

# ALEXANDER POPE: DRYDEN'İN İZİNDE DOĞA

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## MAKALE BİLGİSİ

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## İNCELEME MAKALESİ

## ÖZ

Alexander Pope'un doğayı ele alışının ve John Dryden ile olan üslup bağlarının araştırılması, neoklasik şiirin evrimine dair önemli bir çalışma sunmaktadır. Bu makale, Pope'un doğa tasvirinin Dryden'in yaklaşımından nasıl etkilendiğini vurgularken aynı zamanda Dryden'dan farklı olduğu noktalara da dikkat çekmektedir. Makale Alexander Pope ve selefi John Dryden arasındaki incelikli ilişkiyi araştırırken Pope'un şiirinin tematik ve üslupsal unsurlarını doğa tasvirine odaklanarak incelemeyi ve bunu neoklasik hareket içinde bir bağlama oturtmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ana amacı Pope'un eserini Dryden'in eseriyle karşılaştırarak, her iki şairin şiirsel vizyonlarındaki süreklilikleri ve farklılıklarına vurgu yapmak olan bu araştırmanın aynı zamanda bu iki şairin 18. yüzyıl İngiliz edebiyatının gelişimine yaptıkları katkılara da dikkat çekeceği düşünülmektedir. Pope'un Dryden'a olan edebi borcunu anlamak ve aynı zamanda ondan farklı olduğu noktalara ışık tutmak, edebi etkileşimlerin çalışma şekillerini anlamamıza ve şiirdeki temalar ile üslupların ne yönde değiştiğini tespit etmemize yardımcı olacaktır. Ek olarak makale, Pope'un kendi zamanının edebi ortamını şekillendirmedeki rolünün ve onun İngiliz edebiyatındaki kalıcı mirasının daha incelikli bir şekilde değerlendirilmesine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Ancak inceleme belirli sınırlamalara dâhilinde yürütülmektedir. İki sayfalık bir tartışmanın kapsamı göz önüne alındığında, Pope'un yapıtlarının tamamına veya Dryden'la olan ilişkisinin tüm karmaşıklığına bu yazıda yer verme mümkün olmayacaktır. Çalışmanın odak noktası öncelikle Pope'un şiirlerinde doğanın karşılıklı etkileşimini en iyi şekilde gösteren seçilmiş eserlerdir. Üstelik bu çalışmada, tarihsel ve biyografik bağlamlardan yararlanılırken, Pope'un eserlerini etkilemiş olabilecek daha geniş sosyo-politik ve kültürel etkilere derinlemesine değinmek mümkün olmayacaktır. Bu nedenle araştırma, Pope'un Dryden'in izinden giden edebi evriminin kapsamlı bir incelemesinden ziyade anlık bir görüntüsünü sunan metinsel ve tematik inceleme odaklanmıştır.

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## ALEXANDER POPE: NATURE IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF DRYDEN

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received : 02.05.2024 Accepted : 11.06.2024 Online Published : 15.06.2024</p>	<p>The exploration of Alexander Pope's treatment of nature and his stylistic affiliations with John Dryden presents a substantial study of the evolution of Neoclassical poetry. In exploring the nuanced relationship between Alexander Pope and his predecessor John Dryden, this article aims to examine the thematic and stylistic elements of Pope's poetry, focusing on his depiction of nature and evaluating it in context within the neoclassical movement. The expectation is that the study could draw attention to the similarities and differences between Pope and Dryden's poetic visions and their distinct contributions to the growth of eighteenth-century English literature. Understanding Pope's literary indebtedness to and divergence from Dryden provides deeper insights into the dynamics of literary influence and the evolution of thematic and stylistic trends. Besides, this study contributes to a more nuanced appreciation of Pope's role in shaping the literary landscape and his enduring legacy in English literature. However, the study operates within certain limitations. Within a two-page discussion, it cannot embrace Pope's extensive works or the full complexity of his relationship with Dryden. The paper's focus is primarily on selected works by showing their illustrations of nature. Apart from this, this study draws on historical and biographical contexts but does not delve deeply into the broader socio-political and cultural influences that might have impacted Dryden and Pope's works. The research, therefore, is concentrated on textual and thematic exploration, offering a snapshot rather than a comprehensive examination of Pope's literary evolution in the footsteps of Dryden.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Alexander Pope, Nature John Dryden Neoclassicism Poetry</p>	
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## INTRODUCTION

