

**SPACES, THINGS, HETEROTOPIAS:**  
**A DUNCICAL MAP OF EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH CULTURE**

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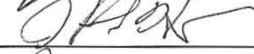

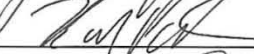
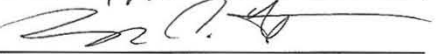
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## ABSTRACT

My work sets *The Dunciad in Four Books* (1743) into parallel play with the most recent technologies of digital humanities, drawing on historical, theoretical and quantitative methods to shed a new light on publicness as an emerging category at the beginning of the eighteenth century. My project branches out in three main directions. First, I attempt to map out the London of Pope's time, to recover its various topographical, political, religious, and cultural spaces, based on the unusually rich system of allusions which informs the text. This layered reading of the text accounts for Pope's unique overlapping of real, mythological and imaginary spaces which contributes to the creation of a networked text and reading community, so characteristic for a modern urban setting. Second, I use this layered reading of the text to argue that Pope's intention was to create a "heterotopic" space describing *what British culture might have become* under the Moderns' assault. Such an exploration of the possible opens a cultural field usually not surveyed by current criticism: the contribution made by minor or forgotten authors in shaping the cultural milieu of their time. Finally, I pay particular attention to the textual spaces described by the poem and its overflowing apparatus. I read Pope's textual strategy of constantly referencing his poem in footnotes as an instance of non-sequential writing, a writing that is rhizomatic, branching and hypertextual in nature, and which encourages new reading strategies that can be best brought to light through the use of digital technologies. Even as I appear to oppose Pope's agenda, I defend here the fundamental, but little acknowledged, role played by Pope's "dunces" in shaping the main directions of modernity.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## INTRODUCTION

The very first pause in reading the actual text of *The Dunciad in Four Books* (1743), after 60-odd pages of prefatory material in Valerie Rumbold's recent edition,<sup>1</sup> occurs immediately after the title of the poem, and calls attention to a fundamental problem in approaching the text: "*The Dunciad, sic MS*. It may be well disputed whether this be a right reading..." "Reading" here has, of course, a strict textual meaning, pointing to a spelling dilemma (whether *The Dunciad* should be, or not, etymologically rendered as *Dunceiad*) and to an editorial rivalry (Lewis Theobald's "restored" version of Pope's edition of Shakespear, spelled without an "e" by Pope and Shakespeare himself). The acid parody of Theobald's textual pedantry starts here, and with it a big part of Pope's agenda against his dunces. However, besides ridiculing false knowledge and intellectual affectation, the note raises the very serious question of what is the proper reading of the poem itself. As it has already been noted, a sequential reading of the material, from the beginning to end, with an honest perusal of all its apparatus, with its footnotes, appendices, advertisements, authors' testimonies, and index, does not seem to be the most intellectually profitable way of making sense of the text. The "discerning" reader has to avoid the traps posed by the false erudition of the numerous sub-, intra-, and intertextual commentators, the mystifying strategy of the author (and his allies), the erroneous pieces of information and the irony of the argument, the upside down logic of the whole, not to mention the dizzying, bouncing movement of his attention up and down the page, from text to footnotes and back. The challenges of this reading strategy and the textual technologies employed in developing it will be addressed later on; what I am interested in at this point is to approximate the right (or a better)

way of approaching this very special text, which could help avoid the numerous interpretive traps scattered all through it.

It seems to me that mapping not the text, but the various spaces the text accounts for, provides a better way of navigating its intricate pathways. As such, I am not going to read the text in its time, but early eighteenth-century British realities as filtered through the satirical lenses of its most representative poet. As Laura Brown has suggested, approaching Pope's satire involves a process of demystification that unveils the ideological structures of the period and the system of beliefs on which the poem is based.<sup>2</sup> Embedded in this most unusual text, there are direct or veiled references to multifarious aspects of the political, religious, economic, social and cultural life during Pope's time that evoke a world which could have been, as J. Paul Hunter has put it, "well-lost," and which may be recovered through a process of reading against Pope's cultural agenda.<sup>3</sup> Instead of lamenting, with Swift, *The Dunciad's* growing indecipherability,<sup>4</sup> I am going to approach it, on the contrary, as a point of entry which opens up a whole cultural panorama, illuminating an important chapter of cultural formation. My ultimate goal is to describe how this insistent mapping out by Pope of real, mythological and imaginary spaces and inhabiting them with figures ancient and modern, culturally significant or helplessly peripheral, illustrates the complex process of creation of the liberal bourgeois public sphere in early eighteenth-century Britain.

Approaching *The Dunciad* by exploring it in terms of "space" is highly appropriate for a number of reasons. First, from its very first edition, the poem required various "keys" in order to be accessed: its *textual space* presented numerous gaps which deliberately mystified the reader. This difficulty was increased later on by the inevitable temporal lapse which made the



topographical, economic, social, political and religious spaces openly described or just alluded to in *The Dunciad* utterly inaccessible, obscuring the text's parodic power. As Pat Rogers has noted, the insistent topographical specificity of the poem is a pointer that Pope's satiric cosmology, based on London's geography during his time, is serving a moral symbolism which cannot be correctly understood outside a very specific locale.<sup>5</sup> Third and most importantly, it seems to me that Pope's choice to introduce his readers to the Empire of Dulness, to give, in other words, a *spatial* representation to something that *is not* space, is highly indicative of his actual intentions. In my reading, one of Pope's goals is to draw a duncical map of the early eighteenth-century culture—or of what that culture might have become under the Moderns' assault. Indeed, as I try to demonstrate, *The Dunciad* charts with a high degree of specificity spaces both real and possible, it X-rays in the actual landscape of Pope's London a cultural space contaminated by the dull, the unashamed, and the worthless, and warns against an evil that spreads from an intellectual periphery to Britain's cultural core.

As Martinus Scriblerus explains in his introduction of the poem, “the ACTION of the *Dunciad* is the Removal of the Imperial seat of Dulness from the City to the polite world.” In other words, the poem's action is substituted by spatial displacement, *unlike* Virgil's *Aeneid*, whose “Removal of the empire of Troy to Latium” has a well-articulated narrative development. *The Dunciad*'s lack of action, which has been one of the most frequent criticisms of the poem, cannot be just a structural flaw; as I argue, it is a deliberate choice which emphasizes the dangers of the dunces' escape from their private spaces of entrapment. Pope's narrative of invasion of the public spaces by forces that should remain private coincides historically with the expansion of the British colonial empire, which brought with it concerns and anxieties that found a powerful

expression in much of the literature of the time. Pope's spatial imagination, so potently displayed throughout his work, is a testimony of both this new awareness of the changing politics of the urban spaces at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and of the larger contexts in which these changes occur.

When approaching an epoch through a unique text there are at least two challenges one needs to avoid. First, it is being too broad, trying to address all the intricacies of Pope's war with his dunces and exhaust all the poem's eventual paths, which would inevitably lead to a sort of historical survey of the first half of the century. The second one is being too narrow, and thus ending up moving within the one room (capacious as it is) of only one text. My quick but not hasty answer would be that this approach is neither exclusively historicist nor narrowly circumscribed to only one text. Rather, it attempts to identify in Pope's satire some of the ideological obsessions of the epoch and interpret them through various theoretical lenses, be they those of cultural geography, everyday practice, cultural studies, thing theory, or aesthetic criticism. It is, indeed, as Pat Rogers has put it, a rather centripetal than centrifugal approach: I read Pope's most ambitious satire as a symptom and exemplary expression of a cultural anxiety that informs much of the writing of the time, and, in doing so, I use *The Dunciad* as an ideal ending point, given its unusual dialogic nature and commodious ideological agenda. The validity and, even more, the necessity of such an interpretive breach has been felt for a while in our critical field. Probably its boldest expression to date remains Pat Roger's remarkable analysis of *Windsor Forest* in his 2005 study, *Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts*.<sup>6</sup>

Returning to my initial inquiry, the problem of reading the text right, of discerning its real target(s) beyond its numerous misrepresentations, obscure allusions, (un)fair evaluations, and

cacophonoy of voices remains as open to postmodern interpreters of the poem as it was for its contemporary readers. We need, indeed, a different filter than the one used by most of its initial readers (i.e. identifying the dunces and making fun of them), but a filter, nevertheless, we need. Therefore, I am going to use mapping not as a metaphor, but as a methodological tool, a tool which will help me make the right selections, avoid the trap of diachrony (so historically correct and so inadequate for a text whose digressions constantly invite to a re-routing of one's reading), and read *The Dunciad*, instead, in its rich synchronicity, as describing a variety of spaces in whose overlapping lies something more important than approximating the text's possible meanings: a subtle, frailly balanced, almost alchemical process of cultural formation.



As Aubrey Williams has pointed out, the special nature of Pope's satire requires a particular kind of reading which calls for diverse interpretive strategies.<sup>7</sup> Although cultural historicist in its major approach, my investigation is necessarily informed by a variety of methods, ranging from cultural geography and urban studies to textual studies and digital humanities. Trying to reconcile these interpretive lenses, I found that mapping out the various spaces described in *The Dunciad* is a most valuable methodological tool. My reading of Pope's poem is informed by an interpretive strategy that involves considering the text's contradictory symbolism, recognizing its subversive *diminutio* method, and unveiling its complex network of relations which fuses the topographical with the social, the economic with the politic, the religious with the cultural. Supplementing and complicating pre-existing critical traditions of Pope scholarship, I explore new, non-trivial patterns that organize the narrative spaces of the

poem, and call attention to the necessary collaboration between cultural authorities and intellectual periphery in establishing the literary canon.

My first chapter, “Mapping *The Dunciad*: Topographies,” explores the real, mythological, and imaginary spaces described in *The Dunciad in Four Books*. I start with a survey of the dunces’ progress from City to Court and their attempt to parasitically take over the “polite world.” I read Pope’s topographical references as purposely ambiguous: the symptomatic confusion of the mayoral and coronation processions that occurs in the poem suggests an interconnectedness of these historical events that complicates the poem’s construction of meaning. The specific venues of the duncical games, the description of the Thames as a circulatory system of the city, the prophetic vision of Britain’s future as a duncical stage, and the spatial enlargement of the fourth book to describe the solar system of the dull, point to the fact that *The Dunciad* describes the general collapse of the classical values defining the Augustan world, a process in which all the participants in the public sphere are engaged. I argue that Pope’s moral equivalence between setting and character is a symptom of his concern with the dunces’ emergence from their cave-like, private space into a public space of debate and civic participation.

The second chapter, “Mapping *The Dunciad*: Religious, Political and Cultural Spaces,” surveys the way in which the urban life is reflected in Pope’s satire. I address issues such as Pope’s attacks against Hanoverian-Walpole government, cultural and political institutions, aspects of professionalization in early eighteenth-century London, the disquieting proliferation of publications (duncical and not), the epoch’s interest in antiquarianism and connoisseurship, and the diversification of popular entertainments (travelling, novel reading, operatic and theatrical

representations). I trace Pope's anxiety over the increased commodification of culture in its relation to the Ancients vs. Moderns debate and to the dilution of political and religious authority of the time. The public sphere of the eighteenth century posed two different models of sociability: the Spectatorial one, whose goal was to make the coffeehouse news industry safe for a Whig oligarchy, and the Scriblerian one, deeply exclusionary in its promotion of a high culture paradigm, and positioning itself as a defender of Tory principles of political conservatism. Unlike Nancy Fraser, who uses the term "counterpublic" to describe marginalized, minority, or disempowered groups, I argue here that Pope's dunces formed a distinct cultural category that participated in a forceful way in shaping cultural trends and public opinion. I propose here the term "networked public" as a better way to describe the collaborative nature of the public sphere of the time, conceived not as a conglomerate of divergent ideologies but as an organic whole.

Drawing on works by Henry Lefebvre, Manuel DeLanda, Michel Foucault, and Franco Moretti, my third chapter, "Inhabiting *The Dunciad*: Social Spaces," describes the social spaces of the poem as spaces of relations, whose essential intertwinement is generative of a dynamic, often explosive environment of public debate. I describe here five of Pope's most representative dunces, all inhabiting crucial areas of Britain's cultural, religious and political life: Colley Cibber, the last enthroned King of the Dunces, actor-manager and Poet Laureate to George II; Edmund Curll, bookseller and publisher epitomizing the unscrupulous rush for publicity of the print market of the time; John Dennis, the most important critic of the period; Eliza Haywood, remarkable actress and playwright, reassessed today as one of the founders of the English novel; and John "Orator" Henley, a highly controversial clerical figure of his day. By using visualizations generated by Graph Viz, a program that creates topological graphs from sets of

dyadic relations, I approach Pope's dunces as *character spaces*, as nodes from which branch out intricate networks of relations that create a close-to-life picture of the social milieu of the time. These graphs highlight the main protagonists of the poem and/or the apparatus, less obvious conflicts and camp affiliations, and, most importantly, recurring themes of moral, cultural, and political import that emerge from their public debate. Addressing the dunces' essential contribution to shaping the cultural and political milieu of their time, I contend here that they should be included in a revised list of alternative publics.

My fourth chapter, "Browsing *The Dunciad*: Textual Spaces," is an exploration of *The Dunciad*'s highly unusual textual landscapes, with a twofold focus. First, I pay particular attention to textual spaces usually not central to critical investigation (prefatory materials and back matter, footnotes and visual paratexts), trying to unveil their role in clarifying or complicating Pope's satire. I argue that Pope uses these paratextual additions as performative spaces, detailing his dunces' follies with a compulsive attention to particulars, recording their gossips and ideological debates, and turning them into almost novelistic characters whose failings must be thoroughly exposed in order to prevent a cultural catastrophe. Second, I read Pope's method of constantly referencing his poem in footnotes as an instance of non-sequential writing, a writing that is rhizomatic, branching, and hypertextual in nature. Often referred to as the "generalized footnote," the hypertext encourages the formation of a networked text and reading community.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, this strategy supports an authority-subverting agenda, allowing the author to describe a hyperactive version of the literary public sphere in which his dunces play a central role. On the other hand, it suggests alternative and enriching ways of

reading the text, creating maps of relations which illuminate the importance of less obvious textual moments.

My last chapter, “Interpreting *The Dunciad*: Heterotopias,” examines how the reality of Pope’s time, as it insidiously resurfaces in his text, is reworked in his mock epic in a manner that anticipates what Foucault called “heterotopias,” *real* cultural sites “simultaneously represented, contested and inverted” in his satire.<sup>9</sup> I examine here three kinds of heterotopias described by Pope’s text: *The Dunciad*’s “New World” as a theatrical space, the body as carceral space, and the memory-space of the library (Cibber’s Cave of Poetry and Poverty). From this perspective, I read *The Dunciad* as a fable about the dire consequences of the assault on Britain’s cultural center by a contemptible periphery, a dystopian projection of a duncical future in which Grub Street denizens are called to set up the standards of cultural excellence.

In sum, my dissertation draws on critical, historical, theoretical, and digital methods which bring to light connections, textual but most importantly contextual, that shed new light on publicness as an emerging category at the beginning of the century. As such, it reads not one text in its time, but early eighteenth-century British realities as filtered through the satiric lenses of its most representative poet. Even as I appear to oppose Pope’s own agenda, my ultimate goal is to reassess the fundamental, but little acknowledged, role played by Pope’s “dunces” in shaping the main directions of modernity.

## CHAPTER I

### MAPPING *THE DUNCIAD*: TOPOGRAPHIES

#### *Real Topographies: Pope's London*

And thou! his Aide de camp, lead on my sons,  
 Light-arm'd with Points, Antitheses, and Puns.  
 Let Bawdry, Billingsgate, my daughters dear,  
 Support his front, and Oaths bring up the rear:  
 And under his, and under Archer's wing,  
 Gaming and Grub Street, skulk behind the King.  
 Oh! when shall rise a Monarch all our own,  
 And I, a Nursing-mother, rock the throne...  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, 305-312)

While the invasion by the dunces of the polite world and the elaborated grotesquerie of the public games celebrating Cibber's coronation in Book II of *The Dunciad* have been repeatedly addressed,<sup>10</sup> little has been done with the insistent topographical specificity that informs the poem as a whole. From the first book to the last, *The Dunciad in Four Books* abounds in geographical references which send the reader to specific locales, expects him to understand their significance and role in the development of the satire, and builds an intricate network of relations and events linked through what Alfred North Whitehead has felicitously called "routes of occasions."<sup>11</sup> Buildings, street names, street signs, rivers, a precarious sewage system, the interaction of the dwellers with institutional norms, organizations and venues, in short, the enormous energy flow of the urban environment depicted in *The Dunciad* produces a particular kind of spatiality and models a particular kind of behavior which reflect an acute anxiety of modernity. Pope's dunces inhabit a territory which is disturbingly rooted in the actual: the spatial reshaping of London following the Great Fire (1666), the building boom propelled by commercial growth, the escalating production of commodities, the alienating effects of an



emerging credit economy, the increased (social mobility of the) urban population, the faster pace of industrial and mercantile life, the explosion of consumer culture and the diversification of public entertainments—all bring with them a new perception of the urban space, widely reflected in the literature of the time. As J. Paul Hunter remarks, “in the years between the Restoration and the middle of the eighteenth century, literature came to be about London [...] as it had not been before” and the city “stood for the concern with contemporaneity itself.”<sup>12</sup> The greatest metropolis of the century (Paris was, at the time, only half London’s size) also becomes a central theme in the popular imagination: the urban space comes to signify the present time and turns into one of the most productive obsessions of the literary market. Encoding significations ranging from a glorious urban ideal of intellectual and commercial thriving (for authors like Addison, Boswell, Johnson, Dryden or Voltaire) to the scatological vision so pervasive in Augustan satire, the literary representations of London reflect the “schizoid character of urban personality,” its ambivalent movement between greater sociability and an increasingly manifest need for privacy.<sup>13</sup> The invasion of the polite world by Pope’s dunces, their spatial appropriation of the West End and apocalyptic “restoration” of a chaotic modernity is but a metaphorical terminus point of a literary obsession live in London’s cultural memory for almost a century.<sup>14</sup>

Conceived at a time when the new capitalist developments started to assign certain functions to certain spaces, *The Dunciad*’s fascination with topography has been seen as a symptom of the social confusion caused by rapid urbanization, as an effort to append meaning to a constantly changing spatial environment.<sup>15</sup> A more clearly delineated class segregation finds its spatial expression in the development of working-class districts in East End, the settling of the fashionable London society to the West End (the “Town”), while the “City” area (the old city of

London, anciently surrounded by walls) became the site of the businessmen, merchants and members of the middling classes. This anomic nature of the class distribution in space is reflected by the overwhelmingly negative representations of the street imagery in the literature of the period, which often highlights the physical squalor, the aural and olfactory invasion, the feeling of historical displacement, the consuming pace of the urban life, in short, the “monstrous” nature of an ever-growing City, systematically opposed to the aristocratic (albeit morally vain) area of the Town.<sup>16</sup> The “newly emphasized fears” that start haunting eighteenth century London—the fear of the mob and the fear of the city’s avarice (Williams 43)—reflect both a sense of invasion of one’s personal space and a feeling of alienation with long-lasting effects in the collective unconscious. As a result, during the Restoration and well into the eighteenth century, the London streets gain an unprecedented imaginative power, coming to stand for a wide constellation of meanings, ranging from landmarks for urban disturbia to relatively sanitized areas with clearly established public functions. Richard Head’s *The English Rogue* (1665), John Dryden’s *MacFlecknoe* (1678), John Dunton’s *The Night-Walker* (1696), Ned Ward’s *The London Spy* (1698-1700), Samuel Garth’s *The Dispensary* (1699), John Gay’s *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716) and *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728), Swift’s urban georgics (“A Description of the Morning,” “A Description of a City Shower;” 1709-10), Fielding’s *The Grub-Street Opera* (1731), Boswell’s *London Journal* (1762-63), Thomas Pennant’s *London* (1790), and much of the novelistic output that has its setting in the British metropolis contain detailed descriptions of London streetscape or include insistent references to specific locales.<sup>17</sup>

As narrative prompts, London streets invite the readers to daring journeys into a public space connoting either imminent danger or thrilling opportunities; their corners, alleys, dead-ends, sideways are seen as “social hieroglyphs,” nodal points indicative of the interrelations of economic, political and cultural realities of the time.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, naming names, precisely identifying places and venues, has in Pope’s and in many of his contemporaries’ case more than a verisimilitude effect: it fulfills a function than is no longer evocative of particular places but of particular spatial trajectories and structures of feeling. Grub Street, Fleet Ditch, Pissing Alley, the Strand, Moor-fields, Drury-lane, Newgate Street, Old-Fish Street, Petticoat Lane, Cheapside, Shoe Lane, Great James Street near Theobald’s Row, Thrift Street in Soho, Rag Fair, Deadman’s Place, Hanover Square are resonant names which create a vivid imaginary map, a map which not only identifies locales or geographic features, but also describes expectations, premonitions, and fears. Indeed, as J. Hillis Miller has pointed out, “the names are motivated” and “by a species of Cratylism they tell what the places are like.”<sup>19</sup> Street names bear clear economic and political codes that help urban dwellers to navigate the city, to avoid its traps, or to take pleasure in its glamorous diversions. The map they draw is the more remarkable as it is not a real, but an allegorical version of the city, “a foggy geography of meanings held in suspension” that “insinuates new routes into the functionalist and historical order of movement.”<sup>20</sup>

### ***Book I. Character and Place***

Significantly, the first Book of *The Dunciad* (which covers Cibber’s succession to laureateship after Laurence Eusden’s death) opens up with a topographical indication which anchors the reader in a frame of reference that collides classical expectations of genre (the epic

invocation of muse) with a contemporary locale (a fair ground), the high with the low. As explicitly spelled out by the footnote, “*Smithfield* is the place where Bartholomew fair was kept, whose shews, machines, and dramatical entertainments, formerly agreeably only to the taste of the Rabble, were, by the Hero of this poem and other of equal genius, brought to the Theatres of Covent-garden, Lincoln-Inn-fields, and the Hay-market, to be the reigning pleasures of the Court and Town.” In a manner typical for the development of the text as a whole, the topographical reference multiplies in the explanatory material, taking the reader from a specific geographic area to a variety of places of more than spatial relevance. The footnote contains an amassing of venue names, the map starts to be drawn with an insistent specificity, but instead of describing a place, it displays a system of relations among various locales which share something in common. Smithfield is the origin point of a theatrical world which migrated from the sites of popular culture and folk humor located north of the historic city of London to the polite stage of the West End. Lincoln’s Inn, one of the two major London theaters during the Hanoverian period, is the birthplace of the pantomimic representations that made John Rich and Lewis Theobald famous. Haymarket Theater (Queen’s Theater till 1714), used by Colley Cibber’s company among others, is the London home of the Opera, substantially sponsored by the Whig elite. Finally, Covent Garden Theater, built in 1732 by John Rich from the profit on *Beggar’s Opera*, hosted a number of plays opposing the Walpole regime. The epic hero of the poem being Colley Cibber, comedian, author and theatrical manager with strong Walpole sympathies,<sup>21</sup> the significance of this attentive mapping of sites of dramatic entertainment becomes obvious: Cibber’s attempt to bring “The Smithfield Muses to the ear of Kings,” to translate the farcical acrobatics of the popular shows into the polite form of operatic entertainment, to distill “the taste of the Rabble”

into “the reigning pleasures of the Court and Town” does not describe a simple geographical displacement, but the dangerous cultural and moral *marasme* of the political class.

The circuitous logic of this spatial translation suggests a disturbing leveling effect that collapses class with taste. By moving west, from their haunt in the City, to the residential areas of Westminster, the dunces dissolve in their way, like a devastating acid, any moral, social, or hierarchical distinctions between the high and the low: the minimal artistic difference between fair shows and theatrical representations is threatening because it has, culturally speaking, the same effect as the social evening out of the rabble with the court. Moreover, the cultural non-differentiation promoted by agents of official authority (Cibber’s work was performed at Batholomew Fair) has a destructive effect on dunces themselves, rendering meaningless social hierarchies: while the reference to “Dunce the second” in the opening of the poem may suggest the succession of one undistinguished Poet Laureate to another (i.e. Cibber replacing Eusden), the language of the line also alludes to George II’s succession to the throne after his father’s death, in 1742. Bad poets or bad rulers, reigning in Smithfield or in a dozing Britannia, they are all dunces stupefied by the soporific song of the nursing mother Dulness:

The Mighty Mother, and her Son, who brings  
The Smithfield Muses to the ear of Kings,  
I sing. Say you, her instruments the Great!  
Call’d to this work by Dulness, Jove, and Fate;  
You by whose care, in vain decry’d and cursed,  
Still Dunce the second reigns like Dunce the first:  
Say how the Goddess bade Britannia sleep,  
And pour’d her Spirit o’er the land and deep.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, 1-8)

Interestingly, this fundamentally outdoor, public, highly dialogic urban poem seems to immediately close in on itself after this initial mention of the dunces’ “progress” from City to

Court. The reader is taken, instead, to the confined space of Cibber's library (the end-point of a surprise-packed excursion through the Cave of Poverty and Poetry), and then to the Temple of Dulness, where Bays is anointed the successor of Laurence Eusden, the late Poet Laureate. The author's textual asides take us from Bedlam (the site of a "Magnificent College" of Duncery) to Grub Street, proverbial haunt of hack writers; from Tyburn, a notorious execution place just west of London, to Hockey-in-the-Hole, a place famous for its dog-fights and bull and bear-baitings; from the Clubs of Quidnuncs, political assemblies obsessed with the trivia of current affairs, to Guild Hall, the ceremonial and administrative center of the City of London; from the fish market at Billingsgate, resounding of the foul language of the fishwives, to the Chapel-Royal in St. James's Place, where coronation songs were performed; from White's, a famous chocolate house turned into a gambling club and assiduously frequented by Cibber, to Drury Lane, renowned at the time for its theaters, brothels and bohemian life; from Ned Ward's tavern in Moorfields (London's first recreational ground), to Needham's, a notorious brothel where Cibber allegedly saved Pope from contacting a venereal disease; from Grub Street, a site of riotous behavior and literary theft, to Devil Tavern in Fleet Street, a popular meeting place for hack writers.

A few networks of relations emerge from this apparently random distribution of names in space. First, the larger geographical arch, the one that traces the criminals' last journey from Newgate to the gallows at Tyburn, connects these places not only with a socially motley and highly reactive class, but also with the "Journals, Medleys, Merc'ries, Magazines" of the "Grub-street race" (I, l. 42 and 44). The problem indirectly posed here is the unscrupulous drive for commercial profit of the print industry. "Tyburn's elegiac lines" (I, l. 41) sang by malefactors at

their execution with the purpose of obtaining a pardon of the capital punishment are turned into money-makers by the “miserable scribblers” (I, note to l. 41) who used to print elegies before or after executions, capitalizing on their death. As the footnote clarifies, such “Papers, Essays, Queries, Verses, Epigrams, Riddles, etc.” are “the disgrace of human Wit, Morality and Decency”: this judgment, however, completely reverses the normal moral code, as it turns lawbreakers into victims of enterprising and often unscrupulous booksellers, such as Bernard Lintot or Edmund Curll. Second, all the sites named by the author are transparently related to habits of drinking, gambling, loose sexual behavior, immoral printing, shameless political puffery, and poor writing. They suggest a state of moral disease in its gangrenous stage centered north of the Thames, in the area between Rag Fair and Drury Lane, but rapidly reaching the polite areas in the far-west. Third, the toponymy is symptomatically and almost invariably associated in this first Book with the dunces’ (clearly spelled out) names; as Pat Rogers correctly observes, “the human geography becomes symbolism,” the poem establishing a suggestive moral equivalence between character and setting.<sup>22</sup> Laurence Eusden, Edmund Curll, Bernard Lintot, Daniel Defoe, Giles Jacob, Ambrose Phillips, Nahum Tate, John Dennis, Ned Ward, Thomas Shadwell, Lewis Theobald, and Colley Cibber are all related to theatrical or printing areas with important centers in Grub Street, Fleet Street, Smithfield, and Drury Lane, the dunces’ names and the place-names becoming, thus, mutually informing. Just like in the case of his dunces, Pope’s toponymy has to be understood as a classificatory means, not as an individualizing tool: the same way in which calling one a dunce affects his or her social interaction and assessment, the names of the various locales evoked in the poem signal expected sets of behaviors, moral values, and social practices. Clearly associated with an urban milieu in which the rapid

architectural, commercial and behavioral change represented the rule, these “City Swans” participate actively in the production of a space which bears with it all the destructive consequences of modernity. The dunces’ hyperactive acting upon the haunts they inhabit has serious “deterritorializing effects,”<sup>23</sup> giving birth to “nameless Somethings,” “magnifying the scene,” and cataclysmically shifting the place of oceans to land—metaphorical translations of changes of fashion and routines, of foolish autorial enterprise and insane geographical relocations which threaten the city’s monocentricity. Last but not least, the symptomatic impossibility of actually *seeing* the various spaces evoked in the poem is indicative of their irrelevance as mere geographical landmarks: the author does not describe places, but a system of relations between specific locales and select dunces, relations which make the city readable in a purposely satiric way. Place and character ultimately collapse in the triumphant metonymy of the choir of venues infused with duncial qualities, boisterously proclaiming their political and/or cultural sympathies:

She ceas’d. Then swells the Chapel-royal throat:  
 God save king Cibber! mounts in every note.  
 Familiar White’s, God save king Colley! cries;  
 God save king Colley! Drury lane replies:  
 To Needham’s quick the voice triumphal rode,  
 But pious Needham dropt the name of God;  
 Back to the Devil the last echoes roll,  
 And Coll! each Butcher roars at Hockley-hole.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, 319-326)

### ***Book II. Overlapping Routes: Mayoral and Coronation Ceremonies***

I have ended my comments on the conclusion of the first Book of *The Dunciad* with a significant hesitation in word choice: does the triumphant coronation of King Colley contain a



political or a cultural critique? Is there a connection between the two that goes beyond the laughable overlapping of identities, royal and poetic? And why is it formulated in such a topographically rich, spatially specific way?

The simple answer to my first question would be *both*; but this is the deceiving one. As always in Pope's case, the paths of relations are more complicated than they seem to be, and the topographical specificity of Cibber's coronation actually provides a number of valuable hints which clarify the significance of the moment. The best illustration of Pope's satiric method remains Book II of *The Dunciad*, whose route of public games gracing Cibber's coronation is allied, in Aubrey Williams's compelling reading, with "one of the most ancient civic traditions of London—the journey of the Lord Mayor of London, on the day that he takes office, from the City to Westminster" (30). The path followed by dunces around London is, indeed, similar to that followed by the Lord Mayor during his public investiture: it starts at Dulness's dome near the Tower of London, crosses the City westward, reaches the site of St. Mary le Strand (an area known for its theatres, printing houses and prostitution), and culminates with the dunces' procession into the Strand, where the epic games are held. The race for overtaking the phantom of a poet (the "plagiary" James Moore-Smith), the pissing contest for the favors of a poetess (Eliza Haywood), and the tickling contest for winning the favors of a Patron are all held in the Strand, one of the leading commercial streets of London and important center of the book trade. Catherine Street in the Strand, the place of Curll's embarrassment by his Corinna during the first race, is also significant as it indicates the place where Curll had traded from about 1720.<sup>24</sup> The vociferating contest (mocking the fustian poets' vocal efforts to gain fame) suggests an interesting spatial enlargement through the aural reverberations of Blackmore's howl, which

reaches Tottenham-fields, an open ground north of Westminster, then Chancery Lane, the site of a notoriously ineffectual court of justice, and Westminster Hall (a traditional site for trials, parliamentary sessions, and coronation festivities).<sup>25</sup> The mud-diving contest brings the dunces back to the junction of Fleet-ditch and the Thames (at the exact time of the Lord Mayor's travel by barge to Westminster Hall to receive the oath of office), and the last game, an exercise in patience (hearing the works of two "voluminous authors" without falling asleep), is held up back in the City, after the dunces' march up the Fleet and Ludgate Hill.

The second book of *The Dunciad* contains, though, a clear political attack, at least in Douglas Brooks-Davies's reading, who considers that "the route followed [...] by the dunces and their Williamite brayer is closer to that taken by coronation procession" (110) itself. His arguments are equally compelling: he calls attention to the fact that the poem refers explicitly to a coronation, not to a mayoral festivity; that the 1729 version of *The Dunciad* begins by the Tower, the traditional place of the coronation ceremonies; that a number of references allude to the king William III<sup>26</sup>; and, finally, that the coronation route ends at Westminster, via Cornhill, Cheapside, St. Paul's, Ludgate Hill, Fleet Street, Strand and Whitehall, sites that in their wide majority are mentioned in Pope's poem.<sup>27</sup> The fact that the city dignitaries, the Lord Mayor included,<sup>28</sup> used to accompany the king on his procession before the coronation day, and that the poem may have collapsed the two events in order to give the dunces' epic games additional layers of signification, is seen as a sign of Pope's "dizzying surrealism," which "juggles" with the mayoral procession as well as the coronation itself, "in response to the mockery he thought the coronation had become, except for Anne's, after the Revolution" (110). Moreover, Brooks-Davies's intriguing interpretation sees the references to urine, chamber pot, and mud diving in

the second book of *The Dunciad* as “glanc[ing] wickedly at the Knights of the Bath and the solemnity of the king’s ritual coronation-eve bath” (111).

Another answer to Aubrey William’s topographical interpretation of the second book of *The Dunciad* belongs to Pat Rogers, who calls for a broader cultural and social understanding of the duncical areas mentioned in the poem. In his opinion, Williams’s presentation of the Strand and Drury Lane areas exclusively as sites of printing houses and theatrical enterprises does not account for their “heterogeneous” and “bohemian flavor” (71), which was linked in the contemporary imagination with organized vice and riotous behavior. The neighboring districts, such as St. Giles and Covent Garden, were also sites of unsanitary boarding and gin-houses, inhabited by dunces and highwaymen, by bawds and booksellers, an aspect which adds new dimensions to Pope’s choice of his epic locales. Rogers also questions Williams’s reading of the path pursued by dunces about London as “an emblem for the passage of Troy-novant from the City to Westminster” by pointing to the fact that “the dunces, for the most part, did not live in the City” but in Westminster or in areas of the metropolis close to Whitehall (75-76). His conclusions, similar to Brookes-Davies’s, point to a more politically inflected reading of the poem, according to which Pope abandoned his original plan to burlesque the choice of a Poet Laureate in favor of a subtly but all-along supported anti-Hanoverian theme. The relatively frequent references to George II’s name in the poem, the allusions to Queen Caroline in the carnation episode in Book IV (and arguably throughout the poem in the figure of Dulness herself), the details of the coronation festivities (“complete with anointing, ritual gestures, incantatory and prophetic language, acclamation and the like”<sup>29</sup>), the oblique references to events happening during the same circumstances<sup>30</sup>, as well as the recurrent court scenes and allusions to

the king's passivity throughout the poem—all these “help to sustain the dynastic theme of Hanoverians following one another in duncely succession” (146). The enactment of the duncical games on Lord Mayor's Day has, from this perspective, a strictly prefatory function: Thorold's appointment coincided with the coronation ritual and was part of the celebratory pageants of the monarch's birthday, the following day.

