost writes that literary art rests on words, "and a word . . . has in itself certain qualities--its sounds when spoken, the connotations that have clustered around it in the course of its history."<sup>39</sup> He emphasizes that sound, word order, connotation, and reverberations in relation to the context of the whole poem are all considerations.

The translators and imitators of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mainly worked with the original verse of Juvenal and Horace, and Dryden's analysis of their methods and purposes and his comparison of the two masters is important. Both poets drew extensive attention during the ages under discussion; it would be difficult to trace the exact periods of most intense interest among the English poets in either Roman poet. Selden sets some general time boundaries, saying that Horace's popularity surpassed Juvenal's from 1690 to 1740, and that Juvenal's voice dominated the last two decades of the Augustan period, 1740-1760.<sup>40</sup> And to a certain extent critics have established the preference of a particular poet for a particular master--Pope's for Horace, Dryden's and Johnson's for Juvenal--although there is some controversy concerning the influence of each on Pope. Dryden appears to prefer Juvenal in the preface to his

Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire, but Selden has recently argued that "neither Horatian delicacy nor Juvenalian 'spleen' are endorsed unequivocally."<sup>41</sup>

Dryden discusses the two masters. Upon the basis of poetry as a means of "Profit" (instruction) and pleasure, he would "divide the Palm" (Vol. IV, p. 61). Horace is more enlightening about human life, but Juvenal is "more delightful." Horace's instruction is general, covering morals as well as "civil Conversation," and his "proper Quarry" is folly, "defects of Human Understanding" or the "Piccadillos" or existence. Juvenal's technique is to expose one vice, a trait or course of action resulting from wild passion or desire. In the sweep of satire it is Horace rather than Juvenal who has the wider field, for there are many fools and fops in the world but few "Notoriously Wicked Men." Horace's approach is to "laugh to shame" all foolishness, and he merely insinuates or implies a better behavior, but Juvenal must exhort his listeners to follow "particular Virtues, as they are oppos'd to those Vices against which he declaims" (Vol. IV, p. 62). Dryden then gives a purely personal reaction: the delight Horace offers him is "languishing"; his wit falls short and his flavor or zest eventually becomes "insipid." But Juvenal's verse is "vigorous and Masculine"; his lashings carry Dryden as a reader as far as the satirist goes and they stop just before Dryden becomes bored or exhausted. Juvenal drives Dryden's mind along with him: "His Spleen is rais'd, and he raises mine" (Vol. IV, p. 63). As for judgments, Juvenal's are as fair as Horace's, but Juvenal's expression is nobler, his verse "more numerous," his words more appropriate and grander. Dryden envisions Horace as "always on the Amble" and Juvenal "on the Gallop," and Juvenal's pace as well as his energy inspires Dryden's spirit.



Dryden concedes that Juvenal's subject matter, the "enormous Vices" practiced under Domitian during the Silver Age of Rome, were more easily adapted to his vehement approach than the offenses current in the Golden Age during the reign of Caesar Augustus, when Horace lived.

Because Dryden is still considered a leading representative of the neoclassical period in English poetry, and because the Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire remains high in critical opinion, comment is appropriate. Selden, while pointing out that the essay is "the chief critical discussion of verse satire in the Augustan period," nevertheless finds it "erratic and at times apparently contradictory."<sup>42</sup> On the one hand, Dryden seems to recognize the superiority of Horace's "ethical stance" in his genteel and urbane attitude, while on the other hand he says he prefers Juvenal's style or performance. The reader is left to conclude that Horace's tempered good sense should be combined with the stylistic prowess of Juvenal, "that the 'venom' of satire is to be tempered by the nobility of epic verse, that good manners require the savour of 'masculine wit' and noble 'spleen.'" Such accommodations and imprecisions are never resolved or clarified. Instead, alternatives are left to coexist. On these grounds Selden doubts that Dryden truly preferred Juvenal to Horace. One element in Dryden's work may be traced to this "conservative eclecticism": the failure to make a decisive choice may have given the poet stylistic tools for placing Juvenal within the neoclassical spectrum of good taste and moderation. In his heroic poetry particularly, Dryden made room to deal with the comic, the evil, the struggles of society and politics, and the traits of his peers. His practice of following both Horace and Juvenal could have helped him to

achieve a form of satire that reached well beyond the Roman tradition without conflicting with neoclassical principles.

Weinbrot's major comment on Dryden's essay is that it is among the earliest English documents to point out the pattern of praise and blame in classical satire, the tradition that the first part would attack a particular folly or vice and the last part would praise the opposite virtue. This feature probably was well known in the Restoration, but Dryden's is the clearest explanation of it. Dryden drew his principles from the ancients, from Boileau, from Renaissance theories of classical satire, and from André Dacier's edition of Horace (1681-89), but the English poet modernized these views and increased their influence.

Dacier's theories lead to an understanding of the manner in which Pope operates within the general tradition of imitation. The French writer's essay introduces his version of Horace. In his "Preface sur les satires d'Horace," he was the first Continental writer to identify the praise-and-blame pattern. Dacier discusses the difference between Horace's satires and epistles, noting that both belong in the genre but that the proportion of praise-and-blame elements may vary between the two. Dacier's ideas, which Dryden demonstrates in Absalom and Achitophel and other works, are fully developed in Pope's writings. Selden believes Pope's "'satires' and 'epistles' converge more than Horace's on a single structural pattern"; in the years immediately following Dryden's death in 1700, the voice of Horace eclipsed the voice of Juvenal.<sup>43</sup> Probably at least partly as a result of this change of emphasis, a middle ground was emerging in the satirical approach. The decades between 1690 and 1720 witnessed a gradual blending of the attitudes of Juvenal and Horace; Horace was viewed as more concerned with truth than he had been earlier, and

Juvenal was considered less violent. Selden explains that the "Horatian recipe--a mixture of triste and iocosum (gravity and gaiety)--became the Augustan norm and reinforced the reasonableness which underlay Dacier's concept of the balance of 'praise' and 'blame.'"<sup>44</sup> It appears logical then that Pope and Swift are more rational and "polite" than the Restoration satirists. In both English poets there are elements of both classical writers.

### Pope

Pope's individuality lies in his mastery of all styles of verse and in his handling of a variety of satiric voices. The voice of the author and that of the satirist, Maynard Mack showed in 1951, are two different elements, and an author may assume as many satiric voices as he is able to project. Mack notes three in Pope's poetry: the plain-living man satisfied with himself, the naive speaker, and the defender of public interests or morals.<sup>45</sup> Selden sees Pope's general style of declamation as an innovative interpretation of the original Juvenalian voice. The speaker is still deeply concerned with moral seriousness, but his attitude has been tempered by Augustan propriety.<sup>46</sup> Thus while remaining within the spectrum of Augustan imitation, Pope erodes the distinction between the terms satire, earlier considered severe and somewhat self-righteous, and epistle, seen previously as chiding and good-natured. His epistles may show Juvenalian vehemence and his satires may demonstrate the gentler attitude.

Explaining other ways in which Pope is unique within the Augustan tradition, Selden lists his distinctive qualities as his mastery of tone, exuberance, and realism. His range of tone is great, but the only work

in which his attitude can be described as good-natured is his best-known satire, The Rape of the Lock. His exuberant handling of figurative language is best shown in The Dunciad, and his realism is most apparent in Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot and in Epistle to Miss Blount: with the Works of Voiture. In these ways Pope perfected the plain style of Horace to reflect the sophisticated irony of Augustan wit.

The Epistle to Augustus is an example of Pope's latitude within the tradition of imitation; as a preliminary step to its analysis, however, it is important to note that in all his epistles, Pope writes not for a public or political audience--as he does in his satires--but to an absent or honored friend. Weinbrot believes Pope limits his epistolary subjects to his own situations or to conditions or follies known to both himself and his friend. There is a difference in Pope's tone within his satirical works. In the satires he is angry and determined, but in the epistles, he is "gentler, more mundane, less certain, more aware of the human situation."<sup>47</sup> Such difference in attitude certainly would affect treatment of theme. As an example of this theory Weinbrot compares the handling of the degenerate theater in Epistle to Augustus and in The Dunciad: "In the Epistle to Augustus . . . Pope criticizes farce as unworthy of the Lords who compose much of its audience, but the criticism lacks the apocalyptic quality of The Dunciad."<sup>48</sup> The difference in tone, content, and method between these two works and between most of Pope's satires and epistles probably stems from the difference in theory at that time between the approaches conventional for the two branches of satire. They might also be reinforced by Pope's own particular interpretation of Horace's habits.

In Epistle to Augustus, or The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace (1737), considered the most brilliant of the series of imitations of the Roman master, Pope turns Horace's words of praise for Augustus, his patron in Rome, to irony aimed toward George Augustus II, King of England, who was far from a patron of literature and whose popularity was low at the time of the poet's writing. Anthony Trott and Marlin Ax-ford in Epistles and Satires of Alexander Pope (1961) comment that "of all the Imitations this is the one that gains the most from a knowledge of how neatly Pope turned Horace's ideas to his own purpose."<sup>49</sup> John M. Adler in Something Like Horace (1969) explains that the imitation is full of "reflections on the King and the times."<sup>50</sup> John Butt sees as the foundation for this satire and for two others, Imitations of the Second Satire and Versification of Donne's Fourth Satire, a contrast of values between the old Roman simplicity of life in a secluded villa, represented by the Whigs who were then in power with Walpole as their leader. Pope's attacks on the king, Butt states, were actually "dangerous matter," and some of their innuendoes may be missed from a distance of two centuries:

Ignorance of the character and personality of George Augustus II may prevent us from recognizing the superb irony of dedicating a criticism of contemporary taste in poetry to a man who paid no attention to either. And this king whose strutting dignity hindered him from recognizing that Walpole and the Queen were responsible for policy, a policy which inevitably repressed his ruling passion for military glory, whose first love was not England but Hanover, where he spent his time in the arms of Madame Walmoden, this man is represented as the dignified defender of his country and the guardian of her morals and her laws. There was no redress for such irony.<sup>51</sup>

In Pope's handling of the new tradition of the voice of Horace, the Roman poet himself becomes a victim. Weinbrot believes that Pope must have sensed that England, with an uncaring and often absent king and with

corruption rampant at court, could no longer tolerate the epistle as it had once been conceived. The poet probably was aware that the current literary precedent did not suit his hostility. Thus the distinction between satire and epistle may be Pope's rather than Horace's alone. Weinbrot concludes that Pope's final satiric form "is overtly un-Horatian; in being most satiric (that is, most acerbic) Pope explicitly denounces the Horatian way of genteel urbanity."<sup>52</sup> This change is probably a major deviation by Pope from the Augustan convention of imitation. Other elements in Pope's epistles also set them apart: their intimacy, their friendly nonchalance, their apparent ease, their attitude of utter sincerity, and their use of the recipient within the structure's rhetoric.

Pope, then, was both a translator and an imitator. In translation he tries to capture the achievement of the original author, as he does in his work with Homer's Iliad, but in his imitations he often follows Cowley's first classification, overtly cutting but freely translating, changing meaning, manipulating his strategy with the praise-and-blame pattern in a unique manner.

This chapter has explained the place of the mode of imitation of classical verse satire in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, a step necessary in the study of Johnson because the poet wrote his greatest work, The Vanity of Human Wishes, in imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. Another major work, London, is modeled after Juvenal's Third Satire. The conventions of the mode of imitation were clearly established at the time Johnson inherited them, developed of course by certain poets of the Restoration and the early Augustan Age. Along with Juvenal, Johnson's favorite, Horace--another classical master--inspired

the flowering of the satirical strain in Swift, Dryden, and Pope, the poet whose works mark the finest example of the form.

Analysis of the influence of the Roman masters aids in the study of Johnson in another way, for the techniques the Roman satirists used often became tools to project ambiguity in the works of the English poets. For Johnson, such tools or devices are sources of ambiguity not only in his imitations but in all of his heroic couplet works.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 4th ed. (New York, 1981), p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>Howard D. Weinbrot, The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire (Chicago, 1969), p. 4. My discussion throughout this chapter draws heavily on his work.

<sup>3</sup>Sigs. A3r-v as quoted in Weinbrot, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>As cited in Weinbrot, p. 28, n. 71.

<sup>5</sup>Jonathan Swift, Journal to Stella, July 1, 1712, as quoted from The Poems of Jonathan Swift, 2nd ed., ed. Harold Williams (Oxford, 1958), I, 151, noted in Weinbrot, p. 28, n. 73.

<sup>6</sup>Aubrey L. Williams, "Pope and Horace: The Second Epistles of the Second Book," in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature: Essays in Honor of Alan Dugald McKillop, ed. Carroll Camden (Chicago, 1963), p. 311, quoted in Weinbrot, p. 17, n. 39.

<sup>7</sup>The Letters of Samuel Johnson, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1952), I, 11, quoted in Weinbrot, p. 29, n. 74.

<sup>8</sup>Weinbrot, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup>Weinbrot, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup>Weinbrot, p. 57.

<sup>11</sup>Abraham Cowley, Preface of the Author to the 1668 folio of his Poems, from Abraham Cowley, Poems, ed. A. R. Waller (Cambridge, 1905), quoted in Weinbrot, pp. 10-11, n. 16.

<sup>12</sup>Weinbrot, p. 51.

<sup>13</sup>Weinbrot, p. 56.



<sup>14</sup>Raman Selden, English Verse Satire: 1590-1765 (Boston, 1978), p. 79, n. 15. My discussion in this section draws heavily from Selden's work.

<sup>15</sup>Selden, p. 79.

<sup>16</sup>Selden, p. 85.

<sup>17</sup>Selden, p. 87.

<sup>18</sup>R. P. Bond, English Burlesque Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1932), quoted in Selden, p. 100.

<sup>19</sup>Selden, p. 91.

<sup>20</sup>Selden, p. 97.

<sup>21</sup>Selden, p. 98.

<sup>22</sup>George Granville, "An Essay upon Unnatural Flights in Poetry," in Poems on Several Occasions (1712), pp. 176-86, quoted in Selden, p. 119.

<sup>23</sup>Selden, p. 119.

<sup>24</sup>Jonathan Swift, "A Copy of Verses upon Two Celebrated Modern Poets," in The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Williams, II, 393, noted in Weinbrot, p. 101, n. 20.

<sup>25</sup>Selden, p. 128.

<sup>26</sup>Selden, p. 148.

<sup>27</sup>Selden, p. 152.

<sup>28</sup>The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Williams, I. This text is printed from the Miscellanies of 1711.

<sup>29</sup>Weinbrot, p. 19, n. 44.

<sup>30</sup>John Dryden, Preface to Ovid's Epistles in The Works of John Dryden, ed. Edward Niles Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg, Jr. (Berkeley, 1956), I, 114. The California edition is the source of all my quotations from Dryden's works, and references to them will appear parenthetically in my text.

<sup>31</sup>John Dryden, Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire, in The Works of John Dryden, ed. A. B. Chambers and William Frost (Berkeley, 1974), IV, 70.

<sup>32</sup>J. McG. Bottkol, "Dryden's Latin Scholarship," MP, 40 (1943), 241-54.

<sup>33</sup>Bottkol, p. 253.

<sup>34</sup>Bottkol, p. 253.

<sup>35</sup>Rolfe Humphries, "Latin and English Verse--Some Practical Considerations," in On Translation, ed. Reuben Brower (Cambridge, 1959), p. 57.

<sup>36</sup>Humphries, p. 58.

<sup>37</sup>Humphries, p. 59.

<sup>38</sup>Humphries, p. 61.

<sup>39</sup>William Frost, Dryden and the Art of Translation (New Haven, 1955), p. 9.

<sup>40</sup>Selden, p. 152.

<sup>41</sup>Selden, p. 120.

<sup>42</sup>Selden, p. 105.

<sup>43</sup>Selden, p. 121.

<sup>44</sup>Selden, p. 121.

<sup>45</sup>Maynard Mack, "The Muse of Satire," Yale Review 61 (1951), 80-92, quoted in Selden, p. 129, n. 23.

<sup>46</sup>Selden, p. 131.

<sup>47</sup>Weinbrot, p. 140.

<sup>48</sup>Weinbrot, p. 143.

<sup>49</sup>Anthony Trott and Marlin Axford, Epistles and Satires of Alexander Pope (London, 1961), p. 130.

<sup>50</sup>John M. Adler, Something Like Horace (Nashville, 1969), p. 21.

<sup>51</sup>Imitations of Horace, Vol. IV of The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt (New York, 1942), Introd., p. xxx-ciii. I used this earlier edition because my material does not appear in the Introduction to the 1963 revised edition.

<sup>52</sup>Weinbrot, p. 144.

## CHAPTER III

### DRYDEN AND POPE: TRANSLATION AND IMITATION

Throughout this discussion, Johnson's poetry will be considered in relation to the work of the two great heroic couplet poets who preceded him, Dryden and Pope. It is appropriate to examine the socio-political conditions that shaped the attitudes of these two authors, note their handling of the couplet, analyze their translation or imitation of classical writers, and trace sources of ambiguity in their work. Briefly, the areas relating to Dryden will include his audience, the people of the Restoration; his purpose, which was often political; his work with the heroic couplet in his major satire, in his prologues, and in his translations; and his projection of ambiguity as a tool of communication to many factions. Particular works to be considered are his epistle "To My Honour- ed Kinsman," his short poem "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham," his satire Absalom and Achitophel, his mock-heroic MacFlecknoe, and his translation of Juvenal. The areas of study of Pope will include his purpose; his audience, the people of the Augustan Age; his style in handling the couplet; his use of the Horatian and Juvenalian voices, and his techniques for attaining ambiguity. His imitations will be the major consideration among his particular works.

The general audiences of the two poets, the Restoration and the Augustan periods, present a contrast. For example, the Restoration occurred in a century of revolution, but the eighteenth century, when the line

of succession to the throne was finally settled, was one of comparative peace and civil obedience. Yet the periods were linked politically and socially by persistent prejudices, fears, and hostilities and by duplicity at court that supplied ample subject matter for each poet. Much of the poetry of each writer is political, but the governmental situations and the issues the authors addressed are different.

### The Restoration and Dryden

Dryden's satires were written when England was in turmoil due to the Stuart yearning for a Catholic king. The Test Act of 1673 excluded any Catholic from civil or military office, and the anti-Catholic sentiment surfacing in that legislation intensified in 1678 when Titus Oates pretended to uncover a "Popish Plot" to kill the king. An attempt was made to prevent James, Duke of York, the Catholic brother of the king, from ever taking the throne, and the crisis that followed resulted in the arrest of Shaftesbury, the Whig leader who had taken part in the campaign. Reactions of poets varied. In general, Reuben Brower writes, the audience that saw Charles back on the throne was "alien to the most vigorous of the surviving older poets"--Milton, Cowley, and Marvell. Dryden became the pioneer of a new time. He was successful because he could draw from native traditions as well as from European ones and still speak to London and the court.<sup>1</sup> Examination of Dryden's public poetry will show how the poet managed to appear moderate and how he employed ambiguity to reach many factions.

William Bowman Piper points out that the greatest questions of Dryden's day involved the various channels and the scope of royal might, the conflicts between religion and loyalty to the nation, and the actions of

Charles II and James II versus those of their enemies. In discussing these matters the poet "faced the parties whom these issues divided--the king and Commons, the Anglicans, Catholics, and Presbyterians, the Whigs and the Tories."<sup>2</sup> His purpose was to unite behind his position as large a section as he could muster of his compatriots--particularly the males as the only voters. Even the non-political poems, the dramatic prologues, are full of political references and seem to emanate from a platform.

Piper writes that

in each of them we catch the raised and ringing voice of a man who speaks to a multitude, and sense . . . the diversity of Dryden's audience. His oratorical tone is marked by its breadth; its power to reach all England's men springs from a note of exaltation and depends upon a noble detachment.<sup>3</sup>

The range of the poet's voice may be inferred from the variety in his mockery. He may appeal to the audience's pride as moderns and ask them to laugh at an ancient age, or to their patriotism and laugh at the French, or to their good sense and laugh at their own situation. Such flexibility helped Dryden to draw the attention of various groups and to win the sympathy of various parties. Of course the poet's audience changed with place of delivery or method of presentation; the London audience required a different approach from the Oxford one, and a printed message had to be handled differently from a spoken one. The basic audience through the years, however, was united by its prejudices. These were the warp and woof of Dryden's web of persuasion; they were prejudices against the clergy, against matrimony, against the Jews, Dutch, and French, against the preceding century, against the Papists, and against women.

James Sutherland comments on the wide divisions among the political segments of Dryden's readers or listeners, whom the poet reached by means of the couplet. On the one hand there was King Charles II, who enjoyed

his poets not only because they wrote entertaining love songs and comedies but also because they painted him and his ministers in a kindly light, presenting the Tory side of problems. Heroic poetry especially helped to keep the monarch on his pedestal of dignity and importance. Almost every poet living in 1660, except Milton and Marvell, wrote some kind of verse celebrating Charles's return to the throne; Dryden even considered writing an epic honoring the king's family. And Charles was not the only dignitary who received poetic tributes; dukes, duchesses, and other nobility also were addressed on any occasion. On the other hand, opponents of national figures or causes were just as vehement and prolific. On political problems, the Whigs would naturally answer through their literary leaders, so that "political verse played a very considerable part in rousing and sustaining party feeling."<sup>4</sup>

#### The Couplet and Political Persuasion

The heroic couplet during the Restoration and Augustan periods, a vehicle for political persuasion, could be used in different forms: mock-epic, satire, or epigram, for example. In this connection there have been recent changes in attitude toward the belief that neoclassical poets looked upon exact dividing lines among these forms, or that they saw certain rules applying to certain kinds, or that each kind had to be directed toward a certain effect. Critics who have followed this theory are mistaken, according to Ralph Cohen. The mixture that could be attained in satire--heroic, burlesque, or pastoral--was related to the various factions of politics and religion, "to a procedure by which different groups could be addressed, with some being supported and others being attacked."<sup>5</sup>

Employing the couplet, Dryden faced the major issues of his time. Eric Rothstein in 1981 stated that most of these issues grew from a struggle for power that naturally fascinated poets as well as politicians. In Rothstein's view the poems of the period reflect the four postures a writer can take toward power:

First, the poet can celebrate the power of others. . . . Second, he can demonstrate his own power. . . . Third, he can express human relationships. . . . Finally, the poet can make a show of distaste for the reckless greed for power.<sup>6</sup>

Dryden's poem which best exemplifies the proper use of power and the equilibrium to be maintained among all the opposing forces is "To My Honour- ed Kinsman" (1700), whose single speaking voice represents a chorus of fellow Englishmen. The work is an epistle to the author's cousin John Driden of Chesterton. The first half depicts the cousin's life as a model of order for one man or for society; the second half deals with England's power in political and military arenas. Thus Driden appears as both a private and a public man, and the poet's association of ideas around these two stances or situations gives direction and spontaneity to his epistle.

Sutherland stresses Dryden's control and precision in handling the couplet as a tool of argument. Early in the poet's career he was able to manipulate and balance rhythm in the couplet and to achieve "precision of thought and expression."<sup>7</sup> The hallmark of his work is the ability to define by antithesis, to shape a continuous argument, and to compose verse paragraphs. During the almost fifteen years he wrote only for the stage, Dryden learned "to argue in verse, to put an imaginary case, to juxtapose and develop conflicting ideas."<sup>8</sup> These skills became especially useful in the writing of Absalom and Achitophel. In controversy Dryden had great ability, apparent in this satire; he could pinpoint



a weakness in his opponent's argument but at the same time tactfully conceal flaws in his own case. Sutherland sees Absalom and Achitophel not as pure satire, but nevertheless as a landmark in the genre in English:

To readers who had delighted in Butler's rambustious tetrameters or in the rough and emphatic invective of Marvell, of Oldham, and of their many cruder contemporaries, the spectacle of Dryden skating along imperturbably and cutting his figures on political ice must have come as a revelation of what polite literature could achieve.<sup>9</sup>

The poet's ease and control of his couplet verse was a triumph in poetry and an effective aid in argument.

Piper comments on Dryden's ability to handle the couplet in a unit of verse longer than four lines, and thus to make clear, emphatic statements. The poet is able to weave many couplets together, through syntactical maneuvering and through manipulation of pauses, into a single unit. The result is a section of verse propelled with "drive." Dryden's success is "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham," for example, depends upon "both the integrity of the separate couplets and on their interconnections-- that is, on the dynamics between definitions and movement."<sup>10</sup> In this poem and in his other works Dryden employs several techniques he inherited from Denham, Cowley, and others. His ability to lend refinement and comprehensiveness to the couplet gives an overwhelming persuasiveness to his judgments, whether of Oldham, of an unthinking mob, or of Achitophel, so that the reader cannot avoid believing that the poet thoroughly understands his subject and has polished and supported his statements. This effect

depends on the drive of Dryden's closed couplet production, on its power to keep us from resting along the way toward Dryden's final equation, on his power to make us continue from one aspect of Dryden's vast overview to the next, and on our thus absorbing in one comprehensive pattern the elements of his . . . understanding.<sup>11</sup>

Dryden's individuality in the "supracouplet" he employed in much of his public poetry--the larger, extended sentence or paragraph-like segment of couplet verse--stems from the placement of key terms in strategic positions so they may best be supported by the couplet's meter and pauses, and on enjambement to emphasize couplet breaks to aid punctuations or majestically to yoke an entire action together and bring a long statement to a climax. But Dryden also uses other techniques. He often extends a figure of speech, and he unifies long spans of verse by playing on words, particularly by placing a word in a minor position in one line and then repeating it in the next line in a position of minor stress, such as at the beginning. This echoing and augmenting effect, starting a couplet with a word that hangs in the reader's memory, allows the poet to make a firm stop and a strong two-couplet relationship simultaneously. Ambivalent syntactical connections are still another technique, earlier noted by Empson, that Piper sees as a cohesive force in Dryden's supracouplet. Such connections create possibilities for a word, phrase, or even an entire line to refer either backwards or forwards toward antecedents or objects of modification. Often in Dryden

an ambivalently applicable phrase will suggest two clearly separable meanings, both of which fit Dryden's argument; more often the same understanding will fit both applications, so that such a phrase indicates a powerful syntactic movement, a richly woven coherency.<sup>12</sup>

All these strategies helped Dryden construct "great webs" of arguments until he had clarified enough evidence to make his own view logical and acceptable.

#### Absalom and Achitophel

A major consideration in this analysis of Dryden's use of the heroic

couplet to reach his audience is his major political poem Absalom and Achitophel, which Rothstein, Brower, Selden, Piper, and Ruth Salvaggio discuss in some detail. Rothstein deals with its analogy with Scripture. Brower analyzes diction, Selden stresses the importance of the poet's approach, Piper works with handling of the heroic couplet, and Salvaggio investigates Dryden's use of syntactical ambiguity to reach multiple audiences.

As a "sophisticated, empirical writer," Rothstein states, Dryden uses as a tool the sort of "messianic" interpretation popular with righteous Englishmen during the Commonwealth. The poet takes his plot from Biblical analogy, from the popular practice of drawing comparisons between Scripture and English politics. He describes events centering around the Exclusion Crisis in terms of Absalom's rebellion against King David of the Old Testament. Rothstein shows that by building on the Biblical narrative as well as on current tendencies, the poet could make a double allusion: "Dryden alludes . . . to the rhetoric of his own time as well as . . . to the Bible. The biblical fiction also allows Dryden's thunderous ending in the triumph of divine right."<sup>13</sup> But the poet does not go as far as to depict the actual revolt shown in the Bible. II Samuel is full of suffering and revolt; instead Dryden presents a scene of non-confrontation. The poet names his characters by making puns and anagrams of names from Scripture, but he seems indifferent as to whether or not these characters actually appear in the Old Testament. Dryden's major character is Charles II; all others merely stand in his reflected glory. Rothstein states that Charles imitates the bounty of God in the beginning, and he "ends by exercising a restorative, ordering power through his voice alone--the Word made Act to the tune of heavenly thunder."<sup>14</sup>

At the end, a spiritual restoration takes place, an enlightened and eager nation welcomes its rightful lord, "the ambiguous 'Lord' because the one in Heaven and the one in Whitehall have for the moment merged."<sup>15</sup> Because King Charles appears to grow into greatness during the discourse, Rothstein sees the work as the finest conceivable panegyric.

Brower shows that Dryden's skill in creating ambiguity is the force that permits him to make "triumphant assertions, every one of them the opposite of the truth from the Court point of view."<sup>16</sup> His irony is manifest in the connotations of his diction which combines the solemnity of Latin with literal Latin meanings, some pejorative. He blends a declamatory tone, full of allusions to the Bible or Roman authors, with a tone that is insolent, vulgar, and non-literary. Brower believes such a combination of lofty and low techniques expanded Dryden's audience:

As compared with Restoration plays or lampoons and gazettes, Absalom and Achitophel spoke to more of the interests of the public in 1631. Although the classical heroic was especially flattering to the aristocrats' view of themselves, Latin culture was the common possession of educated men, whatever their political or religious allegiances might be. The Old Testament flavor, satirically amusing to the Court, was . . . insidiously attractive to Nonconformists. And the colloquial idiom brought the high talk down to the level which the Court and City loved.<sup>17</sup>

Selden says Dryden achieved his goal of appearing both partisan and moderate by combining heroic satire with what the poet himself called "fine raillery" in his Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire (IV, p. 70). The result was a style appropriately elevated but tempered with the reasonableness of the Horatian conversational approach. Dryden carefully balanced his posture in the political allegory as he paralleled the conspiracy of Absalom against David with the restiveness of Monmouth toward Charles II. Such an approach in terms of politics and ideology allows Dryden to review without an obvious

antagonism the near treason of Shaftesbury (whose parallel in the poem is Achitophel) and to a lesser extent of Monmouth. The poet deftly combines cruel ad hominem accusations and a middle-ground Horatian attitude; Selden states that he is "probably the first English satirist to call a man Satan without raising his voice."<sup>18</sup>

In the poem, a tone of "fine raillery" predominates in the opening ten lines. Since the king's moral conduct was well known, the poet could hardly adopt a Juvenalian attitude and argue in his favor with righteous indignation. Instead, Dryden assigns Charles the role of a libertine, and with ironic laughter attempts to wave away his monarch's blemishes. An allusion to contemporary discussions of polygamy gives the king's actions an aura of "noble legitimacy" and allows Dryden to make a concession to his opponents while maintaining Charles's dignity. The poem thus opens in a clever and "slightly blasphemous" grand style, but by the end of the satire, Charles's portrait too approaches a grand level.

The framework of allegory and the imagery support the heroic satire. Although the "surface parallel" between the Bible and the Restoration is important, even more telling in Selden's opinion is the deeper analogy between the leading actors in the Exclusion Crisis and the main characters in Milton's epics. Dryden sketches this parallel in his prose preface "To the Reader," referring there to the temptations of Adam and to the evil traits of the poem's Achitophel. The work maintains a continuing allusion to the rebellion of Satan in Paradise Lost; like God in Milton's poem, Charles is the target of a conspiracy, and like Eve, Monmouth is tempted by Shaftesbury. Selden shows that other details augment the Miltonic echoes:

The temptation scenes are modelled initially on the temptation of Christ in Paradise Regained: Achitophel refers to Absalom's 'Nativity' and speaks of him as 'Saviour' and 'Their second Moses.' We remember that Christ too was a son of David.<sup>19</sup>

Dryden does not neglect tapping the "ambivalent grandeur" that makes Milton's Satan appealing. Selden comments on these lines which refer to Absalom's "Godlike Sin":

Desire of Power, on Earth a Vitious Weed,  
Yet sprung from High, is of Caelestial Seed:  
In God 'tis Glory: and when men Aspire,  
'Tis but a Spark too much of Heavenly Fire  
(ll. 305-8, ed. H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., II, p. 14).

The first metaphor, accomplished with "Weed . . . Seed," appears to condemn Absalom and to accuse him of overwhelming pride and ridiculous ambition. But the second one, "Spark . . . Fire," recalls Prometheus and directs a kindlier judgment.

Dryden's "unique" achievement, his handling of the interworkings of the heroic couplet, is the basis for Piper's analysis of Absalom and Achitophel. Syntax is a major element. Piper works with the opening lines:

In pious times, e'er Priest-craft did begin,  
Before Polygamy was made a sin;  
When man, on many, multiply'd his kind,  
E'er one to one was, cursedly, confin'd:  
When Nature prompted, and no law deny'd  
Promiscuous use of Concubine and Bride:  
Then Israel's Monarch, after Heaven's own heart,  
His vigorous warmth did, variously, impart  
To Wives and Slaves: And, wide as his Command,  
Scatter'd his Maker's Image through the land  
(ll. 1-10, II, p. 5).

Piper first shows how Dryden places key terms in strategic positions. The first three couplets compose a "When" construction describing a state of natural piety, and the next two deal with the king's proper response. To unify and develop the supracouplet Dryden places his important words, first When, at the beginning of two couplets, and the other Then, at the

start of a later one. Enjambement of the first line of the third couplet stresses the couplet break and aids punctuation of all the "When" clause system, and the "more dramatic" enjambement of the fourth couplet unites the last four-line segment and brings the whole long sentence to a climax. A second general technique is Dryden's extension of a figure of speech. Piper writes that the poet often "extended a single figure of speech, such as the food figure in the Prologue to All for Love (ll. 31-40) . . . and the fruits figure in 'To the Memory of Mr. Oldham'" (ll. 11-21).<sup>20</sup> The extended allusion in Absalom and Achitophel is another example Piper cites of "figurative unification." The third device, playing on words, appears in this work in Dryden's repetitive and various placings of treason, integrating the supracouplet systems. A fourth practice, arrangement of an ambivalent syntax, also is apparent. The phrase wide as his Command may modify either the verb impart in the preceding line or Scatter'd in the following one. Such syntax allows the poet to interweave his couplets "without equivocating his meanings."<sup>21</sup> With all of these devices Dryden could pull together all the threads of his argument and forestall his reader's decision concerning in this case Charles's sex life, until he had presented all the evidence he needed to secure his own position.

Piper sees the portrait of Achitophel as typical of the intellectual refinement Dryden projects through syntax, spanning a passage with modifications, some within a couplet, others creating a bridge to bind several couplets together. He examines the sentences which open the description:

Of these the false Achitophel was first:  
 A Name to all succeeding Ages Curst.  
 For close Designs, and crooked Counsell's fit,  
 Sagacious, Bold, and Turbulent of wit:

Restless, unfixt in Principles and Place;  
 In Power unpleas'd, impatient of Disgrace:  
 A fiery Soul, which working out its way,  
 Fretted the Pigmy Body to decay:  
 And o'r inform'd the Tenement of Clay.  
 A daring Pilot in extremity;  
 Pleas'd with the Danger, when the Waves went high  
 He sought the Storms; but for a Calm unfit,  
 Would steer too nigh the Sands, to boast his Wit  
 (ll. 150-62, ll, p. 10).

In its "comprehensiveness of statement" the passage presents the rebel in the good and bad sides of his wit, in his public and private life, and in his good and evil actions. The poet's vast vision, his ability to show many facets of his subject, and his thorough perception of each of these impress the reader through "a dynamic supracouplet movement." But there is a technical element too. Piper points out the large-scale ambivalence that underlines the cohesion:

The three appositives, 'Name,' 'Soul,' and 'Pilot' . . . can be thought to relate to 'Achitophel' in line 150 or to 'He' in line 161: the reader as he goes along feels them all to relate back to 'Achitophel' and then at line 161 consciously recognizes the forward connection of 'Pilot' and senses a web of more extensive connections.<sup>22</sup>

By mingling such grammatical material as these appositives and adjectives, Dryden besmirches Shaftesbury's name, soul, body, and gifts.

Piper also analyzes syntactic effects in the rabble passage:

The Jews, a Headstrong, Moody, Murmuring race,  
 As ever try'd th' extent and stretch of grace;  
 God's pamper'd People, whom, debauch'd with ease,  
 No King could govern, nor no God could please;  
 (Gods they had tri'd of every shape and size  
 That God-smiths could produce, or Priests devise:)  
 These Adam-wits, too fortunately free,  
 Began to dream they wanted libertie;  
 And when no rule, no president was found  
 Of men, by Laws less circumscrib'd and bound,  
 They led their wild desires to Woods and Caves;  
 And thought that all but Savages were Slaves.  
 They who when Saul was dead, without a blow,  
 Made foolish Ishbosheth the Crown forego;  
 Who banish'd David did from Hebron bring,



And, with a Generall shout, proclaim'd him King:  
 Those very Jewes, who, at their very best,  
 Their Humour more than Loyalty exprest,  
 Now wondered why, so long, they had obey'd  
 An Idoll Monarch which their hands had made:  
 Thought they might ruine him they could create;  
 Or melt him to that Golden Calf, a State  
 (ll. 46-66, ll, pp. 6-7).

The passage flows in two long sentences, one a compound-complex statement about the rabble's religion and politics, the other a complex sentence with a compound predicate showing how the rabble apply such judgments and climaxing with the action of the moment. Dryden's skill with the supracouplet allows him to instill the rabble's lack of faith in his first long sentence and to weld it into an outrage in the second. The lines demonstrate two of Dryden's devices: modification and cohesion through syntax. The first sentence, exemplifying modification, opens with "The Jews," the subject, which is followed by seven lines of appositives each defining the reader's reaction or shaping his attitude. The next sentence is "similarly enriched" by a series of "who" clauses. The second of Dryden's devices, cohesion through syntax, cements the two sections or sentences in the supracouplet, one dealing with the rabble's general nature and one with their current activity. To connect these thoughts and to bridge the strong pause created by the period at line 56, "And thought that all but Savages were Slaves," the poet uses the pronoun They, which refers not only to the They at the beginning of the preceding couplet but also to The Jews, the subject of the first sentence. Further, the "who when" in the first line of the second sentence alerts the reader to extensive "syntactical scope" in the coming statement and carries him into the main clause. Piper points out one more element yoking these two long sentences together:

A narrative or chronological strand bridges the pause . . . it is more clearly asserted, in the first sentence, with the verb of the main clause, 'began,' and with the conjunction 'when' . . . and in the second sentence, with the sharply delineated step-by-step description of the rabble's conduct on the death of Saul and with the emphatically placed adverb 'now.'<sup>23</sup>

If inversion may be considered an element of syntax as well as rhetoric--and certainly the ordering or arrangement of words is at the core of both elements--we may add Dryden's inversions to the technique related to syntax in the rabble passage, although their purpose is not necessarily ambivalence or ambiguity. Dryden's early poetry features many inversions, some used merely to hold lines or couplets together. But in his later poems such as Absalom and Achitophel the device lends dignity to important statements and becomes "a selective element in his poetic expression."<sup>24</sup> And if a choice of words that reverberate "an English ring" can be related to ambiguity--and certainly connotation is an element of multiple meaning--then we may examine this technique, too. In Dryden's general statements such as "Great Wits are sure to Madness near ally'd" in Absalom and Achitophel this quality is apparent; the conversational "sure" carries this kind of appeal. Such a line, which in Gerard Manley Hopkins' opinion exposes "the naked thew and sinew of the English language,"<sup>25</sup> naturally underscored the poet's communication with the sturdy body of voting Englishmen, his audience in the widest sense.

Salvaggio's thesis as she works with Absalom and Achitophel is that Dryden's purpose in manipulating ambiguous syntax is subtly to present several options to reach a variety of audiences. By offering a choice of perspectives he can create several responses to a problem and appeal to many groups: "Dryden convinces his reader not by what he says, but how he says it."<sup>26</sup> Each syntactic possibility may evoke a unique reaction from a different segment of Englishmen. In Absalom and Achitophel

Dryden of course favors the king and opposes Shaftesbury, but his passages on Charles are sometimes ambivalent and those on Shaftesbury sometimes praise him.

Like Selden and Piper, Salvaggio examines the poem's opening lines. In two of the first four lines the moralistic commentary "was made a sin" and "was, cursedly, confin'd" appears in the second half of each line, where under heroic couple convention it receives emphasis. Syntactically the two half-lines, both including passive verbs, are parallel. This structure allows the couplets to be read two ways and creates an opportunity for irony. Salvaggio explains that the words Before Polygamy could become the third in a series of prepositional phrases, introducing the supracouplet in this manner: "In pious times, e'r Priest-craft did begin / Before Polygamy. . ." Such a view would lead the reader to consider the pious times as existing before polygamy was practiced, "a notion which . . . suits an orthodox and conventional meaning" for the word pious. In like manner the phrase E'r one to one at the beginning of the final line of the second couplet could be attached to the preceding line and could help define the ancient period--"E'r one to one" ever existed. But as the reader completes the two couplets and the final half-line, he notices that the poet probably is asserting that "pious times" are not those before marriage ever existed but rather those before "one to one was, cursedly, confin'd." Irony results as the second half of each couplet's final line "undercuts the anticipated syntactic construction and objective narrative tone of the preceding line and a half."<sup>27</sup> The interplay permits Dryden to make two points in only one statement.

Creation of several possible meanings by syntactical interplay has also drawn Salvaggio's attention in the three final couplets of the

original passage. Analyzing the subjects of the half-line segments, she notes the close relationship between what "Nature prompted" and "Promiscuous use" and between what "no law deny'd" and "Concubine and Bride." Two readings present themselves. If Nature is joined with Concubine, and law is paired with Bride, as rhetoric and logic suggest, we assume Dryden is stating that a concubine is a natural phenomenon while a wife is a legal one. But if Nature is linked with Promiscuous use, and law with Concubine and Bride, as the meter and syntax direct, we assume Dryden's premise is that promiscuity is natural whereas having a concubine and a bride is legal. Such an interpretation "doubles the meaning" of the half-line "Promiscuous use"; promiscuity with concubine and bride is what nature urges and no law forbids. All such interpretations, although they fit the general statement, tend to complicate the passage so that we have many angles from which to judge Charles. Each option, Salvaggio writes,

makes room for the response of different readers, ranging from the town gentleman who might hold Hobbesian notions of natural behavior, to the Puritan who fervently supports the law which has forbidden this kind of behavior.<sup>28</sup>

The final couplet shows a further extension of meaning through manipulation of pauses and syntax. Heroic couplet convention places a pause at the end of the line, "His vigorous warmth did, variously, impart," and we assume that the syntax is complete with the conclusion of the metrical span. But the next couplet begins with an extension. "To Wives and Slaves," and we realize the major thought has continued with a new meaning. If we follow the tendency of the couplet toward a strong closure, we are convinced of the God-like quality of the king's human affection. But after we follow the syntax into the final couplet we know that the king's sexual habits are involved: "His vigorous warmth did,

variously, impart / To Wives and Slaves." The rest of the passage can portray Charles either as extremely bounteous generally or especially generous toward women. True, the verb Scatter'd has ribald overtones, but the fact that Charles is now "His Maker's Image" as "wide as his Command" forces us to return to loftier grounds, to the analogy of David with God. Because of syntactical connotations Charles appears under the aura of either God's or David's generosity or of David's sexual bounty. Such a variety of options, Salvaggio suggests, enhanced Dryden's political aims:

For those who already sympathize with Charles, the verse is witty enough so that no damage is done to the king's cause or person . . . then perhaps at least some of the connotations . . . may seem in the king's favor.<sup>29</sup>

The passage on Zimri (Buckingham) from the poem is another segment Salvaggio selects for a model as she pursues application of Piper's premise that syntactical ambiguity is an element in Dryden's heroic couplet:

A man so various, that he seem'd to be  
Not one, but all Mankinds Epitome.  
Stiff in Opinions, always in the wrong;  
Was every thing by starts, and nothing long:  
But, in the course of one revolving Moon,  
Was Chymist, Fidler, States-Man, and Buffoon  
(ll. 545-50, II, p. 21).

In the second line, the words Not one, but all could modify Mankinds Epitome and mean that Zimri is "not simply one but all mankind's epitome."<sup>30</sup>

The same words, however, might be in apposition with the half-line preceding, "Not one, but all." In that case the words one and all would be pronouns, not adjectives, and the reader might imply that "Zimri's various nature would make him seem to be 'not one' man, 'but all' men, and as such . . . the epitome of mankind."<sup>31</sup> The two interpretations are plausible; Zimri may be so various that he is mankind's epitome or so various that he is not a man at all.

After analyzing syntactical ambiguity in major speeches and in passages about the English people generally and about the rebels and loyalists, Salvaggio concludes that the major argument of the poem is organic: it is "continually being shaped by the details."<sup>32</sup> Its ambiguity, which presents several choices to a politically-divided audience, stems from Dryden's facility in handling the closed couplet.

#### Dryden's Prologues

Salvaggio also has studied syntactic elements in Dryden's prologues, a form in which Brower believes the poet shows directness and ease by employing "such words as men did use" and a style like a "theatrical form of the Roman epistle."<sup>33</sup> Salvaggio notes that Dryden solicited various groups by directing special passages of his prologues toward them. In the prologue to Mithridates he speaks to "fair Ladies," "kind Men," "He that was the husband's Friend," "New-Market Brothers of the Switch," and even to "you who never did appear" (ll. 17-20, II, p. 185, noted by Salvaggio, p. 179). Sometimes Dryden differentiates between male and female listeners. In the prologue to Circe he speaks of the "Sex that best does pleasure understand" and "the Brothers of the Trade" (ll. 5 and 19, I, p. 156), and in Prologue ("Gallants, a bashful Poet bids me say"), he enlists the attention of both sexes:

He makes this difference in the Sexes, too  
He sells to Men, he gives himself to you.  
To both, he would contribute some delight;  
A mere Poetical Hermaphrodite  
(ll. 32-35, ed. Earl Miner, III, p. 252).

In the Circe prologue and in the prologue to All for Love he isolates various kinds of critics; in Circe he states,

From these Usurpers we appeal to you  
 The only knowing, only judging few  
 (ll. 29-30, I, p. 157, quoted by  
 Salvaggio, p. 179).

Most of his comments about groups within his audience are couched within one couplet or triplet to make the discourse easy for listeners to follow, but the compression does not destroy flexibility of implication because the speaker could emphasize certain words. The heroic couplet form enhanced these opportunities: "A well placed pause, almost a sort of hesitancy on the part of the speaker, after . . . half-lines, gives a different slant to what precedes and follows."<sup>34</sup> Salvaggio cites the prologue To the University of Oxford, 1674 as an example of the influence of the speaker's voice in wielding the effects of ambiguity. Here the poet is showing the difference between his relation to the Oxford audience and to listeners who have little education and little appreciation for his art:

And you have been so kind, that we may boast,  
 The greatest Judges still can Pardon most.  
 Poets must stoop, when they would please our Pit,  
 Debas'd even to the Level of their Wit.  
 Disdaining that, which yet they know, will Take,  
 Hating themselves, what their Applause must make  
 (ll. 30-35, I, p. 152).

Although the passage opens with a compliment to the audience, its meter and syntax may contain some discriminations. Should the speaker hesitate after the first line and a half, "And you have been so kind, that we may boast / The greatest Judges still," he would seem to say that the Oxford audiences are the best critics. But the last half-line colors such a meaning, for Judges is now the subject of the verb can pardon. There are two options: that the Oxford listeners are superior or that their superiority depends on their capacity to pardon flaws. Dryden then moves to the "Pit," but he continues to offer multiple meanings. In the couplet

Disdaining that, which yet they know, will Take  
Hating themselves, what their Applause must make,

both pronouns, that and themselves, have ambiguous reference. Salvaggio explains:

The pronoun 'that' seems to refer to several possible objects of the poet's disdain: that 'Poets must stoop' or the 'Pit' itself, or that poets are 'Debas'd even to the Level of their Wit,' or finally 'their Wit' itself.<sup>35</sup>

But when the speaker continues with 'which yet they know, will Take,' the listeners realize the poet is disgusted with material that attracts such an audience. The other pronoun, themselves, operates similarly. If the speaker hesitates after the phrase Hating themselves, it appears that poets detest themselves for condescending. Yet the next phrase, what their Applause must make, may indicate that the writers despise the material written for such hearers. Thus in just six lines Dryden has praised Oxford for good judgment and patience, and condemned commoners for poor taste and for forcing him to write verse that he is ashamed of. Salvaggio sees a final ambiguity: by implying that other audiences have brought out the worst in him, Dryden hints that Oxford inspires his best.

#### MacFlecknoe

Selden and Salvaggio have studied Dryden's mock-epic MacFlecknoe, Selden working with connotations in allusions and Salvaggio stressing ambiguity of syntax. Generally Selden notes that Biblical and classical references are the basis for ridicule of the playwright Thomas Shadwell. In MacFlecknoe as well as in Absalom and Achitophel, Dryden combines Juvenalian invective, "fine raillery," and allusions to Milton and the Bible in a manner "which Pope perfected in The Dunciad."<sup>36</sup>



Salvaggio has analyzed the section on Shadwell's worthless plays, which presents a mock coronation procession against a landscape depicting the brothel section of London:

No Persian Carpets spread th' Imperial way,  
 But scatter'd Limbs of mangled Poets lay;  
 From dusty shops neglected Authors come,  
 Martyrs of Pies, and Reliques of the Bum  
 (ll. 98-101, II, p. 56).

Salvaggio shows how Dryden in this section employs ambiguities of syntax, particularly "ambivalent reference in a half-line." The poet implies in the second line of the first couplet that instead of carpets, "Limbs" of mangled poets cover the streets. Salvaggio finds the same device in a later couplet dealing with Shadwell's problems in playwriting:

Let Virtuoso's in five years be Writ;  
 Yet not one thought accuse thy toyl of wit  
 (ll. 149-50, II, p. 58).

If the reader hesitates after the first half of the second line following "Yet not one thought," he perceives that Shadwell's play required five years to write, but does not contain a single thought having the quality of wit. The rest of the couplet, however, changes that interpretation. Dryden now appears to say that no thought should accuse Shadwell's effort of any wit. The ambivalence lies in the antithesis of "five years" and "one thought," and of "Let" and "Yet." These last two words are placed for emphasis at the beginning of the lines, and they underscore the antithesis.

Salvaggio finds grammatical function another source of ambiguity. She analyzes the effects of reversing subject and object in this couplet:

Where infant Punks their tender Voices try,  
 And little Maximins the Gods defy  
 (ll. 77-78, II, p. 56).

The "infant Punks" could be trying out their voices, but if the verb try

is taken in another sense, their voices could be trying to the actors' patience. Likewise the "Maximins" could defy the Gods or the Gods could defy the young actors. Here the inversion of conversational word order creates the ambiguity, and the parallel structure supports it.

The end of MacFlecknoe brings together all Shadwell's offensive traits. The final speech, showing how "syntax can enhance the suggestive power of verse," is interrupted by Shadwell's fall through a trap door, the narrator commenting:

He said, but his last words were scarcely heard,  
For Bruce and Longvil had a Trap prepar'd  
And down they sent the yet declaiming Bard.  
Sinking he left his Drugget robe behind,  
Born upwards by a subterranean wind.  
The Mantle fell to the young Prophet's part,  
With double portion to his Father's Art  
(ll. 211-27, II, p. 60).

The verb prepar'd at the end of the second line indicates either that Bruce and Longvil actually made the trap ready or that they were guilty of overseeing its construction. In the line "Sinking he left his Drugget robe behind," the traditional pause may color meaning. If the caesura is enforced following left, the interpretation suggests that Flecknoe left the scene by sinking down, a train of thought echoing the beginning lines of the poem: "All humane things are subject to decay." Salvaggio explains that "if the pronoun 'This' in the third line of the poem, 'This Fleckno found,' did not then refer to the maxim stated in the first line, Flecknoe has surely 'found' it out by now."<sup>37</sup>

Salvaggio's perspective on Dryden's poetry shows that he is "far more fluid and flexible" than has been recognized. The poet could suggest through indirection, modifying meanings and complicating arguments. In this manner he reflects the interrelationships of genres noted by

Cohen and especially by Irvin Ehrenpreis, who has "seen discontinuity of genres and styles in Dryden, the way the comic style, for instance, may undercut the serious feeling of a work."<sup>38</sup> Ehrenpreis perceives Dryden's genius as "essentially dualistic," the "happy discontinuities" of his thinking and his art revealing the breadth of vision that inspired his taste for ambiguity. If indeed Dryden is dualistic, Salvaggio reasons,

then syntactic ambiguity helps explain why he might have been less concerned with straightforwardly speaking to his audience . . . and more involved in the process of communicating with his audience, establishing rapport with them.<sup>39</sup>

#### Translation of Juvenal

Salvaggio has examined syntax in Dryden's translation of Juvenal, a task particularly pertinent to this discussion since Johnson's two major poems, London and The Vanity of Human Wishes, are based on originals by this poet. Dryden of course objected to altering an author's work so that it would no longer be his or would defile his memory, but he did believe the translator, ideally himself a poet, should have the right of putting the ancient material into "poetic dress" in English--a technique requiring stylistic liberties. William Frost and Selden doubt whether Dryden's paraphrase actually should be classified as a form of translation. Frost sees it as both creating a new poem and interpreting an original one,<sup>40</sup> and Selden asserts that Dryden comes close to approving the very practice he has condemned in Cowley, "innovative thoughts" in translation or imitation.<sup>41</sup> In the course of his stylistic changes to make Juvenal "more sounding" and "more elegant," Dryden manipulates syntax to achieve ambiguity. Juvenal's posture of open and bitter disgust and his impassioned expression undermine any foundation for ambiguity on his part. Salvaggio shows that where Juvenal's diatribe is "straight-

forward and direct," Dryden's verse, although clear, logical, and direct in its argument, may become intricate and "flexible in the way its syntactic structures interrelate and suggest modification of meaning."<sup>42</sup>

She finds syntactical parallels between Juvenal's First Satire and Dryden's translation of the passage in which the slave Crispinus, suddenly and undeservingly elevated to importance, parades about in expensive clothing and jewelry. She quotes the Latin passage and gives a prose translation:

Cum pars Niliacae plebis, cum verna Canopi  
Crispinus, Tyrias humero revocante lacernas  
Ventilet aestivum digitis sudantibus aurum,  
Nec sufferre queat majoris pondera gemmae:  
Difficile est Satyram non scribere  
(ll. 26-30, IV, p. 94).

(When a member of the common people of the Nile,  
When the slave Crispinus of Canopus  
Hitches a Tyrian cloak on his shoulder  
Waves a summer golden ring on his sweating fingers,  
Not able to endure the weight of a heavier gem:  
It is difficult not to write satire.)<sup>43</sup>

Dryden's translation is shaped into heroic couplets:

When I behold the Spawn of conquer'd Nile  
Crispinus, both in Birth and Manners vile,  
Pacing in Pomp, with Cloak of Tyrian dye  
Chang'd oft a day for needless Luxury;  
And finding oft occasion to be fan'd,  
Ambitious to produce his Lady-hand;  
Charg'd with light Summer-rings his fingers sweat,  
Unable to support a Gem of weight:  
Such fulsom Objects meeting every where,  
'Tis hard to write, but harder to forbear  
(ll. 34-43, IV, p. 95).