Many critics and academics agree that Alexander Pope (1688-1744) remains a towering figure in English literature. One can see that, while reflecting the intellectual stream of his time, Pope's works are in demand for today's literary studies. For instance, "T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis found in him something to relish and something to admire. Eliot, at one point, found something he thought he could exploit" (Erskine-Hill, 2018, p. 21). In the early eighteenth-century, Alexander Pope played a significant role in English literary life. One of his most important masteries that made him widely known is his skill in using heroic couplets. "Pope produced a poem of two cantos in iambic pentameter couplets within a fortnight, and it appears to have had the desired effect" (Hyman, 1960, p. 406). These couplets are composed in rhyming iambic pentameter, as in "An Essay on Man". Besides, Pope was well-known "as a political satirist" (Reichard, 1955, p. 309). He often criticized society, politics, and literary norms of his time. He used his sharp intelligence and poetic skills to satire the weaknesses and flaws of the society in which he lived. Pope is best known for his heroic couplet, a form he did not invent but perfected. His works like "The Rape of the Lock" and "The Dunciad" are prime examples of his heroic couplets; displaying his skill in producing witty, satirical, and eloquent verse. Beyond his poetry, Pope was also known for his translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into English. These translations were both a commercial and critical success, bringing the classical texts to a wider English-speaking audience and influencing the understanding and appreciation of Greek literature in the West.

Alexander Pope considered John Dryden an outstanding writer who honoured Dryden as a major influence on his writings. Hence, "The period described, from its chief literary figure, as The Age of Dryden, and which might with equal propriety have been entitled The Age of Restoration, extends from 1660 to 1700" (Garnett, 1897, p. v). John Dryden was an influential English poet, playwright, literary critic, and translator who dominated the literary scene of Restoration England. Dryden's works constitute an important field of study to understand the evolution of English literature and drama in the last quarter of the seventeenth-century and to follow its literary development.

Pope's development as a poet and a satirist was significantly shaped by Dryden's style, themes, and literary techniques. Pope is often seen as Dryden's successor in the realm of English poetry. Dryden is one of the well-known English poets who shaped the literary environment of his time and influenced those who came after him in terms of literary understanding. Alexander Pope lived in the literary landscape shaped by Dryden and he admired Dryden's style of works and shared his commitment to classical ideals. Hence, this has been discussed by a great number of authors in literature that he was a natural heir to Dryden's influence and inherited the Neoclassical tradition established by his predecessor. Additionally, just like Dryden, Pope's works reflect forms and structures of Neoclassical tradition. His works often engaged with similar formations to Dryden's, and Pope followed the Neoclassical principles backed by Dryden. Alexander Pope achieved prominence and recognition during the later stages of the Restoration period, a time when Dryden's influence remained pervasive. Therefore, previous studies have emphasized the perception of Pope as Dryden's successor is rooted in their shared literary context, and thematic similarities. After Dryden's death, Pope emerged as the preeminent poet of the early eighteenth-century, carrying forward the Neoclassical tradition that Dryden had significantly shaped.

Following in the footsteps of Dryden, who translated Latin and Greek works, Pope translated more of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and it was reported in literature that they became more well-known than Dryden's translations. It is seen that Alexander Pope made great efforts to produce a translation worthy of the mastery of the ancient Greek poet Homer, whom he admired. As reported by Keane "We see that Pope reverences Homer because Homer is faithful to something higher than himself—Calliope" (Keane, 2011, p. 74). John Dryden left behind a satirical

style and formed the foundation of Neoclassical principles that Alexander Pope adopted and optimized. Thus, their relationship is based on an ongoing chain of literary tradition and influence. Like Dryden, Alexander Pope was a pivotal representer in the Neoclassical movement, which intended to imitate the aesthetic of classical antiquity. Pope's works reflect the Neoclassical ideals of order, logic, and restrained emotion, often focusing on human reason and rules of art.

To properly appreciate the works of Neoclassic poets Alexander Pope and John Dryden, particularly in their treatment of nature, it is essential first to understand the literary movement of Neoclassicism, under which their works were produced. This foundational understanding can illuminate the nuances in the writings of these eminent authors, making their contributions to Neoclassicism more comprehensible to the reader. Therefore, an initial exploration of Neoclassicism's defining characteristics is the starting point of this article.

## 1. Neoclassicism

Neoclassicism is a literary movement which gained prominence in the late seventeenth-century and until early nineteenth-centuries, it stands for representing classical ideals of ancient Greece and Rome. Established out of the excesses of Baroque and Rococo styles (Johnson, 1989, p. 92) Neoclassicism had a great impact on various field such as literature, architecture, and the visual arts, along with other artistic domains. This movement also engendered a distinctive trend in poetry that is philosophical and satirical in nature (Golban, 2015, p. 97). It is distinguished by its adherence to poetic works and a robustly normative and prescriptive doctrine. This essay examines its primary characteristics, historical background, and major figures of the Neoclassical era such as Alexander Pope and John Dryden, demonstrating the movement's significance on the advancement of Western art and culture.