In the light of the above-mentioned analyses, Pope's “surrealism” is a less hazardous statement than it seems to be. The symbolical juxtaposition of mayoral and coronation processions, the possibility that the dunce's trajectory describe different events with significantly different implications, the rich, narrative-creating symbology of the street names, and the close identification of the names of the hack writers and corrupt booksellers with specific locales create productive intersections of meanings and proliferating interpretations. If the route of the dunces describes a mayoral procession, then the poem has a clear anti-Williamite and anti-Hanoverian agenda: as a defender of the old Saxon liberties, the city connoted at the time political liberty and the Lord Mayor was a protector of people's rights against monarchical encroachments. Crowning Colley Cibber—whose Walpole and Whig sympathies were notorious—as a “monarch” of the City contains an obvious irony and supports the general message of the poem: the restoration of chaos and the eventual collapse of the polite world. If the procession alludes to monarchical festivities (and thus be read in the larger tradition of comic coronations inaugurated by Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*), the replacement of King George II with Colley Cibber, the mediocre Poet Laureate, points to the relatively recent successions of second-hand celebrities (the laureates Nicholas Rowe, Elkanah Settle, and Colley Cibber vs. William III and the two Georges) and conflates a cultural disaster with a political one. The Lord Mayor's pageantry is

reduced to a “full-scale rerun of the coronation banquet” whereby “the Hanoverian corporation would ensure that the City of London allied itself in the most open way with the new regime”(132-33), and Cibber is celebrated in his monarchical, not mayoral role. In other words, the emphasis is no longer on King George’s quietude in Queen Caroline’s lap, but on his more committed royal position. This conflation of meanings and the dizzying multiplication of interpretations give *The Dunciad* a surrealist quality which other satires of the time lack. The fact that the London topography is assigned in the poem exclusively negative connotations, that it is observed through the distorting looking-glass of the satire, that it systematically overlaps contemporary sites with mythological and imaginary ones—strips identifiable locales of their normal significance in a way that is surrealist in method, if not in principle.

The connections between the mayoral procession and the route of the dunces’ epic games connote, however, more than political anxiety: as Williams has further suggested, the antithetical representations of the Court and the City aim at emphasizing different standards of value that apply to economic, social, and cultural levels as well. This spatial invasion signifies the blurring differences between the “cits”—the commercial middle-class residing in the City—and the aristocracy inhabiting the West; a replacement of the classical values epitomized by the Ancients with the random change in taste promoted by the Moderns; a proliferation of physical and moral disorder outside the meridian of Grub-street to the polite world of the Court. Moreover, if the London toponyms stand for various classes of dunces, *The Dunciad*’s critique covers a wider range of concerns: the poem does not only aim at exposing bad writers and corrupt politicians, but also gazetteers, “academics,” “loiterers,” prelates, printers, booksellers, debased aristocrats, women writers, in short, all the major participants in the formation of what has come to be called

the public sphere. Particulars stand here for universals, and the poem describes through its spatial minutiae the general collapse of the classical values defining the Augustan world. Pope's dunces launch a total attack from within the polite world, an attack that has a clear territorial claim.



Of the *Epistle of ELOISA*, we are told by the obscure writer of a poem called Sawney, "That because Prior's *Henry and Emma* charmed the finest tastes, our author writ his *Eloise* in opposition to it, but forgot innocence and virtue: if you take away her tender thoughts and her fierce desires, all the rest is of no value." In which, methinks, his judgment resembleth that of a French tailor on a villa and gardens by the Thames: "All this is very fine, but take away the river and it is good for nothing."<sup>31</sup>

Dr. Samuel Garth's anecdote included in the prefatory "Testimonies of Authors" draws attention to a fundamentally "Modern" error in judgment: a displacement of the part from the whole, a disregard for the interrelation between the constituent elements of an entity, for their relevance *as an entity*. Imagining the unimaginable, dislocating a geographical form from its prehistoric bed, judging the aesthetic value of a villa and garden outside the setting in which they were conceived, can only be the work of a tailor, and even a bad one at that. There are symbolical landmarks whose location cannot be changed without altering the significance of the elements which orbit around their magnetic center—and the Thames, omnipresent in Pope's poem as well as in the collective imagination of the Londoners, is one of them.

In *Windsor Forest*, Pope imagines the Thames as a landmark that predates London itself: a clearer stream crossing a land that lacks the vibrant turmoil of a city at the beginning of its encounter with the forces of modernity.<sup>32</sup> Unbounded. Unifying. Channeling energies in which the ferments of civilization are contained, and carrying on her tides the matter of a "new World":

The time shall come when free as Seas or Wind  
 Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind,  
 Whole Nations enter with each swelling Tyde,  
 And seas but join the Regions they divide;  
 Earth's distant Ends our Glory shall behold  
 And the new World launch forth to seek the Old. (397-402)

A fundamental fracture seems to have occurred in Pope's symbolic vision of the nurturing river from this 1716 poem to the 1728 *Dunciad* and its subsequent editions. The "new World" crossed by the river's streams in *Windsor Forest*, a world redolent of an Arcadian ideal, is reconfigured in the years following the Hanoverian succession as the "uncreating" world of "Universal Darkness" from the *Dunciads*. Significantly, the river stands in the two poems for realms of possibilities fundamentally at odds, although it remains the central, mythologized agent of a history cataclysmically swerved from its normal course by the ascension to the throne of a foreign king.<sup>33</sup> It is also the nostalgic center of a world Pope imagined and designed in loving detail at his villa in Twickenham, the idealized abode of the "poor hermit on the banks of the Thames,"<sup>34</sup> an ideal place removed from the confusion and excesses of the town. The displacement of the beginning-of-the world serenity of the river by the physical and moral stink of a city sewer bears in Pope's spatial imagination precise geographical coordinates: the solitary country of his retreat, Twickenham on the Thames, versus the busy environs of Fleet Ditch.

Leaving aside a couple of notes, four of the five references to the Thames in *The Dunciad* occur in the second book, which is a testimony to the centrality of the river in the symbolic economy of the epic games. Concluding the noise-making contest with the triumphant bray of "everlasting" Blackmore, author of long epic poems singled out by Pope as "Father of the Bathos" in *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*, the reference to the Thames seems to contain the same

suggestion of a transporting, unstoppable force—here of reverberating noise—found in *Windsor Forest*:

But far o'er all, sonorous Blackmore's strain;  
 Walls, steeples, skies, bray back to him again.  
 In Tot'nam fields, the brethren with amaze  
 Prick all their ears up, and forget to graze;  
 Long Chanc'ry-lane retentive rolls the sound,  
 And courts to courts return it round and round;  
 Thames wafts it thence to Rufus' roaring hall,  
 And Hungerford re-echoes bawl for bawl.  
 All hail him victor in both gifts of song,  
 Who sings so loudly, and who sings so long.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, 259-268)

In a similar way as in Pope's earlier topographic poem, the Thames operates here as a sort of circulatory system, sustaining the functioning of the whole, harmoniously participating in the flow of the events, reverberating in its waves Blackmore's solitary yell to the crowded precinct of Westminster Hall—a place itself loud with the lawyers' and stallholders' bawling. Carried by the stream, Blackmore's resonant ineptitude is “echoed,” multiplied by the river, given disturbing amplitude in the nonsensical vociferation of the rabble, it is absorbed through this subtle capillary network by the anonymous mob. The Thames serves here as a leveling principle, a determining factor in the process of obscuring the individual into the multitude. Moreover, through its juxtaposition to the “walls, steeples, skies” that function here as “visual signature[s] of a city's territorial identity” (DeLanda 105) the river simultaneously participates in the construction of the city's majestic image and in its obliteration by its polluted streams.

Even more interestingly, the Thames functions here as an intermediary, as an *agent* of a bathetic rhymester. Included into a rich network of spatial references connoting legal, commercial and literary debasement, the river participates in the creation of “a multi-layered



geography of [...] nodal regions nesting around the mobile personal spaces of the human body” (Soja 8). Blackmore, the victor of the vociferating contest, is assisted in his endeavors by the animated elements of a highly responsive setting, a setting that witnesses, participates, and is eventually contaminated by the moral depravity of the duncical tribe. Such a contamination finds a literal expression in the polluted waters of the river, in which the “profound, dark and dirty authors” of governmental journals are invited to leap during the diving contest that follows:

This labour past, by Bridewell all descend,  
 (As morning pray’r, and flagellation end)  
 To where Fleet-ditch with disemboгуing streams  
 Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,  
 The King of dykes! than whom no sluice of mud  
 With deeper sable blots the silver flood.  
 ‘Here strip, my children! here at once leap in,  
 Here prove who best can dash through thick and thin,  
 And who the most in love of dirt excel,  
 Or dark dexterity of groping well.  
 Who flings most filth, and wide pollutes around  
 The stream, be his the Weekly Journals bound;  
 A pig of lead to him who dives the best;  
 A peck of coals a-piece shall glad the rest.’  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, 269-283)

The contest takes place in the proximity of two well-known London sites: Bridewell, a prison for women near the Thames, and Fleet-ditch, a waterway used as a sewer and refuse disposal insistently constructed by Pope as “an emblem of urban pollution.”<sup>35</sup> A significant connection between the female body (the flagellation evokes the custom of whipping the criminals between eleven and twelve) and the lack of urban sanitation is emphasized here, giving the “dirt” transported by the river a clear moral connotation. The “excellence” of the dunces’ love and the commitment to their cause have to be proved by the depth of their plunge into the “dark,” “thick,” “filthy” waters of the river, whereas the pettiness of the prizes they win alludes to their

poverty—ironically meant to serve as “the only extenuation” of their “dirty or low work.” The female body, the sewer, and the work of the political gazetteers are thus brought together in the leveling symbol of waste which becomes “a sign of cultural incontinence” and social indecorum.<sup>36</sup> As Sophia Gee has noted, “in the *Dunciad*, waste takes the form of superfluous, proliferating print-matter in London,” it is a surplus that hides a moral and aesthetic void.<sup>37</sup> This process of sinking in filth, of making body contact with the animal ordure carried by the river’s waters suggests powerfully the dangers of another kind of sinking: the sinking in political compromise and cultural mediocrity. Significantly, the dunces are the ones who “pollute” the river’s waters, they are the ones who produce the daily trash which contaminates its stream; the Thames is just the carrier, a feminized agent of a cultural and moral disease. Their labeling as “Swans of Thames” does not allude to a hierarchy having the ruling image of the river at the top, but to a topography they are infamously attached to.

In her gripping interpretation of the river imagery in the poem, Laura Brown considers *The Dunciad* as “one of the period’s major representations of the fable of the city sewer,”<sup>38</sup> and draws a similar conclusion regarding its feminized representation by following, though, a different interpretive path. She argues that the identification of the river with its tributaries (the myth of Ladona, “the injured maid” in *Windsor Forest*), as well as the use of powerful female figures at central points in the development of the epic games (Corinna causing Curll’s disastrous slip in her “lake,” the loving “Mud-nymphs” encountered by Smedley in his subterranean leap, Cloacina, the “Goddess of the common-sewers,” who contributes to Curll’s victory in the race for grabbing the phantom of a Poet) suggest that “the processes by which modernity was imagined at this early stage of its development is deeply informed by the representation of

women” (102). The associations between book trade, fashion, consumption, commodification, waste, geographical and social inclusiveness and the female body are all enhanced by the unifying symbol of the city sewer epitomized by the polluted waters of the Thames. Brown’s conclusion seems to be contradicted, however, by her occasional shift of emphasis from the river’s connectivity to its agency. Her interpretation of the “intoxicating” effects that the Thames has on the city as evidence that “the sewer confers its peculiar qualities upon the urban setting that it pervades” (41) ignores the fact that the Thames’s waters are infested, in the particular context she makes reference to, by “a branch from Styx”: in other words, the river is *acted upon*, contaminated by forces that are neither historically nor spatially local. The river remains, I argue, a symbolical circulatory system of the larger organism that is the city, spreading around a dullness it was contaminated by as a result of its interaction with dunces, and that is not one of its intrinsic characteristics.

### ***Book III. Underground Spaces: The Empire of Dulness***

See all her progeny, illustrious sight!  
Behold, and count them, as they rise to light.  
As Berecynthia, while her offspring vie  
In homage to the Mother of the sky,  
Surveys around her, in the bless’d abode,  
An hundred sons, and ev’ry son a God;  
Not with less glory mighty Dulness crown’d,  
Shall take through Grub Street her triumphant round;  
And her Parnassus glancing o’er at once,  
Behold an hundred sons, and each a dunce.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, 129-138)

Cibber’s journey to the underworld in Book III of *The Dunciad* presents the readers with a paradoxical situation: while it promises to take them on a descent to “the Elysian shade; where,

on the banks of Lethe [...] the souls of the dull are dipped by Bavius before their entrance into this world,” it actually brings them back in Grub Street and some other duncical locales, being turned into a sort of mirror image, literally upside-down, of the topography in Book I. After falling asleep in Dulness’s lap, Cibber is carried on the wings of Fancy to a subterranean world where he meets the ghost of Elkanah Settle, the late Poet Laureate, who shows him the past and future triumphs of the Empire of Dulness. It is a voyage in time as well as in space, a recapitulation of Britain’s past glories (embodied in some “celebrity” figures such as John Taylor, author of pageantrics and unsophisticated verse, or Daniel Brown and William Mears, publishers of authors despised by Pope, Eliza Haywood included) and a future projection of its cultural regress under Dulness’s “triumphant” reign. This is also a moment of unique significance in the poem as a whole, as it is the first and only time when Dulness’s march gains true epic proportions, encompassing all the four cardinal points of the civilized world. The local stands here for the universal, London becomes the epicenter of an empire expanding tentacularly, and the Island of Great Britain becomes a symptom of a global cultural malaise.

Settle’s prophetic vision starts, thus, with a high-speed bird’s-eye-view of the duncical world. The elements of this panorama signal interesting sets of relations: whereas the vertical span, from north to south (“round the Poles”) suggests the encompassing effects of dullness, the east to west geographical arch suggests a move from the origins of civilization and knowledge (“Orient Science”) to a space engulfed in ignorance and religious philistinism. The landmarks of this horizontal survey are China, through its emperor, Ch’in Shis Huan Ti, the builder of the Great Wall but also the destroyer of “all the books and learned men of that empire”; Egypt, through the Caliph Omar al-Khattab, the alleged incendiary of the ancient library of Alexandria;

and the “Hyperborean skies,” the frozen regions along the river Don and the Sea of Azof, the places of origin of the invading tribes which caused the fall of the Roman empire. The survey also includes Syria and Phoenicia, “where Letters are said to have been invented,” places conquered by Prophet Mohammed, and ends up embracing “all the western world” (epitomized by Rome), called to mind through the figure of Pope Gregory I, a demolisher of monuments and incendiary of Apollo’s library on the Palatine Hill.

The significance of this cultural mapping is knotty, to say the least. In Pat Roger’s interpretation, this episode is an attack on Settle, who used to include “cosmic tableaux,” such as the burning of Troy, in his fairground shows.<sup>39</sup> From this perspective, Pope’s insistent reference to the burning of libraries in Pope’s text equates books with the flourishing Trojan civilization, which was the source of inspiration of the Homeric and Virgilian epics. The juxtaposition of this apocalypse of the civilized world to Grub Street and its neighboring areas supports, on the other hand, the general move of the duncical tribes from east to west, from the City (compared by Martinus Scriblerius with Troy from Virgil’s *Aeneid*) to the “polite world” (the Town, equated by the same with Latium, the cradle of Rome). Pope illustrates in this particular passage the medieval concept of *translatio imperii et studii*, which describes the predestined transfer westward of power, knowledge, and science. What makes it particularly interesting from our standpoint, though, is the *impossibility* of this panoramic view, the poet’s God-like elevation which gives this vista an otherwise unattainable readability, turning random geographical landmarks into a comprehensible text. Pope’s map describes subjective intersections of meanings and immobilizes historical events in unique spatial narratives. Moreover, it gives the author a voyeuristic perspective and disentangles him from the pedestrians “down below” who make

blind use of a space they can't possibly see or understand.<sup>40</sup> The immediate consequences of such improved perspectivism are, indeed, an increased interpretative capability on the author's part, and an antithetical representation of spaces (up vs. down, fictionally-coherent vs. reality-frenzied, the classic vs. the dull) which supports the text's opposing binaries in an implicit, highly elaborate way.

The broad geographic expanse of Cibber's voyage around the world climaxes with his return to the very precisely delineated area of the City of London, turned into the epitome of the duncical world. Settle's prophesy takes our hero back to Britain, Dulness's "fav'rite Isle," and more specifically to her "blest abode" in Grub Street. References to Newport Market, Drury Lane, Lincoln's Inn, "Lud's old walls" (the boundaries of the City of London), Smithfield Fair, St. Mary le Bow, the "banqueting house" of White-hall, the church and piazza of Covent Garden, the palace and chapel of Somerset-house, Button's coffee-house, Eton College and Westminster School follow in quick succession, partially recapitulating the landmarks of a duncical route already explored before. The panoramic view of a world ravaged with fire and sword suddenly focalizes on topographic details which evoke fairgrounds, theatrical sites, meeting places for Whig politicians, and corrupt centers of education. This intentional juxtaposition makes Dennis Todd's observation regarding the paradoxical, "nonviolent victory"<sup>41</sup> of the dunces only apparently true: through an interesting process of contamination, these London sites of moral and physical dissipation become emblems of the cultural collapse brought by invading tribes or religious fanaticism in the previous episode. Pope's poetic logic is again circumlocutory: London's contagion with spectacular entertainments and its political corruption have the same catastrophic consequences as setting the books on fire, a cultural calamity insistently evoked

before. The triumph of dullness on local grounds has to be equaled, from this broader perspective, with the end of civilization: the Grub Street *is* a battlefield where the dull celebrate a catastrophic victory, and their pageantries are only the sequential moment of a conflagration whose allegorical representation we have already witnessed in Settle's prophetic tableau.

Even more importantly, the insistent description of Grub Street area through its inhabiting dunces and their preferred haunts (ale-houses, gill-houses, gin-shops, coffee-houses, fair grounds, banqueting-houses, theaters, piazzas and public markets, etc.) is meant to suggest a deterioration of values which significantly exceeds the moral disease associated with this space in Book I of *The Dunciad*. The reason for this more radical moral denunciation has something to do with theatricality, both of the London public life and of this particular moment in the poem's development. If in Book I of *The Dunciad* specific locales were related to a motley population of publishers, booksellers, poets and novelists, daily gazetteers, literary critics and other "Fools of Quality," the apocalyptic vision of the Empire of Dulness in Book III changes emphasis on authors and protagonists of pantomimic representations and pageantries, as well as on political or literary figures *seen as actors* on a theatrical stage. A unique change of viewpoint occurs as a result of the fact that Settle and Cibber are no longer performers, but spectators of the events taking place on a prophetic stage. This change of perspective from the actual London streets to London seen as a performative space calls attention to at least two kinds of distortions that affect the urban theater: a spatial distortion, resulting from a myopic focus on trivial detail which defines the "unclassic ground" of the dull, and a moral distortion caused by the grotesque re-inhabiting of this space with bad imitators of reputed public figures. From this latter perspective, the world as stage metaphor helps clarify the poem's intentions: just like actors, Pope's dunces

pretend to be somebody else without actually succeeding in taking the place of their betters (besides infamously and only through political detours). While Ambrose Phillips, the “Wit” of Button’s, is a mediocre rhymester propelled to celebrity by his Whig supporters, Gay, a phenomenally gifted playwright and poet, “dies unpension’d with a hundred friends.”

This change in perspective also complicates the work of the discerning readers, who are forced to make a double interpretive move. They have to recognize, first, the spatial sign, and then to remember that what they see through Settle and Cibber’s eyes is no longer Thomas Ripley’s “new White-hall,” for instance, the shoddy work of a Hanoverian carpenter, but *an absence* still waiting to be filled in, an undignified replacement of Inigo Jones’s Whitehall previously built for the Stuarts. The mechanism of the satire is deeply theatrical, suggesting a substitution of a real space with a dramatic prop, switching a standard of value with a second-rate copy, bringing on the same stage a collage of heterogeneous spaces, visible and concealed, and an array of protagonists that energetically perform against their betters, attempting serious roles they are not fit for. A crude but immediately recognizable reality is thus replaced, through an important imaginative somersault, with a chaotic dramatic world in which gestures of political vacillation, for instance, are punished through depersonalizing transformations: Settle literally turns into a green dragon at Bartholomew Fair during the representation of his droll, *St. George for England*, the “needy poet” is carried in a dog’s tail together with the dust of the streets, while Cibber rocks the stage with its unpredicted feats, like a “rolling stone”:

Yet lo! in me what authors have to brag on!  
 Reduc’d at last to hiss in my own dragon.  
 Avert it, Heav’n! that thou, my Cibber, e’er  
 Should’st wag a serpent-tail in Smithfield fair!  
 Like the vile straw that’s blown about the streets,



The needy Poet sticks to all he meets,  
 Coach'd, carted, trod upon, now loose, now fast,  
 And carry'd off in some dog's tail at last;  
 Happier thy fortunes! like a rolling stone,  
 Thy giddy dulness still shall lumber on...  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, 285-294)

Cibber, the “Bedlam’s Prophet,” is significantly described as the necessary link of the madhouse, corruption and stage, and his spatial mobility (Bedlam, Grub Street, Smithfield, Drury Lane) is indicative of his moral, political, and dramatic choices. If his connections with Bedlam<sup>42</sup> and London theatrical sites are generally known, his associations with Grub Street are less obvious and require some clarifications. Known at the time as a poor and insalubrious area (“grube” etymologically means “drain” or “ditch”), Grub Street was an infamous site of hackney authors, scurrilous writing, gambling and drinking houses, and riotous behavior<sup>43</sup>; during Johnson’s time, its name had already turned into a common noun connoting “any mean production”<sup>44</sup> of the literary marketplace. Author of *grubstreets* himself, Cibber published, among other things, a popular autobiography<sup>45</sup> which contained candid accounts of personal affairs that sentimentalized the figure of the actor and contended to provide the secret history behind his public image. Moreover, as Kristina Straub perceptively points out, by impersonating characters such as Lord Foppington in Vanbrugh’s *The Relapse* (1696) or Johnny in *The Schoolboy* (1707), Cibber identified himself with masculine roles that lay outside dominant forms of masculinity, he placed himself into a nonauthoritative male position which could easily suggest sexual liminality.<sup>46</sup> His commodified condition as an actor, his suspect sexual behavior, and his notorious gambling habits turned Cibber into an ideal denizen of Republica Grubstreetaria.

Significantly, in the penultimate book of *The Dunciad*, Grub Street is mentioned twice, in both cases in contexts which involve Cibber's presence. First, the street is associated with the Dulness's "triumphant round," together with her hundred sons, in Settle's prophetic vision of her future empire. Here, Cibber is mentioned as the son of a virtuous father, in a parodic version of Trinity containing Dulness, Bays and an owl with Heidegger's face. Second, Grub Street's notoriety is compared to the perpetuity of the stage, which survives the inherent historical "fall" of the street, on condition it is insured against fire. Here the connection is more obscure, possibly alluding to the false alarm of fire which spoiled Cibber's production of *Henry VIII*, put on to celebrate the coronation of King George I in 1714. Another possible reading may consider the wide popularity of afterpieces and pantomimes at the time, persistently produced in both Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Hall, among others, by Cibber himself. While Grub Street's fall is envisioned as a possibility, the extinction of these highly popular shows displaying improbable plots and entertaining pyrotechnics seemed less likely to occur.<sup>47</sup> By playing with suggestions of religious and artistic immortality, Pope conflates, thus, in Cibber's image the idea of irrational (religious-like) devotion and that of (equally irrational) theatrical fad. A gambler and a comedian, an undeserving Poet Laureate and an unscrupulous Whig devotee, a promoter of tasteless theatrical productions and a successful businessman, Cibber is geographically and symbolically placed at the very center of the Empire of Dulness, on the busy stage of Grub Street.

***Book IV. Vacuous Spaces: The Solar System of the Dull***

Then rose the Seed of Chaos, and of Night,  
To blot out Order, and extinguish Light,  
Of dull and venal a new World to mold,  
And bring Saturnian Days of Lead and Gold.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV, 13-16)

Published twelve years after the first edition of *The Dunciad* and only two before Pope's death, the fourth book brings with it a new hero and significant spatial enhancement: Cibber replaces Theobald as the king of the dunces and the poem encompasses the "whole polite world" attacking "all Imposition either Literary, Moral or Political" with "General, not particular Satire."<sup>48</sup> The change in method is striking, the detachment from the minute particularity of the first three books programmatic, and the result, indeed, heterogeneous. Joseph Warton's critique, however opaque to the reconsidered intent of the poem, is nevertheless precise in summing up the directions of this fundamental change:

For one great purpose of this *fourth* book, (where, by the way, the hero does nothing at all) was to satirize and proscribe infidels and free-thinkers, to leave the ludicrous for the serious, Grub-street for theology, the mock-heroic for metaphysics; which occasioned a marvelous mixture and jumble of images and sentiments, Pantomime and Philosophy, Journals and Moral evidence, Fleet-ditch and the High Priori road, *Curl* and *Clarke*.<sup>49</sup>

Grub Street, such an obsessive presence in the first three books of the poem, plays no role, indeed, in the concluding one; the imperialist overtones are dropped as well, and the readers are invited to witness, instead, the apocalyptic molding of "a new world" (IV, l. 241) born from Chaos and Night. Particular topographies, even if not completely erased,<sup>50</sup> are no longer relevant in this new project which unveils the process of turning Order into Chaos in a sort of inverse, discombobulating Genesis.<sup>51</sup> The previous interest in urbanism, street dynamics, and the

disturbing consequences of an emerging modernity precisely located in the city is refocused on the culture of the ruling classes, with its vain attraction for operatic shows, Grand Tour, French cuisine, laureateship, and coin collecting: a culture of Virtuosi, Indolents, Minute Philosophers, Freethinkers, Scholiasts, Critics, Grammarians, dull Investigators of Nature, and Educators of Youth. The landscape described is no longer spatially identifiable but allegorical, and Pope's excursion does not need precise geographical coordinates anymore because of the generalized territorial conquest of the dull. We are no longer in a realm of possibilities, but in a "new world" in which Settle's prophecies come true, the Dulness reigns supreme, and identification by name, vicinity, urban function or social relevance is no longer necessary because there is nothing to distinguish from: the Chaos has it all.

What's left is the "uncreating" wor(l)d of the Dulness, ponderous into a space whose materiality or vacuity takes now the center stage of the debate. The replacement of Fleet-ditch with the "High priori road," or "Grub Street for theology," triggers a poetical dispute with a whole philosophical tradition which indicates a fundamental change of emphasis from the mundane, "other" places of the City (the madhouse, the fair, the stage, the gambling house, the cultural ghetto) to issues of universal relevance, to arguments about time and space in their absolute form, to a renewed concern for the destruction not of the civilized world, but of the Christian world *per se*:

We nobly take the high Priori Road,  
And reason downward, till we doubt of God:  
Make Nature still encroach upon his plan;  
And shove him off as far as e'er we can:  
Thrust some Mechanic Cause into his place;  
Or bind in Matter, or diffuse in Space  
Or, at one bound o'er-leaping all his laws,

Make God Man's image, Man the final Cause,  
 Find Virtue local, all Relation scorn,  
 See all in *Self*, and but for self be born...  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV, 471-480)

The text is dense in ideological indirections, partially clarified by the sub-text: as the footnote initialed in 1751 as jointly by Pope and Warburton indicates, "they who take this high Priori Road (such as Hobbs, Spinoza, Des Cartes, and some better Reasoners) for one that goes right, ten lose themselves in Mists, or ramble after Visions which deprive them of all sight of their End and mislead them in the choice of wrong means." A reasoning that proceeds from causes to deduce their effects (and thus conclude that the world ought to be different than it is, questioning God's design) is mocked here in a very interesting illustration of various philosophical understandings of space. To start with, the Hobbesian notion of an imaginary space that is a product of our bodily perceptions of the real space is seen as being as irrational as Spinoza's conflation of Nature with God, and hence of space with the "One Infinite Eternal Substance which exists";<sup>52</sup> Spinozian space, in other words, is absurd because it is imagined as possessing God-like attributes. Pope's earlier repudiation of the idea of "pure space," a space "defaecated from Matter," hints, obviously, to the Newtonian theory of an "absolute space," a space which remains always similar and immovable, a space having, in other words, qualities (such as eternity or infinity; or, as added by Spinoza, agelessness and continuity) that can only be credited to God. Equally inconsistent for Pope is the Cartesian description of a space filled with "subtle matter," necessary as a "medium for the passage of light," a theory attacked by materialists such as Richard Bentley, for instance, the supporter, instead, of the Newtonian idea of a space filled with "elastic and springy Particles."<sup>53</sup> Pope's position (and also the position of anti-materialists

such as George Berkeley, one of his close friends) is that of a *a posteriori* reasoner who contemplates the effects, not the causes, of the divine work, recognizing in them the meaning of his own presence in the world.

The purpose of this discussion about spaces, however, started at this very particular moment in the development of Pope's mock-epic, seems less that of launching an ideological debate about the right way of contemplating God's work. Rather, it seems to me that Pope evokes these various and (in his opinion) aberrant spaces with the very precise purpose of organically incorporating them in the construction of the poem, of exemplifying, in poetic form, the consequences of these "distorted" perspectives on reality. His philosophical survey is thus less relevant in terms of describing a version of space that holds a distinct Popean signature, but truly revelatory as an example of poetic treatment of select aspects of metaphysical thought. Dulness's "pure space" is described as a vacuum, as a mock version of the Newtonian "absolute space": it is an ironic, anti-Cartesian demonstration of how *a thing* can become *nothing*, of how matter is not conserved but irretrievably lost in space. Her "uncreating word" restores a "chaos," instates a spatial dis-order which turns upside down both the laws of physics and the logic of the divine work. Pope describes a space which has no frames of reference, be they physical or moral, a space "buried" in stasis, covered in darkness, emptied of divine presence and filled, instead, with the material version of an absence, with the "subtile Matter" of duncical waste. A new kind of poetic space is thus created from the bizarre synthesis of various philosophical models of physical space, all of them trying to ascertain its reality from a man-centered, instead of God-centered perspective. The consequences of this replacement of the divine presence with the

Antichrist figure of Dulness are elaborated in the famous episode of the “buzzing bees” hoarded around their “dusky queen”:

And now had Fame’s posterior Trumpet blown,  
 And all the Nations summon’d to the Throne.  
 The young, the old, who feel her inward sway,  
 One instinct seizes, and transports away.  
 None need a guide, by sure Attraction led,  
 And strong impulsive gravity of Head;  
 None want a place, for all their Centre found,  
 Hung to the Goddess, and coher’d around.  
 Not closer, orb in orb, conglob’d are seen  
 The buzzing Bees about their dusky Queen.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV, 71-80)

Echoes of the Newtonian physics (the laws of attraction, gravity, impulse), Copernican model (the revolution of planets around the sun) and Cartesian thought (the vortex theory of planetary motion) can all be recognized here, being used to describe the three classes of dunces caught in Dulness’s orbit: the “absolutely and avowed dull,” the ones “involuntarily drawn to her,” and the flatterers, not yet “members of her state.” Their different degrees of concurring to “the harmony of the System” are described in terms of gravitational, revolution, and eccentric motion: “The *first* drawn only by the strong and simple impulse of Attraction, are represented as falling directly down into her; as conglobed into her substance, and resting in her centre [...] The *second*, tho’ within the sphere of hear attraction, yet having at the same time a different motion, they are carried... in planetary revolutions round her centre, some nearer to it, some further off [...]. The *third* are properly excentrical, and no constant members of her state or system: sometimes at an immense distance from her influence, and sometimes again almost on the surface of her *broad effulgence*.” The footnote translates in scientific terms the dunces’ chaotic movement, described by the poem as the homing instinct of the bees, gathered around their

Queen in irrational awe. Pope's mixed metaphors suggest the magnetic power of Dulness, her complete control over the swarming dunces, her regulatory presence in a space of her own design. The narrow topography of Dul-town is expanded exponentially in the fourth Book of *The Dunciad* to describe the stellar system of the dull.

***Mythological and Imaginary Topographies: Troy vs. the Empire of Dulness***

The thin film of writing becomes a movement of strata, a play of spaces. (Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*)

One of the most intimidating characteristics of *The Dunciad* is its palimpsestic quality: the layer over layer of references not only to contemporary realities but also to classic mythology (Greek, Latin, and several other strains of literary traditions) and to a completely new realm, to an imaginative space created by the poem itself. The distinctive toponymic specificity of the poem builds, thus, networks of relations, literary and historical connections, odd landscapes of trans-cultural imports and, of course, ideological dead-ends which bring evidence to the difficulty to grasp *The Dunciad*'s complicated construction of meaning. In order to give my exploration of these alternative spaces a coherence that the poem itself seems, at times, to lack, I will follow two interpretive paths: first, I'll briefly draw two (quite selective) maps—one of Pope's mythological references, and one of the imaginative space of his "empire"—; second, I'll try to approximate the significance of their overlapping with the real topography of London of his time. In doing so exhaustiveness will not be my purpose; rather, I am interested in how Pope manages to bring to light, through this very particular imaginative strategy, corners, alleys or epic highways one doesn't usually see from a diachronic angle, patterns of associations which



make the city readable in a way which enriches our understanding of its role in the creation of the public sphere.<sup>54</sup>

As Martinus Scriblerus discloses to us in the prefatory material, the action of *The Dunciad* is “the restoration of the reign of Chaos and Night, by the ministry of Dulness their daughter, in the removal of her imperial seat from the City to the polite World; as the action of the *Aeneid* is the restoration of the empire of Troy, by the removal of the race from thence to Latium.” The issue at stake here is the cultural succession from Rome to Britain, from Troy (seen as the originating point of the Roman civilization) to Troy-novant (i.e. London). In doing so, Pope devises a mock-epic which obviously parodies Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and he does it systematically, as Aubrey Williams compellingly argued in his 1955 study (16-29). The fall of the City (Pope’s fictive Troy) is suggested through the death of the last of the City Poets, Elkanah Settle, a course of events changed by Dulness’s opportune arrival in Cibber’s “cave” (Pope’s substitute for Aeneas), her restorative intervention (by dropping a sheet of Ambrose Phillips’s poem *Thulè* on Cibber’s pyre of “virgin” books), and her triumphant progress to Town. The parallels between the two epics abound: in Book III of *The Dunciad* Settle impersonates Anchises, Aeneas’s father, who conducts Cibber, his poetic heir, through the underworld; just as Aeneas is the first to bring his gods from Troy to Italy, so Cibber is the first to bring “the Smithfield Muses to the Ear of Kings”; the description of Dulness’s dome echoes Virgil’s description of Carthage; “Grubstreet race” is an undignified counterpart of the “Alban fathers”; Cibber’s bemoaning of the fall of Dulness’s favorite city resembles Aeneas’s lament of the fall of Illium; Cibber’s transportation to Dulness’s dome parallels Aeneas’s journey to Italy, followed by the beginning of a new empire; finally, the celebratory games in Book II of *The*

*Dunciad* and Cibber's visit to the Elysian Shades correspond to similar episodes in the Virgilian epic. The relation thus established between the future empires of Cibber and Aeneas permits, as Aubrey Williams emphasizes, "a complex interplay of different realms of value" (25), which serves the author's parodic intentions and gives the poem the illusion of a narrative movement that it otherwise lacks. More important, though, is Pope's choice to suggest the epic development of his poem through spatial conquest, by overlapping a mythic battlefield with a contemporary setting, a heroic empire with a mud-spattered streetscape. The implicit commentary points to an obvious spatial incongruity, to a ridiculous cramming of symbolically relevant figures in the narrow expanse of a few London streets. The spatial equation of Troy with Troy-novant bears a moral parallel which highlights Aeneas' heroic stature while simultaneously insinuating Cibber's ludicrously blown-up proportions. The parody gains, thus, a striking visual representation: Cibber's inflated figure is as excessively emphasized on this congested London landscape as it is Gulliver's gigantism in the country of Lilliput. The emerging image is that of a modern city which cannot sustain the epic proportions of a new mythic hero, a space whose description in terms of overflowing mud, polluted waters, street ordure, and accumulating waste is indicative of a human populace devoid of any authentic moral guide-posts. The poem's misunderstood lack of action is thus resolved by Pope through a layered display of mutually informing spaces: their overlapping contributes to the accumulation of an immense amount of energy, creating the impression of intense spatial movement characteristic for a modern urban setting.

