Here is a conference dedicated to exploring relations between rhetoric and poetic. Decorum would require that it proceed out of a mutual respect between these disciplines; indeed, academic habit would prompt their mutual inflation. Yet to such a conference I can come only blowing sour notes, even as my sense of the professional occasion leads me to apologize for doing so.

For I come, despite certain reservations that I have several times made in print, as a representative of what I have helped to term “contextualist” literary theory, a dominant theory in recent years. And I must acknowledge—although on this occasion defensively, if not downright blushingly—that this critical tradition can say only negative things about the relation to which this conference is dedicated; indeed, it goes further and builds its pedestal for poetry only by making it all that rhetoric (as this theory defines the term) is not. It makes its criterion for poetic failure the work’s falling into “mere rhetoric,” and it takes its metaphor (“falling into”) literally.

So let me be frank. What can a theory do to help us toward relating rhetoric to poetic when it rests on the need to denigrate rhetoric in order to create the very possibility of poetry? One of the major documents in the formulating of this theory, Allen Tate’s “Three Types of Poetry,” offers not merely the commonplace that poetry is the work of imagination, but the extreme claim supported by the condescending question of W. B. Yeats, “What is rhetoric but the will trying to do the work of the imagination?” What, then, is inferior poetry or pseudo-poetry (as a work of the will) but rhetoric in disguise, poetry that has—to repeat the metaphor—fallen into rhetoric? In this supercilious strain, the hidden refrain, “Alas, poor rhetoric!”

1 The University of Iowa Conference on Rhetoric and Poetic, November, 1964.
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Of course, all that this theoretical tradition creates as its tactic it can create only because it creates and offers us a card-stacked definition of rhetoric; perhaps it is in an examination of this fact that my sort of essay, propelled from the wrong corner, can be of value to this conference despite the denials on which it rests. What, then, is this rhetoric, as these critics so condescendingly use the term? Rhetoric is defined as the use of the available means of persuasion concerning a propositional claim that can be referred to independently of the discourse; which is to say, the claim exists in a complete form prior to the discourse, and it is in no essential way transformed by the discourse. A poem that is termed "mere rhetoric" can be reduced to its means of persuasion, can be treated only as instrument, as device. In short, it is discourse that, however tactically useful, is hardly indispensable. The emphasis on the word will as the threat to poetry in Yeats' derogatory definition of rhetoric, with the suspension of the will understood as a prerequisite for the poetic posture, indicates the post-Kantian—indeed almost the Schopenhauerian—sources of this theory. Rhetoric, then, is related to decision and action; poetry, happily, is not. Poetry is related to contemplation and the free play that accompanies it—the contemplation that frees words from their normal semantic and syntactic limitations and that frees our existential world from the contingencies within which our will-driven propensities for action restrict it. Rhetoric is left to employ language in its normal, and normally limiting, way in order to talk about the world within its normally, and willfully, limiting perspectives.

One after another contextualist critic speaks pleadingly of keeping poetry free of the grasp of what is called the "Platonic censor," that which controls non-poetic forms of discourse. And by Platonic they mean pretty much what they mean when they say "rhetorical." It means the directing of discourse toward something extramural, whether a moral imperative, the claim to a moral truth, or to any other sort of truth. So in the dichotomy they draw between poetry and prose or poetry and science—in effect, between poetry and non-poetry as forms of discourse—the techniques of "mere rhetoric" become identified with poetry's antagonist. Wherever there is a separable and transcendent meaning to the discourse, the discourse becomes translation—"mere" translation, to use again one of the favorite adjectives of derogation. All that can distinguish it as discourse—that is, apart from the value of its separable meaning—is its elegance and its effectiveness, "merely" rhetorical properties both, since neither can transform meaning through its ornamental, "merely" ornamental, devices. In such discourse the
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form-content dichotomy is seen as complete. But in poetry—ah, poetry!—there is an organic, ever-transforming quality that renders meaning contextually immanent and untranslatable. Meaning uniquely occurs *in* "these words in this order" rather than being carried inviolately (and indifferently) *through* these words as it might be—or has been—carried through others. If the meaning of a poem can be paraphrased—that is, if it can be reduced to a series of propositions—we must hope that we are oversimplifying its totality in our Platonic haste; for if we are not, if our paraphrase, our reduction, really exhausts the meaning of the poem, then we are dealing with poetry of the will, which is to say pseudo-poetry, disguised rhetoric, "mere rhetoric." And our techniques of analysis should become the more modest ones that concern techniques of persuasion, what R. P. Blackmur called "superficial and mechanical executive techniques"\(^2\) (did he almost mean bureaucratic ones?). I have purposely made the contextualists' distinction broadly and in an oversimplified form to make it unmistakable; and I do not argue for it here since it is rather its consequences upon the study of rhetoric and—even more important to me—of poems that border on rhetoric that concern me.