Neoclassical art and literature were characterized by an adherence to classical principles such as simplicity, symmetry, and proportion. In literature, this translated to a preference for structured forms, clarity of expression, and themes of heroism and morality. In visual arts, artists like Jacques-Louis David adopted a clear, linear style and often chose subjects from classical history or mythology (Walch, 1967, p. 123). Architecture saw a revival of Greek and Roman styles, emphasizing grandeur and formality.

The influence of Neoclassicism extended beyond the arts. It was a major force in forming social conventions and political philosophy during the time, as well as the intellectual atmosphere. Democratic principles and contemporary nation-states are products of Neoclassical ideals. The movement's emphasis on reason and moral clarity had a long-lasting effect on academic endeavours and educational philosophies.

### 1.1. Neoclassicism in England

Neoclassicism emerging in the late seventeenth-century and flourishing through the eighteenth-century, was a period marked by a profound shift towards classical ideals of order, harmony, and restraint in literature and the arts. This period followed the Renaissance and was a reaction against the perceived excesses of the preceding Baroque and Rococo styles.

Rationalism, emphasizing reason and intellect over emotion aligning with the Enlightenment principles, is one of the key features. Equally, moral purpose is another important feature, hence literature is seen as a means to teach and uphold moral virtues. Besides, structured forms, clarity, and accuracy in poetry and prose are the intended frames for a Neoclassical work. Yet another essential feature is the imitation of classical models, in other saying, Greek and Roman influences were prominent in themes, styles, and literary forms.

The majority of prior research has indicated that the Neoclassical period boasted a roster of influential writers, including John Dryden, Samuel Johnson, and Jonathan Swift. Each contributed significantly to literature, embracing a style characterized by wit, moralization, and a

preference for reason over emotion. Their works often critiqued society and politics, using satire and allegory as tools for moral and ethical instruction. English Neoclassical literature often dealt with themes of human nature, society, governance, morality, and the arts (Johnson, 1969, p. 53). The style was marked by its polished language, formal structure, and use of satire, wit, and irony. Poets mostly cohered strict forms like the heroic couplet and satire.

Modern English literature was greatly influenced by the Neoclassical era. It improved the language, created new forms and styles, and set a standard for literary criticism. The focus on reason during this time, together with criticism of politics and society, prepared the way for the later Romantic movement, which would rebel against these very ideas. The writers of this century produced works that still have an impact on literary theory and practice because they explored modern themes while adhering to traditional patterns. As a result, the period reflects both a return to classical ideals and a dynamic growth of these ideas in reaction to the political, social, and intellectual issues of the day. Most academics agree that John Dryden was this era's most important and influential person.

## 2. John Dryden

John Dryden is often regarded as a dominant figure in the Restoration period, and he is also called the father of English criticism. A key player in the English Neoclassical movement, Dryden was well-known for his ability to write in a variety of genres, including drama, poetry, and literary criticism. Yet, William Edward Bohn split Dryden's literary career into five periods and claims that he was not successful in playwrighting: "During in his fifth period...after having failed at play- writing he gives almost undivided attention to his translations" (1907, p. 134). However, the general thought is that Dryden was pivotal in shaping the early phase of English Neoclassicism. His works are characterized by their wit, satirical edge, and a keen sense for the musicality of verse.

The multifaceted representation of nature in Dryden's work and its significance in Neoclassical thought are at the core of this essay. Nature often appears as an inspiration in Dryden's writings, representing a natural moral order that coincides with the Neoclassical pursuit of virtue and reason. As Lillian Feder underlines, "Like Cicero and Quintilian, Dryden equates nature and good sense" (Feder, 1954, p. 1264). What Lillian emphasizes is that Dryden is more concerned with the philosophical and moral representation of nature than with its true physical state. This is seen clearly in his poems like "Absalom and Achitophel," where the innate disorder of revolt and the natural rights of rightful succession are emphasized through the use of natural laws. The poem uses nature as a symbol of political righteousness and stability, which fits with the Neoclassical ideal of conserving morality and society. For instance, the lines: "But life can never be sincerely blest; Heav'n punishes the bad, and proves the best" (Dryden, 1708, p. 2). The lines emphasize that complete happiness cannot always be achieved due to the various difficulties, pains, and injustices that human life contains. Here, the expression "Heav'n" represents God or holy powers and indicates that bad people will be punished and the best will finally emerge. In other words, life includes difficulties and evil, but it makes good people stronger. In these two lines, moral criteria are emphasized by expressing the idea that life's difficulties have meaning. Dryden advocates for a realistic yet idealistic portrayal of nature, a stance that reflects the Neoclassical conflict between artistic refinement and mimetic truth. Dryden uses nature to create vivid and varied imagery in his poems. In "Annus Mirabilis," for example, nature serves as a setting for the political and social unrest of the author's day. "By viewing Nature, Nature's Hand-maid, Art, / Makes mighty things from small beginnings grow: / Thus Fishes first to Shipping did impart, / Their Tail the Rudder, and their Head the Prow" (Dryden, 1688, p. 40). These lines generally highlight the idea that nature inspires human progress and accomplishments and that humans can achieve tremendous success via working with nature. This portrayal of nature exemplifies