The heterogeneity of the mythological references that abound in *The Dunciad* points, nevertheless, to a poetic commentary that is far more complicated, to a satirical eye that delights in particulars and detail. Even if highly relevant, the Virgilian topography is not the only

background on which the Empire of Dulness is projected. A dense web of allusions to a wide variety of myths proliferates almost hypertextually, blurring the comfortable stability of a unique system of reference. The map created by these mythological landmarks draws a wide variety of relations: Boeotia, a Greek province proverbial for the stupidity of its inhabitants, is a *nom de plume* for Ireland, the place from where Dulness allegedly emerged; Egypt's superfluous "showers," the fruits growing in Zembla's arctic regions and the flowers thriving in the deserts of Barca are examples of incompatible poetic images concocted by the dull; "Rome's ancient geese" are invoked as saviors of the Capitol, pointing to Cibber's role as a savior of the Monarchy of Tories; Curl's reference to Ovid's House of Rumor, a place between the earth, sea and sky wherefrom news both true and false are disseminated, is a cunning hint to the publisher's scandalmongering practices; the celestial River Eridanus is used as a bathetic term of comparison for the Thames, in a context alluding to venereal diseases; inversely, a branch of Styx pours into the Thames, intoxicating its waters and establishing a neat poetic connection between realms real and mythological, between a murky present and an ominous past. Pythia and Isthmia, ancient sites of public games initiated by gods, are compared to the London streets in order to bolster Dulness's status as an almighty deity; Lethe and the Land of Dreams evoked earlier in the *Odyssey* allegorically represent in Pope's poem "the Stupefaction and visionary Madness of Poets" inhabiting Dul-land; Alpheus's waters that make "the old olive" grow in order to offer it as a love-token to Arethusa are compared to Fleet Ditch, the dunces' loving bearer of sewage and dead dogs. This distortion of significances associated with mythical locales when projected on local grounds displays a disconcerting imaginative cornucopia: Cibber's journey underworld reaches the Elysian Shade, where the souls of the dull are dipped into Lethe before returning to

the world; the episode contains a tongue-in-cheek allusion to Bavius, the embodiment of the inept poet, who is a fit person to impart dullness to souls born into duncehood; underground, Dulness's sons are given a "Pisgah-sight" of "the future fulness of her glory," an ironic reference to the mountain where Moses was granted a sight of the Promised Land; Cibber's besprinkling "with Cimmerian dew" alludes to his prospective journey to a land of perpetual (intellectual) darkness; Castalia's streams are evoked as metaphors for poetic inspiration, in a context, however, that juxtaposes them to the "lofty madness" of the dunces; Bay's vision vanishes through the Ivory Gate of Falsity mentioned in Homer's and Virgil's epics (a gate that swallows the dreams doomed to remain mere illusions), a fleeting remark that actually invalidates the future triumph of Dulness. The spatial detail is used, thus, less for its visual suggestiveness and more for its narrative energy, for its capacity to trigger webs of associations which tell the story of the modern city in an indirect but highly evocative way. The mythical setting is rarely an actual place we are invited to nostalgically explore, and more often a pretext, a node from which a rich web of associations emerge pointing to issues moral and aesthetic bearing the most serious implications.

*The Dunciad's* interweaving of myths, allegories, historical accounts, literary adaptations and scholarly allusions also has the effect of multiplying its possible readings almost infinitely, a strategy which may purposely have been developed by Pope as a cunning defense mechanism. Thus, the imagery of the Miltonic Chaos is easily recognizable in Book IV of the poem, while Cibber's cohorts at the opening of Book II resemble strangely the satanic legions, turning the Augustan London into a sort of modern Pandemonium.<sup>55</sup> Tenets of Christian theology are systematically inverted, a method which reaches its climactic point in the upside-down vision of

the “uncreating” world from the last book. Oriental and Greek mysteries are freely exploited throughout the poem, possibly as a result of Pope’s reading of Warburton’s *Divine Legation of Moses* (1738-1741), a volume he praised for its “Amazing Scene of ancient Egypt or Greece.”<sup>56</sup> All these references enlarge the geographic frame of the poem to a globalizing perspective, while also creating a seamless fabric of details that sustain the poem’s elaborated construction of meaning. The association between Pope’s Dulness and Cybele, for instance, a goddess worshiped as Magna Mater in Anatolian, Aegean and Roman cultures and also a protectress of cities, adds to the poem’s political commentary: the Semitic and Greek roots of her name refer to mountains and caves, making her “a fitting prototype of Dulness, mother of blockhead and inhabitants of caves and grottoes.”<sup>57</sup> Associated at other times with Ceres, iconographically represented as holding a pitcher from which she pours water over the earth in a life-giving gesture, Dulness is similarly described as a gift-giver, offering instead a “China Jordan,” or chamber pot, to the winner of the pissing contest. In the context of Pope’s urban mythology, the fusion between the figures of Cybele and Ceres creates, thus, a substantial commentary on the city as a space of pollution, overflowing refuse, murky caverns in which dullness is inconspicuously distilled, a space of madness, disorder and noise.<sup>58</sup> The association is reinforced in the mud-nymphs episode from Book II of *The Dunciad*, where Smedley relates his subaquatic encounter with Lutetia, Nigrina and Merdamante, goddesses of mud, slime and dung, but also young and sexually attractive women competing for his love. Additionally, the eroticized language in this episode suggests a new dimension of the city as a space of debauchery and physical indulgence, a feminized space in which second-class goddesses come briskly to the fore, just like Pope’s dunces, who emerge on the front stage of the cultural arena. The grand epic

of the city's origin is thus rewritten as the triumph of the shameless, the gaudy and the incompetent, as the story of the city's beginning of its glorious moral decay.

What this succinct mapping of the poem's mythological spaces suggests is, first, a surreptitious use of two distinct spatial contexts that gives rise to parody. The epic landscape is ridiculously diminished when juxtaposed to contemporary locales and, alternately, the London streets are invested with a moral significance that is completely out of proportion when compared to their actual pettiness. Spatial incongruity translates, thus, a moral incongruity; the epic is bathetically downsized, in the same way a theatrical stage crams empires in its narrow performative field. The author's indirections create a rich network of associations which keep us guessing *The Dunciad's* various strains of meaning. Thus, the fall of the City of London suggested in Book I of the poem through the death of Elkanah Settle is obviously exaggerated in importance by its association with the fall of Troy, but it also contains an additional commentary transparent to the contemporary readers of the poem. In 1707 Settle produced a Smithfield version of his opera, *The Siege of Troy*, which allegedly was the most famous of the Bartholomew-Fair drolls.<sup>59</sup> Here, King Mob is a prominent figure, and the City of Troy is set on fire in an elaborated stage performance. As Pat Rogers points out, "it is a somewhat harsh joke that Settle should be cast as the forlorn defender of Troy, since it was he who had devised its perdition in the best-known contemporary version of the play."<sup>60</sup> The intended effect is, predictably, to insinuate Settle's and the Grub Street hacks' complicity in the fall of the British empire. The spatial translation is complicated here by references to the City Poet, public drolleries, bad taste, the dilution of classical values in the modern city, and the intoxicating effects of theatrical illusion. The poetic logic is either one of inversion, of enhancing the size and

diminishing the significance, or one of proliferating associations: the place evoked is not simply a place, but a place where *something* of consequence happens, where *somebody* leaves his cultural footprint in a truly disturbing way. The urban space is worked upon, inhabited, transformed, dis-ordered, re-invented in a gravitational manner, by sinking deeper and deeper in physical and moral decay, down in the mud-nymphs' cloacal ambit, and even deeper, in the underworld of shades one can access via the Thames, through a branch of Styx. This unexpected passageway, for instance, points to the dangers of opening communication channels between spaces fundamentally incompatible: such a niche allows a constant recycling of dullness and an alarming return of its votaries, brainwashed in the Lethe, to the land of the Dull. Smedley's account of his sinking into the mud becomes, thus, the perfect example of Pope's method of blending mythology with contemporary issues, of drawing classical sources (with their surreptitious authority-building effect) in the web of his critique of present-day realities:

First he relates, how sinking to the chin,  
 Smit with his mien, the mud-nymphs suck'd him in:  
 How young Lutetia, softer than the down,  
 Nigrina black, and Merdamante brown,  
 Vied for his love in jetty bowers below,  
 As Hylas fair was ravish'd long ago.  
 Then sung, how, shown him by the nut-brown maids;  
 A branch of Styx here rises from the shades,  
 That, tinctured as it runs with Lethe's streams,  
 And wafting vapours from the land of dreams,  
 (As under seas Alpheus' secret sluice  
 Bears Pisa's offerings to his Arethuse,)  
 Pours into Thames: and hence the mingled wave  
 Intoxicates the pert, and lulls the grave:  
 Here brisker vapours o'er the Temple creep,  
 There, all from Paul's to Aldgate drink and sleep.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, 331-346)

The consequences of this replacing of Augustan order with the frantic disorder of modernity has, in Pope's poem, a clear spatial representation, they are exuberantly embedded in an imaginary geography described in its most significant details. Thus, Dulness has her Temple in the proximity of Grub Street, with a majestic Throne of Folly, or an Imperial Seat of Fools, surrounded by the four guardian Virtues (Fortitude, Temperance, Prudence and Poetic Justice). Nearby, one finds Cibber's cell, the Cave of Poetry and Poverty, and his "Gothic Library," where he raises his sacrificial altar of "proper books"; the Magnific College of Bedlam is Dulness's "private Academy" for Poets, constantly supplying productions that prove "how near allied Dullness is to Madness." Cloacina's "black grottos," near Temple-wall, resound of link-boys and watermen's obscene jests, while the "Academic Groves" of the freethinkers and the "old Cavern" of Truth symptomatically describe narrow, dark, crammed spaces in which Dullness's votaries are irremediably entrapped. What's most striking in this very general mapping of Pope's imaginary spaces is their spatial confinement, suggestive of the ideological hollowness of Dulness's followers. The dunces are sheltered in spaces where darkness, madness, dirt, and prolonged sleep seem to preserve their wrong-directed energies. Their close vicinity to London areas known as sites of hack writing and unsanctioned behaviors adds to the sullied moral profile of their inhabitants. Their institutional importance as locales wherefrom educational, cultural and political acts are disseminated is thus turned upside down, in a gesture that highlights once more the main directions of Pope's attack.

The "new world" of Dulness in its imperial and (as seen in Book IV) universal expansion contrasts sharply with the narrow cells of her dunces, with the grottoes, caverns, and groves in



which they invariably conglobed. The motif may suggest, of course, the mental entrapment of the dunces and the irrationality of their herd-like behavior, but the insistence with which it is used points to reasons that go beyond these broad evaluations. If we remember that Lewis Theobald was Pope's first King of the Dunces and that he published in 1715 *The Cave of Poverty*, a poem in which Dulness is the main protagonist, Pope's intentions become more clarified. Theobald's poem abounds in references to "gloomy dens," "dungeons," "Robber's Haunts," "caves," "caverns," "Hermetical Cells," and "subterranean Rooms." There, "Clusters of Bards," "Hibernian Troops," a "mingled Croud" of "Virtuosos" and "modern Madmen" "like Bees in Hives, swarm thro' the neighb'ring Cells." The "Meagre Queen" Poverty, "Daughter of hell," reigns in "black-fac'd Clouds" and "malignant Glory" pondering "how she might the Earth's whole Globe enslave." Her kingdom is one of "live-long Night" and "worthless Folly," of "empty Phantoms," "Embrios," and "mounting Vapours" taking various "Transmutations." References to her "cold Confinement," "Foe-beleagur'd Town," "silver Thames," and "Iron Reign" vividly reminds the reader moments in Pope's poem which obviously reworked some of the motifs employed earlier by Theobald. Dulness herself is mentioned in the poem, "haunt[ing] the Place" in a fitting team with Ignorance. The borrowings are sometimes subtle and unexpected: the line about the "empty Vantage of Superior Place" reminds us of Cibber's bird's eye view of Dulness's past victories on the Mount of Vision, while the line about the Tube "Conveying Speeches to the Regent's Ear" is reworked in *The Dunciad*'s opening lines ("The Mighty Mother, and her Son who brings/The Smithfield Muses to the ear of Kings"). The extended passage about the "Painted Story" on the goddess's walls is translated by Pope in the "shaggy Tap'stry" displaying the dunces' fates. Finally, the connection between poetry and poverty as a stimulus to poetic endeavor emphasized

by Theobald (“Ha’st thou not oft improv’d the Poet’s Sense,/Raised him to Fire, and made his Lays inchant”) is turned upside-down by Pope, in his well-known episode from Book I of *The Dunciad*, where poverty is seen as a natural consequence of bad writing. The common representation of the grotto as a “haunt of frugal virtue, philosophy and true wisdom” and the conventional imagery of “the Sage in the holy cave”<sup>61</sup> are thus reversed by Pope into the image of the cave as an “empty,” vacuous space, a negative space adding up, cell by cell, to the boundless Empire of Dulness. Pope’s imaginary spaces are, paradoxically, spaces of absence, crammed with “somethings,” “new-born nonsense,” “figures ill-pair’d,” and “Similes unlike” –the impossible spaces of the madhouse, the bad poem, and the Hanoverian court. But the cave is, even more, the space in which his King of the Dunces admits his own impotence, it is the place where “Nonsense precipitate” and the dead “Embryo” of his “dull Head” lies: the irony of Pope’s poem is that he entraps Theobald in the cell of his own design.

### ***Character and Place: The Physical Location of the Public Sphere***

As Aubrey Williams notes, the contemporary London topography *is* “an essential, meaningful part of the poem” not only because it is allied with some of the most ancient civic traditions of the city or, as Pat Rogers compellingly suggests, because it serves “a moral symbolism,” according to which “the distribution of dunces is a clue to the marriage of character and setting.”<sup>62</sup> Topography plays a fundamental role in Pope’s poem because it is woven into the very matter of his satire, magnifying, belittling, establishing spatial and ideological relations among easily recognizable locales, mapping a space not only in terms of its geographical coordinates but, more importantly, in terms of its political, cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual

alliances. “A topographic identity *becomes* a moral equivalence” [emphasis mine], but what is insufficient in Pat Roger’s otherwise correct observation is the use of the singular form: in Pope’s poems one topographic identity never signifies only *one* thing or another. Such a perspective may accurately describe the significance of particular locales, but never the intricate network of relations between space and its inhabitants, between a *specific* venue and a *class* of dwellers, between a topographical sign and its carefully reworked significance. Pope’s spatial imagination is not descriptive or emotional (hence the difficulty *to see* the actual film of his epic and his failure to impress the Romantics) but relational; it works by suggestions, allusions and clues. The reader is expected to actively participate in an intellectual exercise, fill in the gaps, understand things half told or only vaguely suggested and, eventually, make the correct judgment on his own. Hence the inadequacy of an exclusively historicist perspective in addressing the special nature of Pope’s text: such a reading doesn’t account, for instance, for the multiple layers of space—real, mythological, and imaginary—that map *The Dunciad*, nor for the tridimensional, motion-creating effect of their overlapping on the poem’s page. The stories these spaces tell do have a moral, but they are not always moral stories: while material components of the city, such as geographical location and connectivity, may be relevant in moral terms (and in *The Dunciad*’s case, mocking the mayoral procession and/or coronation festivity contains a clear institutional critique), the “expressive components” (DeLanda 110) of the urban environment speak about an equally important construction of meaning, about a symbolic dimension of the city emerging at the same time with its development as the emblematic space of modernity. The lavishness of the public buildings, churches, and plazas, the splendor of the secular ceremonies, the variety of street activities are nothing but physical expressions of the distribution of power in the new

economic, politic, religious or cultural centers of the city; they do not only articulate a moral commentary, but also the new anxieties, concerns, or gratifications of the urban life. Pope's topographical specificity, as well as the symptomatic geographic minutiae of so many of the authors of the time, speak about their awareness of the environmental changes associated with the urban development and their persistent concern with its cataclysmic and irreversible nature.

The "other" spaces of the madhouse, the prison, the coffeehouse, the theater, the opera, the new Hanoverian court are in Pope's poem emblems of a "new world" rising from the ashes of Augustanism. The polite literature of the eighteenth century falls victim to its own nostalgia for a classical, irretrievable past, whereas the fast-paced forces of modernity relocate "politeness" in the salons, the coffeehouses, the clubs and assemblies that reinscribe the landscape of the new urban space. The creation of the public sphere as "a space of rational debate on matters of political importance"<sup>63</sup> has, indeed, a more obvious Addisonian than Augustan dimension, and its initial emergence as a literary phenomenon created a clear polarization between competing value systems, between a cultural center and an aggressive periphery threatening to assault this core. The elimination of the institution of censorship after the lapse of *The Licensing Act* in 1695 triggered an unprecedented emergence of new sites of public debate and brought an influx of rational arguments in the press, which became more definitely an organ of political and social critique.<sup>64</sup> "Just as Dryden, surrounded by the new generation of writers, joined the battle of the 'Ancients and Moderns' at Will's coffeehouse, Addison and Steele convened their 'little senate' at Button's" (Habermas 33), Cibber frequented the Whig society at White's, and Ned Ward opened his own public house at the King's Head. The theater (with its two main enterprises, Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Hall) became

increasingly inclusive and accommodating of its public while the operatic representations (usually mounted at Haymarket Theater, under John Heidegger's management) offered access, for the first time, to a public coming from all social strata, losing their exclusive function of enhancing official representation. The press, in turn, became a moral and political guide, a democratic organ addressed to a "fraternity of spectators" who considered "the world as a theater, and desire[d] to form a right judgment of those who are actors in it."<sup>65</sup> Defoe's *The Review* (1704-1713), Tutchin's *The Observer* (1702-1707), Swift's *The Examiner* (1710), Addison and Steele's periodical essays in *The Tatler* (1709-1711) and *The Spectator* (1711-1712), and especially Bolingbroke's *The Craftsman* (1726), the first journal clearly engaged in political opposition, shaped the public opinion and established new standards of taste and polite behavior.

Highly symptomatic for his ideological sympathies, Pope's attack in *The Dunciad* aims at these very institutions which are seen by Augustans not as expressions of sociability, civic involvement, and polite behavior, but as promoters of bad taste, moral corruption, and political compromise. This also explains why Pope's concern with establishing clear cultural hierarchies triggers a discourse in which the (disgraceful) place and the (disreputable) character are brought together, in which the dull is seen as emerging from his cave-like, private space to a public space of debate. As Habermas has pointed out, authors like Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot and Swift combined literature and politics in a way comparable with Addison and Steele's blend of literature and journalism, but while the latter ones heralded the democratic ideal of ideological exchange, the Scriblerians attacked the very tenets of this project in an effort to preserve the standards of excellence established by the classical heritage. The irony of the situation, and what gives this

cultural context its momentous importance, is that, in doing so, the Augustans engaged in a clear exercise of civic participation, and their attacks triggered responses which contributed to the creation of a merging space of public dialogue, in which “dunces” and representatives of the polite culture engaged in heated ideological debates. It is one of my purposes to call attention to the notable consequences of this extended cultural dialogue and recognize the fact that a culture is not made up only of its worthiest representatives: despicable as many of Pope’s dunces are, we have to acknowledge their role as significant participants in the creation of the public sphere and in shaping the literary canon of their time.

*The Dunciad* can be regarded, thus, as the ultimate expression of a topical cultural anxiety: the concern with the devastating effects of *not being in the right place*, of dis-placing authentic value with cultural detritus, of re-placing the Augustans’ hierarchical order with the disorder and out-of-place opportunism of the Moderns. Hence Pope’s attack on spaces that epitomize this confusion, spaces of entertainment, *laissez-faire* and accepting collectivism, as well as his preoccupation with the theatricality of one’s public performance disclosed as displacement of identities, functions, and values. From this perspective, *The Dunciad* can be read as a fable about the dire consequences of Britain’s assault of its cultural center by a contemptible periphery, as a dystopian projection of a future in which Grub Street denizens are called to set up the standards of cultural excellence. Its precise topographical mapping of the new, feminized, and unruly spaces of consumerism functions as a warning against the dangers of emergent plural publics, but also as an effort to control the circuits of media communication by precisely identifying and decrying its most contemptible locales.

*Coda: Things in Space*

*The Sewer, the City and the Chamber Pot*

...those unhappy objects of the ridicule of all mankind,  
the bad Poets. (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, note to  
line 34)

‘Description’ here is not a reproduction, but more a  
deciphering: the meticulous undertaking for untangling  
this mess of the diverse languages that are things, in  
order to restore each to its natural place and make the  
book a white place where everything, after de-scription,  
can find a universal place of inscription. (Michel  
Foucault, *The Language of Space*)

The second episode of the epic games, the pissing contest, has as its prize a china jordan and the works and person of Eliza Haywood, notoriously known at the time as Mrs. Novel. The contest engages the publishers and booksellers Edmund Curll and Thomas Osborne; the latter replaces in *The Greater Dunciad*<sup>66</sup> William Rufus Chetwood and Samuel Chapman, respectively, both promoters of Haywood’s works:

See in the circle next, Eliza placed,  
Two babes of love close clinging to her waist;  
Fair as before her works she stands confess’d,  
In flowers and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dress’d.  
The goddess then: ‘Who best can send on high  
The salient spout, far-streaming to the sky;  
His be yon Juno of majestic size,  
With cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes.  
This China Jordan let the chief o’ercome  
Replenish, not ingloriously, at home.’  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, 157-166)

The pissing competition is a perfect allegory for the print trade: an authoress of “libelous” novels fittingly consummates her amorous affair with an equally shameless bookseller, producing the “babes of love” that fill the book market with infamous productions. The intriguing choice of

trophy, however, as well as the colliding association between the best-known woman novelist of the time and an object of waste matter disposal invite, before attempting to elaborate on the significance of the episode, a semantic detour. The jordan, the urinal, the chamber or pissing pot collected at the time a large number of significations appended to their literal meaning. The juxtaposition of the pisspot with a “drinking Vessel” in *Christ Exalted* (1698) suggests habits of drinking followed by prodigious discharging. In Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587) and in Henry Herbert’s *Narrative of His Journey through France* (1671-73) the pisspot is evoked as a means of punishment, either by being publicly displayed around the “leud fellow’s necke” or by emptying its content upon the victims. Elkanah Settle’s *Compleat memoirs of the life of ... Will. Morrell* (1694), mentions a “whole Family under the suffering of a whole Chamber-pot full of Wailings and Tears for their Calamities and Misfortunes,” turning the recipient into a collector of sentimental waste. A silly or foolish person, like Dunbar’s Thairfoir Quhentyne, is derisively called a “full plum Jurdane.”<sup>67</sup> *The Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society (1742-43) mention the habit of holding a pisspot “over the Women’s Heads whilst in Labour, thinking it to promote hasty delivery,” a clear pointer to the preposterous superstitions circulated in women’s circles.

The comic potential of a domestic utensil escaped into the public space is exploited in Thomas D’Urfey’s *Comical History of Don Quixote* (1694), specifically attacked by Jeremy Collier in his *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) for its attempt to divert the Ladies (!) “with the Charming Rhetorick of Snotty-Nose, filthy Vermin in the Beard, Nitty Jerkin, and Louse Snapper, *with the Letter in the Chamber-pot*, and natural Evacuation” [emphasis mine]. In James Puckle’s *The Club* (1711) and Tobias Smollett’s



*Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751), the jordans are converted into flying weapons, the comedy resulting, this time, from their abrupt change in function when publicly displayed. The humorous effect of the Jordan is also indirectly suggested by William Kent's 1735 illustration to the second book of *The Dunciad*, where not one but two chamber pots are represented, an apparently minor detail which indicates, however, the memorable impact of the pissing episode on the reading public.

Quite interestingly, toward the end of the seventeenth century the pisspot starts to challenge its private status being more and more associated with beggars, gypsies, foreigners, and women. The term enters the *Ladies' Dictionary* in 1694, and the *New dictionary of the canting crew* in 1699. The latter piece gives an interesting list of coded terms for chamber pot, such as "Looking-glass," "Member-mug," or "Oliver's skull," and mentions Ireland as a "Urinal of the Planets," given its frequent and abundant rains. A more sophisticated piece, the anonymous *Piss-Pot* (1701), makes fanciful use of prosopopoeia, turning the jordan into a "Closet Darling"; at other times it identifies the vessel with the "Well of Life," and even uses it to describe a short interval of time, "a pissing while." Even more remarkable, the pissing pot is acknowledged here as the great social leveler, the "Mighty Charmer of Mankind," bringing Monarchs and destitutes together:

Presumptuous Piss-Pot, how durst thou offend,  
Compelling Ladies on their Knees to bend.  
To Kings and Queens we humbly bend the Knee:  
But Queen themselves are forc'd to stoop to thee.

The habit of dumping pisspots out of the windows, or, as mentioned in Gay's *Trivia*, that of urinating at street corners, establishes a symptomatic connection between public spaces and

human refuse widely speculated by the literature of the time. The historical record of Pissing Alley (famous for its mentioning by Dryden in *MacFlecknoe*) in more than one locale<sup>68</sup> bears testimony of this dump function associated with the streetscape at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Earlier in *The Dunciad*, Curll slips in Corinna's "lake" (referring to the miscellaneous writer Elizabeth Thomas, who did suffer from digestive problems), an incident that evokes the common practice at the time of emptying chamber pots into the street. Hurlo Thrumbo's *The Merry Thought: or the Glass-Window and Bog-House Miscellany* (1731) also contains an intriguing collection of graffiti written in diamond or filth in "Taverns, Inns, and other *Publick* Places in this Nation" [emphasis mine]. The sensed danger presented by this insistent reference to bodily waste seems to be that of an urban space in which the useless and the repulsive can no longer be contained, in which the most intimate rituals of personal hygiene are made public, in which the repugnant content of the pisspot, the "vile Machine" of Celia's chamber, is openly emptied in the street.<sup>69</sup>

From this variously informed perspective, Pope's choice of associating his china jordan with a notorious authoress of "libelous Memoirs and Novels" is more complicated than it seems: it reflects the same fear of the private made public which is a distinctive attribute of an urban environment. The choice of material (china, or fine porcelain) is indicative of superior value, but also of new urban spaces of pleasure: "operas, masquerade, assemblies, *china-houses*, play-houses."<sup>70</sup> We may infer, also, that Pope's choice of a *china* jordan as a pissing prize contained a sexual innuendo, given the immense popularity of Horner's "china" as a coded term for sexual intercourse,<sup>71</sup> a proper association with a woman novelist who authored morally suspect works and two illegitimate "babes." But even more significantly, china indicated in a period of colonial

expansion and explosive production of material things the quintessential commodity, the exotic turned local, an object of intense circulation both for its value and its exquisite beauty. As such, it reflected two clear gender-inflected concerns of the time: the infatuation of both elite and middle-class women with exotic commodities, with all its associations of indulgence and financial extravagance, and their suspect interest in foreign goods, perceived as a dangerous attempt of imaginary escape from the domestic sphere to which they were confined. Women's gathering around tea-table to display their affluence in expensive china was seen not only as encouraging "viciously malignant female gossip" but also as depriving male participants "of attention that might otherwise have been their own."<sup>72</sup> China connoted, thus, the dangers of female associations that made domestic spaces more inclusive, as well as their impulse to go out in the public, with all its consequences of masculine displacement. In Pope's case, the cunning association between a delicate thing of beauty and a recipient of human residue, between an object denoting affluence and the waste described by bodily effluence is a clear pointer of his concerns with the feminization of the public realm that he perceived as a distinctive feature of modernity.<sup>73</sup>

The intense (and exclusively private) use-value of the chamber pot is juxtaposed in Pope's poem with the equally active (but always public) trade-value of the china. The chamber pot joins the circulatory system of a commercial network that is highly characteristic for an urban environment. Valued as commodities and publicly circulated as gifts, the chamber pot *and* Eliza Haywood are mutually informing: they share similar attributes of undeserving and repulsive public presence, intense circulation of (literary and bodily) waste, and are both trophies in a game with obvious sexual connotations. The feminized jordan badly performing on the

public stage is as repellent as the unscrupulous authoress of scandalous but, nevertheless, widely circulated books. The connection at work here is not only that between the useless content of the chamber pot and the morally rotten productions of a woman writer, but also between novel as a genre and its material presence on the book market. Pope's (fortunately unconfirmed) prediction is that Haywood's works will end up as waste paper; as Lady Mary Wortley Montague put it in her attack on Swift's *The Lady's Dressing Room*, "I'm glad you'll write,/You'll furnish paper when I shite." The chamber pot and the novel share, thus, a more intimate relationship than expected: through a cunning process of recycling, the literary output is turned into literal waste.

My discussion about china jordans has, of course, a lot to do with an urban space, and not only because at the beginning of the eighteenth century London was Britain's main arena of literary and print industry. As we remember, the pissing contest takes place on the streets, in the immediate vicinity of Drury-Lane, and, as its name indicates, it is an irresolvable argument, a dispute in which the two parties challenge each other, are both injured in the process, and ultimately nobody loses or wins. It is also a game whose origin indicates a territorial claim (the "pissing grounds" were urinated on as a mark of ownership), and as such Pope's choice to bring his dunces onto the London streets is highly significant at various levels. To start with, the competition between Curll and Osborne is a public event, it is a contest between booksellers for the favors of a popular woman novelist that disguises their struggle for supremacy on the print market. This anchors their confrontation in a specific urban environment, turns Eliza Haywood into what her penname—Mrs. Novel—indicated, i.e. a commodity, and underscores the publishers' engagement in the market dynamics, to the extent that they consent to public exhibitionism. Second, the location of the pissing contest on the London streets turns them into an immense

urinal, association which highlights in a memorable way the gross realities of the urban environment, but also metonymically identifies the two male protagonists, Curll and Osborne, with the dirt contained by such urinal. Moreover, the “spout” or “stream” representation of the human refuse establishes a neat correspondence between the waste disposal function of the London streets and the Thames, between the city’s sewage system and the river’s “disemboguing streams,” similarly carrying “dead dogs” and “mud” “into its “sable blots.” The magnitude of the street pollution, the resemblance of the London streets with the open lavatory represented by the Thames, and the nature of the river’s pollutants are graphically suggested by the following piece of law regulating the city’s sewage collection and disposal:

No man shall cast into the Ditches of this City, or the Sewers of this City, without the Walls, or into the Wells, Grates or Gutters of this City, any manner of Carren, Stinking Flesh, rotten Fish, or any Rabbish, Dung, Sand, Gravel, Weeds, Stones, or any other thing to stop the Course of the same, under pain of cleaning them at his own Cost and Charge, under pain of Imprisonment.<sup>74</sup>

The chamber pot, the London streets, and the Thames are thus elements of a symbolic sewage system that carries the duncical filth or, as seen in Smedley’s victorious return in the mud-diving episode, the dunces themselves. The lack of hygiene of a crowded city is associated, through a strange process of reification that collapses a human with a material trophy, with the lack of literary value; as a dunce, Eliza Haywood is herself a sort of debris that insidiously pollutes the ecosystem of the city, an unavoidable urban evil. Pope’s moral indictment equates, thus, bad writers with bad persons, the lack of talent with moral corruption, and highlights in the metaphor of the city sewer their virus-like capacity to contaminate the urban body. Symptomatically, Eliza Haywood’s gift-value, her reification into a thing to be offered and acted upon, points to the special nature of the duncical space, a space in which personhood is defined

through one's relation with material objects, and which distinguishes itself through a meaningless proliferation of things. Living in a world of crass materiality, the dunces triumphantly cram the London streetscape with their periwigs and suits, with magus cups and shells, with butterflies and bird nests, with dice boxes, and chamber pots—all “super-lunar things” of an empire of useless particulars.

The pissing episode contains, however, one more implication which unexpectedly broadens its scope. As we know, nobody loses the game: at its end Curl leaves with Eliza, the “pleas'd, soft-smiling dame,” while Osborne, “crown'd with the Jordan, walks contended home.” A strange coronation ends the game that celebrates another coronation—that of Colley Cibber—as King of the Dunces, and which mimics, in turn, the crowning of King George II himself. The chamber pot is literally filled with political content, its empty space accommodating duncical nonsense, a hint at George II's notorious lack of wit. The sly connection between the pissing contest and Dutch (i.e. alcohol-induced) courage seems to confirm the political innuendo: suddenly morphed into a crown, the chamber pot insinuates the ludicrous nature of a victory that lasts just “a pissing while.”

## CHAPTER II

### MAPPING *THE DUNCIAD*: RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL SPACES

How many maps, in the descriptive or geographical sense, might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode all its meanings and contents? (Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*)

In his now classical work on the emergence of the liberal bourgeois public sphere in early eighteenth-century Britain, Jürgen Habermas mentions Pope's *Dunciad* as one of the works "satirizing the times," a "literary prelude" to the Tories' oppositional work, more vigorously pursued by Bolingbroke starting with the third decade of the century (60). Pope's particular method of combining literature and politics to defend the values of Augustanism against the Whigs' modernizing impulse and patronage practice is seen as a sign of public engagement in sorting out authentic value from political sycophancy. A literary public sphere, centered around clubs, literary salons, and the print media is, indeed, burgeoning at the time with impressive speed, anticipating, in the Habermasian reading, the emergence of the liberal bourgeois public sphere, and fueling a lively public debate on issues of political consequence. Habermas's famous blueprint of the bourgeois public sphere, as an intermediary between the private realm (civil society,<sup>75</sup> conjugal family) and Court (with its state-bound regulatory organisms) functions, however, in a conspicuously non-democratic way: as his very examples point out, it describes a cultural elite that leads the public debate through obvious class, gender and political exclusions. Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot, and Swift are seen as engaged in a public conversation serving a politically subversive agenda, and leading an oppositional movement that fueled an ongoing critical commentary against the Court. What is problematic about this narrative, though, is the

significant absence from this dialogue of what this intellectual elite considered to be culturally inconsequential groups. My own argument centers on this important exclusion from the Habermasian scheme of a duncical periphery which, although including the vast majority of the participants in the public discourse, disregards their opinion based on criteria that have nothing to do with their class, gender, or property ownership, but with their narrowly understood cultural prominence. I challenge, in other words, the conventional narrative about the emergence of the public sphere as a result of the revolutionary work of a cultural and political elite: as contemptible as some of them may be, I defend here the fundamental role played by “dunces,” as a distinct cultural and political category, in the process of canon formation and in the creation of the public sphere in the first half of eighteenth-century Britain.

