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Source: *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Apr., 1964), pp. 191-203

Published by: University of Illinois Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27714387>

Accessed: 17-08-2017 19:37 UTC

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## POPE'S SHAKESPEARE

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To discover what Pope most admired in Shakespeare we naturally turn to those "shining passages" and outstanding scenes which, in his edition of 1725, he indicated by his ingenious system of commas and stars. This system, he wrote, "seems to me a shorter and less ostentatious method of performing the better half of Criticism (namely the pointing out an Author's excellencies) than to fill a whole paper with citations of fine passages, with *general Applauses*, or *empty Exclamations* at the tail of them."<sup>1</sup> Though certainly economical, this method has the disadvantage of concealing the motives behind Pope's preferences. In trying to uncover those motives we need to consider the extent of Pope's debt to other neo-classic critics, a debt which both Professor John Butt and Professor Austin Warren, in their discussions of Pope's taste in Shakespeare, have too much overlooked. Pope, says Professor Butt, is "the first critic of Shakespeare to give systematic attention to particulars"; and though he goes on to mention such things as Dryden's observations on Caliban, *Julius Caesar*, and *Richard the Second*, Professor Butt's conclusion is that Pope "could have owed little or nothing in his choice to what was traditionally admired amongst literary critics of Shakespeare."<sup>2</sup> In fact, Shakespeare comment and criticism before 1725 had so much interested itself in particular "beauties" that it must have exerted a considerable formative influence on a new editor wishing to point out his "Author's excellencies." Once we have made allowance for that influence we shall find that what is distinctive about Pope's taste is his marked, and indeed predictable, preference for Shakespeare the satirist.

### I

Some of Pope's scenes and passages virtually chose themselves. Dryden in 1679 (Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*) had warmly praised the quarrel of Brutus and Cassius, with its "natural" passions and sentiments; and, as E. N. Hooker noted, Robert Gould, "in language sug-

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Shakespear*, ed. A. Pope (London, 1725), I, xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> J. Butt, *Pope's Taste in Shakespeare* (London, 1936), pp. 5 and 13. Cf. A. Warren, *Alexander Pope as Critic and Humanist*, Princeton Studies in English, No. 1 (Princeton, 1929), pp. 149-60.

gestive of Dryden's," also paid tribute to its effectiveness.<sup>3</sup> Number 68 of the *Taller* drew special attention to the scene's climax, where Brutus breaks the news of Portia's death: "this," comments Steele, "is an incident which moves the soul in all its sentiments." By 1718 one of the characters in Charles Gildon's *Complete Art of Poetry* can refer casually to "that celebrated Scene of *Brutus* and *Cassius*" (I, 229). It was almost inevitable that Pope should set a star over the quarrel scene (IV.iii.1-123), and commas against the lines about Portia (144-50).<sup>4</sup> Nor was Pope alone in his admiration of another intensely dramatic scene, that in which Iago first plants suspicion in Othello's mind (III.iii.90-257); John Hughes in the *Guardian*, No. 37, calls it "that Scene which has always been justly esteemed one of the best which was ever represented on the Theatre."

Two very different Shakespearean characters, Falstaff and Caliban, were the subject of much neo-classic comment. Thanks largely to the acting of Betterton, the Falstaff of *Henry the Fourth*, Part One, was a great theatrical success in Restoration London.<sup>5</sup> Dryden, in his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," called him "the best of comical characters," and pointed out that his singularity lies in his verbal wit and "quick evasions when you imagine him surprised, which . . . receive a great addition from his person."<sup>6</sup> "*Falstaff*," said Rowe, "is allow'd by every body to be a Master-piece."<sup>7</sup> Pope is appropriately lavish with his commas: he marks Falstaff's description of his soldiers, his soliloquy on Honour, and, in the Tavern scene, his three great impersonation speeches, as well as Hal's exuberant abuse of this bolting-hutch of beastliness.

In Caliban neo-classic criticism was unanimous in seeing Shakespeare's creative imagination at its most intense. This creation of a "person which was not in nature" was for Dryden conclusive proof of

<sup>3</sup> *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. E. N. Hooker (Baltimore, 1939 and 1943), II, 432. Gould's tribute is in his "Satyr against the Play-House," *Poems* (London, 1689), pp. 176-77.