In both original and translation the section opens with a "when" clause, moves into an adjective-infinitive combination, and ends with a phrase meaning "It is difficult." But by incorporating phrases that may modify either words or phrases that precede or those that follow, and by selecting English words whose meanings connote ideas opposite to immediate or

surface interpretations, the English poet attains a subtlety and ambiguity lacking in the Latin. These elements are reinforced by the couplet's meter and pauses. Further, Dryden leaves unclear the reference of some of his nouns. These stylistic techniques, earlier noted in comments on Dryden's political satire and mock-epic by both Piper and Salvaggio, can be described precisely in grammatical terms of words, phrases, and clauses, and can suggest several interpretations. Salvaggio warns, however, that we should not assume Juvenal's poetry is "comparatively simplistic" because it lacks Dryden's syntactical effect. Since Juvenal worked with an inflected language, he had free reign with word order; in the passage considered here we observe that the Latin poet separates noun and modifier at will and creates parallels in noun-modifier relationships in consecutive lines. With this freedom he was able to place his two important nouns, the cloak and the ring the slave wears and their modifiers, in places of importance and in parallel positions in the lines. Salvaggio explains: "He emphasizes these two possessions of Crispinus, and they in turn become definitive aspects of the slave's character."<sup>44</sup> Lacking Juvenal's possible range in word order, Dryden nevertheless connects his elements syntactically for several meanings. We might assume that Dryden's practice derives from the characteristics of English and the couplet, but examinations of other heroic couplet translations of the same segment indicate this is not true. Barton Holyday's lacks metrical and rhetorical control, and Sir Robert Stapylton's fails to achieve any sort of ambivalence or ambiguity.<sup>45</sup>

A second passage from the same satire demonstrates Dryden's use of ambivalence to complicate his argument. The section describes guardians

who prostitute their wards in Rome. Dryden expands the two and one-half lines of Latin to five lines in English:

What Indignation boils within my Veins,  
 When perjur'd Guardians, proud with Impious Gains,  
 Choak up the Streets, too narrow for their Trains!  
 Whose Wards by want betray'd, to Crimes are led  
 Too foul to Name, too fulsom to be read!  
 (ll. 67-71, IV, p. 97).

Dryden again follows Juvenal's basic syntactical framework in two or three major constructions. But if the Dryden passage is read within the heroic couplet hierarchy of pauses--the second half of each line receiving more emphasis than the first, and the second line more than the first--then "Crimes" appear to be "Too foul to Name, too fulsom to be read." From a rhetorical perspective the parallels between the couplet's half-lines could indicate that the corrupted "Wards" have become "Too foul to Name," and their "Crimes" are now "too fulsom to be read." All the possibilities would fit the general argument. Dryden's art develops from his ability to relate the persons and the actions so that the entire situation is pictured as deserving the poet's criticism.

Possibilities for ambiguity also appear in the passive verbs betray'd and are led in the first line of the final couplet. They could refer to the nearest noun want in the phrase by want betray'd, but logically they apply to Guardians two lines earlier. The last line of the couplet reinforces this thinking, for certainly the guardians are "Too foul to Name, too fulsom to be read." Through both theme and syntax such an interpretation would tie the triplet and the couplet together. A further element of cohesion comes from the fact that the phrase Whose Wards may refer to Guardians, Streets, or Trains. The meter strengthens this suggestion because all three nouns fall at the end of the half-line segment of the couplet and infuse a "sense of closure" to the triplet.

Since the couplet opens with "Whose Wards," the reader may perceive any of the nouns as antecedents. Salvaggio recalls that Juvenal was enraged to see the guardians prostituting their wards and clogging the streets with their hangers-on, but she asserts that Dryden amplifies all aspects of the situation by handling syntax and couplet conventions:

The 'Ward-Guardian' relationship is obviously the strongest. . . . But since the 'Guardians' fill the 'Streets' with their 'Trains' of companions, and especially since the 'Streets' would be the likely place for the wards to commit their crimes, practically all of the nouns in the four lines become syntactically and thematically connected, and all are finally connected to the fifth line, 'Too foul to Name, too fulsom to be read.'<sup>46</sup>

A third example of Dryden's syntactical effects is a single couplet describing recognizable murderers riding triumphantly through Rome:

Cum veniet contra, digito compesce labellum  
Accusator erit, qui verbum dixerit, hic est  
(ll. 160-61).

The prose translation follows:

When he will come face to face, put your finger  
to your lips,  
He will be an informer, who will say the word,  
it is he.

Dryden's translation is

Be silent, and beware if such you see;  
The Defamation but to say, That's He!  
(ll. 243-44, IV, p. 107).

Salvaggio comments on the interaction of Dryden's syntax with rhetorical and metrical elements. Both lines have a "clear mid-line pause." In the first, the pause follows the verb beware. Syntax and alliteration hold the half-lines together, for "Be silent" and "beware" are commands, and "if such you see" is a modifying dependent clause. The break in the second line falls in the exact center, after Defamation. Syntactical parallels appear in the main clauses in the first half of each line, and in

the subordinate clauses in the second half of each. Salvaggio shows that two instances of ambivalence result:

The subordinate clause 'if such you see' in the first line can refer to the main clause which precedes it (Be silent and beware if such you see), and forward to the main clause which follows it (If such you see, it is defamation, merely because you see it), and also forward to the entire second line (If such you see, it is defamation if you say That's He). And in a similar way, the main clause of the second line, 'Tis Defamation,' can refer to the subordinate clause in the first line (it is defamation if you see) and forward to the subordinate clause in the second line (it is defamation but to say That's He).<sup>47</sup>

The obvious meaning is that of Juvenal's original: if you point out the murderers your words will be defamation. But with Dryden's ambiguity, the passage could mean that if you notice, your mere recognition of the murderers is defamation. And still another meaning is that all you actually see is defamation, "a meaning that gets at the heart of the entire passage, though it is never explicitly stated."<sup>48</sup>

The same principles of ambiguity by which Dryden expands and deepens meaning in the short passages also may be traced in longer sections, becoming "an essential aspect of the English poet's style and certainly a way of making Juvenal "more sounding."

These works of Dryden, his epistle "To My Honoured Kinsman," his short poem "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham," his political satire Absalom and Achitophel, his mock-heroic MacFlecknoe, and his translation of Juvenal, show his handling of the heroic couplet and his use of ambiguity to reach multiple factions in his audience.

#### The Augustan Age and Pope

The conventions of the heroic couplet, of translation and imitation, and of formal verse satire passed from Dryden to Pope during the first



decade of the eighteenth century, as they would later to Johnson and Goldsmith. But Dryden and Pope operated in different ways within these forms. One important reason for the differences was the contrast in their purposes and in their audiences. For example, where Dryden wanted his discourse to appeal to many conflicting segments within English Restoration society, Pope planned his satire to reach a more homogeneous audience. To understand the attitudes and beliefs of Pope's readers in the Augustan Age, which was also the age of Johnson and Goldsmith, we examine some basic assumptions.

As Brower has noted, it is no wonder that a large group of educated society in the eighteenth century saw their own age as a parallel to the Roman Age of Augustus and encouraged adulation of Greek and Roman writers. Wealthy Englishmen lived secluded on their remote country estates and ignored the problems of lower classes. They believed, as Pope writes in An Essay on Man, that life on earth was natural and reasonable and that men should spend their time seeking answers to philosophical questions. Such an attitude, the historian William B. Willcox explains, could "lead to an inner tranquility that expressed itself outwardly in good manners and good form."<sup>49</sup> To be civilized should mean to free oneself from the political and religious passion that had convulsed Dryden's century. The goal of a gentleman was to keep calm, and this "almost complacent serenity appears over and over again in the literature of the period."<sup>50</sup>

Horace was the model for such a style of living. Even young boys were taught to respect and admire him and the other Augustan satirists. W. Jackson Bate writes that Samuel Johnson as a youth in Lichfield tried to practice the maxims of "the calm and urbane Horace" whom he had

translated as a schoolboy; for Johnson at that period the Roman poet represented a "calm, ironic detachment," and his odes were "like oases of self-control, of cool and urbane wisdom."<sup>51</sup>

Horace was equally a model for adults. Brower quotes a letter from Thomas Burnet to his literary collaborator, George Duckett, on June 1, 1718: "I am now at my leisure hours reading Horace with some diligence and find the world was just the same then, that it continues to be now."<sup>52</sup> The Latin poet was England's cultural hero, Brower writes, mainly because of men's perception of broad historical parallels--

between two societies in an era of concentration following an era of revolution, between nations just becoming aware of their imperial role, and between cultures enriched by increased leisure and easier contacts with 'earth's distant ends.'<sup>53</sup>

English gentlemen could see themselves taking part in both city and country life, business and peaceful retreat; and they could look down upon countrymen entangled in politics or grubbing for money or other material treasures. In Pope as in Dryden,

the Roman voice always can be heard. And though modulation of tone is infinitely various in the Moral Essays and the Satires, the tone of Roman cultivation--more refined and more truly Horatian, less downright and less pompous than in Dryden--still prevails.<sup>54</sup>

Generally, Pope depicts a friendly conversation in contrast with the didacticism of Dryden, whose voice, as Piper says, rang from the platform.

Before looking at some possible ambiguity--in the commonly accepted rather than the literary sense--in the conventional wisdom of the time, we will examine further the major Horatian principles. Horace loved the country not only because of the beauty of growing things but because it was a place to cultivate his soul. All men need to learn discipline, to teach themselves through solitude to control their feelings and actions. As Brower states, the country life offered escape from the city's bustle,

a "simple patriarchal society" where one could read, sleep, and be idle if he wished, and have time to ponder friendship, death, the necessity of being busy, and the reasons some men yearn for money and position. Horace's satire generally is cool, controlled, poised, gently chiding; rarely in his works does the reader receive the impression of a man "on the attack."<sup>55</sup>

The attitude of the eighteenth century toward Augustan Rome, then, was one of modified enthusiasm. At that time as now, the term Augustan indicated that the rule of Augustus Caesar in Rome induced a stable, peaceful environment in which literature was nurtured. But Weinbrot in his 1978 Augustus Caesar in "Augustan" England asserts that this "pretty notion" had its other side, for actually some Whigs and Tories, ordinary citizens, and students of the arts disapproved of Augustus Caesar. The attitude that Roman civilization during Augustus' day set a standard of achievement for all mankind to follow "not only allows us to read history through purple-tinted glasses, but also induces sloppy scholarship by encouraging us to ignore massive contrary evidence."<sup>56</sup> Weinbrot shows that thoughtful Englishmen in the eighteenth century tended to reject historians who sympathized with or praised Augustus. Most of those who praised the ruler were also likely to blame him, but the blame element has been lost in time. Weinbrot quotes some remarks of literary figures concerning the Roman emperor:

For Dryden, Augustus was guilty of 'usurpation of Roman freedom,' slaughtered 'many noble Romans' in the process, and forced the softening of satire 'to provide for his own reputation!'; for Swift, Octavian induced bloody faction, destroyed Rome's freedom and 'entailed the vilest Tyranny that Heaven in its Anger ever inflicted!'; for Pope, Augustus as proscriber was a 'severe & barbarous' tyrant and as emperor was a corrupting manipulator of art . . . for Johnson, who regarded the Romans in general as first poor and then rich thieves, 'no modern flat-

tery . . . is so gross as that of the Augustan age,' as in Horace,  
Odes iii. 5.2.<sup>57</sup>

Weinbrot's conclusion, based on his study of classical historians and of English politics and literature, is that the modern idea of benevolent Augustanism is passé. Among its distortions is the belief that the Horatian satiric mode dominated the period and that Pope was most persistent in employing it. Some of the poet's own works, to be discussed later in this analysis, prove the contrary can be true, for Pope uses Horatian means to gain a Juvenalian goal, and thus cannot be classified as purely Horatian. Weinbrot states that Pope is "most true to his own art and character when politically Juvenalian in an imitation of Horace."<sup>58</sup>

Just as Weinbrot objects to the misapplication of the term Augustan to significant parts of 140 years of English history, W. L. MacDonald argues against the term neoclassical as applied to the Augustan Age. He sees ambiguity in the fact that the period was relatively short and that it involved "a small number of men of letters."<sup>59</sup> Although the educated world followed a line of good sense "based on the authority of antiquity," a revolt "festered by discontent with the over-mechanical application to literature" of the ancient maxims began early in the era and in itself revealed that the "frost of rigid classicism was beginning to thaw."<sup>60</sup> Among the dissidents were George Farquhar, who argued against Aristotle's principles in drama, and Addison and Steele. Pope too admitted in his Preface to the Iliad that he had had to bend classical regulations when, "to attain the 'sublime' he had to choose between 'frenzie and frigidity."<sup>61</sup> And in An Essay on Criticism he emphasizes the importance of imagination as opposed to strict adherence to rules:

Music resembles poetry, in each  
Are nameless graces which no methods teach,  
And which a master had alone can reach.

If, where the rules not far enough extend,  
 (Since rules were made but to promote their end)  
 Some lucky licence answer to the full  
 The intent proposed, that licence is a rule.  
 Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,  
 May boldly deviate from the common track;  
 From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,  
 And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,  
 Which, without passing through the judgment, gains  
 The heart, and all its end at once retains.<sup>62</sup>

Rachel Trickett shows that the Augustans were far from offering blind devotion to the ancients: "When classical forms seemed out of tune with their own ways of life . . . they were remarkably quick to discard them."<sup>63</sup> The pastorals are an example. Dryden during the Restoration had written none of them except translations, and Pope's were "an exercise never to be repeated." The rejection is a natural one. Even when a poet is aware of the importance of tradition, he is likely to lay it aside. Trickett shows that such a paradox is "constantly revealed in Augustan poetry."<sup>64</sup>

In Rothstein's view the eighteenth century has become a "cloven" one through the writings of modern critics about its literature. A wide division separates two elements, often tagged "classicists" and "romantics." Rothstein is as concerned as other contemporary scholars are about labels:

Sometimes one finds 'neoclassic' or the now outmoded 'pseudo-classic' for the first group. They make up part of 'the Age of Reason' or exemplify 'Augustanism' (usually desirable) or 'Augustan humanism' (almost always desirable), the last strain of 'Renaissance Christian humanism. . . .' Such divisions, taken seriously, have often damaged the study of eighteenth-century poetry by imposing false categories on a complex continuum, and exaggerating or engulfing certain similarities and differences in all kinds of poetry from the time of Milton and Marvell to the time of Byron and Keats.<sup>65</sup>

Rothstein sees in the eighteenth century, which he refuses to label with any "ism" tag, four major emphases: analogy; patterns of psychology;

the use of a speaking voice; and the employment of a speaker as a spectator, victim, or dramatic projection. Over the entire period from 1660 to 1780, Rothstein perceives no discontinuity. If there is anything special about the era, it is "a heightened understanding of techniques and a sharpened awareness of the past."<sup>66</sup> Based on this tendency, poets of the period adopted a "positional style" which led them to place their poems "within living traditions, classical or more modern." Because of their study of particular elements of poetry, the writers of the eighteenth century knew more about their tools and their own goals than did their predecessors, whose only guides, he thinks, had been the traditional books of rhetoric. But Rothstein also emphasizes the dynamics of the literary period:

We have seen the rapidity with which change took place despite critics and rules, the fervor with which poets remodeled what they received from the past, and the artistic complexity that rebukes any notion of writers' simply exploiting a handy new rhetoric.<sup>67</sup>

Maynard Mack also finds a duality in the term Augustan Age. The era has been shown as "an excessively well-tamed and tended period . . . supremely satisfied with what it was, and somehow a little remote from the main literary tradition."<sup>68</sup> But among the writers and artists were men who challenged complacency, whose writing assimilated tradition rather than remaining out of the English mainstream. The Augustans added their own flavor to the classical forms. This fact is probably most obvious in one of their favorite forms, the mock-heroic. In copying the weighty action, dignified characters, and elevated style of the epic, the Augustans applied these conventions to "situations that are not at all exalted," creating ludicrous effects. Particularly in the mock-epic The Rape of the Lock, Mack writes, it is easy to miss implied comparisons such as

these: "Or stain her honour or her new brocade" (Canto I, l. 107, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems, II, p. 164) and

Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake  
And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake  
(Canto I, ll. 15-16, II, p. 145).

The tone is wry and casual, but in its very nonchalance is an important element of meaning.<sup>69</sup>

Writers had a unique position in the political and social arena of the Augustan Age. Brower notes that there is some ambiguity in the fact that, like Horace, Pope "disclaimed any interest or influence in the affairs of state."<sup>70</sup> On the same theme Butt quotes a letter of February 8, 1741-2, from Pope to Ralph Allen: "I content myself . . . with honest wishes, asking for honest men to govern us, without asking for any Party, or Denomination" (Imitations of Horace, ed. John Butt, IV, Introd., p. xli). And yet Brower observes that both Horace and Pope had friends among the great and that their readers thought their poetry was significant politically. Pope wrote to Arbuthnot on July 26, 1734, that his "greatest comfort . . . has been to see that those who have no shame . . . have appeared touched by my Satire" (Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 324, n. 209). "Those" to whom Pope refers were politicians, and Pope and his circle were at the center of political life in contrast to the ideally neutral Horace.

Bonamy Dobrée notes an especially close relationship between the literary and the political scene in the eighteenth century, a situation caused by the emerging class of merchant citizens. This business group, which previously had read mainly religious or political tracts, now had sired sons and daughters "who wanted to read something which bore

directly upon the life they knew and lived."<sup>71</sup> London was a city of half a million people, many of them employees of the newly consolidated trading companies, others small entrepreneurs, clerks, and middlemen, and still others the servants of these groups. Taken all together, they made up the new reading class "agog for anything new or fresh."<sup>72</sup> To these elements should be added the old readers--the young lawyers, the gentry, the puritan and dissenting groups who were beginning to widen their viewpoint, and the Huguenots. The political, social, and spiritual questions which intrigued readers tended to divide the writers of the day. Dobrée outlines the separation: "The line of demarcation was Trade-Dissent-Whig-Optimist, following on Locke; and Land-Church-Tory-Pessimist, following on Hobbes (politically)."<sup>73</sup> Pope, from his Tory position, nevertheless leaned somewhat toward optimism because he wrote his major philosophical work "when the sharp definitions of the Enlightenment were beginning to get a little blurred."<sup>74</sup> William Empson states that perhaps because he is a "furious partisan" or wants to "pretend he is being fair," Pope always tries to allow for two judgments of his statements, although his aim is to present the opposition side of an issue.<sup>75</sup> Butt believes that part of Pope's hostility resulted from a conflict in values between the Tories, who for the most part were landowners and believed in following the Horatian ideal of a simple decent life in the country, and the Whigs, whom the Tories saw as living luxurious lives in the London court.<sup>76</sup>

Another major difference between the two parties was in their attitudes toward modesty. Pope and his group urged Horace's doctrine of contentment with little financial reward, but as Butt points out, Walpole's administration was backed by merchants from the cities and by the Whig



squires who were not modest in any sense.<sup>77</sup> An examination of certain passages will show that Pope equated plain-living Tory country people with goodness and city dwellers with evil, because he saw Londoners as contaminated by Whig financial pursuits at court.

Butt writes that specific words which present the contrast of values underlying the political situation are the Imitations of Horace's first and second satires:

The same contrast is implicit in the Versification of Donne's Fourth Satire. . . . In this poem there is no description of the Twickenham scene; Pope's powers are concentrated on depicting what displeases him in the typical courtier. This fop cannot of course keep his talk free from the more immediate political issues of the day, so Pope gives some thirty lines of reflexions on the supreme influence of Queen Caroline, on the Charitable Corporation scandal, on corruption in Parliament, on the mistaken policy of peace at any price, and on the transgression of the Treaty of Utrecht. But Pope is chiefly concerned with disparaging the court (Imitations of Horace, IV, Introd., p. xxxvii).

One aspect of the evil that both Dryden and Pope discuss is the adulteration of literary standards. Dryden implies in MacFlecknoe that what poor poets write is immoral because it is aesthetically bad; Pope, who suffered very real character attacks as well as threats of libel, prized his own morality as a poet and defended himself in his Imitations of Horace and in The Dunciad. Pope's attitude is obvious in the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated (To Fortescue) (1733):

What, arm'd for Virtue when I Point the Pen,  
Brand the bold Front of shameless, guilty Men,  
Dash the proud Gamester in his gilded Car,  
Bare the mean Heart that lurks beneath a Star;  
(ll. 105-08, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 15).

Correspondence between Pope and Aaron Hill underline this attitude. On January 28, 1730-1, Hill wrote to Pope:

I am sorry to hear you say, you never thought any great matters of your poetry. It is . . . the characteristic you are to hope

your distinction from. . . . To be honest, is the duty of every plain man. Nor, since the soul of poetry is sentiment, can a great poet want morality.

To this Pope replied on February 5: "I am very sensible, that my poetical talent is all that may . . . make me remembered; but it is my morality only that must make me beloved, or happy" (Imitations of Horace, IV, pp. 14-15, n. 105).

Pope makes the point that if good poetry is moral, bad poetry is immoral in its effect, in The Dunciad (1743), in which the Queen of Dullness sees her image in the "monster-breeding breast" of Bays (Colley Cibber, appointed Poet Laureate in 1730). Bays writes "nonsense" and thinks nothing of plagiarizing, carrying a "folio commonplace," a notebook for keeping materials stolen from plays written by other men. Not only Cibber but bad poets in general feel Pope's lash:

There march'd the bard and blockhead, side by side,  
Who rhym'd for hire, and patroniz'd for pride  
(ll. 101-02, The Dunciad, ed. James Sutherland, V,  
p. 351).

And at the end of the poem the queen mounts the throne:

Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,  
And unawares Morality expires  
(ll. 649-50, V, p. 409).

#### Pope's Relation to Classical Satirists

Recent comment on the relationship of Pope and other early eighteenth-century British writers to Horace and Juvenal will serve as an introduction to a detailed analysis of Pope's style and tone by several authorities and may also help to clarify Johnson's inheritance. Weinbrot explained in 1982 that Pope and his contemporaries were beginning to reject the gentle Horatian voice for the rough Juvenalian one as early as the 1730s, the period during which Pope's Epistles to Several Persons--

the Moral Essays--appeared. At the beginning of the decade, Horatian conventions were evident not only in Pope's works but in those of other English satirists. However, as the decade progressed, British imitations generally became "harsher, more overtly political, more Juvenalian."<sup>78</sup> By 1739, Juvenal's attitude of outrage and hostility had replaced the Horatian outlook, especially among authors opposed to George II and Walpole. Weinbrot sees this same change developing in Pope. His Epistles to Several Persons (1731-35) generally employ the Horatian voice; his First Satire of the Second Book (To Fortescue) (1733) mingles the voices of Horace and Juvenal, and his Epistle to Dr. Arbuthot (1735) "shows the satirist . . . apportioning his chronological, political, and satirical youth to Horace, and his more mature, combative, and threatened years to Juvenal."<sup>79</sup> Such a trend leads logically to Johnson's preference for Juvenal.

Weinbrot and two other authorities, Selden and Brower, have made a thorough analysis of Pope's style and tone, his manipulation of the Horatian approach and attitude, and his mingling of Juvenalian elements, though such elements are subdued in his early works.

Weinbrot notes first that the change in Pope's tone, his abandonment of the urbane attitude, may be due in part to the nature of the epistles and satires themselves. The epistle was considered gentle and instructive, the satire acerbic. Pope undoubtedly knew this distinction, although the difference is not always clear in his works; the poet had studied outstanding seventeenth-century authorities. Dacier had written that Horace's epistles and satires are both satiric, but that satires "reprimand and refute" and epistles "generally penetrate the spirit (insinuer) and instruct."<sup>80</sup> Daniel Heinsius had stated in 1629 that satire

has a philosophic quality lacking in epistles; in satires Horace teaches virtue by criticizing, and in epistles he exhorts.<sup>81</sup> In 1608, Torren-  
tius had said that satire criticizes men shortcomings and epistles are  
moral essays or poetry; and in 1675, Rappolti had written that where sat-  
ires revile vice, epistles teach virtue. Not only Pope but most English  
gentlemen had read these Continental authorities. In Pope's works, Wein-  
brot finds satires have their "pertinent sections of affirmations" but  
they are shorter than the epistles and "less encouraging."<sup>82</sup>

Weinbrot points out that a difference in audience as well as in tone  
distinguishes some epistles from some satires; generally in the satires  
Pope considers his audience to be much broader, to include both state ad-  
ministrators and the public. The poet states in the Second Epistle of  
the Second Book of Horace, Imitated (To Colonel Cotterell) that he can  
please only two out of twenty readers. But in the satires he can reach  
"Kings, Bishops, Ministers, and Judges." No longer is he concerned with  
his person or his family. He comes close to challenging officials: "But  
touch me, and no Minister so sore" (First Satire of the Second Book of  
Horace, Imitated (To Fortescue), IV, l. 76, p. 13). Satire is his wea-  
pon and he is ready to fight to the death; his words can make authori-  
ties tremble. In An Epistle from Mr. Pope to Dr. Arbuthnot the poet is  
writing on the advice of friends, but in Dialogues I and II (Epilogues  
to the Satires) he stresses the public power of his words. In Dialogue  
II, for instance, he is eager to print because vice is making swift  
gains. Instead of merely avenging himself for attacks on himself and  
his family, he now wants to point the path to goodness for the nation.  
Weinbrot explains: "As a satirist Pope is God's agent; he punishes of-  
fenders at this moment rather than at the end of their lives!"<sup>83</sup>

Yes, I am proud; I must be proud to see  
 Men not afraid of God, afraid of me:  
 Safe from the Bar, the Pulpit, and the Throne,  
 Yet touch'd and sham'd by ridicule alone  
 (ll. 208-11, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 325).

Despite this tone of dedication and divine guidance, the Dialogues project an un-Horatian image of tragedy, of the poet nobly facing defeat. Pope is "willing to die" for virtue and knows his may be "the last Pen for Freedom" (Dialogue II, l. 248, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 327).

Comparison of the treatment of similar themes and of the adversarius' role in the epistles and satires further indicates Pope's rejection of Horace's gentility. In the First Epistle of the First Book of Horace (To Bolingbroke) Pope says merely that men should be advised against seeking gold. But in Dialogue I he writes that pursuit of wealth is "the path to slavery, corruption, and loss of 'old England's genius'" (ll. 147 ff., Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 309).

Weinbrot goes so far as to reject Pope's Epilogue to the Satires as imitation; instead he asserts it is an original poem. It alters the dialogue of Horace, and although it does allude to his character, lines, and thoughts, it does not imitate the whole work--it does not present the Latin original for comparison as the earlier imitations do. The "Censurer" who speaks the reference to the precedent of Horace is "not normative."<sup>84</sup> And finally, instead of accepting the Roman poet as a guide, as Johnson accepts Juvenal, Pope moves away from Horace, appearing "ethically and poetically" superior.

Selden is a second authority commenting on the tone of Pope's poetry and on his tendency to mingle subdued Juvenalian elements into his Imitations of Horace. Selden finds that the spectrum of the satiric styles of the Imitations ranges from harshness in the Second Satire of

the First Book of Horace, Imitated (1734) to friendly plainness in the Sixth Epistle of the First Book of Horace, Imitated (To Murray) (1738). Blending in the invective of Juvenal, Pope uses irony and indirection to enrich and qualify the satiric persona. It is evident that during the writing of the Imitations the poet deserted Horace's neutral position to expose boldly and roughly the corruption of Walpole's government.

But as background for Selden's comparison of Horace and Pope, some explanation of the adversarius should be given. John M. Aden points out in "Pope and the Satiric Adversary" that Pope's adversarius is actually an interlocutor.<sup>85</sup> Aden indicates the ways in which Pope uses the device:

Where the interlocutor is friendly, the poet benefits by the presence of a second satirist on the scene. Where he is antagonistic, he furnishes concrete evidence of the satirist's provocation and specific justification of his contention.<sup>86</sup>

In the work on which Selden bases his comparison of the Roman and English authors, the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated (To Fortescue) (1732-33), Aden has shown that Pope retains the character of Horace's adversarius Trebatius, who is cautious, close-mouthed, a bit cynical, and somewhat subtle in his humor. Aden states that as Pope molds the personality of his interlocutor Fortescue, the English poet "puts the adversary more in key with himself: witty, sympathetic, and, at heart, as much satirically inclined as the satirist."<sup>87</sup> Fortescue is actually the poet's ally, progressing "from Pope's counsellor to his advocate to his fellow satirist."<sup>88</sup>

Selden shows that as the original Roman satire opens, Horace asks Trebatius, a lawyer, what the satirist's role should be. Trebatius advises the poet to give up satire and write epic because satire could

result in libel. Horace gives a sample answer: "Some think I am too bitter in satire."<sup>89</sup> Pope's Imitation deepens the irony and mock-seriousness in this passage, which refers specifically to Peter Walker's speculation and to Francis Chartres' profligacy:

There are (I scarce can think it, but am told)  
There are to whom my Satire seems too bold,  
Scarce to wise Peter complaisant enough,  
And something said of Chartres much too rough  
(ll. 1-4, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 5).

The word wise gives the first hint that unlike Horace, Pope is not taking a neutral stand but will ruthlessly expose corruption. Pope's adversarius Fortescue, who as his legal adviser warned him against libel, becomes the fellow satirist, joining in the game of irony. In Horace's satire, Trebatius suggests the poet will be rewarded if he praises Caesar rather than censuring him. In Pope's Imitation Fortescue says:

Or if you needs must write, write Caesar's Praise:  
You'll gain a Knighthood or the Bays  
(ll. 21-22, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 7).

Selden sees in the subsequent lines which inveigh against Cibber and Sir Richard Blackmore, physician to William III, Pope's addition of sharpness to Horace's usual tone of amusement: "Unlike Horace he does not try to detach himself from . . . free-ranging moral invective."<sup>90</sup> Pope is now the public defender of morals, superimposing this role on the Horatian voice of a plain honest man. Selden believes money makes the difference: "Pope's financial independence evidently permitted him a more uncompromising stance than Horace could afford to adopt."<sup>91</sup>

Brower is a third authority commenting on Pope's qualification of Horace's voice. In the First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated (To Augustus), Pope speaks as a man loyal to poetry and the past, but his approach is one of well-bred deprecation. He echoes Horace's

politeness, but by selecting facts about his own age he emphasizes the difference between the idealized Roman period of Augustus and the English era of Walpole. The next Imitations present a "darker" view of England, and judgments begin to turn moral as well as political. Pope's voice mounts, becomes more declamatory, in the final satires. Brower writes that Pope shows that

the Augustan 'twilight'--a small event if viewed as a failure of the Tories, the disappointments of Pope and his friends, and the death of the men who had created the brief illusion of a new literature and a new culture--had become a timeless image of decline and fall.<sup>92</sup>

Weinbrot, discussing the role of the adversarius as an indication of the place of a particular Imitation in the spectrum of satirical intensity, notes that in the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated (To Fortescue), the enemy is "merely laughed at."<sup>93</sup> But although the satire addressed to Dr. Arbuthnot is an epistle, its satirical approach "borders on bitter," showing us "the enemy demolished."

Aden's discussion of this adversarius, incidentally, may be appropriate here. Aden shows that Arbuthnot speaks out as a concerned friend, but never playfully, always "with an edge."<sup>94</sup> His advice stings and it dares to make innuendoes. Arbuthnot warns the poet to avoid using personal names and to remember that he may be open to physical retaliation. When Sporus is mentioned, Arbuthnot reveals his own contempt, and "his advice to let Sporus alone is in itself an attack upon him."<sup>95</sup>

As Weinbrot moves from his analysis of the posture of Arbuthnot to his examination of the adversarius role in the Dialogues, he asserts that the adversarius is among the elements that force these two poems into a category the scholar calls "extremely harsh." Pope no longer talks to a man who shares the poet's sense of values but with one who represents



the manners and morals of the court, who advises Pope to turn his satire against himself and his own circle, to attack "Scripture, honesty, and his own friends" and be charitable to Knave and Fool.<sup>96</sup>

Discussing political comment in the epistles and satires, Weinbrot shows that in one "moderate" satire, the Second Satire of the Second Book of Horace, Paraphrased (To Bethel), the poet gives an overview of mankind that is much more "brutal" than that shown in the epistles. He attacks gluttony, a sin that not only poisons the body but also the soul, leading to suicide. But the two Dialogues are "most intense" in their public and political character. The first mentions "Jenkins' ear, opposition by the Patriots to Walpole, the Old Whigs, the Lord Chamberlain and stage-licensing, Lyttleton and the Prince of Wales, Fleury, Queen Caroline, and the Gazeteer."<sup>97</sup> The poem exposes a new hierarchy of evil. The ruling class no longer is a model of virtue, and the "World" tumbles along, pulled by the chariot of Vice, personified to betray England. Dialogue II has an even more political approach, and shows the poet feeling for all men but having despaired of rousing his country's watchmen.

In connection with the Dialogues' bitterness, Ehrenpreis has a warning. His thesis is that critics are mistaken if they believe it is not Pope but his ethos which speaks the invective, or that Pope does not attack men as individuals but rather exposes certain men only as examples of evil. The persona should not be seen as a device to "screen the author from his meaning."<sup>98</sup> Critics who fail to "take Pope at his word . . . are turning a genius into a fool."<sup>99</sup> In the Dialogues, where the invective becomes strongest and bitterness infects the normal good nature of Horace, Ehrenpreis believes Pope reaches "his greatest" powers: his satire could not be "more direct without turning ink into acid."<sup>100</sup>

The nature of Pope's audience, the political strain in his poetry, especially in the Imitations, show how Pope's particular solutions differ from Dryden's.

Brower and Peter Dixon note evidence, in the epistles and satires, of Pope's contrast of the corruption of the city and court controlled by the Whig administration with the peace and decency of plain country living of Tory landowners. Brower's example is the Epistle to Bathurst, the Third Moral Essay (1732-33), one of two of Pope's poems on "the Use of Riches." He finds that sometimes parody of the pastoral-heroic tradition supports the satire's main moral, that "corruption of city finance is the degeneration of ancient rural virtue."<sup>101</sup> In the Sir Balaam passage Pope attacks London's association with "bourgeois success and protestant piety." He dramatizes the ambiguity of churchgoing to attain respectability and earn money, a match of "pious allusion" and plain talk. In contrast with such a figure is the Man of Ross, a "shepherd of the people."<sup>102</sup> He is a country gentleman, the improver of landscape and the helper of the poor. Brower parallels him with the poet: "With modest means he realizes the aim of the aristocrat (He bears some resemblance to the patriarch of Twickenham)."<sup>103</sup>

Dixon shows that Pope presents the court and city as full of duplicity and false appearances. The appropriate language to describe them is paradox, and the appropriate rhetorical figure is oxymoron. Thus in his Versification of the Fourth Satire of Dr. John Donne, Pope speaks to the "livery'd Lord" (l. 197, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 43) and the "noble serving man" (l. 199, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 43), and in the First Epistle to the First Book of Horace, Imitated (To Bolingbroke), the "well-drest rabble" (l. 111, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 287). With

this device the satirist can show the difference between an "impressive appearance" and the rottenness under it.<sup>104</sup>

In the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated (To Fortescue), we also find evidence of Pope's pairing of good plain men with the country, and of evil men with the city-court. Pope first tells Fortescue that despite the enemies his poems have made, he will continue to fight city-centered evils. Referring to satire, his weapon, he writes:

I only wear it in a Land of Hectors,  
Thieves, Supercargoes, Sharpers, and Directors  
(ll. 71-72, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 11).

In his editor's notes explaining contemporary connotations for the terms Pope uses, Butt quotes from Macaulay's History of England (Ch. iii).

Butt explains that "Hectors" were "bullies," young men late in the seventeenth century who swaggered about the city at night, "breaking windows, upsetting sedans, beating quiet men, and offering rude caresses to pretty women" (Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 11, n. 72). Supercargoes carries a reference to large amounts of money, for Fielding's use of the word indicates there were officers on merchant ships who managed cargo and all commercial transactions and were "proverbial for their wealth" (Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 11, n. 72). The word Directors refers to the heads of the notorious South Sea Company.

In contrast, later in the poem Pope describes his own home, where he will be

To virtue only and her friends, a friend  
The World beside may murmur, or commend,  
Know, all the distant Din that World can keep  
Rolls o'er my Grotto, and but soothes my Sleep.  
There, my Retreat the best Companions grace,  
Chiefs, out of War, and Statesmen, out of Place.  
There St. John mingles with my friendly Bowl,  
The Feast of Reason nad the Flow of Soul:  
(ll. 121-29, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 17).



well as a bore, since he was hungry," we probably have done an injustice to Pope's humanity and failed to comprehend his tone.<sup>105</sup>

Empson also comments on these lines from the same work about the writing of the poet's enemies:

Yet then did Gildon draw his venal quill.  
I wished the man a dinner, and sat still  
(ll. 151-52, Imitations of Horace, IV,  
p. 107).

Here, Empson states, we may be led to think "Good sympathetic Mr. Pope . . . he has profound knowledge of human nature."<sup>106</sup> Empson sees the situation as proof of the poet's magnanimity, but we cannot be "sure what proportions are intended."

In a passage from Essay on Women (Moral Essays ii, Epistle to a Lady), Empson notes a duality in the discussion of aging dowagers:

As hags hold sabbats, not for joy but spite,  
So these their merry miserable night;  
So round and round the ghosts of beauty glide,  
And haunt the places where their honour died.  
See how the world its veterans rewards,  
A youth of frolics, an old age of cards.  
Fair to no purpose, artful to no end,  
Young without lovers, old without a friend;  
A fop her passion, and her prize a sot;  
Alive ridiculous, and dead forgot  
(ll. 239-48, Epistles to Several Persons  
(Moral Essays) III, ii, ed. F. W. Bateson,  
pp. 66-67).

Empson says that ambiguity in the passage stems from the combination of "two sharply distinguished states of mind within the author": the "finicky, precision" with which he describes the women, and the "pity, bitterness, and terror" in which he must have conceived the subject matter.<sup>107</sup>

In the second couplet the dowagers may "glide round and round" not because they are dancing but because they move in a dull circle from one card to the next and from one drawing room to another. The women may be

either "ghosts" of their dead beauty or of their honor; thus they haunt places they have frequented in the past because they regret losing either their looks or their reputations.

To illustrate the Augustan device of using a word with several extended meanings, Empson also works with this couplet from The Rape of the Lock:

Where thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey,  
Dost sometimes council take, and sometimes tea  
(Canto III, ll. 7-7, The Rape of the Lock and  
Other Poems, II, p. 167).

Here Pope employs the verb take to mirror variety from the real world. Augustan poets frequently used this technique, and the word they selected for it was usually a verb because they considered the process of compressing several ideas into one statement a mental activity.

#### Pope's Heroic Couplet

Piper finds that Pope is as skillful as Dryden in welding heroic couplets into supracouplets, pointing out that the later works such as the Imitations and The Dunciad show a "new density and a new flexibility" in individual couplets as well as a greater power to "enunciate couplet paragraphs."<sup>108</sup> He quotes as an illustration of double antithesis a single line from An Epistle from Mr. Pope to Dr. Arbuthnot: "Now high, now low, now Master up, now Miss" (l. 324, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 119). He further notes that in this couplet, from the same poem, the poet manages a reverse flow of movement:

Is there a Parson, much bemus'd in Beer,  
A maudlin Poetess, a rhyming Peer  
(ll. 15-16, Imitations of Horace, IV,  
p. 97).

Here the poet uses "the syntactic terms and broad assertion of a relationship in his first line to double the weight of the second."<sup>109</sup>

In a quotation from the Moral Essays (I, to Cobham) in which Pope explains the difficulty of designating the ruling passion of a man, Piper finds an example of Pope's control in holding couplet passages together:

When Cataline by raping swelled his store,  
When Caesar made a noble dame a whore,  
In this the Lust, in that the Avarice  
Were means, not ends: Ambition was the Vice  
(ll. 212-15, Epistles to Several Persons  
(Moral Essays) III, ii, p. 32).

Piper states that Pope attains "balanced, perfectly controlled movement of thought in this single syntactic system" by paralleling Cataline and Caesar in the first couplet. At the same time he emphasizes his judgment of the men by wedging it into the final half-line of the second couplet. It is sometimes difficult to appreciate either the meaning or the "force and radiance" of Pope's couplets if they are taken out of context. In the Cataline-Caesar passage, for example, the second couplet makes sense only when the reader perceives the antecedents of the pronouns this and that. Further, only when the segment is considered in relation to its paragraph does it carry the weight it should, as an indication of man's true motives and as an element of the poet's cognizance of complex human emotions.<sup>110</sup>

To weave his supracouplets, Pope also extended beyond a single couplet the syntax of one sentence or clause. In the Atticus portrait in An Epistle from Mr. Pope to Dr. Arbuthnot, the first sentence presents verbal, adjectival, and appositive descriptions with "exterior expansion" of "were-be" predication "by a highly developed 'should' element":<sup>111</sup>

Peace to all such: but were there One whose fires  
True Genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires,  
Blest with each Talent and each Art to please,

And born to write, converse, and live with ease:  
 Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,  
 Bear, like the Turk no brother near the throne,  
 View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,  
 And hate for Arts that caus'd himself to rise;  
 Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,  
 And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;  
 Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,  
 Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;  
 Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend,  
 A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend,  
 Dreading ev'n fools, by Flatterers besieg'd,  
 And so obliging that he ne'er oblig'd;  
 Like Cato, give his little Senate laws,  
 And sit attentive to his own applause;  
 While Wits and Templers ev'ry sentence raise,  
 And wonder with a foolish face of praise.  
 Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?  
 Who would not weep, if Atticus were he!  
 (ll. 193-214, Imitations of Horace, IV, pp.  
 109-11).

The "wedging" of all these thoughts into the second half of the line "Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?" emphasizes the indictment presented in the line's first half, and the following line, the last in the passage, heightens the focus and unity. The final line, which holds the unity and complexity of the indictment within one sentence, allows Pope to juggle the thought "as though he were playing with a ball."<sup>112</sup> In like manner the Sporus portrait is held together syntactically by a "figurative web," implying finally that Sporus is "always the same shocking composite of external charm and inner corruption."<sup>113</sup>

Turning to the earlier work, An Essay on Criticism, Piper sees "contradictory impulses" at work in the sequence, as they are in most great poems, but he notes that Pope gives "unobtrusive" guidance so his readers may choose "between stronger and weaker impressions," adjusting the flow of his thoughts without confusion. For example, in the line "Be niggards of Advice on no pretence" (l. 578, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, I, p. 306), a misunderstanding of the first half-line is



prevented by two elements, the pejorative connotation of niggards and the superior force of the line's end compared to the weaker power of the caesura. The reader is led not to respond to the brief command in the first half of the line but to continue to the line's end, awaiting the completed thought. Piper explains: "The reader endures the caesural prompting sceptically, doubting . . . that critics are being advised to be 'niggards' and enjoys the confirmation of this doubt."<sup>114</sup>

Further evidence of contradictory impulses, supported by the heroic couplet conventions, may be found in another couplet, also from An Essay on Criticism:

There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,  
And drinking largely sobers us again  
(ll. 217-18, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, I, pp. 264-65).

Since the caesura may fall at any one of a variety of places in the line, the reader may not at first understand with which word the adverb largely should be associated for meaning--whether the poet means "drinking largely" or "largely sobers." Piper finds "acceptable sense" either way. But most readers know that the caesura falls more often after the fifth than after the third syllable: "moreover, 'shallow draughts' in the preceding line seem to require the balance of 'drinking largely' in this one."<sup>115</sup> In addition, the word intoxicate pairs neatly with the word sobers. Thus the reader is led through syntax and caesura convention to accept the idea that "drinking largely" can bring sobriety.

Piper also comments on the importance of the caesura convention in a line in An Essay on Man referring to human inability to predict fate as compared to God's omniscience: "What future bliss, he gives not thee to know" (Epistle I, l. 93, An Essay on Man, ed. Maynard Mack, III, i,

p. 25). The caesura normally follows the fourth or the sixth syllable, and Piper finds that rhythm, sound, and inversion support both possibilities: "Thus I pause, first, with the bliss God plans to give, and then, with the understanding that I cannot beforehand know what bliss that will be."<sup>116</sup> The effect of the caesura qualifies meaning in a quatrain from the same poem:

The bliss of Man (could pride that blessing find)  
Is not to act or think beyond mankind;  
No powers of body or of soul to share,  
But what his nature and his state can bear  
(Epistle I, ll. 189-92, An Essay on Man, III, i,  
p. 38).

In the first half of the second quoted line Pope appears to be saying that men should never act or think, but the "movement through the caesura to the couplet close" which follows the relatively stronger movement through the end-line pause carries the reader through to the end of the couplet and makes certain that he understands its completed statement. If he allows his mind to dwell on the pause at the end of the first line of the second couplet, he sees mankind as almost powerless. But the "couplet prompting" as well as the satire preceding couplet's meaning thrusts him forward so that he comprehends the sort of human power to which the poet refers. Throughout the poem, such "excessive statements" create a foil for those that are more "measured."

Piper's analysis of Pope's skill with the heroic couplet, especially his success with the supracouplet, has drawn recent comment from William Edinger. Edinger calls the poetic device a "technical triumph" resulting in binding couplets together in "verse-periods of many shapes and lengths."<sup>117</sup> He notes that the second sentence of Epistle II of An Essay on Man, beginning "Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state," is a

loose "period of sixteen lines" and that the Atticus portrait in An Epistle from Mr. Pope to Dr. Arbuthnot, on which Piper commented, is a "suspended period of twenty-two lines."<sup>118</sup> But he points out that even with such refinements in Pope's day, the doom of the couplet was inherent in the form's "inescapable reliance on balance, antithesis, and the other logical schemes."<sup>119</sup> It was too analytic, a "cutting tool," unable to paint the beauty of nature or to dramatize the speech of humans in situations involving passion. Edinger quotes these comments made in 1762 by Daniel Webb:

The Latin distich, and modern couplet are the greatest levelers. There is no liberty, no continuance in their movements. Like the outline of a [novice] (Brackets are Edingers's) in drawing, they are broken, and interrupted; but, a flow of pencil is the stile of a master in this art. The couplet is formed to run into points; but, above all, it delights in the antithesis; and the art of the versifier is complete, when the discord in the ideas is proportioned to the accord in the sounds. To jar and jingle in the same breath, is a master piece of Gothic refinement.<sup>120</sup>

Edinger adds that these remarks appeared nearly forty years before the "no more disparaging" commentary of the Romanticists--Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge.

#### Pope's Rhyme and Ambiguity

Wimsatt has examined in Pope's poetry the relation of sound to the process of comprehension, of rhyme to meaning or human reasoning powers. Having found in the poetry of most other authors that the meaning of the words joined into a rhyming pair is different, and that this contrast "gives point to the likeness of sound," he investigates the value of difference in meaning between the rhyming words in Pope's lines. His thesis

is that "a greater degree of difference harmonizes with a certain type of verse structure."<sup>121</sup>

An outline of Wimsatt's categories for rhyme words based on degree of parallel or syntactically oblique relationships should be helpful. His first division includes lines of oblique syntactic relationships with rhymes of either (1) the same, or (2) different parts of speech; and his second grouping includes lines in parallel relation with rhymes of (1) the same, or (2) different parts of speech. His discussion indicates that Pope's practice is to pair either two end-words that are different parts of speech or two which are the same but have differing syntactical functions. In both situations, differences are likely to be underscored by parallel structure.

He uses these lines from The Rape of the Lock to illustrate lines of oblique relation rhyming the same part of speech, one subdivision of his first category:

What guards the purity of melting maids,  
In courtly halls, and midnight masquerades?  
(Canto I, ll. 71-72, The Rape of the Lock  
and Other Poems, II, p. 150).

In the second category, lines of parallel relation with rhymes of either the same or different parts of speech, Pope's technique is more easily noted. For example, parallels in sense between the two lines of a couplet may point up a difference in parts of speech:

The light Coquettes in Sylph's aloft repair,  
And sport and flutter in the fields of Air  
(Canto I, ll. 81-82, II, p. 151).

Or:

When Florio speaks, what Virgin could withstand,  
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her Hand?  
(Canto I, ll. 97-98, II, p. 151).

In these last two couplets, the syntax is oblique but the sense is "anti-thetic and hence parallel." The structure places "a burden of variety on the rhyme."<sup>122</sup>

Wimsatt warns that some "flatness" may result when lines in parallel relation end in rhyme words that are the same part of speech. Pope generally avoids this by creating an irregularity or incompleteness of parallel which gives oblique functions to rhyme words. Often some "deft twist or trick" is involved, as in this couplet from An Essay on Criticism:

Some are bewildered in the maze of schools,  
And some made coxcombs Nature meant but fools  
(ll. 26-27, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, I, p. 242).

This couplet presents an inversion--to schools and back to students "in a new light."

Wimsatt expands his analysis to Pope's supracouplet, finding the lines are often in parallel relation but the rhyme words are different parts of speech. His illustration is from the Atticus portrait. Parallel relation of the lines dominates most of the passage, but the parts of speech vary in the words paired for rhyme. And in these lines,

Dreading ev'n fools, by Flatterers besieged,  
And so obliging that he ne'er obliged;  
Like Cato, give his little Senate laws,  
And sit attentive to his own applause;  
(ll. 203-06, Imitations of Horace, IV,  
pp. 110-11).

Wimsatt shows that the two couplets rhyme the same parts of speech. In the first couplet of the four lines they are verbs, but one is passive and one is active. In the other couplet they are nouns, but one is plural and one is singular.

Sometimes, as he avoids flatness, Pope calls forth his resources of "piquancy." In these lines from The Rape of the Lock he finds opportunity for irony:

Th' adventurous Baron the bright lock admired;  
He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspired  
(Canto II, ll. 29-30, II, p. 159).

The difference between the verbs at the end of the lines underscores the "swift ascent of the baron's craving."<sup>123</sup>

Wimsatt asserts that Pope reaches the height of his skill in handling chiasmus. Its basis is usually a "high degree of parallel," often of antithesis, and its rhyme may involve end words of either the same or different parts of speech:

If it is of the same part, the chiasmic variation will be a special case of the 'schools'-'fools' rhyme . . . where a twist in meaning gives different functions to the rhyme words. If the rhyme is of different parts, the variation will be . . . where different parts of speech rhyme in parallel lines.<sup>124</sup>

Wimsatt's example again is from The Rape of the Lock:

Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,  
Or some frail China jar receive a flaw  
(Canto II, ll. 105-06, II, p. 164).

In the first line we encounter the breaking, then the fragile object, the nymph; in the second line we meet another fragile thing, the jar, and then its breaking, the flaw. The treatment gives the parallel a rounding-off or completeness.

A slight element of ambiguity helps create the pleasure some verse produces--a surprise developing from "incongruity or unlikelihood" in the matching of rhyme words. Wimsatt states that Pope's tendency to rhyme proper names exemplifies this principle: "What more illogical than that a proper name should rhyme with any thing? For its meaning is unique."<sup>125</sup>

He cites a couplet from An Epistle from Mr. Pope to Dr. Arbuthnot:

Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,  
 And curses Wit and Poetry, and Pope  
 (ll. 25-26, Imitations of Horace, IV,  
 p. 97).

and this one from the First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated (To Augustus):

The hero William, and the martyr Charles,  
 One knighted Blackmore, and one pension'd Quarles  
 (ll. 386-87, Imitations of Horace, IV, p. 227).

The rhyme positions of the words elope and Pope in the first couplet suggest that they have some connections, but "the joke is that we know very well" there is none. In like manner, in the second couplet, Charles did not pension Quarles, but "we are well on our way to believing" this is true before we catch the humor. Wimsatt concludes that the words of rhyme, with their "curious harmony of sound and distinction of sense, are an amalgam of the sensory and the logical, or an arrest and precipitation of the logical in sensory form."<sup>126</sup> Rhyme preserves the physical quality of words--"intellectualized and made transparent by daily prose usage," but without reason--the intellectual element in which ambiguity may be involved--"there is nothing to save and no reason why the physical element of words need be asserted."

Brower comments on the element of surprise within the lines of Pope's poetry, pointing out that they sometimes present us with a "fine excess," or parallels that "unexpectedly meet." He works with a line from An Essay on Criticism: "A little learning is a dangerous thing" (l. 215, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, I, p. 264). Learning, or knowledge, "is surely one of the most safe-guarding of things, and 'little' usually implies harmless, but when combined in a neat alliterative packet, these mild elements seem quite explosive."<sup>127</sup> The same type of

gentle deception, also discussed by Piper, is noted by Brower, who analyzes the line "To err is human, to forgive, divine" (l. 525, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, I, p. 297). Here the parallels of grammar and rhythm are congruent with our ordinary notions, but they are soon "contradicted by a word that reserves accents and values, human: divine."<sup>128</sup>

Brower further finds many possibilities for ambiguity in Pope's handling of particular words, especially nature and wit. Nature is the source of light, the "inner light of intelligence" that is able to perceive truth and to judge without distortion. It is both an "artist-designer" and an "ordering principle." It refers to the order of the cosmos where every creature, including humans, has a place in the scheme. Manipulating the word to scorn critics in An Essay on Criticism, Pope indicates that "nature" is on his side, not the side of the critics: nature has made some men fools and their duty is to remain in their ordered position.<sup>129</sup>

The poet applies the word wit to jester, critic, or poet, using ambiguities to show their relationship. Brower quotes from An Essay on Criticism this example of the poet's playful art:

In search of wit these lost their common sense,  
And then turn critics in their own defense  
(ll. 28-29, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, I, p. 242).

Brower analyzes Pope's technique:

'Wit' is being used with Pope's characteristic suppleness. Since those 'in search of wit' later 'turn critics,' it seems that they are writers or even poets. Therefore a 'wit' in general would seem to mean some sort of creative power. But since these searchers 'lost their common sense' (the inborn good sense common to all men), 'wit' means also in this context 'unnatural wit,' the extravagant ingenuities of the wit-about-town whom Pope later attacks. . . . And yet the dominant meaning here



probably is that of 'wit' as true poetic power, for Pope is certainly saying that poetry should be left alone by fools and coxcombs. In later passages of the poem, along with this sense of 'wit' as poetic power or poetry, we have 'wit' simply for a poet, whether good or bad.<sup>130</sup>

Such "shiftings and turnings," Brower states, do not confuse us because of Pope's skill in handling phrases and meter.

Both Brower and Selden discuss Pope's management of the Horatian voice, which Brower says leads to some "tight-rope walking." With calm amusement in An Essay on Criticism, Pope like Dryden chides his countrymen for their lack of art:

But we, the Britons, foreign laws despised,  
And kept unconquered and uncivilized  
(ll. 715-16, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay  
on Criticism, I, p. 323).

Such a technique when compared to the "correctness" and "pedantically detailed directions" given by the neoclassical master Boileau may be less consistent, but Brower believes it "comes much nearer to the true Horatian navigation between opposing positions."<sup>131</sup>

Selden explores ambiguity in The Rape of the Lock and in The Dunciad. In The Rape of the Lock, Pope's perfection of the Horatian voice allows him to employ some ambiguity, maintaining a middle ground between gallantry, flattery, mockery, and wit. As he portrays Belinda's over-reaction to a triviality, the poet gently mocks her world, the beau monde of Queen Anne. But such mockery borders on flattery. With the mock-heroic device Pope can judge the era and ridicule Belinda's society at the same time, showing it filled with beauty and superficiality. As Belinda prepares her toilet she appears as a goddess and "an epic hero arming for combat," but also as a "vain young lady" and a possible siren.

The combination of two approaches, heroic and mundane, provides the ambivalence.

An inversion of flattery appears also in the passage in which the gnome Umbriel goes to the Cave of the Spleen, seeking help from the goddess:

Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,  
That single act gives half the world to Spleen  
(Canto IV, ll. 77-78, The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems, II, p. 187).

Selden asserts that the delicate balance achieved here rests on the superimposition of heroic and Petrarchan exaggerations: "The former mode deflates Belinda, the latter elevates her. The result is a poetically productive ambiguity of tone."<sup>132</sup>

Pope's imagery in The Dunciad sometimes allows multiple meanings. In both classical and Miltonic epic, mist, clouds, and fog indicate divine protection or a heaven-sent covering, rendering a human invisible to his fellows. In The Dunciad, Dullness, the "Cloud-compelling Queen," views her creation through fogs "that magnify the scene" (I, ll. 79-80). Other examples of the same metaphor appear in this couplet:

O! ever gracious to perplex'd mankind  
Still spreads a healing mist before the mind  
(Book I, ll. 173-74, The Dunciad, V, p. 283).

And in these lines:

So spins the silk-worm small its slender store,  
And labours till it clouds itself all o'er  
(Book IV, ll. 253-54, The Dunciad, V, p. 369).