Dryden's Neoclassical style—that is, his ability to skillfully blend the natural world with human feelings.

Dryden's study of nature reflects human nature as well, especially in his adaptations and translations of classical texts such as Virgil's "Aeneid." Here, nature is a backdrop against which human passions and follies are played out, reflecting the Neoclassical preoccupation with human virtues and vices. In these works, nature often mirrors the inner turmoil or harmony of the characters, serving as a barometer for human emotions and ethical states.

There have been numerous studies to investigate that, nature also serves an aesthetic or a metaphoric function for Dryden. His descriptions of landscapes, seascapes, and natural phenomena not only pleasure with their beauty and precision but serve thematic purposes in his works. For example; Jerome Donnelly analyzes "Mac Flecknoe", in which Dryden expresses an ordinary oat metaphor to mock Thomas Shadwell's talent as useless grass;

"Shadwell's majesty with the stateliness of oaks proves to be a misleading one, for actually, the "Monarch Oakes," though they presage power by their great height, turn out to be nothing but "thoughtless Majesty" and to do nothing but "shade the plain." Branching out over a large area, they only cast a shade, and, without power of purposeful movement" (Donnelly, 1971, p. 571).

This metaphoric representation aligns with the Neoclassical ideal of art providing pleasure, edification, and moral instruction. Nature often becomes an allegory for political ideologies and events in the politically charged atmosphere of Dryden's time. In "Absalom and Achitophel", natural imagery is employed to comment on political legitimacy and corruption. Dryden uses nature as a tool to critique and analyze the political landscape of Restoration England, demonstrating the versatility of nature as a motif in his work.

Dryden's treatment of nature occasionally intersects with the divine, reflecting the era's religious and philosophical ideas. Dryden reflects that nature represents an order shaped by the will of divine providence, and a generous god governs this order in his poem. Dryden's view of nature has similarities with the Neoclassical period's approach. It is possible to say that Dryden's art values scientific progress and methodical studies. Therewithal, Donald Benson asserts that Dryden had a "political reservation about reason. While reason properly employed was a competent guide to faith for reasonable men, it was also capable of public exploitation by zealots and Democrats" (1964, p. 412). Dryden's fascination with nature extends beyond its aesthetic and symbolic uses; it also explores the laws governing nature and its intellectual comprehension. Nature appears in Dryden's writings in a variety of ways, including as a moral allegory, an aesthetic delight, a setting for human drama, or a representation of divine and political order. This demonstrates his depth of knowledge and creative proficiency.

The main conclusion that can be drawn is that Dryden reflected the Neoclassical ideals of his time while dealing with nature in his style and contributed significantly to the development of English literature by providing insights relevant to contemporary literary discourse. Dryden's effective use of nature by uniting the natural world with philosophical, artistic, and moral concerns highlights his significance as a major figure in the evolution of English Neoclassicism. Furthermore, various studies show Dryden's great impact on other literary figures of the era, like Alexander Pope.

### 3. Alexander Pope

Alexander Pope was struggling against a series of illnesses also he was Catholic. Catholics "were discriminated against by law" (Erskine-Hill, 1982, p. 124) in the era and they were precluded from holding office assignments. Despite facing such significant challenges, he emerged as a distinguished neoclassical figure and Alexander Pope is perhaps the quintessential Neoclassical poet. However, Dryden's work shaped Pope's literary output, focusing on thematic

elements, stylistic features, and philosophical underpinnings. His works are known for their rhetorical grandeur, satirical sharpness, and adherence to classical form. His writing is renowned for its precision, satirical edge, and adherence to classical forms. Pope's works, deeply rooted in the classical tradition, reflect a profound understanding and appreciation of the natural world, serving not only as a canvas for his poetic imagination but also as a medium for philosophical and ethical exploration.