<sup>4</sup> I have used Pope's text for all quotations from Shakespeare, but act, scene, and line references are to the Globe edition, since Pope divides his scenes in the French manner, according to entrances and exits.

<sup>5</sup> *Critical Works of Dennis*, ed. Hooker, I, 279, 492.

<sup>6</sup> Dryden, *Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays*, ed. G. Watson (London, 1962), I, 71-72.

<sup>7</sup> *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. N. Rowe (London, 1714), I, xvii. This 1714 edition (which I have used for all quotations from Rowe), though ostensibly the second, is in fact the third: see R. B. McKerrow, *TLS*, 8 March 1934; and H. L. Ford, *Shakespeare 1700-1740* (Oxford, 1935), pp. 2-3.

Shakespeare's copiousness of invention.<sup>8</sup> Rowe echoed Dryden—"certainly one of the finest and most uncommon Grotesques that was ever seen" (1, xxiv)—and Addison enthusiastically went a little further: "It shews a greater Genius in *Shakespear* to have drawn his *Caliban*, than his *Hotspur* or *Julius Caesar*: The one was to be supplied out of his own Imagination, whereas the other might have been formed upon Tradition, History and Observation" (*Spectator*, No. 279). We have, I think, in this consensus of praise part at least of the motive for Pope's rather unexpected approval of Caliban's first soliloquy, and Trinculo's discovery of the "strange fish" (*Tempest*, II.ii.1-43).

As for set speeches: the *Tailler*, No. 117, admired Edgar's description of Dover Cliff, and Edward Bysshe quoted it in the second part of his *Art of English Poetry* (6th ed. [London, 1718], 1, 61). Pope gives the passage his own marks of approval, as he does also York's account of the entry of Bolingbroke and Richard into London (*Richard II*, V.ii.7 ff.); Bysshe had included this too, perhaps remembering Dryden's lyrical enthusiasm for the "passionate" description of Richard: "the painting of it is so lively, and the words so moving, that I have scarce read any thing comparable to it in any other language."<sup>9</sup>

In these choices, then, Pope is influenced by what, in Professor Butt's words, was "traditionally admired"—though it is perhaps as well to remind ourselves here that Pope was by no means carried along on a tide of other people's adulation. To take a most obvious example, he refrains from marking "To be or not to be," though Bysshe, the *Tailler* (No. 71), and the *Spectator* (No. 541) had all singled it out.

If we turn to what was specifically admired by Pope's editorial predecessor, Nicholas Rowe, we find Pope clearly endorsing many of Rowe's judgments, but in his own "shorter and less ostentatious" manner. When he reprinted among the preliminaries to his own edition Rowe's "Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. William Shakespear" Pope omitted the last part of the observations on *The Tempest*:

Among the particular Beauties of this Piece, I think one may be allow'd to point out the Tale of *Prospero* in the First Act; his Speech to *Ferdinand* in the Fourth, upon the breaking up the Masque of *Juno* and *Ceres*; and that in the Fifth, where he dissolves his Charms, and resolves to break his Magick Rod. (Rowe, 1, xxiv)

Such commendation is indeed little more than filling "a whole paper

<sup>8</sup> "The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy," in *Of Dramatic Poesy*, ed. Watson, 1, 252-53.

<sup>9</sup> *Of Dramatic Poesy*, 1, 259.

with citations of fine passages"; Pope, more neatly, simply marks with commas the second and third of the passages that Rowe selects. Rowe also commends the entire scene of Duncan's murder, Jaques on the seven ages of man, Portia's speech on mercy, and the lines in Act V of the same play about the power of music; Pope concurs with him in all these. Petruchio, observes Rowe, is "an uncommon Piece of Humour" (I, xix), and, as if to bear him out, Pope sets his commas against Petruchio's "humorous" tirade, "Think you a little din can daunt my ears?" (*Taming of the Shrew*, I.ii.200-10), and on Biondello's long description of Petruchio, his fantastic steed, and lackey (III.ii.43 ff.). In the case of *Henry the Eighth* Pope quite strikingly follows Rowe's lead:

Certainly nothing was ever more justly written, than the Character of Cardinal *Wolsey*. He has shewn him Tyrannical, Cruel, and Insolent in his Prosperity; and yet, by a wonderful Address, he makes his Fall and Ruin the Subject of general Compassion. The whole Man, with his Vices and Virtues, is finely and exactly describ'd in the second Scene of the fourth Act. The Distresses likewise of Queen *Katherine*, in this Play, are very movingly touch'd. (Rowe, I, xxx)