Pope makes similar ambiguous use of the image of lead, paralleling it to the gold of the ancient age. Dullness lives in the "new Saturnian age of Lead," and the poet employs all connotations of the metal: color, weight, "mechanical motion and its tendency to fall (bathos)."<sup>133</sup>

Dryden's and Pope's practices in the heroic couplet and their use of ambiguity to reach their separate audiences differ somewhat because of the difference in their times. Both authors comment on popular current issues, an activity typical of Augustan and Restoration poets, and reveal their views of the political scenes in some detail. Dryden's translations and satires, and Pope's Imitations show the influence of the classical voice of Juvenal and Horace; and similarities and differences indicate both poets work within the neoclassical tradition. Both men have a close relationship with Samuel Johnson: like Johnson, Dryden worked with Juvenal; and like Johnson, Pope wrote imitations.

One observation brought out in this chapter may clarify the transition from Pope to Johnson; it is Weinbrot's recent comment that despite their general title, Imitations of Horace, Pope's works modeled on this Roman poet are actually Juvenalian in tone. Weinbrot's argument is that Juvenal's attitude probably was always more in harmony with British nature than Horace's was; therefore, the appearance of strong Juvenalian elements in much British satire during the early eighteenth century should be no surprise. Weinbrot sees three stages in the changing tone of Pope's work with classical satire: first, a mainly Horatian attitude with a subdued element of Juvenal; second, a mingling of the voices of the two Roman poets; and third, a mainly Juvenalian approach. The critic believes the trend results from circumstances in the poet's life: "Many of the events and much of the direction of Pope's career and character, even before his political opposition of the 1730s, point to an un-Horatian road."<sup>134</sup> The possibility that Juvenal was the dominant strain in Pope's work points directly toward Johnson's imitations of this classical satirist.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Reuben Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion (New York, 1959), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>William Bowman Piper, The Heroic Couplet (Cleveland, 1969), p. 102.

<sup>3</sup>Piper, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup>James Sutherland, English Literature of the Late Seventeenth Century (New York, 1969), p. 155.

<sup>5</sup>Ralph Cohen, "On the Interrelationships of Eighteenth Century Literary Forms," in New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Literature (New York, 1974), p. 356. On p. 44, n. 31, Cohen quotes J. Paul Hunter's "'Peace' and the Augustans: Some Implications of Didactic Method and Literary Form," in Studies of Change and Revolution, ed. Paul Korshin (London, 1972), pp. 167, 170. Hunter asserts that almost all late Restoration and all Augustan literature was intended to bring about certain attitudes and actions concerning particular events, people, and ideas, "as well as more general loyalties." Available to readers, for example, were "judgments and mercies, spiritual autobiographies and biographies, sermons, devotional tracts, meditations upon physical objects, tracts for the times, and treatises arguing almost every conceivable philosophical, theological, or ethical issue."

<sup>6</sup>Eric Rothstein, Restoration and Eighteenth Century Poetry 1660-1780 (Boston, 1981), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Sutherland, p. 179.

<sup>8</sup>Sutherland, p. 183.

<sup>9</sup>Sutherland, p. 184.

<sup>10</sup>Piper, p. 112.

<sup>11</sup>Piper, p. 108.

<sup>12</sup>Piper, p. 105.

- <sup>13</sup>Rothstein, p. 17.
- <sup>14</sup>Rothstein, p. 17.
- <sup>15</sup>Rothstein, p. 19.
- <sup>16</sup>Brower, p. 5.
- <sup>17</sup>Brower, p. 8.
- <sup>18</sup>Raman Selden, English Verse Satire: 1590-1765 (Boston, 1978), p. 112 (hereafter cited as English Verse Satire).
- <sup>19</sup>Selden, p. 114.
- <sup>20</sup>Piper, p. 104.
- <sup>21</sup>Piper, p. 105.
- <sup>22</sup>Piper, p. 107, n. 3.
- <sup>23</sup>Piper, p. 111.
- <sup>24</sup>Piper, p. 112.
- <sup>25</sup>Gerard Manley Hopkins, A Hopkins Reader, ed. John Pick (New York, 1953), p. 164, quoted by Piper, p. 115.
- <sup>26</sup>Ruth Ann Salvaggio, "Dryden's Syntax: A Reappraisal of His Couplet Verse and His Public Poetry" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Rice University, 1979), p. 55.
- <sup>27</sup>Salvaggio, p. 70.
- <sup>28</sup>Salvaggio, p. 72.
- <sup>29</sup>Salvaggio, p. 76.
- <sup>30</sup>Salvaggio, p. 58.
- <sup>31</sup>Salvaggio, p. 58.
- <sup>32</sup>Salvaggio, p. 171.
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<sup>33</sup>Brower, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup>Salvaggio, p. 186.

<sup>35</sup>Salvaggio, p. 188.

<sup>36</sup>Selden, p. 117.

<sup>37</sup>Salvaggio, p. 211.

<sup>38</sup>Irvin Ehrenpreis, "Continuity and Coruscation: Dryden's Poetic Instincts," in John Dryden II, papers read at Clark Library Seminars, February, 1974 (Los Angeles, 1978); quoted by Salvaggio, p. 213.

<sup>39</sup>Salvaggio, p. 214.

<sup>40</sup>William Frost, Dryden and the Art of Translation (New Haven, 1955), p. 11; quoted by Salvaggio, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup>Raman Selden, "Juvenal and Restoration Modes of Translation," MLR, 68 (1973), 483; quoted by Salvaggio, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup>Salvaggio, p. 21.

<sup>43</sup>Salvaggio, p. 22.

<sup>44</sup>Salvaggio, p. 29.

<sup>45</sup>Salvaggio, pp. 41-42.

<sup>46</sup>Salvaggio, p. 36.

<sup>47</sup>Salvaggio, p. 40.

<sup>48</sup>Salvaggio, p. 41.

<sup>49</sup>William B. Willcox, The Age of Aristocracy: 1688 to 1830, 3rd ed. (Lexington, Mass., 1976), p. 72.

<sup>50</sup>Willcox, p. 72.

<sup>51</sup>W. Jackson Bate, Samuel Johnson (New York, 1977), p. 65.

<sup>52</sup>Brower, p. 163.

<sup>53</sup>Brower, p. 164.

<sup>54</sup>Brower, p. 13.

<sup>55</sup>Brower, p. 183.

<sup>56</sup>H. Weinbrot, Augustus Caesar in "Augustan" England (Princeton, 1978), p. 7 (hereafter cited as Augustus Caesar).

<sup>57</sup>Weinbrot, p. 231.

<sup>58</sup>Weinbrot, p. 234.

<sup>59</sup>W. L. MacDonald, Pope and His Critics: A Study in Eighteenth Century Personalities (Seattle, 1951), p. 3.

<sup>60</sup>MacDonald, p. 28.

<sup>61</sup>MacDonald, p. 29.

<sup>62</sup>The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. Twickenham, I, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, ed. Audra and Aubrey Williams (New Haven, 1942), II. 143-57, pp. 256-58. Unless otherwise noted, all succeeding references to Pope's work will be to various volumes of the Twickenham edition. These will be cited parenthetically by volume title, when necessary, as well as by page number.

<sup>63</sup>Rachel Trickett, The Honest Muse: A Study in Augustan Verse (Oxford, 1967), pp. 22-23.

<sup>64</sup>Trickett, Introd., p. 13.

<sup>65</sup>Rothstein, Introd., p. xi.

<sup>66</sup>Rothstein, p. 164.

<sup>67</sup>Rothstein, p. 165.

<sup>68</sup>The Augustans, ed. Maynard Mack, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1961), Introd., p. 1.

<sup>69</sup>Mack, Introd., p. 4.

<sup>70</sup>Brower, p. 284.

<sup>71</sup>Bonamy Dobrée, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century 1700-1740 (Oxford, 1959), p. 4.

<sup>72</sup>Dobrée, p. 6.

<sup>73</sup>Dobrée, p. 28.

<sup>74</sup>Dobrée, p. 29.

<sup>75</sup>William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, 3rd ed. (London, 1963), p. 125.

<sup>76</sup>John Butt, "Johnson's Practices in Poetical Imitation," in New Light on Dr. Johnson, ed. Frederick W. Hillis (New Haven, 1959), p. 24.

<sup>77</sup>Butt, p. 21.

<sup>78</sup>H. Weinbrot, Alexander Pope and the Traditions of Formal Verse Satire (Princeton, 1982), p. 123 (hereafter cited as Alexander Pope).

<sup>79</sup>Weinbrot, Alexander Pope, p. 276.

<sup>80</sup>Weinbrot, Augustus Caesar, p. 129.

<sup>81</sup>Weinbrot, Augustus Caesar, p. 131.

<sup>82</sup>Weinbrot, Augustus Caesar, p. 149.

<sup>83</sup>Weinbrot, Augustus Caesar, p. 142.

<sup>84</sup>Weinbrot, Augustus Caesar, p. 78.

<sup>85</sup>John M. Aden, "Pope and the Satiric Adversary," SEL, 2 (1962), 267-86.

<sup>86</sup>Aden, p. 272.

<sup>87</sup>Aden, p. 271.

<sup>88</sup>Aden, p. 275.



- <sup>89</sup>Selden, English Verse Satire, p. 131.
- <sup>90</sup>Selden, English Verse Satire, p. 132.
- <sup>91</sup>Selden, English Verse Satire, p. 133.
- <sup>92</sup>Brower, p. 318.
- <sup>93</sup>Weinbrot, Augustus Caesar, p. 157.
- <sup>94</sup>Aden, p. 277.
- <sup>95</sup>Aden, p. 278.
- <sup>96</sup>Weinbrot, Augustus Caesar, p. 157.
- <sup>97</sup>Weinbrot, Augustus Caesar, p. 139.
- <sup>98</sup>I. Ehrenpreis, "Personae," in Restoration and Eighteenth Century Literature, ed. Carroll Camden (Chicago, 1963), p. 29. It should be noted that on p. 30 in the Introduction to The Augustans, Maynard Mack writes that the "speaker must not be taken as identical with the historical Alexander Pope. Pope never reveals himself through the speaker, but the latter is partly a persona: he is the 'plain good man driven to write satire.'"
- <sup>99</sup>Ehrenpreis, "Personae," p. 34.
- <sup>100</sup>Ehrenpreis, "Personae," p. 29.
- <sup>101</sup>Brower, p. 255.
- <sup>102</sup>Brower, p. 257.
- <sup>103</sup>Brower, p. 258.
- <sup>104</sup>Peter Dixon, The World of Pope's Satire (London, 1968), p. 94.
- <sup>105</sup>Empson, p. 125.
- <sup>106</sup>Empson, p. 126.
- <sup>107</sup>Empson, p. 150.

<sup>108</sup>Piper, pp. 132-33.

<sup>109</sup>Piper, p. 133.

<sup>110</sup>Piper, p. 134.

<sup>111</sup>Piper, p. 134.

<sup>112</sup>Piper, p. 134.

<sup>113</sup>Piper, p. 135.

<sup>114</sup>William Bowman Piper, "Verbal Sequence as an Index to the Style of Milton, and the Style of Pope," paper read at the meeting of the American Association for Eighteenth Century Studies, Houston, Texas, March, 1981, p. 7 (hereafter cited as "Verbal Sequence").

<sup>115</sup>Piper, "Verbal Sequence," p. 8.

<sup>116</sup>Piper, "Verbal Sequence," p. 8.

<sup>117</sup>William Edinger, "The 'French School' in Eighteenth-Century England: Some Critical Reactions Against Pope and Their Implications," paper read at the meeting of the American Association for Eighteenth Century Studies, Houston, Texas, March, 1981, p. 11.

<sup>118</sup>Edinger, p. 12.

<sup>119</sup>Edinger, p. 12.

<sup>120</sup>Daniel Webb, quoted by Edinger, p. 12.

<sup>121</sup>W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., "One Relation of Rhyme to Reason: Alexander Pope," MLQ, 5 (September, 1944), 327.

<sup>122</sup>Wimsatt, p. 330.

<sup>123</sup>Wimsatt, p. 329.

<sup>124</sup>Wimsatt, p. 333.

<sup>125</sup>Wimsatt, p. 335.

<sup>126</sup>Wimsatt, p. 337.

<sup>127</sup>Brower, p. 193.

<sup>128</sup>Brower, p. 193.

<sup>129</sup>Brower, p. 199.

<sup>130</sup>Brower, p. 199.

<sup>131</sup>Brower, p. 193.

<sup>132</sup>Selden, English Verse Satire, p. 132.

<sup>133</sup>Selden, English Verse Satire, p. 141.

<sup>134</sup>Weinbrot, Alexander Pope, p. 141.

## CHAPTER IV

### LONDON AND THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES

Johnson's poems, which he wrote throughout his life from his school days until his death, range from rigid neoclassicism to lyricism; E. L. McAdam and George Milne describe them as satirical, didactic, and reflective.<sup>1</sup> His first efforts were probably exercises, translations of Horace, Homer, and Virgil, along with some original verse. As an adult he found occasions that inspired him to write extemporaneous and humorous poetry. He continued to translate the classics, often just to amuse himself, working with favorite passages such as Hector's farewell to Andromache from Homer's Iliad, epigrams from the Greek Anthology, and sections of Euripides' Medea. McAdam and Milne believe his imitations of Juvenal merit highest praise among all his poetic works.<sup>2</sup> Johnson also wrote prologues to plays; he completed six prologues and one epilogue, all in the heroic couplet. Some were delivered on stage by his friend David Garrick. However, most of the epitaphs, elegies, personal satires, and occasional poems were written in other forms. McAdam and Milne state that among these the epitaphs for Phillips and Hogarth and the elegy for Dr. Levett best show Johnson's ability, and the personal satire "A Short Song of Congratulation" is of "first excellence in its field."<sup>3</sup>

Johnson's imitations of Juvenal are London, based on the Third Satire, and The Vanity of Human Wishes, modeled after the Tenth Satire. About one-third of the first draft of London and all of the first draft

of The Vanity of Human Wishes are in the Hyde collection. Analysis of the two works should determine whether Johnson developed as a poet during the decade between their publications and whether his major devices are typical mainly of his own work or are likely to be inherent in any good heroic couplet verse. Ruth Salvaggio has proved that Dryden employed syntactical ambiguity to present the multiple arguments that help particularly his satire Absalom and Achitophel to reach a wide audience. She explains the poet's techniques:

Syntactical structures, reinforced by the meter and rhetoric of the verse, isolate and define . . . arguments, and thus allow for a variety of perspectives which are continually shaped by the way Dryden directs our responses to them. In other words, the poem presents its reader with a variety of political options which are defined by the ambiguous syntax of the verse.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, each of the great heroic couplet poets, Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, manipulated devices with different goals in mind to reach different audiences.

Johnson's London is generally considered inferior to The Vanity of Human Wishes; critics during the past one hundred and fifty years have continuously voiced disappointment in it despite the fact that London was acclaimed in the author's time--was, in fact, Johnson's first striking success in the field of literature. Meanwhile, The Vanity of Human Wishes has gained ground in critical opinion. It is unfair, however, to consider the poems as companion works. True, both are imitations, Johnson's only efforts in this genre. But London is the work of a young man eager to break into public consciousness, and The Vanity of Human Wishes is the product of a mature thinker and established writer. The purpose of London was to earn money and literary fame; the purpose of the later poem was to put into English poetry some deeply felt responses to Juvenal's observations on the dilemma of all mankind, though Johnson of course

expected it to increase his fortune as well as his literary reputation. Critics who do make general comparisons of the two works have stated one point relevant to this discussion, that the language in London, lacks the power to project two or more references or several kinds of connotations that expand the complexity and enhance the richness of texture in most great poetry. For example, Walter Jackson Bate, a recent biographer of Johnson and a major Johnsonian scholar, writes that London does not have "the unique condensation of phrase of the later poem, or for that matter of the major prose" of Johnson.<sup>5</sup> An examination of the amount of ambiguity in each poem may provide at least a partial answer. For the moment it is fair to assume that Johnson in a sense was trying his wings with London and that in the later poem he could use widely the techniques he had already mastered and explore possibilities in devices he had not earlier learned to manage with precision.

One general source of ambiguity in both poems is Johnson's particular handling of the heroic couplet conventions. This manipulation influences some of the specialized sources of ambiguity such as the effectiveness of rhetorical devices and operation of syntax. William Bowman Piper shows that Johnson organizes his ideas into groups of heroic couplets, adding meaning to his verse paragraphs by the manner in which he fits their various subdivision together. Piper explains how this practice relates to ambiguity:

Each new segment is developed in its own fashion, and each one commonly is related to the material following it in a somewhat different light from that in which it was introduced. This variety in their forms and their relationships augments the weight, the relevance of each segment and gives the passage as a whole a thickness of discursive texture.<sup>6</sup>

Piper adds, however, that Johnson's couplets lack Pope's perfect parallelism, for sometimes Johnson shifts from singular to plural, from one subject to another, or from abstractions to concrete forms. He rarely uses enjambement, and the second line of his couplet tends to be anticlimactic. His imagery may extend through several lines or even an entire verse.

The specialized sources of ambiguity in both London and The Vanity of Human Wishes are abstractions; the deployment of rhetorical devices including the repeated use of individual words in the same or different form throughout the work, a practice not often seen as a device of rhetoric but one which is actually an expansion of the classical pattern of *repetitio*; the operation of English syntax; the multiple meanings of particular words; and the association of both denotations and connotations of various words to form a superstructure of broadened meanings, a technique noted by Maynard Mack in the poetry of Pope. Mack writes that Pope's images rely heavily on the normal and traditional associations that cling to certain English words:

Pope's images . . . take the ordinary established relationships of, say . . . parent and child . . . body and beauty, and with delicate readjustment, freshen and fortify their implications.<sup>7</sup>

First, the heavy use of abstractions is a quality of Johnson's style noted even in his own time. This tendency, of course, opposes the current practice of emphasizing the particular. But in Johnson's day, as James T. Boulton shows, classically based words, from which many English abstractions developed, were welcomed by most readers.<sup>8</sup> Boulton writes that between 1756 and 1802, critics such as Anna Seward, George Gleig in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1798), and Alexander Chalmers in

British Essays (1802) agreed "that . . . Johnson had . . . enriched . . . style, achieving vigor and elegance."<sup>9</sup> Our special concern is that such abstractions, although they are more difficult to comprehend quickly, offer greater possibilities for multiple meanings than do concrete terms. Definitions of abstract words are sometimes nebulous; individual readers may interpret in many different ways such words as grief and fondness which appear in the first line of London. Furthermore, many readers may apply personal interpretations to terms like truth, worth, and poverty in the famous couplet in London:

This mournful truth is every where confessed,  
Slow rises worth, by poverty depress'd  
(ll. 176-77).

Thus ambiguity can stem from the great range of meanings most generalizations imply.

The personification of abstractions in the eighteenth century, Chester F. Chapin explains, is of two kinds: "a type which approaches the nature of allegory and a type which shows certain of the characteristics of metaphor."<sup>10</sup> Chapin believes Johnson's abstractions come "nearer to metaphor."<sup>11</sup> In general, he believes eighteenth-century personifications gave "truly imaginative expression to elements of thought and feeling which reflect that firm sense of actuality," one of the major virtues of an educated mind.<sup>12</sup> Abstractions are often capitalized in eighteenth-century poetry, but given the period's lack of standard practice with capital letters, capitalization no doubt often resulted from a decision by the printer. At any rate, whether capitalized or not, general terms with their wealth of reverberations of meanings touching both the abstract and the concrete can force Johnson's audience to turn their thoughts at least temporarily toward the unseen and permit each reader



to shape the poem's message through his own experience. Rachel Trickett points out that rather than revealing a "frigid insincerity," Johnson's abstractions add to his tone of formality and expertness. In their presentation of a serious attitude toward life, they weld a common bond with readers.<sup>13</sup>

In both of his imitations Johnson energizes abstractions by pairing them in an unusual manner with adjectives or verbs. Bate believes this technique is more than mere personification:

He [Johnson] embodies the depth of his responses to abstractions. In other words, both the typically Johnsonian element and the powerful effectiveness of such phrases lie in the extent to which Johnson absorbed these abstractions as concrete realities or presences . . . he transformed what ordinarily remain abstract into something concretely pictured and felt. . . . The dynamics of Johnson's style certainly involved the transmuting of the abstract into the concrete, but this does not imply that the craving for concrete purchase and impression was less strong than the need and instinctive clutch for the stability of generalization. In fact, the two tendencies were equally powerful, and were locked in productive conflict.<sup>14</sup>

Not only the verbs that accompany Johnson's abstract nouns but also the adjectives that modify his generalized nouns add to the ambiguity of his verse. Bate believes that even if they are lifted from context, they are rich in emotional reverberations. Like other eighteenth-century writers Johnson projects a declamatory style, but according to Bate his poetry's texture is "active, varying, and unpredictable, one that compels close attention and constant adjustment of feeling."<sup>15</sup>

Johnson's rhetorical figures, which are typical of his period, of the heroic couplet, and of classical satire, are the second factor in ambiguity in his verse. Analysis of individual lines and couplets will show the connection of rhetorical devices and expanded or intensified meaning. Such patterns also embellish Juvenal's writings. There is

evidence that Johnson did give attention to Juvenal's rhetorical patterns, not always borrowing the Roman poet's major device, but perhaps taking a secondary one and converting it to a major one. In London, where the techniques appear more extensively than they do in the later poem, many such figures involve verbs, and others are based on the shape or length of clauses or the relation of the clauses to the main parts of sentences. In his imitation of the Third Satire, Johnson frequently opens his verse paragraphs with rhetorical questions, and he sometimes closes with patterns in which the second half of the poetic line reverses the first half. Examples of these devices are plentiful in both of the Juvenalian originals. Commenting on Juvenal's effectiveness, Michael Coffey points out that the Latin satirist employs repetition of certain words at the beginning of clauses or phrases to question his hearers "with inescapable insistence."<sup>16</sup> William S. Anderson finds that sharp antithesis and sardonic personification are features of Juvenal's writings and classifies them as elements of assertion.<sup>17</sup> Ulrich Knoche notes the resounding terseness of some of Juvenal's turns of phrase in the Tenth Satire, for example mens sana in corpore sano: "a healthy mind in a healthy body."<sup>18</sup> G. G. Ramsay believes that the Tenth Satire "has all the merits of a full-blown rhetorical declamation."<sup>19</sup>

The commonly recognized rhetorical techniques in both of Johnson's poems are alliteration, apostrophe, antithesis, ellipsis, onomatopoeia, and repetitio. One form of repetitio is the repeating of certain key words in various verse paragraphs to interlock sections. For example, the word jest appears in London five times in different forms or as different parts of speech; the word smile, six times, and fate and prey, four each, most often in positions of strong emphasis in the heroic

couplet either just before the caesura or at the end of the line or couplet. The more obscure devices Johnson uses, as defined by Richard A. Lanham, include anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses or verses; asyndeton, omission of conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses; compar, the balancing of two clauses of equal length; conduplicatio, repetition of a word or words in succeeding clauses for amplification or for showing emotion; diazeugma, one subject with many verbs; disjunctio, conclusion of each of a series of propositions with its own verb; enallage, substitution of one case, person, gender, number, tense, mood, or part of speech for another; epiplexis, asking questions to reproach or upbraid rather than to elicit information; erotesis, rhetorical questions implying a strong affirmation or denial; hypotaxis, an arrangement of clauses or phrases in a dependent or subordinate relationship; multiclinalum, repetition of words from the same root but with different endings; parison, long phrases or clauses in parallel construction sometimes with similar sounds in similar places in the parallel phrases or clauses; prozeugma, expression of the verb in the first of a series of clauses but allowing the verb to be merely understood in others; oxymoron, a paradoxical saying; ratiocinatio, calm reasoning; synecdoche, substitution of a part for a whole, genus for species, or vice versa; tmesis, repetition of a word with one or a few words in between; and zeugma, which occurs when one verb governs several congruent words or clauses, each in a different way. One final term, chiasmus, requires both definition and example. Lanham explains that the term is derived from the Greek letter χ (chi), "whose shape, if the two halves of the construction are rendered in separate verses, it resembles." The principle is that the order of one clause or phrase is

reversed in another. His example,

Polish'd in courts, and harden'd in the field  
Renown'd for conquest, and in council skill'd,

is from "The Campaign" by Addison.<sup>20</sup> Some of Johnson's lines, of course, illustrate more than one type of word arrangement or thoughtful approach. Choices for discussion will depend upon the contribution of a particular figure to the poem's meaning.

A third source of ambiguity in Johnson's verse derives from the operation of English syntax. Salvaggio explains the influence of syntax on meaning:

Syntactic ambivalence and ambiguity can . . . affect poetic technique because of the ways they work together with the metrics of the line and couplet and the various devices of rhetoric. Furthermore such ambiguity can be described in precise grammatical terms; for instance, words, phrases, and clauses can modify more than one noun, verbs may have more than one subject, parallel syntactic structures may enforce an important semantic relationship between two lines of verse. And as the ambiguity affects technique, it in turn affects the meaning of the verse: by suggesting more than one verbal sequence, the meaning of a segment of verse can be read . . . in a different context. When this happens, the meaning takes on new dimensions and thus becomes increasingly complex, but still within a very ordered framework, so that the ambiguity finally enforces precise discriminations.<sup>21</sup>

A fourth major source of ambiguity is the single word which may suggest several appropriate meanings. William Empson points out that choosing words with multiple meanings allowed many eighteenth-century poets to achieve compression, contracting several ideas into one sentence. Among the Augustan writers, including Johnson, the chosen word was "usually a verb precisely because the process is conceived as an activity, as a work of a digesting and controlling mind."<sup>23</sup>

The final element of ambiguity to be examined in this discussion is the association of denotations and connotations of various words

throughout the poem to form a network of expanded implications and in some cases to create or fortify metaphors as well. By selecting words whose reverberations overlap, the poet can build a superstructure of added meaning.

Although the same sources of ambiguity appear in both of Johnson's poems, some differences are apparent in his method and in his skill in handling techniques. First, abstractions are more declamatory in London than in The Vanity of Human Wishes. Next, manipulation of rhetorical arrangements is fairly obvious in London, seeming to indicate that Johnson is vigorously practicing the deployment of classical patterns, but in The Vanity of Human Wishes the poet uses such devices selectively. Third, the operation of syntax is a minor tool in London, but a major one in the later poem. Fourth, although many words do project multiple meanings in London, the diction in The Vanity of Human Wishes is richer in such possibilities. The major difference arises from association of denotations and connotations of various words. This element is limited in London, but richly employed in the later poem.

London was published in 1738 without the author's name. Welcomed as an attack on Prime Minister Robert Walpole, it was an immediate success; three more editions appeared within a year. McAdam calls the poem "a young man's bid for fame,"<sup>23</sup> and fame it earned, for Pope praised it and stated that the author's identity would soon be known. In accord with the practice of the time, Johnson directed his printer Edward Cave, publisher of The Gentleman's Magazine, to place corresponding passages from the original Latin at the bottom of the page so that readers could compare the two works and note adaptations of Juvenal's views to situations and persons in eighteenth-century England.

Summaries of London and its model will point up Johnson's method of adapting the original. Juvenal's Third Satire, which Ramsay considers "his best, from an artistic point of view,"<sup>24</sup> gives a thorough survey of Rome, emphasizing a personal and private view of the city, Juvenal describes Rome's sights and sounds, evidence of luxury and meanness, elaborate social customs, and contrasts between rich and poor. The Latin poet's persona is Umbricius, a plebian crushed under the restrictions and insults that Rome's wealthy heap upon the unfortunate. He addresses the poet, confiding that he is leaving Rome because he can no longer suffer the miseries and indignities of poverty in the capital. After announcing that he is moving to Cumae, a pleasant rural retreat upon a lovely shore, Umbricius lists the evil practices of Roman fortune-hunters but states that his own conscience will not allow him to stoop to such means of sustaining himself. He points out how Greeks have invaded Rome and by duplicity and fawning have mastered many upper-class Romans, while poverty-stricken natives are ridiculed and physically attacked. He describes the ruffians, thieves, and arsonists who plague the noisy city that he is deserting for his pastoral bower, where he will raise a small garden and live in peace and safety. In the end, he promises the satirist that if Juvenal ever retires from Rome to Aquinum, the poet's birthplace, he will visit him there and listen to his satires if he and his neighbors think him worthy of the honor.

Johnson follows Juvenal's sequence of topics, but differs from him mainly in his examination of contemporary English politics as he shapes the poem into an attack on Walpole's policies. He replaces Juvenal's Umbricius with Thales, named for a Greek philosopher. At the poem's beginning, Thales, a "true Briton" immersed in the nation's past glories,

is boarding a boat for Wales. Speaking to an unnamed friend, Thales sets forth all the incidents of danger and decadence he has observed in London. He attacks the thieves, arsonists, and preying lawyers who roam the streets, but in addition, he condemns contemporary government actions such as Britain's Licensing Act, the money-raising committees, Parliament's acceptance of Spanish inspection of British ships, and profiteering from wars on the Continent. In the end, he promises that if his friend ever tires of London, he will help him write satire about the city.

Some ambiguity appears in the opposing attitudes of critics toward London. Early criticism, of course, precedes the notion of persona or dramatic speaker. Boswell reports that one of the poem's earliest patrons was General Oglethorpe, a man "as remarkable for his learning as for his taste."<sup>25</sup> When Pope first read Johnson's poem, he "requested Mr. Richardson, son of the Painter [Jonathan Richardson] to endeavour to find out who this new author was." According to Boswell, when the younger Richardson reported that the poet was unknown, Pope said, "He will soon be deterré."<sup>26</sup> Boulton states that early in 1748 Thomas Gray wrote to Walpole: "'London is to me one of those imitations, that have all the ease and spirit of the original.'"<sup>27</sup> Goldsmith wrote this headnote for the poem in his collection titled The Beauties of English Poesy (1767): "This poem of Mr. Johnson's is the best imitation of the original that has appeared in our language, being possessed of all the force and satirical resentment of Juvenal."<sup>28</sup> William Mudford, journalist and editor of John Bull, in 1802 accused Johnson of "manifest tautology" in some of London, citing certain lines previously criticized by William Shaw. Mudford also declared that the poem's final line was "weak."<sup>29</sup> He

points out, however, that the description of the city is "just."

Some later critical opinion centers on the poet's sincerity or insincerity. Although he praises the poem, T. S. Eliot believes that Johnson feigned his indignation for the city and probably exaggerated the perils of London.<sup>30</sup> Other scholars have pointed out that contemporaries such as Boswell, Garrick, Joseph Warton, Percival Stockdale, and Nathan Drake never raised the question of Johnson's sincerity, and that the poet's later writings never contradicted the political opinions in London despite Johnson's well-known statement, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life, for there is in London all that life can afford."<sup>31</sup>

But the author's sincerity or insincerity is irrelevant in rhetorical considerations. Johnson wrote a conventional poem with a pastoral theme on a subject that had immediate popular appeal; he used a form that was a general favorite and he had to conform to its conventions. (Pope's satire One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty-Eight appeared during the same week as London did.) In writing satire, Johnson was almost forced to affect disgust. Donald J. Greene believes that in the genre he chose, Johnson could not avoid some criticism of London:

If you are going to write satire, you must find something to satirize. Since satire was fashionable . . . every budding poet, whatever his politics, wrote satire and found the state of England deplorable.<sup>32</sup>

Paul Fussell explains that what Johnson was attempting in London was "turning a penny and bidding for reputation by providing readers with something familiar and yet just slightly novel."<sup>33</sup> The sincerity question also interests another critic, Joseph Wood Krutch, who observes that Johnson was not really convinced that the British people were enslaved, that rural life was superior to city life, or that wealth was



undermining English character, so the opinions in London are not truly the poet's.<sup>34</sup> John Wain, a recent biographer of the poet, defends Johnson's sincerity on the basis of the text of London. He sees a duality in the poem, a welding of two attitudes, a double nature "true to its author."<sup>35</sup> As an imitation of Juvenal, London had to be hostile to city life. At the time of the writing, the twenty-nine-year-old Johnson had lived in England's largest city only a few months and had been away from his home town of Lichfield only three years. Wain speculates that the poet was probably amazed at London's corruption and confusion and without doubt experienced periods when he was repelled by the metropolis. Such moods would fit his emphatic verse as well as Juvenal's attitudes. Yet, Wain explains, on another level the poem's tone is one of acceptance:

In strategy, in the nature of its art, it is metropolitan. It signals an acceptance of the values of eighteenth-century civilization at their most urbane and sophisticated. It reminds us that Juvenal himself had no intention of living anywhere but in the Rome he thrashed so hard. In this dual nature the poem is true to its author. Johnson always saw London as a heartless city, where those who fell were trampled without mercy. At the same time he always accepted it at the level of intellect and art.<sup>36</sup>

Wain contends that Johnson never gave up his belief in London as such a center; thus his poem, though satiric on one level, at the same time supports London culture on another level. Most readers are aware that satirists often attack because they sense that the object of the satire fails to live up to what they see as full potential. For example, such a theory is applicable to Swift's satire, especially to Gulliver's Travels, for the author loves the individual man, even Gulliver himself, despite his flaws and errors. Whatever their background may be, the two levels of London, satiric and supportive, may also reflect Johnson's

intention to reach the city's vast readership. Johnson himself appears to admit that one portion of his poem may be overdone. McAdam and Milne, editors of Johnson's poetry, record a note in the poet's manuscript concerning a comment by Charles Hitch, publisher of the Dictionary, about the poem's section on fires: "This was by Hitch a Bookseller justly remarked to be no picture of modern manners, though it might be true at Rome."<sup>37</sup>

Since the poem satirizes politics and since one convention of the imitation is the rise of modern examples parallel to those in the original, some knowledge of contemporary politics is necessary. Analysis of Pope's satires has shown that almost every Londoner belonged to some faction and that such factions felt little sense of community. Opposition to Walpole had been building over the years. England was verging on war with Spain and in 1731 did enter the War of Jenkins' Ear, which eventually became one of the factors toppling Walpole. As to the poet's relation to politics, Johnson is believed to have spent much time during the period with Richard Savage, a man whose extreme statements and loose habits forced him to leave London in 1739 and who Wain says encouraged Johnson to view Walpole's administration as a threat. Some contemporaries of Johnson asserted that Savage was the model for Thales--Savage, like Thales, did retreat to Wales--but McAdam and Milne note that there is no evidence Savage considered leaving London until months after the poem appeared.<sup>38</sup> Bate suggests that the likeliest answer to this question is given by James Clifford: "While writing the poem Johnson heard of Savage's intention to leave for Wales, and incorporated it into his conception of Thales."<sup>39</sup>

The first two major elements of ambiguity to be examined in

Johnson's London are abstractions and classical rhetorical patterns. As some of the other elements do, these two sources of ambiguity often blend. An example is the poem's first line, "Tho' grief and fondness in my breast rebel," in which the abstract nouns are presented in antithesis. Thus it will be feasible to consider simultaneously these two elements, abstractions and rhetorical patterns, and perhaps, later, others as well. Since rhetorical techniques are a classical device, excerpts of the Third Satire will be quoted to facilitate comparisons between the styles of Juvenal and Johnson.

Antithesis appears in several other instances in the opening paragraphs of both the original and the imitation. Charles Witke sees four pairings of antithetical ideas within the first section of the Latin poem (ll. 1-9): Cumae, Umbricius' place of "sweet retreat" versus the Suburra, Rome's noisiest quarter; leisure versus danger; country versus city; and the pleasant versus the unpleasant.<sup>40</sup> The original Latin, the translation by Rolfe Humphries, and Johnson's corresponding section are reproduced:

Quamvis digressu veteris confusus amici  
 laudo tamen, vacuis quod sedem figere Cumis  
 destinet atque unum civem donare Sibyllae  
 ianua Baiarum est et gratum litus amoeni  
 secessus. ego vel Prochytam praepono Suburrae. 5  
 nam quid tam miserum, tam solum vidimus, ut non  
 deterius credas horrere incendia, lapsus  
 tectorum assiduos ac mille pericula saevae  
 urbis et Augusto recitantes mense poetas? (ll. 1-9).

(Troubled because my old friend is going, I still must  
 commend him)

For his decision to settle down in the ghost town of Cumae,  
 Giving the Sibyl one citizen more. That's the gateway to  
 Baiae

There, a pleasant shore, a delightful retreat. I'd prefer  
 Even a barren rock in that bay to the brawl of Suburrae. 5  
 Where have we ever seen a place so dismal and lonely?

We'd not be better off there, than afraid, as we are here,  
of fires,  
Roofs caving in, and the thousand risks of this terrible city  
Where the poets recite all through the dog days of August?  
(11. 1-9).

In Johnson's opening, antithesis is evident between London and Wales,  
vice and purity, friendship and solitude, and the pleasant and the  
unpleasant:

Tho' grief and fondness in my breast rebel,  
When injur'd Thales bids the town farewell,  
Yet still my calmer thoughts his choice commend,  
I praise the hermit, but regret the friend,  
Resolved at length, from vice and London far, 5  
To breathe in distant fields a purer air,  
And, fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,  
Give to St. David one true Briton more  
(11. 1-8).

This beginning section of the poem is one long sentence consisting of a  
dependent clause at the opening, the main clause in the center, and  
long modifying phrases filling the last four lines. Johnson couches  
his opposing ideas in grammatical parallels of antithesis so we find  
not only the "grief" and "fondness," noted earlier in line 1, but also  
"praise" and "regret" as well as the "hermit" and the "friend" in line 4,  
all in antithesis. Johnson's particular placement of two nouns in line  
1 and his balanced half-lines in line 4, both instances of antithesis,  
sharpen his contrast and deepen our sense of the turmoil in the speak-  
er's "breast." Further, the counter-activity in these nouns and verbs  
injects vigor into the poem's beginning. By their abstraction, the  
terms grief and fondness encourage varying resonances of meaning for  
individual readers, and by their multiple denotations permit more than  
one plausible meaning. Grief may be either a mental suffering or a mis-  
hap; we may see the departure of "injur'd" Thales as either bereavement  
or a physical act in his boarding of the boat and pushing off from

London's shore. The verb rebel increases ambiguity since we are uncertain whether both emotions, "grief" and "fondness," rebel against the situation, or the two feelings rebel against each other within the speaker. In the second line we are unaware whether Thales has been "injur'd" mentally or physically; the poem later deals with both possibilities. In line 3, the word still adds to complexity of meaning. Although it is an adverb here meaning continuously or until the moment at hand, one denotation of it as an adjective associates it with "calmer thoughts." Further, the word thoughts may mean either reflections or meditation, or it may take the meaning of sorrows listed in the Oxford English Dictionary as current in the seventeenth century, for Johnson would have been acquainted with this denotation. In line 4, "I praise the hermit, but regret the friend," double meanings are associated with regret, which according to the OED meant in Johnson's time to mourn the loss of or to be keenly sorry for; thus we may perceive that the friend will miss Thales, but also that he pities him because the city's decadence and its residents' insults have forced him to depart. Multiple meanings also arise in line 5, "Resolved at length, from vice and London far." The participle resolved not only means determined or decided, its major implication here, but also loosened, untied, or dissolved; thus Thales has settled his future and also broken his connection with the city. In the second half of line 5, "from vice and London far," the preposition from and the adverb far appear to pertain both to the abstraction vice and to the particular place London, where the vice occurs. Finally, the phrase at length works backwards and forwards in syntax, modifying Resolved to prolong the time Thales has spent weighing his decision, and fortifying far to indicate a great distance from the

city. In their association with distant, the influence of at length and far carries over to line 6, "To breathe in distant fields a purer air," a Vergilian echo. In the same line, the two denotations of purer increase richness, and all the shades of meaning become applicable. The adjective pure can mean stainless or free from taint or physical pollution, and it can also mean innocent, guiltless, or lacking moral defilement. In the paragraph's final couplet,

And fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,  
Give to St. David one true Briton more,

the verb fix'd, which echoes Juvenal's figere Cumis, "to fix [his home] at Cumae," has several meanings: to settle or place definitely, to make firm or steadfast, or to give a permanent form. All of these apply to Thales' choice of Cambria's shore, which is "solitary" both in the sense of Thales' life as a hermit and of its distance from London and its seclusion in the "fields." The verse paragraph's last line tells us that St. David, patron saint of the Welsh, will receive "one true Briton more," and Johnson draws on all denotations of true: loyal to one's country, honest and upright, and not in error. The word more, in the position of greatest emphasis in the final couplet, hangs in the reader's mind and implies that other Londoners, equally disgusted, have fled.

In his second section Johnson compares the dangers of London to the peace of Ireland and Scotland, using rhetorical figures to invigorate his comment:

For who would leave, unbrib'd, Hibernia's land,  
Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand? 5  
There none are swept by sudden fate away,  
But all whom hunger spares, with age decay:  
Here malice, rapine, accident conspire,  
And now a rabble rages, now a fire;  
Their ambush here relentless ruffians lay, 15  
And here the fell attorney prowls for prey;

Here falling houses thunder on your head,  
And here a female atheist talks you dead (11. 9-18).

In this section Johnson continues to employ ideas from Juvenal's first paragraph. Johnson's opening couplet uses erotesis, a question implying a strong denial:

For who would leave, unbrib'd, Hibernia's land,  
Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand?  
(11. 9-10).

Inversions mark rhyming words in the second couplet, lending them force:

There none are swept by sudden fate away,  
But all whom hunger spares, with age decay  
(11. 11-12).

In the rest of the passage three other rhetorical patterns intensify meaning and stress important words. In line 13, "Here malice, rapine, accident, conspire," omission of conjunctions forms the device of asyndeton to add to the reader's sense of evil being stacked upon evil as he reads through the series: "malice," "Rapine," "accident." In the rhetorical pattern of zeugma, the use of one verb to govern congruent words in different ways, the word rages in the next line lends a sense of violence and intensity to both its subjects, rabble and fire, which are paired with two meanings of rage here: to rave or be fierce or frenzied, and to prevail beyond control. Anaphora, the repetition of the same word at the beginning of phrases or clauses, appears with the word now in the same line, convincing the reader that calamities like riots and fires are almost simultaneous in the city and that the public is helpless in the face of constant danger. Another such pattern occurs in the five "Here" clauses throughout the verse paragraph. In the wide range of dangers and harassments, from accident and robbery to female speech-making, and with the repetition of here and now, the reader feels almost as though he is following an orator's gestures as he points to various

sections of the city as scenes of depravity.

Other ambiguous elements appear in the passage. First, abstractions dominate the first half except in the initial couplet, and the adjectives and verbs that accompany these abstract terms create intense imagery.

"Fate" is called "sudden," emphasizing the human helplessness the rhetorical techniques also imply. Hunger is said to "spare" some victims, and we picture a break in the relentless toll of the starving. Age is said to "decay," bringing images of withering flesh or disfiguring disease.

Next, multiple denotations and special connotations are also a factor in ambiguity. Lines 9-10 ask who would "change" or exchange Scotland's "rocks," which can mean either its promontories or its stony soil, for the Strand in London, or who would leave the "land," either the realm or domain, or the rural or country areas, of Ireland for the English metropolis. The verb swept in the next line implies that fate brushes away people as though they are of no importance, and anticipates Thales' complaint that he is ignored and insulted in London. "Malice," "rapine," and "accident" are said now to "conspire." In the second line of the couplet the opening words And now hint that riots and fires may indeed be the result of a conspiracy of such elements. One of the meanings of fell is savage and brutish, and prowl and prey have obvious animal references; combination of connotations of all three words approaches animal imagery. In the final couplet, Johnson's first line reflects lines 7 and 8 in Juvenal:

ut non  
deterius credas horrere incendia, lapsus  
tectorum assiduos (ll. 6-8)

(We'd not be better off there, than afraid, as we  
are here, of fires,  
Roofs caving in" (ll. 7-8),



and the second, the poet's personal animosity toward women who preach. The word talks has pejorative implications in the final line, "And here a female atheist talks you dead" (l. 18); it can mean to speak idly or incessantly, or to chatter or prate. Dead can mean devoid of energy, bereft of sensation, or barren or sterile.

A short paragraph describes how Thales and his friend stand at Greenwich awaiting Thales' boat and remembering Britain's past glories. The "wherry," a narrow river vessel, is bring the "remains" of Thales' "dissipated wealth," and since dissipated can mean either scattered and driven off or squandered, we wonder if Thales ever was a rich man, for Umbricius never was, and whether his fortune was taken from him by thieves or politicians or wasted by the speaker himself. The rhetorical pattern of diazeugma, one subject with many verbs, holds the thought together in the long clause and leads the action to a climax in lines 23-28:

Struck with the seat that gave Eliza birth,  
 We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth,  
 In pleasing dreams the blissful age renew, 25  
 And call Britannia's glories back to view;  
 Behold her cross triumphant on the main,  
 The guard of commerce, and the dread of Spain  
 (ll. 23-28).

Here the subject "we" governs five verbs: kneel, kiss, renew, call, and behold, which lead us from the honor paid to Queen Elizabeth's birthplace, through abstractions like blissful age and glories, to a concrete symbol of England's recent past, her "cross triumphant" on the "main," which denotes the open sea.

In the final couplet,

Ere masquerades debauch'd, excise oppress'd,  
 Or English honour grew a standing jest (ll. 29-30),

the vigorously bitter second line gives impetus to the couplet's thought. The phrase standing jest echoes stood in line 21, "in silent thought we stood." Connotations of the related words stood and standing mingle until the two men standing on the Thames bank remembering their country's former power begin to share its present humiliation.

Lines 31-34 are a transition into "Indignant" Thales' speech; with words such as transient, calm, lull, sense, and awaking, they amplify references in the preceding section (ll. 23-28) to "pleasing dreams" and backward "view":

A transient calm the happy scenes bestow,  
And for a moment lull the sense of woe.  
At length awaking, with contemptuous frown,  
Indignant Thales eyes the neighboring town  
(ll. 31-34).

Juvenal's next verse paragraph describes Umbricius' poverty and old age:

Hic tunc Umbricius "quando artibus," inquit, "honestis,"  
nullus in urbe locus, nulla emolumenta laborum,  
deteret exiguis aliquid, proponimus illuc  
ire, fatigatas ubi Daedalus exiit alas 25  
dum nova canities, dum prima et recta senectus,  
dum superest Lachesi quod torqueat et pedibus me  
porto meis nullo dextram subeunte bacillo (ll. 21-28).

(Umbricius has much on his mind. "Since there's no place  
in the city,"  
He says, "For an honest man, and no reward for his  
labors,  
Since I have less today than yesterday, since by tomorrow  
That will have dwindled still more, I have made my  
decision. I'm going  
To the place where, I've heard, Daedalus put off his  
wings 25  
While my white hair is still new, my old age in the  
prime of its straightness,  
While my fate spinner still has yarn on her spool,  
while I'm able  
Still to support myself on two good legs, without  
crutches; (ll. 21-28)

Abstractions and rhetorical figures expand the meaning in Johnson's verse, which closely follows Juvenal's original. Both poets employ

anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of clauses, and hypotaxis, clauses in a dependent or subordinate relationship. Johnson, however, opens his paragraph with a series of "Since" constructions:

Since worth, he cries, in these degen'rate days           35  
Wants ev'n the cheap reward of empty praise;  
In those curs'd walls, devote to vice and gain,  
Since unrewarded science toils in vain;  
Since hope but sooths to double my distress,  
And ev'ry moment leaves my little, less (ll. 35-40).

The passage gains interest partly because the "Since" clauses built suspense in the reader as he awaits the main clause, but also because the abstractions such as worth and hope draw vigor from adjectives and verbs linked to them. Thales says that "worth . . . wants," or lacks, even empty praise, that "science," or learning, is "unrewarded," and that "hope . . . sooths" merely to "double my distress." Most effective of the abstractions, however, is little, paired as it is with its comparative form less; alliteration combines with the generalization to deepen meaning. Within the span of two lines in the passage we find the word reward used twice in slightly different form: in line 36 we are told that there is no "cheap reward" for worth, and in line 38 we learn that "science," that is, knowledge, is "unrewarded." The repetition strengthens the association; neither a good man nor a learned one gets any reward at all.

Multiple meanings also interact with rhetorical figures and abstractions to enrich these lines. When Thales speaks of "degen'rate days" in the first line of the passage, he may mean that the city during the reign of George II has sunk to a lower order of civilization than during earlier periods, or that the people individually lack the virtue their ancestors had, or that "the days," indicating the passage of time, are marking a decline in British character. Those curs'd walls probably

refers to the ancient Roman walls that surrounded the City of London. By Johnson's time, the area demarked by the Roman walls was called "The City"; this area was and remains the financial center, but was also the residence of many whores. Thus the second half of line 37, "In those curs'd walls, devote to vice and gain," the term gain probably refers to money exchange, and the term vice to sexual activity. Johnson, however, may not have intended to limit vice in this manner. He may also have meant to include other immoralities such as pride, envy, anger, or gluttony, which was particularly notorious at the banquets within "The City." In the next couplet, line 38, "Since hope but sooths to double my distress," several meanings of sooths are apparent. For the modern reader the meaning of calms, quiets, or renders tranquil intensifies antithesis, for hope's pacifying effect seems to lead to greater desires which will never be satisfied and thus cause greater distress. Older meanings also render the discourse more complex. One meaning of sooth would have been available to Johnson, since according to the OED it was current between 1553 and 1623; it is to confirm the truth of, to uphold or back up. With this denotation of sooth, the line would tell us that hope asserts Thales' suffering, and by this act, increases it. A final aspect of wider meaning stems from syntax. We are uncertain whether the poet intended to leave out a direct object (me) for sooths, and meant his line to tell us that when hope does encourage Thales, the anguish he feels later, when hope is gone, is more acute than before.

Although they are not reproduced in their entirety at the bottom of Johnson's page, several lines of the Latin model for the next couplet, containing a series of dum clauses, illustrate Juvenal's use of rhetorical parallels and show how Johnson in this particular passage echoes the

meaning of the original lines and implies one of the grammatical parallels. Umbricius speaks of the infirmities of old age:

dum nova canities, dum prima et recta senectus,  
 dum superest Lachesi quod torqueat et pedibus me  
 porto meis nullo dextram subeunte bacillo  
 (ll. 26-28):

(While my white hair is still new, my old age in the  
 prime of its straightness,  
 While my fate spinner still has yarn on her spool,  
 while I'm able  
 Still to support myself on two good legs, without  
 crutches) (ll. 26-28).

Juvenal uses anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of clauses, in the dum ('while') constructions to emphasize several problems of senility which may prevent Umbricius from leaving Rome, should he delay. In his poem, Johnson retains the anaphora, but he does so by implication through ellipsis:

While yet my stedly steps no staff sustains  
 And life still vig'rous revels in my veins  
 (ll. 41-42).

The second line of the couplet is parallel to the first. The ellipsis is understood by Johnson's reader, who allows the word while to control both clauses. The principal rhetorical device in Johnson's poem is ellipsis; the principal sound effect in Juvenal is anaphora. A secondary technique is alliteration, especially in prima, pedibus, and porto. In Johnson we also find alliteration, so it is obvious that the English poet picked up a hint of the technique in his model and developed it explicitly in his own verse. The differences in the two languages may offset this practice, but Johnson does give attention to Juvenal's skills, not always transferring the major device, but sometimes taking a secondary one and making it a major figure. Another task Johnson faced was fitting Juvenal's main thoughts into the heroic couplet; in the instance under

discussion he borrows some of Juvenal's concrete details and arranges the English words so that emphasis falls on his verb sustains and on the important nouns steps and veins.

As London continues Thales asserts that while he is still in good health he would like to find a retreat where his simple virtues will not be considered disgraceful:

Grant me, kind heaven, to find some happier place,  
Where honesty and sense are no disgrace,  
Some pleasing bank where verdant osiers play,  
Some peaceful vale with nature's paintings gay  
(ll. 43-46).

The word sense in line 43, "Where honesty and sense are no disgrace," interlaces this paragraph with the preceding one, for eleven lines earlier, in line 32, "And for a moment lull the sense of woe," the word sense also appears. Yet the meanings in the two instances do not quite coincide. In line 32, "sense of woe" refers to sensibility or feeling, an emotional reaction. In line 43, the meaning of sense, paired as it is with honesty, means correct or stable judgment, sound perception, or good mental capabilities.

In the next couplet, lines 45-46, the repetition of some in "Some pleasing banks" and "Some peaceful vale" creates another example of anaphora. The couplet also employs parison in that its two lines form two long phrases with similar sounds in similar places. The two lines contain the same number of words with almost parallel parts of speech. The only difference lies in their second half-lines. In line 45, the final half-line, "where verdant osiers play," is a dependent clause; in line 46, "with nature's paintings gay," the half-line is a prepositional phrase. The anaphora and the parison intensify Thales' yearnings and add to his vision of escape. The second "Where" clause in the long verse

statement fortifies his nostalgia:

Where once the harrass'd Briton found repose,  
And safe in poverty defy'd his foes (ll. 47-48).

The reference is to invasions by the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes in the fifth century and by the Danes in the ninth, which forced the native Britons to retreat into Wales.

The next section employs diazeugma, one subject with many verbs, to intensify the attack on Walpole:

Here let those reign, whom pensions can incite  
To vote a patriot black, a courtier white,  
Explain their country's dear-bought rights away,  
And plead for pirates in the face of day:  
With slavish tenets taint our poison'd yough,  
And lend a lye the confidence of truth  
(ll. 51-56; my italics).

The sequence of strong verbs, all one-syllable except the first, marks steps of degeneration in public life: explain, for we know when the official explains away rights he is beginning to sell his countrymen's freedom; plead, for we are told in Johnson's note that the pirates referred to here are the Spaniards who were defended in Parliament for boarding and searching English ships trading with the American colonies; taint, because the target is the English youth, and lend, because the loan is a superficial appearance of truth. In lines 51-52, the opening lines of the passage quoted above, the words patriot and pension have special references. The OED records the meaning of patriot accepted from 1605 to 1855 was one who disinterestedly exerts himself to promote the well-being of his country, but the dictionary adds that the term was also employed by persons or parties whose claim to it was questioned or ridiculed by others. Substantiating the fact that the word fell into discredit early in the eighteenth century, the OED quotes Johnson's Dictionary that the term was "used ironically for a factious disturber of

government." By 1833, the OED states, the word patriot indicated derision. Boswell records Johnson's comment that patriotism is "the last refuge of a scoundrel."<sup>41</sup> Frank Brady and W. K. Wimsatt explain that the "Patriots" were a group of Whig politicians opposed to Walpole.<sup>42</sup> However, the fact that supporters of the Prime Minister used the same term to describe themselves could have led Johnson to consider the word cant. The second word, pension, is defined thus in Johnson's Dictionary: "An allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason against his country." The pejorative associations of both words, patriot and pension, fit the tone of the passage.

The section continues with two couplets filled with references to government policies:

Let such raise palaces, and manors buy,  
Collect a tax, or farm a lottery,  
With warbling eunuchs fill a licens'd stage,  
And lull to servitude a thoughtless age  
(ll. 57-60).

In the first couplet the phrase farm a lottery refers to an activity very profitable during Walpole's rule: paying a certain sum to obtain a government license to conduct a lottery and then pocketing all the proceeds. Johnson's allusion in the next line in "warbling eunuchs" is to the castrati or male sopranos who sang in Italian operas, popular in London in the mid-eighteenth century. McAdam and Milne explains that the Italian operas had been attacked since Addison, partly because the Court enjoyed them.<sup>43</sup> Although there were other reasons why operas were considered lacking reason, the main line of reproach was that their entertainment was "irrational" since most of the audience could not understand the Italian language. The meanings of Johnson's words give edge to



ridicule. Warbling means to sing in trills, quaveringly, and thus implies bird-like or effeminate actions that amplify the denotation of eunuchs. The "licens'd stage" alludes to the Licensing Act of 1737 requiring that the Lord Chamberlain approve all plays for which admission was charged. The act was intended to censor attacks on Walpole's government. In the final line of the quoted passage, line 60, the words lull and thoughtless echo the half-line "lull the sense of woe" in the transition paragraph introducing Thales as a speaker (l. 32), and thoughtless recalls the "calmer thoughts" of the poem's opening section.

