

apparently mechanic art of the metre, it would be difficult to better, either for conciseness, or directness, or curious tenuity of phrase. Much of Pope's work is but a rhythmical exemplification of Addison's dictum (after Boileau) in the review of the *Essay on Criticism*, 'that Wit and Fine Writing doth not consist so much in advancing Things that are new, as in giving Things that are known an agreeable Turn'—in other words, it is concerned less with the revelation of the unattempted or the unimagined in emotion, than with the expression, in a given form of verse, and with faultless perspicuity and finish, of the ordinary ideas in circulation at the time. But this studiously-controlled ambition by no means precluded the production of very noble and dignified utterances, as the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* to take that example again—will readily testify. Indeed, it is difficult to read the closing paragraphs, or the splendid lines beginning, 'Not Fortune's Worshipper, nor Fashion's Fool' (quoted below at page 189), without wondering upon what ground it can ever have been debated whether Pope was really a poet.

From Young to Cowper, the heroic couplet on the Pope model remained the recognised metre of the century, and, as might be expected, it was largely employed for the social satire in which he had won his greenest laurels. Among his contemporaries were more than one poet who, without being exactly imitative, certainly showed signs of subjection to the trick of the time. Prior, who was Pope's senior, and a better scholar, followed the fashion of adaptation by versifying Exodus and Ecclesiastes, and by clothing in a strait-laced and high-heeled Queen Anne costume the fine old *Not-Brother's Maid*. But his services to poetry were happily not limited to this. In his 'loose and hasty scribble' of *Alma* and in his *Tales in the French manner*, he added flexibility to the cramp Hudibrasities of Butler; his genuine Horatian note gave gaiety and grace to a dozen minor pieces; he reproduced in *Down Hall* and the *Thief and the Cordelier* with marked ability the anapestic ballad measure of the *King and the Abbot of Canterbury*, and he stands in the front rank of English epigrammatists. Moreover, in the lines *To a Child of Quality*, he set the tune of that half-gay, half-grave familiar verse which, in this country—despite the depressing definition of M. Littré—we are content to class as *vers de société*. Another of Pope's contemporaries was Gay, a more

sedulous disciple of his illustrious friend, but who, nevertheless, besides some pretty songs that sing, contrived to enrich his age with the long-popular Ballad opera, and to equip it with a form of Fable which, while it fell short of the supreme art of La Fontaine, was still a convenient, workable vehicle. Nor must it be forgotten that, in *Mr Pope's Welcome from Greece* (i.e. from translating the *Iliad*), he anticipated and employed, with unexpected success, the *ottava rima* of Ariosto afterwards made popular by Frere and by Byron's *Beppo*. Who, for example, would imagine that the following octave, with its note of modernity, comes from the pen of the author of *Tristram* and the *Shepherd's Week*?

I see two lovely sisters, hand in hand,
The fair-haired Martha and Teresa brown;
Madge Bellenden, the tallest of the land;
And smiling Mary, soft and fair as down.
Yonder I see the cheerful Duchess stand,
For friendship, zeal, and blithsome humours known;
Whence that loud shout in such a hearty strain?
Why, all the Hamiltons are in her train.

Of the remaining Pope group (not school), none gave any new thing to English verse-craft, and their achievements may be left to the separate account which follow. Pope survived them all save Swift, and Swift's last years were death-in-life.

It was with the Essay of Addison and Steele that—more for the sake of continuity than of logic—we endeavoured to link the early poetry of Pope. But the connection of the first appearances of modern prose fiction with a paper in the *Englishman* stands less in need of apology. In December 1713 Steele gave an account from his own knowledge of a certain morose Alexander Selkirk or Selcraig of Largo, who had lived for more than four years alone in the island of Juan Fernandez. Similar cases, both real and feigned, were not unknown. Witness, as an instance of the former, Dampier's record of the Mosquito Indian whom Watling had left behind on the same island in 1681. But there is small doubt that to the story of Selkirk, as told by Steele, Captain Woodes Rogers, and others, Daniel Defoe, already referred to as the writer of the *Review of the Affairs of France*, was indebted for the germ of the remarkable book which he issued in April 1719, with the title of the *Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. In 1719 Defoe was in his sixtieth year. He had been many things—journalist, pamphleteer,