We find that in Act III, scene ii, the scene in which the Cardinal perceives his impending "Fall and Ruin," Pope has duly marked the dramatic highlights—some of *Wolsey's* first soliloquy (204-208, 225-27), his farewell to greatness (351-72), and part of his pathetic and dignified address to Cromwell ("And when I am forgotten . . .," 432-49). Then Pope sets a star above the scene (IV.ii) in which Katharine and Griffith assess *Wolsey's* character, and where the Queen's distresses and tenderness are "very movingly touch'd."<sup>10</sup>

Rowe's six-volume edition appeared in 1709. In the following year there was added to it a seventh volume containing the Poems; this was compiled by Charles Gildon, who contributed two long critical essays, and printed by Curll (Tonson had produced the edition proper).

<sup>10</sup> With *Twelfth Night*, too, there is complete agreement between the two editors, though only one passage is involved: "A blank, my Lord: she never told her love . . ." (II.iv.113-18). The agreement here, and over the seven ages speech, is noted by Butt (*Pope's Taste*, pp. 13 and 17).

In his ordering of the Comedies Pope seems to have taken a hint from Rowe, who had remarked that "the Greatness of this Author's Genius do's no where so much appear, as where he gives his Imagination an entire Loose, and raises his Fancy to a flight above Mankind and the Limits of the visible World. Such are his Attempts in *The Tempest*, *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*" (I, xxiii). Pope's first departure from Rowe's arrangement of the plays (that of the Fourth Folio) is the placing of *Midsummer Night's Dream* immediately after *The Tempest*, as though in support of Rowe's point.

Though the volume appeared without Rowe's authority,<sup>11</sup> it was subsequently incorporated, with some revisions, into his 1714 edition, the edition on which Pope based his text.<sup>12</sup> The most interesting section of this supplementary volume, for the purpose of the present discussion, is Gildon's second essay, "Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear" (1714 ed., IX, 237-390). Gildon takes each play in turn, gives a summary of its plot, makes some critical observations, and lists, usually quoting them in full, the play's particular beauties. Professor Warren has remarked that Pope's contemptuous rejection of long quotations and general applauses seems to be a slur directed at Gildon for having thus worked so exhaustively through the Shakespearean gems.<sup>13</sup> But Pope was quick to appropriate the good things in an enterprise even while he disliked, or laughed at, the enterprise as a whole. If he rejects Gildon's methods in his Preface, he applauds with him in his text; their tastes are remarkably similar.

In the first place, Gildon usually follows where Dryden, Dennis, and the periodical essayists had led the way. He esteems the Brutus-Cassius quarrel as one of the two best things in *Julius Caesar*, adding that it "has always receiv'd a just Applause" (IX, 338). "*Falstaff's* Speeches, when he personates the King, are very pleasant," as is his "Account of his Men." "*Edgar's* Description of the Precipice of *Dover* Cliff is very good" (yet another strikingly empty exclamation), and York on Bolingbroke and Richard is "the finest thing" in *Richard the Second*. Gildon confirms, too, many of the points made by Rowe in his "Account." Prospero's "Reflections and Moralizing on the frail and transitory State of Nature, is wonderfully fine"; and in *The Merchant of Venice* he admires the lines on mercy and music that had appealed to Rowe. In *Henry the Eighth* "The Scene betwixt *Norfolk, Surrey, and Wolsey* [III.ii.228-349] is dramatick; and that which follows betwixt *Cromwel* and *Wolsey* [III.ii.372 ff.], very moving." Gildon quotes part of Wolsey's farewell to greatness and his injunction to Cromwell to "fling away Ambition," and notes that "The two different Characters of *Wolsey* by Queen *Catharine* and *Griffith* are worth perusing." Gildon, in his insipid way, is helping to consolidate a tradition of Shakespeare appreciation, and to hand it on to Pope.

When Gildon begins to move more independently among the plays

<sup>11</sup> A. Jackson, "Rowe's Edition of Shakespeare," *The Library*, 4th ser., x (1930), 464, 472.

<sup>12</sup> T. R. Lounsbury, *The Text of Shakespeare* (New York, 1906), p. 101.