Pope's works promote the Enlightenment ideals of rationalism and virtue, exhibiting the period's characteristic blend of wit, moral philosophy, and adherence to structured forms like the heroic couplet. For example; "The Rape of the Lock", a mock-heroic narrative poem satirizes a minor high-society quarrel by comparing it to the epic world of the gods. "An Essay on Criticism", one of his other famous poems lays out the Neoclassical principles of criticism, emphasizing nature, wit, and the rules of classical poetry. Another example is "An Essay on Man," a "philosophical poem" that presents humans' place in the universe. Broadly, Pope reflects the intellectual and artistic spirit of the Enlightenment era by "seeking to correct and extend men's ideas about the nature of the universe and of man's place in it and duty" (Tuveson, 1959, p. 369).

One of Pope's most notable works that exemplify his treatment of nature is "Windsor Forest". This poem is a celebration of nature's beauty and order, and it mirrors the political peace following the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Dudley explains that the Treaty of Utrecht was an agreement that ended "The War of the Spanish Succession" (2013, p. 1091). It established peace and changed political and economic balances between some European countries including Britain. In "Windsor Forest", Pope portrays the forest as an idyllic and harmonious place, where every element of nature - from the trees to the flowing rivers - exists in a perfect balance. This portrayal can be evaluated as an emblematic mirror of the Neoclassical ideals of order and proportion by "embodying the Virgilian spirit" (Miller, 1979, p. 169). However, it is not just an aesthetic appreciation. It can be evaluated that Pope uses the forest as a metaphor for political stability and peace, and makes a subtle yet profound connection between the natural world and human affairs. It seems Pope employs nature in a satirical context in "The Rape of the Lock". This mock-heroic narrative poem uses natural imagery to provide a sharp contrast to the trivialities of the aristocratic society he is satirizing. By juxtaposing the grandeur and sublimity of nature with the pettiness of the characters' concerns, Pope effectively criticizes the superficiality and artificiality of contemporary social norms. It appears the sylphs, supernatural beings derived from natural elements, play a significant role in this poem, further blending the natural with the human and the spiritual.

Alexander Pope's early literary development was notably influenced by Dryden. Pope's formative years as a poet were steeped in Dryden's works, with Dryden's translations of classical texts being particularly impactful. Pope's admiration for Dryden is evident in his later works, where he often echoes Dryden's themes and adopts similar stylistic approaches. Dryden's influence is particularly noticeable in Pope's satirical and moralistic works. Dryden's satires like "Absalom and Achitophel" provided a template for Pope's satirical masterpieces, including "The Dunciad" or "The Rape of the Lock". While Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel" deals with political events, he shaped his work as a mock epic. Similarly, Pope also preferred to write "The Rape of the Lock" as a mock epic, and it is possible to see Dryden's allegorical style reflected in Pope's work. It is a widely accepted judgment among readers and critics that the use of symbolism and metaphor in both poems provides an enjoyable subtext for analysis. In "Absalom and Achitophel" Dryden uses "rape upon the Crown" as a sexual allegory which indicates nothing can resist a young man's desire likewise in "The Rape of Lock" Alexander Pope uses a similar sexual allegory upon Belinda's hair lock; "Th' advent'rous baron the bright locks admir'd; / He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspir'd." Pope continues by telling Baron's plans in canto II: "By force to ravish, or by fraud betray" (Pope, 1798, p. 17). The Baron's liking for Belinda's hair and his desire to have them,

even if by force, is an uncontrollable desire for him. Hence, the verses express that he makes plans in line with this desire.

#### 4. The Comparison between Pope and Dryden

Both poets used satire to critique contemporary society and mores, albeit with differing degrees of acerbity and focus. Dryden's and Pope's views on literary criticism also show a clear line of influence. Dryden's "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" and Pope's "An Essay on Criticism" have some common points in their reflection on the classical traditions. They believed that nature, wit, and promoting judgement should be the paths to follow for a good poet and good poetry. These two works demonstrate strong attention to keeping traditional norms such as aesthetics and dedication alive in contemporary writing. Dryden's translation methodology—which viewed translation as both a literal exposition and an act of creative interpretation—had an impact on Pope's translations, which sought to adapt classical epics to the tastes and intelligence of his contemporary audience. Charles Tomlinson expresses that "Alexander Pope, who at the age of sixteen was inspired by Dryden to his own metamorphosis of Chaucer... Ahead of him lay the Iliad and the Odyssey, challenged into being by Dryden's Virgil" (2001, p. 18).