Rhetorical figures are the dominant source for ambiguity in the next short section:

Heroes, proceed! what bounds your pride shall hold?  
 What check restrain your thirst of pow'r and gold?  
 Behold rebellious virtue quite o'erthrown,  
 Behold our fame, our wealth, our lives your own  
 (ll. 61-64).

The parallels in the first couplet above are important: both lines include questions beginning with what, and in the second couplet, both lines are statements opening with Behold. Thus the passage matches two rhetorical interrogatives with two explanations for the situations responsible for the questions. The interrogatives form two rhetorical figures. The addressing of unseen heroes creates apostrophe, and the implication of a strong negative answer to the questions demonstrates erotesis. Actually the "heroes" are thieves of the public purse; the irony thus presented in the salutation leads the reader to expect the slight exaggeration implied in the questions, and the repetition of the word what seems to swell the evil, expanding the "pride" in the first line to inspire "thirst of pow'r and gold" in the second. In the answers, lines 63-64, the repetition of Behold has the effect of widening

the view of corruption, and the repeated pronoun our emphasizes that the corruption touches people, that it is damaging the national reputation and stealing the personal incomes of Britons. Asyndeton, omission of conjunctions between the stolen elements, "fame," "wealth," and "lives," which are arranged in order of increasing importance to a climax, serves to lengthen the list of lost valuables.

Thales turns away from the "heroes" and back to his friend in the next verse paragraph to tell him that although heaven may visit wrath on public criminals, Thales himself lacks power of reprisal:

But what, my friend, what hope remains for me,  
 Who start at theft, and blush at perjury?  
 Who scarce forbear, tho' Britain's Court he sing,  
 To pluck a titled poet's borrow'd wing;  
 A statesman's logick unconvinc'd can hear,  
 And dare to slumber o'er the Gazetteer;  
 Despise a fool in half his pension dress'd,  
 And strive in vain to laugh at H---'s jest (ll. 67-73).

Again rhetorical devices are the major element in reinforcing the meanings. In the first line quoted here we find tmesis, repetition of a word with only a few words in between: "But what, my friend, what hope remains for me" (l. 67). The two "Who" clauses which follow are in the form of anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses or verses, and hypotaxis, an arrangement of clauses or phrases in a dependent or subordinate relationship, a construction which has the effect of adding length to the list of offensive acts Thales refuses to perform to earn a living in London. Such an impression is carried through the rest of the passage by diazeugma, use of one subject with many verbs, and just as they did in the false politician section, lines 51-56, the verbs gather intensity as the passage unfolds. We begin with forbear, with passive or negative implications, and move to hear, less passive but not yet vigorously active, to dare and despise, both

involving much spirit and sentiment, and end with a sour descent, "And strive in vain to laugh" at a crude joke (l. 73). Not only the rhetorical devices but also some multiple meanings enrich the message. In line 68, describing how Thales tends to start at theft and blush at perjury, the word start may denote either a physical or a mental reaction. Thales could move suddenly, spring quickly, or dart away from a threat of theft, or he could react in horror, with an involuntary twitch or other action, at theft either personally suffered or merely observed. In the second half of the following line, "tho' Britain's Court he sing," (l. 69), the verb means praise, but the memory of the "warbling eunuchs" lingers with an unfavorable association. Thus, the entire couplet,

Who scarce forbear, tho' Britain's Court he sing,  
To pluck a titled poet's borrow'd wing,

means that Thales will not expose a poet who plagiarizes even when the plagiarism is a paeon for the Prime Minister. The verse paragraph's final line is a rejection of further degradation: "And strive, in vain to laugh at H---'s jest" (l. 73), for critics explain that the missing name belongs to the Rev. John "Orator" Henley, an eccentric preacher known for his crude jokes aimed at anyone opposing the Walpole administration, who also frequently appears in Pope's The Dunciad.

The next two short paragraphs (ll. 75-90) fit together, for in both of them Johnson has done with rhetorical techniques what he has done previously with single words--tied together separate poetic statements or separate sections:

Others with softer smiles, and subtler art,	75
Can sap the principles, or taint the heart;	
With more address a lover's note convey,	
Or bribe a virgin's innocence away.	
Well may they rise, while I, whose rustick tongue	
Ne'er knew to puzzle right, or varnish wrong,	80

Spurn'd as a begger, dreaded as a spy,  
Live unregarded, unlamented die.

For what, but social guilt the friend endears?

Who shares Orgilio's crimes, his fortune shares.

But thou, should tempting villainy present

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All Marlborough hoarded, or all Villiers spent,

Turn from the glitt'ring bribe thy scornful eye,

Nor sell for gold, what gold could never buy,

The peaceful slumber, self-approving day,

Unsuilied fame, and conscience ever gay (ll. 75-90).

The particular rhetorical patterns used as links between the verse paragraphs are antithesis and chiasmus, a device in which two halves of a statement are reversed. In the first section (ll. 75-82), the antithetical terms are right . . . wrong, in the line "Ne'er knew to puzzle right, or varnish wrong" (l. 80), and live . . . die in the line "Live unregarded, unlamented die" (l. 82). In the second paragraph (ll. 83-90), the opposites are hoarded . . . spent," in the line "All Marlborough hoarded, or all Villiers spent" (l. 86), and sell . . . buy in the line "Nor sell for gold, what gold could never buy" (l. 88).

Thus antithesis in the first passage emphasizes the fact that "others" willing to do "wrong" are able to "live," while Thales, who tries to do "right," will die friendless and unknown. In the second paragraph, money is the vehicle for right or wrong, and the antithesis centers on two sorts of people, the hoarder and the spender. No one, however, can sell the things that cannot be bought, a good name and a "gay" conscience; the adjective gay takes the meaning of delighted or happy. Even more effective than the link created between the two verse paragraphs by antithesis is the connection achieved by the repeated pattern of chiasmus, since the two statements shaped by this arrangement are only two lines apart (l. 82 and l. 84). The first chiasmus, "Live unregarded, unlamented die," tells us that the upright Thales must live without many friends. The second, "Who shares Orgilio's crimes, his

fortune shares," through the reversal of the word pattern, causes us to remember the first chiasmus and to weld the two meanings together. Led by rhetoric, we complete the poetic message: because Thales refuses to be a partner in evil, he must live without respect and die friendless; but because "others" are willing to be accessories in crime, they will enjoy both friends and money.

Besides these two rhetorical techniques which help to link overtones of meanings between the two verse paragraphs, other patterns, aided by multiple meanings, have an impact relating to ambiguity. In the first of the two paragraphs (ll. 75-82), diazeugma, one subject with many verbs, is used to list the offensive acts of "others" with the verbs sap, taint, convey--which with its object a lover's note draws from context a hint of adultery, and finally, bribe. By spanning four poetic lines the figure appears to extend the crime.

The lively verbs themselves project associations. Sap, meaning to draw off or drain, connotes a kind of blood-letting of honorable "principles." Taint recalls the tainting of "our poison'd youth" (l. 55) and thus reinforces its own denotation of impregnating with something odious, defiling, corrupting, or staining. Convey depends upon its object lover's note for its unfavorable association, with the noun address, meaning both location and adroitness, forming a pun, but bribe stands alone in its pejorative meaning. Other parts of speech also offer possibilities for extended associations. "Others," those persons willing to earn money by immoral practice, are said to have "softer" smiles, smiles that show gentle acquiescence or are easily provoked, and we transfer the comparative adjective to the smiler himself, inferring that his character too is soft. Through consonance the meaning of subtler later in the

line--"Others with softer smiles, and subtler art"--mingles with the smile, so that we see the smiler not only as constantly agreeable, but secretive and tricky.

In the opening line of the final couplet (ll. 81-82) of the same paragraph, "Spurn'd as a begger, dreaded as a spy," the pattern of compar, balancing of two clauses of equal length, gives identical weight to two attitudes toward Thales: "Spurn'd" and "dreaded." In the last line, "Live unregarded, unlamented die" (l. 82), where chiasmus points up the antithesis between life and death, the two four-syllable adjectives underline similarities. The meaning of unregarded appropriate in context here is disregarded or lacking respect; the OED lists this meaning as current from 1545 to 1627, so it would have been known to Johnson. Such a meaning makes unregarded a companion adjective to unlamented.

More elements of ambiguity should be noted in the second of these paragraphs in the section on false friendship (ll. 83-90). By opening as Juvenal does with a rhetorical question, "But what but social guilt the friend endears" (l. 83), Johnson leads us to his answer in the following line, which explains that the "friends" who are willing to be Orgilio's accomplices in crime may share his profits. In the remainder of the paragraph, possibilities for multiple meanings occur in the phrase tempting villainy because the present participle conveys its image visually. Here again the generalization makes an energetic personification through its modifier. In the next couplet,

Turn from the glitt'ring bribe thy scornful eye,  
Nor sell for gold, what gold could never buy  
(ll. 87-88),

the modifier glitt'ring tells us the bribe is gold and prepares us for the repetition of gold in the following line.

As Juvenal utters his diatribe against the Greeks in Rome in his Third Satire, Johnson disparages the French immigrants in London. Thales bemoans the fact that London has become the "common shore" for the dregs of Paris and Rome. Some critics interpret the word shore as prostitute, and others as sewer. Early editions of Johnson's poem show the word shore, but later ones replace it with sewer. Brady and Wimsatt use shore in the text of London but note that the term means sewer. Johnson's Dictionary states that shore is "properly sewer" and that sewer is "now corrupted to shore." The OED lists land bordering the seacoast as one meaning of shore between 1470 and 1876, but explains that during that period the word was usually considered a variant of sewer. It suggests that the expression the common shore probably originally described the "no-man's land" by the waterside where filth was thrown so that the tide could wash it away. This explanation permits either word to fit Thales' statement that England collects the lowest elements of French and Italian society.

Thales now admits that he "cannot bear a French metropolis" and asks his friend to forgive his "transports," vehement emotions, concerning the French, who are the subject of the next fifty lines.

The first paragraph of the French section is addressed to Edward III, the fourteenth-century British king famous for victories in France, who is invited to evaluate eighteenth-century Englishmen:

Illustrious Edward! from the realms of day,  
 The land of heroes and of saints survey;  
 Nor hope the British lineaments to trace,  
 The rustick grandeur, or the surly grace,  
 But lost in thoughtless ease, and empty show,  
 Behold the warrior dwindled to a beau;  
 Sense, freedom, piety, refin'd away,  
 Of France the mimick, and of Spain the prey  
 (ll. 98-106).

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King Edward is asked to look from "the realms of day," or heaven, to

inspect Old England, "the land of heroes and . . . saints" (l. 99). In the "lineaments," or outlines, contours of the body, or features of the faces of present-day Britons, he will find no "rustick grandeur" or "surly grace." The adjective rustick emphasizes the pastoral theme of the poem as well as describing the British as artless, unaffected persons, naturally simple in character and manners like the ostensible shepherds of pastoral poetry, as opposed to the French, who congregate in the evil city. The meaning Johnson would probably attach to surly in the phrase surly grace is likely intractable; for grace, choice meanings are those listed in the OED as current in Johnson's time: good will, virtue, and the condition of being favored. The fact that the word grace was a title given to English sovereigns from 1495 to 1837, as noted in the OED, implies that the British are a nobler breed than the French. But, Thales states, the English "warrior" now has "dwindled," meaning languished, wasted, shrunk, or degenerated, to a mere "beau." Beau, the French word for beautiful, connotes in English a handsome but effeminate male, a dandy or fop, a lover as opposed to a fighter. In the final couplet of the paragraph,

Sense, freedom, piety, refin'd away,  
Of France the mimick, and of Spain the prey  
(ll. 105-6),

asyndeton, lack of conjunctions, seems to lengthen the list of British losses in the first line. In the second, anaphora, repetition of a word at the beginning of phrases, appears almost to give the nod to two enemies: France and Spain. But the qualities the British lose are not suddenly taken from them; they are "refin'd away," a phrase which associates through antithesis with the earlier adjectives rustick and surly describing the English. Refined means freed from the coarse, the vulgar, or the



inelegant, and the word thus has pejorative meaning in the context of the poem. As a single adjective, refined means the elegant, fastidious, sophisticated, and subtle, all descriptions Thales would apply to the French.

The following section, lines 107-116, tells us in another arrangement of compar, balancing of clauses of equal length, that among the dregs swept into England are Frenchmen who have been "Hiss'd from the stage, or hooted from the court" (l. 109) in their own country. The paralleling of the clauses combines with onomatopoeia and alliteration to balance the two forms of rejection. The next line, "Their air, their dress, their politicks import" (l. 110) features both asyndeton, omission of conjunctions between phrases, and anaphora, repetition of a word at the beginning of successive clauses, and so intensifies the number of offensive French customs and attitudes. The word import in the same line recalls its Latin root importare meaning to bring in. On Britain's "fond credulity" the French are said to "prey," a word that recalls the "fell attorney" who "prowls for prey" in London's streets, as well as the image picturing England as the "prey" of Spain. The French are now shown as infiltrating many trades which seem trivial to a "true Briton": "They sing, they dance, clean shoes, or cure a clap" (l. 114). Here the terse phrases, alliteration, the repetition and the variety in the verbs all stress the French opportunism and willingness to do anything for money. Further, the pretentiousness and suppleness of Frenchmen are emphasized by rhetoric and diction in the last couplet of the paragraph:

All sciences a fasting Monsieur knows,  
And bid him go to hell, to hell he goes  
(ll. 115-16).

Sciences, here as elsewhere in the poem, refers to all fields of

learning, and fasting is an allusion to the Roman Catholicism the English despised and feared. In the final line, the chiasmus, the reversal of grammatical elements in the two half-lines, here a procession of short Anglo-Saxon words, throws major accents of the heroic couplet on the important repeated word hell.

Thales now stops scorning the French and utters a lament:

Ah! what avails it, that, from slav'ry far,  
I drew the breath of life in English air;  
Was early taught a Briton's right to prize,  
And lisp the tale of Henry's victories;  
If the gull'd conqueror receives the chain,  
And flattery subdues when arms are vain? (ll. 117-22).

Ambiguity of meanings in these lines arises from the operation of syntax and from personification. For example, if we see the word prize in line 119 as the object of the preposition to, with the indefinite article omitted, then the line means that Thales learned as a child that his country had a right to win battles or honors. If, however, the word to governs both prize and lisp as infinitives, then the object of both infinitives is "the tale of Henry's victories" and the statement means that the child Thales was taught both to admire and repeat the stories of Henry V, another British conqueror of the French. In the next line the "gull'd" or tricked "conqueror" refers to the British, who although they have military triumphs to their credit, now are infiltrated by their enemies. The personification of flattery through its accompanying verb subdues associates with the word arms in the same line, one admired for its strength by Piper.<sup>44</sup> The image of flattery subduing the English connotes a physical stroking or fondling reminiscent of the "others" who are caressed by the "great" in an earlier passage (l. 92).

Several examples of Johnson's practice of interlocking meanings of various paragraphs by repeating important words in slightly different

context are obvious in lines 123-31 in the French section:

Studious to please, and ready to submit,  
 The supple Gaul was born a parasite:  
 Still to his int'rest true, where'er he goes,  
 Wit, brav'ry, worth, his lavish tongue bestows;  
 In ev'ry face a thousand graces shine, 125  
 From ev'ry tongue flows harmony divine.  
 These arts in vain our rugged natives try,  
 Strain out with fault'ring diffidence a lye,  
 And get a kick for aukward flattery (ll. 123-31).

Adjectives and nouns are the major parts of speech Johnson repeats for cohesion and for expanded meaning. The first example is true. Echoes of the "true Briton" (l. 8), as Thales describes himself in the first section, abound in the statement that the "supple Gaul" is "to his int'rest true" (l. 123). Thales is true in the finest sense, but the Frenchman is selfish, true to his private desires. A similar association occurs with the word worth in line 124. Thales remarks in his opening speech that worth "in these den'rate days" (l. 35) gets no reward. Yet the Frenchman is able to "bestow" or falsely project worth, and he obtains reward. The word worth has favorable connotations in association with the British, but pejorative ones in reference to the French. These two examples link widely separated passages. A third example of such repetition is the word tongue, which appears twice within three lines, first in line 126, "From ev'ry tongue flows harmony divine." The repeated term fortifies and interweaves meanings within the passage: first we read that the Frenchman's "lavish tongue" spreads impressions of admirable qualities, and next that from "ev'ry tongue" divine harmony emerges. In each case the implication is hypocrisy, and in each context is a hint of God-like condescension: in "lavish" and "bestows," in "a thousand graces," and in "harmony divine." The ironic use of graces in connection with the French speech is a reverberation of the "surly grace"

of the "gull'd" Briton. The triplet at the end of the paragraph, which according to McAdam and Milne is Johnson's only triplet in all of his mature poetry, states that the English attempt in vain to copy the French "arts."<sup>45</sup> Both of the nouns in this phrase support or broaden earlier references. Arts, which here means crafty designs or ingenious deceptions as well as cultural works, recalls the "subtler art" of Londoners who commit iniquities to stay alive in the city; further, it echoes the general description of French immigrants as "artful." Vain is a reflection of the way "unrewarded science toils in vain" (l. 38) and of the flattery which "subdues when arms are vain" (l. 122). Lye reminds us of pensioners willing to "lend a lye the confidence of truth" (l. 56).

Thales explains in the next paragraph (ll. 132-39) that through their talent for mimicry and their natural hypocrisy, the French are well suited to trick the British into relinquishing their time-honored "rustick" customs in favor of French habits:

Besides, with justice, this discerning age  
 Admires their wond'rous talents for the stage:  
 Well may they venture on the mimick's art,  
 Who play from morn to night a borrow'd part: 135  
 Practis'd their master's notions to embrace,  
 Repeat his maxims, and reflect his face;  
 With ev'ry wild absurdity comply,  
 And view each object with another's eye (ll. 132-39).

In the final two couplets of the verse paragraph, anaphora, the repetition of a word at the beginning of successive verses, points up the extremes of French treachery, and chiasmus, the reversal of grammatical sequence in the two halves of the poetic line, emphasizes an antithesis full of sensual imagery:

To shake with laughter ere the jest they hear,  
 To pour at will the counterfeited tear,  
 And as their patron hints the cold or heat,  
 To shake in dog-days, in December sweat (ll. 140-43).

The verb shake, appearing twice in the four lines, each time has a different context. First the Frenchman shakes with false laughter, and next he pretends to quake with cold in mid-summer in response to a comment by his "patron," the Briton he maneuvers. In line 141 the verb pour implies that the Frenchman can produce his tears as easily as he might pour a glass of water, and the adjective counterfeited sets up an unexpected contrast. Placement of the three-syllable latinate December between dog-days and sweat, Anglo-Saxon derivatives, produces the same effect. All these techniques work together to indicate the difference between the Frenchman's superficial and specious behavior and the Englishman's rugged honesty.

Thales now asks,

How, when competitors like these contend,  
Can surly virtue hope to fix a friend? (ll. 144-45).

This couplet, John Butt writes, is not borrowed from Juvenal; instead it illustrates the way Johnson adds his own touch, or "insinuates a moral peculiarly applicable to the time." The phrase surly virtue recalls the fact that Boswell "used it to describe Johnson's first response to Wilkes' ingratiating approaches at Dilly's famous dinner party . . . It suggests a radical zeal in attack, an 'angryness.'"<sup>46</sup> Further, the couplet's first line presents somewhat ambiguous syntax, so that the reader is not certain whether the "competitors," the French immigrants, are contending with each other or against the Britons, or both. Nor is he sure which of several meanings apply to the word fix, a term which recalls that at the poem's opening Thales was "fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore" (l. 7). Through the choices of meanings for fix, the British might give permanent form to a friend by locating him among the "competitors"; or settling him

in a place of responsibility as a trustworthy companion by learning that he is honest; or assuring that he is stable, firm, and steadfast in his affection by affirming that he is upright.

The remainder of the verse paragraph is enriched by diazeugma, one subject with many verbs, by inversions, and by parallels:

Slaves that with serious impudence beguile,  
And lye without a blush, without a smile;  
Exalt each trifle, ev'ry vice adore,  
Your taste in snuff, your judgment in a whore;  
Can Balbo's eloquence applaud, and swear  
He gropes his breeches with a monarch's air  
(ll. 146-51).

The subject of the diazeugma is slaves, an ironic reference to the French, which controls all the verbs in the passage: beguile, lye, exalt, adore, applaud, and swear. Some have religious connotations although they are tied irreverently to nouns like impudence, blush, smile, trifle, vice, snuff, whore, and breeches. The contrast between the lofty verbs and the common nouns is a form of antithesis, a technique which appears more obviously in the chiasmus in line 158: "Exalt each trifle, ev'ry vice adore." The final line includes the word gropes, which McAdam and Milne believe Johnson used in the now obsolete sense listed in the OED: to touch with the hand, take hold of, or grasp.<sup>47</sup> This meaning, however, is not given in Johnson's Dictionary. The line "He gropes his breeches with a monarch's air" (l. 151) thus describes touching or grasping, an interpretation compatible with the modern definition of attempting physically to find something in the dark.

An even more extensive use of diazeugma, one subject with many verbs, appears in the next section with the same effect--of prolonging and expanding the list of offensive French actions:

For arts like these preferr'd, admir'd, caress'd,  
 They first invade your table, then your breast;  
 Explore your secrets with insidious art,  
 Watch the weak hour, and ransack all the heart;  
 Then soon your ill-plac'd confidence repay,  
 Commence your lords, and govern or betray (ll. 152-58).

Eight verbs follow the subject They, which refers to the French. The verbs are invade, explore, watch, ransack, repay, commence, govern, and betray. These words lead us through the meaning of the passage, from the invasion of the British home and betrayal of British confidence by the French, through the steps of insidious activity, to the final acts of rule or treason. In the opening line, the word arts recalls other pejorative uses of the same or similar words, and omission of conjunctions between the adjectives emphasizes a mounting revulsion against French practices. Preferr'd, Brady and Wimsatt explain, refers to obtaining of public office; admir'd and caress'd lead from abstract to physical senses of sight and touch, demonstrating Londoners' gullibility.<sup>48</sup> Line 153 features zeugma, one verb controlling several congruent words, each in a different way: "They first invade your table, then your breast." The device shows first a literal physical use, then a moral figurative charge for the verb invade. The word art, which means craft or tricky skill, appears a second time within three lines in line 154, "Explore your secrets with insidious art," and echoes arts in line 152 that cause the French to become "preferr'd, admir'd, and caress'd" as they undermine British character.

Johnson now opens the section on the problems of a poor man in London. The topic of his paragraph, poverty, receives emphasis early in the passage:

By numbers here from shame or censure free,  
 All crimes are safe, but hated poverty.  
 This, only this, the rigid law pursues,

This, only this, provokes the snarling muse.  
 The sober trader at a tatter'd cloak,  
 Wakes from his dream, and labours for a joke,  
 With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze,  
 And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways. 165  
 Of all the griefs that harrass the distress'd,  
 Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;  
 Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous heart,  
 Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart  
 (ll. 158-69).

Syntax and the dynamics of the heroic couplet combine to accent the important word poverty in the opening couplet:

By numbers here from shame or censure free,  
 All crimes are safe, but hated poverty (ll. 158-59).

The statement has a compound subject, crimes and poverty, but by withholding the phrase but hated poverty until the end of his line, Johnson permits the strongest emphasis in the couplet to fall upon this final word, the topic of his discourse. By situating both nouns in the same line, "All crimes are safe, but hated poverty" (l. 159), he links the two subject nouns and takes advantage of the antithesis in their connotations: "crimes" are intentional, evil, and often financially profitable; "poverty" rarely involves choice, has traditionally been associated with humble or pious living, and of course means lack of money and material goods. Other contrasts appear in the section: between crimes and safety, between the sober trader and the brisker--sprightlier or more effervescent--air of the courtier, between the trader's tatter'd cloak and the courtier's silken apparel. All of these widen the gap between the "gen'rous"--noble or admirable--"heart" and the "blockhead" whose insult stings. Two patterns of repetition appear in lines 160-61. They are anaphora, repetition of a word at the beginning of verses, and tmesis, repeating a word with only one word between. The line states that



This, only this, the rigid law pursues,  
 This, only this, provokes the snarling muse  
 (ll. 160-61).

In the remainder of the passage, abstractions, multiple meanings, and repetition of important terms from earlier passages amplify the meaning. Vivid personifications appear as subjects of the series of inverted main clauses: the "law pursues," the "snarling muse"--satire--is provoked, "griefs . . . harass," "Fate wounds," and "insult points." Among the words whose several meanings add richness to this section is censure in the opening line, from which all crimes except poverty are said to be safe. Censure may mean mere blame, fault-finding, or hostile criticism. The epithet sober trader deserves special attention. Johnson's entry for the word trader in the fourth edition of his Dictionary was one engaged in trading or merchandise, one long used in the methods of money getting; a practitioner. About this time, the word trader was beginning to attract associations with trade and tradesman, both terms of opprobrium to the landed gentry and peerage. However, Johnson's favorable attitude toward the word trade is probably best supported by Boswell, who writes that when an old friend, Mrs. Thrale, sold her brewery, "Johnson appeared bustling about." When asked about the value of the property, he said, "'We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich, beyond the dreams of avarice.'" <sup>49</sup> In the poem, the word sober modifying trader helps to assert Johnson's favorable meaning: sober means temperance, a serious mood or subdued appearance, a gentle or deliberate manner, or a reasonable, well-balanced, and unimpassioned mind.

Another example of reverberations of meanings appears in the predicate "labour for a joke" (l. 163). Labour can mean to work, to be

oppressed with difficulty or disease, to move slowly; or it may refer to childbirth; and joke can apply to an attempt at humor or to a ridiculous situation. Thus the trader may work for wages so low that they are laughable, or he may move slowly to make light of his burden. The joke may also be part of his sales technique, used to put customers in a frame of mind for buying. The word silken can literally describe the courtier's clothing, and figuratively his condescending gaze or his slippery character. "Griefs" may be sorrows or physical disasters, and the "distress'd" may be persons who suffer financial stress or other mental or bodily ills such as anguish or physical danger. In the final line, "Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart" (l. 169), the word points may mean either to aim or to sharpen an edge or point. Either meaning is acceptable, but both may exist simultaneously since neither contradicts the other.

Repeated terms in this passage, which interweave the meanings projected by various paragraphs, include jest in line 167: "Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest," which recalls English honor as a "standing jest" in line 30; the crude jokes against the Opposition in "H---'s jest" in line 75; and the "jest" that inspired the French to laugh in line 150; as well as Fate, which appears in the description of the tranquil life in Ireland or Scotland in line 11: "There none are swept by sudden fate away," and in line 94, which describes the manner in which London "sucks in" the dregs of France and Italy: "With eager thirst, by folly or by fate." Thus the word jest in line 167 absorbs some of the bitterness associated earlier with dying English honor, party politics, and French duplicity, and Fate attracts connotations of natural death and gradual decay of character.

The last paragraph of the poverty section, lines 170-80, shows how Johnson created a style different from Juvenal's while relying on the original, and how he employed various devices to give his English poem ambiguity. The original reveals the sufferings of Rome's poor:

Haut facile emergunt quorum virtutibus opstat  
 res angusta domi, sed Romae durior illis  
 conatus: magno hospitium miserabile, magno  
 servorum ventres, et frugi cenula magno. 165  
 Fictilibus cenare pudet, quod turpe negabis  
 translatus subito ad Marsos mensamque Sabellam  
 contentusque illic Veneto duroque cudullo (ll. 164-70).

(Men do not easily rise whose poverty hinders their  
 merit.  
 Here it is harder than anywhere else: the lodgings are  
 hovels,  
 Rents out of sight; your slaves take plenty to fill up  
 their bellies  
 While you make do with a snack. You're ashamed of your  
 earthenware dishes--  
 Ah, but that wouldn't be true if you lived content in  
 the country,  
 Wearing a dark-blue cape, and the hood thrown back on  
 your shoulders (ll. 165-70).

The section illustrates Juvenal's typical offering of many specific details: slaves' bellies, a snack, and a dark blue hooded cape. There is much antithesis; comparisons are made or implied between Rome and other cities, between rich and poor, between shame and tranquility. Employing another rhetorical technique, Juvenal repeats the adjective agnus for emphasis:

magno hospitium miserabile, magno  
 servorum ventres, et frugi cenula magno  
 (the lodgings are hovels,  
 Rents out of sight; your slaves take plenty to fill  
 up their bellies (ll. 166-67).

In the last two clauses of this quotation, agnus servum ventres, et frugi cenula agno, Juvenal uses another rhetorical pattern, chiasmus, in which the order of one clause is reversed in one immediately following.

The major difference between Juvenal and Johnson in this passage rests on the presence of concrete details. Juvenal works with them almost constantly, but Johnson, as he does in most of the rest of his poem, converts sensory words into abstractions such as waste, happy seats, oppression, insolence, truth, worth, poverty, merchandise, and flattery. True, in the companion passage of London he speaks of a shore, a desart, slaves, gold, smiles and bribes, all of which offer some visual imagery, yet none of the nouns listed here except the personification happy seats is attached to a human personality until we reach the final line: "The groom retails the favours of his lord" (l. 181). Even here the groom represents a general class of underlings; the specific favors, whether objects or influence, Johnson leaves to the reader's imagination, and he does not depict flatteries in sensual images. Yet through the power of his verbs and the vitality and precision of his adjectives, through his personification of human attributes, and his control of rhetorical arrangements so that his key words receive the accents of the heroic couplet, Johnson still manages to stir our emotions:

Has heaven reserv'd in pity to the poor,  
 No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore;  
 No secret island in the boundless main?  
 No peaceful desart yet unclaim'd by Spain?  
 Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,  
 And bear oppression's insolence no more. 175  
 This mournful truth is ev'ry where confess'd,  
 SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D.  
 But here more slow, where all are slaves to gold,  
 Where looks are merchandise, and smiles are sold;  
 Where won by bribes, by flatteries implor'd,  
 The groom retails the favours of his lord (ll. 170-81).

Johnson portrays heaven, appropriately, in a compassionate attitude toward the poor, but by his use of ratiocinatio or calm reasoning he projects the sense that Thales really expects little relief. The parade of negative questions, each opening with "No" and each spanning one line,

drives home Thales' lack of hope and his helplessness. We note too that the "happy seats" or locations Thales indicates heaven might have set aside for the poor are the least attractive among the choices Britons might find on earth: the "pathless waste," "secret island," and "peaceful desert"--but one where Spain might threaten. Yet Thales is not defeated. With a series of one-syllable words, "Quick let us rise" (l. 174), he punctuates his despair and decides to "explore" the "happy seats." However, since those "seats" are wasteland, remote shores or islands, and deserts, his statement is ironic. In the middle of the following line (l. 175), the two long Latinate abstractions oppression's insolence almost snarl, and the ending phrase no more, in its emphatic position as a rhyme word, reverberates with sad finality, in both its assonance and its meaning underlining the long, hopeless suffering of the poverty-stricken.

Next comes the famous couplet,

This mournful truth is ev'ry where confess'd,  
Slow rises worth, by poverty depress'd (ll. 176-77).

Bate comments that although Latin is "naturally more concise than English," Johnson manages to compress into six words "what Juvenal compressed into nine; Haut facile emergunt, quorum virtutibus obstat / res angusta domi."<sup>50</sup> Johnson's inversion deepens the meaning in both half-lines. The first allows the word slow to absorb the first accent in the line, and still permits the poet to place his key noun worth in an emphatic position just before the caesura. Further, the inversion "Slow rises worth," rather than "Worth rises slow," gives the poet greater license to use the contraction slow instead of the full adverb slowly; Johnson's Dictionary lists slowly as the adverb, slow as the adjective. Finally, the inversion would force any speaker to read aloud the first half-line

with deliberation; even the silent reader unconsciously hesitates with each word. The repetition of the letter w and the long vowels in the first half-line draw out both sound and sense, so that the three words function as an image. Mack notes the same technique in Pope, whose lines often obtain "the benefits of metaphor without being, in any of the ordinary senses, strikingly metaphoric."<sup>51</sup> Johnson constructs the second half-line with equal skill; the two accents of the iambic pentameter fall on the key noun poverty, and the energetic verbal depress'd receives the strongest accent of all--at the end of the couplet. The meaning of depress'd draws strength from the Latin root depressus, past participle of the verb deprimare, to press down. In contrast with the stately long vowels of the first half of the line, "Slow rises worth," we find mainly short vowels in the second half, "by poverty depress'd," which portrays the frustration of the worthy poor man.

In the two final couplets Johnson's nouns tend toward the concrete rather than the general, and frequently used rhetorical patterns appear. The three "where" clauses, one filling a half-line, the second spanning one line, and the third requiring two full lines, constitute anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of clauses, and hypotaxis, placing of clauses in subordinate relationship. Their arrangement with the shortest clause first--"where all are slaves to gold" (l. 178)--and the longer clauses appearing in the order of their length, fits the retarding pace of the idea projected at the beginning of the thought: "But here more slow" (l. 178). Individual words, by their repetition within the section or by the reverberations of their meanings, also support the message. The word more in the half-line just quoted echoes Thales' admonition, "And bear oppression's insolence no more" (l. 175). Slaves,

gold, smiles, bribes, and flatteries are all repetitions of nouns used several times previously. Slaves recalls the "Slaves that . . . beguile" in the French section (l. 146); gold echoes Thales' question to London's corrupt officials: "What check restrain your thirst of pow'r and gold?" (l. 62), and his reference to false friendship, "Nor sell for gold, what gold could never buy" (l. 88); smiles reminds us that "Greenwich smiles" in line 22, that some Londoners have "softer smiles" in line 74, that the French lie "without a smile" in line 147; bribes echoes Thales' question as to who would leave Ireland or Scotland "unbrib'd" (l. 8) and his comment on the "glitt'ring bribe" in line 87; and flatteries recalls how French flattery can subdue the British "when arms are vain" (l. 122). The connotations of almost all of these terms, in the senses in which they have been used earlier, relate to evil or dishonest practices. The words implor'd and lord, which end the last two lines of the paragraph, by their religious projections reflect the plea to heaven in the passage's opening line, yet with worldly implication.

The next section deals with fires in the city. Johnson prints only five lines of the original of this passage, but the entire paragraph is reproduced here:

et tamen illud	
perdidit infelix totum nihil. Ultimus autem,	
aerumne est cumulus, quod nudum et frusta rogantem	210
nemo cibo, nemo hospitio, tectoque iuvabit.	
Si magna Asturici cecidit domus, horrida mater,	
pullati proceres, differt vadimonia praetor.	
tum gemimus casus urbis, tunc odimus ignem.	
ardet adhuc, et iam accurrit qui marmora donet	215
conferat inpensas; hic nuda et candida signa,	
hic aliquid praeclarum Euphranoris et Polycliti,	
hic Asianorum vetera ornamenta deorum,	
hic libros dabit et forulos mediamque Minervam,	
hic modium argenti. meliora ac plura reponit	220
Persicus, orbis lautissimus et merito iam	
suspectus tamquam ipse suas incenderit aedes	
(ll. 208-222).	

(Codrus had nothing, no doubt, and yet he succeeded,  
     poor fellow,  
 Losing that nothing, his all. And this is the very last  
     straw--  
 No one will help him out with a meal or lodging or  
     shelter. 210  
 Stripped to the bone, begging for crusts, he still re-  
     ceives nothing.  
 Yet if Asturicus' mansion burns down, what a frenzy of  
     sorrow!  
 Mothers dishevel themselves, the leaders dress up in  
     black,  
 Courts are adjourned. We groan at the fall of the city,  
     we hate  
 The fire, and the fire still burns, and while it is  
     burning, 215  
 Somebody rushes up to replace the loss of marble,  
 Some one chips in toward a building fund, another gives  
     statues,  
 Naked and shining white, some masterpiece of Euphranor  
 Of Polyclitus' chef d'oeuvre; and here's a fellow with  
     bronzes  
 Sacred to the Asian gods. Books, chests, a bust of  
     Minerva, 220  
 A bushel of silver coins. To him that hath shall be  
     given!  
 This Persian, childless, of course, and more, than  
     before the disaster.  
 How can we help but think he started the fire on  
     purpose? (ll. 208-223).

Johnson's poem concentrates on the predicament of a poor Londoner in the face of a calamity:

But hark! th' affrighted crowd's tumultuous cries  
 Roll thro' the streets, and thunder to the skies;  
 Rais'd from some pleasing dream of wealth and pow'r,  
 Some pompous palace, or some blissful bow'r, 185  
 Aghast you start, and scarce with aking sight  
 Sustain th' approaching fire's tremendous light;  
 Swift from pursuing horrors take your way,  
 And leave your little all to flames a prey;  
 Then thro' the world a wretched vagrant roam, 190  
 For where can starving merit find a home?  
 In vain your mournful narrative disclose,  
 While all neglect, and most insult your woes (ll. 182-93).

Johnson obtains much of his material from Juvenal's preceding paragraph, which he does not print at the bottom of his page. Juvenal's preceding verse paragraph describes a poor man faced with calamities such as



falling or burning houses; the section quoted here, partially reproduced by Johnson, deals with the rich man who may have set the fire himself in order to attract sumptuous gifts from friends. A major device in Juvenal is anaphora, repetition of a word at the beginning of successive clauses or verses. The series of hic ("here") clauses emphasizes the long train of rich friends who arrive before the fire is extinguished to donate building materials and expensive statues and other furnishings.

Johnson, depicting the poor Londoner, uses personification, multiple meanings of individual words, and the operation of English syntax to attain ambiguity. Typically his personifications draw power from modifiers; examples are "pursuing horrors" and "starving merit." Multiple meanings can first be observed in the word Rais'd in line 124: "Rais'd from some pleasing dream of wealth and pow'r." Thales is "rais'd" by the crowd's cries both physically and mentally, since sleep is a physical and mental state and since he also rises physically from his bed. The verb start in lines 186-87,

Aghast you start, and scarce with aking sight  
Sustain th' approaching fire's tremendous light,

indicates that Thales is jumping or jerking physically as he realizes his situation, for he is barely able to "sustain" or endure the contrast between his "pleasing dream" (l. 184) and the terrible reality of the fire (l. 187). In the next couplet, line 189, "And leave your little all to flames a prey," follows Juvenal closely. The original Latin sentence concludes with these words: perdidit infelix totum nihil: "losing that nothing, his all" (l. 209). Johnson's brilliant combination little all, an oxymoron or paradoxical saying, is in a sense an abstraction or generalization; yet by juxtaposing the adjective little and the indefinite

noun all, Johnson pictures Thales' poor worldly store. In the final couplet,

In vain your mournful narrative disclose  
While all neglect, and most insult your woes  
(ll. 192-93),

the word all is repeated, but it refers in this instance to people rather than things.

Referring to the beginning of his second fire paragraph (ll. 194-209), Johnson attaches a note concerning the Hitch comment quoted earlier. Then, closely following Juvenal's text (ll. 212-222), Johnson describes the outcry, the gifts, and the reconstruction and redecoration that occur when a wealthy man's home burns. In

Should heaven's just bolts Orgilio's wealth confound,  
And spread his flaming palace on the ground  
(ll. 194-95),

the verb confound offers two acceptable meanings: to spoil, and to throw into confusion or disorder. The poem then relates how Orgilio's followers mourn, how his "laureate tribe," the poets dependent on his financial favors, write "servile verse," and how the "pension'd band" restores the house. Diazeugma, one subject with many verbs, is the rhetorical pattern formed by the next two couplets, whose four main-clause verbs--come, crowd, restore, and raise--again tell the story:

See! while he builds, the gaudy vassals come,  
And crowd with sudden wealth the rising dome;  
The price of boroughs and of souls restore,  
And raise his treasures higher than before  
(ll. 202-205).

The "gaudy vassals," who are hangers-on described earlier as fools in half their "pension dress'd" (l. 73), bring gifts purchased with money undoubtedly taken from the public, to fill the "rising dome," or building. They restore "The price of boroughs," a phrase referring to the

fact that the rich and powerful often bought or sold parliamentary boroughs or areas of representation.<sup>52</sup> But the entire line, "The price of boroughs and of souls restore" (l. 204), demonstrates zeugma, one verb governing two congruent words, each in a different way. The congruent words here are boroughs and souls. The verb restore can be applied in a literal sense to the concrete noun boroughs, for one meaning of restore is to repair or rebuild. The price of such reconstruction was of course drawn from the pockets of "vassals." The verb restore can be applied in a figurative sense to souls; the verb's meaning in this instance would be to return to a former state of grace. If souls refers to human beings rather than to spiritual essences of human beings, the vassals can be seen as restoring themselves to the rich man's favor by bringing gifts. If souls takes an alternative meaning of the animating or spiritual principle of life, the line may be an allusion to the Last Judgment, when all humans in a sense pay back or restore the price of life's deeds. The passage may also be an allusion to the practice of wealthy people having the right to appoint rectors to parishes. The final line presents ambiguous meanings, for raise may refer to the physical rebuilding of the great house, or to the levying of heavy fees or taxes to pay for it, and treasures may mean either the lavish gifts or the money or crops collected from the tenants on the rich man's land. The conclusion of the paragraph also follows Juvenal, indicating that the rich man, now happy with his new home, hopes "from angry heaven" the blessing of another fire.

Johnson ignores some thirty-three lines in which Juvenal presents daytime Roman street scenes, and instead the English poet centers his section on a stock pastoral theme. If he could leave the city, Thales

tells his friend, he might find an "elegant retreat." Johnson's Diction-ary defines elegant as "pleasing with minuter beauties," a definition quoted by the OED under the particular meaning of the word as applied to written composition or a literary style characterized by grace and refinement. Following the eighteenth century, however, the OED states, the term lost its connotation of intensity and grandeur and has tended to be used in a depreciatory sense. In Johnson's line, elegant may allude to a well-known poem of the early eighteenth century by Anne Finch, Countess of Winchester, titled "Petition for an Abstract Retreat," in which she describes a luxurious rural life. The general topos is of course the locus amoenus, or "pleasant place," of which Horace's Sabine farm was an example.

The next section of Juvenal's poem describes the city's night danger. Only portions of it form the basis of Johnson's work:

possis ignavus haberi 272  
 et subiti casus improvidus, ad cenam si  
 intestatus eas:

.....  
 Ebrius ac petulans, qui nullum forte cecidit,  
 dat poenas, noctem patitur lugentis amicum  
 Pelidae, cubat in faciem, mox deinde supinus; 280  
 ergo non aliter poterit dormire: quibusdam  
 somnum rixa facit. sed quamvis improbus annis  
 atque mero fervens, cavet hunc, quem coccina laena  
 vitari iubet et comitum longissimus ordo,  
 multum praeterea flammaram et aenea lampas;  
 (ll. 272-285).

(You are a thoughtless fool, unmindful of sudden  
 disaster,  
 If you don't make your will before you go out to have  
 dinner. 275

.....  
 There your hell-raising drunk, who has had the bad  
 luck to kill no one,  
 Tosses in restless rage, like Achilles mourning  
 Patroclus,  
 Turns from his face to his back, can't sleep, for only  
 a fracas

Gives him the proper sedation. But any of these young  
 hoodlums,  
 All steamed up on wine, watches his step when the  
 crimson  
 Cloak goes by, a lord, with a long, long line of  
 attendants,  
 Torches and brazen lamps, warning him, Keep your  
 distance! (ll. 274-284).

Johnson describes the night perils of London:

Prepare for death, if here at night you roam,  
 And sign your will before you sup from home. 225  
 Some fiery fop, with new commission vain,  
 Who sleeps on brambles till he kills his man;  
 Some frolick drunkard, reeling from a feast,  
 Provokes a broil, and stabs you for a jest.  
 Yet ev'n these heroes, mischievously gay, 230  
 Lords of the street, and terrors of the way;  
 Flush'd as they are with folly, youth and wine,  
 Their prudent insults to the poor confine;  
 Afar they mark the flambeau's bright approach;  
 And shun the shining train, and golden coach  
 (ll. 224-35).

Again Johnson's major improvement over the original is his compression of ideas into fewer words than Juvenal does, especially when we discount Juvenal's advantage; in Latin, major words such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives can be made to indicate the functions many short words must perform in English--our pronouns and prepositions, for example. Johnson's careful choice of adjectives such as fiery, vain, frolick, and prudent, of participles like reeling and flush'd which are used as adjectives in the passage, and of present tense verbs like roam, confine, and shun allow the English poet to condense much meaning into a short space. Besides the several denotations and connotations of words such as these can offer, Johnson employs two other elements of ambiguity to add richness to the texture of the section: reverberations from previous uses of key words, and ambiguity of syntax. Thales' message is that the poor man on a dark street has much to fear from the "fiery fop"--the adjective reminds us of possible arson in the earlier sections and the noun

connotes the dandified French man--who is "with new commission vain." The noun fop probably refers to a member of a fashionable regiment like the Guards. Ambiguity of syntax is apparent, for the adjective vain may describe the fop, who displays his pride in his new commission, or the commission itself, which may be unimportant, a petty reward for a socially prominent family. Or worse, the commission may direct the fop to murder. That murder is pointed out in the next line, and anxiety concerning it will cause the fop to sleep "on brambles," or uneasily. The poor man should also beware of the drunkard who kills for a "jest," a word which recalls references to English honor and political jokes, but now resounds with fatal implication. For the third time in his imitation, Johnson now employs the word heroes: "Yet even these heroes /paid killers or drunkards ] mischievously gay" (l. 230). The reader recalls two previous appearances of the word heroes; thus Johnson can draw on earlier associations to intensify the irony already inherent in context in line 230. In its first use (ll. 61-62), the word heroes referred to pensioners whose thirst for "pow'r and gold" was unrestrained. In the second, the word appeared as the poet addressed "Illustrious Edward" (ll. 99-100), bitterly urging the king to look from heaven at what has happened to his "land of heroes and of saints." Thales says that even though they may be drunk, such rogues know enough to attack only the poor. They shun "the shining train, and golden coach" (l. 235), symbols of the rich that the poet deploys in the technique of synecdoche, substitution of a part for the whole.

A three-couplet verse paragraph now describes robbery by a cut-throat "cruel with guilt" since he has been paid to perform a task he has not completed, and "daring with despair," since fear of reprisal

drives him into the job. In the final couplet, the robber

Invades the sacred hour of silent rest,  
And leaves, unseen, a dagger in your breast  
(ll. 240-41);

the verbs project double meanings, for the thief not only invades the "sacred hour of rest" but the sanctity of the home, and he leaves not only the premises but also "a dagger in your breast." The adjective unseen applies to both his escape and his weapon.

Another brilliant pairing of two objects with one verb, supply, occurs in the next couplet:

Scarce can our fields, such crowds at Tyburn die,  
With hemp the gallows and the fleet supply  
(ll. 242-43).

In these two lines Johnson gives a modern application to Juvenal's comment that most of the iron in Rome is being used for chains or weapons rather than for ploughshares. The rope image carries over into Johnson's next two couplets, which are allusions to the government's money-raising and to the frequent visits of George II to Hanover:

Propose your schemes, ye Senatorian band,  
Whose Ways and Means support the sinking land;  
Lest rope be wanting in the tempting spring,  
To rig another convoy for the k--g (ll. 244-47).

Here the words schemes and band imply that Parliament, usually called the Seante in the eighteenth century, is a gang of criminals. Further, expansion of meanings stems from the antithesis in line 245 with support and sinking, as well as from the ironic connection between Ways and Means, a government committee, and sinking. Line 246 personifies the rope, which may be "wanting" or desiring to "rig another convoy" as well as "wanting" in the sense of lacking at the busy gallows at Tyburn. The word rig in line 247 casts a pejorative connotation on the assembling of

the convoy and emphasizes the malevolent political imagery already developed.

Finally, like Juvenal, Johnson looks back to a golden age of his nation, to the legendary rule of King Alfred, a Saxon believed to have united the Old English kingdoms against Danish invaders. Johnson personifies "fair justice," who in those days "Held high the steady scale, but drop'd the sword" (l. 251), so that order was maintained without crowding prisons and staging mass executions.

The last section portrays Thales, like Umbricius, saying farewell to his friend, boarding his boat for his retreat, and adding a comment on satire:

Farewell!--When youth, and health, and fortune  
 spent,  
 Thou fly'st for refuge to the wilds of Kent;  
 And tir'd like me with follies and with crimes,  
 In angry numbers warn'st succeeding times;  
 Then shall thy friend, nor thou refuse his aid, 260  
 Still foe to vice, forsake his Cambrian shade;  
 In virtue's cause once more exert his rage,  
 Thy satire point, and animate thy page (ll. 256-63).

Thales expects his friend to write satire, "angry numbers" meant for "succeeding times," periods of time yet to come. He himself will not change his beliefs and will return later from Wales to "exert his rage," to give life to or reveal his strong inspiration or feeling. The satire ends typically in a pattern of diazeugma, one subject with many verbs, with friend in line 260 as the subject and with five verbs completing the figure: refuse, forsake, exert, point, and animate. Multiple meanings project from the last two. Point may mean either to aim at a target or to sharpen, and animate may mean either to inspire, to invigorate, to improve, or to grant life to, the denotation closest to its Latin root. When we apply these meanings to the friend's pages of satire, we have a



choice of the implications.

Thus ambiguity in London develops from abstractions, rhetorical patterns, operation of syntax within heroic couplet conventions, plurality of word meanings, and interlocking denotations and connotations. Some abstractions, however, are overdone. Examples are line 63, "Behold rebellious virtue quite o'erthrown"; line 66, "When public crimes inflame the wrath of heaven"; line 87, "Turn from the glitt'ring bribe thy scornful eye," and line 199, "How virtue wars with persecuting fate." Further, rhetorical figures are so profuse they become tiring, even though we understand that many appear in the work Johnson is imitating; the profusion gives the impression that Johnson is working hard to learn manipulation of classical techniques in poetry. Certain individual words have not been chosen for their ability to offer several meanings applicable in context, or for their reverberations beyond the straightforward lexical definition. On the other hand, repetition of some words lends the poem cohesion.

#### The Vanity of Human Wishes

Johnson's major poetic effort, The Vanity of Human Wishes, is an imitation of Juvenal's Tenth Satire. It was published in 1748, two and a half years after Johnson had started work on the Dictionary. According to Bate, Ecclesiastes, St. Augustine's Confessions, Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Holy Dying, and William Law's A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life provided the complex arguments or ideas and attitudes present in the poem.<sup>53</sup> Like Juvenal's satire, it shows the futility of pursuing worldly goods and fame. But a major difference appears in the conclusion. Juvenal admonishes us to accept the will of the gods; Johnson adds

Christian beliefs, arguing that since earthly life can offer nothing that truly satisfies men, religious faith provides their only solace. Loosely following Juvenal's format, Johnson proclaims that his survey is universal, that he will show how men everywhere are led by pride into struggles for money, rank, or fame as they stubbornly resist reasoning out their choices. The first verse paragraph discusses all mankind, portraying the way hopes and fears obscure our path and mislead us into satisfying our pride. In the next two paragraphs, the poet shows that only the poor are safe from warring kings or from highwaymen. Like Juvenal, Johnson summons Democritus, the laughing philosopher of ancient Greece, stating that since he enjoyed human follies in an earlier time, he will likely find much mirth in the England of Johnson's day, during the reign of George II. McAdam explains that "as Juvenal in the reign of Nero used an imagined golden age of Rome for contrast with his degenerate times, so Johnson contrasts the age of George II with a supposedly simpler period."<sup>54</sup>

The English poet describes various groups of people "athirst for wealth" and fame in modern Europe. These include a statesman and his followers; Cardinal Wolsey, who was dismissed as chief minister for Henry VIII of England after Wolsey could or would not secure annulment of Henry's marriage; and an ambitious scholar reminiscent of Johnson who leaves a comfortable home to make his reputation at Oxford but finds that learning brings no satisfaction. The poet then presents a group of warriors, Alexander the Great, Charles XII of Sweden, Xerxes, and Charles Albert, Elector of Bavaria, who try to use military conquest as a stepping stone to fame. The final portraits are of two old men, one a rich man who prays for long life and receives it along with its many

troubles, the other a humble man who cannot avoid loneliness and loss of contact with current ideas; and finally, of a beauty whose charms cause her own ruin. The last paragraph tells readers to pray for heavenly guidance and to submit to God's decisions alone. The poem, McAdam states, "comes to rest in affirmation and serenity."<sup>55</sup>

Two general elements offer evidence of the poem's ambiguity. One is diverse responses to the attitude the work presents; some readers see it as pessimistic, and others as optimistic. A second general element, related to the first, is the mingling of Christian and Stoic beliefs. Christianity absorbed certain elements of Stoicism, and Johnson attached a Christian moral to Juvenal's classical Stoic satire. A third general factor contributing to ambiguity is Johnson's ordering of the sections of his long poem and his arrangement of the ideas within each verse paragraph. These general features require discussion before particular passages can be analyzed for specific ambiguous factors. As in London, such factors include Johnson's tendency to put ideas in abstract form, deploy rhetorical devices, manipulate syntax within heroic couplet conventions, choose what Empson calls complex words which add to his poem's richness through their multiple meanings; and interlace denotations and connotations to create a network of added meaning and to support major images.

Critics who find the poem's tone pessimistic cite two arguments: its series of portraits of individual humans doomed by psychological forces, and its suggestion of religion as little more than an escape from nihilism. Ian Jack, for instance, argues that the poem's rhetorical function is to diminish human life.<sup>56</sup> Other critics view the work as pessimistic because it shows men destroyed by the satisfaction of their own desires; still others, Howard D. Weinbrot states, have compared its

bitterness to the Book of Job. But Weinbrot opposes such interpretations for two reasons: the typical eighteenth-century reading, which was optimistic, and the requirements of traditional satire.<sup>57</sup> A review of both of Weinbrot's arguments will clarify the subject.

First, eighteenth-century readers saw the poem as conciliatory, not as a recitation of doom. Their optimism could have been based on the conclusion, which Boswell described as noble. Boulton supports Weinbrot's finding, stating that most Englishmen in the 1750s admired and read moral works; they were "an audience accustomed to sustained and serious literary pursuits," and they considered Johnson "a sage and moral teacher."<sup>58</sup> The subject matter of such writings was fundamental truths. Weinbrot believes that Johnson's purpose was to state these so well that they would be remembered and so clearly that they would appeal widely. In his character portraits he sought the same quality he had admired in Shakespeare's plays; he wanted to give a just representation to human nature, to present "the genuine progeny of common humanity."<sup>59</sup>

Weinbrot's second argument is that the poem's group of melancholy portraits followed by a brief conclusion conforms to "the classical Roman concept of attack on a particular vice and praise of its opposing virtue."<sup>60</sup> He states that the Juvenalian approach always had an element of opposition; it produced "an elevated confrontation."<sup>61</sup> If considered in the light of this traditional contrast, the work can leave its audience with a positive or even hopeful feeling concerning the praised virtue, faith.

And other critics do not perceive the poem as pessimistic. Among them is Trickett, who, while admitting the attitude is inherent in the work, believes that the element of pessimism is balanced by a deep

confidence in Christian revelation. She looks on such "duality" as a source of power. Johnson moves from one character to another, none able to control the disorder in his life, all yielding to pride, the deadly sin which dominates the writings of both major and minor eighteenth-century authors including Swift, Dryden, and Goldsmith. For example, in his Essay on Criticism Pope calls pride the "never-failing vice of fools" (l. 204), and in The Dunciad he links it with stupidity:

There marched the bard and blockhead side by side,  
Who rhymed for hire, and patronized for pride  
(IV, 101-2).