<sup>13</sup> Warren, *Pope as Critic and Humanist*, p. 149 n.

he reveals his appreciation of set speeches and descriptions, the Shakespearean "beauties" that have since had a fatal fascination for the anthologists: Valentine's "extremely pathetick" speech "On Banishment for Love" (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III.i.170-87); the Duke "On Life" and Claudio on "Death" in *Measure for Measure*; the Duke's speech in Arden, "full of moral Reflections" (*As You Like It*, II.i.1 ff.); Biron's "pretty Account of Love" (*Love's Labour's Lost*, IV.iii.327 ff.); Richard II's soliloquy in prison, King Henry IV on sleep, and King Henry V on Ceremony. From the tragedies Gildon selects, among many other things, the Queen Mab speech, the funeral orations of Brutus and Antony, Macbeth on "Life" (V.v.24-28), and Polonius' advice to Laertes. Of every one of these Pope also approves; his taste was not operating in quite the void that Professors Butt and Warren have implied.

Neo-classic critics were drawn to acclaim passages, or indeed whole plays, of Shakespeare which came up to their ideals of style and composition. Gildon's final comment on *Julius Caesar* is that "the Stile of this Play is, generally speaking, plain, easy, and natural"; Pope marked as many as thirteen passages from it—a score equalled only by *As You Like It*.<sup>14</sup> Gildon had been beforehand with Pope in noticing lines which approximate to an Augustan standard of versification. He cites, and Pope marks, Adriana's carefully patterned reproach to Antipholus (*Comedy of Errors*, II.ii.112-20), and he draws attention, on account of its "several Pauses, &c.," to Troilus'

The *Greeks* are strong, and skilful to their strength,  
Fierce to their skill, and to their fierceness valiant.  
But I am weaker than a woman's tear,  
Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance;  
Less valiant than the virgin in the night,  
And skil-less as unpractis'd infancy. (I.i.7-12)

Not surprisingly, Pope too was enthusiastic over these lines, which have a point and balance that would make an immediate appeal to Augustan taste, and which are not unlike some of the livelier parts of Dryden's blank-verse dramas.

Apart from their agreement over these various passages and the

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Pope's note to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: "It is observable (I know not from what cause) that the Style of this Comedy is less figurative, and more natural and unaffected, than the greater part of this Author's, though suppos'd to be one of the first he wrote." From this play Pope selects five passages, totalling ninety-five lines.

satirical speeches (which I consider later) Gildon and Pope display an interesting similarity of approach in the following instances:

1. In *Henry the Sixth*, Part Three, Gildon praises the King's soliloquy on Civil War and a quiet life (II.v.1-54), and Pope sets his commas against its middle section (ll. 21-40). Gildon finds that "the ill Omens given by *Henry VI* of *Richard's* Death, are Poetical enough," and Pope has also marked part of this prophecy (V.vi.39-50). (Pope's other choice in this play—Henry's self-justification for his treatment of his subjects, IV.viii.39-46—may be an instance of his supporting a point made by Rowe, who had warmly praised Shakespeare's presentation of the King; but the speech would also commend itself on stylistic grounds.)

2. Gildon comments that the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* "is a true Comick Character"; Pope approves the whole of her reminiscing speech in I.iii (16-48). The parting of the lovers seems "very pretty" to Gildon, and Pope has marked the first twenty-five lines of the scene (III.v).

3. Though *Cymbeline* offends against Gildon's canons of dramatic probability ("most of the Incidents of this Play smell rankly of Romance"), he finds some didactic and descriptive passages to his taste—the address to Melancholy (IV.ii.203-206), Pisanio's account of slander (III.iv.34-41), and his "Description of the Temper of a pert Boy or Page" (III.iv.157-68), which "is a *propos* enough." Pope is with him in all these.

Pope had, of course, to choose for himself how to allocate his stars and commas. But it is reasonable to suppose that some influence would be exerted on his choice by the fact that a number of authoritative critical texts, and, more decisively, the very edition that he was working from, had already set a seal of approval on certain "excellencies." Of the passages and scenes admired by Pope (there are more than 160 of them) just over half had been admired by one or more of his predecessors.