Dryden popularised the heroic couplets, and of course, Alexander Pope, who followed in Dryden's footsteps, developed these heroic couplets and carried them further from where Dryden left off. However, in Pope's writing, heroic couplets are constructed with harmony between sounds and sense. Pope's works, such as "An Essay on Man" and "The Rape of the Lock," reflect this characteristic usage, which became a building block of Neoclassical poetics. Even though Dryden had a great impact on Pope, he struggled to both carry on and outdo his mentor. It was challenging for Pope to find his place in the literary tradition that Dryden had thoroughly established. For instance, as Ralph Cohen mentions, "The technique of details and process in a spatial world suddenly ordered by blending- these in Alexander Pope led to nation and God; in Dyer, nature itself is the harmonious whole composed of contrary fragments" (1967, p. 11).

The traditional understanding of nature as a symbol of logic and order was regularly repeated in John Dryden's artwork. For example, Dryden's nature in "Annus Mirabilis" imitates the dramatic events of the Great Fire of London and the Dutch War as a mirror of the chaotic social and political climate of his day. In the poem, nature represents both a peace that has the power to create and a force to destroy.

Although adopting characteristics of the classics regarding nature just like Dryden did, Pope's way was different from Dryden's. Pope's nature is pretty harmonic because to Pope, "The sound must seem an echo to the sense" (Pope, 1900, p.12).

In "Windsor Forest" Pope's nature is peaceful and ordered place shows political balance. According to Pope there is a reflection of social order and code of ethics in natural order. "There is a great moral momentum to the poem, which frequently rises to supreme heights of rhythmic beauty" and "each word has force" (Pope, 1900, p.16).

"Pope's versification, his allusive mode, his ventures into translation and literary criticism all bear the mark of his poetic predecessor. Of course, Pope also inherited Dryden's satiric technique" (Miller, 1979, p. 188). From a very early age, Pope respected Dryden. Nevertheless, instead of adopting Dryden's ideas and forms verbatim, he used them as guiding elements. Dryden's poetry in "Annus Mirabilis," which "was developed as a plea that citizens should leave off their waywardness, pay their loyalty and obedience to their anointed leader, and vote him all the supplies that his purposes required" (Hooker, 1946, p. 67), captures the energy and turbulence of both human endeavours and nature. In "Windsor Forest," Pope's political and economic concerns are similar to Dryden's in "Annus Mirabilis," but enriched with literary associations, it is more complicated with the deep forest metaphor to express Britain's political, economic, and social life.



Taking everything into account, Dryden's impact on Alexander Pope highlights great importance in the development of Neoclassical writing. Pope's literary style, characterised by placing nature at the forefront of his works, mirrors the aesthetic principles of classical antiquity. Moreover, Pope's writings frequently feature Greek characters, exemplifying his adept incorporation of classical motifs and themes into his Neoclassical creations. "Be Homers works your study and delight,

Read them by day and meditate by night" (Pope, 1711, p. 12).

More than being a good successor of the classics, he is the most celebrated writer among English neoclassicists. "In more respects than the mere perfection of technique in the heroic couplet, English neoclassicism culminates in Pope" (Burgum, 1944, p. 251). When it is compared to one of the significant Neoclassic figures of English literature Dryden, Pope's remarkable poetic style which is adorned with rationalistic features shows how he released from the boundary of the Renaissance and brought a fresh soul to Neoclassic writing. Nevertheless, keeping track of the classics is also means putting nature and its divine order in the centre for him. Although Pope speaks well of wit in his work *Essay on Criticism*, he indicates that wit broken from nature is just a wild heap, and it can be balanced only if it reflects God's design nature, "True wit is nature to advantage dressed" (Pope, 1711, p. 18).

On the contrary, one of the pioneering Neoclassicists Dryden who died when Pope was only 12 years old, originated his assessment of literary criticism by comparing the ancients' writing of poetry and drama with his contemporary English literature writers in his work "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy". The work refers to the imitation of nature as much as other literary concerns by both ancients and Neoclassicists. His thoughts are spoken out by four gentlemen as dialogues in his essay. Thereby, by way of using those imaginary four men, Dryden tackles the problem of the difference between modern and ancient, besides, the idea of accepting the French drama as superior. The essay is specially based on the Aristotelian point of view which is framed by stringent rules. However, he is not insistent to be following them and bends those strict rules a little giving some elasticity to drama and poetry.