Trickett believes that at the end of Johnson's imitation of Juvenal, the offer of heaven as the only deliverance from the human dilemma is all the stronger because of the earlier examples of fear and melancholy. Johnson develops a convincing argument that faith arises from suffering, but the welding of these two elements, the pessimism and the Christian hope, demands a vocabulary of concentration and compression which the poet attains with his deep knowledge of the particular power of words. Trickett states that in both style and tone, Johnson's poetry is "peculiarly suited to the dual conception of the transience of this world and the steadfastness of the next."<sup>62</sup>

Johnson's combination of Juvenal's Stoic philosophy and his own Christian message creates an ambivalent quality. Eric Rothstein writes that in imitating the "majestic, pagan savagery" of Juvenal, Johnson has produced an "equally majestic, but compassionate tone of Christianity."<sup>63</sup> Rothstein says that Johnson's "reheated" Juvenal presents an attitude opposite that of the original. However, instead of melodrama, Johnson, by offering clarity and objectivity, makes the pious conclusion acceptable. Where Juvenal confines himself to obvious earthly wishes, Johnson

rises above all these to present an intricate pattern of human relations, vanities, and ultimate hope through submission. Where Juvenal lambasts the failures of human desires, Johnson, using similar ambitions and drawing on Law's principles, sympathizes with his fellows and offers a solution. Thus Rothstein shows that the same or similar situations are shaped into different poetic products, Juvenal's an angry and contemptuous verbal lashing, Johnson's a bleak but compassionate sermon.

A third generally ambiguous factor is the sequence of the verse paragraphs and the arrangement of ideas within each. In the ordering of his poem's sections Johnson follows Juvenal, presenting an introduction dealing with general humanity, the invocation of Democritus, a series of portraits illustrating political and military power, generalized sections on old age and beauty, and a conclusion. Such a plan at first could appear haphazard, and indeed, in the Latin satura the intent was casually to arrange miscellaneous elements; as Richard E. Braun points out. Juvenal mixes "the commonplaces of literature, pre-history, and myth and real and fictitious events and people."<sup>64</sup> But Johnson's intent seems to be deliberately to arrange sections of his poem to widen meaning. He moves from general humanity, where he gains our sympathy, to specialized portraits, then back to the general, and finally to a solution to the human dilemma for both--for those who achieve fortune or fame and for those whose lives are less illustrious but are equally complicated by delusion.

The emotional impact of the portraits' arrangement also contributes to diversity and depth of meaning. The grandeur of Wolsey and Harley is set against the poverty and inexperience of the scholar, and the strength and determination of the warriors against the weakness and anxiety of

old age, which in turn is in contrast with youthful and charming beauty. David Nichol Smith comments on the positions of the portraits in the poem's framework: "The effect of the poem is cumulative; we are gripped more strongly the further we proceed."<sup>65</sup>

Johnson's use of abstractions as opposed to Juvenal's details is the first specialized stylistic source of ambiguity to be analyzed in The Vanity of Human Wishes. The poem divides humanity into general classes, statesmen, scholars, military leaders, old people, and beautiful women, each representing a dominant human desire, and all together producing an effect of weighty generalization. Their qualities of character and their emotions also are generalized. Examples are "hope and fear, desire and hate" which appear in line 5, and "truth," "science," "reason," "doubt," and "kindness" in the scholar section (ll. 135-64).

Bate notes that a part of the opening passage (ll. 3-10) contains an unusually large number of abstract nouns: strife, life, hope, fear, desire, hate, and pride. He believes their shading is pessimistic. Many adjectives such as anxious, eager, busy, crowded, clouded, wavering, venturous, dreary, treacherous, fancied, and airy "suggest emotional restlessness." Bate sees ambivalence in their meaning:

The adjectives convey . . . Johnson's sympathy and participation, on the one hand, and on the other hand, his judgment and warning. In the first case, we have adjectives that express what the person caught up in the toil and strife feels--anxious, eager, dreary, and the like. In the second case, we have terms such as treacherous, fancied, airy, which pronounce the judgment of an onlooker, who sees not just the eager, toiling individual, but also the whole context in which he strives, and utters accordingly his somber but firmly held truth.<sup>66</sup>

A second stylistic technique is rhetorical patterns, among them repetition, which deserves special attention. In this poem as in London, Johnson repeats certain words in different sections in order to interlock

his verse paragraphs. Two particular words employed in this manner throughout The Vanity of Human Wishes are pride and vanity. The opening section presents man's betrayal by pride because man is foolish and daring enough to walk life's pathways "without a guide." (l. 8). The portraits then reveal how "vent'rous pride" (l. 7) operates to bring misery to each living human, whereas in earlier and more virtuous times, "scarce a sycophant was fed by pride" (l. 56). The word vain first appears in reference to the human drama "whose griefs are vain" (l. 68). In the Wolsey section, "At once is lost the pride of awful state" (l. 113) as the leader falls. Then in the scholar section, the student is warned that Sloth may "effuse her opiate fumes in vain" (l. 150). Immediately the section on Charles XII of Sweden opens with the question, "On what foundation stands the warrior's pride?" (l. 191) and continues with the statement that "Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain" (l. 201). Xerxes is introduced "In gay hostility and barb'rous pride" (l. 225), but finally counts "myriads with his pride no more" (l. 230). In the old age passage, "In vain their gifts the bounteous seasons pour" (l. 261) on the old man. In the beauty section Catherine Sedley, mistress of the Duke of York, is said to "frown with vanity" (l. 327). A few lines further, "Pride and Prudence take her seat in vain" (l. 336) as beauty falls. The beautiful woman's guardians leave, pressed by superior forces, "By Int'rest, Prudence, and by Flatt'ry, Pride" (l. 340). The word pride does not appear in the conclusion, but a word related to vanity does: "Nor deem religion vain" (l. 350). In most instances these two important words are placed at the end of the line for emphasis.

The Democritus section (ll. 48-72) also illustrates this technique,



repetition of a particular word in modified form, and it demonstrates as well how Johnson employs the conventions of the heroic couplet to lend emphasis to a particular word.

In the heroic couplet line, since the accent always falls on the final syllable, a position of greater emphasis than the mid-line pause, the poet has several choices to maintain a strong closing for his line. He may end with a substantive or a key adjective, or he may withhold his verb or employ a verbal as the final word. For example, Johnson's first rhymes in the Democritus section are the nouns earth and mirth:

Once more, Democritus, arise on earth,  
With chearful wisdom and instructive mirth  
(ll. 49-50).

In the next couplet, however, rhymes are dress'd, a verbal, and jest, a noun:

See motly life in modern tra-pings dress'd,  
And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest  
(ll. 51-52).

The fact that dress'd is not in its normal speech position (after life) provides the final accent for the iambic pentameter and also lends emphasis to the verb participle, a vigorous word. This handling of couplet rhymes is important in an analysis of ambiguity because dress'd is to be echoed through association later in the passage, in line 66, by robes and veils: "The robes of pleasure and the veils of woe." The careful reader may discern several other instances of this interweaving pattern in the poem. Some examples are line 13, "How nations sink, by darling schemes oppress'd," which is echoed a few lines later by impeachment" and "death," and line 117, "With age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd," echoed by "grief," "disease," "stings," and "sighs."

The final stylistic elements of ambiguity are syntactical arrange-

ment, the use of a single word to suggest several appropriate meanings, and the interlacing of denotations and connotations to expand meanings and to create images. These elements, the same as those examined in London, will be treated as the poem is analyzed in its actual sequence of paragraphs or sections.

Most couplets in each portion of the entire poem show ambiguity and ambivalence. The opening couplet,

Let observation with extensive view,  
Survey mankind, from China to Peru  
(ll. 1-2),

has been criticized for redundancy, yet we may justify Johnson on these grounds: first, he is following Juvenal's phrase in his first statement, a Gadibus usque Auroram et Gangem: "From Gades to the Ganges and the Morn," and second, his diction does present different shades of meanings. Johnson's first line invites the reader to look closely at the human race with a critical eye and with a point of view unlimited in either time or space. The word observation connotes a judgment in keeping with the moral tendency of Johnson's writings; it should lead readers to draw conclusions, for measure is one aspect of its meaning. Figuratively it places the poet and the reader immediately at an imaginary vantage point above their fellows, as though they are on a platform overlooking the world, a position in keeping with Johnson's didactic tone. The length and Latin origin of observation connote a serious appraisal; author and reader prepare to go on a tour involving evaluative respect and somber judgment. In the same line the reader learns that the view will be "extensive." Meanings of this adjective recorded in the OED as common during the seventeenth century, but obsolete today, are capable of being extended and tending to cause extension. From 1706 to 1872 the word,

when applied to material things, meant occupying a large surface or space, widely extended; and from 1605 to 1863, when applied to persons or faculties, meant far-reaching, large in comprehension and scope, wide in application, comprehensive, or full of detail. These meanings are acceptable in the context of Johnson's work, for the poet's analysis is far-reaching geographically, "from China to Peru," and it may also cause extension or expansion within the reader's mind since he may find facts or make judgments that broaden his knowledge or understanding. Such meanings associate closely with survey, the opening word of the second line. A survey can be a description of land as well as a fact-finding probe of history or an overview of an academic field.

Johnson's first statement spans fourteen lines. He emphasizes the importance of the word observation, the major activity of the poem, by making it the subject of his long loose opening sentence and by placing it to receive the first accent in the work. He then expands this important word's meaning by separating or subdividing it into its several aspects, for he tells the reader to "survey," "remark," "watch," and then "say" or report. All of these verbs involve dictionary denotations of observation. In order to note particularly the positioning of amplifying verbs, the poem's first six lines are repeated here:

Let observation with extensive view,  
Survey mankind, from China to Peru;  
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,  
 And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;  
 Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,  
 O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate  
 (ll. 1-6, my italics).

5

Each of the four italicized verbs expanding observation is placed to receive the initial accent of the line. Survey and Remark are each accented on the second syllable, so they fit the first foot of the



clauses contribute in these ways: they help to hold the long statement together, they allow it to gather momentum of meaning, they project a brief outline of the poem, and they appear to widen the subject, to assure us that the poem will include all men and all nations.

In line 7, "Where wav'ring man, betray'd by vent'rous pride," and image of mankind moving in confusion through earthly existence begins to develop. But the present participle wav'ring has possibilities for ambiguity, for it may describe either a mental or a physical state. If mental, it would show man unable to decide between fear and desire: "fancied ill" or "airy good." The adjective treach'rous modifying phantoms two lines later in line 9 would mean untrustworthy or deceiving. But context also supports a physical interpretation to extend the image of a man doomed to walk on dangerous pathways, whose development Johnson has already begun in line 6 with snares and maze. With this meaning the word treach'rous would describe an insecure footing, and the image would be fortified by the physical meanings of tread and paths in line 8: "To tread the dreary paths without a guide." The passage then would show that men vacillate due to the unreliability of the ground beneath their feet, and the phrase wav'ring man would suggest a visual image. Such an approach, further supported by connotations of vent'rous and chases, would fortify the metaphor of man's life as a journey by foot, and raise it above the level of a mere cliché.

In the remainder of the first section (ll. 10-20), ambiguity aids an image of inflation and expansion, which represents earthly desires throughout the poem. In contrast to the heavy effect of the phrase To tread the dreary paths, Johnson presents the vision of man chasing "airy good," and in this manner ends his couplet. At the beginning of the

next couplet, however, he echoes both the sound and meaning of airy with the word rarely:

How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,  
Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice  
(ll. 11-12).

Airy means ethereal, visionary, or high above the earth, and rarely, although its meaning here is seldom, derives from the adjective rare, one of whose meanings is then or lacking compactness. Connotations of height and lightness support one of the poem's metaphors and help to weave couplets together.

Another device employed in the introductory section is the linking of two ideas or long sentences by the use of two words with almost identical meaning. By placing in separate sentences the words fancied and darling, both of which can mean favorite, the poet subtly ties together the passage just discussed concerning the dilemma of individual man, and the later couplet concerning entire countries or races:

How nations sink, by darling schemes oppress'd,  
When vengeance listens to the fool's request  
(ll. 13-14).

The reader recalls that fancied was the adjective in line 10 describing the "ills" that "wav'ring man" tries to avoid. Now the adjective darling, with the same implication, applies to nations sinking in their own desires or dreams.

Good and evil mingle within each human desire in the final lines of the first verse paragraph:

Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart,  
Each gift of nature, and each grace of art,  
With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,  
With fatal sweetness elocution flows,  
Impeachment stops the speaker's pow'rful breath,  
And restless fire precipitates on death  
(ll. 15-20).

Johnson's meanings, associated with air and heat, amplify his metaphor of inflation or expansion in connection with vain desires. The opening of the first line of the passage, "Fate wings," employs a verb connoting height. Yet as aspirations rise at the beginning of the line, they descend at the end, for every human wish has an "afflictive dart" (l. 15), one that will bring the wisher pain or grief. In the next couplet,

With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,  
With fatal sweetness elocution flows  
(ll. 17-18),

the ominous meaning is emphasized not only through anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of clauses, and parataxis, clauses arranged independently in coordinate relationship, but also through the double meaning of fatal. The word can mean either doomed or deadly, or pertaining to or resembling fate. Thus through ambivalence the reader perceives that fate is responsible for man's heady courage and his expansive but vacuous visions, and also that a stream of political and rhetorical breath may lead nations to destruction.

In the same section ambiguity may stem from the way Johnson intended the adverbial phrase with ev'ry wish to fit the context of the line "Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart" (l. 15). Two interpretations are possible first, that at the exact moment that a selfish human wish is made, fate in response releases its "afflictive dart" toward the wisher; second, that fate is constantly attaching barbs to every wish flying from the human breast.

Since a comma appears at the end of each line in the passage, the section appears to be a series of independent clauses, the only exception being line 16, "Each gift of nature, and each grace of art." If this balanced line is in apposition to wish in the preceding line, then each

gift and each talent are transformed by fate into desires or goals with "afflictive" darts and the verb wings means to supply with wings or to enable to fly. But "each gift of nature" and "each grace of art" could also be direct objects of the verb wings. This verb would then have an opposite meaning: to wound in the wings or to disable. With this interpretation all inborn abilities and all acquired skills would in a sense be maimed by fate and transformed into grief and pain.

In the next couplet,

With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,  
With fatal sweetness, elocution flows (ll. 17-18),

connotations continue to amplify images of inflation, expansion, and heat, and the positions of the words carrying such connotations stress their importance. The word impetuous appears at the beginning of the second half-line. That line ends with the word glows, and the following one with flows, a typical heroic couplet technique creating not only the rhyme but also the rhetorical figure disjunctio, the conclusion of each proposition with its own verb. Meanings of both glow and flow are inherent in one of the meanings of impetuous. One is rushing with force and violence as in a wind or torrent, and another is afflicted with a rash or passionate temperament; a dictionary synonym for impetuous is hot. Both of the meanings help us to picture the human speaker's rush of breath as his "elocution" leads to disaster, an idea borrowed from Juvenal, who writes that many a man has met death from "his flood of eloquence."

(l. 10). The phrase restless fire and the word precipitates in the final line of the passage (l. 20) also aid this imagery. In addition, the intransitive verb precipitates means to dash or fall steeply, and a specialized meaning in chemistry is to condense from vapor. It is possible that Johnson is indicating how men, following the "fatal sweetness"



of their political leaders' persuasive speeches, may be attracted, through the windy vapor of spoken words, to the solid finality of death. Such an image, supported as it is by implications and inter-relations of meanings, also enhances the earlier "mist" vision of "wav'ring man," groping in confusion through the maze of his fate.

A final examination of the first verse paragraph illustrates another technique connected with ambiguity, the use of the same word as a different part of speech in separate clauses or lines. The first instance appears in line 8, "To tread the dreary paths without a guide," where the word guide is a noun. Yet in line 11, "How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice," the word is a verb. A similar situation, this time involving forms of the word fate, may also be noted in the introduction. The poet places the noun fate at the end of line 6: "O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate," and at the beginning of line 15: "Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart." But in lines 17 and 18 the adjective form of the noun appears: "With fatal heat" and "With fatal sweetness." Like the nouns, the adjectives occupy positions of emphasis, in this instance the opening foot of each line. Such repetitions with modifications, McAdam states, help the passage to support its overtone of fatality. In the next verse paragraph, to interlock his sections, Johnson will build meaning in a similar manner around one of the major fatal temptations, gold. He will employ the word gold "three times in five lines and in strong positions, once as a rime and twice in the first foot."<sup>67</sup>

In the second verse paragraph, the first of several short sections leads into the longer Democritus section. The second paragraph spans only eight lines:

But scarce observ'd, the knowing and the bold,  
 Fall in the gen'ral massacre of gold;  
 Wide-wasting pest! that rages unconfi'd,  
 And crouds with crimes the records of mankind;  
 For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws, 25  
 For gold the hireling judge distorts the laws;  
 Wealth heap'd on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys,  
 The dangers gather as the treasures rise (ll. 21-28).

Besides the repetition of the word gold just noted, several other words add to the poem's richness through the ambiguity of their meaning fortified by their position in the sentence's syntax and in the heroic couplet's rhythm pattern. In the opening line the word observ'd makes such a contribution. Through ambiguity it echoes the first line of the poem: "Let observation with extensive view." However, where the activity of observing was thoughtful, forthright, and desirable in the first instance, it now connotes underhandedness. It is not likely that those privy to special information, "the knowing," or those who dare to take risks, "the bold," would desire notice. The nearly parallel positions of observation and observ'd in their particular couplets indicate that Johnson could have meant the two words as links between paragraphs. Each appears just before the caesura in a position of emphasis within an opening half-line. The abstractions the knowing and the bold, besides adding to the solemn meaning through their long vowel sound, give the reader free rein to formulate meaning within the scope of his own imagination.

Syntactical ambiguity arises from the fact that the phrase scarce observ'd may modify either the half-line "the knowing and the bold" (l. 21) or the verb fall (l. 22). If it modifies the abstract nouns, the statement could mean that most men pay little attention to daring financial schemers; if it modifies fall it means that other men are hardly aware when the rich lose their fortunes. The "gen'ral massacre of gold" (l. 22) could describe the destruction of man by gold itself or by

his pursuit of it, and thus reflect the "afflictive dart" of the earlier section. Or it could show man misusing a resource that could serve a better purpose than greed. In the next couplet,

Wide-wasting pest! that rages unconfin'd,  
And crouds with crimes the records of mankind  
(11. 23-24),

the words wasting and rages with their connotations of fire amplify the inflation/heat image of human desires, and crouds echoes the crouded life in line 4. The meanings of both crouds and crouded are pejorative. In the context of "crouded life" we are asked to watch "busy scenes" which will reveal futile strivings, and in crouds in line 24, the prepositional phrase with crimes produces a similar unfavorable implication. In lines 25 and 26 the adjective hireling modifies characters who rightfully should be opposites, the ruffian and the judge, but the modifier forces them together. The final couplet,

Wealth heap'd on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys,  
The dangers gather as the treasures rise  
(11. 27-28),

continues building on the theme of widening desires and rising or inflating ambitions.

The second paragraph of transition draws a moral from the "gold" of the preceding section: in civil wars, where "rival kings" make war and the "wealthy traitor," a reference to the Scottish lords of 1745, is locked in the Tower of London, only the poor man is secure:

Let hist'ry tell where rival kings command,  
And dubious title shakes the madd'd land, 30  
When statutes glean the refuse of the sword,  
How much more safe the vassal than the lord;  
Low skulks the hind beneath the rage of pow'r,  
And leaves the wealthy traitor in the Tow'r.  
Untouch'd his cottage, and his slumbers sound, 35  
Tho' confiscation's vulturs hover round  
(11. 29-36).

Repetitions appear in various forms of the words sword, safe, rage, and wealth. In the preceding passage the ruffian is paid to draw his sword; now laws "glean" that weapon's "refuse." The "safe" vassal echoes the "safety" which cannot be bought in the preceding paragraph. The "rage of pow'r" recalls the pest of gold that "rages unconfin'd", and the "wealthy traitor" reminds us of the repetition in line 27: "Wealth heap'd on wealth." In the final line, "Tho' confiscation's vulturs hover round" (l. 36), the verb extends the metaphor of rising or expanding human desires. Here, of course, birds of prey are ready to puncture the hopes of those who have built up treasure.

In line 33, "Low skulks the hind beneath the rage of pow'r," the word hind has multiple meanings. It can indicate the peasant or tenant farmer as opposed to the land owning "traitor," for such a rustic would have no money or place of refuge and thus would "skulk" in his cottage. But it could also indicate the man who is left behind, too unimportant to figure in the quarrels of the great.

Johnson's first portrait presents his "needy" or poverty-stricken traveler:

The needy traveller, secure and gay,  
Walks the wild heath, and sings his toil away  
(ll. 37-38).

The poem then asks, "Does envy seize thee?" (l. 39). But the addressee in the apostrophe is not immediately clear. Johnson may be speaking to the traveler, or to the Enquirer of classical satire, or to the reader. The couplet is completed thus: "crush th'upbraiding joy, / Increase his riches and his peace destroy" (ll. 39-40), a statement whose meaning is explained by Bertrand Bronson in this way: "If you are troubled by envy of the poor man's carefree lot, give him wealth and watch the results."<sup>68</sup>

In the final four lines of the short paragraph, rhetorical techniques deepen meaning:

Now fears in dire vicissitude invade,  
And rustling brake alarms, and quiv'ring shade,  
Nor light nor darkness bring his pain relief,  
One shews the plunder, and one hides the thief  
(ll. 41-44).

The word vicissitude, meaning alternation or interchange, offers a clue to the antithesis in the remainder of the passage, where contrast occurs in "light" and "darkness," "pain," and "relief," "shews," and "hides." Position of each of these terms allows each to receive accent. In line 44 their opposing meanings are further emphasized by the figure compar, the balance of two clauses of equal length, as well as by anaphora, through repetition of the word one at the beginning of each half-line: "One shews the plunder, and one hides the thief." The words vicissitude, rustling, and quiv'ring apply not only to the traveler's surroundings but to the pedestrian himself. Like "wav'ring man" he faces a "vicissitude" of problems: alternating fear and desire. His movement, as well as the movement of the unseen thief, causes the "rustling," and his person, as well as the "shade" around him, may be "quiv'ring."

The next two couplets form the final transition to the Democritus passage:

Yet still one gen'ral cry the skies assails,  
And gain and grandeur load the tainted gales;  
Few know the toiling statesman's fear or care,  
Th' insidious rival and the gaping heir (ll. 45-48).

The "gen'ral cry" may be a plea by all men eager for riches, or it may be a lament for the outrages in history stemming from the "gen'ral massacre of gold" (l. 22) or from "dubious title" (l. 30).

Syntactical ambiguity as well as multiple meanings of individual words appears in the next couplet,

Few know the toiling statesman's fear or care,  
Th' insidious rival and the gaping heir (ll. 47-48).

The word care may be a verb parallel to know, and thus show that few citizens either are aware of or are concerned about the conscientious statesman's problems--which are also their own. But "th' insidious rival" and the "gaping heir" may be appositives of Few, the subject of the sentence. In that case only rival politicians, who would want to unseat the officeholder, and wealthy heirs, who might be tapped for funds, are the few who truly understand the statesman's fear and care. On the other hand we may see both fear and care as nouns and the following line in apposition with them. The insidious rival would then become the statesman's major fear, and the heir his most burdensome care. The final phrase of this couplet, the gaping heir, has drawn comment from Bate, who states that it "spreads lurid implications." Literally, "the heir might almost be a driveling idiot"; figuratively, "there is a half-activated image of the grave, gaping hungrily to swallow the father."<sup>69</sup>

The Democritus section, lines 49-72, invites the Greek philosopher to survey the eighteenth century. The passage illustrates Johnson's tendency to enrich the texture of his verse by repeating a word in modified form, a technique apparent with the words modern and modish, cause and causeless, pierce and piercing, feed and fed, and state. Democritus is asked to survey modern situations:

See motly life in modern trappings dress'd,  
And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest:  
Thou who couldst laugh where want enchain'd caprice,  
Toil crush'd conceit, and man was of a piece;  
Where wealth unlov'd without a mourner dy'd 55  
And scarce a sycophant was fed by pride;  
Where ne'er was known the form of mock debate,  
Or seen a new-made mayor's unwieldy state;  
Where change of fav'rites made no change of laws,  
And senates heard before they judg'd a cause; 60  
How wouldst thou shake at Britain's modish tribe,

Dart the quick taunt, and edge the piercing gibe?  
 Attentive truth and nature to descry,  
 And pierce each scene with philosophic eye. 65  
 To thee were solemn toys or empty shew,  
 The robes of pleasure and the veils of woe:  
 All aid the farce, and all thy mirth maintain,  
 Whose joys are causeless, or whose griefs are vain.  
 Such was the scorn that fill'd the sage's mind,  
 Renew'd at ev'ry glance on humankind; 70  
 How just that scorn ere yet thy voice declare,  
 Search ev'ry state, and canvass ev'ry pray'r  
 (ll. 49-72).

Johnson writes "modern trappings" in line 51, and ten lines later speaks of Britain's "modish tribe," using an adjective of almost identical meaning. Both modern and modish derive from the Latin modo or modus, meaning just now. Johnson's use of feed in line 52, "And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest," follows the original Juvenal: tunc quoque materiam risus invenit ad omnis/occursus hominum: "Democritus, long ago, found ample occasion for laughter / No matter whom he met" (ll. 47-48). Johnson echoes his thought with the passive past tense of the same verb a few lines later: "And scarce a sycophant was fed by pride" (l. 56). Johnson first presents the word cause in line 60, "And senates heard before they judg'd a cause." The word here is a noun referring to a legal action senators might judge or review. Yet in line 68 the poet writes "whose joys are causeless," and the reader wonders, through this interweaving of different forms of words, whether there may be some connection between the people's joys and the legal actions. With the linking of pierce and piercing in lines 62 and 64 we find different sets of connotation. The "piercing" gibe in line 62 indicates a joke that is hurtful, that is sharp and coldly clear. But when Democritus in line 64 is said to "pierce each scene with philosophic eye," the verb pierce means to penetrate with the mind, to comprehend, discern, or see through. In like manner we find two meanings for the word state in lines 58 and 72. The

"unwieldy state" in line 58 pertains to the "new-made mayor's" unmanageable situation as he takes office. In line 72, "Search ev'ry state, and canvass ev'ry pray'r," the word state may indicate the situations of the portrait subjects and thus parallel its association with the major, or it can refer to the nations of the world "from China to Peru."

A close inspection of both syntactical ambiguity and multiple meanings in the Democritus passage first shows that the philosopher is asked to "arise" in two senses: of resurrection from the ancient past and of prominence among wise men due to his unique sense of humor. In line 52, "And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest," the meaning of the verb feed may be to furnish something essential for the philosopher's humor. In this case feed would be transitive, and its object would be jest. Again perceiving the verb as transitive, we could apply its theatrical denotation: to supply an actor with cues to help him recall his part in a performance. Certainly Democritus is summoned like an actor to the stage of experience, and the portraits Johnson will soon present will produce material for his "instructive mirth" (l. 50). This interpretation would also relate to the "farce" of human vanity mentioned near the end of the section, in line 67: "All aid the farce." A farce is a satirical or humorous drama in which character traits are exaggerated or ridiculed, mainly by physical action rather than by words.

Democritus is said to have been amused in classical times "where want enchain'd caprice" (l. 53) or wherever a lack of material possessions "enchain'd" or prevented "caprice," a term which offers two appropriate meanings. A caprice may be a foolish whim or sudden change of attitude or action, or it may be wantonness, excessive or slothful behavior. Democritus in the past also had laughed when he observed men's



toil crushing "conceit," and again two meanings of a single word are compatible with the major idea. Conceit can mean self-aggrandizement, or refer to thinking or imagination; in this latter case the phrase would indicate that a man who works hard and long has little time for vain desires. The last dependent clause in the series, "and man was of a piece" (l. 54), may contain a pun. Most steady, serious, toil-weary men organize life around a few sturdy principles; such men are "of a piece" in the sense of being devoted to one humble or conscientious way of life, but they may also be "of a peace" spiritually.

Lines 53-60, which describe Democritus' relatively unsophisticated period in history, illustrate both anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of clauses, and hypotaxis, arrangement of clauses in a subordinate relationship. With the techniques, Johnson can give equal weight to four major ideas: "where want enchain'd caprice . . . Where wealth unlov'd without a mourner dy'd . . . Where ne'er was known the form of mock debate . . . Where change of fav'rites made no change of Laws." The next couplet is a question addressed to Democritus:

How wouldst thou shake at Britain's modish tribe,  
Dart the quick taunt, and edge the piercing gibe?  
(ll. 61-62).

Here both the iambic meter and the caesura after taunt support possibilities for multiple meanings of edge. Not only is it last in a line of crisp words and the recipient of the accent, but it is also the third-- and thus the most emphatically positioned--in a series of three verbs which create diazeugma, one subject with many verbs; for thou is the subject of shake, dart, and edge. This strongly-placed verb edge could indicate that Democritus might sharpen his "piercing gibe," or move it gradually toward his victim, or embellish or trim with his with the sur-

face meaning of his remark. In the first half of the same line, "Dart the quick taunt," the adjective quick may mean either sudden or alive and still fit the major idea of the passage. Democritus' jokes must be swift and sudden to be effective, but they must also be alive or current in order to suit modern British society. "Attentive truth," which the poet states in the next line that Democritus would "descry," meaning reveal or discover, could be a personified truth waiting to be noticed and thus vigilant and intent, or one that is heedful but never aggressive. The "robes of pleasure" and the "veils of woe" (l. 66) are now described as "solemn toys" and "empty shew" (l. 65); since both robes and veils are coverings--one usually considered royal or gay, the other connoting the grave or the sanctuary--the two nouns fortify the "trappings" or superficiality Johnson refers to in line 51 when he urges Democritus to "See motly life in modern trappings dress'd." The word veils, which denotes a covering that is amorphous or thin, relates to the poem's opening, which depicts "wav'ring man" groping through phantom fears and desires.

The Preferment or "sinking statesman" section immediately following illustrates how the various meanings of individual words contribute to several of the poem's metaphors: the rise of vain and ultimately foolish desires, and their descent, often associated with vapor or water, as goals fail to bring satisfaction. Other metaphors contrast surface appearance or coverings with unseen realities. The Preferment section, which mocks political hangers-on and hack writers, concludes with a powerful image which, with the aid of multiple meanings, brings several of these strands of thought together:

Unnumber'd suppliants croud Preferment's gate,  
 Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great;  
 Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,

They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.  
 On ev'ry stage the foes of peace attend,  
 Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their end.  
 Love ends with hope, the sinking statesman's door  
 Pours in the morning worshiper no more; 80  
 For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,  
 To growing wealth the dedicator flies,  
 From every room descends the painted face,  
 That hung the bright Palladium of the place,  
 And smoak'd in kitchens, or in auctions sold, 85  
 To better features yields the frame of gold;  
 For now no more we trace in ev'ry line  
 Heroic worth, benevolence divine:  
 The form distorted justifies the fall,  
 And detestation rids th' indignant wall (ll. 73-90).

The "unnumber'd" suppliants, either too many to be counted or too unimportant to count, are "athirst for wealth" and "burning to be great" (l. 74). The petitioners "shine," a verb which can mean wetness, "evaporate," a term which brings together the water and heat imagery as well as indicating the disappearance of the fawning crowd, and finally "fall." The statesman, once sought after, now is "sinking," an adjective which not only tells us the leader is losing public favor but also pictures for us a drowning man. The next line opens with another word whose various meanings support the water imagery: "Pours in the morning worshiper no more" (l. 80). Pours portrays a steady parade of petty office-seekers through the failing statesman's door, but its major connotation is one of moving water. Bate sees the word worshiper as a "bold exaggeration" that "drives home how excessive and wrongly directed the hopes of the suppliants are."<sup>70</sup> The nearly perfectly balanced lines of the next couplet,

For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,  
 To growing wealth the dedicator flies (ll. 81-82),

repeat growing, but in the first line it refers to importance, or respect, or popularity, and in the second to material goods. The dedicator "flies," and we understand he is hunting other patrons, but the verb also means to move upward through the air and in this sense contributes to the

image of inflation and expansion of vain desires. In the next couplet,

From every room descends the painted face  
That hung the bright Palladium of the place  
(ll. 83-84),

ambiguity is inherent in the verb. Hung can mean doubtful, fastened without support, drooping, or fixed in position. Any of these meanings fits the context. Now the painted face, picturing a temporary hero, brings doubt about the wisdom of the public's admiration. Metaphorically the face has been elevated without justly deserving prominence, thus without proper support. As the "bright Palladium" or symbol of protection it was originally meant to be, it is now drooping. And undoubtedly it was at one time fixed in position on the wall to honor an official considered a defender of public interests. Line 85, "And smok'd in kitchens, or in auctions sold," supports the inflation and heat imagery and implies smudges of double dealing as well. The next line, "To better features yields the frame of gold" (l. 86), may warn us that the facial features of the pictured leader will be replaced by those of a different politician, or that the golden frame will be melted down and given a different structure or appearance. The next couplet,

For now no more we trace in ev'ry line  
Heroic worth, benevolence divine (ll. 87-88),

describes the changed public attitude toward the now despised statesman, and the final one portrays his degradation:

The form distorted justifies the fall  
And detestation rids th' indignant wall (ll. 89-98).

Johnson here uses a typical technique, that of employing a single word as two different parts of speech within one paragraph. In line 76 at the beginning of the section the suppliants "fall," and line 89 describes the "fall" of the politician. Bate comments on the vehement connotation of



"riot and to rail." The word full is repeated, but as an adverb rather than an adjective, in the opening line of the Wolsey portrait, the next section. The cardinal is said to stand "in full blown dignity," a phrase which may refer to Wolsey's obesity. Bate comments on some aspects of the word full:

We see the voter primed with election ale, briefly feeling himself important, 'full.' And at the other extreme of the social scale Wolsey appears in 'full-blown dignity,' so great that 'his nod' alone turns 'the streams of honour . . . His smile alone security bestows.' "73

The same technique is apparent with the word blow: Wolsey's dignity is "full blown" in the opening line, but at the end of the section he sinks "beneath misfortune's blow."

Verbs at the ends of the first seven lines of the Wolsey passage demonstrate the rhetorical pattern of disjunctio, conclusion of each of a series of propositions with its own verb, which the poet employs to trace the cardinal's career. The reader first sees Wolsey stand, which can mean merely to appear or to rise. The list of line-end verbs in the figure follows: consign, shine, flows, bestows, and tower. From their emphatic positions within their couplets, they describe the various steps in the activity that led Wolsey from minor churchman to a mastery of the church and state. Of the ten lines quoted below, eight end with verbs, the last two parallel infinitives. Besides outlining Wolsey's experience, the verbs picture vigorous action. These action words interlace with the many abstract nouns in the passage to compress most of Wolsey's public life into a short section of verse:

In full blown dignity, see Wolsey stand,  
 Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand:  
 To him the church, the realm, their pow'rs consign  
 Thro' him the rays of legal bounty shine,  
 Turn'd by his nod the stream of honour flows,  
 His smile alone security bestows:

Still to new heights his restless wishes tow'r  
 Claim leads to claim, and pow'r advances pow'r;  
 Till conquest unresisted ceas'd to please,  
 And rights submitted, left him none to seize  
 (ll. 99-108; my italics).

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Wolsey now falls as he loses the King's favor:

At length his sov'reign frowns--the train of state  
 Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.  
 Where e'er he turns he meets a stranger's eye,  
 His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly;  
 At once is lost the pride of awful state  
 (ll. 109-113).

The parallel phrases At once and At length govern ambiguity each within its own line and also interact with each other. Let us look first at line 109, "At length his sov'reign frowns--the train of state," the placement of At length at the beginning of the line makes it a subtle modifier of train and seems to prolong indefinitely the line-up of courtiers. Line 113, "At once is lost the pride of awful state," also illustrates ambiguity. The line can mean that immediately following Wolsey's fall, the state's pride suffers, or that the pride of the nation sank away at the moment of Wolsey's fall. Interaction between the parallel phrases adds meaning, too. At length, along with the lines between the parallel phrases, seems to stretch the events out in a continuous descent of power in the leader. The verbs turn, scorn, and fly contribute to this effect. But the phrase At once at the end of the series makes all these events seem simultaneous rather than consecutive, as the earlier lines may have suggested.

A list of symbols of Wolsey's lost power follows, each half-line beginning with the definite article, followed by an adjective, to form the adjective epithet, an eighteenth-century convention within which Johnson worked. Geoffrey Tillotson quotes Pope's comments on such compound constructions, proving the poet's concern with its derivation from

the classics:

To throw his language more out of prose, Homer seems to have affected the compound epithets . . . a . . . composition peculiar to poetry, not only as it heightened the diction, but as it assisted and fill'd out the numbers with greater sound and pomp, and likewise conduced in some measure to thicken the images.<sup>74</sup>

Johnson manipulates syntax so that his nouns fall in the position of greatest stress:

The golden canopy, the glitt'ring plate,  
The regal palace, the luxurious board,  
The liv'ried army, and the menial lord  
(ll. 114-16).

Repetition of the article, alliteration of the consonants, weight of the long vowel sounds, and arrangement of the half-lines in the figure parison, the rhetorical technique involving phrases in parallel construction, often with similar sounds in similar places in the parallel phrases, all help the reader to imagine the amassing of emblems of luxury and power. The list of these elaborate trappings, however, drops to sudden anticlimax with the oxymoron "menial lord" (l. 116). Rothstein's comment on the passage deals with connotations in Johnson's use of synecdoche, substitution of a part for the whole:

Even Juvenalian historical specifics . . . drop away . . . so that the human figures have nothing but the evocative, glimpsed emblems of their positions . . . They are isolated from every reality of their lives except the void where hope had been. Through this kind of implied pathos, the poem frees itself from mere moral irony to ascend to the elegaic.<sup>75</sup>

Wolsey retires to a monastery to end his life, "And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings" (l. 120). Johnson uses the word faith here with great irony, but it appears in the conclusion in a different context, directed toward a heavenly rather than an earthly being. Johnson now poses four questions in a tone of calm reasoning, the figure ratio-



cinatio, asking the reader if he would desire to share Wolsey's wealth and fate, or if he would be content with a "safer pride." To words carry multiple meanings in the third question:

For why did Wolsey near the steps of fate,  
On weak foundation raise th' enormous weight?  
(ll. 125-26)

McAdam and Milne note that steps refers to precipices, the first meaning listed in Johnson's Dictionary,<sup>76</sup> but readers also remember Wolsey's swift and direct advance to power. The word foundation recalls the Biblical warning against building on sand (Matt. 7: 25-27).

Another transition paragraph now mentions other fallen statesmen, who probably were chosen because all not only were political leaders but had some connection with the arts as well. They are George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, a favorite of James I who was fatally stabbed by an army officer; Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford, who was an important minister under Queen Anne but who suffered disgrace during the rule of her successor George I; Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Strafford, who held the position of adviser to Charles I but who was put to death by the Parliamentary party; Edward Hyde, first Earl of Clarendon, an artist, who served as Lord Chancellor under Charles II but fled to France in 1667 after his impeachment. Empson works with these lines from the short verse paragraph dealing with these men. He finds in the lines "a grace or generalization of ambiguity":

What murdered Wentworth, and what exiled Hyde,  
By kings protected and to kings ally'd?  
What but their wish indulged in courts to shine,  
And pow'r too great to keep or to resign? (ll. 129-34).

Empson notes that allied may mean "connected by marriage, or of a similar species to, so that they were royal."<sup>77</sup> McAdam and Milne explain that Hyde "was allied to kings in that he was the father-in-law of James

11, and grandfather of Queen Mary and Queen Anne."<sup>78</sup> From the same  
verse paragraph, Empson discusses ambiguity in shine and indulged:

Wentworth and Hyde may have wished merely to shine, to shine  
in courts, to shine indulged by kings and courtiers . . . or  
they may have indulged their own wish to shine. . . . Not all  
these give different senses, but they are all different ways  
of reading the line aloud, and the two meanings of indulge  
carry some wealth of reflection and variety of feeling, in  
particular scorn, sympathy, respect, and a sort of natural-  
ist's sense that it was all predetermined.<sup>79</sup>

The young scholar is the subject of the next portrait:

When first the college rolls receive his name,	135
The young enthusiast quits his ease for fame;	
Through all his veins the fever of renoun	
Burns from the strong contagion of the gown;	
O'er Bodley's dome his future labours spread,	
And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head	140
(ll. 135-40).	

Johnson's description of the student's fervor recalls his technique in the sinking statesman section. There the wall was almost personified as it rejected the picture of the detested leader. Here in the rhetorical pattern of synecdoche, substitution of a part for the whole, the academic gown appears to transmit a contagious fever into the student's body, which "burns" with a desire for "renoun." Johnson here is using the precise word fever precisely; one of its meanings is excessive excitement of the passions. Brady and Wimsatt note that Boswell believed this line (l. 138) was an allusion "to the fate of Hercules, who died when he put on a poisoned shirt."<sup>80</sup> Ambiguity derives from the interlocking meanings arising from the "fatal heat" and the "restless fire" of the introduction and from the "maladies" suffered by Wolsey. Now Bacon's mansion "trembles" over the student as the shade earlier quivered around the needy traveler. The scholar is told to "proceed" (l. 141), which may mean to take a step forward, or in academic life specifically,

specifically, to advance from a bachelor's to a higher degree. The warning that follows,

Yet should thy soul indulge the gen'rous heat,  
Till captive Science yields her last retreat  
(ll. 143-44),

contributes to military imagery abundant in the poem, but it also offers and retreat. Captive not only describes a prisoner of war, but also anything kept in confinement, as the scholar is confined in the Bodleian library; yields not only means to surrender or conquer, but also to reward, requite, or repay, as Science, which here refers to the particular field of knowledge the student is seeking, would grant honor or satisfaction to the diligent scholar; and retreat not only means withdrawal to safety but also a hiding place or an area of seclusion. The image of heat in connection with ambition is extended two lines later:

Should Reason guide thee with her brightest ray,  
And pour on misty Doubt resistless day  
(ll. 145-46),

since the reader associates the words ray and day with the sun. The rhetorical techniques of anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of clauses, and hypotaxis, arrangement of clauses in a dependent relationship, add vigor to Johnson's account of the student's difficulties. Six "should" clauses, each spanning one couplet, build suspense as the reader unconsciously awaits the main clause. There is evidence of syntactical ambiguity and of multiple meanings for individual words as the passage lists the student's dangers: the praise which may mislead him, the woman who may win his heart, the melancholy which may drain his energy, the novelty which may tempt him, and the sloth which may act as an opiate to his brain. In the third "should" clause, "Should no false Kindness lure to loose delight" (l. 147), several appropriate meanings

may attach to Kindness and to loose. Kindness denotes affection, good will, or a natural aptitude or inclination; if we apply the last meaning, we understand that the student may be misled by his belief in his own abilities. Probably the most appropriate of the denotations of loose is free from bonds or obligation, rambling, or ready to shift or come apart, so that delight, modified as it is by loose, would become as transient and phantom-like as the desires of "wav'ring man" in the poem's opening section. But the word loose may also be a verb meaning to detach, to break up or dissolve, or to let fly as a hunter would an arrow. If loose is a verb, the line would warn the scholar against allowing false aptitude to lead him to a premature delight in his ability. The meaning "to dissolve" can associate with the metaphor of mist, and the meaning "to let fly like an arrow" would support military imagery. In the next line, "Nor Praise relax, nor Difficulty fright" (l. 148), if we perceive relax as meaning to diminish in effort, we would imply thee or the scholar as the direct object of all three verbs in the couplet: lure, relax, and fright. We would then interpret the entire couplet as notice to the student to avoid gloating over his unproved abilities, allowing praise to undermine his efforts, or permitting the intensity of his work to discourage him.

In lines 153-54,

Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,  
Nor Melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade,

The first line refers to a physical state, the second to a mental one. Yet disease in the opening line can also mean uneasiness or disturbance: or an evil tendency or a morbid condition of the mind. If this mental interpretation is placed on the word disease, then the word torpid would mean stupefied or apathetic or sluggish, and vein would mean attitude or

tone. The line would picture the student's will as paralyzed by anxiety. The second line would portray another step toward depression. The phantoms, which we know since the poem's introduction are man's fears and desires, spring from melancholia to haunt the student. His "shade" may be a time of night, for the word shade can mean darkness. Yet the noun may also describe a depressed state of mind, a time of shadow; or it may refer to a time or place of retirement or meditation. In the next couplet,

Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,  
Nor think the doom of man revers'd for thee  
(ll. 155-56),

several meanings of the verb think aid ambiguity. Thinking can be meditating, or on the other hand, imagining or fancying something, picturing it in the imagination. Since Johnson warns earlier in the scholar passage against "tempting Novelty," he is probably urging the student now to avoid romantic visions. The poet directs the youth's eyes to the "passing world," a phrase which can refer to the state of human existence, all human society, or the entire physical universe, and he asks him to "Pause awhile from letters, to be wise" (l. 158). The verb Pause implies a thoughtful hesitation as well as a recess. The couplet ends with a complex meaning, for although wisdom is usually associated with "letters" or books, the scholar is advised to become wise by turning away from the written word. Next appears one of the best-known couplets in the poem:

There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,  
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail  
(ll. 159-60).

The second line originally contained the word garret rather than patron. McAdam explains Johnson's change:

After the first edition of the poem, following his experience of Chesterfield's neglect of the Dictionary, he changed "garret" to "patron." The word, in its complete unexpectedness, gives a satiric point to the line which it wholly lacked before.<sup>81</sup>

A review of the fate of Archbishop Laud, who was executed in 1645 following his interference in troubles between Charles I and Parliament, is the subject of the next brief verse paragraph:

Nor deem, when learning her last prize bestows,  
The glitt'ring eminence exempt from foes;  
See when the vulgar 'scape, despis'd or aw'd,  
Rebellion's vengeful talons seize on Laud  
(ll. 165-68).

The first couplet is addressed directly to the student; the word eminence means an elevated condition among men, the goal the student seeks. The word vulgar, referring to persons who escaped at the time Archbishop Laud was put to death by the Puritans, may mean either boorish or uneducated, which is probably the more acceptable meaning given Johnson's strong sense of Latin origin and his detestation of the Puritan enemies of Charles I.

The next paragraph, lines 175-90, introduces the military leaders: Alexander the Great, Charles XII of Sweden, Xerxes, and Charles Albert of Bavaria, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire as Charles VIII. The first line ends with show, the word on which centers much of the multiple meaning in all the portraits. A "show" may be an ostentatious demonstration of strength, but a second meaning is an unreal or illusory appearance, a simulation or pretense, a phantasmal spectacle. The context may probably validate both meanings. The warriors believe at the time of their exploits that they are exhibiting power and patriotism. Time proves, however, that both they and their followers have been deceived, that they have produced a mere temporary display.

The first military passage, which briefly presents Alexander, falls into two sections. The first ten lines deal with conquest, the last six with its rewards of remorse. Within these sections are examples of the manner in which ambiguity supports and overlaps meanings to produce the rich poetic texture Piper sees in Johnson's couplet. The two opening couplets list the rewards of victory:

The festal blazes, the triumphal show,  
The ravish'd standard, and the captive foe,  
The senate's thanks, the gazette's pompous tale,  
With force resistless o'er the brave prevail  
(ll. 175-78).

Varying meanings of single nouns and adjectives expand the message. The first noun, blazes, may indicate torches, brilliant displays, or clear full lights. In the ravish'd standard, the adjective ravish'd means seized by violence, or spoiled or corrupted, but also means transported ecstatically through the strength of deep emotion. A standard is an army's flag, which could be seized and torn by conquerors if its meaning coordinates with one meaning of ravish'd. In the next line the meaning of senate can link ancient to modern times. In ancient Rome, senate meant the chief legislative body, and in Britain as early as the middle of the sixteenth century, it often referred to Parliament. In the half-line, "the gazette's pompous tale," (l. 177), pompous pertains generally to a military display or triumphal march, but when it is used to describe language, as it is here, it means inflated or turgid. A tale can be a series of actual events, but also a fiction. The word force in line 178, "With force resistless o'er the brave prevail," can describe military power or troops of soldiers, but it can also mean mental strength.

Ambiguity and ambivalence add complexity to the next two couplets:

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Such bribes the rapid Greek o'er Asia whirl'd,  
 For such the steady Romans shook the world;  
 For such in distant lands the Britons shine,  
 And stain with blood the Danube and the Rhine  
 (ll. 179-82).

The inverted first line (l. 179) tells us that the "rapid Greek," Alexander the Great, "whirl'd" over Asia "bribes," or rewards that corrupt. The relationship in meaning between rapid and whirl'd, both indicating vigorous swiftness, connects the nature of the hero and the tempo of his actions. The phrase Such bribes could refer to the rewards of conquest just listed: the fires, triumphal marches, tattered flags of enemies, the prisoners, the politicians' oratory, and the glowing written accounts of battle. The OED quotes Johnson's meaning of bribe: "a reward given to pervert the judgment or corrupt the conduct." Thus the prizes Alexander's soldiers took in Asia were permitted by the king as reward for savage behavior. Johnson now turns to the Romans, describing them as "steady"--stable, unshaking, balanced or free of giddiness; their troops are perceived as firm, disciplined, regular in approach, and persistent. Those soldiers "shook" the world, causing it to lose equilibrium, totter, and lack the very stability the conquerors showed. The verb shook, since it means to make quiver, also recalls the "quiv'ring shade" of the needy traveler passage and the mansion that "trembles" over the scholar's head. In the next couplet the British troops "shine" in modern Continental wars. The verb echoes the reference to Villiers, Harley, Wentworth, and Hyde, who wished to "shine" in courts, and interweaves with connotation the earlier image of the heat of human desires, particularly the "generous heat" in the scholar's soul and the "brightest ray" of Reason. The word shine also means surface brilliance and thus amplifies the metaphor of the false "triumphal show" in the opening line of this first military



section (l. 175). In the next couplet,

This pow'r has praise, that virtue scarce can warm,  
Till praise supplies the universal charm (ll. 183-84),

the verb warm, here meaning to inspire or stir up, continues to augment the heat imagery.

In the final portion of this section Johnson presents the true rather than the illusory side of conquest:

Yet Reason frowns on War's unequal game, 185  
Where wasted nations raise a single name,  
And mortgag'd states their grandsires wreaths regret,  
From age to age in everlasting debt;  
Wreaths which at last the dear-bought right convey  
To rust on medals, or on stones decay (ll. 185-90).

War is unfair because one side is stronger and because one man becomes a hero while others, whose valiant support shapes his victory, die without such acclaim. The adjective wasted deepens the meaning, for nations are wasted in that their land is devastated, their treasure is spent to support armies, and the lives of their youth are squandered to obtain victory. The honors given to the heroes are transient; the most lasting effect of war is sorrow and regret. Human life and the laurel wreaths which represent human victories are equally frail; they are "dear-bought" because death is their price, and the "right" they offer is not the lasting honor hoped for. Instead, the symbolic wreaths, fashioned of organic material, cause rust on medals and decay against gravestones. The phrase at last may indicate the wreaths are placed on the graves in a final sense, at the point of quiet meditation as the nation looks back through generations on its dead, or it may mean at the end of the conflict, when the "show" of the triumphal parade has passed.

The first major military portrait, that of Charles XII of Sweden, has caused critics to question whether Johnson intended it as a tragic or

a comic portrayal. Weinbrot points out that although the poet's attitude toward his characters is compassionate, most portraits are not tragic because their subjects are not "playing for stakes worth having." If they were, "the wish for them would not be vain, and the entire poem would lose its satiric point."<sup>82</sup> Even the scholar may be pursuing a doubtful goal, since Johnson suggests he should "pause awhile from letters to be wise." Weinbrot's opinion is that Charles probably is indeed a tragic character, for he is "super-human but inhuman, heroic but common, and kingly but 'gothic.'"<sup>83</sup> He does not deserve emulation, however, because Johnson associates him with Wolsey in the vanity of both men's desires and in the speed of their fall.

An examination of connotations of particular words and of rhetorical techniques in the passage may open new possibilities for meaning. The opening three lines introduce Charles:

On what foundation stands the warrior's pride,  
How just his hopes let Swedish Charles decide;  
A frame of adamant, a soul of fire (ll. 191-93).

Weinbrot notes that Johnson's questioning opening line at once suggests a "foundation" of character unable to maintain the king's "frame of adamant" and "soul of fire" (l. 193). The words pride and foundation are unfavorable terms; by this point in the poem the word pride implies disaster and the word foundation is likely to "recall a central question and answer concerning Wolsey,"<sup>84</sup> who once raised the "enormous weight" of church and state on a "foundation" too "weak" to sustain him (l. 126). Johnson's question probes the reason why Wolsey desires such power, and his bitter answer is "to sink beneath misfortune's blow" (l. 127). Pejorative associations cluster about the word stands. Wolsey stands "In full blown dignity" (l. 99) near the "steeps of fate" (l. 125). Further,

stands is the root word for the "standard" described as "ravish'd" in the introduction to the military section (l. 176). Throughout the poem Johnson has shown that pride never "stands" in the sense of remaining upright, steady, or steadfast, or even of refusing to give ground. Instead, pride is always doomed to fail. Weinbrot points out that Johnson's attitude is emphasized by a series of negatives:

No dangers fright him, and no labours tire;  
 O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain, 195  
Unconquered lord of pleasure and of pain;  
No joys to him pacific scepters yield,  
 War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field;  
 Behold surrounding kings their pow'r combine,  
 And one capitulate, and one resign; 200  
 Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain;  
 "Think nothing gained," he cries, till nought remain  
 (ll. 194-202; my italics).

Besides the series of negatives, some of them in parallel grammatical structure and in identical positions within half-lines, Johnson emphasizes his message by antithesis in more than one sense: "O'er love, o'er fear" (l. 195), and "of pleasure and of pain" (l. 190).

Lines 203-204,

On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,  
 And all be mine beneath the polar sky!

suddenly reverse the negatives and present the phrase Gothic standards whose ambiguous meaning reaches to the core of Charles' character. Weinbrot says Gothic means Swedish or Teutonic. Since the full title for Kings of Sweden now, and probably in the eighteenth century, is "King of Swedes, Goths, and Wends," the word Gothic is another example, like proceed in the scholar section, of Johnson's careful precision in diction. The reader of course can interpret the adjective in more than one sense. Weinbrot explains that other common meanings are rude, barbarous, and uncivilized, and that the word often described the destroyers of Rome

and the onslaught of the Dark Ages. The word reminds us "that in spite of Charles' personality, his destructive and vain wish for military supremacy threatens civilization."<sup>85</sup> The portrait continues with a description of the hero's triumphs:

The march begins in military state,  
And nations on his eye suspended wait  
(ll. 205-206).

Ambiguity in the second line is syntactical; suspended may modify the "eye" or view Charles surveys, or it may modify wait and thus describe nations frozen in terror as they watch for Charles' attack. As the poem refers to Charles' defeat by Peter the Great of Russia at "Pultowa," or Poltava, in 1709, again several words offer implications which help to interlock the sections of the poem and to broaden its meaning: shews, needy, suppliant, and wait:

The vanquish'd hero leaves his broken bands,  
And shews his miseries in distant lands;  
Condemn'd a needy suppliant to wait,  
While ladies interpose, and slaves debate  
(ll. 211-14).

The beaten Charles now deserts his followers and runs to "distant lands." McAdam and Milne explain that after his defeat by the Russians, Charles XII fled to Turkey. Five years later, in 1714, he returned to his own country and "died in the siege of the Fortress Fredriksten in Norway in 1718."<sup>86</sup> Thus in a foreign land, Turkey, Charles, the "vanquish'd hero" (l. 211), "shews his miseries" (l. 212). The two earlier established meanings of show, to present an ostentatious display and to offer an illusory spectacle, ironically apply here. As the fallen hero, Charles is still commanding some attention, but he has become phantom-like because his goals are vain. He is now humiliated as a "needy suppliant" (l. 213), a description which recalls both the "needy traveller" (l. 37)

and the several references to suppliants: the "suppliant voice" (1. 12), the "unnumber'd suppliants" at Preferment's gate (1. 73), and the suppliants who scorn Wolsey (1. 112). Yet to realize the significance of Johnson's attitude toward Charles XII, we must note a difference in spelling. Charles is a suppliant, one who asks "submissively"; the others are mere beseechers or pleaders. Connotations differ in the word wait, which ends line 206, "And nations on his [Wolsey's] eye suspended wait," and line 213, "Condemned a needy suppliant to wait." In the first instance, nations "wait" with dread for Charles' battle movements, but in line 213 he must himself "wait," almost as a servant as "ladies" try to "interpose" among other generals.