## II

That Pope could exercise a strong and independent judgment is most clearly shown in his dealings with those plays toward which previous critics had been unsympathetic or actively hostile. He marks five passages from *Antony and Cleopatra*, and seven from *Titus Andronicus*, a play in whose diction Gildon could find no beauties at all, "or at least they are very faint and very few" (one is tempted to think that in this

case Pope is deliberately rebuking Gildon's lack of sensitivity). Moreover, Pope is vastly more selective than Gildon, as with *Hamlet*, from which the latter quotes extensively, and on which he fairly showers his plaudits. Pope, in sharp contrast, marks only the first part of Polonius' precepts to Laertes (I.iii.59–69), and most of Claudius' prayer (III.iii.36–64), which Gildon does not mention in his "Remarks," though, following Edward Bysshe, he quotes it in the second volume of his *Complete Art of Poetry*.<sup>15</sup> Pope no doubt admired the prayer for its skilful presentation of spiritual turmoil: he shows himself responsive to similar passages elsewhere (Brutus' "Between the acting of a dreadful thing . . ." [*Julius Caesar*, II.i.63–69], and Macbeth's "Canst thou not minister to minds diseas'd . . . ?" [V.iii.40–45]), and he had himself already laid bare the limèd soul of Eloisa. But Claudius' prayer also touches, significantly, on bribery and underhand dealings:

In the corrupted currents of this world,  
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;  
And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize it self  
Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above. . . .  
(*Hamlet*, III.iii.57–60)

Pope had glanced at the perversion of justice in *The Rape of the Lock* (III, 21–22), and was to return, most forcefully, to Claudius' theme in the *Epistle to Bathurst* and the conclusion of 1738, Dialogue I. Pope sees Shakespeare virtually as a fellow-satirist; he sets particularly meaningful commas by two lines in *Cymbeline* that his predecessors had completely ignored:

Those that I rev'rence, those I fear; the wise:  
At fools I laugh, not fear them. (IV.ii.95–96)

In marking these lines Pope is declaring himself: the words could almost serve as epigraph for the *Epistles* and *Imitations of Horace*.

Gildon, too, appreciates something of the satirist in Shakespeare—what Augustan would not? *Timon of Athens* he describes as "full of moral Reflections and useful Satire"; of the eleven passages chosen by Pope from this play Gildon had already drawn attention to nine, almost all of them passages of scorn and denunciation. In the other plays, many of the speeches that both men enjoy have a cutting edge, a

<sup>15</sup> On the relation between Bysshe's poetical commonplace book and the "Collection" of poetical gems appended to Gildon's *Complete Art of Poetry* see A. Dwight Culler, "Edward Bysshe and the Poet's Handbook," *PMLA*, LXXIII (1948), 868.

pungency, that would be specially attractive to an Augustan: Posthumus' railing against women (*Cymbeline*, II.v); Ulysses on "Encounterers" (*Troilus and Cressida*, IV.v.55-63); Parolles against virginity (*All's Well*, I.i.150-62), where the vigorous attack on self-love has affinities with Pope's later work; Grandpré on the English army (*Henry V*, IV.ii.39 ff.); Hotspur's portrait of the finical courtier (*1 Henry IV*, I.iii.33-64); Hubert's picture of the common people full of fearful rumours (*King John*, IV.ii.185 ff.); the description of the plebeians crowding to stare at Coriolanus (II.i.221-37—cited, in part, by both Bysshe and Gildon, though not mentioned in the latter's "Remarks"); and Romeo on the Apothecary and his shop (V.i.37-48, 68-74<sup>16</sup>). Pope is alone in commending some other passages in a similarly vigorous and pointed vein: Beatrice's malice at men's expense (*Much Ado*, III.i.61-67); the description of the mountebank Pinch (*Comedy of Errors*, V.i.238-41), and of a bragging youth (*Merchant of Venice*, III.iv.66-76); Cassius on Caesar (I.ii.135-55), and Caesar on Cassius (199-212); and Posthumus' scathing account of the routed Britons (*Cymbeline*, V.iii.5-13).<sup>17</sup>

Pope shows himself, throughout his edition, responsive to some of Shakespeare's lightest satiric strokes. Thus while both he and Gildon think highly of Touchstone's résumé of the courtier's life, "I have been politick with my friend, smooth with mine enemy, I have undone three taylors . . ." (*As You Like It*, V.iv.44-49), Pope alone notices Lorenzo's sharp words on courtly equivocators:

The fool hath planted in his memory  
An army of good words; and I do know  
A many fools that stand in better place,  
Garnish'd like him, that for a tricksie word  
Defie the matter.