### ***The Public Sphere Revisited***

The main outline of Habermas’s model of British development is well-known: the emergence of a public sphere at the beginning of the eighteenth-century was made possible by three major events: the funding of the bank of England (1694), which signaled a new stage in the capitalist development, the elimination of the institution of censorship (1695), which allowed an influx of rational-critical arguments in the press, and the establishment of the first cabinet government, which marked a new phase in the parliamentary development. In the literary realm, the coffee-houses became “seedbeds of political unrest” (Habermas 59), creating a public for a growing news media (Defoe’s *Review*, Tuchin’s *Observer*, Swift’s *Examiner*, etc.). In the political realm, the opposition gained momentum with Bolingroke’s *Craftsman* (1726), the first



journal openly engaged in criticism of the Crown and Parliament's decisions, and pushed for an expansion of the pre-parliamentary forum, which became more and more open to public criticism.

The limits of the Habermasian narrative about the emergence of the public sphere in eighteenth-century Britain have been thoroughly addressed by Paula McDowell, J. A. Downie, Steven Pincus, and Anthony Pollock,<sup>76</sup> among others, who have made a number of notable revisions. McDowell's critique addresses the exclusionary nature of the Habermasian public sphere, arguing that it "was not always already masculine or bourgeois" (9). On the contrary, she contends that "women of the widest possible variety of socioeconomic backgrounds played [...] a prominent role in the production and transmission" of political and religious ideas (6). Broader in scope, J. A. Downie's argument focuses on issues of chronology, censorship, public access, class denomination, and even the actual level of politicization of the literary public sphere of the time. In his opinion, the development of an effective system of print distribution occurred much earlier, during the 1640s; the Hanoverian government promoted a policy of arrest and harassment against libelers and printers that contradicts the myth about the elimination of censorship during the time; and the "public" of the coffee-houses was exclusive of women, apprentices and servants, who could not effectively inform the public opinion of the day (73). Moreover, the bourgeoisie itself was outnumbered at the time by the landed elite, who were still the ruling class in the first decades of the century. Steven Pincus's interpretation, on the other hand, addresses the content of the public debate, and reads the Habermasian public sphere as "an account of the emergence of a specific type of bourgeois discussion in the face of a specific kind of state" (216), a discussion that focuses mainly on issues of political economy. In his opinion, the public sphere

in Britain emerged in the period following the Glorious Revolution (1688), a time when “the regime accepted the principle that public discussion was valuable, and indeed essential, for a commercial society” (220). The funding of the Bank of England, an institution that first helped English manufacturers, is seen as a normal consequence of the modernizing economic policies of the post-revolutionary state. Finally, Anthony Pollock introduces into this discussion the notion of a spectatorial public sphere, a space of debate where opposing models of cultural authority (the paternalistic Whig public discourse vs. its feminist counter-model) compete in a quite fruitful way.

As seen from the examples above, the critique of the concept of public sphere addresses at least three major issues: its chronology, the issue of participation, and the problematic definition of the notion of “common concern” (Habermas 36). Whether it emerged during the 1640s, after the 1688 Revolution, or in the first decades of the eighteenth century is of less consequence in the light of more recent analyses about the existence of “multiple” or “alternative” public spheres, or of Habermas’s own observations regarding various forms of public engagement that acted at different historical moments as “substitute[s] for publicity” (Habermas 14). More important for my analysis are issues regarding the groups involved in this public debate and the nature of the conversations generated in the public arena which, although profoundly informed by the political situation of the day, did not necessarily have a political content. Nancy Fraser’s valuable analysis of the exclusions from the Habermasian public sphere dictated by gender, social status, ethnicity and property ownership, or Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge’s defense of a proletarian public sphere, are just two of the most important contributions to a more inclusive model of publicness emerging during early modernity.<sup>77</sup> The absence from

the Habermasian model of marginalized groups, or, as Fraser calls them, “subaltern counterpublics” (67) is of paramount importance, as it questions the very possibility of a democratic model, or a “universal” public sphere. Gerard Hauser’s argument for a rhetorical public sphere, on the other hand, calls attention to the benefits of considering it in the light of the issues posed for public debate, rather than the identity of the population engaged in the discourse.<sup>78</sup> His analysis focuses on features of the public sphere that include a discourse-based, rather than class-based approach, attention to its discursive practices, and awareness of the many intermediate dialogues that eventually merge in one major theme of common concern. Hauser’s discussion about the permeable boundaries of various rhetorical spheres, and the active engagement in the public debate of their members, provides a set of concepts that allow a better understanding of the digital public sphere of today, whose interactive exchanges and plurality of voices often exclude a central authority or hierarchies of any kind.

In exploring the political, religious, and cultural spaces of early eighteenth-century Britain described by Pope’s *Dunciad*, I will focus, therefore, on defending his dunces as important participants in the creation of a combustible space of public debate. While I fully embrace gender- or class-based revisions of the Habermasian model, I argue that the role of the cultural periphery, of an educated class actively engaged in civic dialogue with the intellectual elite, is fundamental for understanding the main directions of early modernity. In supporting this position, I will pay particular attention to the social networks described by the poem, from clubs and coffee-houses to other forms of association over political lines, and to their ramifications inside and outside the poem, tracing their ideological impact on articulating some of the major themes of the modern debate. Unlike Nancy Fraser, who argues for an inclusion of “subaltern”

groups in the public sphere, I contend here that Pope's dunces are engaged in concurrent discourses that place them in the same realm of public discourse with cultural authorities, rather than in a subaltern position, and that they use this publicity in ways that promote their own cultural agenda in sometimes more effective ways than their adversaries.<sup>79</sup> In doing so, I use the model of sociability practiced by the Scriblerians as a case in point, calling attention to their insufficiently explored cultural impact, and to the cultural ramifications of their public debate. This chapter attempts to demonstrate how relevant the social networking strategies were to the context of Pope's London, and the extent of his dunces' involvement in the creation of a thriving arena for ideological exchange.

### *The Dunciad's Political and Religious Spaces*

Britain's political landscape at the beginning of the eighteenth century was profoundly divided between two rival political parties: the Tories, supporters of the Stuart succession and of a High Church Anglican and Recusant Catholic heritage, and the Whigs, defenders of the Hanoverian succession and Protestantism, a position that brought them to political prominence under the two Georges.<sup>80</sup> During the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-1681, the Whigs unsuccessfully attempted to prevent James Stuart, a Roman Catholic convert, from becoming the king of England, and the Tories scored an important victory by bringing James II to the throne in 1685. This victory, though, did not last long: James II abdicated in 1688, being followed to the throne by Mary (1689), his Protestant daughter, and then by her sister, Anne (1702). After the death of Anne's only son, Prince William, Duke of Gloucester, the Act of Settlement (1701) was issued, containing clear provisions that excluded Roman Catholics from the throne. Consequently,

James II's son, James Francis Edward, was denied the right to the throne on religious grounds, the nearest Protestant claimant becoming Sophia, widow of Ernest Augustus, Elector of Hanover. Upon Queen Anne's death in 1714, Sophia's son, George I, succeeded to the throne, enjoying the vigorous support of the Whig aristocracy. He was followed, in 1727, by his son, George II, who appointed Robert Walpole as his chief minister, upon the advice of the queen consort, Caroline.

The "Whig Ascendancy" under the Hanoverians extended during the whole first half of the century, a period in which the party supported a constitutionally limited monarchy, ensured the supremacy of the Parliament, advocated civil and political liberties, and encouraged religious toleration. Robert Walpole became the direct link between the Commons and the king; in this position, he managed to consolidate the country's finances and maintain an antiwar foreign policy. On the negative side, Walpole dispensed unscrupulously the king's patronage, installing Whigs at every level of government and the church. Moreover, Walpole was a social parvenu; as Paul Langford points out, he was "the only Hanoverian Prime Minister before Addington in 1801 who did not inherit blue blood from either his father or his mother."<sup>81</sup> Connected with the urban interests of the merchants and bankers, he commandeered an expanding state apparatus maintained by means of a dense network of informers, propagandists, and undercover agents paid from secret service funds. In Roy Porter's words, "With costs and rewards so high, the arts of fixing seats, bribing voters, placing supporters, cultivating influential interests, and not least resorting to gerrymandering, graft and legal chicanery became a major part of the Hanoverian statesman's manual."<sup>82</sup> Bribery became the norm at the government level and the purchase of seats in the House of Parliament the easiest way of admission to political power of commercial

classes.<sup>83</sup> Accusations of corruption and nepotism became a frequent topic in the press, literature, and visual satire of the time, fueled by a flood of newcomers at elections, such as the East India Company nabobs, who had the financial power to promote their own political interests.<sup>84</sup>

Walpole's political authority was solidified by George II's strong leaning toward his "German business," which allowed his ally, Queen Caroline, to act as regent during the king's frequent travels abroad.<sup>85</sup> Walpole's label at the time as "the Queen's minister" described the political reality of the government in quite accurate terms.<sup>86</sup> Intellectually superior to her husband, Caroline surrounded herself with an intellectual elite, was a passionate collector of books, jewelry, portraits, and miniatures, helped introduce the practice of variolation, and supervised the redesign of the royal gardens by the main landscape designers of the day, William Kent and Charles Bridgeman. She exerted notable influence in the ecclesiastical field, appointing eight of the thirteen bishops consecrated between 1727 and 1737. Her interest in religious and philosophical matters gathered around her a circle of distinguished theologians, including Thomas Sherlock, Samuel Clarke, and Benjamin Hoadly. She famously acted as patron in the correspondence between Gottfried Leibniz and Samuel Clarke about Newtonian doctrines and the nature of free will, published in 1717. In the popular imagination, Caroline was often seen as the true ruler of the country, and consequently it was her figure, not George's, that was burned in effigy alongside Walpole's during the demonstrations against the Excise Bill of 1733.<sup>87</sup> Although such manifestations of antipathy reflected more a gender bias than a policy disagreement, they also indicated a castigation of her close association with Walpole whose disapproval rate was on the rise. Overall, her influence on Walpole prevented the minister from taking inflammatory

actions and promoted political stability in the first half of the century, aiding, in the long run, the establishment of the House of Hanover in Britain.

At the opposite pole, the Tories supported the interests of the landed aristocracy and denounced the upstart financiers and stockjobbers, whom they accused of corruption, undermining the Constitution, and political machinations. They started a more sustained anti-Walpole campaign in the 1720s, when Henry St. John, first Viscount Bolingbroke, launched the first oppositional journal, *The Craftsman* (1726). Bolingbroke's goal was to rally the Tory opposition in Parliament, as well as the discontented Whigs led by William Pulteney, and bring down Walpole as a prelude to his own return to power. To do so, he needed to bring them together around a political platform defending common political ideas, instead of party interests. This involved an active campaign that tried to render obsolete the old distinctions between Whigs and Tories, and forge a new country party meant to defend the Constitution, safeguard the liberties of the British subjects, and fight against corrupt factions that promoted their own group interests. Walpole was constantly described in the pages of this publication as the epitome of the corrupt counselor who betrayed the interests of the people, supporting, instead, the interests of the rising financial class through his adept use of royal patronage. *The Craftsman* attacked the Walpole regime on a number of recurrent issues, such as government corruption, the maintenance of a standing army, the sponsorship of a foreign policy serving the interests of foreign princes, as well as toleration of national debt and high taxes. With a circulation of over 10,000 copies around 1733, *The Craftsman* turned soon into the most important opposition journal of the time, enjoying the support of an illustrious literary circle including Pope, Swift,

and Gay. Although it didn't manage to overturn Walpole's regime, it scored some important victories, such as the withdrawal of the excise tax in 1733. The seriousness of the threat it posed to the governing class was reflected by the prompt funding of two rival journals meant to answer some of these criticisms, *The Political State of Great Britain* and *The Historical Register*, both of which published reports on Parliamentary decisions. Moreover, Walpole hired William Arnall to edit *The Free Briton*, subsidized *The Daily Courant* and *The Daily Journal*, and hired Matthew Concanen, Thomas Cooke, and William Wilkins, among others, to write pro-ministry pamphlets.<sup>88</sup> From this moment on, the press becomes, indeed, "a critical organ of a public engaged in a critical political debate" (Habermas 60), influencing political decisions and modeling an attitude of support for national welfare against narrow party interests.

The religious sphere of the time was intimately connected to the political one: the Jacobite surges of 1715 and 1745 threatened not only the Hanoverian succession, but also the Anglican Church's supremacy. As a result, the religious life in the first half of the century was highly politicized: the crown appointed the bishops, deans and canons, its 26 bishops sat by right in the House of Lords voting on the side of the king's ministers, and the church sanctioned all public demonstrations of the Crown's authority. Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, became Walpole's chief assistant in matters of religion, promoting a policy of greater toleration toward Protestant dissenters, excluding from higher positions any churchmen with inadequate Whig credentials, and endowing *Regius* professorships and scholarships for academic excellence at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge on political grounds.<sup>89</sup> Often described as "Walpole's Pope," Gibson pressed for the prosecution of libertine authors and in 1724 he secured a royal



proclamation prohibiting public masquerades, which he thought encouraged profane behavior. The politicization of the church under Gibson's bishopric was suggestively described by Gibson himself, whose declared goal was "to bring the Body of the Clergy to a liking of a Whig-Administration, or at least to an acquiescence in it, and a disposition to be quiet and easy under it."<sup>90</sup> In his *Alliance between Church and State* (1736), William Warburton, the future bishop of Gloucester, described best this relation as a partnership in which "the Church should serve the State, and the State protect the Church," and argued for a "jurisdiction assisted by coercive Power, for Reformation of Manners."<sup>91</sup>

This "natural" alliance between church and state was not always seamless: during the first half of the century it was threatened both by dissenting religious groups and by the discomfort of the political class at sharing its authority with "the praying branch of the State."<sup>92</sup> After the adoption of the Toleration Act (1689), which recognized the right of the dissenting Protestants to worship in their own chapels, the Anglican Church faced a pastoral crisis that lasted well into the eighteenth century, and which was worsened by a widespread perception that a tide of profaneness and immorality was sweeping the nation. Again, the two issues were connected in a quite intimate manner: the main conflict between dissenters—Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers, and Unitarians—and the established church was over the Anglicans' blatant sycophancy to state authorities. The dissenters' plea for the separation of church and state and parliamentary reform was rooted in their belief that the church was corrupted by its political and financial alliance with the ruling class. These ideological and political divisions were deepened during the Hanoverian rule by the frequent attacks on the

Anglican establishment by Freethinkers, who questioned the Trinity and disparaged the authority of the Church. The Bangorian Controversy, started in 1717 by Benjamin Hoadly, disputed the need of the church to function through visible organizations with distinctive markings, and through representatives who must ensure the external adherence to ritual. His argument that Christ did not delegate his authority to any representatives had significant political implications, as it questioned not only the divine right of the king, as the head of the established Church, to act as a religious primate, but, more seriously, the very necessity of a church-state coalition in ruling the nation.<sup>93</sup> Written at the request of George I, whose intention was to break the power of the House of Lords by removing the bishops from it, the sermon was immediately attacked by William Law and Thomas Sherlock, who defended the established church with arguments underlying the fact that its teachings were derived from miracle, mystery, and authority. Controversies over whether miracles existed or not continued throughout the century, with deists such as Matthew Tindal, John Toland, or Thomas Woolston arguing for a natural religion in which the supernatural intervention played no role.

The sense of the corruptibility of the church was enhanced by a gradual loss of its role as a moral guide of the nation. This trend had obvious causes in the politicization of the pastoral realm, but also in what was perceived at the time as the “abuse of Scripture-terms,” the excessive use of religious references in ordinary correspondence, as well as in the literature and polite conversation of the time. This process was described in suggestive terms in an anonymous piece published in 1743, significant for its accurate rendering of one of the most serious concerns of the age:

The Scripture-Phrase, which no serious or sensible Man ever utters but with a Degree of Reverence, is cited by such Persons with the utmost Freedom and Unreservedness, according to the different Occasion, or as may best suit their own Humour, or the Turn of the Conversation. Sometimes it is us'd to strengthen a silly Assertion, or as a Proof of some idle Opinion. Sometimes to give a quicker Sting to a Piece of Satyr; and very frequently is tagg'd to the End of a long Story, to enliven the Conclusion, and send it off in a Blaze. There's many a foolish Woman that would not be thought to use an indecent or obscene Expression for the World, that will sit an hour together and apply Scripture-Terms in this manner: And many a weak Man, who thinks very ill of another that Curses, and Swears in his ordinary Discourse, and yet will make no scruple very freely to use an Apostle's Name on every Occasion, to talk with great familiarity of Peter and Paul, and rehearse their Precepts and Sentiments in the most low and ludicrous Manner.<sup>94</sup>

This excerpt calls attention to the blatant incongruence between one's real character and his or her inflated discourse, between authentic faith and the verbal expression of this faith, cunningly used for its rhetorical effects. The reference to the satire's "sting" is not accidental; Swift and Pope are both referred to in the piece, as examples of wits who burlesqued whole passages of Scripture in a manner that only "a very little Genius might have done" (20). Moreover, the "different occasions" mentioned above are clarified later as "public occurrences" during which references to sacred texts are used "to give the whole a Political shape," a method thoroughly employed "by all School-Boys, Orators, and Under-writers to Magazines and Journals" (23-24). The excerpt is significant not only for its open critique of the intense process of secularization ongoing at the time, but also for its underlying message that literature and politics, public and private realms are becoming increasingly intertwined, creating a public of all genders and social strands that participates in a process of ideological exchange by engaging in "conversation" and public "discourse." The "weak Man" and the "foolish Woman" are taking liberties unheard of before, expressing ideas and supporting them, as "ludicrous" as this may be, with references

from sacred books they internalized and then shared as consumers of printed texts. This process of secularization is thus seen as intimately connected to an influx of rational, gender-inclusive debate in the public sphere, as well as to an equally alarming process of misrepresentation of the real purpose of the official church through the blatant politicization of its message and role in the fabric of the nation.



You may strut, dapper George, but 'twill all be in vain,  
We all know 'tis Queen Caroline, not you, that reigns.  
(Popular verse)

In moderation placing all my glory,  
Whilst Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory...  
(Alexander Pope, *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated*, 1733)

How much of this complicated political and religious landscape of the first half of the century is absorbed in Pope's *Dunciad*? How accurate is his representation of the realities of his time in the poem, and what does a correct reading of his satire bring to the understanding of the ideological structures of the period? To what extent does this "version of history for their age" proposed by Pope's satires betray the author's beliefs, biases, or less obvious affiliations?<sup>95</sup> One of the premises of my argument is that the mapping out of the religious and political landscape of his time in *The Dunciad* is more precise than generally acknowledged, and that this is the very reason why the distorting "glass" of Pope's satire works so effectively in sorting out real value from short-lived fads, partisan support, and political propaganda. In other words, Pope's indirectness of attack needs to be read as concealing the author's intimate engagement with the political reality of his time, as conveyed by the networks of relations developed among his dunces and the events in which they are engaged inside and outside the poem. While the social

networks in which some of his main protagonists are engaged are explored in a different chapter, I focus here on some of the plot networks developed in the poem, and on how the historical information embedded in his satire is reflective of Pope's own ethical, cultural, and political beliefs.

In a letter to Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, dated November 20, 1717, Pope unveiled his political and religious credo in the following words:

I'll tell you my politick and religious sentiments in a few words. In my politicks, I think no further than how to preserve the peace of my life, in any government under which I live; nor in my religions, than to preserve the peace of my conscience in any Church with which I communicate. I hope all churches and all governments are so far of God, as they are rightly understood, and rightly administered: and where they are, or may be wrong, I leave it to God alone to mend or reform them; which whenever he does, it must be by greater instruments than I am. I am not a Papist, for I renounce the temporal invasions of the papal power, and detest their arrogated authority over Princes, and States. I am a Catholick, in the strictest sense of the word. If I was born under an absolute Prince, I would be a quiet subject; but I thank God I was not. I have a due sense of the excellence of the British constitution. In a word, the things I have always wished to see are not a Roman Catholick, or a French Catholick, or a Spanish Catholick, but a true Catholic: and not a King of Whigs, or a King of Tories, but a King of England.<sup>96</sup>

The letter is addressed by Pope to one of his closest friends, but also the one who initiated the Jacobite Conspiracy of 1722 (the "Atterbury Plot"), and it reads as a considerate refusal to take sides against Protestantism motivated by arguments formulated in managerial rather than spiritual terms. A "rightly administered" government excludes partisanship of any kind, and hence Pope's initial endorsement of George I, whose attempt at a separation of the Church and State reflects the poet's own belief that "Papist" intrusions in the internal affairs of the states cannot have positive outcomes on matters relevant to the secular realm.<sup>97</sup> The whole argument is built through indirections: if Pope had been born under "an absolute Prince"—which George I was

not—he would have kept his beliefs to himself—which he doesn’t, because of the climate of freedom of speech and religious toleration encouraged by the new King. Pope’s self-described pacifist attitude, both in politics and religion, reflects his wise reaction to the recent events of 1715, when the Pretender’s supporters unsuccessfully tried to bring James III to the throne. It echoes, again, George I’s moderate attitude toward the insurgents: the King encouraged the government to show leniency, used some of the revenue from forfeited estates for establishing Scots-speaking schools and for paying off part of the national debt, and showed, overall, a “win hearts and minds” policy meant to appease the rebels. Although the description of a nonpartisan “King of England” expressed more wishful thinking on Pope’s part than the political reality of the time, his “peace”-loving and political neutrality will turn into a leitmotif of his whole career and a convenient façade behind which he successfully pursued his own goals.

As a Tory and a Roman Catholic, however, Pope was in a particularly difficult position.<sup>98</sup> Pope’s father, a converted Roman Catholic merchant, had been forced to leave London for the village of Binfield, close to Windsor Forest, as a result of the religious and economic persecutions enforced by the Williamite regime. After the Jacobite rising of 1715, the family is forced again to move to Chiswick, following their refusal to take the oath of allegiance. Pope himself suffered the consequences of the Test Acts of 1673 and 1678, which banned Catholics from teaching, attending a university, voting, or holding public office: he received almost no formal education, being taught to read by his aunt, Elizabeth Turner, and then learning Latin and Greek from John Taverner, his family’s priest. During his adult years, Pope tried to make friends with writers from both sides of the political divide, but he was always considered an outsider among the Whigs. His closest friends, John Gay, Jonathan Swift, Thomas Parnell, John

Arbuthnot, and Henry St. John, first Viscount Bolingbroke, were all Tories, as were a large number of the subscribers to his translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.<sup>99</sup> When he did make friends with Whig writers, such as Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, some of these relationships turned sour: Addison, for instance, would insidiously attack the poet's translation of the *Iliad* by prompting Thomas Tickell to publish a new version of the epic, which Addison corrected himself, and he may even have paid Charles Gildon to attack Pope.<sup>100</sup> Pope's sympathies were therefore clearly pro-Tory, in spite of his vocally declared political moderation: he dedicated his *Rape of the Lock* (1712; 1714), for instance, to John Caryll, a member of a known Jacobite family and a staunch defender of Catholicism in west Sussex, and *Windsor Forest* (1713) to George Granville, Baron Lansdowne, one of the major Tory politicians during the reign of Queen Anne.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, his literary career was split from the very beginning along political lines. Pope's publication of his *Pastorals* in 1709 occasioned a rivalry between his Tory admirers and the Whig supporters of Ambrose Phillips, who had his pastorals published in the same volume. John Dennis, the most reputed critic of the time and a well-known Whig devotee, launched his 20-year long campaign against Pope after his publication of *An Essay on Criticism* in 1711, a campaign that played an important role in the election of Colley Cibber as Poet Laureate to George II in 1730, despite his poetic ineptitude. An overwhelming majority of his dunces were Whig devotees who had attacked Pope vigorously before and especially after the publication of *Peri Bathous*. Pope's Catholic background and Tory leanings limited his access to the literary circles of the time, and made impossible his official endorsement as the most important poet of the first half of the century, causing his bitter mockery of the institution of laureateship throughout his career.

*The Dunciad in Four Books* (1743) reflects much of Pope's antipathy for the political subservience of many authors of the time, as well as his lack of faith in the Hanoverians' ability to bring the nation to the glory it knew under the Stuarts. The poem contains overt or slyly veiled references to the political regime of the time at almost every line, and the general allegory it develops—Queen Dulness taking over Britannia and instating an empire of “Universal Darkness” on British grounds—can be easily read as a satirical demonstration of the nation's cultural regress under the Hanoverians. A quick survey of the major themes of political and religious concern that appear in the poem will give a suggestive image of the nature of Pope's critique and of the intricate, self-defending strategies he employed in conveying it.

Although there are only six references by name to King George II in the poem, all of them placed in apparently innocuous contexts, they reveal themselves as deeply subversive when analyzed in some detail. The first one occurs toward the end of the very first note to the title of *The Dunciad*: Richard Bentley, one of the ablest English classicists of his time and one of Pope's favorite dunces, launches himself in a rigorous explanation of the fact that Cibber, and not Theobald, is the “true Hero” of the poem. The argument is that Theobald “was never an Author in fashion, or caressed by the Great” and that he has never “had a Son so exactly like him, in his poetical, theatrical, political and moral Capacities.” Interestingly, though, Cibber's name is never stated in this note. Instead, the commentary contains an intriguing reference to the poem being “presented by the Hands of Sir Robert Walpole to King George II,” and ends with a line from the poem making clear reference to the royal succession: “Still Dunc the second reign'd like Dunc the first.” It is known that Walpole offered George II a copy of *The Dunciad Variorum*, and that, according to Arbuthnot, the king declared the author “a very honest man.” However, the remark



that Walpole offered the king the poem, followed in the next sentence by an observation about the hero being the one “who brings/The Smithfield Muses to the ear of kings” establishes an immediate association between the political and cultural realms: Walpole and Cibber play a similar role as political and cultural agents who bring the low amusements and corrupt practices of the city to the polite society of the court. Furthermore, if we go back to the reference to the “Laurel” crowning the hero of the poem, the note becomes even more subversive: Bentley’s reading of the “Dunce the second” as being Theophilus Cibber, Cibber’s son, makes no sense in the context of the cultural succession of the laureateship from Laurence Eusden to Colley Cibber. However, it makes a lot of sense in the context of the royal succession from father to son, from George I to George II, and of the reference to the royal laurel: the coronation medals issued in 1727 and engraved by John Croker show, indeed, on one side the bust of George II wearing a laurel crown. Bentley’s system of references establishes, thus, a number of dubious associations between Walpole and Cibber, as agents bringing undignified practices to the court, and Kings George I and II, as possible targets of the poem, a clear pointer that the political and cultural spheres were seen as fundamentally interconnected at the time.

The next direct reference to George II occurs in the note to line 2 of the poem, and clarifies that the “Kings” during whose reigns Cibber brought to Court “the shews, machines, and dramatical entertainments, formerly agreeable only to the taste of the Rabble” are, indeed the two Georges. These are, according to the same note sending the readers to Book III of the poem, the kings under whom, according to Settle’s prophecies, “the nation shall be over-run with Farces, Operas, and Shows,” the throne of Dulness “shall be advanced over the Theatres, and set up even at Court,” and Dulness’s sons “shall reside in the seats of Arts and Sciences” (*Argument*

to *Book III*). Although cross-referenced, the critique of the debased cultural life under the Hanoverians is explicit, and George II's commentary about the "honesty" of the author is nothing but hilarious in the context of Pope's argument about the dullness of the king ruling over "the Island of Great Britain." Another direct reference to George II occurs in a note by John Dennis (Book I, verse 106), in which the critic politicizes his response to Pope's translation of Homer by declaring his "duty to King George, whose faithful subject I am [...] to pull the lion's skin from his [Pope's] little ass, which popular error has thrown round him." The note, again, speaks for itself: Dennis's duty to his king is to disclose the lack of competence of the author attacked, but in doing so, he only reveals his moral and critical flaws: his trumpeted love to his country and king indicates his political sycophancy, not the attacked author's incompetence, while his so-called critique is just a shameless mockery of Pope's physical deformity, without any relevance to his artistic ability. Moreover, Dennis's attempt to demonstrate George II, who was a Hanoverian, that Pope has "neither sense in his thoughts, nor English in his expressions" indirectly speaks of royal sensitivities that the critic should have left untouched.

Finally, the note to line 297, Book III, is Pope's defense against Matthew Concanen's accusations that the blanks in the first edition of the poem "must needs mean no body but *King GEORGE* and *Queen CAROLINE*," and is indicative of a reading of the poem as a veiled attack against the Hanoverian regime at the time of its publication. Although the note appears in a context speaking of Settle's pantomimes, the reference is intensely politicized: Settle's party transgressions from Tories to Whigs are alluded to in his transformation into a green dragon on the stage, and the blank spaces inadvertently filled in by Concanen with the king and queen's names are replaced in the final version of the poem with references to "the Patriot" and "the

Courtier” that, again, may imply Pope’s disillusion with the Patriot opposition to Walpole, and his pose of political moderation. The same (improbable) alliance between the poet and the king along cultural lines is also suggested in a note to the Letter to Publisher, where Pope mentions a translation of *The Rape of the Lock* in Italian by the Marquis Rangoni, included in his volume, *Envoy Extraordinary from Modena to King George II* (most likely mentioned, just as in *The Dunciad*’s case, for *not* being read by the king, due to the language barrier). The common denominator of these overt references to George II is Pope’s message of political moderation, on the one hand, and his deliberate use of references and cross-references to imply a coincidence between Dulness’s son and the Hanoverian king, on the other.

The rest of the allusions to George II, such as the long episode of Cibber’s coronation in Book II that might have mimicked the king’s coronation ceremony in 1727,<sup>102</sup> or the illustrations designed by Pope that appeared in various editions of the poem,<sup>103</sup> are covert and circumstantial, just like the possible identification of Queen Dulness with Queen Caroline throughout the poem, and especially in the fourth book of *The Dunciad*. In Queen Caroline’s case, though, the satire is more acid, pointed, and specific than in the King’s case: although she is called by name in only six instances throughout the poem, Caroline is constantly alluded to in the cloud of contextual and subtextual references that surrounds the poem. If we leave aside Concanen’s incorrect reading of Pope’s blanks as a reference to the royal couple and the Index entry mentioning the queen, the only episode in which Caroline’s name is repeatedly mentioned is the well-known carnation episode in Book IV of *The Dunciad*:

The first thus open’d: Hear thy suppliant’s call,  
Great Queen, and common Mother of us all!  
Fair from its humble bed I rear’d this Flow’r,

Suckled, and chear'd, with air, and sun, and show'r,  
 Soft on the paper ruff its leaves I spread,  
 Bright with the gilded button tipt its head,  
 Then thron'd in glass, and nam'd it CAROLINE:  
 Each Maid cry'd, charming! and each Youth, divine!  
 Did Nature's pencil ever blend such rays,  
 Such vary'd light in one promiscuous blaze?  
 Now prostrate! dead! behold that Caroline:  
 No Maid cries, charming! and no Youth, divine!  
 And lo the wretch! whose vile, whose insect lust  
 Lay'd this gay daughter of the Spring in dust.  
 Oh punish him, or to th'Elysian shades  
 Dismiss my soul, where no Carnation fades.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV, 403-414)

The episode is a satire on the fashion of naming floral varieties after celebrities, and alludes to Queen Caroline's passion for gardening and landscaping. "The ambitious Gardiner at Hammersmith" presents the carnation to Queen Dulness, decrying its death due to the "insect lust" of a fellow entomologist chasing his butterfly without care for the fragile shelter where it had rested, and asks for his banishment to the Elysian fields, the final resting place of the souls of the virtuous/virtuosos. The whole episode has the intricate architecture of a Russian doll: the Queen is offered a flower bearing the name Caroline, while the story told by the gardener is an allegorical description of the actual Queen Caroline's death, in 1737, in excruciating pains probably caused by the after-effects of an umbilical rupture during the birth of her last child. The details of Caroline's death invite, indeed, a reading of the "insect lust" as a reference to George II's connubial visits, and also to his chasing more than butterflies during his well-known extramarital excursions. Moreover, the episode appears within a book addressing the complete obliteration of learning in Britain under Dulness's rule, and contains specific references to "tasteless admirers" and "vain Pretenders," flatterers and patrons of dunces, antiquaries and

virtuosos, “minute philosophers” and freethinkers which make the associations between Queen Dulness and Caroline transparent enough.

The rest of the references to Queen Caroline are purposefully oblique, although their reading in a non-fictional register works like a charm. The physical description of Dulness as “Laborious, heavy, busy, bold, and blind” (l. 15) in Book I reflects some of the features of Queen Caroline, whose 1737 portrait by Joseph Highmore, for instance, presents her as an imposing character, obviously marked by her nine pregnancies.<sup>104</sup> The beginning of Book III contains the famous Madonna and Child tableau, in which “On Dulness’ lap th’ Anointed head repos’d,” a transparent reference to Queen Caroline’s active involvement in the political life, in striking contrast with King George II’s passivity or mere indifference during her life. The lines about the Pedant “with an easy mien,/As if he saw St. James’s and the Queen” (l. 279-280) in Book IV have been read as an allusion to Frederick, Prince of Wales,<sup>105</sup> the eldest son of the royal couple, a patron of the arts and especially of Opera of Nobility in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, whose bad relationship with his parents was notorious at the time. Moreover, Queen Dulness is repeatedly referred to in her capacity of patron (“Next bidding all draw near on bended knees, /The Queen confers her *Titles* and *Degrees*,” IV, l. 565-566) and as being surrounded by Ministers employing similar practices to reach their political goals.