Reflecting the negatives associated with Charles early in the passage in lines 194-202, a series of interrogatives concerning the leader's death appears in lines 215-18, forming the rhetorical figures of epilexis, questions posed to reproach rather than to gain information, and anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive verses:

But did not Chance at length her error mend?  
 Did no subverted empire mark his end?  
 Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound?  
 Or hostile millions press him to the ground?  
 (11. 215-18).

The negative case of the first two questions and the tone of rebuke, as well as the echo of the negatives at the passage's beginning (11. 194-202), lead the reader to choose a negative answer. The nearly perfect parallel grammatical structure implies that the same answer fits all four inquiries. Thus by the structure of the section, the interrogative form of the ideas, and the grammatical parallels, Johnson appears to open a variety of responses to his reader but subtly leads him to only one.

Eliot and McAdam comment on compression of meaning in the final couplet of the section on Charles XII:

His fall was destined to a barren strand,  
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;  
He left a name at which the world grew pale,  
To point a moral or adorn a tale (ll. 219-22).

Eliot states that in some of Johnson's "best lines" (ll. 219-222), readers find "a degree of heterogeneity of material compelled into unity. . . . The effect is due to a contrast of ideas."<sup>87</sup> McAdam says the contrast "epitomizes the vanity of military pride and of the desire to make war in order to achieve fame and power."<sup>88</sup> Opposing meanings occur in the word tale, the final word in the Charles portrait. As it did in the introduction to the military portraits in "the gazette's pompous tale" (l. 177), the word now has a double connotation: actual events, which are the series of Charles' victories, and the illusion or fiction of grandeur they become.

The shorter portraits of Xerxes and Charles Albert of Bavaria open with an introductory couplet:

All times their scenes of pompous woes afford,  
From Persia's tyrant to Bavaria's lord  
(ll. 223-24).

The verb afford can mean to accomplish or to bear the cost of an exploit. The poet may be saying that nations of all ages have produced their own particular woeful scenes, or that all nations have paid for them in money and lives. The poem does not make clear what is modified by the couplet's second line, "From Persia's tyrant to Bavaria's lord" (l. 224). If these prepositional phrases describe "All times," then they limit the period under discussion to about two thousand years, from about 450 B.C. to Johnson's day. If they modify scenes or woes, as appears more likely,

then Xerxes and Charles Albert merely represent two examples, one from an ancient and one from a modern era.

The Xerxes portrait illustrates how Johnson employs ambivalence in syntax, multiple meanings, and rhetorical patterns to complicate his message. In lines 227-28,

Great Xerxes comes to seize the certain prey,  
And starves exhausted regions in his way,

the reader is in doubt whether the phrase certain prey means that Xerxes is sure of conquering or that the nations in his path see their fate as hopeless. The phrase in his way can refer to the route of the advancing Persian army or the particular manner Xerxes forces conquered people to turn over food supplies and other plunder. In the following couplet,

Attendant Flatt'ry counts his myriads o'er,  
Till counted myriads sooth his pride no more  
(ll. 229-30),

Johnson's handling of rhetorical techniques and his ability to employ vigorous adjectives to shape meanings of his abstractions appear strongly. The abstraction Flatt'ry becomes personified through its epithet Attendant, which may mean simply waiting, or serving as a kind of handmaid constantly at the general's side. The rhetorical pattern in the couplet is multiclinalum, the repetition of words from the same root with different endings; Johnson uses counts in one line and counted in the next. Flattery, of course, is constantly attendant or uppermost in the mind of Xerxes as he continuously numbers his "myriads" of captives; the repetition in counts and counted seems to lengthen the task in time, just as the use of "At length" with "train" appeared to extend the long line of courtiers watching Wolsey's loss of favor. Moving to line 231, "Fresh praise is try'd till madness fires his mind," we see that the verb fires

may project two meanings acceptable in context: to ignite or kindle as with desire, or to destroy or explode. With either meaning, the verb supports the poem's heat and expansion imagery as a depiction of earthly wishes. In line 233, "New pow'rs are claim'd, new pow'rs are still bestow'd," Johnson implies the stacking of action on action through three techniques: by the balance of his half-lines, by the use of anaphora in the repetition of the word New at the beginning of the two clauses, and by the employment of disjunctio, conclusion of each proposition with its own verb.

The portrait of Charles Albert of Bavaria, the final military example, shows the multiple meanings and syntactical ambiguity that are the major elements in expanding the message:

The bold Bavarian, in a luckless hour,  
Tries the dread summits of Caesarian pow'r,  
With unexpected legions bursts away,  
And sees defenceless realms receive his sway;  
Short away! fair Austria spreads her mournful charms,       245  
The queen, the beauty, sets the world in arms;  
From hill to hill the beacon's rousing blaze  
Spreads wide the hope of plunder and of praise;  
The fierce Croatian, and the wild Hussar,  
And all the sons of ravage croud the war;               250  
The baffled prince in honour's flatt'ring bloom  
Of hasty greatness finds the fatal doom,  
His foes decision, and his subjects blame  
And steals to death from anguish and from shame  
(ll. 241-54).

Several examples of multiple meanings of single words appear in this passage. In line 242, "Tries the dread summits of Caesarian pow'r," the verb tries may mean either attempts or tests, for Charles Albert, who McAdam and Milne note was "elected Holy Roman Emperor as Charles VIII in 1742 after invading the 'defenceless realms' of Upper Austria and Bohemia,"<sup>89</sup> attempts to cross the mountains and tests the power of his army against both nature and man. The word summits also projects two



meanings, one concrete and one abstract. Since "the bold Bavarian" has to lead troops through the Alps, the same mountains crossed by Hannibal, summits may refer to mountain peaks. On the other hand, Johnson may be showing that Charles Albert wanted to reach the "summits" of military might that the Caesars attained. Further, the word sway, at the end of the second couplet (l. 244), may describe Charles' abstract influence or the physical sweep and momentum of his army's attack on "fair Austria" (l. 245).

Syntactical ambiguity also appears in this portrait in lines 251-2,

The baffled prince in honour's flatt'ring bloom  
Of hasty greatness finds the fatal doom.

The prepositional phrase Of hasty greatness may modify either bloom or doom. If it refers to bloom, Charles Albert is at the height of his power at the time he meets his fate; if it refers to doom, then he finds the doom of hasty or too-sudden "greatness" is the fatal or "afflictive dart" for him. In the passage's final line, "And steals to death from anguish and from shame," context does not clarify whether from means away from or due to. The hero could seek death to escape or to avoid anguish and shame, or he could die of remorse.

Certain words in the Xerxes and Charles Albert sections serve as links between the portraits of these two generals as well as between the military portraits and the generalized opening section (ll. 1-20). As an example of the first linking, the reader notes that Xerxes is a "spreading god" (l. 234), and later that Charles Albert watches as "Austria spreads her mournful charms" (l. 245) and the blazing beacon "Spreads wide the hope of plunder" (l. 248). The three uses of variations of the root word spread indicate three connotations. The "spreading

god" Xerxes is of course widening his areas of conquest. Austria sadly spreads or presents her charms, and the beacon projects or announces the surge of power. The root word spread also connects these two military portraits with the poem's opening section, for the reader remembers that the path of "wav'ring man" was "o'erspread with snares" (l. 6). In like manner the "beacon's rousing blaze" (l. 247) of the Charles Albert section recalls the "festal blazes" of more than seventy lines earlier (l. 175) in the introduction to the military portraits, and subtly reasserts the denotation implied earlier--the torches of triumph. Further, the "pompous woes" of the Xerxes section echo the "pompous tale" of the introduction to the military portraits. Probably the closest link is the use of *multiclinatum*, repetition of words from the same root but with different endings, which here involves the root word dread to tie together the portraits of Xerxes and Charles Albert. At the end of the Xerxes section, line 239, the general quits the "dreaded coast." Four lines later, at the beginning of the Charles Albert portrait, the Bavarian explores the "dread summits" of "Caesarean pow'r" (l. 242).

Like Juvenal, Johnson now turns from ancient and modern military leaders to portraits of old age and youthful beauty, widening his examples to include all human life. Considering the old age section first, we can by way of introduction analyze its implication of one of the major ideas in the entire poem: pride. The word pride itself does not appear in the old age section, but readers are always aware of its force in human motivation toward vain wishes. Pride often rests on an unfounded or inflated idea of one's own worth. Johnson's old people, particularly the wealthy old man praying for more time, appear to regard themselves as too important to be covered by natural laws, so extraordinary that the

"doom of man" should be reversed for them. This vanity leads the wealthy old man to bore relatives and friends; he believes they are fond of him and enjoy his speeches, when actually they are watching for clues as to how soon his death will come. The pronoun his reflects the ambiguity of his situation. Johnson shows the wealthy old man handling "his bonds of debt," "his coffers," and "his gold." These treasures, however, are no longer his; pride misleads him. He is too old to enjoy such material things and must touch them now with "cripled hands" and regard them with "anxious heart" (l. 287). His only true possessions are "dreaded losses"--of treasure, friends, and relatives. The old man prays that his "life" be enlarged "with multitude of days" (l. 255). By the word life he implies strength needed for normal living and for joy in daily tasks or pleasures. All of the added days lay "siege to life" (l. 284), however, by gradually shutting off each source of enjoyment. Thus life, as granted, is living death.

Close analysis of the ambiguous elements within this section should begin with an examination of the opening couplet,

Enlarge my life with multitude of days,  
In health, in sickness, thus the suppliant prays  
(ll. 255-56).

It is significant that Johnson chooses the word suppliant rather than the pejorative supplicant. Through the slight difference in denotation, the reader understands the poet believes the old man is to be pitied rather than reproached. There is also syntactical ambiguity: the antithetical phrase, In health, in sickness, may operate backwards or forwards, modifying either days or prays. The old man can be asking for additional days whether they offer health or illness, or he can be praying constantly whether he is sick or well. Chiasmus, the reversal of

grammatical elements within a construction, emphasizes the meaning of the next line: "That life protracted is protracted woe" (l. 258). The word protracted not only forms a major element of the figure but also carries ambiguity. In Johnson's time its meanings were both wasted and prolonged in time to cause delay. Thus "life protracted" becomes not only lengthened in time but wasteful, and "protracted woe" is not only extended but purposeless.

The poet now discusses the failing senses of sight, taste, and hearing. In the sight couplet, the old man looks at flowers and fruit:

With listless eyes the dotard views the store,  
He views, and wonders why they please no more  
(ll. 263-64).

By repeating views Johnson employs the technique of conduplicatio, repetition for emphasis. Yet a slightly different meaning can be inferred from each instance. In the first line, views means merely to see or behold, but in the second, variation results from the link with wonders, and the word means now to inspect or examine carefully or to regard or consider in a certain light. The word views also connects the old age section with the poem's opening line: "Let observation with extensive view." Syntactical ambiguity is apparent in the next couplet describing taste:

Now pall the tasteless meats, and joyless wines,  
And Luxury with sighs her slave resigns  
(ll. 265-66).

Since the phrase with sighs can work backwards or forwards, the meaning is that Luxury personified sighs as she relinquishes a disciple as dedicated as the wealthy old man, or that the old man himself sighs as he accepts his restriction, the resignation of his pleasures. The word re-signs recalls from the Villiers-Harley-Wentworth-Hyde section the political leaders whose power was too great "to resign."

A longer portion of the wealthy old age section deals with hearing. Minstrels are summoned to ease the aged man's pain with music, but he can hear nothing even though Orpheus might move mountains with his melodies:

Nor lute nor lyre his feeble pow'rs attend,  
Nor sweeter musick of a virtuous friend,  
But everlasting dictates croud his tongue,  
Perversely grave, or positively wrong  
(ll. 271-74).

Johnson uses rhetorical patterns and syntactical ambiguity in this section, and he places certain words in positions of emphasis in the heroic couplet to further complicate meaning. In lines 271-72, the anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of verses, with Nor at the start of both lines of the couplet, and the series of three Nor phrases, "Nor lute nor lyre . . . Nor sweeter musick," gives impetus to the thought and helps carry the reader smoothly through the couplet's second line. Rather than being anticlimactic, as Piper describes some of Johnson's second lines, this line (l. 272) projects the weight of meaning, for it takes the reader from the art of hired strangers--"ye minstrels"--to the sympathetic conversation of a "virtuous friend." The suddenness of Johnson's turn from the two musical instruments, the lute and lyre, to the human voice of the friend deepens the effectiveness of the implied comparison between a more or less mechanical performance and emotional interaction between companions. In the following couplet,

But everlasting dictates croud his tongue,  
Perversely grave, or positively wrong  
(ll. 273-73),

The second line draws weight and impetus from balance and from arrangement of the words within the half-lines. Each half of the line contains an adverb followed by an adjective, the accent falling on the short terse

adjectives, one placed just before the caesura, the other at the line's end. Yet Johnson positions the longer adverb and the stronger adjective in the second half-line so that they may draw attention in the positions of greatest emphasis in the entire couplet. Thus he leads the reader from the old man's stubbornness to his error of judgment or fact.

The next few lines illustrate syntactical ambiguity and multiple meanings. The "fawning niece" and "pampered guest" listen to the old man's tales, but "scarce a legacy can bribe to hear" (l. 278). The word scarce, a contraction of scarcely, can function as an adjective and modify legacy or function as an adverb and modify bribe, and thus state either that no gift has the power to tempt the family to listen with real interest, or that any legacy the old man might leave would hardly be enough to bribe them to give attention. A similar example appears in lines 280-82:

The daughter's petulance, the son's expence,  
 Improve his heady rage with treach'rous skill,  
 And mould his passions till they make his will  
 (ll. 280-82).

Readers may wonder if the children, by exciting the father's emotions, are causing him to hate people he formerly loved and thus are directing his will power, or are leading the father to rewrite his final will and testament.

The short passage on the old man's physical troubles (ll. 283-90) presents several words whose repetition or connotations link this section of the poem to previous ones. The "Unnumber'd maladies" of the aged man echo the "Unnumber'd suppliants" of the sinking statesman section. The old man's counting of his gold recalls Xerxes counting his "myriads," as well as the "frame of gold" in the statesman section and the three references to gold in the "massacre of gold" paragraph (l. 22). The old man's

avarice is described as "unextinguish'd," and readers remember the many images of heat and fire in connection with vain wishes.

Johnson draws on two meanings of the word press to help to link the passage on the wealthy old man with the following paragraph on the benevolent old man. For the wealthy one, maladies "press the dire blockade" against life; the verb in this phrase means to drive or thrust ahead. With the virtuous old man, however, Misfortune presses her load on "the weary minutes flagging wings" (l. 300), and the verb now means to exert a steady downward force or weight.

The final paragraph on old age reminds us that few men die in peaceful, kindly senility, gently awaiting the "gulphs of fate," a phrase which recalls the "gulphs below" (l. 128) ending the Wolsey passage. Johnson then makes reference to Croesus, "Lydia's monarch," who was warned by Solon that fate often punishes the very rich. In a couplet whose second line employs antithesis to emphasize ambiguity, he asks,

In life's last scene what prodigies surprise,  
Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise?  
(ll. 315-16).

His examples are Marlborough, who suffered two paralytic strokes before his death in 1722, and Swift, who became insane during his final years. In line 318, "And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show," Johnson ends the old age passage with show, a word he has used frequently with varying connotations. Two meanings apply here: Swift at the height of his power was a "show" of success. But in his senility he became an object of curiosity, a sideshow that servants revealed to tourists, as McAdam and Milne report, "for a fee."<sup>90</sup>

Like Juvenal, Johnson discusses beauty in his final portrait. He first presents a mother awaiting her child's birth:

The teeming mother, anxious for her race,  
 Begs for each birth the fortune of a face:  
 Yet Vane could tell what ill<sup>s</sup> from beauty spring;  
 And Sedley curs'd the form that pleas'd a king  
 (ll. 319-22).

Intentional or not, a pun appears in the name of Anne Vane (1705-36), mistress of Frederick, Prince of Wales, in the 1730s. Other words in the passage, including teeming, fortune, tell, ill<sup>s</sup>, and form, offer double meanings of a more serious type. The "teeming mother," for example, is not only ready to give birth and thus is teeming physically, but is also full of anxiety and teeming mentally. She prays for her child the good fortune of a pretty face, but the "fortune" that face attracts can be the rich nobleman a daughter might marry. In line 321, "Yet Vane could tell what ill<sup>s</sup> from beauty spring," two meanings apply to tell and ill<sup>s</sup>. Tell may mean that Vane is able to discern or count such troubles immediately, or that from experience she can describe her problems as a beautiful woman. ill<sup>s</sup> may be simple misfortunes in contrast to the good fortune the mother hopes for, but they may also be wickedness, malevolence, or disease--especially venereal disease, common at that time and difficult or impossible to cure. The next line, "And Sedley curs'd the form that pleas'd a king," (l. 322) refers to Catherine Sedley, whom McAdam and Milne identify as a mistress of the Duke of York, made a countess a year after her lover became James II in 1685.<sup>91</sup> Form in this context has a variety of meanings. It can refer to the woman's body, which the king admired, but also to her graceful behavior in court society which first attracted him. In the light of Johnson's emphasis on vain show, such interpretations are reasonable.

From general declamation the poet turns now to address young beauties of the court in a chiding, fatherly tone. In the apostrophe to "Ye



nymphs of rosy lips" (l. 323), he poses a long--four-couplet--question which preserves momentum through grammatical parallels and a variety of rhetorical figures:

Ye nymphs of rosy lips and radiant eyes,  
 Whom Pleasure keeps too busy to be wise,  
 Whom joys with soft varieties invite, 325  
 By day the frolick, and the dance by night,  
 Who frown with vanity, who smile with art,  
 And ask the latest fashion of the heart,  
 What care, what rules your heedless charms shall save,  
 Each nymph your rival, and each youth your slave?  
 (ll. 323-30).

The question includes two "Whom" clauses forming anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of clauses; two short "who" clauses which together span one line in a second pattern of anaphora; an arrangement of diacope, the repetition of a word with a few words in between--in this case the word what--and in the final line, repetition and balance. First, chiasmus, reversal of grammatical sequence in the second of two half-lines, in line 326, "By day the frolick, and the dance by night," stresses the frivolity and restlessness of the girls' lives, implied in the preceding line with the phrase soft varieties of entertainment. Other techniques appear in the remainder of the passage, in which Johnson offers explanation and warning:

Against your fame with fondness hate combines,  
 The rival batters, and the lover mines.  
 With distant voice neglected Virtue calls,  
 Less heard and less, the faint remonstrance falls; 335  
 Tir'd with contempt, she quits the slipp'ry reign,  
 And Pride and Prudence take her seat in vain.  
 In croud at once, where none the pass defend,  
 The harmless Freedom, and the private Friend.  
 The guardians yield, by force superior ply'd;  
 By Int'rest, Prudence; and by Flatt'ry, Pride: 340  
 Now beauty falls betray'd, despis'd, distress'd,  
 And hissing Infamy proclaims the rest (ll. 331-42).

In the first line of this paragraph, the poet employs disjunctio, conclusion of each proposition with its own verb, to show the vigor and violence

of his thought. The verbs ending those thoughts are combines, batters, and mines. In the next couplet his rhetorical pattern is enAllage, substitution of one part of speech for another:

With distant voice neglected Virtue calls,  
Less heard and less, the faint remonstrance falls  
(ll. 333-34).

In the second line of this couplet, use of less first as an adverb modifying heard and then as an adjective modifying remonstrance forms this figure of speech. Not only does the pattern create ambiguity based on the point of reference of the second less, but it also gives the effect of the voice of Virtue dying in the distance. Lines 339-40 form prozeugma, expression of the verb in the first clause but allowing it to be merely understood in others, since the verb ply'd is expressed in the initial clause and understood in the second and third of the series:

The guardians yield, by force superior ply'd,  
By Int'rest, Prudence, and by Flatt'ry, Pride  
(ll. 339-40).

The second line produces a terseness that fits the military imagery of the guardians and supports the chiding tone of the section. In the final couplet,

Now beauty falls, betray'd, despis'd, distress'd,  
And hissing Infamy proclaims the rest  
(ll. 341-42),

the omission of conjunctions between the adjectives produces asyndeton. The device emphasizes the demoralizing steps the beauty undergoes as she is ostracized.

Multiple meaning and ambiguity of syntax enrich the texture of the same passage. When the nymphs "ask the latest fashion of the heart," (l. 328), they may inquire about the newest mode of dress or about the young man who is the current favorite. In the next couplet,

What care, what rules your heedless charms shall save,  
 Each nymph your rival, and each youth your slave?  
 (ll. 329-30),

multiple or special meanings occur. The speaker asks what sort of "care," a noun meaning suffering, grief, sorrow, trouble, or anxiety, will be "saved," or avoided, by the nymphs' thoughtless way of life. He also demands to know what "rules," a word indicating court practices or standards, or prescribed criteria of conduct, will be "saved," which here means preserved or protected, by their selfish behavior. By drawing on two meanings of one verb, save, and by supplying two direct objects, care and rules, each fitting one meaning of the verb, Johnson increases the complexity of his poetic texture. One of the denotations of save--preserve or continue--extends through the second line of the couplet: "Each nymph your rival, and each youth your slave?" (l. 330). Johnson may imply that the nymphs wish to preserve or continue a format in which all females are rivals and all males slaves. Results of such a situation become obvious in the next couplet, when "hate combines" with fondness to cause the rival to "batter" and the lover to "mine."

In the final section Johnson, rejecting Juvenal's Stoicism, advises human beings to seek heavenly guidance and to confine desires to goals befitting religion and earthly happiness: love, patience, faith. Once, again the elements of ambiguity are rhetorical figures, combinations of vigorous modifiers with abstract terms, ambivalence in pronoun reference, connotations of words recalling earlier references or fortifying earlier metaphors, and multiple meanings of individual words. The passage opens with four rhetorical questions:

Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find?  
 Must dull Suspence corrupt the stagnant mind?  
 Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,

Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?  
 Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,  
 No cries attempt the mercies of the skies?  
 (ll. 343-48).

The interrogatives constitute erotesis, questions implying strong affirmation or denial. Their ambiguity lies in their suddenness, in the lack of transition between the beauty section and the religious conclusion. The reader, unprepared for the speaker to address him, naturally wonders whether the inquiries are directed to him, since the entire poem has raised similar questions in his mind. Identity of the addressee is not made clear until the line following the passage quoted above, when the unnamed Enquirer appears. The Enquirer seems to be mankind in general, described in the poem's first section.

Johnson's diction also permits ambiguity of meaning. The poet asks where Hope and Fear can be satisfied: "Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find?" (l. 343). The adverb where reflects man's searching, but the word objects indicates that he is seeking something, some concrete element outside himself as a means of gratification--a tangible thing his senses can identify, when the final answer will come from an intangible force within himself. In the second question, "Must dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind" (l. 344), Johnson's manner of pairing dull and suspence changes the common connotation of the noun. Most readers believe suspense is sharply felt, is a state of excitement or anxiety, but the modifier dull deflates the noun into a condition of sluggish or languid uncertainty, emphasizing the misery and helplessness of man. The verb corrupt lends complexity to this interpretation by indicating a spoiled or putrid state, and the phrase stagnant mind spreads the metaphor of adulteration throughout the line. As a stagnant

pool is foul, the stagnant mind is corrupt, a breeding place for mental disease.

Having pictured the nihilistic possibilities for a man lacking faith, Johnson loads his next couplet with energizing adjectives:

Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,  
Roll darkling down the current of his fate?  
(ll. 345-46)

Bate's comment helps clarify it:

What is typical of Johnson is that his imagination follows up and completes the rather conventional metaphor (torrent of fate) so that now man is pictured as actually rolling down it. Darkling (in the dark) adds a further element to the scene, and is at the same time one of Johnson's typical doublings, since it translates into concrete terms a meaning already given in ignorance. Meanwhile a crosscurrent of feeling comes to the fore in the word sedate. For man to be inordinately sedate in a situation so lamentable is ridiculous in the extreme. And, of course, sedate also keeps its Latin root sense of "sitting," so that ignorance becomes the boat, as it were, in which man is both swept along and (though only temporarily) protected. The concreteness of this imagery, the complex interactivity of it, the bold heaping up, and the multiple meanings and feelings evoked are all characteristic.<sup>92</sup>

In his final question,

Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,  
No cries attempt the mercies of the skies?  
(ll. 347-48)

Johnson employs the verb attempt in the sense of trying to move by entreaty; thus we may perceive heaven is moved to show mercy upon hearing man's pleas.

Suddenly the poet deserts the role of questioner and appears to retire the petitioner into the distance and to address him as though he were a different individual:

Enquirer, cease, petitions yet remain,  
Which heav'n may hear, nor deem religion vain  
(ll. 349-50).

The Enquirer is told to continue to offer prayers but to allow heaven to

make choices, for he will be

Safe in his pow'r, whose eyes discern afar  
The secret ambush of a specious pray'r  
(ll. 353-54).

In this couplet the phrase secret ambush recalls the "wav'ring man" whose path is filled with unseen snares, and the "afflictive dart" which accompanies human wishes. And in both this couplet and the next,

Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,  
Secure whate'er he gives, he gives the best  
(ll. 355-56),

pronouns whose antecedents are either missing or unclear create ambiguity. His, whose, and he have no antecedents, although the Christian reader assumes they refer to God.

In the next two couplets, three words particularly--fires, fervours, and pour--lead readers to remember references with slightly different colorings of meaning. In lines 357-58,

Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,  
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,

fires strengthens the heat metaphor of human yearnings, but it does so in a context different from previous sections. Earlier references were to the "fatal heat" of courage (l. 17), and the "restless fire" that "precipitates on death" (l. 20) in the introduction; the followers "burning" to advance in the sinking statesman section, the young student who "burns" with ambition; the "soul of fire" of Charles XII of Sweden (l. 193), and Xerxes, whose mind "fires" with madness (l. 231). Now, though, the word applies to heavenly inspiration. The poet extends the imagery into the following line: "Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind." (l. 359). He combines fervours, which means intense heat, high temperature, or glowing passion, with pour, which amplifies the poet's water or vapor metaphors in connection with confusion. Yet the connotation of

pours, too, changes in the conclusion. Earlier, in line 80, in which the statesman's door "Pours in the morning worshiper no more," pours had a perjorative connotation, but in the conclusion it indicates an intense and continuous release of religious passion.

The proper "objects" of prayer are now listed in a climactic arrangement of anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses, which stresses the emphasis on the third and most important of the parallel terms: "For love . . . For patience . . . For faith." We are moved from the kind of love earthly honors cannot satisfy to patience, which quells the "ills" or troubles of life, to faith, which yearns for eternal peace and welcomes death. Here, in a reassertion of his military imagery in line 364, "Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat," Johnson draws on the multiple meanings of two terms: signal and retreat. A signal can be a sign of danger for the faithless or a token of the approach of heaven for the faithful. A retreat may be merely a retirement from "the busy scenes of crowded life" (l. 4) on earth, a withdrawal of troops from enemy ground, or a place or time of religious seclusion. The connotations function in two ways: they strengthen the military metaphors and they support the religious allusions which appear throughout the poem.

In lines 365-66, repetition and plurality of meanings underline and expand the message:

These goods for man the laws of heav'n ordain,  
These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain,"

the repetition of These goods balances the anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of verses, employed only a few lines earlier in the listing of the three aesthetic qualities: "For love . . . For Patience . . . For faith" (ll. 361-63). The phrase to gain in the half-

line "who grants the power to gain" forms an infinitive and completes the meaning of pow'r. The phrase pow'r to gain thus means that God not only is a source of love, patience, and faith, but also gives humans the ability to "gain" or attain the abstract "goods."

This portion of Chapter IV has examined ambiguity and ambivalence in Johnson's best-known poetic work, The Vanity of Human Wishes, as the first part of the chapter did in London. Before comparing Johnson's two imitations of Juvenal's satires to evaluate the English poet's achievement in ambiguity, however, we should recall that the works differ in two important ways. The first is their purpose: Johnson wrote London because he needed money, and he chose a form, the satire, and a subject, city life, that were popular enough to reward him financially and to obtain recognition from literary authorities even though the work was published anonymously. By the time he wrote The Vanity of Human Wishes, however, Johnson's poetic skills and self-confidence had increased through ten years of successful writing, and he chose a subject that had always concerned him: the dilemma of man. Another difference is audience. Only Londoners or people living near the city could grasp all the references to the court, Parliamentary actions, and current leaders in London; today's readers need explanatory notes. But modern readers have little trouble with The Vanity of Human Wishes beyond identification of a few military figures. The message touches all thinking men of all times.

The same sources create ambiguity in both poems: abstractions; rhetorical arrangements including a kind of repetitio, repeating the same word with slightly different form or meaning in different couplet or in different sections of the poem; operation of English syntax within



the conventions of the heroic couplet; multiple meanings of individual words; and associations of denotations and connotations of various words to broaden meaning and create imagery.

First, in both poems abstractions, supported by adjectives and verbs that sharpen personification, are an element of ambiguity. But the abstract terms in The Vanity of Human Wishes are less declamatory and more subdued than those in London, and thus project greater sincerity.

Second, a greater variety of rhetorical devices occurs in The Vanity of Human Wishes than in London, but in London their deployment is more concentrated and more intense, so that Johnson appears almost to practice steering his thoughts into particular patterns of communication and persuasion recognized by classical writers. In The Vanity of Human Wishes, such figures are employed with greater skill and subtlety. In a sense, Johnson seems in this second long poem to free himself from the control or stricture exercised by classical arrangement, and to be more relaxed in making his own choices wherever he sees that such devices would intensify or broaden his message.

Third, the manipulation of English syntax within heroic couplet conventions is certainly a tool of ambiguity in London, but it is only a minor one. Johnson uses it more frequently in The Vanity of Human Wishes and is better able to place his important words within his poetic statement to take advantage of the couplet's points of emphasis. In The Vanity of Human Wishes, then, syntactical manipulation is a major element of ambiguity.

Fourth, comparison of multiple meanings of individual words in the two poems leads to a similar judgment. Although many words in London project several meanings appropriate in context, the diction in The

Vanity of Human Wishes better employs this tool.

Last, a great difference between the poems arises from Johnson's skill in associating denotations and connotations of various words to achieve a network of expanded and related meanings and to create for fortify images. Again, to a certain extent Johnson does tap this source of ambiguity in London. But this poem lacks major imagery; thus reverberations of meanings of particular words and the interaction of their denotations and connotations cannot support metaphor; whereas in the later poem, images of rising and falling, of military might, of water or vapor, and of heat and expansion can all be amplified by the interweaving of denotations and connotations of various words, some separated by many lines.

The conclusion is that Johnson did develop as a poet during the decade between his two poems. In London he tries the techniques of ambiguity that work well in the heroic couplet tradition: abstractions, rhetorical figures, syntactical positioning, multiple meanings, and association of denotations and connotations. In The Vanity of Human Wishes he perfects his handling of these tools.

The next chapter will examine Johnson's prologues, all written in the heroic couplet, to determine whether ambiguity is present, and if so, to identify its sources.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Poems, Vol. VI of The Yale Edition of The Works of Samuel Johnson, ed. E. L. McAdam with George Milne (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), Introd., p. xvi. All citations of Johnson's poetry are to this text and future references will be acknowledged parenthetically by line number.

<sup>2</sup>McAdam and Milne, Introd., p. xvii.

<sup>3</sup>McAdam and Milne, Introd., p. xx.

<sup>4</sup>Ruth Salvaggio, "Dryden's Syntax: A Reappraisal of His Couplet Verse and His Public Poetry," Diss. Rice, 1979, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup>Walter Jackson Bate, Samuel Johnson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 173.

<sup>6</sup>William Bowman Piper, The Heroic Couplet (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve Univ. Press, 1969), p. 397.

<sup>7</sup>Maynard Mack, "'Wit and Poetry and Pope': Some Observations on His Imagery" in Pope and His Contemporaries: Essays Presented to George Sherburn, ed. James L. Clifford and Louis A. Landa (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), p. 24.

<sup>8</sup>Johnson: The Critical Heritage, ed. James T. Boulton (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), Introd., p. 22.

<sup>9</sup>Boulton, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup>Chester F. Chapin, Personification in Eighteenth Century Poetry (New York: King's Crown Press at Columbia Univ., 1955), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Chapin, p. 106.

<sup>12</sup>Chapin, p. 133.

<sup>13</sup>Rachel Trickett, The Honest Muse: A Study in Augustan Verse (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. 243.

- <sup>14</sup>Bate, pp. 284-285.
- <sup>15</sup>Bate, p. 288.
- <sup>16</sup>Michael Coffey, Roman Satire (New York: Methuen, 1976), p. 143.
- <sup>17</sup>William S. Anderson, "Imagery in Satires of Horace and Juvenal," American Journal of Philology 81 (1960), 249.
- <sup>18</sup>Ulrich Knoche, Roman Satire, trans. E. S. Ramage (Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1975), p. 149.
- <sup>19</sup>The Latin is quoted from G. G. Ramsay, Juvenal and Persius with an English Translation (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), l. 356. All further quotations from Juvenal's original will be from this text and will be noted parenthetically by line number. The translation is from Rolfe Humphries, The Satires of Juvenal (Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1958), l. 356. All further translations of Juvenal will be from this text and will be noted parenthetically by line number.
- <sup>20</sup>Richard A. Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969), pp. 22-23.
- <sup>21</sup>Salvaggio, pp. 28-29.
- <sup>22</sup>William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, 3rd ed. (New York: New Directions, 1971), p. 70. M. H. Abrams warns, however, that the goal of the student's search for ambiguity and ambivalence should be to deepen appreciation of the power, richness, and complexity of the language of poetry, not to find "ingenious, overdrawn, and sometimes self-contradictory explications that violate the norms of the English language and ignore controls upon reference exerted by the context of a literary passage." M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 4th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), p. 9.
- <sup>23</sup>E. L. McAdam, Johnson and Boswell: A Survey of Their Writings (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p. 26.
- <sup>24</sup>Ramsay, Introd., p. xxxvi.
- <sup>25</sup>Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. by L. F. Powell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), I, 128. All further references to Boswell's work will be to this text and will be noted by volume and page number.
- <sup>26</sup>Boswell's Life of Johnson, I, 129.

<sup>27</sup>Correspondence of Gray, ed. P. T. Toynbee and L. Whibley, 1935, I, quoted in Boulton, p. 20.

<sup>28</sup>Collected Works of Goldsmith, ed. Arthur Friedman, 1966, V, 320, quoted in Boulton, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup>William Mudford, Critical Enquiry into the Moral Writings of Samuel Johnson, pp. 68-80, quoted in Boulton, p. 45.

<sup>30</sup>T. S. Eliot, "Johnson as Critic and Poet," in On Poetry and Poets (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 179, quoted in Howard Weinbrot, The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 166, n. 5.

<sup>31</sup>Boswell's Life of Johnson, III, 178.

<sup>32</sup>Donald J. Greene, The Politics of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1960), quoted by Paul Fussell, Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 19.

<sup>33</sup>Paul Fussell, Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 19.

<sup>34</sup>Joseph Wood Krutch, Samuel Johnson (New York: Henry Holt, 1944), p. 63.

<sup>35</sup>John Wain, Samuel Johnson (New York: Viking, 1974), p. 86.

<sup>36</sup>Wain, p. 86.

<sup>37</sup>McAdam and Milen, p. 57.

<sup>38</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 47.

<sup>39</sup>Bate, pp. 610-11, n. 10.

<sup>40</sup>Charles Witke, Latin Satires: The Structure of Persuasion (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1970), p. 141.

<sup>41</sup>Boswell's Life of Johnson, II, 348.

<sup>42</sup>Samuel Johnson: Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Frank Brady and W. K. Wimsatt (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1977), p. 48, n. 15.

<sup>43</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 51.

- <sup>44</sup>Piper, p. 398.
- <sup>45</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 54.
- <sup>46</sup>John Butt, "Johnson's Practice in the Poetical Imitation" in New Light on Dr. Johnson, ed. Frederick W. Hillis (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), p. 25.
- <sup>47</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 55.
- <sup>48</sup>Brady and Wimsatt, p. 51, n. 32.
- <sup>49</sup>Boswell's Life of Johnson, IV, 87.
- <sup>50</sup>Bate, p. 173.
- <sup>51</sup>Mack, p. 22.
- <sup>52</sup>Brady and Wimsatt, p. 52, n. 36.
- <sup>53</sup>Bate, p. 297.
- <sup>54</sup>McAdam, p. 27.
- <sup>55</sup>McAdam, p. 29.
- <sup>56</sup>Ian Jack, Augustan Satire (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), p. 129.
- <sup>57</sup>Howard D. Weinbrot, The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Satire (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 198.
- <sup>58</sup>Boulton, Introd., p. 14.
- <sup>59</sup>Samule Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare," in Vol. VII of The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1904), p. 65.
- <sup>60</sup>Weinbrot, p. 195.
- <sup>61</sup>Weinbrot, Alexander Pope and the Traditions of Formal Verse Satire (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), Introd., p. xiv.
- <sup>62</sup>Trickett, p. 245.

<sup>63</sup>Eric Rothstein, Restoration and Eighteenth Century Poetry 1660-1780 (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 95.

<sup>64</sup>Richard E. Braun, Juvenal: Satires, trans. Jerome Mazzaro (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1967), Introd., p. xii.

<sup>65</sup>David Nichol Smith, Some Observations on Eighteenth Century Poetry (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1937), p. 41.

<sup>66</sup>Bate, p. 289.

<sup>67</sup>McAdam, p. 27.

<sup>68</sup>Bertrand Bronson, Samuel Johnson: Rasselas Poems, and Selected Prose (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 52, n. 2.

<sup>69</sup>Bate, p. 284.

<sup>70</sup>Bate, p. 287.

<sup>71</sup>Bate, p. 287.

<sup>72</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 95, n. 93.

<sup>73</sup>Bate, p. 286.

<sup>74</sup>Alexander Pope, The Iliad of Homer I (1715: folio ed.) quoted by Geoffrey Tillotson in "Eighteenth-Century Poetic Diction" II, in Essays in Criticism and Research (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1942), p. 66.

<sup>75</sup>Rothstein, p. 141.

<sup>76</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 97, n. 125.

<sup>77</sup>Empson, p. 68.

<sup>78</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 97, n. 131-32.

<sup>79</sup>Empson, p. 68.

<sup>80</sup>Brady and Wimsatt, p. 61, n. 29.

<sup>81</sup>McAdam, p. 28.

<sup>82</sup>Weinbrot, The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Satire, p. 203.

<sup>83</sup>Weinbrot, The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Satire, p. 205.

<sup>84</sup>Weinbrot, The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Satire, p. 204.

<sup>85</sup>Weinbrot, The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Satire, p. 205.

<sup>86</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 102, n. 210-12.

<sup>87</sup>Eliot, "Introduction to London and The Vanity of Human Wishes" in Selected Essays (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), p. 283.

<sup>88</sup>McAdam, p. 29.

<sup>89</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 103, n. 241-54.

<sup>90</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 106, n. 318.

<sup>91</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 106, n. 322.

<sup>92</sup>Bate, p. 285.



## CHAPTER V

### THE PROLOGUES AND THE EPILOGUE

In the prologues, frequently treated as hack-work by other eighteenth-century writers, Johnson shows noteworthy power.<sup>1</sup> Between 1740 and 1777, he wrote six prologues, often as favors for playwrights. The best, At the Opening of the Theatre in Drury-Lane (1747), was written for the occasion of his friend David Garrick's first night as manager. Others are to Lethe (1740), to Johnson's own play Irene (1749), to Comus (1750), to The Good-Natured Man (1768, and to A Word to the Wise (1777). Though its date is unknown, the epilogue to The Distrest Mother by Ambrose Philips may have been written earlier than any of the prologues, for Boswell reports that it is one of "a considerable collection" of Johnson's writings believed to date from 1725 to 1728,<sup>2</sup> and E. L. McAdam, Jr., and George Milne place the epilogue before London in their chronological arrangement in the Yale edition of Johnson's poems. The epilogue and the prologues generally demonstrate a tighter use of the heroic couplet than appears in the imitations. As Ruth Salvaggio points out in her analysis of Dryden's prologues and epilogues, the reason is probably that such poetry was meant to be heard, not read silently; tighter structure "might make it easier for an auditor to follow what is being said, but still might allow for flexibility in its implications."<sup>3</sup>

Except for Drury-Lane, Johnson's prologues are considered inferior to his imitations of Juvenal. For example, the heavy tone of the

Prologue to The Good-Natured Man does not fit comedy well; perhaps, as McAdam and Milne observe, Johnson "was in no mood to introduce a comedy";<sup>4</sup> and the Prologue to A Word to the Wise presumably did not engage Johnson's full powers, since the poet never held a high opinion of the author, Hugh Kelly, nor was their acquaintance ever close.<sup>5</sup> The epilogue to the Philips play The Distrest Mother probably was never even delivered; the sub-title states that it was "intended to have been spoke by a Lady who was to personate the Ghost of Hermione." Still, analysis of the prologues will permit tracing the devices of ambiguity in Johnson's heroic couplet. The prologues span at least thirty-seven years; two were written during the decade between publications of the imitations, and four were produced later than The Vanity of Human Wishes.

The Prologue Spoken at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury-Lane demonstrates all of the techniques of ambiguity appearing in the other prologues. In its survey of the history of English drama and its comments upon the changing tastes and the influence of audiences, it is outstanding.<sup>6</sup> It deals with Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, describes the Restoration, and outlines emergence of cold classical tragedy and ribald farce during the early eighteenth century.

Abstractions are one of the specific tools of ambiguity Johnson uses in this poem as well as in the other heroic couplet works. In the verse paragraph on Johnson, for example, the poet's name is one of only five concrete nouns within an eight-line section. A second technique in ambiguity is rhetorical devices. Other sources of ambiguity are multiple meanings of certain words and the use of words whose associations cluster to form a network of added interpretation. A final source, rare in Johnson's other heroic couplet poetry but skillfully employed here, is

juxtaposition of long Latinate words and short Anglo-Saxon terms to attain sudden anticlimax.

In the opening paragraph, personifications, multiple meanings, and repetition of certain terms or of words with similar reverberations create ambiguity. Vivid adjectives and verbs personify abstractions:

When Learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous foes  
 First rear'd the stage, immortal Shakespeare rose;  
 Each change of many-color'd life he drew,  
 Exhausted worlds, and then imagin'd new:  
 Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign, 5  
 And panting Time toil'd after him in vain:  
 His powerful strokes presiding truth impress'd,  
 And unresisted passion storm'd the breast  
 (11. 1-8).

Some combination of abstract nouns with other parts of speech, particularly panting Time toil'd and unresisted passion storm'd, approach imagery.

Multiple meanings are a factor in ambiguity. In the first couplet, "When Learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous foes / First rear'd the stage, immortal Shakespeare rose," the phrase Learning's triumph refers to reviving scholarship and art during the Renaissance; triumph, besides meaning victory, had a special interpretation in Elizabethan drama; the word then meant the musical interlude separating plays. In the first half of line 2, "First rear'd the stage," rear'd has three plausible meanings: roused or caused to rise, thus associating with "Shakespeare rose"; or bred, as drama's revival was an offspring of renewed culture, or elevated from oblivion. Shakespeare now is said to be "immortal." He "rose" in two senses: he emerged following the Dark Ages and towered over other dramatists. Lines 3-4, "Each change of many-color'd life he drew, / Exhausted worlds, and then imagin'd new," probably refer to stations of life from slave to king, sailor to grave-digger, poor drunkard to rich

merchant, as well as to life periods from childhood to old age and to varying moods that Shakespeare portrayed. In the phrase many-color'd life, the word color'd may imply complexion, outward appearance, or species; its special meaning in art also applies--full of zest, imaginative intensity, or vividness. Thus Shakespeare's characters are unique, and they represent many races and temperaments. Drew may also have more than one meaning. In one sense Shakespeare could extract his characters from life, and in another he could sketch their personalities.

Johnson's generalities combine with energetic adjectives and verbs in the next couplet, "Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign, / And panting Time toil'd after him in vain" (ll. 5-6). Existence refers to Shakespeare's mortality, his "bounded" span of fifty-two years. Thus Shakespeare's time on earth--personified--sees or watches him "spurn," i.e., reject or kick, her restriction. "Panting Time toil'd" in vain after him. Toil, from Middle English toilen meaning to pull about, can here show Time harassed or frustrated with exertion, or physically worn out from the effort of reducing Shakespeare to oblivion.

In lines 7-8, "His [Shakespeare's] powerful strokes presiding Time impress'd, / And unresisted Passion storm'd the breast," two Latinate words, presiding and impress'd, personify Truth. Presiding gains imagistic force from its original meaning; the word derives from praesidere, to sit in front of--from prae, before, and sedere, to sit; thus truth rests on a throne of authority. The Latin root of impressed is impri-mere from im, on or in, and premere, to press; Shakespeare's achievement thus presses into truth as she sits in honor.

The "powerful strokes" of Shakespeare may be his influence upon all literature, his artistic feats, or the marks made by his pen. In line 8,

"And unresisted passion storm'd the breast," the latinate unresisted-- along with strokes and storm'd--echoes the military tone of the "triumph o'er her barb'rous foes" in line 1 and bonds the paragraph. Because of its length and unhurried dignity, unresisted also creates suspense for passion.

In the second paragraph, subtle diction shows drama's decline. Shakespeare is "immortal" but Jonson is "moral." The association also ties the sections on the two poets together, as do breast in the Shakespeare segment and heart in the Jonson one. A second clue to degeneration appears in the contrast between the lively words panting and passion in the Shakespeare paragraph and the brittle and morbid doom and tomb as well as the allusion to pyramids in the Jonson verse. The Jonson references are in antithesis with connotations of continuity and immortality in the Shakespeare lines. Further, where Shakespeare "rose," Jonson merely "came."

Diction in the Jonson section associates that poet with plodding and constricted orderliness:

Then Jonson came, instructed from the school,  
 To please in method, and invent by rule; 10  
 His studious patience, and laborious art,  
 By regular approach essayed the heart;  
 Cold approbation gave the lingering bays  
 For those who durst not censure, scarce could praise  
 A mortal born he met the general doom 15  
 But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tome  
 (ll. 9-16).

The organization of half-lines is more precise here than in the opening paragraph; falling after the second foot in lines 9-13, the caesura becomes anticipated. In lines 9-11, punctuation of the caesura is uniform.

The Latin origins of words strengthen their association with meticulous classical rules. In line 9, "Then Jonson came, instructed from the

school," instructed, from instruere--to furnish, provide, or construct--implies following a predecessor's lead or an approved pattern. Jonson is next said "To please by method, to invent by rule" (l. 10) and again the Latin roots control the tone. Please derives from placere and is akin to placere, to placate or reconcile. Method, from methodus, means an orderly procedure, and in literature, a connected arrangement. Rule is from regula, a rule model, and means strictness, acceptable conduct, and adherence to principles; i.e., Jonson was devoted to generic decorum in tragedy and comedy, the rules. Lines 11-12, "His studious patience, and laborious art, / By regular approach essay'd the heart," continue to stress rigidity. Essay'd derives from exagium, a weighing or balance--a combination of ex, out, and agere, to drive. Its meaning is to test or try out, to make an effort, to exert one's power upon. But where Jonson tries, Shakespeare impresses, and where Shakespeare "storm'd the breast," Jonson makes a "regular approach" to the heart. "Cold approbation," or spiritless, unfeeling sanction by authority, now gives Jonson the "ling'ring bays." Although it does indicate that the honor of Poet Laureate lasts, ling'ring, from Middle English lengen meaning to tarry or prolong, has pejorative involvement with slow movement, waning, or dying. Lines 15-16, "A mortal born he met the general doom, / But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tomb," show Jonson sharing universal destruction. The "tomb" Jonson left is "lasting," but its comparison with the cold stone pyramids forms chilling contrast with Shakespeare's metaphorical pursuit by "panting Time."

In the Restoration paragraph (ll. 17-28) and in the eighteenth century section (ll. 29-38), ambiguity develops from similar techniques. Since the word wit appears twice in the Restoration section and once in

the eighteenth-century one, it deserve attention. The neoclassical period is often called the Age of Wit, a time of judgment and reason. Formerly wit also referred to perceptual faculties such as common sense, imagination, fancy, judgment, and memory, as well as to the five senses. Wit can also mean wisdom and learning, mental capacity and understanding, lively intelligence, or practical sense. Further meanings are drawing widely separated matters into a conjunction, and saying something in better style than it has ever been said. As a person, a wit is someone possessing some of the qualities listed here. The word first appears in the Prologue in line 17, "The wits of Charles," where Johnson attacks Restoration judgment; the term is ironic. In line 20, however, the poet says that "obscenity was wit." The third time the word occurs, it pertains to decline during the Enlightenment, as "Faustus lay the ghost of wit" (l. 36).

Multiple meanings contribute to ambiguity in the Restoration paragraph:

The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,  
 Nor wished for Jonson's art, or Shakespeare's flame;  
 Themselves they studied, as they felt, they writ,  
 Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit. 20  
 Vice always found a sympathetick friend;  
 They pleased their age, and did not aim to mend.  
 Yet bards like these aspir'd to lasting praise,  
 And proudly hop'd to pimp in future days.  
 Their cause was gen'ral, their supports were strong, 25  
 Their slaves were willing, and their reign was long;  
 Till shame retain'd the post that Sense betray'd,  
 And Virtue call'd oblivion to her aid. (ll. 17-28).

When the poet writes that Restoration dramatists--the wits of Charles--found "easier" ways to fame, he employs several meanings of easy; free from trouble or pain, thus involving little literary effort; giving ease or comfort, or allowing the dramatists to live well by their writings; or of small moment or degree. Not envying "Jonson's art or Shakespeare's

flame" of truth and passion, the "wits" ignore the "worlds" outside their own circle. When Johnson inverts normal word order in "Themselves they studied," he allows Themselves to receive the line's first accent and strengthens his irony. In the rest of the half-line, "as they felt, they writ," the short Anglo-Saxon words emphasize the dramatists' limited intellect, and the appearance of they three times in one line reflects their self-centeredness. For them, "Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit"; balance underlines the antithesis. The nouns Intrigue and plot share meaning; intrigue is not only strategy or conspiracy but also the plot of drama. The word in this context also has a strong smell of amorous involvements.

In line 21, "Vice," which may mean either immoral conduct or fault, is more sharply personified as the line progresses: "Vice always found a sympathetick friend." The verb supplies the vigor, but the phrase sympathetick friend carries the ironic thrust. Common connotations of sympathy and friend are favorable, but in context here, sympathetick means congenial with sin, and friend implies accessory. Line 22 touches the audience: "They [the dramatists] pleas'd their age, and did not aim to mend," for if the playgoers were satisfied, their tastes were low. The next couplet presents anticlimax: "Yet bards like these aspir'd to lasting praise, / And proudly hop'd to pimp in future days" (ll. 23-24). The Latin background of aspir'd and praise gives the first line a stateliness jolted in the second line. Praise and lasting also reflect earlier usages; lasting described the monument Jonson left, his "lasting" tomb, and praise referred to his "cold critics" who "scarce could praise." The term pimp, whose origin is unknown, surprises readers with its terseness as well as its opposition in tone to aspir'd and praise. In lines 25-26,



Their cause was gen'ral, their supports were strong,  
 Their slaves were willing, and their reign was long,

the "their" clauses recall the Restoration's self-interest, earlier emphasized by Themselves. Two words in this couplet have appeared previously: gen'ral modified doom in the Jonson passage, where it meant universal. Now, in "Their cause was gen'ral," it means touching or being accepted by all members of a special group--people close to Charles. In this instance, gen'ral means exclusive. Supports in the half-line "their supports were strong" (l. 25) denotes a force which aids or upholds but also endures or suffers as a particular discerning group might tolerate bad literature because it delights their king. The meanings of strong and supports combine to offer several interpretations, for strong not only means vigorous and forceful and thus able to help, but also having great power to bear a burden, and thus able to endure. Also in line 26, reign is repeated; in the phrase bounded reign (l. 5), it described the mortality Shakespeare flouted.

In the Enlightenment passage, Johnson's tools for ambiguity are again personification, variety in meanings, reverberations of Latin origins, and association with previously used terms:

Then crush'd by rules, and weaken'd as refin'd,  
 For years the pow'r of tragedy declin'd; 30  
 From bard, to bard, the frigid caution crept,  
 Till declamation roar'd, while passion slept.  
 Yet still did Virtue deign the stage to tread,  
 Philosophy remain'd, though Nature fled.  
 But forc'd at length her antient reign to quit, 35  
 She saw great Faustus lay the ghost of wit:  
 Exulting Folly hail'd the joyful day,  
 And pantomime, and song, confirm'd her sway  
 (ll. 17-38).

Line 29, describing the Enlightenment as "crush'd by rules, and weaken'd as refin'd," contributes to ambiguity through comparison. The "rules" are an allusion to Boileau's L'Art Poetique (1674), in imitation

of Horace's Ars Poetica; the French work lays down regulations for the language of French poetry, analyzes various kinds of verse, and lists the principles each kind should follow. It had great influence on English neoclassicism. Yet in showing the Enlightenment's drama as "crush'd by rules," Johnson sees Boileau's precepts as constraints on the "pow'r" of tragedy, for one meaning of crush'd is overwhelmed by pressure. The second half of the same line, "and weaken'd as refin'd," specifies that tragedians, following Boileau's directions, used language so "refin'd" that it lost the ability to communicate simple emotions. The refinement --the close adherence to classical principles--"weaken'd" the English poets' works; emotional power, now "crush'd," dwindled away until "passion" disappeared. The next couplet, "From bard, to bard, the frigid caution crept, / Till declamation roar'd, and passion slept" (ll. 31-32), also pursues this thought. Caution means security, a warning, or careful attention, and connotes reserve, control, or suppression of all emotions except fear; approbation means formal approval, but like caution it excludes most emotions. In line 32, "Till declamation roar'd, while passion slept," the dignity declamation gains from its length and Latin origin is punctured by roar'd, and "passion," which "storm'd" in Shakespeare's day, now sleeps. In the next couplet, "Yet still did Virtue deign the stage to tread, / Philosophy remain'd, though Nature fled" (ll. 33-34), Philosophy may refer to love of wisdom, to ethics, or to calm temper or judgment following the Restoration excesses, and Nature has at least three acceptable meanings. First is the Elizabethan one, the creative agent operating in all creatures. Next is human characteristics or temperament, and third is naturalness in the sense of spontaneous kindness. A fourth reference may be to a quality permanent in human

responses, given a set situation. In lines 35-36, the reference of her and she is ambivalent: "But forc'd at length her antient reign to quit, / She saw great Faustus lay the ghost of wit." The pronouns may refer to the Virtue that still deigns "the stage to tread," or the Philosophy, which "remain'd." Reign, used her for the third time, now means influence. Several meanings of both lay and ghost add interest. Lay means to cast down or strike prostrate, to suppress or silence, or to force a spirit to return to the grave. Ghost may mean the vital spark of life, a shadowy semblance or phantom, or a disembodied soul. Thus Faustus may strike down or silence either the vitality of wisdom of its nebulous remains following the Restoration's onslaught. Wit here means lively intelligence and judgment. Used a third time, the word profits from the ironic association with poor writers in "The wits of Charles" (1. 17) and from its contrast with context in "obsenity was wit" (1. 20).