(*Merchant of Venice*, III.v.71-75)

A related topic, much handled in Augustan literature, is the precarious and unenviable situation of the great, a situation described, with Pope and Gildon's approval, by the Duke in *Measure for Measure* (IV.i.60-

<sup>16</sup> Garth had leant heavily on the first of these passages for his description of the shop of Horoscope in *The Dispensary* (II, 120-29). Bysshe includes the Garth and Shakespeare descriptions in his *Art of English Poetry*, 6th ed., I, part II, pp. 16-17.

<sup>17</sup> Pope's fifth Index to his edition, "Of Speeches," has the following categories: Exhortatory (13 speeches listed); Vituperative (26); Execrative (8); Deliberative (6); Narrative (9); Pathetic (25); Soliloquies (23).

65), and at greater length by Achilles (*Troilus and Cressida*, III.iii.75–87):

'Tis certain, Greatness once fall'n out with fortune  
Must fall out with men too: what the declin'd is,  
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others,  
As feel in his own fall: for men, like butter-flies,  
Shew not their mealy wings but to the summer;  
And not a man, for being simply man,  
Hath honour, but is honour'd by those honours  
That are without him; as place, riches, favour,  
Prizes of accident as oft as merit. . . .

Timon of Athens feels what it is to be “declin’d”: Pope agrees with Gildon in finding memorable Flavius’ account of the refusal of the senators to raise a loan (II.ii.213–22), and the comments of the servant on the “slinking away” of former friends (IV.ii.8 ff.); Pope also marks Apemantus’ stern contrasting of the harsh life of exile with Timon’s vanished ease and affluence (IV.iii.221–32).

Pope is much concerned in his own satires with the greeds and passions that unsettle the mind and soul—avarice, ambition, pride and presumption. He is impressed (as indeed is Gildon) by Timon’s cynical tribute to the corrupting power of gold (V.ii.30–44 and 382–93). But once again he is alert to more fleeting references. Thus the starred scene in *The Tempest* includes Trinculo’s jibe at English charity: “when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead *Indian*.” And Pope notes—it is an extreme example of his alertness—Hero’s comparison of honey-suckles to favourites

Made proud by princes, that advance their pride  
Against the power that bred it. (*Much Ado*, III.i.8–11)

Gildon joins him in praise of Isabella’s denunciation of “man! proud man!” (*Measure for Measure*, II.ii.114–23), the discussion of ambition by Brutus (*Julius Caesar*, II.i.22–27), and Wolsey’s advice:

*Cromwell*, I charge thee, fling away Ambition,  
By that sin fell the angels. . . .

The whole subject of man’s restlessness and discontentedness, fully treated by Pope in his *Sixth Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated*, is a main theme of Richard II’s soliloquy in prison (V.v: Pope marks ll. 1–11 and 24–41).

Pride, avarice, and ambition are associated by Pope, as by other Augustans, with the “moneyed men” and the Court; and Pope, like

Gildon, notices where Shakespeare sets the ideal of "contentment with little" over against a life of dissatisfaction and insecurity. They concur in praising Henry VI's

O God! methinks it were a happy life  
 To be no better than a homely swain, . . .  
 So minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years  
 Past over, to the end they were created,  
 Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave  
 (3 *Henry VI*, II.v.21 ff.)

and Belarius' firm contrasting of a quiet rural life with the miseries of court and city (*Cymbeline*, III.iii—Pope marks the first fifty-five lines of this scene). Gildon quotes approvingly Nerissa's verdict that "they are as sick that surfeit with too much, as they that starve with nothing; therefore it is no small happiness to be seated in the mean . . ." (*Merchant of Venice*, I.ii.5–10); though Pope does not mark these lines, the passage is listed in his "Index of Thoughts, or Sentiments," under "Mediocrity, the happiest state." He agrees with Gildon, too, over the Duke's first speech in Arden, with its sharp juxtaposing of sweet retirement and "painted pomp," of the "winter's wind" and flattering courtiers. Later in the same play, as Professor Butt has remarked, Pope picks out Corin's account of the shepherd's contented lot (III.ii.77–81), an account "in perfect accordance with the views [Pope] expressed in the *Ode on Solitude* and in numerous passages of the *Imitations of Horace*."<sup>18</sup> He also marks Adam's speech to Orlando (II.iii.38–53), which displays the old man's generosity and temperance. Thus Pope shares with Shakespeare not only targets for satire but also the ethical standards by which the vices and follies are judged: in his *Second Satire of the Second Book of Horace Paraphrased* extravagance and luxury are measured and condemned by reference to precisely the same values that are upheld in *As You Like It*—thrift, charity and the quiet life. Pope is also much concerned, notably in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, with the question of true friendship, and he has marked Shakespearean passages celebrating happy and intimate personal relationships: the "school-days friendship, childish innocence" of Helena and Hermia (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, III.ii.198–210), Polixenes on his son (*Winter's Tale*, I.ii.165–71), and the whole scene in which Arthur reminds Hubert of his past friendship and good offices (*King John*, IV.i).