A large number of existing studies in literature admitted that Dryden is the father of English criticism by the reason of being the person who gave the fine definition of a play after Aristotle. While quoting Dr Johnson's reverence for Dryden, Syed and Saxena (2014, p. 48) underline that it was a very appropriate praise, as there was no critic of significant qualifications before Dryden in England in the period: "Dryden may be properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition".

As specified by Dryden, there was a divergence from the classical point of view in literature, which was expanded after the Renaissance, and this divergence emerged in the literature as an ill representation of nature as well as being a low-quality aspect of writers in his age. For that reason, Dryden criticizes his contemporary writers for being unfruitful. "Those ancients have been faithful imitators and wise observers of that nature which is so torn and ill-represented in our plays" (Dryden, 1889, p. 19). Dryden's emphasis on nature is essentially based on imitation which does not go beyond Aristotle's point of view thus he is tremendously loyal to Aristotelian rules of three unity. He claims that a play is an imitation of nature. Hence, to Dryden "If nature be to be imitated, then there is a rule for imitating nature rightly; otherwise here may be an end, and no means conducing to it" (Dryden, 1918, p. 116).

A series of studies have indicated that in the age of Dryden, playwrights and poets turned their faces to the ancient and at the cause of antic influence the period is called the neoclassical era. Yet, Dryden asserts that those neoclassicists lack competence in the way of reflection of nature in comparison with ancients which appears in his essay *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* clearly;

“And we may cry out of the writers of this time, with more reason than Petronius of his, ‘Pace vestrud liceat dixisse, primi omnium eloquentiam perdidistis’” (Dryden, 1918, p. 14). Latin words in the sentence say “they lost their eloquence”. Hence, through the quote, Dryden criticizes writers as ruining eloquence and he continues; “You have debauched the true old poetry so far, that Nature, which is the soul of it, is not in any of your writings” (Dryden, 1918, p. 14).

Pope’s engagement with nature in his poetry is a fusion of classical reverence and personal interpretation. Unlike the Romantic poets who followed, Pope viewed nature through the lens of order and rationality, consistent with Neoclassical ideals. His descriptions of nature are often structured, controlled, and used as a backdrop for human activity and moral lessons rather than being celebrated for their inherent wildness or emotional inspiration. Pope depicts nature such a typically restful and blessed place that witnesses the political peace of Britain in his poem “Windsor Forest”.

Although the political approach makes itself felt more in Dryden's works, the reader can also notice the existence of divine power. On the other hand, Pope's use of nature shows that his philosophical concerns are at the forefront. For example, it is possible to say that in his work "An Essay on Man," Pope gives priority to discussing the integrity of nature and humanity, the natural order, and the place of man in this order. He depicts attention to God's continual order and query of entity. In line 17, "Say first, of God above or man below," Pope underlines the "great chain of being," and in line 18, "What can we reason but from what we know?" (1900, P. 18), he emphasises reasoning that is inadequate compared to God's. This poem delves into the laws of nature and the natural order of things, arguing that man must accept his position within this order. Pope reflects on the interconnectedness of all things in nature, suggesting that everything has its rightful place and purpose. This work exemplifies Pope’s belief in a benevolent, orderly, and purposeful natural world. For Pope, as for Dryden, the unity of nature and humanity is necessary because the activity of reason can be celebrated only if it has a true and strict correlation with nature and its creator God otherwise its exercise will be in futility or remain wild because human has no power to get across the line symbolizing the divine order of God. His “Essay on Criticism”, which contains the idea of the integrity of intertwined ancient and nature “Nature and Homer were he found the same” (Pope, 1711, p. 12), rather than being a proper criticism, most particularly indicates Pope’s point of view that it is giving precedence to follow ancients. Hence, for him, “To copy nature is to copy them” (Pope, 1711, p. 12). Practically, most of his lines lead the reader either as a critic or a poet to integrate with nature which is divine and unerring light. Pope’s various epistles and shorter poems also reflect his engagement with nature. Whether he is musing on the changing seasons, reflecting on the beauty of a landscape, or using natural phenomena as metaphors for human emotions and experiences, his treatment of nature is always thoughtful and layered.

Both poets also used nature in their satirical works, though in different capacities. Dryden’s “Mac Flecknoe” employs natural imagery to mock and satirize, using the decay and degeneration in nature as a metaphor for the decline in literary taste. Pope, in “The Rape of the Lock”, uses natural elements symbolically to satirize the pettiness of high society, contrasting the sublime beauty of nature with the trivial concerns of the human characters. Nature as his main concern appears as one of the most celebrated subjects in the essay. In addition, Pope uses extremely clear and delightful metaphors to emphasize his thoughts with respect to nature. It seems that his aim is to exhibit nature as a perfect track for the mortal to find self and God.