In turn, Robert Walpole is transparently alluded to in a number of instances, such as the scene in which Cibber ponders over staying loyal to the Whigs, or selling himself to the Tories, shortly before his coronation as King of the Dunces:

Shall I, like Curtius, desp'rate in my zeal,  
O'er head and ears plunge for the Commonweal?  
Or rob Rome's ancient geese of all their glories,

And cackling save the Monarchy of Tories?  
 Hold—to the Minister I more incline;  
 To serve his cause, O Queen! is serving thine.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, 209-214)

The attack against Walpole is either disguised under superlative remarks, when his name is explicitly mentioned, or overtly derogatory, when the Prime Minister is referred to under the sobriquet Magus or Palinurus. In *Ricardus Aristarchus on the Hero of the Poem*, for instance, Cibber is quoted comparing himself in his *Apology* with “Sir ROBERT WALPOLE, for good Government while in power,” a reference to Cibber’s joint leadership of the Drury Lane theater for twenty-four years, and to his ability to defuse the potentially explosive quarrels of his associates, Thomas Doggett and Robert Wilks. Similarly, the Walpole-Townsend joint leadership during the rule of the two Georges marked important victories during the South Sea Bubble (1720), and Atterbury Plot (1722), brought to an end the Whig Schism by joining the Sunderland-Stanhope ministry in the early 1720s, and played an important role in the reconciliation of George I with the Prince of Wales (the future George II). As the Earl of Chesterfield, one of the leaders of the Walpole opposition, described him, Walpole was “the ablest parliament man, and the ablest manager of parliament” that ever lived, getting the King’s business through the Commons and taking lead in defending the government’s policy across the full range of its activities for twenty years.<sup>106</sup> The note to line 148 in Book IV makes reference to the “youthful Senators... under the undue influence” of their Master, another allusion to Walpole’s daunting management of Parliament through pensions and places distributed to the MPs, which ensured him a parliamentary majority. The attack is reiterated in the lines 599-602, which describe him as the “daring son” of Dulness, and an able manipulator of the tensions

existing between the two Georges; the lines help identify the actual character through his public function (“Princes are but things/Born for First Ministers, as Slaves for Kings.”). At other point, Walpole is alluded to in the figure of Dulness’s High Priest, Magus, or “Wizard Old,” who is described as causing “a total oblivion of all Obligations, divine, civil, moral, or rational” (*Argument to Book IV*). Pope refers here, again, to Walpole’s “Robinocracy,” or interested dispense of pensions and sinecures to govern the Parliament, one of the leitmotifs of the Patriot opposition, but also to Caroline’s complete support of “her” minister’s policy. Indeed, a telling remark of Lady Cowper points to the fact that the future George II was “guided” by his wife, who was “engross’d & Monopolis’d” by Walpole “to a degree of shutting every body out & making her deaf to every thing [that] did not come from him.”<sup>107</sup> One of the most interesting references to the minister appears in the final episode of the poem describing the goddess’s great yawn, to which Walpole/Palinurus himself falls victim:

Lost was the Nation’s Sense, nor could be found,  
While the long solemn Unison went round:  
Wide, and more wide, it spread o’er all the realm;  
Ev’n Palinurus nodded at the Helm:  
The Vapour mild o’er each Committee crept;  
Unfinish’d Treaties in each Office slept;  
And Chiefless Armies doz’d out the Campaign;  
And Navies yawn’d for Orders on the Main.  
O Muse! relate (for you can tell alone,  
Wits have short Memories, and Dunces none)  
Relate, who first, who last resign’d to rest;  
Whose Heads she partly, whose completely blest;  
What Charms could Faction, what Ambition lull,  
The Venal quiet, and intrance the Dull;  
’Till drown’d was Sense, and Shame, and Right, and Wrong—  
O sing, and hush the Nations with thy Song!  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV, 611-626)

In Howard Erskine-Hill's opinion, the implication of these lines is that, with Walpole gone (the Prime Minister resigned in 1742, shortly before the publication of *The New Dunciad*), the political world is left without direction, and therefore the episode "does a kind of honor to the great Prime Minister."<sup>108</sup> Pope's note, though, seems to point in a different direction. The note explains that the verses had been written years before the publication of the poem, and that they appeared in a volume of *State Poems*, or political verse, that Pope actually owned. Indeed, the lines 617-618 ("And Chiefless Armies doz'd out the Campaign;/And Navies yawn'd for Orders on the Main.") are strikingly similar to the ones in Charles Montagu, Earl of Halifax's poem, "Orpheus and Margarita," a satire on the power of the singer Margherita de L'Epine to seduce statesmen from duty, which had been published in 1705. By calling attention to the inexact chronology, however, Pope tries to distract from the actual message of the lines: Walpole's failure to answer properly to the depredations committed by Spanish coastguards against British merchants trading with South America and the Caribbean in 1738. The Prime Minister's determination to secure a peaceful settlement with Spain, intensely attacked by the opposition, has been seen as the beginning of the disintegration of Walpole's administration, causing the biggest Lords division of the Walpole period. The victimization of the Prime Minister suggested by the note (like the statesmen in Montagu's poem, Walpole is a victim of Dulness's yawn), is therefore just a falsely sympathetic reference to Walpole's induced decision-paralysis; the correct chronology points to the fact that Walpole fell as result of his own actions, and not because of his compliance to the Queen's orders (Caroline had died five years earlier, in 1737).

The whole discussion about the role of the royal couple in governing the country is developed throughout the poem with reference to their relation to the ministers of state,



conglobed like “The buzzing Bees about their dusky Queen,” and engaging in this support system their own “band of ministerial writers” serving the Whig interests. The ripple effect of corruption seems to spread, thus, from the royal couple to the social periphery, and the wealth of specific details about the political involvement of the press in supporting Walpole’s policies helps identify this couple with George II and Caroline. A note to line 314, for instance, is an acid attack against the corrupt practices of the political gazetteers, and explicitly identifies the Prime Minister as their patron by including information from a 1742 parliamentary report drafted by Walpole’s opponents after his resignation:

[...] the *Daily Gazetteer* was a title given very properly to certain papers, each of which lasted but a day. Into this, as a common sink, was received all the trash, which had been before dispersed in several Journals, and circulated at the public expence of the nation. The authors were the same obscure men; though sometimes relieved by occasional essays from Statesmen, Courtiers, Bishops, Deans, and Doctors. The meaner sort were rewarded with Money; others with Places or Benefices, from an hundred to a thousand a year. It appears from the *Report* of the *Secret Committee* for enquiring into the Conduct of R[obert Walpole] Earl of O[xford] “That no less than *fifty-thousand, seventy-seven pounds, eighteen shillings*, were paid to Authors and Printers of News-papers, such as Free-Britons, Daily-Courants, Corn-Cutter's Journals, Gazetteers, and other political papers, between Feb. 10, 1731 and Feb. 10, 1741.” Which shews the Benevolence of One Minister to have expended, for the current dulness of ten years in Britain, double the sum which gained Louis XIV so much honour, in annual Pensions to Learned men all over Europe. In which, and in a much longer time, not a Pension at Court, nor Preferment in the Church or Universities, of any Consideration, was bestowed on any man distinguished for his Learning separately from Party-merit, or Pamphlet-writing.

It is worth a reflection, that of all the Panegyrics bestowed by these writers on this great Minister, not one is at this day extant or remembered; nor even so much credit done to his Personal character by all they have written, as by one short occasional compliment of our Author. (II, note to l. 314)

A few recurring themes can be identified in the above note: the cultural medley of “trash” writings and essays by distinguished authors that these journals hosted in their pages, the reward

system cultivated by the Walpole administration, the exorbitant amounts paid from taxpayers' money for promoting narrow party interests, and the active involvement of both political and clerical figures in endorsing the decisions of the ruling party. Some of these figures have been identified by James Ralph, a co-editor with Henry Fielding of the virulently anti-governmental journal *The Champion*, as Dr. Henry Bland, Dean of Durham and close friend with Walpole since their years at Eton college, Dr. Francis Hare, Bishop of Chichester and tutor of Walpole at Cambridge, and Horatio Walpole, Whig diplomat and brother of the Prime Minister.<sup>109</sup> To this list can be added the names of other personalities who are directly attacked by Pope in his satire: Thomas Sherlock, Bishop of London, another school friend of Sir Robert Walpole and a favorite of Queen Caroline who supported his appointments to bishoprics of Bangor and Salisbury; John Potter, Archbishop of Canterbury, a committed supporter of the Hanoverians who enjoyed the patronage of the queen and other leading figures in the Whig party; and Jonathan Smedley, Church of Ireland Dean of Clogher, a bold attacker of Pope in *The Daily Journal* and *The Flying Post*, and one of Swift's literary and clerical rivals.<sup>110</sup> Other names include William Arnall, the best paid government journalist in London, who published against Pope in *Mist's Weekly Journal* and contributed pro-Walpolean articles to *The British Journal*, *The Free Briton* and *The Daily Gazetteer*;<sup>111</sup> John Henley, a controversial preacher and the publisher of the pro-ministerial *Hyp Doctor*; George Ridpath, editor of the Whig paper *The Flying Post*; Ambrose Philips, the founder of the Whig periodical *The Freethinker* (1718-1721) and a constant accuser of Pope for being "an Enemy to the Government" (III, note to l. 326); and Colley Cibber himself, who contributed to the government newssheets such as *The Daily Courant*. "The current dullness of ten years in Britain" is thus directly associated to the corrupt practices promoted by the Walpole

regime, and the Prime Minister's resignation in 1742 is seen by Pope as the end of the intensely partisan journalism that marred the political landscape of Britain in the first half of the century.<sup>112</sup>

The density of references in *The Dunciad* to various clerical figures from all shades of the religious spectrum is an indicator of the royal couple's interest, and especially Queen Caroline's, in strengthening the relationship between the political administration and the Church of England. As such, the identification of the Queen with the "mighty Dulness" is strongly, albeit circuitously, emphasized: while in the first versions of *The Dunciad* Smedley is Dulness's high priest, in *The Dunciad in Four Books* his place is taken by John Potter, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose promotion due to the Queen's insistent interventions is well-known. Lines 355-364 of Book II, describe the "low-born, cell-bred, servile band" of clerical dunces who "dedicate themselves for venal and corrupt ends to [...] Ministers or Factions" and "flatter the follies of the Great," a clear reference to the Walpole-Caroline political alliance. This satire is just a prologue to the longer attack against various trends in religious thought in Book IV, lines 451-492, where the identification by function helps establishing connections between clergy and political class: Samuel Clarke, one of the "modern" theologians favored by Queen Caroline, is attacked in the figure of the "gloomy Clerk" and accused of being an "irreligious Sceptic" as well as a supporter of the Newtonianism and natural philosophy. Another attack against the freethinkers' "false religion" that "makes God after Man's Image" may refer to Thomas Gordon, pamphleteer and classical scholar who displayed a blatant anti-clericalism in *The Independent Whig*, and served as Walpole's literary supervisor of his government-subsidized journalism after 1723.<sup>113</sup>

Other references to clerical figures in the same episode are less obviously political, emphasizing, instead, the growing influence of the physical sciences in the first half of the century. John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester, one of the earliest promoters of natural theology and one of the founders of the Royal Society, is attacked as a deviser of irrational schemes to visit the Moon. John Craig, mathematician and Church of England clergyman, is mocked for his use of “Moral,” i.e. indemonstrable evidence, in calculating the probability of past events “to disappear,” as elaborated in his *Theologiae Christianae Principia Mathematica* (1699). Matthew Tindal, freethinker and religious controversialist, is mentioned by name three times, and also alluded to in the discussion about the “high Priori Road” (IV, l. 470), a reference to a contentious position he defended in his *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730), the “deists’ Bible.” The main accusation against Tindal involves his *a priori* deism, or an impulse to start “from an *invisible God*” and rationalize “downward, to a *visible world*,” a line of thought that renders one incapable of accounting for the evil that exists in the realm of God’s creation. Ralph Cudworth, theologian and anti-materialist philosopher, is evoked in the reference to the “Plastick Nature” of the “Original of all things,”<sup>114</sup> while Richard Bentley, distinguished philologist and classical scholar, can be identified in the reference to the “Elastic Fluid,” or, in Bentley’s own words, “elastic or springy Particles”<sup>115</sup> that expand themselves, an allusion to his support for the Newtonian principles of natural philosophy which the orthodox rejected as blasphemous. Pope also attacks philosopher Thomas Hobbes for his defining of God within a materialist framework—as “diffuse[d] in Space” (l. 476)—a clear reference to his *Answer to Bishop Bramhall* (1682) where he describes God as a sort of extended presence mixed through and able to affect all the things in the world.<sup>116</sup> In the same episode, a reference to “the third of some succeeding

Philosophers” alludes to Henry More, distinguished theologian and founder of latitudinarianism, who argued that the “Spirit of Nature” was capable of extension in space.<sup>117</sup>

In the light of his open attack against notable freethinkers throughout the poem, the assertion that Pope’s ideology is one of ambivalent “Catholic deism” is difficult to accept.<sup>118</sup> Brian Young’s argument that, under the influence of Bolingbroke (a well-known freethinker himself), Pope “had to manage a balancing act between Erasmian Catholicism and deism,” and that “Warburton came along to provide his poetry with a respectable Anglican veneer” doesn’t seem to be supported by a historicized reading of the text, as the critic himself suggests (124-125). One of Pope’s most prominent dunces, Ambrose Philips, is the founder of *The Freethinker*. Explicit references to Toland, Tindal, and Woolston, all known freethinkers, are kept in the successive versions of the poem, and reinforced in the 1743 edition of *The Dunciad* in the expanded satire of various religious fads from Book IV. In the Index of Matters, Pope’s series of implicit comparisons between “Virtuosi in Science,” “Freethinkers in Religion,” and “Slaves and Dependents in Government,” establishes a clear analogy among freethinkers and categories of reasoners whose common denominator is, in Pope’s opinion, the very lack, or misuse, of their reasoning abilities. The same mockery of the freethinkers surfaces in a number of Pope’s texts throughout his career. I will only mention here Chapter XII of the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, where the pedant’s correspondence with the freethinkers at the Grecian Coffee-House attacks the very tenets of their ideology,<sup>119</sup> and follows in great detail the debate between the metaphysician Samuel Clarke and the deist Anthony Collins over the materiality of the soul.<sup>120</sup> The text is particularly interesting to us given the telling application of the “particle” theory to the body politic, by providing a mechanist explanation of the “maxim of the English Law, that

the *King never dies*” (139). By allowing freethinkers to explain the royal succession through rational instead of spiritual arguments, the author points to the implied anticlericalism and political dissidence they promote. Pope’s attack against freethinkers from a position of religious orthodoxy may, thus, entail two different things: that they represented a common enemy against which both the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholics should unite forces, and that they infiltrated the highest circles of the royal court, through their interested support, in press and from the pulpit, of the Walpolean regime.

### *The Dunciad’s Cultural Spaces*

The cultural life in early eighteenth-century Britain was characterized by a climate of vibrant intellectual exchange that encouraged a lively public dialogue on a variety of issues of common concern. It was an epoch that witnessed a strong flourishing of sciences under the aegis of the Royal Society, a diversification of the popular and elite entertainments, an explosion of the print industry, an introduction of new literary genres, a reshaping of the stage in its theatric and operatic form, an emergence of the publicity and celebrity culture, and a decisive offensive by women writers on the literary marketplace. It was also an epoch of great ideological debates, be they about the prevalence of the ancient or the modern culture, conflicting theories of the sublime, the morality of the stage, the legitimacy of new cultural practices, or the emerging notions of individual freedom, democracy, tolerance, and egalitarianism, which paved the way to civic participation for more diverse social groups. These debates were increasingly held in public spaces such as coffee houses, clubs, societies, literary salons or in the ideological avenue offered by the press, were more inclusive in terms of participation, and divided the public in

ideologically more cohesive social groups. Literature reflected social concerns with a new immediacy and with more attention to their moral implications, bringing to public debate fads, attitudes, behaviors, and ethical issues which were sorted out through a lively dialogue involving social groups with clear camp affiliations and support systems.

A culture of sociability that values the rational exchange of ideas over class, gender, and ideological affiliations bears obvious political implications. In London alone there were around 2,000 coffee-houses by 1714, many of them clearly split along political lines: Tories frequented places like Ozinda's, the Cocoa Tree, or the fashionable White's, while Whigs were regular visitors of St James's.<sup>121</sup> Jonathan's in Change Alley was the nucleus from which emerged the English Stock Exchange.<sup>122</sup> Dick's, Will's and the Grecian were rendezvous places for the wits, Man's Coffee-House catered for stockjobbers, Child's was frequented by clergymen, Old Slaughter's by artists, Button's by authors, Smyrna by a learned society of musicians, poets, and politicians, and so on. Providing their clients with a generous supply of newspapers, tracts, pamphlets, and broadsides, the coffee-houses turned into important centers for the dissemination of ideas and political debate. Clubs like the Kit-Cat, frequented by Robert Walpole and Joseph Addison, among others, or the Scriblerians, which included Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot and Gay, had a politically inflected cultural agenda, while places like the Literary Club, founded by Sir Joshua Reynolds, or the Brooks', one of London's most exclusive gentlemen's clubs, were organized around the artistic and scientific interests of their members. A remarkable feature of the time is the formation of the women's clubs, such as the Bluestockings (in the 1750s), or of clubs that included a mixed membership in terms of gender, such as the Hillarians (1720-1724), where politics, public affairs and religious topics often sparked heated debates.<sup>123</sup>

In this intellectually ebullient environment, a significant number of societies emerge, organized around common moral, scientific, or artistic goals. The interest in Greek and Roman antiquities during the Hanoverians gives rise to the culture of collection and the museum, and triggers a new fascination with archeology, travelling, landscaping, and homebuilding in the neoclassical style. Started as a dining club whose members had enjoyed the excitement of the Grand Tour, The Society of Dilettanti (1734), which included David Garrick, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, developed into an active sponsor of archeological excavations. The Royal Society of London (1660) had its origins in two coffee-houses frequented by Robert Boyle, Christopher Wren, and Thomas Sprat.<sup>124</sup> Presided over, in the first half of the century, by Sir Isaac Newton and Sir Hans Sloane, it included a diverse membership, most of it made up of non-scientists, a clear indicator of the live interest in scientific investigation of the early eighteenth-century public. The Society for the Reformation of Manners (1691), one of whose most tireless supporters was Rev. Josiah Woodward, attempted to correct the profanity and lewdness of the times, as well as strengthen the role of Anglicanism by aligning it more closely with the Whig administration. This diversification of the public's interests and of the avenues of sharing them had important consequences: not only did it legitimize a sense of national identity, but also indicated a reorganization of the social fabric around patterns of relations that were increasingly public and dialogic in nature.

The popular entertainments, which included the theater, the fair, the pantomime, the opera, the menagerie at the Tower, the madmen of Bedlam, as well as a whole array of public ceremonies endorsing the Hanoverian regime, described "an itinerary of urban pleasure-hunts"<sup>125</sup> that turned London into a cultural center attracting the most diverse social categories in



commonly shared spaces. The altered design of the playhouses, with more expensive stage-, front-, and side-boxes, and cheaper first and second galleries, allowed a mixed spectatorship to comment on the performance and the actors to engage with the public through asides about facts happening on or outside of the stage, which became one of the distinctive characteristics of the eighteenth-century spectacle. Expectedly, such asides were often politically loaded, and in Fielding's, Gay's or Carey's plays, particularly critical of the Walpolean regime.<sup>126</sup> In order to keep under control the increasing wave of anti-governmental criticism, the Parliament passed the Licensing Act in 1737, closing all non-patent theatres with the exception of the Theatres Royal at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and confining Italian opera to the King's Theater. The act gave the Lord Chamberlain the power to approve any play before being staged, which resulted in an immediate decrease in the number of new plays; they would be replaced by stage revivals and adaptations, a genre in which Colley Cibber, the manager of Drury Lane, was particularly successful. Consequently, actors looked for alternative venues in which to perform, such as Bartholomew Fair, whose fortnight-long entertainments also featured "sideshowes, rope-dancers, wire-walkers, acrobats, puppets, freaks and sometimes wild animals."<sup>127</sup> Women started acting upon the stage, more sophisticated scenery and machines were used for spectacular effects, and performances were spiced up by entr'acte entertainments of singing and dancing and by short pantomimes following the main plays, made famous by John Rich. The Italian opera experienced an unprecedented boom under Handel's management (1711-1739), competing with the English, or ballad opera, a new genre particularly successful in John Gay's phenomenally popular *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), and in the works of Thomas Augustine Arne, William Boyce and John Frederick Lampe. A distinctively British invention, the public concerts where the audience paid

for attendance spread from taverns and coffee-houses to large-scale performances given in public theaters and concert halls such as Hickford's or Holywell Music Room, or to popular concerts held in the pleasure gardens at Vauxhall, Marylebone and Ranelagh. As a result, public entertainments became increasingly democratized, answering the expectations of a socially more diverse public. At the same time, a clear competition ensued between officially endorsed forms of entertainment and alternative cultural practices, which developed as a result of the censorship imposed by the political class.

In this climate of cultural effervescence, ever-changing fads, and intellectual curiosity, the dissemination of ideas through books, newspapers, broadsides, mercuries, didactic texts, personal writings, or perspective narratives turned into a commercial boom. Publishers and booksellers tried out new modes of publication, such as part-books, serials, miscellanies, chapbooks, astrological guides and almanacs, and experimented with new, more aggressive forms of advertising their products. While reputable publishers, such as Jacob Tonson and Bernard Lintot, advertised their works by emphasizing the quality of the binding, the use of illustrations, and the expensive red lettering on the title page, more profit-driven booksellers, such as Edmund Curll, made money by unashamedly proliferating scandal, rumors, or ready-made biographies of dead authors in quickly put together pamphlets. An army of hack writers were hired to this effect, many of them coming from the back alleys of the Grub Street, notoriously associated with bad and venal writing. Following the expiration of the Licensing Act in 1695, which put an end to the censorship of the press, an open market for books emerged, allowing the members of the trade to buy and sell at auction the copyrights they owned. Moreover, given the inconsistencies in the Copyright Act of 1710, which allowed the Scottish

and Irish booksellers to reprint English books as long as they were not exported to England, piracy turned into a profitable enterprise during the Hanoverian era. The larger output of books published and the increased literacy of the public indicated an appetite for reading—either for pleasure or for ideological exchange—which turned the English-speaking world into “the most literate culture”<sup>128</sup> of the century.



Pope’s view of his world, as reflected by his whole opus, is unequivocally critical. The new paradigms of modernity, more audience-oriented, more inclusive in terms of class, and more interested in commercial profit, contradicted the core values of Augustanism, which stubbornly rejected “both popular directions and populist desire.”<sup>129</sup> Pope’s attitude is rooted in a serious concern during the time with the prevalence of modern thought over ancient tradition, a debate started at the end of the seventeenth century by illustrious members of the Académie Française. In early 1690s, Nicolas Boileau and Jean-Baptiste Racine, defenders of the great classical tradition of the past, confronted Charles Perrault and Bernard de Fontenelle, who had argued that modern scholarship surpassed the ancient one in knowledge and scope. The quarrel continued on a smaller scale in Britain, where William Temple published in 1690 his *Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning*.<sup>130</sup> Here, he compared the ancients with “Gyants in Wit and Knowledge” on whose shoulders the modern “Dwarfs”<sup>131</sup> sit in order to see farther, a position strongly opposed, among others, by the future Doctor of Divinity William Wotton.<sup>132</sup> The discussion was rekindled in 1704 by Swift, Temple’s secretary, whose *Battle of the Books* described a literal fight between classical and modern authors impersonated by books who came to life to defend the two positions. The superiority of the ancients who, like the bee, gathered their materials from nature,

over the moderns who, like the spider, killed the weak and spun their web from the taint of their own body (a transparent attack against contemporary critics), turned into a leitmotif of the Scriblerians later on, being reiterated by Pope himself in a number of his works. The ideal of the author as a gentleman, learning from the great classical tradition of the past, and living as a recluse in a pastoral landscape found its personification in Pope himself, who described the urban space as a nest of hack writing, social intrigue, and political corruption. Although placing themselves against the normal course of the times, Pope and the other defenders of Augustanism had it right in terms of their assessment of authentic cultural value, and of the role played by the poet in society: their shaping of the canon remained unchallenged until the latter decades of the twentieth century, and their active involvement in the life of the city has provided a model to follow to this day.

*The Dunciad*'s place in the context of these changing cultural values that take place at the beginning of the century is of paramount importance as it touches, more than any other work, on all the major concerns about the main directions of modernity addressed in public debates or in the press of the time. It documents, indeed, a historical moment of many aborted starts and spectacular beginnings, and elaborates on the possible consequences of this major paradigm shift in verses of unequal sharpness and poetic wit. I argue, therefore, that *The Dunciad*'s ideological power comes from the very level of detail that Swift in its time, and Lord Byron later on, decried as a factor of its growing indecipherability. I also argue, against Pope's own agenda, that the poem maps out in an exemplary way the complex nature of the social interactions occurring in the urban spaces of early eighteenth-century London, and the various detours, ramifications, and trajectories that define the emerging category of publicness during the first stages of

modernity.<sup>133</sup> Rather than simply “detecting and dragging into light these common Enemies of mankind”<sup>134</sup> in order to expose their cultural inconsequence, Pope’s duncical world displays an inclusiveness, social variety, and participatory drive that are some of the most distinctive features of modernity. The poem documents in great detail the social networking strategies employed by the dunces to promote their own cultural and political agendas, and displays with calculated minutia plot networks that outline major issues of public concern: the role of the poet and the critic in society, the dangers of an audience-oriented culture, the corruptibility of the political class, the replacement of authentic value with the whims of fashion, and the threat posed to public morality by a manipulative patronage system. It also draws attention in a manner never attempted before to the important role played by the duncical race in shaping larger cultural trends, from an interest in celebrity culture to commercialization of sentimentality to strategies of publicity still practiced today. More importantly, the poem challenges the very subaltern status of its “dunces” by bringing to forefront a social category of noteworthy (albeit misdirected) energy, resourcefulness, and surviving prowess.

The change of *The Dunciad*’s main hero from Lewis Theobald, in the first editions, to Colley Cibber, in the final one, and the content adjustments involved in this revisionist process outline the larger cultural and political scope of the poem. Pope’s change of emphasis from a hero that epitomized the dangers of verbal criticism to one that called attention to the theatricality and corruptibility of the political life under the Hanoverians reflects the poet’s concern with the negative consequences of bad leadership at all social levels. The politics of Pope’s footnotes supports this claim as well: whereas the critics John Dennis and Giles Jacob are the main protagonists of the poem’s subtextual debate in the first three books of the poem, they

are replaced in the fourth book with Richard Bentley and Martinus Scriblerus, two pedants, one real, one fictional, which signals once more that the focus of the poem changes from textual criticism to larger cultural and political concerns.<sup>135</sup> As a Poet Laureate, Cibber is undeniably a more fit hero for a poem whose focus is the criticism of the corrupt political practices that contaminated the cultural and social life of the time. The critique of the institution of Laureateship during the two Georges, which is an important part of this argument, is developed throughout the poem in a systematic way: it starts in the Testimonies of the authors, where Cibber's authority as laureate is ironically invoked in evaluating the poem (*The Dunciad* being, in Cibber's own words, "a better poem of its kind than ever was writ"), continues throughout the footnotes which clarify Cibber's succession to laureateship after equally inept predecessors such as Nahum Tate (laureate from 1692 to 1715), Nicholas Rowe (1715 to 1718) and Laurence Eusden (1718 to 1730), develops in the famous episode in Book III describing Cibber's voyage underground guided by his spiritual father, Elkanah Settle ("his Brother laureate" in his quality of City Poet), and culminates in Appendix VI, *Of the Poet Laureate*, with an acid satire on the extra-literary qualities required by the office ("feeding from the *prince's table*, drinking out of his *own flagon*, becoming even his *domestic* and *companion*"). Interestingly, Cibber is described in at least three instances in the footnotes as a "colleague" of Queen Dulness in his quality of Laureate, and in one particular instance he is clearly compared to King George II, whose frequent travels to Hanover left the queen in charge with all domestic affairs:

With great judgment it is imagined by the Poet, that such a Colleague as Dulness had elected, should sleep on the Throne, and have very little share in the Action of the Poem. Accordingly he hath done little or nothing from the day of his Anointing; having past through the second book without taking part in any thing that was transacted about him, and thro' the third in profound Sleep. Nor ought

this, well considered, to seem strange in our days, when so many *King-consorts* have done the like. **Scribl.** (IV, note to l. 20).

As Poet Laureate, Cibber was commissioned to writing New Year and birthday odes to the King,<sup>136</sup> for which he received £100 annually and a butt or pipe of Canary wine every Christmas. More importantly, though, he promoted a close relationship between court and theater during his management of Drury Lane, staging adaptations of famous plays revamped to gratify the new taste of the public. Cibber's acting and managerial career triggered the second direction of Pope's attack in *The Dunciad*: his indictment for introducing the "taste of the rabble" to the court by bringing the dramatic entertainments from Bartholomew Fair to Covent-Garden, Lincolns-Inn-Fields and the Haymarket. Pope's view of the theater had deep political undertones: the emergence of popular entertainments, such as pantomimes and after pieces, was perceived by the poet as reflecting the very theatricality of the political life, the support by nobility of undignified cultural forms, and the preoccupation of the political class with public displays of authority and pomp. The connection is made clear in Book III, where Elkanah Settle, Cibber's guide to the Elysian Shades, "*prophesies how first the nation shall be over-run with Farces, Operas, and Shows; how the throne of Dulness shall be advanced over the Theatres, and set up even at Court*" under the rule of the new king (*Argument to Book III*). The attack against "the new world to Nature's laws unknown" of the pantomimes and opera is developed over more than one hundred lines, emphasizing the irrational transformations occurring on the London stage. Among the authors attacked are John Rich, manager of the theatres at Lincoln's Inn Fields and Covent Garden and the father of the English pantomime, whose association with Lewis Theobald, author of pantomimes himself, made him an ideal target of Pope's satire. Rich

impersonates in *The Dunciad* the “sable Sorc’rer” (III, l. 233)—an allusion to a famous afterpiece, *The Necromancer, or Harlequin Doctor Faustus* (1723), in whose final scene the actor is swallowed up by a huge dragon. Another reference to the “vast Egg” producing “human race” (III, l. 248) evokes an episode in one of the actor’s most famous performances, whose title is now lost, but which was considered at the time “a masterpiece of dumb-shew.”<sup>137</sup> The whole episode is introduced in the poem by Elkanah Settle, playwright with shifting political sympathies and occasional actor at Bartholomew Fair; the reference to the “Dragon[’s] glare” (III, l. 235) may well be an allusion to one of his best-known drolls, *St. George for England*, where Settle impersonated a green dragon on the stage. Theobald’s *The Rape of Proserpine*, a revised issue of *Harlequin the Sorcerer*, is identified in this episode as an example of irrational transformation made possible through theatrical illusion:

All sudden, Gorgons hiss, and Dragons glare,  
And ten-horn’d fiends and Giants rush to war.  
Hell rises, Heav’n descends, and dance on Earth:  
Gods, imps, and monsters, music, rage, and mirth,  
A fire, a jig, a battle, and a ball,  
‘Till one wide conflagration swallows all.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, 235-240)

This mock apocalypse illustrates the kind of absurdities that infested the stage under Cibber’s management of Drury Lane. Although Cibber despised the “monstrous medleys” of the pantomimic representations and confessedly promoted them “against [his] conscience,” and because he “had not virtue enough to starve,”<sup>138</sup> admitting their absurdity is not, in Pope’s opinion, an excuse for staging them. Cibber’s “wizardry,” so mercilessly attacked by Pope, is therefore his ability for compromise, his promotion of subpar theatrical productions and, in spite



of that, his managerial success, as clearly spelled out in the following episode detailing his competition with John Rich's company at Lincoln's Inn:

But lo! to dark encounter in mid air  
 New wizards rise; I see my Cibber there!  
 Booth in his cloudy tabernacle shrin'd,  
 On grinning dragons thou shalt mount the wind.  
 Dire is the conflict, dismal is the din,  
 Here shouts all Drury, there all Lincoln's-inn;  
 Contending Theatres our empire raise,  
 Alike their labours, and alike their praise.  
 And are these wonders, Son, to thee unknown?  
 Unknown to thee? These wonders are thy own.  
 These Fate reserv'd to grace thy reign divine,  
 Foreseen by me, but ah! with-held from mine.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, 265-276)

Cibber's victory in the theatrical competition with Rich and his "reign divine" establish a shrewd equivalence between stage performance and royal leadership, between the "contending Theaters" of the empire of Dulness and the "contending" parties engaged in political competition at the British court. Cibber's theatrical victory highlights, at the same time, the poor quality of the spectacle put on both the real and theatrical stage during the Hanoverian rule.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, the reference to Cibber's pantomimical "wonders" in 1743, six years after the Theater Licensing Act (1737) was adopted, has added layers of irony: the Act had replaced the theatrical satires, farces, interludes and afterpieces performed on the London stages during the first decades of the century with plays where easily identifiable characters were substituted with fictional, albeit more life-like individuals, that the audience could empathize with. Cibber was particularly successful in the new genre, rewriting for the London audience plays by Shakespeare, Dryden, Corneille, and Moliere, among others. The implicit critique of censorship finds in Cibber its perfect target, as

the playwright is the one who had answered Earl of Chesterfield's attack of the Act in the House of the Lords by insisting, in his 1740 *Apology*, on satire's potential for malice.<sup>140</sup>

Similarly, Pope's attack on the Italian opera centers on its sudden transformations, its follies, nonsense and "chromatic tortures" (l. 55), but also on its foreign origin and features that doesn't match the British taste. "Since the Italian Opera had prevail'd, the nation was infected with a vice not fit to be named," laments Pope in his note to verse 179. This double argument is obviously politicized: the patronage of the opera by the royal couple, who sponsored the Royal Academy of Music, and by their son, Frederick, Prince of Wales, who supported the rival Opera of the Nobility, plays an important role in Pope's dislike of the genre. The Hanoverian king, George II, had a known fondness for opera ("Saw ev'ry Court, hear'd ev'ry King declare/His royal Sense, of Op'ra's or the Fair," IV, 311-314), and Queen Caroline was a close supporter of Handel, who had tutored her and composed for her since his arrival to her father's electoral court in Hanover in 1710. Significantly, Colley Cibber, the King of the Dunces, was no stranger to opera himself: he had composed librettos such as *Love in a Riddle* (1729), *Polipheme* (1735), *Flora* (1735), and *Damon and Phillida* (1737) and his daughter-in-law, Susannah Cibber, had performed in operas and oratorios, such as Handel's *Messiah*.