<sup>18</sup> Butt, *Pope's Taste*, p. 17. Cf. Warren, *Pope as Critic*, pp. 155 ff., on Pope and the pastoral Shakespeare.

Though Pope satirised restlessness and greed, he was far from adopting a Stoic position of lofty indifference and “apathy.” His disapproval of the neo-Stoicism fashionable in Augustan England may be gathered from, amongst other sources, the *Essay on Man* (Epistle II, 101–10) and the *First Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated*. It explains, I think, Pope’s commendation of Leonato’s passionate refusal to be patient (*Much Ado*, V.i.17–32) and of his direct rebuttal of the Stoic creed in his next speech:

For there was never yet philosopher,  
That could endure the tooth-ach patiently;  
However they have writ the stile of Gods,  
And made a pish at chance and sufferance.

(Bysshe and Gildon had included both speeches in their respective *Arts of Poetry*, though Gildon ignored the second in his “Remarks.”) Critical attention had already been paid, as I have indicated, to the powerful effect of Brutus’ breaking the news of his wife’s death:

*Bru.* O *Cassius*, I am sick of many griefs.  
*Cas.* Of your philosophy you make no use,  
If you give place to accidental evils.  
*Bru.* No man bears sorrow better—*Portia*’s dead.  
*Cas.* Ha! *Portia!*—  
*Bru.* She is dead!  
*Cas.* How scap’d I killing, when I crost you so?  
(IV.iii.142–48)

The fact that Pope marks the whole of this exchange, not merely its second half, shows that he is doing more than testifying to its dramatic poignancy. The sheer impossibility of indifference and equanimity in the face of disaster and bereavement was the argument with which the neo-Stoic position was most commonly assailed.

There is one other group of “shining passages” that deserves comment—the visions of chaos and disorder. Pope has selected Northumberland’s outburst, “Let heav’n kiss earth! . . . let order die. . . . And darkness be the burier of the dead!” (2 *Henry IV*, I.i.153–60),<sup>19</sup> and Timon’s curse (IV.i) with its

Fear and Piety,  
Religion to the gods, peace, justice, truth, . . .  
Degrees, observances, customs and laws,  
Decline to your confounding contraries!  
And yet [*sic*] confusion live!

<sup>19</sup> This speech had been cited in *Taller*, No. 47, as a fine instance of tragic passion.

These two speeches are also remarked upon by Gildon; the early eighteenth century remembered the horror of the Civil War, and appreciated the precariousness of Augustan "Order." Pope, besides, admires Ulysses' "Force would be right; or, rather, right and wrong . . . Would lose their names, and so would justice too" (*Troilus and Cressida*, I.iii.116-24), and Macbeth's "Though you untie the winds . . . Even 'till destruction sicken" (IV.i.52-60). As Professor Brower has reminded us, Pope was "a man acutely sensitive to disorder in a work of art, a life, a society."<sup>20</sup> There is a direct line of descent from these passages to the conclusion of *The Dunciad*.

It would be unfair to Pope to leave a final impression of a restricted taste for Shakespeare. He sets his commas against pastoral descriptions, and protestations of love; and, being the author of the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*, against passages of pathos and melodrama. Nevertheless, one carries away from his *Shakespeare* the sense of a strong editorial preference for the crisply satiric, for passages of scorn and lofty denunciation. Pope finds Shakespeare a congenial spirit, almost an Augustan "wit"; one feels that he is using Shakespeare's words to define and consolidate his own satiric stand-point.

<sup>20</sup> R. A. Brower, *Alexander Pope, the Poetry of Allusion* (Oxford, 1959), p. 342.