“First follow nature and your judgment frame by her just standard, which is still the same.  
 Unerring nature still divinely bright,  
 One clear, unchanged and universal light” (Pope, 1711, p. 10).

According to Alexander Pope, nature should be used by mankind like a mirror because of its feature as being a necessary part of the soul. Furthermore, Pope draws a circle, a universal

frame, which comprises nature, the soul, and the universe, and the circle is a kind of great chain of being that cannot be seen by man but affected by it. There is only God who can see the circle as a whole.

*“One clear, unchanged and universal light,*

...

*In some fair body thus the informing soul*

...

*Itselfunseen, but in the effects remains”* (Pope, 1711, p. 10).

Both Dryden and Pope used nature didactically, but their methods differed. Dryden’s didacticism is more direct and politically charged, while Pope’s is philosophical, using nature to explore and expound on moral and ethical principles. However, Pope took the mentioned imitation of nature further than his predecessor, for him all exertion should be for an understanding of a pattern, in regard to the boundary of nature and human beings which is under the control of God. However, in his poem “A Little Learning”, Pope states the fruits of the Enlightenment era and mankind’s pleasure concerning those scientific developments and openly appreciates the new scientific evolvment, further, he defends better to go further on learning; “A little learning is a dangerous thing Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring” (Collins, 1896, p.8). When little knowledge is combined with one’s “fearless youth” enthusiasm and boldness, it leads one to haste. Rather than being content with superficial knowledge, deepening and comprehending knowledge means discovering all the hidden surprises.

*“Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind,*

*But, more advanced, behold with strange surprise”* (Collins, 1896, p.8).

## CONCLUSION

The main conclusion that can be drawn is that notable neoclassical authors John Dryden and Alexander Pope used nature as a way to study human nature, ethics, and the universe’s structure in their writings. They portrayed nature as a manifestation of divine order, in which each element has a certain place and function, rather than as a wild, untamed force. For instance, in Pope’s “Essay on Man,” nature is portrayed as an extensive structure part of a more comprehensive, divinely ordained plan. This depiction of nature emphasized the Neoclassical principles of harmony, balance, and proportion. It also emphasized the place of humans within a larger, interrelated system. Hereby, In Neoclassical thought, nature surpassed the material world and incarnated the moral and intellectual values of the era.

Both prominent Neoclassical writers Dryden and Pope presented different yet convergent interpretations of nature in their writings. However, the way that Alexander Pope depicts nature in his writings is more multidirectional and profound. Pope’s reflection of nature is evidence of his sophistication as a poet, as shown in his celebration of harmony and order in “Windsor Forest,” his use of nature as a satirical tool in “The Rape of the Lock,” and his exploration of philosophical ideas in “An Essay on Man.” Though his works exhibit a profound intellectual and ethical engagement with the natural world; nevertheless, they reflect the Neoclassical principles of order and rationality. While Dryden often depicts nature in a more dynamic and politically charged manner to capture the chaos of his day; Pope use nature more idealized and harmonic, reflecting both his philosophical inclinations and the comparatively stable times of his day. Both poets contributed to the Neoclassical literary movement by engaging with the classical legacy and making commentary on social, political, and moral issues of their day through their unique interpretations of nature. The comparative study of their works thus reveals not only stylistic diversity but also a shared commitment to integrating nature into the broader tapestry of human

experience and thought. It can be said that Pope acknowledges nature as the best mentor to be followed to get a balanced life as a whole with body and soul. Poets or critics should imitate nature and for sure follow the classics. He specifies that there is a law order in nature and on top of that general law upon everything as God's will, the system of a great chain.

*"Is the great chain, that draws all to agree,  
And drawn supports, upheld by God, or Thee?"* (Pope, 1900, p. 18).

Pope's nature is an adorable gift given by God but Pride stands for man in his essay, is a malignant user of it. "From pride, from pride, our very reasoning springs" (Pope, 1900, p.22). For Pope, from the beginning of life the law of great chain as a perfect order is withheld in nature which is the integral part of man. Therefore, he states that nature, man and God are elements of the whole;

*"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul"* (Pope, 1900, p. 25).

In that case, it may be possible to deduce if man follows nature, the perfection of integrity will emerge, and man can reach to perfect balance as a core part of the universe.

### Research and Publication Ethics Statement

The study does not require an ethical committee approval.

### Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

This article was prepared by a single author.

### Ethics Committee Approval

In this article, ethics committee approval is not required. A signed consent form stating that ethics committee approval is not necessary is included in the article processing files on the system.

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There is no conflict of interest.

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