Personifications invigorate lines 37-38, "Exulting Folly hail'd the joyful day, / And pantomime, and song confirm'd her sway." Folly draws energy and imagery from both Exulting and hail'd. Some key words have multiple meanings: Exulting can mean leaping into the air as well as restrained rejoicing; Folly can indicate costly undertaking or a sin as well as foolishness, and sway can describe rotation or oscillation as well as force and dominance. None of these meanings goes to extremes beyond the probabilities of eighteenth-century farce. In fact, Johnson now predicts further antics:

But who the coming changes can presage,  
And mark the future periods of the stage?--  
Perhaps if skill could distant times explore,  
New Behns, new Durfeys, yet remain in store.  
Perhaps, where Lear has rav'd, or Hamlet dy'd,  
On flying cars new sorcerers may ride.

Perhaps, for who can guess th' effects of chance? 45  
 Here Hunt may box, or Mahomet may dance  
 (ll. 39-46).

Ambiguity stems from abstractions like "skill" and "chance" and from repetition in the three "Perhaps" clauses and in the use of new twice in line 42.<sup>7</sup>

The next four couplets seriously appraise dramatists' problems:

Hard is his lot, that here by fortune plac'd,  
 Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste;  
 With ev'ry meteor of caprice must play,  
 And chase the new-blown bubbles of the day. 50  
 Ah! let not censure term our fate our choice,  
 The stage but echoes back the publick voice.  
 The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,  
 For we that live to please, must please to live  
 (ll. 47-54).

Rhetorical figures--particularly those involving repetition, association with other words, and multiple meanings broaden interpretation. In line 47, lot lends fortune a pejorative air, for lot has harsher connotations; and plac'd carries the double meaning of set in a particular spot--the theater--or fixed in a particular position--in Garrick's case as new manager of Drury-Lane. In lines 49-50, overtones interact with earlier references: "With ev'ry meteor of caprice must play, / And chase the new-blown bubbles of the day." Meteor associates with fortune, for fortune was believed to originate in the heavens. Caprice also relates to fortune, an unpredictable female. Play projects several meanings--to move swiftly or gambol about, to participate as in a game, to perform on stage, or to function freely. Line 50 says the actor must "chase the new-blown bubbles of the day," a possible allusion to the South-Sea Bubble of the 1720s. If bubbles means globules, the word is used metaphorically. But if it means a false show, one lacking solidarity or reality,

it could pertain to inferior but popular drama. In either reference, new-blown would emphasize lightness.

Rhetorical patterns of tmesis and chiasmus mark lines 51-54. Tmesis, repetition of a word with only a few words between, sharpens meaning in line 51, "Ah! let not censure term our fate our choice," and in line 53, "The drama's laws the drama's patrons give." In line 54, "For we that live to please, must please to live," chiasmus, the reversal of arrangement in the half-lines, emphasizes the importance of playgoers. Multiple meanings also enrich this line. Please means to placate or to provide pleasure the first time it appears in this figure, in "live to please"; but in the second, "must please to live," it can mean to choose to stay alive. The final factor in ambiguity in this section is association. Censure in line 51, "Ah! let not censure term our fate our choice," recalls Jonson's critics who "durst not censure"; fate reflects fortune in the opening line of this paragraph as well as chance in line 45, "for who can guess th' effects of chance?" Laws and please in line 53, "The drama's laws the drama's patrons give," allows readers to recall the classical "rule" constraining Jonson.

The same technique, association of words with language used earlier, endows the conclusion with confident finality and cohesion. Accents fall on major abstractions:

Then prompt no more the follies you decry,	55
As tyrants doom their tools of guilt to die,	
'Tis yours this night to bid the reign commence	
Of rescu'd Nature, and reviving Sense;	
To chase the charms of sound, the pomp of show,	
For useful mirth, and salutary woe;	60
Bid scenic Virtue form the rising age,	
And Truth diffuse her radiance from the stage	
(ll. 55-62).	

Major generalizations provide interlocking overtones. Sense attracts emphasis at the end of line 58; its modifier reviving puts this noun in contrast with the "Sense" that was "betray'd" in the Enlightenment (l. 27). Virtue, in line 61, draws meaning from two earlier references. The first is in the Restoration section, when Virtue "called oblivion" (l. 28) to rid the stage of poor drama. The other is in the Enlightenment paragraph when Virtue still deigned "the stage to tread" (l. 33) although Nature had fled. Truth receives the first accent of the poem's final line and associates with the Shakespeare paragraph, where it was "presiding" over Elizabethan stage.

Connotations of less important words also interweave. In line 55, "then prompt no more the follies you decry," prompt may mean to move to action as Johnson challenges hearers to reject poor theater, but it also means giving an actor his cues. Follies recalls how "Exulting Folly" (l. 37) rejoiced at the Enlightenment's extravaganza. In line 56, "As tyrants doom their tools of guilt to die," doom echoes Jonson's "general doom." Lines 57-58, "'Tis yours this night to bid the reign commence / Of rescu'd Nature and reviving Sense," probably refer to a demise of eighteenth-century plays with virtue but no Nature. In lines 59-60, "To chase the charms of sound, the pomp of show, / For useful mirth and salutary woe," chase appears for the second time within ten lines, but now with a different meaning. In the preceding paragraph Garrick chases "the new-blown bubbles of the day" (l. 50); there chase means to run after; now it means to clear away or get rid of. In lines 61-62, "Bid scenic Virtue form the rising age, / And Truth diffuse her radiance from the stage," rising echoes the description of Shakespeare who "rose" following Learning's triumph. In this third use, Virtue is modified by

scenic, which has a triple meaning. It can mean representing an action graphically, pertaining to the stage, or pertaining to natural scenery. Thus Johnson may be saying either that Virtue should present events realistically and clearly in every play; or that Virtue should be inherent in good theater; or that Virtue in theater should relate to the moving force of creation.

Close analysis of the Prologue Spoken at the Opening of the Theater in Drury-Lane has proved that it contains all of the five major techniques of ambiguity that Johnson used in the imitations, and that the poet skillfully handles all devices, particularly juxtaposition of latin-ate words against Anglo-Saxon derivatives for anticlimax.

An Epilogue to the Distrest Mother, "intended to have been spoke by a Lady who was to personate the Ghost of Hermione" may pre-date all of the prologues; it should indicate whether or not ambiguity appears in Johnson's early heroic couplet works. The playwright Abmrose Philips, now chiefly known as the author of the pastorals Pope ridiculed, adapted The Distrest Mother from Racine's Andromache. The French play's action takes place in Epirus at the court of Pyrrhus, son of Achilles, one year after the fall of Troy. Pyrrhus is betrothed to young Hermione, daughter of Menelaus and Helen and granddaughter of Zeus, but Pyrrhus is infatuated with Hector's widow Andromache, also an involuntary guest at the court. Orestes, son of Agememnon, is sent to Epirus to reconcile Pyrrhus and Hermione. However, Orestes loves Hermione and so hopes his mission will fail. Hermione manipulates Orestes, asking him to avenge her honor, and hurts Andromache when the Trojan woman asks for help. Consumed with vengeance against Pyrrhus, Hermione behaves like a spoiled child. In the end, she rejects Orestes, Greece, and her past.

The poem addresses "ye blooming train," young women flowering with beauty. The ghost of the young and beautiful Hermione describes the area of Hades where "tender nymphs" live in shadowed comfort. She then compares this part of the underworld to that reserved for "scornful maids" like herself who have toyed with men's affections. The poem ends with an appeal to "ye fair"--the young lovelies--to pity men.

Ambiguity arises from the development of rhetorical patterns, from multiple meanings, and from association. The first segment stresses female powers:

Ye blooming train who give despair or joy,  
 Bless with a smile, or with a frown destroy,  
 In whose fair cheeks destructive Cupids wait,  
 And with unerring shafts distribute fate,  
 Whose snowy breasts, whose animated eyes,  
 Each youth admires, tho' each admirer dies,  
 Whilst you deride their pangs in barb'rous play,  
 Unpitying see them weep and hear them pray,  
 And unrelenting sport ten thousand lives away  
 (ll. 1-9).

5

Among the rhetorical techniques, antithesis is a dominant element in ambiguity. For example, young women may either bless or destroy, causing "despair and joy" with a "smile" or "frown." Line 3 presents "destructive Cupids"--the oxymoron carrying the opposites. The same line demonstrates inversion: "In whose fair cheeks destructive Cupids wait"; throughout the poem this kind of arrangement withholds important verbs to the end of the line, as it does here, for emphasis. Repetition is another rhetorical device shown in the opening segment but employed throughout the work. It occurs with whose in line 5, "Whose snowy breasts, whose animated eyes," and with each in line 6, "Each youth admires, tho' each admirer dies." The effect is to move readers through four steps, two with whose and two with each, from breasts to eyes and from admiration to death. In line 2, chiasmus, reversal of the first half of a



line in the second half, forces the verbs to the line's extremes: "Bless with a smile, or with a frown destroy." Multiclinatum, use of the same word but with a different ending, draws attention to the admiring men in line 6: "Each youth admires, tho' each admirer dies."

The Prologue now explains the ghost's appearance and lists the awards awaiting kindly maidens in afterlife:

For you, ye fair, I quit the gloomy plains,	10
Where sable night in all her horror reigns;	
No fragrant bow'rs, no delightful glades,	
Receive th' unhappy ghosts of scornful maids.	
For kind, for tender nymphs the myrtle blooms,	
And weaves her bending boughs in pleasing glooms.	15
Perennial roses deck each purple vale,	
And scents ambrosial breathe in every gale;	
Far hence are banish'd vapours, spleen, and tears,	
Tea, scandal, ivory teeth, and languid airs;	
No pug nor favourite Cupid there enjoys	20
The balmy kiss for which poor Thyrsis dies;	
Form'd to delight, they use no foreign arms,	
Nor tort'ring whalebones pinch them into charms;	
No conscious blushes there their cheeks inflame,	
For those who feel no guilt can know no shame;	25
Unfaded still their former charms they shew,	
Around them pleasures wait, and joys for ever new	
(ll. 10-27).	

Repetition and inversion mark this section. Lines 18-19, "For hence are banish'd vapours, spleen, and tears, / Tea, scandal, ivory teeth, and languid airs," deserve attention because the two lines contrast interior elements--"vapours, spleen, and tears"--with cosmetic ones--"Tea, scandal, ivory teeth, and languid airs." Zeugma, the control of all these congruent subjects each in a different way by the verb phrase are banished, intensifies the contrast between the groups. Inversions divide the thought within the nymphs segment, separating each statement into two-couplet portions (ll. 19-21 and ll. 22-25) accented by negatives. Emphasis in the first division falls on "For hence" (l. 18) which shows the remoteness of the Elysian fields; on "Form'd to delight" (l. 22)

which stresses the association between the tortures women can create for men and the tortures females suffer in whalebones, and on "unfaded still" (l. 26) in the third division, which promises that the charms of good women last forever.

The next section is the cruel virgins' segment:

But cruel virgins meet severer fates;  
 Expell'd and exil'd from the blissful seats,  
 To dismal realms, and regions void of peace, 30  
 Where furies ever howl and serpents hiss.  
 O'er the sad plains perpetual tempests sigh,  
 And pois'nous vapours, black'ning all the sky,  
 With livid hue the fairest face o'ercast,  
 And every beauty withers at the blast; 35  
 Where e'er they fly their lovers' ghosts persue,  
 Inflicting all those ills which once they knew;  
 Vexation, Fury, Jealousy, Despair,  
 Vex every eye, and every bosom tear; 40  
 Their foul deformities by all descry'd,  
 No maid to flatter and no paint to hide  
 (l. 28-41).

As in the previous section, inversion moves semantically important phrases to the beginning of lines, accenting meaning. For example, in line 32, "O'er the sad plains perpetual tempests sigh," sad in the initial phrase emphasizes the contrast with the "pleasing" atmosphere of the tender nymphs' area of Hades. In line 34, "With livid hue the fairest face o'ercast," the opening phrase livid hue contrasts with the "unfaded" beauty of good women. Chiasmus and personification intensify the meaning of line 39, "Vex every eye, and every bosom tear." In line 40, "Their foul deformities by all descry'd," the passive voice accomplishes the same result as inversion does, forcing the object of the verb descry'd to the beginning of the line. Thus the "foul deformities" are made to oppose the unfaded "former charms" of the nymphs section, since both initiate lines.

The finale presents the ghost's admonition to young girls:

Then melt, ye fair, while crouds around you sigh,  
 Nor let disdain sit low'ring in your eye;  
 With pity soften every awful grace,  
 And beauty smile auspicious in each face; 45  
 To ease their pains exert your milder power,  
 So shall you guiltless reign, and all mankind adore  
 (ll. 42-47).

Inversion is again a major tool in ambiguity. It appears in line 44, "With pity soften every awful grace," giving prominence to Johnson's thematically important word pity. The figure has the same effect in line 46, "To ease their pains exert your milder power." Three personifications in the conclusion draw power from accompanying verbs: "disdain" should not "sit low'ring" in a maiden's eye (l. 43); "pity" should "soften every grace" (l. 44), and "beauty" should "smile" (l. 45).

Multiple meaning contributes to ambiguity. For example, in the phrase sable night (l. 11), sable means black, mysteriously threatening, or dismal; all meanings apply. In line 14, "For kind, for tender nymphs the myrtle blooms," nymphs reflects the ancient Greek setting but also describes maidens of any era; myrtle links the line to mythology because the plant was sacred to Aphrodite, who had a deadly power over men. The "purple vale" in line 16 may represent the color of royalty but also of death. In line 18, "Far hence are banish'd vapours, spleen, and tears," vapours can be the mists of Hades as well as melancholy, and a third meaning, transience, also fits. In the conclusion (ll. 42-47), the "fair" are urged to "melt," a word with two appropriate meanings: to soften or to become tender, or to be subdued. The poet also warns now against allowing "disdain" to "sit low'ring in your eye." Low'ring indicates a movement downward but also implies rejection.

Associations aid ambiguity. The word fair occurs four times in various forms, and fate, face, sigh, cheeks, and wait each appear twice.

Fate first refers to suitors in line 4, but to cruel virgins in line 28; face refers first to cruel beauties, but later to the good women; sigh accompanies the tempests of hell first (l. 32), but the "crouds" around good beauties last. The "cheeks" of destructive Cupids appear in line 3, and those of blushing nymphs in line 24; the cruel Cupids "wait" for victims in line 3, but pleasures "wait" for nymphs in line 27. In line 9, "And unrelenting sport ten thousand lives away," sport associates with "barb'rous play" of line 7. In the nymphs section, the "pleasing glooms" (l. 15) interact with the "gloomy plains" Hermione has just left. The cruel virgins section presents another cluster of associations. It is the realm where "furies" torment (l. 31), recalling the "severer" fate of females in line 28 and the "fate" distributed by "destructive Cupids." Constant "tempests" sigh in this part of Hades in contrast with the ambrosia-scented "gales" in the nymphs section. The "pois'nous vapours" blackening the sky in line 33 may be the same "vapours" banished from the nymphs' haven in line 13. Pursuing ghosts of disappointed lovers in line 36 recall the howling "furies" of line 21 and anticipate the Fury in line 38 where "Vexation, Fury, Jealousy, Despair" attack cruel virgins. Finally, in the conclusion, the "crouds" who "sigh" around enlightened beauties recall the ten thousand men sported away in the introduction; pity in line 44 contrasts with Unpitying in the opening lines; the "smile auspicious" of line 45 interacts with the smile that blesses in line 2, and the "guiltless reign" of reformed beauties recalls the reigning "horror" of the queen of "sable night" at the poem's beginning.

The Epilogue thus demonstrates three of Johnson's typical devices of ambiguity: rhetorical patterns, multiple meanings, and association of reverberations, but it does not show two others: abstractions and

the operation of syntax so that words, phrases, or clauses have several acceptable possibilities of reference.

Johnson's first prologue, to Lethe: Or Aesop in the Shades, was written in 1740, two years after London, for the play's author, David Garrick, England's greatest actor of the time. Only two of Johnson's usual sources of ambiguity appear extensively: multiple meanings of individual words and the use of rhetorical devices, a strong source of ambiguity in London and The Vanity of Human Wishes. The Prologue's point is that writers must risk offering their works to critics and the public. Garrick recently has watched several tragedies fail, but he still will try to succeed. He hopes a change of mood--to comedy--will delight the playgoers.

The first three couplets describe playwrights in general and the last five deal with Garrick individually. The opening passage follows:

Prodigious madness of the writing race!  
 Ardent of fame, yet fearless of disgrace.  
 Without a boding tear, or anxious sigh,  
 The bard obdurate sees his brother die.  
 Deaf to the critic, sullen to the friend, 5  
 Not one takes warning by another's end  
 (ll. 1-6).

The opening exclamation probably was not intended to be taken literally, a fact that in itself projects ambiguity. Yet a stronger element is multiple meaning, for Prodigious, madness, and race each have several denotations. Prodigious may mean monstrous or marvelous or extraordinary, or omen-like or portentous. Madness means insanity, ecstasy of inspiration, or extreme folly. Pairing the meanings in just one of the several possible ways--combining some choices of denotations--shows that Prodigious madness may be monstrous insanity, or extraordinary or lofty inspiration, or folly that portends either success or disaster.

In line 2, "Ardent of fame, yet fearless of disgrace," balance stresses antithesis, one element in the line's expanded meaning. Ardent, which means hot or burning, fierce or glowing, passionate or vehement, associates with both madness and race (as competitive running). Disgrace may mean loss of respect, shame, or even opprobrium. Thus writers fear neither dishonor among peers nor public upbraiding from critics.

In the second couplet, "Without a boding tear, or anxious sigh, / The bard obdurate sees his brother die" (ll. 3-4), rhetorical techniques, aided by some association, create ambiguity. The "boding" tear is ominous and the "anxious" sigh indicates disquiet, so that both adjectives reflect uneasiness and both nouns evidence anxiety. In line 4, where the "bard" is seeing--or watching--his "brother die," the original meaning of bard, employed here in a general sense, was a Celtic poet-singer who praised heroes' exploits; later meanings are a wandering minstrel or a lyric or epic poet. Yet Johnson juxtaposes opposite ideas, for bard means a sensitive song-writer and performer who plays on emotional memories, and obdurate means unfeeling, hard-hearted, or inflexible. In the same line, brother may refer to a sibling. If, however, it means a fellow writer and associates with race as tribe or group, die would mean to fail as an artist.

Lines 5-6 expand the description of the "obdurate bard" and generate complexity through indefinite reference of pronouns. Line 5, "Deaf to the critic, sullen to the friend," balances similar attitudes; grammatical arrangement emphasizes the second half-line. The phrase Deaf to the critic may mean unwilling to listen to qualified criticism, and sullen to the friend may mean showing obstinate lack of sociability. In line 6, "Not one takes warning by another's end," pronoun reference to

"writing race" obscures meaning. One might refer to the nearest noun friend, or to critic or to brother. The logical antecedent is bard, yet that noun--appearing two lines earlier--implies one poet as a representative of a group; not as an individual. The same problem arises with another's. Its antecedent may be another poet, a brother, or another person. The meaning of end also is indefinite; it may be death and thus echo die in the previous couplet; or it may also be a final place, a position, limit, or boundary and thus indicate the apex of the poet's achievement.

The prologue now moves to Garrick on his opening night at Drury-Lane:

Oft has our bard in this disastrous year  
 Beheld the tragic heroes taught to fear.  
 Oft has he seen the poignant orange fly  
 And heard th' ill-omened catcalls's direful cry 10  
 Yet dares to venture on the dangerous stage  
 And weakly hopes to 'scape the critic's rage.  
 This night he hopes to show that farce may charm,  
 Though no lewd hint the mantling virgin warm,  
 That useful truth with humor may unite, 15  
 And mirth may mend, and innocence delight  
 (ll. 7-16).

Lines 7-8, "Oft has our bard in this disastrous year / Beheld the tragic heroes taught to fear," imply that Garrick himself has been unfortunate in ill-starred 1740, or that London had offered many tragedies. The next couplet "Oft has he [Garrick] seen the poignant orange fly / And heard th' ill-omened catcall's direful cry" (ll. 9-10) says that Garrick recently has seen several audiences violently disapprove of plays. Poignant offers several meanings; major ones are those affecting the senses--taste and possibly sight--and affecting human feelings--an orange thrown at an actor would both puncture his self-respect and wound him physically. Poignant also denotes something sharp and keen, or painfully moving.

In line 10, catcall implies further degradation, and direful, meaning woeful and calamitous, describes the reactions of audience.

Repetition is an element of ambiguity in this section. In line 7, "Oft has our bard," and line 9, "Oft has he seen," it leads readers from viewing tragic plays to witnessing audience response. Lines 11-12, "Yet dares to venture on the dangerous stage / And weakly hopes to 'scape the critic's rage," present the final verbs of another rhetorical device, di-azeugma--one subject with many verbs. The figure begins in line 7 with our bard as the subject, and the verbs move from a passive to an active mental state: beheld, seen, heard, dares, and hopes.

Multiple meanings enrich this section (ll. 7-16). One meaning of dangerous in the phrase on the dangerous stage (l. 11) offers a fresh approach: arrogant, harsh, or reserved. The interpretation is that the stage is "dangerous" because the audience is difficult to please. In line 12, "And weakly hopes to 'scape the critic's rage," weakly can mean exhausted, easily subdued or overcome, or foolish and lacking judgment; and rage can refer to critics' anger or vehemence. But if readers accept the meaning of rashness--folly or madness--the line reflects the poem's opening phrase Prodigious madness as it applies to writers.

The final two couplets of the section (ll. 13-16) show that Garrick wants to please his audience but also to present "useful truth." The "That" clauses in lines 15-16, "That useful truth with humor may unite, / That mirth may mend, and innocence delight," bond the passage and lead through the three major desires of the playwright. Charm in line 13, "This night he hopes to show that farce may charm," means not only to fascinate or delight but also to soothe; both meanings apply. In line 14, "Though no lewd hint the mantling virgin warm," the words lewd,



mantling, and warm offer several meanings. The most common interpretation of lewd today is lustful or unchaste, one that would contrast with virgin later in the same line; yet older meanings of wicked, vulgar, rude, and stupid or clumsy might operate. Johnson's probable meaning for mantling in the phrase mantling virgin is blushing, but another interpretation gives a picture of the virgin drawing her cloak about her as insulation from verbal impurity. Warm may mean to stir up or excite, to arouse interest, or to open by giving entertainment. The virgin could then be wearing clothing that covers her well or she could be blushing at bawdy lines. If she is "warmed"--as in "the mantling virgin warm"--she will enjoy the play.

The opening line of the final couplet, "That useful truth with humor may unite" (l. 15.), recalls the four Renaissance humors. Humor can mean a disposition or state of mind, a whim, or whatever appeals to our sense of the ludicrous. Thus the speaker may hope his "truth" will reach a receptive audience, may fit their uncertain state of mind--their whim--or may make them laugh. In the final line, "That mirth may mend, and innocence delight," mirth may mean joyous entertainment or laughter, and mend may mean to free something from defects, as Garrick hopes his play will repair the breach with the audience earlier created by the tragedies, or to alter for the better, as he hopes his play will exceed others in quality. The final statement, "and innocence delight," echoes the reference to the virgin and the lack of lasciviousness, and to the enchantment Garrick expects his farce to generate.

This early prologue, then, relies on only two sources of ambiguity found in most of Johnson's other heroic couplet verse: rhetorical devices and multiple meanings. There is some association of reverberations

devices and multiple meanings. There is some association of reverberations of meanings, but it is not a strong element in expanding interpretation.

All the remaining prologues, to Irene, to Comus, to the Good-Natured Man, and to A Word to the Wise, were written after The Vanity of Human Wishes appeared in 1748. Irene and Comus were written within two years after the imitation, and the others much later, The Good-Natured Man in 1768 and A Word to the Wise in 1777. Though none of the prologues won critical acclaim, in some cases probably because of Johnson's lack of enthusiasm for his subject or his task, they nevertheless can point up his continual practice or his progress in handling ambiguity.

The poet began writing his only play Irene before he came to London in 1737, and finished revisions around 1746.<sup>8</sup> With Garrick's help it was produced in 1749, running for nine nights and earning Johnson more than £195, a respectable sum. Neither the play nor the prologue has met critical success; however, the prologue does illustrate the poet's developing skill with four tools of ambiguity. The prologue first appeals to women, businessmen, and politicians to heed its "mighty moral" involving peace of mind, guilt, and innocence. Next, Johnson hopes to reflect nature and reason, and to present a good plot, but if the audience catcalls or naps he will accept his fate; he has arranged no spectacle to veil lack of talent. Finally, he will trust the judgment of "wits" but ignore the prattle of "fops."

The work is rich in rhetorical devices of thought such as apostrophe and antithesis, and in rhetorical arrangements of words such as anaphora, inversion, and balance. Yet their intense use--an average of almost one per line--raises suspicion that the poem suffers from saturation.

Nine of the prologue's thirty-four lines invert normal word order, sometimes obscuring understanding; an example is line 22: "To force applause no modern arts are try'd," where readers must hunt the subject in the middle of the sentence, then move on to the verb, and finally return to the first of the line for the direct object. Three couplets show ellipsis.

A second device for ambiguity is generalizations, often personified and combined with active verbs or image-producing adjectives. Examples are "anguish racks," "truths join," and "welcome sleep relieve." A third technique, which Johnson handles skillfully to bind his paragraphs together, is the repetition of important words. A fourth is multiple meanings.

The opening paragraph demonstrates all these techniques. It also supports William Bowman Piper's assertion that Johnson's management of rhetorical arrangements under heroic couplet convention is looser than Pope's:<sup>9</sup>

Ye glitt'ring train! whom lace and velvet bless,  
Suspend the soft sollicitudes of dress;  
From grov'ling business and superfluous care,  
Ye sons of avarice! a moment spare:  
Vot'ries of fame and shorshippers of pow'r! 5  
Dismiss the pleasing phantoms for an hour.  
Our daring bard with spirit unconfin'd,  
Spreads wide the mighty moral for mankind.  
Learn here how Heav'n supports the virtuous mind,  
Daring, tho' calm; and vigorous, tho' resign'd. 10  
Learn here what anguish racks the guilty breast,  
In pow'r dependent, in success deprest.  
Learn here that peace from innocence must flow;  
All else is empty sound, and idle show (ll. 1-14).

The paragraph opens with a series of apostrophes (ll. 1, 4, and 5), but these are not grammatically parallel. The first, "Ye glitt'ring train!" (l. 1) and the second, "Ye sons of avarice!" (l. 4) each span half a line, but are not identical. The third and fourth, "Vot'ries of

fame and worshippers of pow'r!" (l. 5) create balance, but they do not parallel either of the two preceding figures. Positioning of the apostrophes within the couplet is relaxed. The first appears at the couplet's beginning, the next at the opening of a couplet's second line, and the last two in a couplet's first line. Although it deviates from precision, such a loosening does break monotony and approach the normal speech patterns appropriate for spoken verse.

Rhetorical patterns include inversions in lines 3-4, "From grov'ling business and superfluous care, / Ye sons of avarice! a moment spare," and in line 13, "Learn here the peace from innocence must flow." In both cases the figure emphasizes a verb.

Multiple meaning and association are also factors in ambiguity. In the first half-line, "Ye glitt'ring train!" glitt'ring can describe decorations on women's attire or the impression their gowns create, bejeweled or not. Train can refer to a trailing garment or to the women waiting with their escorts at the theater door. In the rest of the half-line, "whom lace and velvet bless," bless may mean make joyous, guard, or protect--as clothing does the body--or praise or glorify--as fancy garments enhance. In line 2, "Suspend the soft sollicitudes of dress," Suspend may mean to hang at the point of support as ornaments dangle; this interpretation would associate with velvet and lace. Suspend may also mean to debar or withhold; thus women would be urged to await the play's end to give "sollicitudes" or excessive attention to the "dress." In lines 3-4, "From grov'ling business and superfluous care / Ye sons of avarice! a moment spare," grov'ling can mean either worthless or unnecessary and wasteful. It also suggests that to engage in trade is the demean one's self. Thus businessmen are to forget the mean "care" of every-

day "avarice," and attend the stage. Superfluous associates with sollicitudes, unnecessary worries. In lines 5-6, meanings of Vot'ries and worshippers overlap, for a votary is devoted to a service. Lines 7-8, "Our daring bard with spirit unconfin'd, / Spreads wide the mighty moral of mankind," form a transition from the opening plea to the play's subject matter. Here the poet says his "spirit" is "unconfin'd"; spirit may indicate his devotion to the play's meaning, the liveliness of his lines, or the soul or breath of life in his poetry. The last meaning of spirit would interact with phantoms in the preceding line: "Dismiss the pleasing phantoms for an hour" (l. 6). The "Learn" clauses (ll. 9-14) in this passage support Piper's comment on the looseness of Johnson's heroic couplet. The first line of each couplet names the play's subjects--virtue, guilt, and innocence; the second line of each, as Piper notes, is anticlimactic because it presents "obviously expansive matter."<sup>10</sup> In two of these anticlimactic lines, the antithesis aids ambiguity, for the audience must color, qualify, or match "daring" with "calm" and "vigor" with resignation or uncomplaining acquiescence (l. 10); power with dependence, and success with dejection or humility (l. 12).

Several terms in this section refer to morality: Heaven, virtuous, and innocence. These contrast with others indicating wordliness: glittering, sollicitudes, superfluous, avarice, fame, success, and power, which appears twice. In its first instance (l. 5) politicians are addressed as "worshippers of pow'r"; here the force is earthly. The second time, in lines 11-12, "Learn here what anguish racks the guilty breast, / In pow'r dependent in success deprest," pow'r may refer to either earthly or heavenly might.

The next paragraph is an "if-then" sequence:

If truths like these with pleasing language join;      15  
 Ennobled, yet unchang'd, if nature shine:  
 If no wild draught depart from reason's rules,  
 Nor gods his heroes, nor his lovers fools:  
 Intriguing wits! his artless plot forgive;  
 And spare him, beauties! tho' his lovers live  
 (ll. 15-20).

The section draws ambiguity from abstractions and association. In line 15, "If truths like these with pleasing language join," pleasing reflects the "pleasing phantoms" of the politicians in line 6. Language gains intensity from the earlier use of its modifier pleasing with "phantoms" of fame and power, and from "truths" in its own line. Syntactical ambiguity stems from the next half-line, "Ennobled, yet unchanged" (l. 16). The adjectives can work backwards modifying truths to indicate that if the poet's language is proper, truths will emerge because he will not alter them. Or the half-line may modify nature in the clause if nature shine (l. 16). Then the poet would say that if he can make nature shine in his verse he may exalt it or make it obvious. The next couplet promises that the prologue will use reasonable subjects from life rather than the actions of gods or the antics of lovers: "If no wild draught depart from reason's rules / Nor gods his heroes, nor his lovers fools" (ll. 17-18). Draught may mean the act of drawing or hauling, as the play would withdraw from reason, or the act of drinking or inhaling, as the poet would inhale the essence of his art from the muses. A "wild draught" then would miscarry or depart from "reason's rules." In line 19, "Intriguing wits! his artless plot forgive," Intriguing means baffling and beguiling, tricky or complicated--all adjectives that could apply to the audience--and it also pertains to events in a literary work, thus associating with plot: "his artless plot forgive." In line 20, "And spare

him, beauties! tho' his lovers live," spare reminds readers that the poet has asked some hearers to spare "a moment" from business.

Rhetorical techniques dominate the opening sentences of the final paragraph:

Be this at least his praise; be this, his pride;  
 To force applause no modern arts are try'd.  
 Shou'd partial cat-calls all his hopes confound,  
 He bids no trumpet quell the fatal sound.  
 Shou'd welcome sleep relieve the weary wit, 25  
 He rolls no thunders o'er the drowsy pit.  
 No snares to captivate the judgment spreads;  
 Nor bribes your eyes to prejudice your heads  
 (ll. 21-28).

In lines 21-22, "Be this at least his praise; be this, his pride; / To force applause no modern arts are try'd," repetition stresses praise and pride. The "Shou'd" clauses that open the next two couplets reflect the preceding paragraph's "if" clauses. Lines 27-28, "No snares to captivate the judgment spreads; / Nor bribes your eyes to prejudice your heads," completes the poet's promise to reject tasteless "modern" techniques for holding attention. The line also may refer to la querelle des anciens et modernes which was popular at this time.

Inversion, as well as multiple meanings, many of which, like those explored throughout this discussion, appear in Johnson's Dictionary, create ambiguity. In line 22, "To force applause no modern arts are try'd," Johnson withholds the verb to emphasize the double meaning of try--to strain and to attempt. Confound, ending line 23, "Shou'd partial cat-calls all his hopes confound," has several meanings: despoil, damn, throw into confusion, or defeat in argument. Quell in line 24, "He bids no trumpet quell the fatal sound," can mean destroy or overpower and also to quiet and pacify, a meaning appropriate with trumpet and sound. In the next couplet, "Shou'd welcome sleep relieve the weary wit, / He rolls

no thunders o'er the drowsy pit" (ll. 25-26), welcome indicates that sleep may give pleasure or be freely permitted; Johnson thus will be patient with a napping audience. Relieve expands reverberations of "welcome sleep," for it denotes comfort and relaxation. In lines 27-28, "No snares to captivate the judgment spreads; / Nor bribes your eyes to prejudice your heads," snares and captivates each mean, first, physically capturing a creature by cord or noose, and second, abstract fascination.

The Prologue's conclusion demonstrates more rhetorical patterns and multiple meanings:

Unmov'd tho' witlings sneer and rivals rail;  
 Studious to please, yet not asham'd to fail. 30  
 He scorns the meek address, the suppliant strain,  
 With merit needless, and without it vain.  
 In reason, nature, truth he dares to trust:  
 Ye fops be silent! and ye wits be just  
 (ll. 29-34).

Again balanced antithesis points up contrasts: the silent "sneer" versus the noisy railing; "please" and "fail"; "with merit" and "without it"; and "fops" and "wits." And again several repeated words attract earlier reverberations. One is witlings, meaning pretenders to intelligence; it profits from opposition to both wits and wit in earlier uses and to wits in the poem's last line. Another is please, associating with "pleasing phantoms" of fame and power in line 6 and with the "pleasing language" the poet hopes for in line 15; a third is reason, which echoes "reason's rules" in the second paragraph. Others are nature, which interweaves with the phrase if nature shine in paragraph 2, and truth, which recalls the "truths" asked to join "pleasing language" (l. 15). Finally the poet "dares" to trust his audience after promising that he is a "daring bard." Within lines 27-34, judgment, prejudice, and just interact; all involve decisive attitudes or pronouncements. And within the final three



couplets (ll. 29-34), sneer and scorns interlace: the 'witlings' may "sneer," but the poet "scorns."

Multiple meanings are a factor in ambiguity. The poet scoffs at the "meek address" and the "suppliant strain." A "meek" address would come from a playgoer who was either kindly indulgent, patient with the "artless plot," or tamely spiritless, and the "suppliant strain" would describe a group of audience, the tenor of a response, or impassioned speech by a playgoer.

The Prologue to Irene, written for Johnson's play which was produced in 1749, one year after The Vanity of Human Wishes, demonstrates all of the poet's typical devices for ambiguity: rhetorical patterns, personified generalizations, association, and multiple meanings, and syntactical ambiguity. However, syntax operates for ambiguity in only two instances; thus this source is not as strong as the others. The Prologue shows a gradual broadening of Johnson's use of techniques for ambiguity, for abstractions did not aid or expand meaning in either the Epilogue to The Distrest Mother or the Prologue to Lethe, and association did not appear in Lethe.

Johnson wrote his next prologue, the Prologue to Comus, for a performance in 1750 to benefit Mrs. Elizabeth Foster, granddaughter of Milton. The woman was living in poverty. The poem, appearing two years after The Vanity of Human Wishes, first points out the sincere admiration of the current audience for Milton as opposed to the insincere praise some Augustan poets heaped on patrons to gain money or favor. The Prologue next states that the full theater proves Britain's belated recognition of her great poet and his only surviving descendant. It then points out that the political problems harassing Milton have now waned

and that England and the Continent are honoring him. Meanwhile, however, despite erection of his bust in Westminster Abbey (1737), his country has neglected his granddaughter. If the Comus performance awakens public concern, Milton's spirit can trust England to care for her as long as she lives.

The Prologue follows:

Ye patriot crouds, who burn for England's fame,  
 Ye nymphs, whose bosoms beat at Milton's name,  
 Whose gen'rous zeal, unbought by flatt'ring rhymes,  
 Shames the mean pensions of Augustan times;  
 Immortal patrons of succeeding days, 5  
 Attend this prelude of perpetual praise!  
 Let Wit, condemn'd the feeble war to wage  
 With close malevolence, or public rage;  
 Let Study, worn with virtue's fruitless lore,  
 Behold this theatre, and grieve no more. 10  
 This night, distinguish'd by your smile, shall tell,  
 That never Briton can in vain excel;  
 The slighted arts futurity shall trust,  
 And rising ages hasten to be just.  
 At length our mighty bard's victorious lays 15  
 Fill the loud voice of universal praise,  
 And baffled spite, with hopeless anguish dumb,  
 Yields to renown the centuries to come.  
 With ardent haste, each candidate of fame  
 Ambitious catches at his tow'ring name: 20  
 He sees, and pitying sees, vain wealth bestow  
 Those pageant honours which he scorn'd below:  
 While crowds aloft the laureat bust behold,  
 Or trace his form on circulating gold,  
 Unknown unheeded, long his offspring lay, 25  
 And want hung threat'ning o'er slow decay.  
 What tho' she shine with no Miltonian fire,  
 No fav'ring muse her morning dreams inspire;  
 Yet softer claims the melting heart engage,  
 Her youth laborious, and her blameless age; 30  
 Hers the mild merits of domestic life,  
 The patient suff'rer, and the faithful wife.  
 Thus grac'd with humble virtue's native charms  
 Her grandsire leaves her in Britannia's arms,  
 Secure with peace, with competence, to dwell, 35  
 While tutelary nations guard her cell.  
 Yours is the charge, ye fair, ye wise, ye brave!  
 'Tis yours to crown desert--beyond the grave!

Noteworthy among abstractions contributing to ambiguity are "gen'rous zeal . . . / Shames" (l. 3-4); "baffled spite" and "hopeless anguish" (l. 17), and "want hung threat'ning" (l. 26).

Rhetorical devices are direct address and anaphora, both of which open and close the poem; isocolon, repetition of phrases or clauses with corresponding structure; inversion; and tmesis, repetition of a word with one or only a few words between. Anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive verses, appears in lines 1 and 2, "Ye patriot crouds . . . / Ye nymphs"; the figure offers the address to both men and women. A similar repetition in lines 7 and 9, "Let Wit . . . Let Study," associates patriots with wit and nymphs with study. Isocolon occurs in lines 1-3, which form three dependent clauses with closely corresponding structure. The third of these, "Whose gen'rous zeal . . . / Shames the mean pensions of Augustan times," as the last in the series receives emphasis. Tmesis is most effective in lines 21-22, "He sees, and pitying sees, vain wealth bestor / Those pageant honours which he scorn'd below," for it points up meanings of both notice and comprehension for the word sees: Milton first merely notices the situation on earth, but as he continues to gaze he understands, and his comprehension is touched with pity. Inversion occurs in nine lines, nearly always withholding the verb to the end of the line.

Both syntax and multiple meanings are sources of ambiguity in lines 7-8, "Let Wit, condemn'd the feeble war to wage / With close malevolence, or public rage." Wit, referring either to Milton's mind or to the audience's judgment and reason, must war against "malevolence" that is "close"--either parsimonious, strictly confined to Milton himself at the exclusion of others, or secretive--or against "public rage"--the extravagant

passion of the Restoration against the Puritan Milton. In this view the phrases close malevolence and public rage contain objects of the preposition with in line 8, "With close malevolence and public rage." But "or public rage" can be an elliptical statement involving the word public (like Wit) as an object of Let. The meaning then would be to let Wit make war against malevolence and also to let the public rage as it will against Milton's Puritanism.

A similar combination of two techniques achieves ambiguity in lines 13-14, "The slighted arts futurity shall trust, / And rising ages hasten to be just." Either arts or futurity may be the sentence subject. Thus "slighted arts" may depend upon future recognition, or the future may put more confidence in "slighted arts." These "arts" may be either Milton's talents, or "Wit" and "Study," which now should regain status. In line 14, rising may mean either dawning in the sense of beginning, or ascending in the sense of improving in appreciation of aesthetic values, and hasten may mean either to move fast or to drive forward. Thus dawning times could move swiftly toward justice, or the public's greater consciousness of aesthetics could push all Englishmen toward proper treatment of Milton.

Association is effective in lines 19-20, "With ardent haste, each candidate for fame / Ambitious catches at his tow'ring name." Five words recall earlier references. Haste reflects the ages that "hasten to be just" in line 14; tow'ring echoes the "rising ages" which will honor Milton, and fame and name repeat the rhyme words of the poem's opening couplet. In line 1 fame was the goal of "patriot crouds," but here in line 19 it becomes the aim of individual poets. Both uses of name, however,

pertain to Milton. Ardent, meaning hot or fever-causing as well as passionate, echoes burn in line 1, zeal in line 3, and rage in line 8.

Two devices attain ambiguity in the last section, which compares the granddaughter to Milton (ll. 27-38). One is association. Shine and fire in l. 27, "What tho' she shine with no Miltonian fire," recall the crowds who "burn for England's fame" (l. 1), and the "public rage" of line 8. The "muse" which has ignored the granddaughter (l. 28) associates with the "nymphs" addressed in line 2. In lines 31-36, religious connotations cluster about mild, merits, sufferer, faithful, grac'd, humble, virtue, and cell as the poet describes Mrs. Foster's "domestic life" and "charms." Tutelary, in the phrase tutelary nations in line 36, means possessing supernatural powers, and thus interweaves the guarding of Mrs. Foster with the earlier terms Immortal (l. 5) and perpetual (l. 6) and with the image of Milton in heaven (ll. 21-22). Another technique for ambiguity is multiple meaning. Charge in line 37, "Yours is the charge," has a double interpretation, for the physical charge is the granddaughter herself, but the abstract responsibility is her financial well-being.

In summary, the Prologue to Comus demonstrates all five of the devices for ambiguity that normally appear in Johnson's heroic couplet verse.

The heavy quality of the Prologue to Goldsmith's The Good-Natured Man (1768) is not appropriate for comedy and may contribute to its failure to impress critics. Johnson's lack of enthusiasm may have affected the work; according to Boswell, Johnson was not eager to help with a comedy, and did so only to keep a promise. The London Magazine charged that Johnson had plagiarized his central point,<sup>11</sup> but actually, similarity stemmed from the fact that both Johnson's work and a prologue to

Dr. William Kenrick's The Widow'd Wife pertained to an approaching election.

The poem, a series of comparisons, first discusses man's toil and sorrow in a tone as heavy as that in The Vanity of Human Wishes, which appeared twenty years earlier. The Prologue states that the poet as well as the statesman must compete with the "bustling season" of post-Christmas to find an audience--the play was produced in January. Both contend with hopes and fears, and both must suffer silently if they fail. Foes of each may be clever; opponents may withhold disapproval until a particularly critical situation occurs--in the playwright's case, opening night--and then make public their rejection. However, unlike the politician, the bard has no money to buy acclaim, so his only recourse is honest acceptance if he merits it.

The Prologue follows:

Prest by the load of life, the weary mind Surveys the general toil of human kind; With cool submission joins the labouring train, And social sorrow loses half its pain; Our anxious bard, without complaint, may share	5
This bustling season's epidemic care, Like Caesar's pilot, dignified by fate, Tost in one common storm with all the great; Distrest alike, the statesman and the wit, When one a borough courts, and one the pit.	10
The busy candidates for power and fame, Have hopes, and fears, and wishes, just the same; Disabled both to combat, or to fly, Must hear all taunts, and hear without reply. Uncheck'd on both, loud rabbles vent their rage, As mongrels bay the lion in the cage.	15
Th' offended burgesse hoards his angry tale, For that blest year when all that vote may rail; Their schemes of spite the poet's foes dismiss, Till that glad night when all that hate may hiss.	20
This day the powder'd curls and golden coat, Says swelling Crispin, begg'd a cobbler's vote. This night our wit, the pert apprentice cries, Lies at my feet, I hiss him, and he dies.	

The great, 'tis true, can charm th' electing tribe;        25  
 The bard may supplicate, but cannot bribe.  
 Yet judg'd by those, whose voices ne'er were sold,  
 He feels no want of ill-persuading gold;  
 But confident of praise, if praise be due,  
 Thrusts without fear, to merit, and to you.        30

Abstractions are strongest in the poem's beginning. In lines 1-2, the "weary mind" is "Prest" by life's load and "surveys" human kind, and in lines 3-4, "cool submission joins" the stream of workers; finding company, "social sorrow loses" its sting.

Rhetorical devices are most effective in the section comparing statesmen and poets to their problems (ll. 9-16). In the entire segment, metaphor and simile project an image of violet struggle. In line 13 the implied comparison is military: "Disabled both to combat, or to fly," and in line 16 the simile is based on animals: "As mongrels bay the lion in the cage." Line 10, "When one a borough courts, and one the pit," demonstrates zeugma, the use of one verb to control two objects in different contexts. Polysyndeton, use of conjunctions between each element, intensifies a conflict of emotions in line 12, "Have hopes, and fears, and wishes, just the same." Tmesis, repetition of a word with only a few words in between, stresses helplessness of statesman or poet before the public; "Must hear all taunts, and hear without reply" (l. 14). Later in the Prologue, in lines 21-22, synecdoche, the use of a part to indicate the whole, marks a reference to wealthy politicians: "This day the powder'd curls and golden coat, / Says swelling Crispin, begg'd a cobbler's vote." Antithesis appears in the final section (ll. 25-30). In line 25, "The great, 'tis true, can charm th' electing tribe," the "great" or powerful can buy votes, but in line 26, "The bard may supplicate, but cannot bribe," the poet can only plead. The Prologue's ending presents another contrast--between the poet's current situation and his

stance at the poem's beginning. As he took the stage, the speaker was "anxious," "labouring," and "weary." Now he is "confident" of praise, "if praise be due."

Another technique for ambiguity is multiple meaning. For example, cool, which modified submission in line 3, may mean lacking passion, apathetic, calmly deliberate, or even presumptuous or impudent; all invigorate the abstraction and expand interpretation. In line 8 the poet, like Caesar's pilot, is "Tost in one common storm with all the great." Tost means to be flung about physically or be mentally agitated, and storm can refer to a natural disturbance, political oratory, or violent social fury which sometimes developed in British elections.

The most powerful tool of ambiguity is association. For example, in lines 5-6, "Our anxious bard, without complaint, may share / This bustling season's epidemic care," Johnson, through auras of meanings, associates anxious and epidemic; both indicate a state of human disease in the original sense, lack of ease. The bard is described as "without complaint"; he shares holiday "care" described as "epidemic," a term whose meaning is either widespread or affecting many people but whose reverberations of illness link it with pain in line 4 and complaint in line 5. In line 9, "Distrest alike the statesman and the wit," Distrest implies the pain and anxiety mentioned earlier. Further interlockings of reverberations occur in line 11, "The busy candidates for power and fame," for busy recalls bustling in line 6, "The bustling season's epidemic care"; fears in line 12, "Have hopes, and fears, and wishes, just the same," echoes anxious in line 5, care in line 6, and Distrest in line 9. Disabled in line 13, "Disabled both to combat, or to fly," interacts with Prest in line 1, submission in line 3, pain in line 4, and epidemic



in line 6; in line 15, "loud rabbles vent their rage," loud joins through connotation with bustling, storm, and combat to create an impression of noise, and rabblés interacts with the earlier words general (l. 2), common (l. 8), and pit (l. 10). In his conclusion (ll. 25-30), Johnson interlaces terms with earlier reference to project finality. Voices in line 27, "Yet judg'd by those, whose voices ne'er were sold," recalls the earlier railing and hissing; and fear in line 30, "Trusts without fear," reminds readers of the poet's initial anxiety and his "hopes and fears" (l. 12). Other words in the conclusion carry extensive connotations. Charm in line 25, "The great . . . can charm th' electing tribe," may refer superficially to the election process, but to charm is also the playwright's purpose. In line 26, "The bard may supplicate, but cannot bribe," supplicate reproduces the poet's posture throughout the Prologue; he can only offer his work with "cool submission" and silently await the verdict.

In the Prologue to The Good-Natured Man, then, Johnson ignores syntactical ambiguity as a source, but he does employ four of his usual techniques: abstractions, rhetorical devices, multiple meanings, and association. However, his personifications are neither as lively nor as prevalent as they are in other heroic couplet works. The poet was in his sixties when he wrote the poem; the weight of years and his serious mood may have affected his enthusiasm as he kept a promise to Goldsmith.

The Prologue to Hugh Kelly's A Word to the Wise was an act of charity, for Johnson held a low opinion of the author and their relationship was never close. However, when Kelly died in 1777, Johnson agreed to write a prologue to be delivered at a benefit performance for his family. Though it received loud applause on that occasion, it has never won

critical acclaim. The somber poem first asks the audience to rid itself of vengeance; the play earlier had been "hooted from the stage," and damned by Kelly's political opponents.<sup>12</sup> Since Englishmen let the dead rest in peace, Johnson says, the poet tonight expects little show of malice, but anyone who may still harbor resentment should recall that it is too late to hurt Kelly; he has already made the ultimate appeasement. If the play shows good sense or "harmless merriment," the audience might at least approve. The author is now out of reach of cruel criticism, but since the audience will someday be in Kelly's place, they should watch calmly with an open mind. Pleasure and impartial judgment would in themselves show virtue.

The Prologue follows:

This night presents a play, which publick rage,  
 Or right, or wrong, once hooted from the stage,  
 From zeal or malice now no more we dread,  
 For English vengeance wars not with the dead.  
 A generous foe regards, with pitying eye, 5  
 The man whom fate has laid, where all must lye.  
 To wit, reviving from its author's dust,  
 Be kind, ye judges, or at least be just:  
 Let no resentful petulance invade  
 Th' oblivious grave's inviolable shade. 10  
 Let one great payment every claim appease,  
 And him who cannot hurt, allow to please;  
 To please by scenes unconscious of offence,  
 By harmless merriment, or useful sense.  
 Where aught of bright, or fair, the piece displays, 15  
 Approve it only--'tis too late to praise.  
 If want of skill, or want of care appear,  
 Forbear to hiss--the poet cannot hear.  
 By all, like him, must praise and blame be found;  
 At best, a fleeting gleam, or empty sound. 20  
 Yet then shall calm reflection bless the night,  
 When liberal pity dignify'd delight;  
 When pleasure fired her torch at Virtue's flame,  
 And mirth was bounty with a humbler name.

Typically, verbs and adjectives enliven Johnson's abstract terms to create added meaning. For instance, "rage" once "hooted" Kelly's play

from the stage; "vengeance wars not with the dead"; "resentful petulance" could "invade" the grave; "calm reflection" may "bless"; "liberal pity dignify'd delight," and "pleasure fired her torch."

Ambiguity also arises from rhetorical sources. Antithesis appears in the contrast between the "publick rage" and "malice" discussed at the poem's beginning and the "calm reflection," "pleasure," and "mirth" at the end, and also between "right" and "wrong" (l. 2); "hurt" and "please" (l. 12); and "praise" and "blame" (l. 19). Diacope, repetition for emphasis, occurs in lines 12-13, "And him who cannot hurt, allow to please, / To please by scenes unconscious of offence." Repetition and antithesis mark lines 9 and 11, "Let no resentful petulance invade," and "Let one great payment every claim appease." Thus the poet underlines the difference between the negative and deplorable, and the positive and compassionate. Another effective deployment of diacope occurs in line 17: "If want of skill, or want of care appear." Stress on want emphasizes several reverberations aiding ambiguity: Kelly's play earlier was found wanting; his family is now in economic want, and the sponsors of the benefit want to help. In other lines throughout the poem, inversion places important phrases at the beginning of lines, or withholds verbs to the end. Lines 19 and 20, "By all, like him, must praise and blame be found, / At best, a fleeting gleam, or empty sound," demonstrate this effect.

Multiple meanings also enrich the Prologue. Dust in line 7, "To wit, reviving from the author's dust," could refer to the author's death or to the political turmoil he encountered. Oblivious in the phrase oblivious grave (l. 10) could mean unmindful and pertain to the playwright, or unobserving and pertain to the tomb. In line 11, "Let one great payment every claim appease," payment may mean compensation or chastisement,

both applicable to Kelly's death, and appease may mean to reduce to a state of peace or to satisfy demands, both also acceptable. Line 13 says Kelly's scenes are "unconscious"; they may be mere words not possessing mind or conscience, or the author may have written them without intending injury. In line 21, "Yet then shall calm reflection bless the night," reflection may mean a reversed or mirrored image, and indeed Johnson hopes this night will reverse the effect of the earlier performance. Reflection may be a bending or turning back, as the sponsors are in a sense turning back time in reviving the play. A third meaning, a thought or opinion formed after contemplation, fits Johnson's earnest plea for a just reappraisal. And in the Prologue's last line, "And mirth was bounty with a humbler name," bounty may be liberality in bestowing something, in this case approval; or it may be a reward, here given to the family of the author; or it may be payment for recognizance, in this case one that may redeem Kelly from his earlier condemnation.

Repetitions of certain words and phrases expand meaning and bond the poem's opening and ending. One such word is night. In line 1 it recalls a night of rage and disgust when Kelly's play was rejected. In the conclusion, "Yet then shall calm reflection bless the night" (l. 21), it implies peaceful benevolence. Another example is pity. One form of this word appears in line 5, "A generous foe regards with pitying eye," describing an enemy's attitude. But in line 22, "pity" is "liberal" and it dignifies "delight."

Throughout the poem, associations create major meanings of reflective gentleness in the wake of conflict and of the transience of human life. Some associations fortify antithesis between violent resentment and kindly acceptance. With words such as rage, vengeance, wars, and

foe, lines 1-5 set up a military metaphor. The next section (ll. 6-13), urges a kindly justice toward the dead author, but the connotations of key words echo the earlier militant imagery: invade, appease, hurt, offence, inviolable. The argument for generosity sharpens in connotations of unawareness or helplessness: oblivious, unconscious, harmless. These interact with the military imagery to picture a combatant unable to fight back. The implication is that malicious feelings may yet have the power to torment Kelly's spirit, if only as it lives on in his family. In line 7, reviving in the phrase reviving from its author's dust proceeds directly from death references in the preceding line: "The man whom fate has laid where all must lye." Another example of interlacing associations stems from the interaction of hurt and harmless in lines 12 and 14; Johnson writes that the dead author can no longer "hurt" anyone through his "harmless merriment." In like manner all the commands in the middle section of the poem overlap to urge restraint: "Be kind" and "be just" in line 8; "Let one claim appease," in line 11; "allow to please," in line 12, "Approve" in line 16, and "Forebear" in line 18. In this line (l. 18), "Forebear to hiss--the poet cannot hear," the word hear interacts with earlier antithetical words such as unconscious.

In this Prologue, his last, Johnson makes effective use of lively abstractions and interlocking reverberations of meanings, and he also draws on rhetorical devices and multiple interpretations of particular words as sources of ambiguity. As he does in some of the other prologues, however, in this one he ignores ambiguous possibilities in the operation of syntax.