It goes without saying that the contextualist approach carries with it—and quite explicitly—the downgrading of many poems in the accepted canon, especially the allegorical, the satirical, the didactic. For these are all expressly dualistic, indeed referential in their intention, so that what happens in the poem is largely conditioned by demands of an *a priori* system of meaning—*a priori* in that it pre-existed this poem and has its authority independently of it. Of course, the tactics of argument may lead the contextualist to say not that he is downgrading what may be termed rhetorical poetry *as* poetry, but rather that he is determining it to be a different sort of discourse altogether, one that demands different techniques and standards of evaluation; that as something else in literature it may be splendid even if it cannot create the purely aesthetic occasion that poetry proper can. But this is really no more than a tactical dodge that only mutes the insult if, indeed, it does not aggravate it by an imputation of bastardy.

After I have conceded that entire genres of writing are traduced by the contextualist approach, however, I must insist that this approach often opens our awareness to the other than rhetorical dimensions in a poem which we might otherwise think of as mainly rhetorical—dimensions that can convert

it into something quite otherwise, a something that rhetorical analysis might never lead us to discover. The persona has been a major device that contextualist critics have used to convert rhetorical analysis to poetic. It has been especially effective in converting the rhetoric of self-righteous satire to the double-edged poetic irony of a satirized world viewed by a similarly, if far more subtly, satirized satirist—thus the revolution in our criticism of Jonathan Swift, most spectacularly of the final book of *Gulliver's Travels*, in which we have learned to treat the Houyhnhnm-loving Gulliver contemptuously, as an imperfect, developing character rather than as Swift's unerring mouthpiece.

I choose Alexander Pope's "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" to demonstrate my point, partly because it is explicitly a verse satire, a traditional—even formalized—satire in general imitation of Horace, and partly because it has received an impressively full analysis as a work of rhetoric. So I choose it mainly because it would seem at the outset to offer so difficult a case—especially when we add the fact that the protagonist and chief speaker in the dialogue is P., obviously Pope, as A., or Arbuthnot, is his interlocutor. Here surely is little room for the fictional ground we would need to convert real author into objectively imagined, dramatically conceived persona. The poet's respectful attitude to his Arbuthnot assures us that we can take his attitude to P. as being equally autobiographical and defensive, as fact rather than as fictive reality only. Biographical facts about Pope and his ancestry, the well-annotated enemies he assails, make us ever more certain. And following the lead of the title and the confessional nature of the prefatory Advertisement, we can expand both initials to the full historical names with

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5 I am assuming, of course, the authority of the Warburton text of 1751, in which the dialogistic attributions to P. and A. are made. There is some question on this point; the Twickenham edition prints the 1739 version, in which the form of the epistle is unbroken except by occasional quotation marks, which often indicate another speaker, sometimes a close friend, with Arbuthnot as a likely candidate. And even its editor, John Butt, acknowledges the possibility that the change from epistle to dialogue was Pope's (Alexander Pope, *Imitations of Horace with An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot and the Epilogue to the Satires*, ed. John Butt [London, 1939], pp. 93–94). As a general imitation of Horace, the "Arbuthnot" may be like Pope's "The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated," which is a dialogue between P. and F., though addressed to Mr. Fortescue. I feel the presence of Arbuthnot is strongly indicated in many of the passages in quotation marks in the earlier version. In any case, the essay by Elder Olson, to which mine is in part addressed, assumes that the poem is a dialogue between P. and A., as in the 1751 version.
equal confidence. Thus the poem can only be Pope's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, his vindication of himself and his purgative role by his self-righteous condemnation of all enemies.