In 1711, John James Heidegger, a Swiss national, emerged as the leading operatic impresario, to become "the main figure in the presentation of opera in London" in the 1720s and 1730s.<sup>141</sup> Pope mentions his name in the parody of the Christian trinity in Book I, where a bird with a face like Heidegger's impersonates the Holy Spirit, together with Dulness (Father) and Cibber (Son):

The Goddess then, o'er his anointed head,  
 With mystic words, the sacred Opium shed.  
 And lo! her bird, (a monster of a fowl,  
 Something betwixt a Heideggre and owl,  
 Perch'd on his crown. "All hail! and hail again,  
 My son! the promis'd land expects thy reign...."  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, 287-292)

Pope's attack on Heidegger was triggered by his promotion of operas and masquerades, as well as his adept "conversion of art into a joint-stock venture."<sup>142</sup> Heidegger was a well-remunerated manager of public and private festivities who had directed the coronation festivities of both George I and II, and who, between 1716 and 1740, was at the center of London's most important operatic ventures.<sup>143</sup> His partnership with Handel between 1729 and 1737, although not particularly successful due to the competition of the Opera of the Nobility, solidified Heidegger's position as the main promoter of the Italian opera on the London stage. As highlighted by Pope's lines above, his association with the opera establishes a cunning relationship between royal patronage and the sound without sense epitomized by the genre that points at the dangers of commercialized leisure brought in Britain by foreign agents.<sup>144</sup>

The importance of opera in Pope's argument about the linkage between noise and nonsense is emphasized in the 1743 edition of *The Dunciad* by its representation as Harlot at Queen Dulness's court. Turned into a character on the satire's stage, opera is described as both effeminate (having "mincing step, small voice, and languid eye," l. 46) and meaningless (as "foreign," l. 47), as dissenting ("Joy to great Chaos! Let Division reign" – l. 54) and soporific ("To the same notes thy sons shall hum, or snore," l. 59), as irrational ("chromatic tortures.... fritter all their sense," l. 55-56) and political ("By singing Peers up-held on either hand," l. 54). The reference to the "singing Peers" points to the need for subscription of wealthy patrons to

produce it: sopranos like Cuzzoni, Faustina and Merighi, castrato artists like Farinelli and Gizziello, or composers like Handel, Bononcini and Porpora were expensive acquisitions that could be financially upheld only through the Court's patronage.<sup>145</sup> The splitting of the nobility between supporters of the "Harlot" opera, on the one hand, and Handel's more "manly" productions (note to l. 54), on the other, gives a clear picture of the world of dissent that characterizes this imported genre, but also discloses Pope's own party sympathies:

Strong in new Arms, lo! Giant Handel stands,  
Like bold Briareus, with a hundred hands;  
To stir, to rouze, to shake the Soul he comes,  
And Jove's own Thunders follow Mars's Drums.  
Arrest him, Empress; or you sleep no more—  
She heard, and drove him to th' Hibernian shore.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV, 65-70)

The threat presented by Handel to Queen Dulness is, again, both cultural and political. A dramatic genius who composed forty-two operas, twenty-nine oratorios, more than 120 cantatas, trios and duets, as well as numerous arias and organ concerti, Handel contributed significantly to the introduction of Italian opera in Britain. After 1737, however, he changed direction toward English choral works, such as *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt* (1739), and after his success with *Messiah* (1742) he never composed Italian opera again. The references to "Jove's Thunders" and "Mars's Drums" in *The Dunciad* point to these very two oratorios: in *Israel in Egypt*, Handel used a huge chorus and orchestra to convey the power of the divine ordinance, while the kettledrums used in *Saul*, reputedly captured by Marlborough at the battle of Malplaquet, are indicative of the same "Wrath of God" theme, which was particularly resonant with the Patriot opposition pressing at the time, against Walpole, for the war with Spain. Handel's banishment "to th' Hibernian shore" alludes to another actual event in his career: the composer's session of

concerts performed in Dublin in the winter of 1741-1742 at the invitation of the Duke of Devonshire, where he also launched his *Messiah*. The note to line 54 clarifies the circumstances of this decision: “Mr. *Handel* had introduced a great number of Hands, and more variety of Instruments into the Orchestra, and employed even Drums and Cannon to make a fuller Chorus; which prov’d so much too manly for the fine Gentlemen of his age, that he was obliged to remove his Music into *Ireland*.” This event also started Handel’s long-term collaboration with Charles Jennens, an English librettist with strong anti-Hanoverian convictions. The reason why Pope singled him out as a “Giant” among his peers has thus to do with Handel’s change of direction toward less effeminate productions and his perception as politically unregimented after Queen Caroline’s death.<sup>146</sup>

The new emphasis on the politicization of the institution of laureateship, as well as on the destructive effects of theatrical and operatic representations after the change of hero in *The Dunciad in Four Books*, adds to the previous argument of the poem about the harmful consequences of the patronage practice in the press and literature at large. The attack is directed, in Books II and III of the poem, against poets, novelists, critics, gazetteers, and booksellers who displayed shameless sycophancy to the political class of the time. The victors of the six celebratory games in Book II of the poem are telling examples of Pope’s focus on the politicization of the literary field under the two Georges. A notorious publisher with strong Hanoverian affiliations, Edmund Curll is presented as victor twice, once in the competition for overtaking the phantom of the “Poet” James Moore-Smith, and once in the pissing contest where he wins the favors of the “Poetess” Eliza Haywood. The tickling contest, which rewards “*the arts and practices of Dedicators*,” is won by a “youth unknown to Phoebus” (II, 213) identified

in an early manuscript draft as “W\_r,” possibly Edward Webster, who had gained the place of chief secretary to Charles Paulet, second Duke of Bolton, by prostituting his daughter.<sup>147</sup> The winner of the vociferating contest is Richard Blackmore, King William’s physician-in-ordinary and author, among other lengthy epic works, of *Prince Arthur* (1696), an anti-Jacobite political allegory. Jonathan Smedley, Church of Ireland dean of Clogher and author of blatant pro-governmental journalism, is the winner of the diving game, a contest for “profound, dark, *and* dirty Party-writers.” The final contest, the exercise in patience during which the contestants had to listen to the recitations of “two gentle readers” without falling asleep has, expectedly, no victor, but a drowsy (and very specific) audience:

At last Centlivre felt her voice to fail,  
 Motteux himself unfinish’d left his tale,  
 Boyer the State, and Law the Stage gave o’er,  
 Morgan and Mandevil could prate no more;  
 Norton, from Daniel and Ostroea sprung,  
 Bless’d with his father’s front, and mother’s tongue,  
 Hung silent down his never-blushing head;  
 And all was hush’d, as Folly’s self lay dead.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, 411-418)

Significantly, all the authors falling victim to this exquisite performance are attacked on political, religious, and moral grounds: Susannah Centlivre, “the most prolific comic dramatist of Queen Anne’s reign,”<sup>148</sup> is attacked by Pope for her association with Curll, Whiggism, and criticism of Pope’s translation of Homer “before he began it” (note to l. 411); Peter Anthony Motteux, a French translator, opera librettist, and journalist, is targeted because of his Protestantism, complimentary works for political patrons, and suspect prolificity as a writer (he was the translator of Rabelais and Cervantes); Abel Boyer, “a voluminous compiler of Annals, Political Collections, etc.” (note to l. 413), is attacked for his Whig commitment and antagonism to Swift

and Bolingbroke; William Law, a High Church clergyman, is singled out for his strike against playhouse as “the temple of the Devil” in *The Absolute Unlawfulness of the Stage-entertainment Fully Demonstrated* (1726); Thomas Morgan, Deist and Doctor of Medicine, ends up in the poem due to his outrageous self-definition as a “*Moral Philosopher*” and negative comments on Warburton’s *Divine Legation of Moses* (1742); Bernard Mandeville, a staunch Whig himself, is contrasted to Morgan as an “*Immoral Philosopher*” who proved that “Vice is necessary” (note to l. 414) in his *Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1714); Benjamin Norton Defoe is mentioned because of his involvement with the Whig organ *The Flying Post*, where he often abused Pope; the poet also alludes to his suspect origins, as Daniel Defoe’s illegitimate son by an oyster-seller. Although described by Pope in a veiled way as “Critics,” the victims of these soporific performances are clearly not textual but personal censors, whose anti-Tory, anti-Catholic, or anti-Pope positions disqualify them as moral arbiters.

The personal nature of these attacks, either against our poet or against his friends or allies, is disclosed in Book III, in a magisterially conceived episode where the Scriblerians are all identified by name:

See, see, our own true Phoebus wears the bays!  
 Our Midas sits Lord Chancellor of Plays!  
 On Poets Tombs see Benson’s titles writ!  
 Lo! Ambrose Philips is prefer’d for Wit!  
 See under Ripley rise a new White-hall,  
 While Jones’ and Boyle’s united labours fall:  
 While Wren with sorrow to the grave descends,  
 Gay dies unpension’d with a hundred friends,  
 Hibernian Politics, O Swift! thy fate;  
 And Pope’s, ten years to comment and translate.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, 324-332)

The episode describes the final victory of Queen Dulness in Britain, as prophesied by Elkanah Settle during Cibber's journey to the Elysian Shades. "True Phoebus" is Colley Cibber himself, whose appointment as "Lord Chancellor of Plays" allows him to decide what could be performed on the London stage, a clear allusion to his position as manager at Drury Lane. William Benson is the successor as Surveyor-General of Works of Christopher Wren, the architect who had famously rebuilt the city of London after the Great Fire; unlike his predecessor, though, his appointment is politically motivated, and his professional gaffs (such as condemning the House of Lords as unsafe) are excused due to his Whig affiliations. Pope also points here to the monument to Milton that Benson erected in Westminster Abbey, on which he had ridiculously listed his own titles. Pastoral poet who had been favorably compared to Pope by *The Spectator*, Ambrose Phillips is attacked in this episode not on literary but political grounds: appointed as Justice of Peace and then secretary to the Primate of Ireland under George I, he is also the founder of the Whiggish journal *The Freethinker* which ran 350 issues over three years, being compared by contemporaries with *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Thomas Ripley, "a carpenter, employed by a first Minister who raised him to an Architect, without any genius in the art" (note to l. 328) is contrasted here to Inigo Jones, the famous architect of the Whitehall, Covent Garden and Somerset House, in an implied parallel between the Stuarts' glory and the Hanoverians' shoddiness. Richard Boyle, third Earl of Burlington and friend of Pope, is credited with restoring the portico of Covent Garden church, after years of governmental neglect. Finally, the concluding lines evoke particular events in the Scriblerians' literary careers. Gay's death "unpension'd with a hundred friends" alludes to his hopes to obtain a sinecure after King George II's rise to the throne; although he was offered the post of Gentleman Usher to one of the royal



children at the intervention of Henrietta Howard, the king's mistress, he declined it as undignified. The note to this line elaborates on Gay's literary prominence, offering a substantial account of his success with *Beggar's Opera* (1728), presented as a national victory against Italian opera which had dominated the English stage for over a decade. In Pope's account, "That idol of the Nobility and the people, which the great Critic Mr. Dennis by the labours and outcries of a whole life could not overthrow, was demolished by a single stroke of this gentleman's pen" (note to l. 330). Similarly, Swift's involvement in "Hibernian politics" refers to his hopes for receiving the preferment in the Church of England that would have allowed him to relocate to London; he was appointed, instead, Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin (1713), position that put an end to his visits to England after 1727. Finally, Pope laments his own laborious work as a translator and editor of the Homeric epics, a ten-year travail that had delayed his original work. The note to this particular line is important, as it refers specifically to two additional years employed by Pope in "the drudgery of comparing impressions, rectifying the Scenary, etc." for his edition of Shakespeare's plays. Significantly, the first major original work authored by the poet after this long editorial endeavor is *The Dunciad* itself, a mock epic triggered by Lewis Theobald's attack of Pope's edition of Shakespeare, in which "Tibbald" is celebrated as the first King of the Dunces.

The episode builds an impressive network of relations of opposition and resemblance, but also of *false* contrasts and similarities among the various characters evoked. The main opposition developed here is that between value and politics: the contrast between Benson and Wren, Ripley and Jones, Phillips and Pope, Walpole and Burlington, the Italian and the English opera, highlights the negative effects of political involvement in the cultural field. Moreover, the

characters are opposed in terms of their cultural importance: Benson and Milton, Dennis and Gay, Cibber and Swift, Theobald and Pope, the dunces and the Scriblerians illustrate contrasting value systems, the rabble's and the elite's. Some of these pairings are meant to emphasize, also, less obvious connections: although not explicitly contrasted in this episode, characters like Cibber and Gay had intersected in the real space of the city, with Cibber rejecting what would become the most successful play ever performed on the Georgian stage, *The Beggar's Opera*. Just like George II before, who had been blind to Gay's cultural prominence and modestly rewarded him as his daughter's Usher for the publication of his *Fables* (1727), Cibber is unable to recognize value when presented with it. The two kings, the real and the fictional one, are equally inept, a parallel, though, that is never spelled out in this particular scene. Similarly, Phillips and Pope are both authors of pastorals, but this relational node is *not* invoked to clarify who is the other's better: Pope mentions Philips for his party involvement, which seems to suggest that his support by Addison, Tickell and Dennis, for instance, all of whom applauded Philips's poems and disregarded Pope's, is politically motivated. Finally, the contrast between Benson and Wren, or Ripley and Jones, has less to do with their architectural achievements; instead, it is part of a bigger argument about the political prominence of the Stuarts over the Hanoverians, clearly supported by the mentioning of Burlington, a staunch Tory supporter, in this context. The reference to the Italian opera solidifies this covert political argument by evoking the Hanoverians' preference for this form of entertainment, perceived by the Scriblerians as deeply foreign to the British taste.

The "particular satire" of the first three books of *The Dunciad* has a devastating specificity, pointing to dozens of public figures, both prominent and obscure, that inhabited all

the political, cultural, and religious spheres of the time. Pope's argument builds in clusters of dense references to particular individuals that contain a systematic social critique. Such textual moments include the "City Swans" episode (I, 95-110), that evokes politically adept albeit culturally inconsequential authors; the attack against the political Gazetteers (I, 215-240); the depiction of the "Grubstreet Choir," i.e. incompetent printers and booksellers (II, 123-140), the "Shaggy Tapestry" episode (II, 143-154), or the depiction of the clerical "Party Writers" (III, 199-213). This dense network of relations among an impressive number of characters is meant to clarify their cultural and political affiliations, and is shrewdly developed through a cloud of indirections and references to actual events that give the poem a reality-effect unparalleled by any piece of the time.

The same clustering method is used in Book IV as well, in spite of the author's promise to shift focus from particular to more general satire: the list of "fierce Logician[s]" (IV: 195-206), or of famous political figures indicated in capital letters in the "Harlot" opera episode are two examples that illustrate Pope's preference to develop his arguments in proliferating linkages and networks. However, Pope's clusters of associations seem to function in this particular book in different ways: individual names are only rarely spelled out and the satire offers, instead, oblique contextualizations meant to facilitate the identification of the actual character.<sup>149</sup> The "Genius of the Schools" may well be Richard Busby, headmaster of Westminster College, whose use of flogging and insistence on memorization are seen by Pope as inhibitors of creative work. "The young Nobleman perfectly accomplished" may be Evelyn Pierrepont, second Duke of Kingston, whose mistress, Madame La Touche, accompanied him on his return from the Grand Tour. The antiquary Annius has been identified by Horace Walpole with Sir Andrew Fountaine,

a coin collector and Vice-Chamberlain to Queen Caroline, and Mummius is most likely an alias for John Woodward, a natural historian and antiquarian repeatedly attacked by the Scriblerians.<sup>150</sup> The “Troop of people fantastically adorn’d” and “engaged in the study of Butterflies, Shells, Bird-nests, Moss, etc.” describes famous collectors, some possible identifications including the entomologist Joseph Dandridge and the botanist Johan Jacob Dillenius. The “Minute Philosophers and Freethinkers” alluded to in the following episode are most likely Samuel Clarke, John Craig, Matthew Tindal, and Ralph Cudworth. This tuning of Pope’s method indicates that individual characters in Book IV are significant not so much as particular cases of duncery, but as representatives of broader trends that start to define the modernity at large: the growing interest in scientific observation, the emergence of the culture of the collection and the museum, the increased secularization of the religious realm, or the growing regimentation of the educational system. Pope’s clustering method in Book IV works less as an accumulation of names placed in close proximity to suggest similar characteristics, and more as a cloud of allusions to possibly, but not necessarily, identifiable figures that typify larger social tendencies. The emphasis on dunces’ connectivity in the first three books of the poem is replaced by an emphasis on their representativeness and symbolic value in the fourth one: they are no longer defined by their immediate linkages or ideological coteries, but by an epidemic proliferation in the modern space of the city. Lack of differentiation becomes the symptom of generalized trends and fashions that instate new value systems based on modern modes of knowledge. The effects of this movement from part to whole have suggestively been described by network theorist Albert-László Barabási: while the attention to “nodes and links” allows us “to observe the architecture of complexity,” “by distancing ourselves from the particulars,” we

are able to glimpse “the universal organizing principles behind [...] complex systems.”<sup>151</sup> Pope’s decision to elevate himself from the level of particular satire brings the necessary conclusion to *The Dunciad in Four Books*: after the systematic examination of the way in which the duncical networks function, after the detailed depiction of their rules of preferential attachment and politics of solidarity, the final book of his mock epic gives the readers, fifteen years after the poem’s initial publication, a panoramic view of modernity, with all the side effects of its democratizing impulse.

### *Scriblerus and the Scriblerians: A Case Study*

I have often endeavored to establish a Friendship among all Men of Genius, and would fain have it done. They are seldom above three or four Contemporaries and if they could be united would drive the World before them. (Jonathan Swift, Letter to Pope, 20 September 1723)

Among the many clubs that flourished during the first decades of eighteenth-century London, the Scriblerians was neither the most famed nor the most long-lasting association of kindred spirits. The origins of the club can be traced to Pope: in October 1713 he approached Jonathan Swift with the idea of publishing a monthly periodical, *The Works of the Unlearned*, meant to satirize follies in learning and criticism. Disenchanted with the lack of support of the Brothers Club for deserving authors, Swift ended his membership and accepted Pope’s proposal. John Gay, a close friend of Pope since 1711, was the next to support this scheme, as was Thomas Parnell, a writer and member of the Church of Ireland who had known Pope since their collaboration with the Whig periodical the *Guardian*. John Arbuthnot, the physician-in-ordinary to Queen Anne, also joined the club, bringing his experience as a scientist and literatus: a

member of the Royal Society since 1704, Arbuthnot was also the author of the famous John Bull pamphlets that had propelled him to literary celebrity. The last to join the club was Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford and Lord Treasurer, who brought to the club his humor, learning, and a social distinction, which increased the members' ambitions for public reform. Although Pope's intention had been to gather a mixed group of Whigs and Tories in his scheme, neither Congreve nor Addison, both personalities he admired and had a close relationships with, accepted his invitation to membership.

The official birth date of the Scriblerus Club is January 1714, when its members started meeting in Arbuthnot's room in St. James's Palace. Their meetings were frequent, almost every Saturday, and they were held in an atmosphere of friendliness and conviviality. During this initial phase of the club, the scheme of the planned periodical underwent major changes: its scope broadened considerably, evolving into a program of ridiculing the follies of all party writers, critics, editors, philosophers, antiquarians, travelers, educators, scientists, lawyers, music and dancing masters. In order to prevent the negative consequences of this total attack on a large number of professional groups, the members of the club came up with the idea of creating a character that would epitomize all these follies and provide a convenient alias for publishing their work. As a result, the Scriblerians started working on the biography of a fictional hero, Martinus Scriblerus, and decided to endorse his existence by publishing his biography and works under his name. A considerable portion of Scriblerus's *Memoirs* was drafted during this period, but only one minor piece was completed: *An Essay of the Learned Martinus Scriblerus, concerning the Origine of Sciences. Written to the most Learned Dr. \_\_\_ F.R.S., from the Deserts of Nubia*. The essay is a jocular history of the evolution of Arts and Sciences, as recorded by

various ancient sources, which is traced back to an odd race of “Learned Beasts” that are called to “instruct Heroes, States-Men and Scholars” on “ceremony and address,” “the Art of pleasing in conversation and agreeable affectations,” as well as on the “Improvement of several Sciences.”<sup>152</sup> Written collectively by Pope, Parnell and Arbuthnot, this pamphlet was belatedly published in 1732, in the last volume of Swift’s *Miscellanies*, as an illustrative sample of Scriblerus’ pseudo-scientific approach.

The club broke up after only a few months, in April 1714, when Pope set out for Bingfield with Parnell to complete a sample of his translation of Homer’s *Illiad*. On Pope’s return in June, it was Swift’s turn to leave for Upper Lecombe in Berkshire. The reasons of his departure were political: Swift had published anonymously a virulent political pamphlet, *The Publick Spirit of the Whigs*, which had incensed the House of Lords so much that a reward of £300 was offered to anyone who could provide information on the identity of the author. The Scriblerians met a few more times, mainly at Arbuthnot’s insistence, but its members’ personal projects and dramatic political changes that occurred during the summer put an end to their regular meetings.

The death of Queen Anne in August 1714 brought with it a major shift in political forces: the Tories lost their political influence under the new Hanoverian rule, which appointed Lord Halifax as a leader of the Cabinet and Robert Walpole as chairman of a secret committee formed to investigate the activities of the previous Tory ministry. The members of the Scriblerus Club were seriously affected by this change in affairs. Oxford was forced to relinquish his position as Lord Treasurer and even experienced imprisonment under allegations of high treason and misdemeanor; Arbuthnot lost all his court privileges and moved to Chelsea, where he secured a

modest post in the local hospital; Gay lost his post in the Monmouth household, and both Parnell and Swift were forced to return to Ireland. The formal activity of the Club ceased for almost a year, a period during which the only publications in Scriblerian spirit were Pope and Gay's *The What D'ye Call It* (1715), a pastoral farce that burlesqued Addison's *Cato* (1712), and Pope's *A Key to the Lock* (1715), published under an alias of Martinus Scriblerus, Esdras Barnivelt.

In the next years, the Scriblerus Club would experience two more periods of revival. The first one occurred between 1715-1718, when its members published collaborative or individual works in Scriblerian spirit: Pope, Gay and Arbuthnot composed *Three Hours after Marriage* (performed in Drury Lane Theater in January 1716), and Pope published a translation of the pseudo-Homeric "Battle of Frogs and Mice," whose Remarks served as a satire on critics. The second revival of their activity occurred in 1727-1729, when their collective work, *Peri Bathous: or the Art of Sinking in Poetry* was published in the last volume of Swift's *Miscellanies*. Maybe the most important piece of the Scriblerus Club, *Peri Bathous* officially launched Scriblerus' career as a quintessentially Modern author. Inspired by Longinus' work, *Peri Hipsous* [On the Sublime], the treaty is an *ars poetica* in reverse, a parody teaching how *not* to write poetry by combining serious with trivial matters, the high with the low. This piece was followed by "Virgilius Restauratus," a satire on textual criticism authored by Arbuthnot and included by Pope in his *Dunciad Variorum* (1729) and by the Scriblerians' collective contribution to *The Dunciad*'s apparatus. A piece of unknown authorship whose elaboration can be traced down to the same period, "Annus Mirabilis: or the wonderful effects of approaching conjunction of the Planets Jupiter, Mars, and Saturn," was the only work signed by "Mart. Scriblerus, Philomath."<sup>153</sup> Arbuthnot's death in 1735 put an end to the Club's activity, six years before the



publication of the long-planned *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* in Pope's 1741 edition of his *Works*.

Martinus' *Memoirs* elaborate on the origins of a character that had already become a recognizable figure on the literary marketplace of the time. Intended to epitomize the follies of the age, Martinus is a highly composite figure: a native of Germany and a descendent "from a Race of Virtuosi," he is initiated in the mysteries of rhetoric, logic, anatomy, music, physics and metaphysics and authors a number of extraordinary works, *Peri Bathous* and the notes to *The Dunciad* included. As a critic, he distinguishes himself through his ability "to convert every Trifle into a serious thing" and his diligent "Emendation and Correction of Ancient Authors" (129). In terms of religion, Martinus endeavors to find out the Seat of the Soul, an enterprise in which he seeks the help of the Freethinkers; as a man of science, he is engaged in projects ranging from calculating the "Quantity of the real Matter in the Universe" to a "demonstration of the natural Dominion of the Inhabitants of the Earth over those of the Moon" (167); as a poet, "he hath appear'd under a hundred different names," and as a politician he "wrote against Liberty [...] and in praise of Corruption"—"in so delicate and refin'd [way] as to be mistaken by the vulgar" (169). As seen from his biography, Scriblerus is a character that stands for a variety of authors and the follies personified by them, be they textual critics such as Richard Bentley and Thomas Hare, opera managers such as John Heidegger, naturalists and antiquaries such as Robert Hooke and John Woodward, booksellers such as Edmund Curll, physiognomists such as John Evelyn, Dr. Gwither and Ephraim Chambers, and political journalists such as Raphael Courteville, Francis Medley, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon.<sup>154</sup> The range of the attacks on

early eighteenth-century figures is comparable to the one of *The Dunciad* itself, rendering the text an invaluable source of inquiry for public sphere and cultural studies enthusiasts.

The date of birth of Martinus Scriblerus remains, however, the publication in 1727 of *Peri Bathous*, followed in 1729 by *The Dunciad Variorum* which solidifies the pedant's status as a significant critical voice. Whereas in *Peri Bathous* Scriblerus "authors" his most ambitious work, "commending" a significant number of "Modern" authors for illustrating bathetic characteristics and starting, thus, Pope's 17-year long war with his dunces, in the *Variorum* he will assume the role of the "learned critic," qualifying the work, "setting straight" some of the references to ancient sources and etymological debates, and clarifying some of the "good authors'" more obscure ironies. Scriblerus introduces the author of *The Dunciad* in the *Prolegomena* by providing a long list of contradictory testimonies by contemporary writers, then he continues by offering one of the most accurate assessments of Pope's mock epic in *Martinus Scriblerus on the Poem*:

Now our author, living in those times, did conceive it an endeavour well worthy an honest satirist to dissuade the dull and punish the wicked, *the only way that was left*. In that public-spirited view he laid the plan of this poem, as the greatest service he was capable (without much hurt, or being slain) to render his dear country. First, taking things from their original, he considereth the causes creative of such authors—namely, *Dulness* and *Poverty*; the one born with them, the other contracted by neglect of their proper talents, through self-conceit of greater abilities. This truth he wrappeth in an *Allegory* (as the construction of epic poesy requireth), and feigns that one of these goddesses had taken up her abode with the other, and that they jointly inspired all such writers and such works. He proceedeth to show the *qualities* they bestow on these authors, and the *effects* they produce; then the *materials*, or *stock*, with which they furnish them; and (above all) that *self-opinion* which causeth it to seem to themselves vastly greater than it is, and is the prime motive of their setting up in this sad and sorry merchandise. The great power of these goddesses acting in alliance (whereof as the one is the mother of industry, so is the other of plodding) was to be exemplified in some one *great and remarkable Action*: and none could be more so than that which our poet

hath chosen, viz., the restoration of the reign of Chaos and Night, by the ministry of Dulness their daughter, in the removal of her imperial seat from the city to the polite world; as the action of the *Æneid* is the restoration of the empire of Troy, by the removal of the race from thence to Latium. But as Homer singing only the *Wrath* of Achilles, yet includes in his poem the whole history of the Trojan war; in like manner our author hath drawn into this *single Action* the whole history of Dulness and her children. (71-72)

It is striking when reading this introduction that the critical voice we hear is less Scriblerus' and more the Scriblerians': the veiled irony, the correct "key" to reading the allegory, the classic references that reinforce the poem's epic status, the indirect answer to existing critical assessments of the work, and the clear statement of the poem's purpose are not the result of a deluded critical mind but the product of a sharp intellect that plays with conventions and authorial voices in a highly effective way. This ambiguous status of the critic is obvious at various moments in the poem: his notes both attack "the ignorance of these Moderns" (note to l. 88) and identify him with the Moderns, by their inclusion under Remarks, and by the silliness of his observations made in a voice of absolute authority. Scriblerus' declared admiration for the author of *The Dunciad* is a ruse that highlights the complicated relationship between a genius and his followers: whereas being able to acknowledge and openly support a great piece of work, inept disciples read the text through lenses that diminish it or make it risible to more expert readers. Scriblerus' *Dunciad* is a work of honest patriotism, "a sad and sorry" enterprise whose author is driven by the good intention "to dissuade the dull and punish the wicked." Pope's *Dunciad* is all and nothing of that.

The composite nature of the character is obvious throughout the notes, many of which are signed "half Mr. Theobald, half Scribl[erus]." The method calls attention to Scriblerus' associations, most often either with Theobald, a promoter of Bentley's methods of textual

criticism so often derided by Pope, or with Bentley himself. Book IV of *The Dunciad* is particularly interesting from this perspective: if in the first three books the most vocal critics of the textual underground are John Dennis and Giles Jacob, in the last book they are completely replaced by Scriblerus and Bentley, who seem to compete in their expert reading of the text. The change is significant not only in light of the author's effort to replace particular with more general satire, but also in terms of the poems' reconsidered goals: by replacing an actual and a would-be critic with a couple of pedants, one real, one fictional, Pope seems to envelop this more politicized version of *The Dunciad* in dizzying arguments over the "true reading" of his satire and the ridiculous nature of inept textual debates.



Although the Scriblerians' collaboration was not particularly productive, it sparked three of the best works of the first half of the century—Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Pope's *Dunciad*, and Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. Even more importantly, it triggered a growing awareness of the enormous gap between classic and popular culture that became a leitmotif of the public debates of the time. The joke had a willing audience that engaged in the game from the very start: during the second period of the Scriblerian collaboration, for instance, a small volume titled *Memoirs of the Life of Scriblerus* (1723) is published, under the alleged authorship of D[ean] S[wif]t, detailing the origins and prodigies of Tim Scriblerus. A young of "unbounded genius" that "would one Day write a System of Physick; the next, a Comedy, or Copy of Verses; a third, would make a Sermon; the next, a Tale of a Tub or Romance," Tim fathered his works "upon some body or another," one such author being "P[op]e" himself.<sup>155</sup> With the publication of *Peri Bathous* in 1727 Martinus Scriblerus becomes an instant celebrity, with a substantial public

presence and an increasingly larger number of “family members” with overt literary ambitions. Works authored by Martinus or his close relatives are published in significant number between 1727-1733, between 1741 and 1744, and then in the 1750s, but this phenomenon of fictitious publishing under Scriblerus’ name continues throughout the century and possibly after 1800 as well. Significantly, the majority of these works do not belong to the Scriblerians, but to their attackers or emulators: in 1728, Jonathan Smedley publishes *The Metamorphosis: A Poem. Shewing the Change of Scriblerus into Snarlerus*, a pointed attack against Pope and Swift, and George Duckett prints *Pope Alexander’s Supremacy and Infallibility Examined; and the errors of Scriblerus and his man William detected*; in 1730 Thomas Cooke publishes under the pen name Scriblerus Tertius the poem *The Candidates for the Bays*, and as Scriblerus Quartus *The Bays Miscellany, or Colley Triumphant*. In 1731, an anonymous poem, *Whistoneutes*, is opened by a Dedication signed Scriblerus Simon, followed the same year by a sequel, *Gorgoneicon*, signed by Andrew Scriblerus, first cousin to Simon. In 1733 another anonymous piece appears, *The Tamiad*, published under the pen name Erasmus Scribelrus, “Cousin-German to the Learned and Witty Martinus,” and *The Art of Scribling* authored by Scriblerus Maximus. A more interesting case of fictitious authorship is that of Henry Fielding, who engaged in the joke publishing no less than six works under the alias H. Scriblerus Secundus: *The Grub-Street Opera* (1728), *The Author’s Farce* (1730), *Tom Thumb* (1730), *The Letter-Writers* (1731), *The Welsh Opera* (1731) and *The Tragedy of Tragedies; or The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1737). In doing so, he deliberately aligned himself to the Scriblerian tradition, attacking the same follies as Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot and Swift: the easy pleasures of the town (personified in Don Tragedio, Dr. Orator, Sir Farcical, Monsieur Pantomime and Signior Opera in *The Author’s Farce*), the taste of

the modern public for cliché-ridden, Cibberian tragedies, the “Supernatural”<sup>156</sup> language of theatrical productions, the critical pedantry spiced up by absurd readings of classical works, the use of bathos as preferred literary trope, the prolificity of the hack writers, etc. The political dimension of his critique is manifest especially in *The Grub Street Opera*, where Fielding satirizes not only the subpar productions of the party-writers (a crusade fought by *Grub Street Journal* between 1730-1738 as well), but also Walpole’s administration and the Hanoverian monarchy itself.<sup>157</sup>

Another high point of Scriblerus’ career is the first half of the 1750s, which records a number of works that solidify the character’s presence on the literary marketplace: among those worth mentioning are Galfridus Scriblerus’ *Remarks on Mr. Pope’s Epistle of Taste* (1751), a heavily annotated poem preceded by a Dedication in which Pope is celebrated for saving so many scribblers from being irremediably forgotten, and Scriblerus Minimus’ *The Modern Justice, in Imitation of The Man of Taste* (1755), which provides the Moderns with a recipe to rise to public prominence by worshipping influential patrons. A piece generally attributed to Arbuthnot, Martinus Scriblerus’ “Annus Mirabilis, or the wonderful effects of approaching conjunction of the Planets Jupiter, Mars, and Saturn,” describes the pedant as a delusional man of science: the piece announces the “mutual transformation of sexes”<sup>158</sup> from males to females and vice versa under the influence of celestial bodies. Interestingly, Scriblerus’ predictions seem to confirm in an unexpected way: the piece is followed shortly by William Kenrick’s *The Old Woman’s Dunciad: with notes by Margelina Scribelinda Macularia*, “the true and genuine *Dunciad* of Mrs. Mary Midnight,” a fictitious authoress who “had a principal hand in all the Performances that have been wrote within these hew Years past” and who engaged herself in

“Improving” the English language through additions from “Gomerian or Welch tongue.”<sup>159</sup> The character may be seen as a hilarious feminine avatar of Martinus Scriblerus, but also an interesting figure as she signals an increased presence of the women writers on the literary marketplace at mid-century.

A few interesting conclusions can be drawn from this quick survey of Scriblerus’ presence in the public sphere between 1723 and 1800. The first one refers to Scriblerus’ posterity: as documented by *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*, Scriblerus’ name appears in no less than 841 works throughout the century. Interestingly, while the number of works in which he is mentioned in the first part of the century is significantly lower than in the second half (193 works, including reprints, up to 1750, versus 648 after this date) (Figure 2), the number of individual works attributed to Scriblerus, his relatives, or in which Scriblerus is the main character is much higher in the first three decades of his life (1723-1753) than in all subsequent five decades combined (Figure 3). The key word here is *reprints*: Scriblerus’ public presence increases gradually during the century due to insistent reprinting of Pope’s, Swift’s, and Fielding’s works, turned classic after their death. In contrast, the character and his avatars appear more in works by authors other than the Scriblerians (Fielding included), most of which were printed in direct response to pieces like *Peri Bathous* or *The Dunciad* and rarely, if ever, republished. As the Scriblerians’ status as cultural authorities consolidates, the character becomes increasingly present on the literary marketplace, while his many avatars, fathered by obscure authors or mentioned in anonymous pieces, have just an ephemeral life in the public sphere. Second, this increased presence of Scriblerus as we approach the end of the century seems to contradict the idea of exhaustion of satire’s “artistic usefulness:”<sup>160</sup> far from being

completely replaced by sentimental prose and other narrative forms, satire is still very much alive in the public consciousness around 1800s, and most likely after this date as well.<sup>161</sup> Laurence Sterne and Samuel Butler were some of the better known authors who wrote in Scriblerian vein, but Scriblerian satire also seeped into the journalism and didactic literature of the time, and continued to disseminate in works by important modern and postmodern authors.<sup>162</sup> Rather than thinking of hegemonic forms in terms of cycles during which genres exhaust their potential and give place to new literary practices, Scriblerus' case draws attention to the organic growth of new forms *in response to* existing traditions, as something fundamentally related to and coexisting with a fading model. Finally, the spectacular presence of this fictional character in the public sphere, from the pages of the books, to periodicals, to the stage, and then in the cultural consciousness of future generations up to this day points to the key role played by an elite minority in disseminating ideas, beliefs, and cultural trends.<sup>163</sup> As Swift put it in one of his letters to Pope, if three or four "Men of Genius [...] could be united, [they] would drive the World before them"—a premise seemingly not very different from Habermas's argument about the essential role of the intellectual elite in the formation of the public sphere. My disagreement addresses the hierarchical and exclusionary nature of this model: while cultural elites have the authority to propel ideas to public debate, their proliferation, however, depends on a dynamic process of ideological exchange. The creation of the public sphere cannot be conceived outside a fluid exchange of opinion which involves the most diverse social, gender, and ideological groups. As Scriblerus' case demonstrates, the dunces' role in publicizing and consolidating ideas, to the point of turning them into flesh and blood characters, with a biography, genealogy, and bibliography of their own, cannot be ignored.