Johnson's epilogue and most of his prologues do not have the status of his other heroic couplet works, but they do rely on ambiguity to

amplify reference and deepen meaning. Some prologues employ all of the same sources of expanded meaning that the poet uses in his major poems. In a few instances, personifications lose some of the intensity that they project in London and The Vanity of Human Wishes, but in others, particularly in the best, At the Opening of the Theatre in Drury-Lane, the juxtaposition of long latinate words against short Anglo-Saxon terms is a more powerful technique in attaining added or special effect than it is in the imitations, and other devices are effective. Although most of the prologues never won critical acclaim, they are helpful in a study of ambiguity because they cover a long period. The earliest prologue whose date is definite is Lethe, written in 1740; the last, to A Word to the Wise, was published in 1777. The epilogue to The Distrest Mother may have appeared as early as 1730. Two of the prologues were written during the decade between publication of the two imitations, and the others appeared after The Vanity of Human Wishes. Analysis has proved that through the years Johnson continued to employ more or less the same devices of ambiguity in his prologues as he did in his longer works. Three of the prologues use all five of his usual devices to create this poetic element. Some of the other techniques appear in the other prologues and the epilogue. In the last two, to The Good-Natured Man and to A Word to the Wise, Johnson's age and attitude may have affected his management of ambiguity as well as his general performance, for he does not employ all the sources he had at his command, nor does he manipulate them as effectively as in other heroic couplet poems.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Poems, Vol. VI of The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, ed. E. L. McAdam, Jr., with George Milne (New Haven, 1964), Introd., p. xix.

<sup>2</sup>The Life 1709-1765, Vol. I of Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. L. F. Powell (Oxford, 1971), pp. 50, 55.

<sup>3</sup>Ruth Salvaggio, "Dryden's Syntax: A Reappraisal of His Couplet Verse and His Public Poetry" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Rice University, 1979), p. 180.

<sup>4</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 264.

<sup>5</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 290.

<sup>6</sup>McAdam and Milne, Introd., p. xix.

<sup>7</sup>According to McAdam and Milne, p. 89, n. 46, "New Behns" in line 42 refers to Aphra Behn (1640-89) and "new Durfeys" to Tom D'Urfey (1653-1723), minor dramatists who wrote ribald comedy. In line 44, "On flying cars new sorcerers may ride," cars means the chariots sometimes brought on stage. In line 46, Edward Hunt was a boxer and Mahomet a rope dancer.

<sup>8</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 109.

<sup>9</sup>William Bowman Piper, The Heroic Couplet (Cleveland, 1969), p. 396.

<sup>10</sup>Piper, p. 398.

<sup>11</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 264.

<sup>12</sup>McAdam and Milne, p. 290.







an arrangement of clauses or phrases in dependent relationship; multi-clinatum, repetition of words from the same root but with different endings; chiasmus, a pattern in which the grammatical sequence of the first half of a line or couplet is reversed in the second half; inversion, and exclamatio.

Besides the epithet My fair, the poet repeats several words such as find, form, care, pain, and charms, sometimes in a new context. Find ends lines 3 and 17. The first instance, "May this returning day for ever find," implies an annual check on development, which the next line explains should be both physical and mental. In line 17, where "mimick censure" needs to learn "her own faults to find," the verb again implies inspection. The word form in line 4, "Thy form more lovely, more adorn'd thy mind," probably refers to the physical body, but in line 15, "With his own form acquaint the forward fool," it points out behavior. Form may also mean the Platonic form of folly and the particular embodiment. Care and pain appear first in the plural (l. 5) but the second time in the singular (ll. 14 and 15). In each case the singular is more powerful, for it refers to the girl's treatment of other people--her suitors--whereas in the plural, in "All pains, all cares, may favouring heav'n remove" (l. 5), meaning centers on the girl herself. Another repeated word is charms. In line 13 those "charms" are dangerous, but in the poem's last line, "So shall Belinda's charms improve mankind," they are benign.

Several other rhetorical techniques aid ambiguity. Line 4, "Thy form more lovely, more adorn'd thy mind," is arranged in chiasmus since the order of the first half of the statement is reversed in the second. The device allows emphasis to fall on form and mind at the line's

extremes. Tmesis and anaphora occur in lines 5 and 6; the word all is repeated in line 5 with only one word in between, and that same word begins both lines as well: "All pains, all cares, may favouring heav'n remove, / All but the sweet solitudes of love." The second line's shift in meaning develops partly from these devices, for the repetitions lead the reader to expect further stockpiling of troubles, not an exception. Lines 7 and 8, "May powerful nature join with graceful art, / To point each glance, and force it to the heart," contain balances stressing the contrast between "nature" and "art" and deploying the verbs point and force into accented positions. In the pivot couplet, "O then, when conquer'd crowds confess thy sway, / When even proud wealth and prouder wit obey" (ll. 9-10), the rhetorical patterns are hypotaxis, an arrangement of subordinate clauses, and multiclinatum, in the use of the words proud and prouder, which have the same root but different endings. In Johnson's first admonition, "Those sovereign charms with strictest care employ, / Nor give the generous pain, the worthless joy" (ll. 13-14), inversion forces employ to the end of the first line for emphasis, and balance underlines the antithesis in the second line. In line 15, "With his own form acquaint the forward fool," inversion places the important word fool at line's end. The same figure adds meaning to the closing triplet. In its first line, "Teach mimick censure her own faults to find" (l. 17), the infinitive is out of normal order, strengthening the word find, and in its second line, "No more let coquets to themselves be blind" (l. 18), the phrases No more and to themselves are displaced. The sonorous No more gains emphasis from its unexpected appearance at the line's beginning, and the shifted position of to

themselves allows the line to end with blind, which carries a major implication.

Operation of syntax also creates ambiguity. In the opening couplet, "This tributary verse receive, my fair, / Warm with an ardent lover's fondest pray'r" (ll. 1-2), the word modified by Warm may be either verse or fair, for the poet's tenderness could "warm" either the copy or the lady. Double meanings arising from syntax are possible in line 14, "Nor give the generous pain, the worthless joy." The girl's charms can cause generous or widespread pain, or, on the other hand, if generous is an indirect object, they can give pain to "the generous." In the second phrase, the charms can offer "worthless joy" or insincere affection, or, if worthless is the indirect object, they can wrongly give joy to "worthless" men.

Multiple meanings present another source of ambiguity. In the opening line, "This tributary verse receive, my fair," tributary may have several references: a payment from a subordinate (the adoring poet) to a superior (the young girl); a gift of affection, or the furnishing of support. The Oxford English Dictionary reports that all three meanings date from 1585 well into the eighteenth century. The verb receive offers two applicable interpretations. The girl can accept the verse in a physical action, but also in an abstract one by either encountering the verse's effect or permitting its honor. In the second couplet, "May this returning day for ever find / Thy form more lovely, more adorn'd thy mind" (ll. 3-4), returning means coming back, but also restoring, as each birthday reinforces beauty and sense of learning. In lines 5-6, "All pains, all cares may favouring heav'n remove, / All but the sweet solitudes of love," favouring can show heaven as kindly, encouraging, partial

or gently sparing, and solicitudes can be anxious cares or special attentions. In line 7, "May powerful nature join with graceful art," graceful can pertain to the divine, or mean favorable, attractive, or elegant. Point in line 8, "To point each glance, and force it to the heart," also supports ambiguity. If it carries the meaning of note or indicate, one that Johnson would have been aware of since according to the OED it was current in 1669, then each glance would be recorded by nature and art; but it can also mean to sharpen or direct, thus coordinating with force. In line 9, "O then, when conquer'd crowds confess thy sway," sway can mean momentum like the girl's rising appeal, or sovereign rule, or physical litesomeness. In line 13, "Those sovereign charms with strictest care employ," strictest can describe "care" as exactly fitting or rigorously severe. The next couplet tells the girl to "acquaint" or inform the "forward fool" with his "own form." Forward here can mean presumptuous, immodest, or aggressive; all interpretations are acceptable. The next line discusses the "faithful glass of ridicule," which may be a mirror, a transparent lens, or, in the early seventeenth century, the human eye, a meaning Johnson would have known. Several words with multiple meaning appear in the conclusion. First, censure in line 17, "Teach mimick censure her own faults to find," can be a condemnatory judgment or hostile criticism. In the sixteenth century one meaning was censorship, and in the seventeenth, correction. All fit context. Finally, both blind in line 19 and improve in the poem's last line present several meanings. Blind can mean that the coquets lack intellectual or moral perception, or that they are heedless, inconsiderate, or indiscriminating, and improve can state that Belinda's charms will advance either men's condition or their spiritual edification.

The final element of ambiguity is association to support images of law and military power. These words have legal nuances: tributary, strictest, find, form, confess, faults, obey, trust, just, sovereign, and censure. Some of course project both a judicial and a military sense. Other words with strong military reverberations are powerful, conquer'd, crowds, sway, forward, point, force, and mighty.

Unlike the recipient of "To a Young Lady on Her Birthday," the honoree in "To Miss Hickman Playing on the Spinnet" is known. She was Dorothy Hickman, whose father Gregory Hickman, a relative of Johnson's who vainly tried to place him as an usher at Stourbridge Grammar School in 1731. McAdam and Milne believe the poem was written that year.<sup>2</sup>

The first verse paragraph, consisting of one heroic couplet and two triplets, describes Dorothy's physical charms and musical ability. According to McAdam and Milne, the second paragraph was suggested by Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," which relates that when Timotheus, a court musician, played the lyre, Alexander recalled his battles, sank upon the breast of his love Thais, and finally rushed to burn down the palace of Xerxes in Persepolis. Johnson's less-detailed poem shows that Timotheus' music stirred the king to "ambitious fury." If instead he could have heard Dorothy's gentle harmony, he would have rejected violence for love.

The poem demonstrates all of the ambiguous elements typical of Johnson, but some not as extensively as in "To a Young Lady on Her Birthday." Abstractions are not stately, and syntax is a minor source of expanded meaning:

Bright Stella, form'd for universal reign,  
 Too well you know to keep the slaves you gain.  
 When in your eyes resistless lightnings play,  
 Aw'd into love, our conquer'd hearts obey,  
 And yield, reluctant, to despotick sway.  
 But when your musick soothes the raging pain,

We bid propitious Heav'n prolong your reign,  
 We bless the tyrant, and we hug the chain.  
 When old Timotheus struck the vocal string, 10  
 Ambitious fury fir'd the Grecian king;  
 Unbounded projects lab'ring in his mind,  
 He pants for room, in one poor world confin'd.  
 Thus wak'd to rage by musick's dreadfull pow'r,  
 He bids the sword destroy, the flame devour.  
 Had Stella's gentle touches mov'd the lyre, 15  
 Soon had the monarch felt a nobler fire,  
 No more delighted with destructive war,  
 Ambitious only now to please the fair,  
 Resign'd his thirst of empire to her charms,  
 And found a thousand worlds in Stella's arms. 20

Abstractions, though few, are vigorous. In the girl's eyes "resist-  
 less lightnings play," and as a result "conquer'd hearts obey" (ll. 3-4).  
 Her "musick soothes" pain so that "propitious Heav'n" is asked to "pro-  
 long" her spell. Later, "Ambitious fury fir'd" Alexander so that "Un-  
 bounded projects" labored in his brain. The music enraged him. However,  
 if he had listened to Stella (Dorothy), he would have desired only to  
 love "the fair." The name Stella may be an allusion either to Penelope  
 Devereux, subject of Sir Philip Sidney's sonnet series Astrophel and  
Stella, or to Swift's friend Esther Johnson, who shared Sir William  
 Temple's household with him.

Rhetorical devices support ambiguity. Repetitio with the word When  
 bonds the two verse paragraphs; When appears in the first paragraph in  
 line 3, "When in your eyes resistless lightnings play," and in the open-  
 ing line (l. 9) of the second paragraph: "When old Timotheus struck the  
 vocal string." More repetition occurs with We in lines 7 and 8: "We bid  
 propitious Heav'n prolong your reign, / We bless the tyrant, and we hug  
 the chain." This final clause (in l. 8) is an example of synecdoche,  
 substitution of a part for the whole.

A form of repetitio, the use of one word in different lines and in  
 different contexts, aids ambiguity. The pattern is handled most

effectively with world. In line 12, Alexander "pants for room, in one poor world confin'd"; the king is cramped, unhappy, and unfulfilled in a material world too small for his "Unbounded projects." But in the poem's final line, "And found a thousand worlds in Stella's arms," his world is unlimited and the king is satisfied.

Multiclinatum, repetition of words from the same root but with different endings, is a final rhetorical tool; it is a source of both ambiguity and cohesion. In participle form the word rage appears in line 6, "But when your musick soothes the raging pain," referring to pangs of love; but it appears as a noun object in line 13: "Thus wak'd to rage by musick's dreadful pow'r," pertaining now to vengeance. Two other words operate in this pattern. In line 14, under the evil power of Timotheus' song, Alexander bids "the sword destroy." But in line 17 destructive, akin to destroy, reveals a changed attitude: the king is "No more delighted with destructive war." Likewise, in line 10, the king's "Abmitious fury" is "fir'd" or viciously stirred; in line 16 Alexander feels the "nobler fire" of romance.

Multiple meanings support ambiguity. For example, in the first line, "Bright Stella, form'd for universal reign," bright can mean illustrious, resplendent with charms, or lively and sprightly; form'd can mean either created originally or shaped presently to attract men, and universal can mean including all sorts of subjects or territories, drawing honor or allegiance from all persons, or constant and continuing, an interpretation current in Johnson's day (OED). The "resistless lightnings" that "play" in Stella's eyes can flutter and vibrate, or sport or dally. In line 8, "We bless the tyrant, and we hug the chain," bless can mean to make (the girl) joyous, to guard her, or to praise her,



and hug can mean both cherish and clasp. Multiple meanings also appear in line 11, "Unbounded projects lab'ring in his [Alexander's] mind." These occur in lab'ring, which can fit context under any of these interpretations: toiling, addressing favor, or travailing as in childbirth, for the king's plans are struggling toward birth. Pants in the phrase pants for room (l. 12) can mean to breathe quickly or to yearn, and room can refer to a particular territory or to an opportunity. Wak'd in line 13, "Thus wak'd to rage by musick's dreadfull pow'r," has several meanings. Derived from Old English wacan, to awake, and akin to both Old English waeccan, to watch, and Latin vagere, to rouse, it can mean to be stirred or to stay up late for festivities, as Alexander does. Double meanings also occur in line 14, "He bids the sword destroy, the flame devour," for sword can mean a weapon or a symbol of power, and flame can be a blaze or a burning zeal. In the second section readers learn that Stella's "gentle touches mov'd the lyre" (l. 15). Gentle can describe her quiet, tractable actions or her soft handling of the instrument.

Word associations, a final tool for ambiguity, center about military conquest. Stella's "reign" is "universal," and the "conquer'd hearts" of her slaves always "yield" and "obey." As she plays the spinet, they "bless the tyrant" and "hug the chain" of admiration. Alexander feels the "dreadfull pow'r" of music, indulges in destruction, and then feels the "fire" of love and sinks into Stella's "arms."

Boswell states that Johnson wrote "An Epitaph on Claudy Phillips, a Musician" after David Garrick had read him memorial lines composed by Dr. Richard Wilkes of Wolverhampton, the town where the poverty-stricken Welsh violinist was buried. Johnson declared that he could write a better verse. His poem, published in 1740, shows typical techniques:

Phillips! whose touch harmonious could remove  
 The pangs of guilty pow'r, and hapless love,  
 Rest here, distrest by poverty no more,  
 Find here that calm thou gav'st so oft before;  
 Sleep undisturb'd within this peaceful shrine,  
 Till angels wake thee with a note like thine.

5

Ambiguity, which arises from structure, flow, diction, and theme, has its nucleus in the word harmonious (l. 1). From each of its several interpretations readers may trace an element of expansion in meaning. For example, one meaning of harmonious is symmetrical, borne out in the poem's sequence of ideas and in grammatical structure. The work moves through the "pangs" of life to a grave in a "peaceful shrine," and ends with a heavenly "note" created by angels. A series of balances fit into one sentence. The poem opens with direct address and continues with a "whose" clause ending in balance in line 2, "guilty pow'r, and hapless love." Then follow three parallel admonitions, each opening with a one-syllable verb, Rest, Find, and Sleep. The march of these verbs leads to the climactic one wake (in heaven). Several meanings of note in the final line help to unify the work. A note can be a mark of style in the work of any artist, or a sign or token, or a musical sound. The connection between the human "touch harmonious" (l. 1) and the angels' "note" (l. 6) gives the epitaph cohesion.

The quatrain "On Colley Cibber," an heroic couplet verse about the poet laureate named by King George I, probably was composed in 1741 as Johnson's reaction to Cibber's "Birthday Ode" to the monarch. Both Johnson and Pope, who in 1742 substituted Cibber for Theobald as the hero of The Dunciad, held Cibber in low esteem. Ambiguity stems from an analogy. First, Cibber is compared to Vergil, whose full name was Publius Vergilius Maro, and King George to Vergil's parton, the Emperor Augustus; next, Cibber is paralleled with Spenser, and King George with

Queen Elizabeth, who was honored in Spenser's Faerie Queene:

Augustus still survives in Maro's strain,  
 And Spenser's verse prolongs Eliza's reign;  
 Great George's acts let tuneful Cibber sing;  
 For nature form'd the poet for the king.

The first word whose multiple meanings aid ambiguity is strain in line 1. If it means a pervading note or tone running through the poet's works, it refers to praise. If it means a stream of forceful speech, it describes the author's skill in magnifying his sovereign; if it means specific poetry, it refers to odes, and if it means progeny, it associates with the phrase still survives (l. 1), for Augustus' memory lives in the poetry. In line 2, prolongs indicates continuing generation. Multiple meanings not only aid ambiguity but also change the poem's tone. In the second couplet the word acts carries a strong pejorative sense, implying that King George's "acts" are inconsequential and that Cibber is writing empty verse about non-events. Tuneful, too, is strongly ironic. A "tune" is any kind of song--any succession of sounds, musical or not--if they reveal personality. The suggestion is that Cibber's verse is poor, but better than a mere tune. Irony emerges in the final line, "For nature form'd the poet for the King." If that "nature" is human, it may be frail. On the other hand, all of these words may project opposite meanings; given Johnson's well-known antipathy to Cibber, however, the ironic ones suggested through ambiguity are more likely.

"On a Lady's Presenting a Sprig of Myrtle to a Gentleman" was written in 1731. McAdam and Milne explain that Edmund Hector, the Birmingham physician, asked Johnson to write it for Hector's fellow townsman Morgan Graves, who had received a branch of myrtle from a woman and wanted to

respond. Graves was the brother of Richard Graves, author of The Spiritual Quixote.<sup>3</sup> Ambiguity stems from five sources:

What fears, what terrors does thy gift create!  
 Ambiguous emblem of uncertain fate!  
 The myrtle, ensign of supreme command,  
 (Consign'd by Venus to Melissa's hand)  
 Not less capricious than a reigning fair, 5  
 Oft favors, oft rejects a lover's pray'r.  
 In myrtle groves oft sings the happy swain,  
 In myrtle shades despairing ghosts complain;  
 The myrtle corns the happy lovers' heads,  
 Th' unhappy lovers' graves the myrtle spreads; 10  
 Oh! then the meaning of thy gift impart,  
 And cure the throbbings of an anxious heart;  
 Soon must this bough, as you shall fix his doom,  
 Adorn Philander's head, or grace his tomb.

Structure, abstractions, rhetorical devices, multiple meanings, and associations produce ambiguity. But abstract terms--"fears," "terrors," "Fate," "command," "fair," "meaning," and "doom"--lack the force most abstractions show in other poems because in this one, lively verbs and adjectives do not accompany the generalizations. Most effective are the first line's "fears" and "terrors." Their power however derives mainly from a rhetorical technique and from sequence. The word what preceding both terms forms tmesis, repetition of a word with only one word in between, which lends emphasis and emotional appeal. Next, sequence supports ambiguity in that "fears" seem to deepen into something more frightening, "terrors," which are extreme agitations due to fear.

Some rhetorical devices broaden meaning. First, the entire poem is an apostrophe. Next, exclamatio appears in three lines, 1, 2, and 11; in the opening couplet the technique sets an anxious tone, and in line 11, "Oh! then the meaning of thy gift impart," it makes the transition to the conclusion. Tmesis occurs a second time in line 6, "Oft favors, oft rejects a lover's pray'r." Here it emphasizes the antithesis between Venus' love and treachery, and it stresses the confusion the

myrtle, a plant sacred to Venus, has brought Graves since he received the gift. Anaphora, repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses, marks lines 7 and 8: "In myrtle groves oft sings the happy swain, / In myrtle shades despairing ghosts complain." Again the technique supports antithesis. Oft, used for the third time within two lines, extends the tmesis into line 7 to form a series bonding two couplets (ll. 5-6 and 7-8).

Several words project more than one meaning. For example, in line 4, "(Consign'd by Venus to Melissa's hand)," Consign'd can mean either delivered or entrusted, and the name Melissa, coming through Latin from Greek, originally meant a bee. If the name is fictitious, it fits the poem's anxiety. Swain in line 7, "In myrtle groves oft sings the happy swain," can describe any young rustic or the gallant lover in pastoral poetry. Crowns in line 9, "The myrtle crowns the happy lovers' heads," can mean merely to cover or to glorify. In line 12, which asks the lady to "cure the throbbings of an anxious heart," cure means both heal and remove. In the penultimate line, "Soon must this bough, as you shall fix his doom" doom can refer either to a judgment or destiny for Philander.

Associations also support ambiguity. For example, ambiguous and uncertain in line 2 interweave with reverberations of capricious in line 5, and doom ending line 13 echoes fate in line 2. Other associations center about military life or sovereignty.

The major tools of ambiguity in this verse, then, are rhetorical devices, multiple meanings of certain words, and mingling reverberations of others.

"The Young Author," published in 1743, anticipates the scholar portion of The Vanity of Human Wishes. In the Juvenalian imitation, the

first paragraph in the scholar section deals with the student's hopes and his troubles on his way to fame, and the second with the tragic ends of several learned men. The inferior earlier poem "The Young Author," however, is a kind of Homeric simile, in itself a source of expanded meaning; the first paragraph describes a peasant who leaves his fields to wander at sea; the second implies comparison of the rustic to a budding author scrambling for recognition. The poem thus reverses the usual pattern of a simile. In the conclusion the young writer seeks a home port of anonymity:

When first the peasant, long inclin'd to roam,  
 Forsakes his rural seats and peaceful home,  
 Charm'd with the scene the smiling ocean yields,  
 He scorns the flow'ry vales and verdant fields;  
 Jocund he dances o'er the wat'ry way, 5  
 While the breeze whispers and the streamers play.  
 Joys insincere! thick clouds invade the skies,  
 Loud roars the tempest, high the billows rise,  
 Sick'ning with fear he longs to view the shore,  
 And vows to trust the faithless deep no more. 10  
 So the young author panting for a name,  
 And fir'd with pleasing hope of endless fame,  
 Intrusts his happiness to human kind,  
 More false, more cruel than the seas and wind.  
 'Toil on, dull croud, in extacy, he cries, 15  
 'For wealth or title, perishable prize;  
 'While I these transitory blessings scorn,  
 'Secure of praise from nations yet unborn.'  
 This thought once form'd, all counsel comes too late,  
 He plies the press, and hurries on his fate; 20  
 Swiftly he sees the imagin'd laurels spread,  
 He feels th' unfading wreath surround his head;  
 Warn'd by another's fate, vain youth, be wise,  
 These dreams were Settle's once, and Ogilby's.  
 The pamphlet spreads, incessant hisses rise, 25  
 To some retreat the baffled writer flies,  
 Where no sour criticks damn, nor sneers molest,  
 Safe from the keen lampoon and stinging jest;  
 There begs of heav'n a less distinguish'd lot;  
 Glad to be hid, and proud to be forgot.

Abstractions, rhetorical devices, operation of syntax, multiple meanings, and association are tools of ambiguity and ambivalence. Abstractions abound in the second verse paragraph, but most are trite.

Rhetorical patterns include tmesis, repetition of a word with only one or a few words in between; apostrophe; exclamatio; parataxis, clauses or phrases arranged independently; and much balance and inversion. In lines 25-26, "The pamphlet spreads, incessant hisses rise, / To some retreat the baffled writer flies," the procession of independent clauses forms parataxis, which intensifies the author's plight. Parallels add power in line 27, "Where no sour criticks damn, nor sneers molest," and to the poem's final line, "Glad to be hid, and proud to be forgot."

In several instances (ll. 17, 21, and 26), inversion delays important words to accented positions at the end of lines. In line 7, "Joys insincere! thick clouds invade the skies," exclamatio forms a transition between the placid ocean and the storm. In line 14, "More false, more cruel than the seas and wind," tmesis, repetition of more with only one word between, underlines the viciousness of "human kind." In the final couplet of the second verse paragraph, "Warn'd by another's fate, vain youth, be wise, / These dreams were Settle's once, and Ogilby's" (ll. 23-24),<sup>4</sup> the apostrophe occurs as suddenly as it does near the end of The Vanity of Human Wishes when the poet, without preparing the reader, turns to address the enquirer.

Syntax aids ambiguity in only one instance. In line 15, "Toil on, dull croud, in extacy, he cries," the phrase in extacy, here meaning a trance-like state, may refer either to the crowd striving for wealth or fame, or to he, the young author.

Repetitio, repeating a word in a different line or section and with a different context, supports ambiguity and cohesion. In line 1, the peasant is "long inclin'd to roam"; long extends the restless yearning. In line 9, "Sick'ning with fear he longs to view the short," longs is a

different part of speech but still, it means yearning. Scorn appears twice as a verb. But in the first section, the farmer "scorns the flow'ry vales and verdant fields" (l. 4), and in the second, the author scorns "transitory blessings" (l. 17). The rustic trusts "the deep" no more, but the author "Intrusts" his happiness to humans. A similar example occurs with rise. In line 8, nature is rampant: "high billows rise"; in line 25, mankind is vicious: "incessant hisses rise." Finally, in line 21, the "imagin'd laurels spread," but in line 25, the pamphlet "spreads" the critics' jeers.

Johnson's diction projects multiple meanings. In line 6, "While the breeze whispers and the streamers play," streamers can be either ships' flags or columns of light in the water. In line 20, the young author "plies the press"; plies can mean to furnish with writings or to use diligently, hence in a sense to take advantage of the trade's need for material. Later, he is "baffled"--disgraced and frustrated--and he "retreats." Finally, he prays for a "less distinguish'd lot" (l. 29), one less recognized, known, and honored, so that he can hide or be "forgot," lost to memory, but also neglected and slighted.

Some ideas overlap through association. A natural storm gathers for the peasant, a storm of criticism for the author; the rustic sees the "clouds invade" or overspread the sky, the author watches pamphlets spread through the city. The author taunts the crowds for cherishing the "perishable prize" of "wealth or title" (l. 16), but soon he sees himself wearing the ultimate prize--the laurel.

Thus in this poem Johnson uses typical techniques for ambiguity, but not as skillfully or extensively as in other poetry. His abstractions, rhetorical devices, and operation of syntax are particularly weak.





"sonnet" in line 8: "Its charms are fled and all its powers destroyed" (l. 9). Soon, which fortifies the censure of sudden undisciplined outpouring of emotion, benefits from this build-up of repetitions. Inversions in several lines once again delay verbs to the ends of lines or cause other important accents within the couplet to fall on important words.

Multiple meanings also broaden interpretation. Melts in line 2, "When fondness melts me," can mean either overcome or cause to become tender and gentle, and inflames in the same line, "or when wine inflames," can mean to intensify or to cause to become hot or red. In line 4, "I too can pour the extemporary song," pour has the literal meaning of produce without restraint and the figurative one of utter or sing. Sallies in line 6, "Or sudden sallies seize," may be brief outbreaks of expression, flights of fancy, or transgressions from soberness, an implication supported by wine in line 2. In the penultimate line, perfect projects three meanings: flawless, conforming to an ideal, and complete: "What soon is perfect, soon alike is past." This line is an example of Johnson's precise diction. He opens it with What, which here means whatever, implying vague generality. But moving to lasting works of art in the following line, he employs That: "That slowly grows, which must for ever last" (l. 10). The implication is now specific, particular, outstanding.

Associations unify the poem. Melts, inflames, and rapture in lines 2 and 3 denote heat; extemporary (l. 4), sudden and seize (l. 6), and soon (l. 9) imply spur-of-the-moment activity. The "powers" destroyed by time in line 8 echo the "fierce and strong" rapture in line 3; rapture is linked by nuance with charms in line 8, for both rapture and charms imply the occult.

"The Ant," Johnson's heroic couplet paraphrase of Chapter VI, Verse 6 of Proverbs, was first published in 1766. The opening paragraph describes the ant's diligence, the second the human transgression of sloth, one of the seven deadly sins:

Turn on the prudent ant, thy heedful eyes,  
 Observe her labours, sluggard, and be wise.  
 No stern command, no monitory voice,  
 Prescribes her duties, or direct her choice,  
 Yet timely provident, she hastes away 5  
 To snatch the blessings of the plenteous day;  
 When fruitful summer loads the teeming plain,  
 She gleans the harvest, and she stores the grain.  
 How long shall sloth usurp thy useless hours,  
 Dissolve thy vigour, and enchain thy powers? 10  
 While artful shades thy downy couch enclose,  
 And soft solicitation courts repose,  
 Amidst the drousy charms of dull delight,  
 Year chases year, with unremitted flight,  
 Till want, now following fraudulent and slow,  
 Shall spring to seize thee like an ambush'd foe.

Abstractions and rhetorical techniques contribute strongly to ambiguity; associations of certain words are a definite factor, and multiple meanings are a minor source. At least half of the abstract words are invigorated by adjectives or verbs. In lines 3-4, for example, "stern command . . . Prescribes"; in line 7, the "fruitful summer loads the teeming plain"; in lines 9-10, "sloth shall usurp . . . dissolve . . . enchain"; in lines 11-12, "artful shades . . . enclose" and "soft solicitation courts"; in line 14, "Year chases year," and in the last couplet, "want . . . fraudulent and show, / Shall spring." In other instances adjectives alone intensify or personify abstractions: "the plenteous day" (l. 6), "thy useless hours" (l. 9), and "the drousy charms of dull delight" (l. 13). The modifiers prudent (l. 1) and timely provident (l. 5) personify the ant.

Among rhetorical tools for ambiguity are apostrophe; epilexis, or asking questions to reproach; tmesis, repetition of a word with only one or a few words in between; simile, and inversion. Like the Proverbs

verse, the poem addresses a "sluggard." Epilexis, a reproachful rhetorical question closely following the Bible, makes the transition from the ant's diligence to human laziness and procrastination: "How long shall sloth usurp thy useless hours, / Dissolve thy vigour, and enchain thy powers?" (ll. 9-10). A simile featuring personification, "want . . . / Shall seize thee like an ambush'd foe" (ll. 15-16), appears in the last couplet. Inversions occur only twice (ll. 1 and 11). Tmesis reinforces the balance in line 4, "Prescribes her duties, or directs her choice," and prolongs time in line 14, "Year chases year."

A third source of ambiguity is multiple meaning. The "prudent ant" behaves judiciously, and she is circumspect and discreet. No "stern command" or "monitory [warning] voice / Prescribes" her tasks--dictates or keeps them within bounds. She is "timely provident": she anticipates the future and acts in a saving manner. When summer "loads" the plain--weighing it down and supplying it abundantly--the ant "gleans"--gathers what reapers leave and collects it patiently. In the human section "sloth" is said to "usurp" hours; usurp can mean seize by force or employ wrongfully; here it means both. Sloth dissolves "vigour"--human strength as well as intensity of action--and "enchains"--attracts as well as fetters--human powers.

Among words whose associations mingle are those implying caution and care: prudent and heedful (l. 1); wise (l. 2), and provident (l. 5); those centering about discipline: stern and monitory (l. 3), and Prescribes and directs (l. 4); those concerned with abundance: plenteous (l. 6), fruitful and teeming (l. 7), and harvest (l. 8); those suggesting oppression: snatch (l. 6), usurp (l. 9), enchain (l. 10), enclose seize and ambush'd foe (l. 16); and those involving stupor: sluggard

(1. 2), useless (1. 9), shades, downy, and couch (1. 11), soft and repose (1. 12), drousy and dull (1. 13), and slow (1. 15).

In summary, vigorous abstractions and rhetorical devices aided by associations are the major factors in ambiguity in "The Ant."

The brief heroic couplet tribute "To a Lady Firebrace at Bury Assizes" probably was written in 1738. It was composed at the request of friends to honor someone Johnson did not know, and he undoubtedly gave it little thought, for McAdam and Milne state that he wrote this comment to his publisher Edward Cave: "Such a subject neither deserves much thought nor requires it."<sup>6</sup> The poem contains no ambiguity.

Johnson's last poem in the heroic couplet is "On Seeing a Portrait of Mrs. Montagu," dated 1779. Three years earlier, T. Wright had published a medallion portrait of the woman, whom Johnson had known for some time. The poet told Mrs. Thrale in 1778 that he wanted a copy of the likeness.<sup>7</sup> The verse states that a statue of Mrs. Montagu in ancient Rome would have enhanced the city and improved the character of the goddess Minerva, with whom the English woman is identified:

Had this fair figure which this frame displays,  
Adorn'd in Roman times the brightest days;  
In every dome, in every sacred place,  
Her statue would have breath'd an added grace,  
And on its basis would have been enroll'd  
'This is Minerva, cast in Virtue's mould.'

5

Virtue, since it is capitalized and personified by association with Minerva, protector of city life and favorite daughter of Zeus, aids ambiguity. The abstraction raises Mrs. Montagu above the goddess, also a ruthless battle deity. If the woman becomes this goddess "cast in Virtue's mould," she loses Minerva's fierceness and assumes high moral excellence, particularly chastity.

Inversion in line 2, "Adorn'd in Roman times the brightest days," moves to the line's end the important phrase the brightest days, which associates with the "grace" and deification of Mrs. Montagu. Repetition in line 3, "In every dome, in every sacred place," stresses the wide influence of the statue.

Several words aid ambiguity by projecting more than one appropriate meaning. The "fair figure" in the opening line may be a bodily shape, the image on the medallion, or the central impression revealed in the portrait. In line 2, "Adorn'd in Roman times the brightest days," brightest can mean outstanding in sovereignty or in intellectual activity, or can refer to the sunlight the statue needs. Two words in line 4, "Her statue would have breath'd an added grace," have multiple interpretations. Breath'd means to blow gently, but another meaning in Johnson's time was to emit fragrance; and grace is favor, virtue, charm, or ornament. In the next line, "And on its basis would have been enroll'd" (l. 5), basis means foundation, but in Johnson's day it referred to the pedestal of a column (OED). In the last line, mould means either the matrix or cavity for shaping a likeness, or a distinctive character; or it can be seen in the sense in which Shakespeare used it: an example to be followed (Hamlet, III. i. 161).

Interaction of word associations expands meaning. Some implications of fair, adorn'd, brightest, grace, Virtue, and mould center about goodness or beauty. And some concern a model: figure, frame, statue, cast, and mould. Two others show the projection of an ideal: displays and breath'd.

Thus even in this short work readers can trace ambiguity. It is

true that there is little variation from normal word order and that abstractions are a minor source, but other typical elements are factors.

Since one purpose of this study is to determine whether the ambiguity in Johnson's heroic couplet stems mainly from the rhetoric and tradition of the couplet itself or from other sources, several poems in other forms should be examined. Those selected are often anthologized: "To Mrs. Thrale, on Her Completing Her Thirty-Fifth Year," "A Short Song of Congratulation," and "On the Death of Dr. Levet."

Mrs. Thrale is said to have told Johnson on January 27, 1777, that the day was her birthday; he responded with this verse in seven-syllable meter except for the final couplet:

Oft in danger yet alive	
We are come to thirtyfive;	
Long may better years arrive,	
Better years than thirty five;	
Could philosophers contrive	5
Life to stop at thirtyfive,	
Time his hours should never drive	
O'er the bounds of thirtyfive:	
High to soar and deep to dive	
Nature gives to thirtyfive;	10
Ladies--stock and tend your hive,	
Trifle not at thirty five:	
For howe'er we boast and strive,	
Life declines from thirtyfive;	
He that ever hopes to thrive	15
Must begin by thirty five:	
And those who wisely wish to wive,	
Must look on Thrale at thirtyfive.	

Only two of the six abstractions are personified by verbs: in line 7, "Time" should never drive "his hours," and in lines 9-10, "Nature gives" [the ability] "High to soar and deep to dive." In line 7, "Time" adds imagery; in lines 7-10, "Nature" is restricted in its effect by the ellipsis and by the weak verb gives.

Typical rhetorical techniques stress major terms. In line 3, "Long may better years arrive," inversion emphasizes Long and places arrive to

receive the final accent; in line 7, "Time his hours should never drive," it stresses Time and drive. A form of repetitio in lines 3-4, "Long may better years arrive, / Better years than thirty five," underlines hope. Lines 11-12 forms apostrophe to "Ladies." The device stresses the poem's conversational tone.

Influence of syntax and multiple meanings of individual words is slight. Syntax is ambiguous only in the first couplet: "Oft in danger yet alive / We are come to thirtyfive" (ll. 1-2), where the phrase yet alive may modify either danger and thus work backwards, or We in the next line. The several words with more than one appropriate meaning are soar and dive in line 9, hive in line 11, and declines in line 14. Soar, dive, and hive have both a literal and a figurative sense. Declines can refer to stamina, to quality of life, or to gradual descent to the grave.

Nuances of several words center about movement, either stopping or advancing or going up or down: come, arrive, stop, drive, soar, dive, and declines. However, their association is not a major factor in expanding meaning.

"A Short Song of Congratulations" was composed in 1780 following the coming of age of Sir John Lade, Henry Thrale's nephew, heir to a large estate. McAdam and Milne admire the "restraint, sardonic neatness, and sharp analysis of character" in this personal satire"<sup>8</sup>

Long-expected one and twenty  
 Ling'ring year at last is flown  
 Pomp and Pleasure, Pride and Plenty  
 Great Sir John, are all your own.

Loosen'd from the minor's tether,  
 Free to mortgage or to sell,  
 Wild as wind, and light as feather  
 Bid the slaves of thrift farewell.



Call the Bettys, Kates, and Jennys  
 Ev'ry name that laughs at care, 10  
 Lavish of your grandsire's guineas,  
 Show the spirit of an heir.

All that prey on vice and folly  
 Joy to see their quarry fly,  
 Here the gamester light and jolly, 15  
 There the lender grave and sly.

Wealth, Sir John, was made to wander,  
 Let it wander as it will;  
 See the jocky, see the pander,  
 Bid them come, and take their fill. 20

When the bonny blade carouses,  
 Pockets full, and spirits high,  
 What are acres? What are houses?  
 Only dirt, or wet or dry.

If the guardian or the mother 25  
 Tell the woes of wilful waste,  
 Scorn their counsel and their pother,  
 You can hang or drown at last.

Among the several abstractions, four producing ambiguity are "Pomp and Pleasure, Pride and Plenty" (l. 3), where the accents and the alliteration enhance meaning. Another is personified in line 17: "Wealth, Sir John, was made to wander." The only rhetorical device is erotesis, questions implying strong denial, in line 23: "What are acres? What are houses?" A few words offer multiple meanings: light in line 7 in the phrase light as feather means weightless; but in its second use in line 15, "Here the gamester light and jolly," it means fickle, happy, or wanton. In line 19, "See the jocky, see the pander," jocky refers to a horseman or a cheat, and pander means a male pimp or someone who encourages any evil. Meanings of a few words associate: Loosen'd, Free, wild, fly, and wander indicate lack of restraint.

Thus the sources of ambiguity common to Johnson's heroic couplet poetry either do not appear or are only minor influences.

McAdam and Milne state that Johnson's elegy "On the Death of Dr. Robert Levet" shows a severity and realism "surprising in this kind of poem."<sup>9</sup> They believe Johnson felt that the truth outweighed sentimental glow and that the poem radiates his "loving preoccupation" with the physician who shared his home and humbly treated the neighborhood poor:

Condemn'd to hope's delusive mine,  
 As we toil from day to day,  
 By sudden blasts, or slow decline,  
 Our social comforts drop away.

Well tried through many a varying year, 5  
 See Levet to the grave descend;  
 Officious, innocent; sincere,  
 Of ev'ry friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills affection's eye,  
 Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind; 10  
 Nor, letter'd arrogance, deny  
 Thy praise to merit unrefin'd.

When fainting nature call'd for aid,  
 And hov'ring death prepar'd the blow,  
 His vig'rous remedy display'd 15  
 The power of art without the show.

In misery's darkest caverns known,  
 His useful care was ever nigh,  
 Where hopeless anguish pour'd his groan,  
 And lonely want retir'd to die. 20

No summons mock'd by chill delay,  
 No petty gain disdain'd by pride,  
 The modest wants of ev'ry day  
 The toil of ev'ry day supplied.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round, 25  
 Nor made a pause, nor left a void;  
 And sure th' Eternal Master found  
 The single talent well employ'd.

The busy day, the peaceful night,  
 Unfelt, uncounted, glided by; 30  
 His frame was firm, his powers were bright,  
 Tho' now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then with no throbbing fiery pain,  
 No cold gradations of decay,  
 Death broke at once the vital chain, 35  
 And free'd his soul the nearest way.

Only one of the typical elements of ambiguity, heavy use of abstract terms, operates to any degree in this work. Such nouns, often energized by other parts of speech, not only contribute to the poem's solemnity, but also personify death and its sufferings--"Misery," "anguish," and "lonely want." Their deployment unifies the work, relating each verse to unseen and inevitable forces. Many abstractions associate in meaning or connotation. Particularly effective are "hope's delusive mine," in line 1, which is echoed by "Misery's darkest cavern" in line 17; "he fills affection's eye" in line 9; "When fainting nature calls for aid / And hov'ring death prepares the blow" (ll. 13-14); "Where hopeless anguish pour'd the groan, / And lonely want retir'd to die" (ll. 19-20); "virtues walk'd their narrow round" (l. 25); and the final couplet, "Death broke at once the vital chain / And free'd his soul," which associates with the opening word Condemn'd.

Three rhetorical patterns--multiclinatum, anaphora, and tmesis--appear once each. Multiclinatum, use of words with the same root but with different endings, occurs in line 8: "Of ev'ry friendless name the friend." Anaphora, repetition of a word at the beginning of successive verses, marks lines 21-22: "No summons . . . / No petty gain." Tmesis, repetition of a word with only a few words in between, appears in line 26: "Nor made a pause, nor left a void."

The merit of this work thus stems from other elements than ambiguity and ambivalence, although abstract terms possess the vigor shown in London and in The Vanity of Human Wishes.

This chapter has shown that ambiguity is an element in all but one of Johnson's brief works in the heroic couplet, just as it is in the prologues and in the imitations of Juvenal, and that the same techniques as

those found in the long poems broaden or multiply possibilities of interpretation in the short verse. But examination has uncovered little ambiguity in three well-known non-heroic couplet works. These findings point to the conclusion that the devices Johnson typically uses in his heroic couplet poems are not mere idiosyncrasies, but belong to the heroic couplet tradition.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Poems, Vol. VI of The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, ed. E. L. McAdam, Jr., with George Milne (New Haven, 1964), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> McAdam and Milne, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> McAdam and Milne, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> John Ogilby (1600-1676) was a British writer whose fortunes were ruined in Dublin by war and whose London property was destroyed later in the Great Fire of 1666; Elkanah Settle (1648-1724) was an English poet and playwright who died in poverty. Both appear in Pope's Dunciad, Settle especially, and thus both often appear as bad poets, or as here, unfortunate poets who never achieve fame.

<sup>5</sup> McAdam and Milne, p. 256.

<sup>6</sup> McAdam and Milne, p. 62.

<sup>7</sup> McAdam and Milne, p. 302.

<sup>8</sup> McAdam and Milne, Introd., p. xx.

<sup>9</sup> McAdam and Milne, Introd., p. xix.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

In this analysis of ambiguity and ambivalence in the poetry of Samuel Johnson and of his relation to the tradition of neoclassical imitation, certain preliminary steps were necessary. First was a definition of the terms ambiguity and ambivalence, which have changed and broadened during the middle years of this century as literary critics have applied them especially to poetry. Before this trend developed, both words had pejorative connotations among students and scholars who value the English language as an avenue to clear communication. Thus until the 1930s ambiguity generally meant a clouding or confusing of meaning, often through careless handling of syntax--the due arrangement of word forms to show their mutual relations within a sentence. After William Empson employed the term critically, however, ambiguity became recognized as a technique any skilled writer might use to allow a single word or expression to signify two or more distinct or even opposing references or to project two or more attitudes or emotions. This factor thus came to be seen as an aid to the poet; with it he could widen the range of interpretations possible in his work, for readers might make a variety of responses without violating the norms of language or exceeding the logical limits imposed by context. Ambivalence, which once carried the unfavorable connotation of hesitation or indecision, now refers in literature to the simultaneous attraction of words toward each other or to their

opposition to each other, within any unit of writing from phrase to paragraph or entire work. Thus it involves tension between words--between denotations or dictionary definitions as well as between overtones--and it allows the reader's mind to fluctuate among the choices of meanings created by such tensions. Ambiguity and ambivalence of course interact and reinforce each other.

Since the publication of Empson's study in 1930, other critics have attempted to identify the several sources of ambiguity and ambivalence. Some, such as multiple dictionary meanings of a single word or overtones of emotions, attitudes, or memories stirred in the minds of most readers, are fairly obvious. But others such as the sequence of words in a statement or question, or the influence of passages immediately preceding or following a word or expression, are more difficult to isolate and explain. These last two sources have drawn critical attention during the past twenty-five years. Two sources of ambivalence, the operation of syntax--or the violation of its norms--and the tendency of reverberations of several words to cluster into super-meanings, also have received some comment.

Besides the definitions and an analysis of critical trends in identifying sources of ambiguity and ambivalence, a prerequisite in the study of Johnson's poetry was thorough groundwork in the technical features of the heroic couplet, which Johnson used almost exclusively. The closed couplet, influenced by the elegaic Latin distich of Ovid and Martial, was an achievement of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Through its handling mainly by Dryden and Pope, the couplet developed certain traditions; for example, a hierarchy of pauses, certain positions of special emphasis, and a thrust of continuity from its

first line through its second. The couplet's Latin heritage suggested many classical word arrangements, particularly inversion and parallelism, which helped poets make lively and incisive statements. The poet thus could draw on several characteristics within the couplet norms to help him expand or complicate his message.

Since Johnson's major works, London and The Vanity of Human Wishes, are based on the Roman poet Juvenal, the next step in analyzing Johnson's poetry was an explanation of the mode of imitation of classical satire, a popular genre during the Restoration and the Augustan Age. This distant literary form, involving the poet's interest in Horace and Juvenal, developed mainly from these influences: the classical education most English boys received between 1660 and 1740, which required them to read and write in Latin; the acceptance of a free rather than a close theory of translation, and the several ways the term imitation came to be applied. Those ways varied with different periods and poets. Dryden's explanation of translation and imitation is the best known; however, Johnson defines literary imitation in his Dictionary as a method of translating "looser than paraphrase." Generally, the eighteenth-century poet replaced ancient Roman examples or illustrations with those drawn from his own time and country, but retained the Roman poet's attitude or commentary on general human nature. Writers of the best Augustan imitation including Johnson believed that most of their readers could read Latin and would enjoy noting what a contemporary author had done with the original; thus the poet often incorporated all or part of the model into his work. Rather than merely echoing or transplanting ancient ideas, the mode of imitation gave the poet freedom in creating metaphor, clarifying the relation of modern situations to classical ones, and



widening the scope of his message beyond the concerns of his own nation during his particular era. Although critics have attempted to define the time periods in which either Horace or Juvenal dominated the attention of English poets, such boundaries have proved difficult to set. Interest in both Roman poets was intense. However, authorities have established the preference of Dryden and Johnson for Juvenal; and at one time they believed that Horace had the greater influence on Pope. But recent studies have emphasized Juvenal's strong effect on this poet, especially toward the end of his career.

An investigation into the manner in which Johnson's predecessors Dryden and Pope imitated classical satire and managed the heroic couplet to attain ambiguity and ambivalence was the next requirement in determining these elements in Johnson. Practices of Dryden and Pope varied because their times and audiences differed, but both projected several acceptable meanings into their poetry and subtly drew the attention--and often the sympathy--of certain groups, notably political factions. Scholars show that part of their success derives from their skill in expanding and complicating meaning and reference. Ruth Salvaggio has examined Dryden's techniques and found that manipulation of syntax contributes heavily to the flexibility of his meaning. She has proved that although Dryden does make direct pronouncements--for there is no clouding of the relationships of his words, phrases, and clauses within the metrical and rhetorical structure of his verse--he can also make indirect statements and allusions by shaping syntax in an ambiguous manner and encouraging ambivalent reference. Thus, though relations within his sentences appear precise, his assertions are actually full of potential for suggesting alternative or multiple interpretation. No such

close analysis has been done on Pope's couplet; this paper has dealt briefly with him but has not been thorough enough to make a strong generalization about characteristics of his style that typically or consistently project ambiguity. The present discussion has focused on Pope only as a predecessor to Johnson as the heroic couplet was handed from one master to another--from Dryden to Pope to Johnson, and later to Goldsmith. It has proved that ambiguity and ambivalence do occur in Johnson's poetry as they do in Dryden's and that manipulation of syntax, one of Dryden's major tools to expand meaning, is also one of Johnson's several devices.

Johnson's imitations of Juvenal, London (1738) and The Vanity of Human Wishes (1778), have received major emphasis. In them the poet employs five main techniques to complicate his message: the heavy use of abstract terms, often personified and invigorated by accompanying adjectives or verbs; rhetorical word arrangements and approaches to thought; the operation of syntax; the various specific dictionary meanings of single words; and the interaction of overtones of several--even many--words to create metaphors. Based on the use of these techniques, a comparison of the imitations produces these judgments: that abstractions in The Vanity of Human Wishes are more subdued and project greater sincerity than those in the earlier work, and thus are more effective; that although rhetorical devices occur with greater intensity in London, they are more selectively deployed in The Vanity of Human Wishes so that the poet seems more relaxed and confident in his handling of these patterns in the later poem; that syntax manipulated within the norms of the heroic couplet is a stronger tool for ambiguity and ambivalence in The Vanity of Human Wishes than in London, that various specific meanings of

individual words expand the poem's message to a greater degree in The Vanity of Human Wishes than in London, and that the interweaving of overtones to help create metaphors is only a minor factor in ambiguity in London but a major one in the later poem. In The Vanity of Human Wishes, in fact, reverberations of certain words support metaphors of rising and falling, military might, water or vapor, and heat expansion that both sharpen and magnify the poem's message.

The metaphors in The Vanity of Human Wishes are such a strong element in expansion of meaning that they deserve special attention. For most readers, the portions of the poem with the greatest impact are those that are most abstract and that offer most vigorous or extensive metaphors--the portraits of the young scholar and of the two old men. A military metaphor spans the scholar section. Like a soldier the student fights his battle for learning; "Science" may someday become his "captive" as it "yields" to him a "last retreat" (ll. 143-44). Like a crusader he seeks the "throne of Truth," with virtue as his guard and reason as his guide. But he must beware of Beauty, who may shoot her "fatal dart" and "claim the triumph" of the student's "letter'd heart" (ll. 151-52). Mental or physical disease may also "invade" him, and finally, foes like toil, envy, and want may "assail" him. A second metaphor links the student's ambition to heat: he "burns" with a "fever of renown," a "contagion" caused by his desire for the academic "gown." And in the two old age portraits, metaphor supported by plurality of meanings also expands the message. In the first portrait the major metaphor is military: each day the wealthy old man earnestly desires actually lays "siege" to life, in its richest sense, since he cannot enjoy his material possessions. His family, rather than sincerely

caring for him, as he thinks, stands like plunderers nearby waiting to claim his treasures. Like an impatient warrior, Time "hovers 'o'er him," ready to "destroy" him; it gradually "shuts up" all his senses, his "passages of joy" (ll. 260). At the same time "Unnumber'd maladies" begin to "invade" his body, to "lay siege to life and press the dire blockade" (ll. 283-84). In the second old age portrait, depicting the benevolent old man, personifications of evil fortune and Nature help to create the major metaphor. "Misfortune flings" her load on this virtuous old person, burdening him daily with new sorrows--illness or losses shared with close relatives, deaths of his own friends or of acquaintances he has admired, and a sense of loneliness and estrangement from a world now filled with "New forms" and "diff'rent views." At last, like a jailor or a military guard, "pitying Nature" signs the "release" of this prisoner of life and lets him die. Thus due to their imagery, these abstract sections hold more meaning for modern readers than do the other sections such as those picturing Cardinal Wolsey and Charles XII of Sweden, which are full of concrete historical details beyond the knowledge of current audiences.

Thus The Valley of Human Wishes demonstrates the poet's greater or improved art in manipulating sources of ambiguity and ambivalence, particularly rhetorical figures and the selection of words whose connotations cluster. However, audience and purpose can affect the range of interior poetic elements; readers should bear in mind that London was written first to make money, and second to reach people in or near the city who would recognize allusions to leaders or policies; The Vanity of Human Wishes, on the other hand, was meant to speak to all men of all times and to interpret for modern readers truths about human nature stated by Juvenal.

Johnson's prologues, the next subject in this examination of the poet's work, prove his continuing practice of creating ambiguity and ambivalence to broaden interpretation. Although the epilogue and all but one of the prologues are of inferior worth, they are helpful because they offer a broad vision of Johnson's poems--they span his entire life of writing. The epilogue is believed to have been written very early, perhaps in the early 1730s, and the last prologue was composed in 1777. The best prologue, Drury-Lane, was written during Johnson's middle years, nine years after London and one year before The Vanity of Human Wishes. By this time he had polished his techniques of ambiguity and ambivalence, and all are evident in this outstanding work. One prologue, to Lethe, was written two years after London, and four others appeared later than The Vanity of Human Wishes. Though not all of them employ all of Johnson's usual tools of ambiguity, they all prove his mastery of these devices. Again, other influences besides the poet's talent affect his works; at the time he wrote at least two of the prologues Johnson either was not enthusiastic about the task of introducing a play or was not fond of the playwright to be honored at a special performance. These factors could have detracted from his skill in handling ambiguity as well as from general merit of his poems.

Last, Johnson's remaining works in the heroic couplet, most of them short occasional poems, also reveal ambiguity and ambivalence. Here the poet uses the same tools for expanding his message as he does in the longer works, although less intensively.

In the short non-heroic couplet poems, however, little ambiguity or ambivalence appears. These elements then must arise from the tradition of the closed couplet as developed during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

One general conclusion is that all three great heroic couplet writers--Dryden, Pope, and Johnson--attain ambiguity and ambivalence through similar avenues, some either made possible or strengthened by the accent patterns and the various poetic devices traditional in the couplet. Ruth Salvaggio proved in 1979 that Dryden, especially in Absalom and Achitophel, isolated and defined his arguments by manipulating syntax and by drawing on the resources inherent in the meter and rhetoric of the couplet. The present discussion shows that the same is true of Johnson. Though to date no close analysis has been made of Pope or of Goldsmith, the other outstanding heroic couplet poet, the facts brought out so far suggest that certain elements for expanding or complicating the poet's message are inherent in any good heroic couplet verse.

A second general conclusion is that Johnson developed certain techniques to create ambiguity, for the same sources permit meanings to flow in several directions in all of his heroic couplet works. All five of his major devices occur in his finest poems including the best of the prologues, Drury-Lane, and at least three in most of the other prologues and in the epilogue, which admittedly are of inferior merit. The fact that few if any of the typical devices for ambiguity and ambivalence appear in the non-heroic couplet verse proves that Johnson's use of such techniques in his closed couplet is not a mere habit or whim, but belongs to the couplet tradition.

Finally, examination of all the poet's heroic couplet works shows that Johnson improved as a poet from the early years until the publication of his masterpiece at the height of his career in 1748, and that one aspect of that improvement is his skill in producing ambiguity and ambivalence. Even during his later years he continued to employ the

same techniques he had mastered earlier--to create these two elements in his heroic couplet verse.

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VITA<sup>2</sup>

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