This is surely the unquestioned assumption of Elder Olson who, in his essay appropriately entitled "Rhetoric and the Appreciation of Pope," treats the poem as an effective demonstration of the prescriptions in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Olson defines rhetoric in Aristotle as "that faculty by which we are able in any field of discourse to induce belief or conviction in our audience." Pope's art in the poem is defended as the rhetorician's strategy of establishing himself "as a man of good moral character" assailed by unworthy enemies. Olson engages in an impressively detailed analysis of Pope's tactics, from his manipulation of the dialogue form—of the function of that trustworthy witness and interlocutor, Arbuthnot—to his reassurances to the audience of his own tender innocuousness, despite the attacks that increase in fury (from Atticus to Sporus) as Pope wins the confidence of the audience, now secure in their safety from him. Pope answers the attacks of his enemies by justifying his character even as he assumes the role of attacker himself, though an attacker who has delayed attacking beyond all reasonable endurance. Pure though defiled, he persuades us to understand his own defiling at last, even as Arbuthnot does.

Of course Olson understands that none of this argument proceeds from logic, for the law of its strategy is rhetorical, not logical, as its goal is persuasion, not truth or validity. Thus deception is not only permissible; it is positively to be courted. Every argument in the poem presents us only with circularity since we have only Pope's word for the facts, even for Arbuthnot's presence and for the words that Pope, after all, puts in his mouth. The poem is to establish Pope's good moral character, except that we can trust what he says in it only if we believe, to begin with, that he had good moral character. It is all dissembling, then, but need be no more for its rhetorical purpose of moving "opinions and emotions," rather than creating a proper response to the demonstration of truth. Saying what he would and acting as he would if he were truly virtuous, he circularly persuades us that he is. He gives us a "semblance" of virtue rather than logical proof of it, the "semblance of truth" rather than truth itself. Imitation becomes a cheat that effectively works its intended way.

Olson would have to acknowledge, then, that our persuasion depends on our taking the fiction for the fact, on the illusion that we are overhearing an actual dialogue, not the "imitation" of a dialogue fabricated for his own
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interests by Pope. We must, in effect, mistake art for nature—surely not the sort of response the neoclassical writer normally expected of his sophisticated reader who cherished art's artifice. It is the sort of demand, however, that the rhetorical intention demands of its reader, as the poetic—proper imitation seen as but an imitation—does not. All this is the price of Pope's creating his "P." as an ego, not as an objectively created, dramatically conceived alter ego; the price of converting poetic imitation to rhetorical persuasion.

Should not this very demand—that the reader be persuaded to forget that he is reading a poem, a free fabrication—put us on our guard against Olson's easy claims that we take the poem for reality in accordance with Pope's strategy? And is it not rather supercilious for Olson to suggest that only a critic as rhetorically wary as he has shrewdness enough to see through the semblance, the deception, and the underlying circularity? As Pope's wit everywhere shows, he was ready to grant wariness to his readers; and any wary reader would surely not be taken in. How many are persuaded by P.'s self-righteous pointing to himself as the injured and the innocent party, especially if we add his contemporary reader's awareness of Pope's reputation for playing a venomous and craftily aggressive public role, a role that Pope would surely trade on? And how many seriously credit the delightful and brilliantly manipulated fiction of Arbuthnot's presence and sympathetic support? To turn A. from character in a dialogue into the breathing reality of Arbuthnot requires as much blindness to the aesthetic fact as he exhibits who would leap onstage to rescue Desdemona from Othello's clutches.

I am not about to invert Olson's claims by saying merely that the poem fails as rhetorical apologetics because of an error in tactics or an underestimating of his reader. Rather I would hold that Pope must have meant to give the game away, that he wanted us to see through the transparent employment of P. and A. and the sometimes painful self-righteousness of P.'s coupling of attacks and self-vindication—to see through these even as we admire the wit that flashes from them. How else to account for what W. K. Wimsatt means when he characterizes the poem as "an exquisite vibration between mayhem and pious professions"? He sees the persona as "a masterpiece of fighting traits justified by benevolent intentions and milky innocence—or mock-innocence (it matters not; in either case, the victims must squirm, and the self-portrait remains in some degree inscrutable)." To

what extent has the poet convicted himself and his role as Horatian satirist, to what extent given evidence of his own irrationality as well as his rational, justifiably self-righteous superiority over his enemies? I see the conventional Horatian role deepen, the humane being in part overcome by the vicious—the vicious in himself as well as in his enemies, even if we grant that his own viciousness has been inspired and even forced by the attacks of those enemies. Still the put-upon poet becomes, in his forced role within the public arena, the violent man.