The public sphere of the eighteenth century had a clearly political dimension. It posed, two different models of sociability—the Spectatorial one, whose goal was to make the coffeehouse news industry and “the cultural politics of Augustan Britain safe for a Whig oligarchy,”<sup>164</sup> and the Scriblerian one, deeply exclusionary in its promotion of a high culture paradigm, and positioning itself as a defender of Tory principles of political conservatism. As a space of rational debate on matters of political importance, the public sphere in Britain was, indeed, the result of the development of the bourgeois culture centered around coffeehouses, intellectual and literary salons and the print media. But while Addison and Steele conceived of these spaces as arenas of sociability, civic involvement, and polite behavior, the Scriblerians saw them, instead, as promoters of bad taste, moral corruption, and political compromise. The Scriblerian model aimed less at a reformation of manners or the creation of a civil society and more at condemning an incipient modernity characterized by news mongering, political partisanship and a suspect interest in science over religious faith. As such, they distanced themselves from the “rabble” and engaged in a fierce crusade for which they created their own army of self-destructive scribblers—the many Simon, Andrew, Erasmus, Galfridus, Cornelius, Minimum, or Maximum Scriblerus—who are nothing else but grotesque embodiments of a modernity gone wild. The widening gap between polite letters and professional writing, the disregard for literary merit and use of disreputable authorial practices, the ludicrous fascination of the virtuosi with pseudo-scientific research, the irrationality of the theatrical and operatic representations, the lack of morality of the religious and secular realms—are all recurrent themes of the Scriblerian writings that seep into the public sphere creating expectations, challenging the status quo, and generating opinion by engaging a highly reactive cultural periphery in the public

debate. The Scriblerians' marketing strategy—involving collaborative writing, answering each other's works, engaging the readers in public disputes, and turning their dunces into fictional characters in order to highlight their flaws—relied heavily on the very reactive nature of their opponents, who answered in large number to provocations and engaged into exercises in public debate with profound political implications. From this standpoint, Pope's dunces form a distinct cultural category that, far from representing a marginalized, minority, or disempowered group, participated in a forceful way in shaping public opinion. They contradict the exclusionary nature of the Habermasian model by engaging in the same network of cultural exchange with the elites, and even demanding ascendancy over their betters based on their alliance with the ruling political class. While "counterpublic" (Fraser 61) is a term that suggestively encapsulates the idea of competing interests—be they divided over class, gender, or political lines—, a *networked public* may better describe the collaborative nature of the public sphere conceived not as a conglomerate of divergent ideologies but as an organic whole.

### CHAPTER III

#### INHABITING *THE DUNCIAD*: SOCIAL SPACES

It was worth while being a dunce then. Ah, Sir, hadst *thou* lived in those days! It is not worth while being a dunce now, when there are no wits. (James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*)

And it's not even a matter of time, but of method: a field this large cannot be understood by stitching together separate bits of knowledge about individual cases, because it isn't a sum of individual cases: it's a collective system that should be grasped as such, as a whole... [...] A more rational literary history. (Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*)

One of the most startling oddities in an age of so many “first things,” the sudden popularity of allegorical maps describing romantic attachments or matrimonial relationships in the first half of the eighteenth-century Britain bears evidence to an important shift in understanding emotional states in a space-related configuration. The trope of love as fortified destination, the representation of marriage as an odyssey through an archipelago of strifes, or the depictions of one's existence as a voyage between the longitudes of the fifteenth and thirty-third years of life are all translations of socio-political or nautical cartography in terms of moral, behavioral, and sentimental coordinates that describe changing sets of lifestyles, spatial perceptions, and gender attitudes.<sup>165</sup> More importantly, their circulation is a symptom of a subtle alteration in the epoch's representational modes: regions of the soul and sentimental trajectories are charted out in topographical terms, visually representing not so much intended destinations, but relationships between individuals seen as the geographical center of a particular network of desires, expectations, and social norms. As Foucault has put it in a different context, such spatial

representations elucidate personal encounters as “sets of relations,” giving the story of one’s life a moral coherence which the personal experience actually lacks.<sup>166</sup>

When broadening their scope from sentimental to interpersonal relationships, the interpretive possibilities created by allegorical maps are limitless. They make visible centers of power and social periphery, assemblies of similar or conflicting interests, areas of public or private encounters, networks of ephemeral or stable relations among various social groups, practices of exchange or control, and the coercive action of the social norm on individual choices. Particularly relevant when describing the confrontational space of early modernity, the maps of relations emerging from the essential “intertwinement” and the “unlimited multiplicity”<sup>167</sup> of various social spaces may describe individuals in terms of their affiliations and exclusions, or social trends, assemblages, and fashions in terms of their emergence from the topographical center of a character’s space. Mapping space as “social morphology” involves, in Henri Lefebvre’s terms, a process of delineation of the “networks of communication, exchange and information” (86) seen as clusters of relationships, or in Manuel DeLanda’s terms, a process of unveiling the “interpersonal networks” within which “the subject emerges as relations of exteriority” (47). Mapping social spaces as networks of relations is particularly relevant when attempting to explore the early stages of the formation of the public sphere, a period during which personal alliances, cultural or political debates, and gender clashes are easily traceable as issues of public interest and insistently addressed in the press, literary salons, coffeehouses, and other public assemblies.

It is my intention here to explore some of the consequences of this social mapping in pro- and anti-Pope camps from the perspective of the most important satirist of the eighteenth

century, but also from the revisionist angle of more recent scholarship. I am going to investigate Pope's fields of relations with some of the most prominent of his dunces: Colley Cibber, the last enthroned King of the Dunces and leading (albeit controversial) cultural figure in his quality of actor-manager and Poet Laureate to George II; Edmund Curll, bookseller and publisher epitomizing the unscrupulous rush for publicity of the print market of the time; John Dennis, "the most formidable critic of the period" and one of Pope's most fervent attackers;<sup>168</sup> Eliza Haywood, remarkable actress and playwright, reassessed today as one of the founders of the English novel; and, finally, John "Orator" Henley, a famous clerical figure of his day and one of the "constant talking point[s] in London [of Pope's time] for thirty years."<sup>169</sup> After the more general discussion of the developments in the political, cultural and religious spheres from the previous chapter, I address here some of the motivations of Pope's selection of his dunces and how their reactions and alliances against Pope contributed to the creation of a vibrant space of public debate. I question not only Pope's assessments of some of his dunces that embalmed them in a place of undeserved posterity, but also his dunces' vitriolic attacks and the consequences of this ideological war for the process of creation of a literary public sphere. This more granular analysis of some of the most representative figures of "the Grub-street race" (I, l. 44) uncovers the complicated network of relations established not so much between Pope and a particular dunce, but between Pope as the canonical center of Britain's literary life at the beginning of the century and his dunces' proliferating system of alliances that reveals a significant intersection of the political, religious and cultural spheres of the time. I look both at the *social networks* emerging from one character center, and the *plot networks* developed by Pope in the poem and apparatus, textual spaces where he tells the story of his war with his dunces in sometimes

strikingly different ways. I try, in other words, to map out the social spaces described in *The Dunciad in Four Books* around select centers of intensity, considering, at the same time, Pope's elaborated play on the thin borderline between dream and fact, fantasy and reality.

### ***The Figure of the King: Colley Cibber, Comedian***

*The Dunciad* remains, to date, the poem with the largest number of identifiable characters in all world literature: almost two hundred dunces inhabit its spaces creating, through the mere frequency of the names provided, the strong impression that the individuals referred to are not important as identifiable characters, but as pieces in a complicated mechanism of cultural reassessment. It is undeniable that one of the author's intentions was to describe in an ironic way what British culture might have become under the Moderns' assault, to imagine an alternative literary history in which classical values are turned upside down, and contemptible authors are shown as prominent cultural figures.<sup>170</sup> This premise is validated by the symptomatic absence from the text of "good" writers, for whose praise the poem is allegedly written, and by the author's insistence on "exposing the bad, who can only that way be made of any use" (II, note to l. 40). *Authors* like Locke, Newton, Atterbury, Dryden, Congreve, Garth or Addison are banished to the textual periphery, in a fleeting footnote, as if unworthy to inhabit the Empire of Dulness, whereas countless inconsequential *names* are evoked as legitimate denizens of the poem. The realm described in *The Dunciad* is one in which the quantity turns into a standard of value and the textual prominence supersedes the cultural and political relevance of the figures evoked.

And who else could have best ruled over this mass of controversial figures than Colley Cibber, Poet Laureate to King George II for twenty-seven years, the most important theater manager and playwright of the first half of the century, and arguably one of the most popular actors of his time? The fundamental theatricality of the Empire of Dulness demands a hero whose cultural stature as actor, playwright, stage manager, and Hanoverian devotee gives the confusion of values in the literary field a political slant, conflating the idea of compliance to the taste of the rabble with that of servile endorsement of royal authority. Cibber was, indeed, a zealous supporter of the Hanoverian succession, personally known to many of George II's courtiers, and a familiar presence in the houses of Henry Pelham and Philip Stanhope, for instance, both important members of the Whig oligarchy. According to Henry Fielding, Cibber was one of Robert Walpole's regular companions at White's gentlemen's club, where the actor used to "divert company... with his tricks," showing a disgraceful sycophancy to the leading politicians of the day.<sup>171</sup> As a stage manager, Cibber promoted a close relationship between court and theater, Drury Lane becoming under his management a regular entertainment place for the royal family and political officials. Therefore, the replacement of Lewis Theobald, the King of the Dunces up to 1742, with Colley Cibber, reflects not so much a change in Pope's antipathies (although it is fueled by traceable animosities), but a necessary readjustment to the new intentions of the poem, that gains, with the addition of the fourth book, a more politically inflected dimension.

Cibber's significantly more visible public presence made inevitable his clash with Pope, the uncrowned laureate of English poetry. The details of Pope's change of heart are best explained by Warburton in the *Advertisement to the Reader* that opens the poem:

I had lately the pleasure to pass some months with the Author in the Country, where I prevailed upon him to do what I had long desired, and favour me with his explanation of several passages in his Works. It happen'd, that just at that juncture was published a ridiculous book against him, full of Personal Reflections which furnished him with a lucky opportunity of improving This Poem, by giving it the only thing it wanted, *a more considerable Hero* [emphasis added]. He was always sensible of its defects in that particular, and owned he had let it pass with the Hero it had, purely for want of a better; not entertaining the least expectation that such an one was reserved for this Post, as has since obtained the Laurel: But since that had happened, he could no longer deny this justice either to him or the *Dunciad*.

And yet I will venture to say, there was another motive which had still more weight with our Author: this person was one, who from every Folly (not to say Vice) of which another would be ashamed, has constantly derived a Vanity; and therefore was the man in the world who would least be hurt by it. (23-24)

Warburton refers here to Cibber's publication in 1742 of his notorious *Letter from Mr. Cibber, To Mr. Pope*, a pamphlet that dissects minutely Pope's allegedly unprovoked attacks against the actor. Pope's magnanimous remark, though, that he did not replace Theobald as the main hero of *The Dunciad* "purely for want of a better" is far from sincere: Cibber obtained the laureateship in 1730, and had it not been for the fourteen-year prohibition imposed by the copyright law, Pope would have crowned him as the king of the dunces much earlier.<sup>172</sup> Pope's correspondence indicates that he started revising the poem to account for the new hero as early as 1741, two years before the expiration of *The Dunciad*'s copyright, and that the new version of the poem was completed by December 1742.<sup>173</sup> The minutiae with which Pope changed his satire, touching on all levels of textual interpretation, points to the fact that Pope considered Cibber the ideal candidate for the throne of the dunces, and that the change of hero reflected his intention to change the argument of the poem as a whole.



A quick account of Pope and Cibber's feud may clarify some of the directions of this textual adjustment. As Cibber's *Letter* elucidates, their conflict dates back to 1717, when Cibber attacked *Three Hours after Marriage*, a play authored by Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot. Cibber had played the role of Plotwell, a tragedy author and actor, without realizing that the target of the play was actually himself. One month later, while performing in *The Rehearsal*, Cibber introduced an aside referring contemptuously to one of the scenes in *Three Hours after Marriage*, an intervention that inflamed Pope, who came behind the scenes to call Cibber to account for the insult. The incident ended up the next night in a scuffle between Cibber and Gay which required the intervention of the police.<sup>174</sup>

The conflict continued the same year after Cibber's performance of *The Non-Juror*, an anti-Catholic play which obviously galled Pope. In a letter to William Digby, Pope made the offensive remark that "the Stage is the only Place we seem alive at: There indeed we stare, and roar, and clap Hands for King George, and the Government"<sup>175</sup>—correctly interpreted by Cibber as referring to his own play. Moreover, Cibber suspected that Esdras Barnevelt, the author of a pamphlet claiming that *The Non-Juror* was "a closely couched Jacobite libel against the Government," was none other than Pope.<sup>176</sup> The feud lied dormant until 1727, when Pope attacked again Cibber in *Peri Bathous*, including him among the "parrots [...] that repeat *another's* Words, in such a *hoarse, odd* Voice, that makes them seem *their own*," and depicting him as an exemplary representative of the "pert style," or "the low in Wit."<sup>177</sup> Connected to this event or not, in 1728 Cibber rejected *The Beggar's Opera*, a play by Pope's friend, John Gay, which was performed, instead, with exceptional success, by John Rich at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Soon after this event, Cibber was again attacked in the first edition of *The*

*Dunciad*, whose frontispiece illustration placed his volume of plays at the bottom of the altar of books on which sat the Dulness's owl.<sup>178</sup> In 1733, three years after Cibber won the laureateship, Pope took another swipe at his lack of poetic skills in *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace* ("And justly Caesar scorns the Poet's Lays,/It is to History he trusts for Praise."). In 1734, Pope attacked Cibber again in *An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*, this time in a more personal way, alluding to his social ambition and sexual transgressions ("And has not Colley still his lord, and whore?"). In 1737, Pope included in *The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace* another direct reference to "idle Cibber" who made "poor Pinky eat with vast applause": the poem refers to an event dating back to 1700, when the actor William Pinketham was required to gulp down whole chickens in Cibber's play *Love Makes a Man*. Cibber's autobiography, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, followed in 1740, making surprisingly mellow remarks about being "dispraisingly spoken of" by Pope.<sup>179</sup> His autobiography enjoyed a lasting success in spite of Cibber's aggravating self-commendatory tone, which predictably inflamed Pope: in a letter to John Boyle, Pope remarked that the actor was "the honestest Man I know," adding, however, that "never had Impudence and Vanity so faithful a Professor."<sup>180</sup> As Warburton pointed out, the next and most decisive attack against Cibber came in the 1743 *Dunciad* (after the less explicit fourth book published separately in 1742), in which the actor was turned into the epitome of dullness. Pope's swipe at Cibber was devastating: in the words of one of his alter-egos, if "the constituent qualities of the greater Epic Hero, are *Wisdom Bravery*, and *Love* [...] it followeth that those of the lesser Epic Hero should be *Vanity*, *Impudence*, and *Debauchery*, from which happy assemblage resulteth heroic Dulness" (*Ricardus Aristarchus on the Hero of the Poem*). The enumerated qualities describe the public perception of the real Cibber to a T.

From this point on, Cibber's attacks against Pope were no longer sedate and dignified, but full of nasty personal details and haughty commentaries. In his 1742 *Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope*, the actor recapitulated the main moments of his conflict with Pope, including the famous episodes of Pope's incensed visit behind the scene after the conclusion of *The Rehearsal*, and Pope's visit to a whore at Button's coffee-house. Pope was presented as a "Universal Censor," as a detractor of Addison, as revengeful without a cause (and actually helping dunces "to transmit their Names to Posterity"), and denounced as using selective quoting from Cibber's *Apology* to render exactly the opposite of what the text said. Cibber also critiqued Pope's notes to the poem as pointless (when not self-commendatory), and ended his letter with the humiliating episode of Pope being threatened to be beaten with a birchen rod at Button's by an infuriated dunce.<sup>181</sup> Another *Occasional Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope* followed in 1743, after the publication of *The Greater Dunciad*: openly disclosed as the new King of the dunces, Cibber counterattacked violently, accusing Pope of publishing a "barren, twice-told Story," of displaying shameless "Self-admiration" in the notes, of demonstrating satirical indecency ("your filthy Slut of a Muse empt[ies] her Jordan, Toast and all, into the Street! Smell it Reader!"), lewdness (Pope was a "ridiculous Lover"), religious heresy (Pope "infused the weak minds of the Multitude" with anti-Popish ideas), dishonesty and treason (Pope transgressed "all the Laws of Morality, or Government"). Warburton, who had encouraged Pope to replace Theobald with Cibber in the last version of *The Dunciad*, was denounced as a "Volunteer Champion" of the author, and the letter turned, at times, into a manic exercise in close reading, both of the text and of Pope's intentions.<sup>182</sup> His attacks had serious consequences for Pope, who saw his allegedly failed sexual encounter with the harlot graphically represented in widely circulated cartoons.<sup>183</sup>

Interestingly, Cibber was never dunce enough not to see beyond Pope's textual stratagems, and his constant invocation of Pope's political, religious, and moral transgressions is a clear indicator that he considered himself more a victim of his affiliations, and not (as Pope implied at times) a plagiarist, and even less an inconsequential cultural figure. Pope praised, after all, *The Careless Husband* in an important note to *The Dunciad*, as he had previously done in *The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace Imitated (To Augustus)* (1736). It is curious, therefore, that Cibber is blind to the radical changes of the poem dictated by the choice of a new hero: in his *Second Letter* to Pope, he reduced the revision of the poem to a mere change of names, and made no reference to the added Book IV, which contained no less than ten direct references to the new hero:

The bare Change of one Name for another is his whole Expence of Thought about it! The Materials, and Furniture of the Character, even to the same Books, in his Study (which he knew would never be looked into) stand just in their old Places! The Clouds, the Mists, the Fogs, and some Vapours of Dulness (let them never so much obscure the Likeness) will serve for any Mortal he has a Mind to wrap in them! (29)

If it is true that some of the dunces are simply replaced with new figures in the revised edition of the poem, nothing that relates to Cibber involves just a change of names: the whole poem is carefully revised to account for the greater significance of a "more considerable hero." Its very first line indicates this change in emphasis: the more generic "Books and the Man I sing..." becomes in the 1743 version "The Mighty Mother and her Son...", a change clarified by an added note that says that "the Mother, and not the Son, is the principal Agent of this Poem," and that the main action of *The Dunciad* is "the Restoration of the Empire of Dulness in Britain" that is accomplished in the last book, and not "the Coronation of the Laureate," that occurs in the first.

Cibber is clearly identified in the reference to the Laureate, and described as a character subordinated to the mythic figure of Goddess Dulness, who takes the main role on the poem's stage. The change in emphasis is significant: if the previous editions of the poem celebrated a hero whose qualification as a textual critic (Theobald was, allegedly, "the best all-round editor of Shakespeare in [his] period"<sup>184</sup>) justified his work on "books," i.e. on canonical authors who are approached with the inadequate tools of the "Modern" scholarship, the new hero is described from the very beginning through his relationship with a pseudo-mythic figure who epitomizes all the evils of modernity incarnate. The multifarious representation of Dulness in the poem as a religious, political, and cultural figure, finds in Cibber a fit companion, and, most importantly, one that covers all these areas of concern in a way in which Theobald never did. Cibber's abandonment of clerical life for the stage, his cultural stature as an actor, theater manager, and playwright, and his fervent Whiggism that won him the appointment as Poet Laureate to King George II, represent aspects of his personality which are finely woven into Pope's satire, turning it into a systemic critique of the religious, political, and cultural life at the beginning of the century.<sup>185</sup>

As Charles D. Peavy correctly observes, the changes dictated by the use of Cibber as a hero operate at all major levels of interpretation.<sup>186</sup> On the literal and historical level, Cibber is seen as "the theatre manager who had discouraged talented playwrights and who, motivated by personal gain or party prejudice, rejected dramas of merit" (19). His association with the idea of debased theatre, plagiarism, and poor standards of taste is emphasized, on an allegorical level, by Cibber's "progress" from city to court, from Bartholomew Fair to Drury Lane, a transition which has profound political connotations: the "city" takes over the "court" because of a corrupt

administration that deliberately promotes non-value, destabilizing the very fundamentals of civil society. On a moral level, Cibber is described as “the corrupter of verbal wisdom, the debaser of the dignity and integrity of the ‘word’” (21), as seen in much of the fourth book of *The Dunciad* that deals with the dangers posed by the operatic and pantomimic representations. Finally, on anagogical level, Cibber is portrayed as an “anti-Christ of wit” and “the harbinger of the uncreating word of Dulness” (24). If Goddess Dulness is an inversion of God the Father, then Cibber’s anointment is an inversion of the baptism of Christ, and his dream in Book III is nothing but an upside-down version of the divine Revelation. Cibber’s enthronement as the new King of the Dunces is thus justified by Pope’s conviction that the corruption of aesthetic values has serious moral consequences, and that the patronage practice so adeptly employed by Cibber to his own benefits may result in a politicization of the cultural and religious realms that could shake the very fundamentals of the nation.

Supporting these larger levels of interpretation, the fabric of the text is attentively woven to include details that help the whole coalesce around the new hero. Pope’s poem contains no less than forty direct references to Cibber in the main text, and seventy-three in paratext (not counting the forty-three references to the hero in the Index of Matters).<sup>187</sup> This makes for a careful revision of the poem that will eventually broaden its argument to include a more explicit critique of the Whig-supported Hanoverian rule. The change in the poem’s geography from Rag Fair to Bedlam, from the vicinity of the Tower, with its connotations of royal authority, to the proximity of Grub-Street, with its implications of poverty and carelessness, is neatly backed up by references to Cibber’s father, Caius Gabriel, who created the two statues in front of the Bethlehem mental hospital, Melancholy and Raving Madness. Moreover, Cibber’s investiture as

the King of the Dunces in Book II follows in significant topographical detail the coronation ceremony of George II, creating a subversive confusion in the readers' mind between the laureate and royal succession. The altar of books described in Book I of *The Dunciad* is carefully redesigned to include rewritings by Cibber of classical plays that the King of the Dunces adapted to the new requisites of the stage: *Ximena: or, The Heroic Daughter* (1719) (an adaptation of Corneille's *Le Cid*), *Perolla and Izadora* (1706), *Caesar in Egypt* (1725), *The Non-Juror* (1717) (a comedy after Molière's *Tartuffe*), and *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John* (an adaptation of Shakespeare's *King John* not produced until 1745 but written much earlier).<sup>188</sup> The plays are carefully selected to support Cibber's accusations of plagiarism circulating at the time, but they also highlight the playwright's active support of royal authority: *The Non-Juror* capitalized on the passions aroused by the 1715 Jacobite uprising, winning Cibber the sympathy of the Hanoverians and eventually the laureateship in 1730, and *Papal Tyranny* brazenly exploited the unrest caused by the second Jacobite rising in 1745. Cibber's vision of the future empire of Dulness in Book III emphasizes the hero's royal position, and (better than Theobald) the theatricality of his public performance on the political stage. Pope's derogatory remarks about Cibber's English grammar and Latin proficiency can also be rendered as disguised *a propos* of the language difficulties of a foreign king. Interestingly enough, the subtle confusion of the King of the Dunces with the actual King George II is backed up by factual evidence showing that the royal power was actually controlled by Queen Caroline, associated in the carnation episode with "the Mighty Mother" in whose lap Cibber sleeps throughout the newly added fourth book. The great specificity of these examples (and they could continue beyond political lines) renders

Leonard R. N. Ashley's evaluation of *The Dunciad in Four Books* as being "marred" with "a hero who did not fit" obviously incorrect (116).

Moreover, Cibber is referred throughout the poem in relation to a large number of more or less prominent dunces (Figure 4), all of whom belong to groups that inevitably intersect on political lines: Lord Hervey (a staunch Whig supporter), John Dennis (England's leading critic of the first half of the century, also a Whig), Robert Walpole (Prime Minister of George II), Edmund Curll (disreputable, albeit very successful, bookseller and publisher of Whig political tracts), Thomas "Hesiod" Cooke (translator with declared Whig sympathies), Stephen Duck (one of Cibber's counter-candidates to laureateship), Lewis Theobald (reputed Shakespearian critic who also wrote Whig propaganda for hire), Laurence Eusden (former Poet Laureate), the two Hanoverian kings, Elkanah Settle (former City Poet who organized the Whigs' anti-Catholic pope-burning pageants in London), John Banks (tragic playwright), William Broome (clergyman and translator with Pope of Homer's *Odyssey*), George Etherege (libertine playwright and Whig politician), John Fletcher (playwright and Bishop of London), Richard Bentley (classical scholar and Master of Trinity College), John Ozell (translator associated with the Whig writers grouped around Addison at Button's Club), Thomas Archer (architect to the King), Cardell Goodman (actor and reformed Jacobite supporter), Barton Booth (joint manager with Cibber of the theatre in Drury Lane), Henry Janssen (director of the South Sea Company), Charles Fleetwood (theatrical manager). The importance of this social network having Cibber at its symbolic center is paramount: it covers areas of cultural, clerical, and political life that tidily intersect in the figure of the new King. Cibber's name is evoked in contexts referring to the significance of the laureateship during the Georges era, the youth's education through theatrical representations, the



introduction of fairground shows to the Court and Town, the role of cultural authorities in endorsing popular culture (i.e. “novels, plays and obscene books,” I, note to l.147), the dangers of secularization brought by popular shows, the moral responsibility of the public personalities, the cultural advancement mediated by political coalitions, the epidemic spread of false learning and plagiarism, and so on. This map of relations unravels systems of alliances whose common denominator is the unconditional support of the leading political class of the time: almost all of the above-mentioned dunces, whether having religious, theatrical, or literary backgrounds, won their social prominence not due to personal merit but to their pro-Hanoverian affiliations.

Both Cibber and Pope had their own defenders and attackers in this “war with Pens” which continued throughout their active life and well beyond the pages of *The Dunciad*.<sup>189</sup> Fielding’s pamphlets published in *The Champion* in 1740 supported what became Pope’s critical position against Cibber, accusing Cibber of mauling the English language, while *The Tryal of Colley Cibber, Comedian* (published under the pseudonym Thomas Johnson in 1740) similarly proved him “guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors against the English language.”<sup>190</sup> During 1742 alone, more notable Pope defenses included *A Blast upon Bays, or a New Lick at the Laureate* (possibly by Pope himself) and *The Scribleriad. Being an Epistle to the Dunces. On Renewing Their Attack upon Mr. Pope under Their Leader the Laureate*. In turn, Cibber was vocally defended by John Hervey in *The Difference between Verbal and Practical Virtue* (1742), and in *Letter to Mr. C[ib]b[e]r, on his Letter to Mr. Pope* (1742), which contained a loud panegyric of Cibber’s character, doubled by a pointed attack against *The Dunciad* and Pope’s career as a whole. Other supporting pamphlets included *Blast upon Blast and Lick for Lick, or A New Lesson for P[o]pe* (1742), which transferred the competitors’ rivalry in the literary arena,

with Pope humiliated by Cibber's success as dramatic author, and *Sawney and Cibber* (1742), which attacked Pope as a poet, translator, editor, and lover, and ended up by rewriting the emetic episode with Pope as a victim. The debate triggered by Pope's satire engaged supporters on both sides, continuing during the two years before Pope's death, and ending in an ironical note with Cibber's assessment of the poet's life and oeuvre in the prefatory material to the elegant Bell edition of Pope's *Works* (1787).

Although the poem's plot network includes some of the biographical details of his conflict with Pope, they are purposely simplified in a manner that evidences Cibber's political and moral compromises, as well as his failure to act as demanded by the importance of his public persona. Described as an inept cultural figure but as an adept promoter of the political interests of the day, Cibber epitomizes in Pope's satire all the dangers of modernity brought in Britain by a foreign king, with a foreign agenda, and a foreign set of cultural values.

### ***The Figure of the Bookseller: Edmund Curll***

Alexander Pope's conflict with Edmund Curll, one of the most active participants in the London print trade, brings to the fore issues of paramount importance for the shaping of the literary marketplace and the creation of the literary canon at the beginning of the century. It is a conflict between the most authoritative poetic voice of the time, an aristocrat of the world of letters and a promoter of high culture, and one of the most unscrupulous supporters of the new fad for scandal, gossip, and raw news that defines the popular culture of the time. In spite of his disreputable methods as a publisher, Curll's position on the marketplace has never been peripheral: his use of loud publicity, ready-made biographies of recently dead celebrities, piracy,

and even pornography kept him constantly in the public eye and placed him at the center of a number of literary and political controversies which ended up in legal decisions regulating copyright rights, and even in a notorious sentence to stand in the pillory.<sup>191</sup> Whereas publishers like Jacob Tonson or William Strahan helped establish the respectability of the profession, Curll stereotypically illustrated the venality of a certain segment of the publishing world, as well as the adept use of the public's interest in gossip and ephemera that helped create the modern literary marketplace. One of Pope's footnotes on Curll in *The Dunciad* gives a good sense of the bookseller's place in the collective memory of his time:

We come now to a character of much respect, that of Mr. Edmund Curl. As a plain repetition of great actions is the best praise for them, we shall only say of this eminent man, that he carried the Trade many lengths beyond what it ever before had arrived at; and that he was the envy and admiration of all his profession. He possessed himself of a command over all authors whatever; he caused them to write what he pleased; he could not call their very Names their own. He was not only famous among these; he was taken notice of by the *State*, the *Church*, and the *Law*, and received particular marks of distinction from each. (II, note to l. 58)

The details of Curll's literary feud with Pope are carefully embedded in the textual fabric of *The Dunciad* in a manner which, typically for Pope, leaves room for conflicting interpretations. In Curll's case, more than in the case of any other dunce evoked by Pope, the story told by the poem is significantly different from the story told by the apparatus. The network of relations in which Curll is involved within the poem is strikingly thinner and more decorous than the dense (and clearly infamous) web of relations depicted or alluded to by the footnotes, prefatory, and back material. The ruse is meant to mimic Curll's own method of turning black into white, or presenting an obvious dishonest situation in a positive light, and Pope uses to that

effect a news-marketing technique first rehearsed by Curll in his *Key* to the 1728 edition of *The Dunciad*.

Within the poem, Curll is one of the most developed characters, being presented twice as victor: once in the competition for catching the phantom of a poet, and then in the pissing contest that takes place during the celebratory games following Cibber's coronation. During the first game, Curll competes with Bernard Lintot, one of the most prominent publishers of the first half of the century, to grab "Phantom More" (James Moore Smythe), a plagiarist playwright who proves in the end to be as immaterial as his own original works. During the race, "dauntless Curl" slips in the "lake" made by "his" Corinna (the poetess Elizabeth Thomas), who discharges her "evening cates" in the street. Fearful that he may lose the race, Curll addresses a prayer to Cloacina, the Goddess of the Sewers, who comes to his aid, "imbibes" Curll with new life, and helps him win the race. Moore's Phantom, though, proves to be nothing but an "embroider'd suit" that is "snatch'd away" by an unpaid tailor:

And now the victor stretch'd his eager hand  
Where the tall Nothing stood, or seem'd to stand;  
A shapeless shade, it melted from his sight,  
Like forms in clouds, or visions of the night.  
To seize his papers, Curll, was next thy care;  
His papers light, fly diverse, toss'd in air;  
Songs, sonnets, epigrams the winds uplift,  
And whisk them back to Evans, Young, and Swift.  
The embroider'd suit at least he deem'd his prey,  
That suit an unpaid tailor snatch'd away.  
No rag, no scrap, of all the beau, or wit,  
That once so flutter'd, and that once so writ.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, 109-120)

The contest ends with Curll being offered by the Goddess a "shaggy Tap'stry" in which it is woven the unhappy fate of several notorious representatives of the print market (John Dunton,

Daniel Defoe, John Tutchin, George Ridpath, and Abel Roper). Before offering him this consolation prize, though, supremely amused by Curll's disappointment at the vanishing of Moore, Goddess Dulness replays the race, unlocking, in the process, the meaning of the whole episode:

Three wicked imps, of her own Grub Street choir,  
 She deck'd like Congreve, Addison, and Prior;  
 Mears, Warner, Wilkins run: delusive thought!  
 Breval, Bond, Bezaleel, the varlets caught.  
 Curll stretches after Gay, but Gay is gone,  
 He grasps an empty Joseph for a John:  
 So Proteus, hunted in a nobler shape,  
 Became, when seized, a puppy, or an ape.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, 123-130)

John Durant Breval, William Bond, and Bezaleel Morice, all members of the "Grub-street choir," are evoked for their involvement in authorship scandals: Breval for the use of Gay's name, Bond for publishing a satire against Pope under the name of "H. Stanhope," and Morrice for bringing out a number of satires against Pope's *Essay on Man* and his translation of Homer as anonymous pieces. Described as Curll's "varlets," the "three wicked imps" attempt to imitate William Congreve, Joseph Addison, and Matthew Prior, authors whose works had been spuriously published by Edmund Curll.<sup>192</sup> Curll's grabbing of the "empty Joseph" Gay instead of John is an allusion to the publisher's practice of using fictitious names for some of his pamphlets, to make them pass for pieces conceived by reputable authors. The episode also makes reference to Breval's *The Confederates*, whose dedication was signed "Joseph Gay" in an attempt to insinuate that the celebrated John Gay supported the play. William Mears, Thomas Warner, and William Wilkins are all "Booksellers and Printers of much anonymous stuff"; Mears published, among other works, Daniel Defoe's *New Voyage Round the World* (1725)

and *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724–1727), Thomas Warner was known for his pro-government tracts, and William Wilkins was the printer of “Iliad Doggrel’s” *Homerides* (1715), a ridiculous attack of Pope’s translation by Thomas Burnett and George Duckett. A more veiled suggestion—the reference to winning an “ape” instead of a “nobler shape”—could be read as an allusion to Pope himself, frequently mocked by his detractors who referred to him as (an) “A. P\_e.” The episode unveils the corrupt practices of publishers like Curll, who capitalized on stolen or misattributed works, but it is also a commentary on the negative effects of their political involvement: the publishers’ race serves the higher interests of Queen Dulness/Hanoverian rule and, as such, it has a devastating effect on the literary realm by replacing true value with worthless imitations.

Rich in personal detail, the footnotes disclose the real story told by the poem, which is a rewriting in epic mode of the booksellers’ fierce competition for profit on the literary marketplace. Curll’s opponent in the race is Bernard Lintot, Pope’s publisher of his early works (*Windsor Forest*, *Temple of Fame*, *Eloisa to Abelard*, and *The Rape of the Lock*, to name just a few), and of his translations of the *Iliad* (1715–1720) and the *Odyssey* (1726). Lintot’s presence in *The Dunciad* is justified by his greediness over the payment for Pope’s translation of the *Odyssey*: because of a Dutch duodecimo piracy of the *Iliad*, his profits for the translation were considerably reduced, so he accordingly cut Pope’s pay for the next translation of the *Odyssey* by half. A reference in this episode to the “left-legg’d Jacob” (II, l. 68) links Lintot to Jacob Tonson, one of the most important publishers of poetry of his time and the one who launched Pope’s career by bringing out his *Pastorals* in 1709. The reference gives more context about the reasons why Pope attacks Lintot in the poem: given Lintot’s greediness, Pope tried to win Tonson as

publisher of the *Odyssey*. Although Pope's attempt was without success, he published with Tonson Shakespeare's *Works* (1725), which infuriated Lintot, who immediately offered the readers "the equivalent folios for a guinea less than Pope's quarto." This incident put an end to their collaboration (although Lintot continued to hold the copyright of most of Pope's early poems and published them regularly) and won Lintot the notorious place of Curll's unsuccessful competitor in *The Dunciad*.

"Curll's Corinna" episode evokes another real fact that is attentively disclosed by the footnotes: in 1727, "Mrs. T\_" [Elizabeth Thomas], sold to Curll some of Pope's letters to his friend Henry Cromwell, with whom, rumors say, she had an affair. Pope described the letters in the notes as "very trivial things, full not only of levities, but of wrong judgments of men and books, and only excusable from the youth and inexperience of the writer," and he hit back at the poetess by implying a sexual relationship of Thomas with Curll (Ovid's eponym character, Corinna, being the poet's mistress in *Amores*).<sup>193</sup> The *nom de plume* lasted and, after her death, J. Wilford published her edition of *Metamorphosis* (1743) under the inscription "By the late celebrated Mrs. ELIZABETH THOMAS, Who so often obliged the Town, under the name of CORINNA."