Our maturest reading finds P. to be a splendid wit and a dangerous enemy, and thus far to be preferred to his antagonists; but he is also self-deluded precisely where he tries to delude us. And I would claim that Pope means to leave his speaker exposed even as that speaker far more damagingly exposes his enemies. The poet's gladiatorial role is seen critically, even sadly perhaps, although P. is given great freedom to play it broadly enough to appease the appetite of his embittered creator. But the creator is also poet enough to keep P. as the object of a case study. He is transformed from spokesman to persona as the “Epistle” is transformed from rhetoric to poem, from apologia to mock-apologia, at least in part.

But the common-sense likelihoods I began with that support the biographical equations are still there, so that evidence of this transformation must be inclusive indeed if our acceptance of these equations and the single satirical thrust is to be shaken. Evidence there is, in the manipulation of both argument and tone: in tactics whose transparency converts them in part to pseudo-tactics and in juxtapositions that shriek their contradictions of motive, compelling our critical awareness of the mixture of violence in innocence.

P.'s primary tactic is to cajole friendliness from his readers through the obvious device of telling them that only the unworthy and the dishonest need fear him: "A lash like mine no honest man shall dread" (line 303); or, earlier, "Curs'd be the verse, how well soe'er it flow,/That tends to make one worthy man my foe" (lines 283–84). We are having a distasteful trade proposed to us: say my verse is righteously inspired and I'll say you are worthy or honest. The very act of dreading my lash is an admission of your guilt; so protect yourself by defending my verse. But P., in his anxious display of self-righteousness, must overstate his case to the point of disingenuous sentimentality. His verse is to be cursed, not only if it makes one worthy man his foe, but, he goes on, if it should "give virtue scandal, innocence a fear,/Or from the soft-ey'd virgin steal a tear!" (lines
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285–86). If the reader is not aware that he is being put on in the first of these couplets (lines 283–84), this second of them, with its dead-pan piety, would seem to make it unmistakable.

P. uses the sentimental and the pious in many places to proclaim his sanctity. There is the repeated invocation to "thee, fair Virtue," as his goddess, to whom his satires are at all costs dedicated and who oversees the bitter sacrifice her servant willingly undergoes. And if he must be impolitic even where it is politically dangerous, his goddess prompts the indifferent priggish pronouncement, "A knave's a knave, to me, in ev'ry state" (line 361). Self-satisfied by the "pious professions" Wimsatt spoke of, P. can continue with his justified "mayhem." Where his own person enters, piety and sentiment come with it and together they introduce a cloying self-pity as well. I can cite, as an obvious example, his reference to "this long disease, my life" (line 132), the "being," "preserv'd" by Arbuthnot, which the poet must manage to "bear" (line 134). Another and more extended example is his introduction of his gentle parents, innocent, maligned by his enemies, one dead and the other kept awhile "from the sky" (line 413) only by the poet's dutiful and loving solicitude.

But insidious juxtaposition appears here, as well, to give the game away. P. begins by defending the unslanderous natures of his parents: Why are they slandered? "... that father held it for a rule,/lt was a sin to call our neighbo

Further continuation of the quotation: 

u r fool;/ That harmless mother thought no wife a whore:/ Hear this, and spare his family, James Moore!" His pious defense of his slandered parents as non-slanderers ends in slander, with P.'s implying the gossip that James Moore Smythe was a bastard. Don't you insult my family, who is innocent and who, in its honest simplicity, would insult no one, not even your family, who deserves the insult I hereby give it!

This device of contradictory juxtaposition is the poet's defense against being taken only seriously by us, his indication to us of his self-critical awareness. He uses it frequently. Often he will join disarming modesty about his poetic talents with implied confessions of genius. The phrase "many an idle song," which he uses to describe his works in a sentimental couplet ("Friend to my life! [which did not you prolong,/The world had wanted many an idle song]," lines 27–28), occurs just two lines after the conjunction of "wit, and poetry, and Pope." This conjunction has all the world's ills blamed on him as the sole incarnation of the twin spirits of wit and poetry. Or where he apologizes for falling involuntarily into the harmless and soothing art of poetry to help him bear this long disease, his life, he
lists those distinguished writers whose praise encouraged him. His conclusion is hardly in the soft tones: "Happy my studies, when by these approvd! / Happier their author, when by these belov’d! / From these the world will judge of men and books, / Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cookes" (lines 143–46). Here his name-dropping (Granville, Walsh, Garth, Congreve, Swift, Talbot, Somers, Sheffield, Atterbury, and Bolingbroke) has led to a braggadocio awareness of his talents.

The momentary modesty of claims about himself, related to his half-meant retreats to soft sentimentality and like them undercut by a tougher scornfulness, is related also to his protestations of his patient endurance of ill-treatment. And ironic juxtapositions occur here as well. He can proclaim his humility with a sequence of examples that concludes with his charge of plagiarism against his enemy, James Moore Smythe: "So humble, he [P. himself] has knock’d at Tibbald’s door, / Has drunk with Cibber, nay has rhym’d for Moore" (lines 372–73). His humility turns into his pride in being copied, his docile nature into an aggressively charging one. Yet the transformations are masked by the parallel order which presents his being victimized by the plagiarist as an act that is graciously voluntary on his part ("has rhym’d for Moore"). The irony in the juxtaposition totally undercuts the soft pretension. Or earlier, answering charges that he has written barbs that were really fashioned by others, P. seems to be at once above reproach, cocky, and arch: "Poor guiltless I! and can I choose but smile, / When ev’ry coxcomb knows me by my style?" (lines 281–82). Here we have his half-meant claim of innocence ("Poor guiltless I!") together with his awareness of his inimitable satiric style and his hidden acknowledgment that his own barbs, well sharpened and directed, have earned him everyone’s anxiety—hardly a consequence of innocence, of guiltlessness. Guiltless he is, in these particular cases; but he is mistaken to be guilty—as he implicitly admits—only because he has been so guilty, and so brilliantly and so often guilty, elsewhere. Thus while insisting upon his softhearted endurance of violent opponents, he clearly admits to retaliating in kind: "Were others angry: I excus’d them too: / Well might they rage, I gave them but their due" (lines 173–74). And after describing one after another of his dunces, he concludes with the claim and counterclaim, "All these, my modest satire bade translate, / And own’d that nine such poets made a Tate" (lines 189–90). "Modest satire" indeed!

It is the act of attacking while denying he has the temperament to attack that constitutes the basis for these contradictory juxtapositions.
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Can Pope not wish us to ask how the P. who speaks his brilliant and damaging lines in the poem can also characterize himself as “soft by nature, more a dupe than wit” (line 368)? Are you serious? The words burst from us if we have been observing P. at all carefully. As we have repeatedly seen, he represents himself as one who would excuse—has excused—his enemies, although he insults them on all levels, public and private, lightly and gravely, even as he parades himself as resisting the urge to do so. We have observed how the excusing of those who rage (line 173) is coupled with his giving “them but their due” (line 174). Through the use of indirection, the tongue-in-cheek contradiction takes back his claim in the very act of his making it.

The boldest example is, of course, the Atticus portrait in its relation to the disclaimers that precede it. In the preceding verse paragraph P. has been giving the dunces their due, arriving at the summary couplet, whose mixed quality we have noted: “All these, my modest satire bade translate,/And own’d that nine such poets made a Tate” (lines 189–90). His modesty is answered by rage: “How did they fume, and stamp, and roar, and chafe!/And swear, not Addison himself was safe” (lines 191–92). Is he? Well, P. follows by opening his next line with the unqualified assurance, “Peace to all such!” What follows, of course, is the portrait of Atticus, with its almost unveiled attack on Addison. This daring conjunction of protestation and vituperation is mockery indeed. The wounded innocence of “Peace to all such!”—as if I would touch him—joins with the thin disguise of the code name Atticus and with the contrary-to-fact condition of the extended subjunctive construction that follows as the portrait (“But were there one . . .”). What makes the disguise not merely thin but utterly transparent is the fact that Pope knew his readers, as followers of the arena of public poets, would know and recall that the Addison portrait had appeared some dozen years earlier without disguise. How in keeping with the complex nature of P.’s satire here that in being assimilated to a new whole the formerly discrete portrait follows so misleading a preamble.7

7 Both the 1722 (perhaps unauthorized) and the 1727 versions of the portrait, printed long before its inclusion in the complete “Arbuthnot” in 1734–35, refer to “A——n” instead of “Atticus.” While the first puts the portrait in no significantly broader context, the second (“Fragment of a Satire”) not only is very close to the final version in “Arbuthnot,” but is also preceded by lines very similar to the preamble we have examined. But one of the differences is crucial—and most helpful to my argument. Just before “Peace to all such” we find “How would they swear, not Congreve’s self was safe!” How significant to replace Congreve, a respected ally Pope would not attack (see “Arbuthnot,” line 138), with Addison, the very figure
P. may indirectly be reminding the reader, through the portrait of Addison and the history of feuding it recalls, that the current poem is hardly the first time that its author, creator of *The Dunciad* (referred to in line 79), has been on the offensive, despite his pious protestations of innocence, of a desire to live outside the arena: "Oh, let me live my own, and die so too!/(To live and die is all I have to do:)" (lines 261–62). These lines of simple and soft retirement lead to others: "I was not born for courts or great affairs;/I pay my debts, believe, and say my pray'rs" (lines 267–68). This subliminal awareness of his prior role as assailant is to qualify the central and continual assumption that the self-righteous P. appears to be urging: that except for the assault he is launching now—at the very moment of composing this poem, at the very moment of his claiming not to be launching it, not to be temperamentally able to launch it—except for this one time he has resisted launching it. How, then, this poem, unless he is using the paradox of its being, its curious status, to reveal the uproariousness of his soberer claims, to reveal the fact that he is toying with us and with his satirist’s role.

At one of the poem’s more naked moments of self-exaltation, P. is describing the ideal poet (guess who), what he avoids and what he seeks. (For example, "Not proud, nor servile, be one poet’s praise," [line 336].) What he does, including his satirizing, the moralizing of his song, he does "not for fame, but virtue’s better end" (line 342). Are we to believe in this selfless, disinterested service of the goddess? Or are we to recall the more damaging implications of the earlier line 127: "As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame"? As a self-proclaimed servant of virtue, he still is not a fool to fame, then? My point must be, it should by now be clear, that in playing the game, in writing this very poem as he has written it, he does become one. And the earlier line indicates his half-knowledge of the fact. He proves that he has become a fool to fame by the very act of claiming—in the ways we have seen him claiming—not to be one. But he becomes one necessarily, through the aggressive need to defend himself, to show himself as self-righteous, protector of the role of poet become Horatian satirist-rhetorician in the degrading and self-degrading public arena. But the poet has remained to immediately be attacked. Could Pope have made such a substitution—from a name that claimed his innocence to one that proved his guilt—without a keen awareness of a changed strategic purpose which the satiric portrait of a poet now a decade and a half dead was in the final version made to serve? For the earlier versions, see Alexander Pope, *Minor Poems*, ed. Norman Ault, completed by John Butt (London, 1954), pp. 142–45, 283–86.
remind us of his saving critical consciousness of that role and its demands, demands that have caused him to be victimized into writing his apologia.

Thanks to his continual tongue-in-cheek qualification of this angry defense, our double view of P. tempers the rhetorical with the poetic, so that the element of mock-apologia ends by leading to a far profounder apologia, one based on an understanding of the pressures, the appeals, the temptations of the public poet's arena, its rivalries and hatreds, its inhumanities, and the human response to it as well as the rationalizing—if transparent—defense of that response. He may be the best of poets (and surely he is trying to persuade us of this as well, I am free to admit) but as The Dunciad tells us, it is the worst of times. There is, then, a final sense in which the flight from rhetoric or transcendence of rhetoric leads to a rhetorical purpose after all, so that poetics may be seen to have its rhetoric or rhetoric its poetic. This possibility opens the way for—indeed demands—a new and far subtler, far more flexible and even poetic, definition of rhetoric than Aristotle's. But that would be the subject of another, and a far more difficult, essay than this one—one that would be friendlier and more fitting to the union of disciplines that is the proper objective of this conference.

Let me admit, by way of epilogue, that, partly out of my engagement with polemic, I have meant somewhat to overstate my case for the persona, thus rendering clearer than they are the confusing, and probably confused, elements in a poem that is too much a collage. In my own defense I point out that I have tried throughout to insist upon the doubling of our rhetor-poet's voice, his bitterness at others as well as his self-awareness, except that I have not sufficiently pressed the unsystematic, sporadic nature of this doubling. My further methodological confession, then, is that I have meant to follow Pope's lead, learning tactics from his tactics, as in my employment sometimes of the first and sometimes of the third person in speaking of the contextualist. For, like Pope, I have meant to insist upon the limitations of my perspective even as I have tried to exploit it for all the advantages it could provide, thus rendering myself attack-proof even as I deepened my attack—by including myself in its swath. But such confessional candor in motive-hunting is the subject for yet a third essay.