Finally, "Phantom More," Curll's vanishing prize in the booksellers' race, is no other than James Moore Smythe, a playwright and a fop, whose play, *The Rival Modes* (1727), sparked his quarrel with Pope. Smythe quoted in the second act eight lines written by Pope, who had initially offered them to the author but then withdrew his permission to use them. Following this incident, Pope described Smythe in *The Dunciad* as a plagiarist, implying that he had similarly plagiarized works by Evan, Young, and Swift, and portrayed him as a fool with only "one lucky

hit” (II, l. 47) at authorial celebrity. A question arises, though: why did Pope use Smythe and no other, maybe better, candidate as a prize for the booksellers’ race? The answer highlights another less visible link that brings together the protagonists of the race. It involves, again, the publisher Bernard Lintot, who had offered Smythe a generous copyright payment of £105 for *The Rival Modes*, in spite of the modest critical reception of the play. In the context of Lintot’s parsimony in paying Pope for the prodigious effort of translating Homer’s *Odyssey* (Pope received only £367 in copy money), the poet may have perceived this as an additional offense and developed the whole episode as an illustration of the mercenary publishing practices of the time.<sup>194</sup>

Besides offering clarifications regarding the main protagonists of the episode, the footnotes elaborate on a large number of dunces only fleetingly mentioned in the poem, creating, when unlocked, a vivid image of the publishing industry of the time. “It was a common practice of this bookseller to publish vile pieces of obscure hands under the names of eminent authors,” explains Pope in his note to verse 132, and continues his list of illustrative examples with Thomas Cooke, the author of an infamous *Battel of the Books* (1725) “in which Philips and Welsted were the heroes, and Swift and Pope utterly routed” (note to l. 138). Matthew Concanen is also mentioned as impersonator of Swift, probably for his acid attacks against the poets in *A Letter on Swift and Pope’s Miscellanies* (1727), in the Preface to *A Compleat Collection of all the Verses, Essays, Letters and Advertisements occasion’d by Mr. Pope and Swift’s Miscellanies* (1728), and in *A Supplement to the Profound* (1728).<sup>195</sup> A last, quite offensive, reference to the wrongs inflicted by “Lady Maries” ( Lady Mary Wortley Montagu) upon a “hapless Monsieur,” although not clarified by the footnote, alludes to another episode of some notoriety at the time: as Horace Walpole describes it, Lady Montagu’s “Debt was to a Monsr. Ruremonde, a French man



who had follow'd her to London; she persuaded him to let her lay out above £2000 in the stocks for him; as soon as She had got it, she told him her Husband had discover'd their intrigue & would murder him if he did not fly; after which she denied the Debt; he threaten'd to send her letters to her husband, on which she tried to get Ld Mar & Ld Stair to fight him."<sup>196</sup> The attack on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, alluding to extramarital affairs and dishonest financial behavior, is explained by her attitude toward Pope, whose affection she allegedly answered with ridicule and, after the publication of *The Dunciad*, with a malicious pamphlet attack, "A Popp upon Pope," included by Curll in his *Popiad* (1728).<sup>197</sup> As a whole, all these references have Curll as a common denominator, either as an orchestrator of the campaign against Pope, or as a bookseller and publisher epitomizing the unseemly practices of the print trade in the first decades of the century.

The "shaggy Tap'stry" (II, l. 143) received by Curll from Godess Dulness, his consolation prize for winning the booksellers' race, reminds of the gold-embroidered mantle of Cloanthus, from the fifth book of the *Aeneid*, and displays "the fates" of Dulness's "confessors": John Dunton is described as a "broken bookseller and abusive scribler" (II, note to l. 144), Daniel Defoe as an author whose offensive works won him a sentence to the pillory, and John Tutchin as a Whig radical sentenced to whipping for promoting seditious libel in his periodical, *The Observer* (1702-1704).<sup>198</sup> George Ridpath and Abel Roper, the publishers of the Whig periodical *The Flying Post* and of the Tory periodical *The Post Boy*, respectively, are introduced as political extremists "who deserved to be cudgeled, and were so" (II, note to l. 149). The overarching theme of the tapestry is the physical punishment of all the characters evoked there, Curll included: the footnotes send the readers to Swift's and Pope's *Miscellanies*, where they can

find details about Curll's punishment by Pope, who administered him an emetic, and about his retribution by the scholars at Westminster School, who tossed him in a blanket.<sup>199</sup>

The second episode in which Curll is a main character is the pissing contest, or the game for the favors of a Poetess: Thomas Osborne and Edmund Curll compete for Eliza Haywood, the victor being the one "who best can send on high/The salient spout, far-streaming to the sky" (II, 161-162). The game involves, again, two booksellers, but what is emphasized this time is not so much the improper practices employed by some agents of the print trade, but the public's craze for the latest fashion reflected by their appetite for novels, which were perceived by the Scriblerians as a feminine genre *par excellence*. The competition starts, Osborne makes a fool of himself by washing his own face with his "small jett," while "shameless Curl" vigorously projects "the stream [...] o'er his head" (II, l. 177-180). Victor of the competition, Curll leaves with the "pleas'd dame," and Osborne is crowned with the jordan and "walks contented home" (II, l. 188-190).

The comparative economy of characters in this particular episode is remarkable: the competition involves only three participants whose relationships, although alluding to improper sexual behavior, are glossed by the footnotes to be strictly professional. Thomas Osborne is one of the leading publishers of the beginning of the century, specialized in selling libraries for which he issued annotated catalogues. His relationship (if any) with Haywood is unclear, Osborne being a replacement of William Rufus Chetwood, and then of Samuel Chapman, both of them Curll's competitors in the previous editions of the poem, and both of them former printers of Haywood's works. The coronation of the bookseller with a china jordan is inspired by a real episode whose hero was Chetwood, described by Curll as a "Drunken-Debauch" in his *Key to the*

*Dunciad*. Apparently, “of Booksellers [Osborne] was one of the most ignorant: of title pages or editions he had no knowledge or remembrance, but in all the tricks and arts of his trade he was most expert.”<sup>200</sup> His business acumen triggered, in fact, the conflict with Pope: Osborne sold Pope’s subscription books of Homer’s *Iliad* at half the price, by cutting down the folio copies to the size of the subscription quartos. Eliza Haywood wins her place in the poem because of two “scandalous histories” in which she attacked two of Pope’s friends, and because of her warm celebration of “Curl’s undertakings for *Reformation of manners*,” “*sweetness of disposition*,” and “*tenderness with which he considered the errors of his fellow creatures*” [Pope’s emphasis] in *History of Clarina* (note to l. 157). The language of the note is obviously sexualized, implying a sentimental affair that would support the denouement of the pissing episode, but the note provides no evidence of such a relationship. Haywood’s name ended up in Curll’s edition of *The Female Dunciad* (1728), although with a piece that had nothing to do with Pope, and Curll continued to print her works in the years that followed the publication of *The Dunciad*.

Besides providing biographical details about the protagonists, the notes open discussions about the nature of critical act and textual interpretation, discussions in which are involved Lewis Theobald and Martinus Scriblerus, one a real, the other one a fictional pedant, who speak expertly from this textual underground. Curll’s connection with Theobald is underscored in a number of attacks against the bookseller, such as Savage’s *An Author to Be Lett*, Fielding’s *The Author’s Farce*, or Swift’s *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, to name just a few. In *The Dunciad*, Theobald is brought in to comment on the inelegance of a term used by Pope to suggest Curll’s suffering from a venereal disease (the note to l. 183 is signed “half Mr. Theobald, half Scribl.”). In turn, Scriblerus is introduced to protest against “conjectural emendations,” a phrase coined by

Richard Bentley, whose method Theobald adopts in *Shakespeare Restored* (1726). The two commentators are thus presented as mindlessly positioning themselves against each other, and, by siding with Curll, who was the first annotator of Pope's poem in his *Key to the Dunciad*, as doing nothing else but a more pretentious form of "curlicism."<sup>201</sup>

Curll's victorious persona within the poem, as opposed to his debauched and unscrupulous behavior in the footnotes, is a telling example of the kind of conflicting characterization offered by Pope in order to assemble a multifaceted portrait of his enemy. The two instances analyzed here contrast an epic hero to a scandalmongering hack, an exemplary individual to a character who typifies all the contemptible attributes of the profession. The thick semantic cloud surrounding the bookseller in the apparatus and the dense social network built around him in the footnotes, are textual pointers of his visibility in the public sphere, but also (in Pope's opinion) of Curll's marginal cultural relevance. In spite of his indictment, Curll remains, however, the main orchestrator of the most sustained campaign against Pope, and the first annotator of the poem before Pope himself. Immediately after the publication of the 1728 edition of *The Dunciad*, bare of almost any notes and deliberately hazy regarding the identity of its protagonists, Curll produces his *Compleat Key to the Dunciad*, which provided Pope with a model to follow in drafting his own footnotes to the poem.<sup>202</sup> Pope mimicked Curll's technique with a slant, as it can be seen from this Curllian note, which is turned in Pope's text into a veiled suggestion of fertile creative intimacy between the authoress and bookseller. Curll dicit, "Mrs. Eliza Haywood, Authoress and Translatress of many Novels. † Mr. Kirkall the Engraver of her Picture before her Novels. The two Babes of Love (which the Holy Father of the Church, St. Augustin, calls Adeptus) the scandalous Chronicle records to be the Offsprings of a Poet and a

Bookseller” (12). Pope’s note, on the other hand, gives the titles of the two scandalous novels that won Haywood a place in his poem, turning Haywood’s “offsprings” into books; he also uses the reference to the authoress’ amorous affair with a bookseller, but he transfers the intimation on Curll.<sup>203</sup>

Curll’s profit following the publication of *The Dunciad* was considerable: he speedily published *The Popiad* (1728), *Codrus, or Dunciad Dissected* (1728), *The Female Dunciad* (1728), *The Curliad* (1729), reprinted *Court Poems* with Pope as the alleged author, and printed a new issue of *The Altar of Love* (1727), containing, among other pieces, Giles Jacob’s *The Rape of the Smock*, a rewriting in scatological register of *The Rape of the Lock*. Moreover, in the *Key to the Dunciad* he launched an invitation to the dunces to emulate his vitriolic attacks: “The Dunciaders are hereby desired to invent some more taking Titles, which shall be filled up as the *Progress of Dulness* has been” (vi). And they surely did: Caleb d’Anvers published *The Twickenham Hotch-Potch* (1728), George Duckett, *Pope Alexander’s Supremacy and Infallibility Examin’d* (1729), John Henley, *Tom O’Bedlam’s Dunciad* (1729), John Dennis, *Remarks upon the Dunciad* (1728), James Ralph, *Sawney* (1728), Edward Ward, *Apollo’s Maggot in His Cups* (1729), and an anonymous author even produced a mock *Sequel to the Dunciad* (1729). All these examples indicate that the social networks described by Pope within the text as emerging from the character space of the bookseller accurately mirror Curll’s connections and sphere of influence outside the poem, in the cultural landscape of the early modern London. As I have attempted to demonstrate, they develop around several interlocking themes that address all the despicable aspects of the trade (dishonest relationship with authors and fellow publishers, (ab)use of publicity, taste for scandal, unfair competition, mercantilism,

pornography, physical and moral promiscuity, etc.) but also touch upon broader issues, such as political servility, the diversification of readership, and the accelerated decline of religious authority.

Curll is one of the most visible characters in *The Dunciad*, with eleven mentions within the poem, no less than fifty-five references in the apparatus, and two possible identifications in the visual paratexts of the 1728 and 1729 editions of the poem. His character maps out a social space of impressive diversity, bringing together the largest number of individual plot networks of all the characters evoked in the poem (Figure 5). The intersection of the various characters that orbit around Curll creates, indeed, a “reality effect” that vividly describes the venality of the publishing world, and the cultural shift toward the formation of a new reading community at work at the beginning of the century.<sup>204</sup> As Pat Rogers compellingly argues, Curll is an important agent of modernity that anticipated the emergence of the celebrity culture promoted by modern gossip magazines today and helped shape the literary marketplace at the beginning of the century.<sup>205</sup> On Pope’s epic map, Curll covers, after Cibber, the largest and most dangerous territory of all: the dark alleys, smutty streets, and dark garrets from which the gossips, ploys, and public commotion emerge.

### *The Figure of the Authoress: Eliza Haywood*

In a footnote to the second game celebrating Cibber’s coronation, the booksellers’ competition for gaining the favors of a Poetess, Eliza Haywood is openly introduced as a representative figure for a whole category of “scriblers”:

In this game is exposed, in the most contemptuous manner, the profligate licentiousness of those shameless scriblers (for the most part of that Sex, which ought least to be capable of such malice or impudence) who in libelous Memoirs and Novels, reveal the faults or misfortunes of both sexes, to the ruin of public fame, or disturbance of private happiness. Our good poet (by the whole cast of his work being obliged not to take off the Irony) where he could not shew his indignation, hath shewn his contempt, as much as possible; having here drawn as vile a picture as could be represented in the colours of Epic poesy. (II, note to l. 157)

The note is remarkable for its obvious gender prejudice: the “shameless scriblers” alluded to belong, most of them, to the female sex, and are all authors of “libelous Memoirs and Novels,” who trespass not only the public decorum, but also the clearly delineated boundaries of the public sphere. One’s “private happiness” is shattered by the “profligate licentiousness,” “malice,” and “impudence” of such authors, and their victims’ “public fame” is irremediably compromised by the “vile” gossip recorded in print and circulated as truth in the public eyes. The gender partisanship is coupled with a genre bias which opposes “the good poet,” to “the libelous” Novelists, the “Epic poesy,” to the “licentiousness” of the “Memoirs,” and, more broadly, the high culture epitomized by Pope, to the popular productions that fueled an emerging entertainment industry. The conflict is dramatized at epic level in the pissing contest episode, Pope’s most offensive attack against his dunces, specifically directed against the alliance between women writers and booksellers, seen as the main agents of the public’s corruption of taste.

Pope’s attitude toward women writers in general and Eliza Haywood in particular is worthy of attention, as it reflects in many respects the epoch’s stereotypes about femininity and the dangers of cultural (re)production, about social decorum and public access to spheres coded as exclusively male, about culturally sanctioned productions and new genre developments

(novel, biography, memoir, letter writing, moral guidebooks, trivia). As discussed before, the first decades of the eighteenth century see the appearance of the first female communities (literary or not), as well as the public emergence of the woman writer, described either as an important participant in the formation of a polite public sphere (Mary Astell, Delarivier Manley, Sarah Fielding, and later the Bluestockings), or, more often, as a producer of morally suspect hack writing.<sup>206</sup> Eliza Haywood is included by Pope in this latter category, together with five other women writers who find a place in his *Dunciad*: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (ridiculed for her literary over-productivity), Elizabeth Thomas (Curll's Corinna, attacked for the unauthorized sale to Curll of Pope's letters to Cromwell), Susannah Centlivre (contemptuously depicted as a cook's wife due to her hit at Pope's translation of the *Iliad* in "The Catholic Poet"), and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (accused of lewdness and unfair attacks against Pope).<sup>207</sup> Interestingly, almost none of them is attacked on literary grounds: as Valerie Rumbold persuasively demonstrates, with the noticeable exception of Duchess of Newcastle, all of them "have wounded him in sensitive areas which bore centrally on his self-image and emotional commitments" (528). The clashing camps described by Pope's categories suggest, nevertheless, a total exclusion of the women writers from the public debate as incompetent, and even worse, harmful participants in the public sphere.

In Haywood's case, the history of her conflict with Pope is insistently mapped out in the plot network of the poem, which highlights her moral and sexual promiscuity. The first reference to Haywood belongs to Martinus Scriblerus, who in the prefatory material and then in a subsequent footnote identifies her as a "libelous Novellist" (II, note to l. 157). The note explicates the qualification: Haywood is an "Authoress of those most scandalous books called



the *Court of Caramania* and the *New Utopia*,” and also of the infamous *History of Clarina* printed by Curll in *The Female Dunciad* (1728), a hotch potch of improvised attacks against Pope. All the titles mentioned are invoked, indeed, for their scandalous content. *Memoirs of a Certain Island Adjacent to the Kingdom of Utopia* (1724) contains a veiled attack against Pope’s friend, Martha Blount, who, under the name of Marthalia, is described as “the most dissolute and shameless of her sex.”<sup>208</sup> The *Memoirs* also attack Martha Fowke, beloved by both Savage and Pope, provoking their outraged reaction and the immediate disapproval of the Hillarian circle (to which both Fowke and Haywood belonged) as a whole. The stories contained in the *Memoirs* are transparent attacks against the corrupt Walpole government,<sup>209</sup> and in at least one of them Haywood tried to win back an estranged Savage by writing an idealized story of his birth (“History of Masonia, Marville, and Count Riverius”). However, the personal bouts weighed more in Savage’s and Pope’s eyes, who hit back vigorously in the *The Authors of the Town* (1725), and the 1728 and 1729 *Dunciads*, respectively. *The Secret History of the Present Intrigues of the Court of Caramania* (1727), another political allegory whose central characters represent the king of England, his queen, and his mistress, libels Pope’s and Martha Blount’s friend, Henrietta Howard, who is identified with Isamonde, mistress to the married prince Theodore (George, Prince of Wales). After this attack, the Scriblerians’ animosity reaches its peak, Swift calling Haywood a “stupid, infamous, scribbling woman” in his October 1731 letter to Henrietta. The volume is also singled out on the cover of *The Dunciad Variorum*, together with Haywood’s *Novels*, a clear indication that Pope puts his friends before his political sympathies (after all, both Pope and Haywood were stern Tory critics of the corruption epitomized by the Whigs). *Irish Artifice; or, the History of Clarina*, the last title mentioned in the

note, is an innocuous piece which has nothing to do with Pope, except for being annexed to Curll's infamous volume of anti-Pope pamphlets, *The Female Dunciad*; however, Pope uses in his note a quotation from *Clarina* which, taken out of context, sounds like a confession of the authoress' shortcomings.

Another note to line 160 refers to Haywood's portrait drawn by Elisha Kirkall (actually George Vertue), which appears in the first of her four volumes of works, *Secret Histories, Novels and Poems* (1725). Pope seems to have been familiar with this edition, which contained some of Haywood's most popular novels (*Love in Excess, The British Recluse, Idalia, Fantomina, The Masqueraders*), but also a short piece in verse dedicated to Hillarius, a nickname for Aaron Hill, one of Pope's most despised dunces. Hill is not the only dunce Haywood cultivated: she also had connections with Bond and Defoe, and was a friend of Theobald, from whom she received a copy of *The Dunciad Variorum* with dedication. Moreover, Appendix II to *The Dunciad*, which contains the notorious "List of Books, Papers, and Verses" that abused Pope, mentions another lampoon against our poet, *Memoirs of the Court of Lilliput* (1727), attributed by him (probably incorrectly) to Haywood.<sup>210</sup> The *Memoirs* contain the following passage that hits at the very core of Pope's sensibilities:

And besides, the inequality of our Stature rightly consider'd, ought to be for us as full a Security from Slander, as that between Mr. Pope, and those great ladies who do nothing without him; admit him to their Closets, their Bed-sides, consult him in the choice of their Servants, their Garments, and make no scruple of putting them on or off before him: Every body knows they are Women of strict Virtue, and he a harmless Creature, who has neither the Will, nor Power of doing any farther Mischief than with his Pen, and that he seldom draws, but in defense of their Beauty; or to second their Revenge against some presuming Prude, who boasts a Superiority of Charms: or in privately transcribing and passing for his own, the elaborate Studies of some more learned Genius. (16)

The remark about Pope's defense of the women he admired and about his passing for his own "the elaborate Studies of some more learned Genius" seems to point to his relationship with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whom he indeed praised in his verses, and whose *Town Eclogues* had been published by Curll in 1716 under Pope and Gay's names. Whether "Captain Gulliver" is Eliza Haywood or not has, however, little relevance, as Pope was convinced of her authorship and, consequently, turned the novelist into the prize of the most offensive episode of the poem, the booksellers' pissing contest:

See in the circle next, Eliza plac'd,  
Two babes of love close clinging to her waist;  
Fair as before her works she stands confess'd,  
In flow'rs and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dress'd.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, 157-160)

Pope's anger was, indeed, formidable: in the earlier editions of *The Dunciad*, the lines about Haywood were even more brutal than later, containing a now cancelled passage that placed her in the same moral and literary category with Curll's "Corinna," Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas.<sup>211</sup> The "two babes of love" are identified by Curll in *The Compleat Key to the Dunciad* as "the offspring of a Poet and a Bookseller" (the poet is probably Richard Savage) and, by Helene Koon, with *Utopia* and *Caramania*, the two books cited in the footnote.<sup>212</sup> The "fair" portrait that the poem and footnote attribute to Elisha Kirkall has nothing unseemly or overly ornate, but could be easily turned into the caricaturized version of Eliza described in lines 163-164, if looked at with the magnifying glass of the satire ("His be yon Juno of majestic size,/With cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes."). Pope's attack is obviously sexualized, insisting on bodily images that conflate ideas of promiscuity and over-productivity (literary or not), of immoral behavior and scandalous novelistic content.

Significantly, although the competitors change from one edition to another (William Chetwood, Haywood's first publisher, is subsequently replaced by Samuel Chapman and, in the last revision, by Thomas Osborne), the victor stays the same: Edmund Curll leaves with "the pleas'd," "soft-smiling" dame, while his opponent, "crown'd with the Jordan, walks contented home" (II, l. 188-190). Although Curll and Haywood don't seem to have collaborated before the attacks in *The Dunciad*, they are paired constantly in other anti-Haywood attacks as well, such as Savages' *An Author to be Lett* (1732), where Eliza is described as belonging to the same Club of Dunces that included Moore Smythe, Theobald, Welsted, Dennis, Cooke, Morris, and Curll. A less obvious connection between the two is also suggested by the cover illustration to *The Dunciad Variorum*, where Haywood's novels appear in the pile of publications carried by the book-laden ass, together with works by Leonard Welsted, Edward Ward, John Dennis, Lewis Theobald, and John Oldmixon. Almost all these authors had connections with Curll, who published or sold their works, and fueled in one way or another his campaign against Pope.<sup>213</sup> From this perspective, David Vander Meulen's identification of the owl on the pile of books with Edmund Curll works beautifully, as the bookseller seems to preside over a society of authors whose common denominator is the appetite for scandal and improper public behavior. The pissing competition is thus a perfect allegory for the print trade: an authoress of "libelous" novels fittingly consummates her amorous affair with an equally shameless bookseller, producing the "babes of love" that fill the book market with infamous productions.

The theme of women's damaging transgression from private to public spaces becomes a leitmotif of Pope's treatment of his female characters throughout the poem, and it has a solid justification in the cultural and political realities of the time. Haywood's public presence during

the 1720s as an actress, novelist, political commentator, periodical editor (*The Tea Table*, 1724; *The Parrot*, 1728; 1746) and member of literary coteries, such as the Hillarians, is notable, and, even if seriously compromised by Pope's attacks, it becomes even more visible in the 1740s.<sup>214</sup> Her publication of the *Female Spectator* (1744-1746), one of the first periodicals written by a woman for women, and the *Invisible Spy* (1755) is the culmination point of a lifelong career of political propagandist, literary critic, and social analyst.<sup>215</sup> As Anthony Pollock convincingly argues, Haywood's engagement with the Addisonian periodical "goes far beyond the structural similarities of the fictional spectatorial club" (147), calling attention to the fact that discourse against female publicness is gender-biased and that "desire for authoritative reputation through the broadcasting of scandal is a particularly masculine, public-sphere phenomenon, carried out by 'male-gossips'" (165) in the first place, not by women's innate propensity toward scandal. Interestingly, the male control of the spectatorial gaze which creates fictions about women's improper behavior is perfectly exemplified in a more obscure reference in *The Dunciad*, where Pope associates Haywood with Anne Tanneguy-Le Fèvre Dacier (II, note to l. 165), a leading authority on Homer whose work assisted Pope in his translation. Although Pope mentions Dacier in a context in which he argues that Haywood is treated "with distinction," as she is acknowledged to be more valuable than the chamber pot in the pissing contest, the pairing of the two female intellectuals is mutually informing: male hierarchies function here in a deflating way, comparing the contribution of two voices of authority in the women's literary community to bodily waste. More importantly, though, this slip betrays a hidden acknowledgment of their similar cultural stature, an undeclared anxiety with the emergence of the woman intellectual as an important agent of modernity.

Haywood's only reference to Pope's attacks is a fleeting remark made in the Preface to *Frederick, Duke of Brunswick-Lunenburgh* (1729), where she deems herself "beneath the Censure of the Gyant-Criticks of this Age."<sup>216</sup> Although Pope's, Savages's and later Fielding's attacks (to mention only a few) seriously affected her career in the next decade,<sup>217</sup> she had her defenders, the most important being Clara Reeve, who praised her efforts for moral rehabilitation in *The Progress of Romance* (1785). The revaluation of her career has emphasized in more recent years her constant presence in all areas of public discourse, be they political, cultural, or, more broadly, of moral concern.<sup>218</sup> Although the network of relations disclosed by Pope's satire attach her to Curll and his circle, insistently associating Haywood with the print trade practice of capitalizing on gossip and scandal, it also includes the authoress in a fashionable cultural circuit, and singles her out as the most significant female voice in the literary marketplace (Figure 6). The irony is that, in her case, Pope's instinct for cultural prominence was flawlessly precise: Haywood was indeed the most remarkable feminine voice in the emerging public sphere of the time.

### ***The Figure of the Critic: John Dennis***

Pope's quarrel with John Dennis, the most important critic of the period, illustrates in an exemplary way the ramifications of the literary feud started by *The Dunciad* with key personalities of London's cultural life, as well as Pope's deep belief in the intertwinement of the aesthetic values with the moral, political, religious and social realities of the time. England's leading critic of the first decade of the eighteenth century, political pamphleteer with strong Whig sympathies, author of moral and religious tracts, and playwright with a constant presence

on the English stage, Dennis is one of the most prominent public personalities drawn into the whirlpool of Pope's satire. One of the most vocal and vituperative attackers of Pope's work, becoming, as Johnson put it "the perpetual persecutor of all his studies,"<sup>219</sup> Dennis is also the perfect victim of Pope's elaborated machinations which ended up with his moral disrepute and severe literary effacement. None of Pope's dunces, with the notable exception of Colley Cibber, were subject to a more complicated strategy of ridicule and disparagement than John Dennis, a clear indicator, in Pope's satiric world, of Dennis's public prominence in London's cultural life.

The history of their quarrel starts in 1711 with Pope's biting (and apparently unprovoked) remarks in *An Essay on Criticism*, which apparently baffled Dennis:

There well, might Criticks still this Freedom take;  
But Appius reddens at each Word you speak,  
And stares, Tremendous! With a threatening Eye,  
Like some fierce Tyrant in Old Tapestry! (584-587)

The reference to Dennis as Appius is inflammatory: it alludes to his failed play, *Appius and Virginia* (1709), remembered today only because of Dennis's invention of a new kind of thunder as a stage effect. The reasons of Pope's attack are uncertain; as Dennis mentioned in his *Remarks upon the Dunciad*, he only met Pope three times before this attack, and they never had any disagreements, although the fact that Dennis ignored Pope's *Pastorals* (1709) might have precipitated the young poet's rancor.<sup>220</sup> In response, Dennis rushed to publish *Reflections, Critical and Satyrical, upon a Late Rhapsody, Call'd, An Essay upon Criticism*<sup>221</sup> (1711), in which he taunted Pope for his deformity, stating, among other things, that he is "as stupid and as venomous as a hunch-back'd Toad" (26), and accusing him of Jacobitism. Pope hit back with *The Critical Specimen* (1711), where he dubbed Dennis "Rinaldo Furioso, Critick of the Woeful

Countenance” (another allusion to one of Dennis’s dramatic failures, *Rinaldo and Armida*) and with *The Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris* (1713), a veiled defense of Addison’s *Cato*, that had been virulently attacked by Dennis in the previous year. Addison repudiated any involvement in Pope’s attack against Dennis, and Dennis confessed that he wrote the attack against Addison at Lintot’s request, who, in turn, had been persuaded by Pope to invite Dennis’s contribution. In 1715, the Preface to Gay’s *What D’Ye Call It* satirized “classical” critics and Dennis’s doctrine of poetic justice, a critique in which Dennis thought he discerned Pope’s hand. After this attack, Dennis allied with Curll in his disparaging campaign against Pope, and published (anonymously) *A True Character of Mr. Pope, and His Writings* (1716), a venomous pamphlet that describes Pope as a “little, but very comprehensive Creature, in whom all Contradictions meet”: Pope was “a Beast and a Man,” “a Whig and a Tory,” “a Rhimester without Judgement or Reason,” “a Critick without Common Sense,” “a Jesuistical Professor of Truth,” “a lurking way-laying Coward, and a Stabber in the Dark,” and a “Traytor-Friend,” among other designations.<sup>222</sup> Pope struck back in the collectively written *Three Hours after Marriage* (1717), where Dennis appeared briefly as “Sir Tremendous Longinus.” As a result, Dennis’s anti-Pope campaign became more comprehensive: in 1717, he published *Remarks upon Mr. Pope’s Translation of Homer, With Two Letters Concerning Windsor Forest, and the Temple of Fame*, in which he criticized Pope’s version of the *Iliad* for its many “Blunders” and “errors,” *Windsor Forest* for “want of plan, of a regular subordination of parts terminating in the principal and original design,” and the *Temple* as a burlesque imitation of Chaucer’s *House of Fame*.

Their conflict apparently cooled down during the next decade, when Pope subscribed to Dennis’s *Select Works* and his volumes of *Letters*. In 1727, though, Pope published *Peri*



*Bathous, or the Art of Sinking in Poetry*, an upside-down Longinian treatise in which Dennis was, again, one of his favorite targets: here, he included the critic among “porpoises,” which “put all their Numbers into a great Turmoil and Tempest, but whenever they appear in plain Light [...] they are only shapeless and ugly Monsters” (27). The 1728 *Dunciad* contained again derogative references to Dennis, but the most damaging attack against the critic follows the next year, with the much expanded *Dunciad Variorum*, in which Dennis and Jacob were turned into the main protagonists of the sub-textual debate. Dennis retaliated with *Remarks on Mr Pope’s Rape of the Lock. With a Preface Occasion’d by the Late Treatise on the Profound, and the Dunciad* (1728), a series of seven letters in which he critiqued systematically Pope’s composition, characters, machines, sentiments, and style, and whose Preface contained a severe forecast of Mr. A. P\_\_E’s literary posterity.<sup>223</sup> The following year he elaborated on his previous attack, in *Remarks upon Several Passages in the Preliminaries to the Dunciad [...] and upon Several Passages in Pope’s Preface to his Translation of Homer’s Iliad*, a pamphlet dedicated to Lewis Theobald, *The Dunciad*’s first King of the Dunces.<sup>224</sup> Pope was described as a “scandalous Author,” showing a “monstrous and impudent Vanity” (5), and as “an empty..., impudent Scribler” (7) whose “Pericranium is... much out of Order” (10). Dennis supported his attack against Pope’s translation of Homer with Madame Dacier’s comments about his misunderstanding of the Greek poet, concluding with the vituperative line: “No Indian, no Negro, no Hottentot, knows less of Homer, than P[o]pe” (24). As regards *The Dunciad* itself, Dennis introduced here his famous argument about the poem’s lack of action and passivity of its hero, provided a harsh comparison between Pope’s and Boileau’s satirical methods, and elaborated extensively on the motives of his own inclusion in the poem.

What in *The Dunciad* caused Dennis's vehement response to Pope's satire? It is obvious for anybody looking closely at the poem's plot network that much of Dennis's conflict with Pope is included, albeit in a distorted form, in the poem and its apparatus. Interestingly, the poem itself is scarce in references to Dennis, who is mentioned in only three brief instances. First, in Book I, l. 106, Dennis is described as one of the deranged specimens of the "Grub-street race" ("She [Dulness] saw slow Philips creep like Tate's poor page,/And all the mighty Mad in Dennis rage."). Next, in Book II, Dennis is one of the participants in Dulness's fourth game, the noise competition, a hint at his opinionated and highly reactive nature:

'Twas chatt'ring, grinning, mouthing, jabb'ring all,  
And Noise and Norton, Brangling and Breval,  
Dennis and Dissonance, and captious Art,  
And Snip-snap short, and Interruption smart,  
And Demonstration thin, and Theses thick,  
And Major, Minor, and Conclusion quick.  
Hold (cry'd the Queen) a Cat-call each shall win;  
Equal your merits! Equal is your din!  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, 237-244)

The lines describe in a brilliant way Dennis's critical method, so often displayed in his attacks against Pope: while the "demonstration" regarding, for example, *The Dunciad*'s libelous nature, contains thorough analyses of some of its prefatory materials (like William Cleland's *Letter to the Publisher*), it constantly fails to provide a serious close reading of the poem itself, thereby undermining its own purpose. Instead, Dennis's prose abounds in "interruptions," ranging from contrasting analyses of classical authors' superiority over Pope, to detailed explanations of Pope's false accusations against Dennis, and to nasty personal attacks against Pope formulated in an often suburban lingo. "Thick" as they are, some of his theses are, also, misplaced: while Dennis's extensive defense of Madame Dacier, for instance, can be rendered as an early (and

valiant) instance of pro-feminist position taken by a male critic, it can hardly be considered as supporting his conclusions about *The Dunciad*'s "maliciousness" at all, given that Dacier appears in the poem only fleetingly, in a brief footnote. Dennis's conclusions come, indeed, too "quick" to be accepted at face value, and much of his argument is seriously undermined by the offensive language that permeates it throughout.

Finally, the last reference to Dennis in the poem occurs in Book III, where he is paired as "fool with fool" (l. 176) with Charles Gildon, a minor playwright and critic whom Pope suspected to have written with Dennis the infamous *True Character of Mr. Pope and His Writings*. Dennis's reaction to this association is indeed foolish, as in *Remarks on the Dunciad* he dismissed any collaboration with Gildon, admitting implicitly the sole authorship of the libel.<sup>225</sup> Dennis is thus presented in the poem as an unreliable critic, a lunatic, a libeler, and a fool, an inconsequential figure with a brief but thunderous presence on the poem's stage.

The details of these qualifications are abundantly displayed in the footnotes and apparatus, where the critic becomes, unexpectedly, the most vocal of all of Pope's dunces. The story told by the paratext is, indeed, quite different from the one told by the poem: with ninety-two references in the apparatus (not counting his inclusion three times in the Index of Persons, seventeen times in the Index of Matters, and three times in the illustrations to the 1728, 1729, and 1735 editions of the poem), Dennis becomes the uncrowned king of *The Dunciad*'s textual periphery, being placed at the core of a dense network of relations that disclose much of the political and moral motivations of his war against Pope. Constantly associated with Giles Jacob, the author of *A Life of the English Poets* that had caused Pope much angst due to accusations of being the "Trumpeter" of his own praise,<sup>226</sup> Dennis is also mentioned in relation to Edmund

Curll, Bernard Lintot, Charles Gildon, Colley Cibber, Tom D’Urfey, Thomas Rymer, Lewis Theobald, A. Moore, Matthew Concanen, Thomas Cooke, George Duckett, S. Popping, Richard Blackmore, William Law, Leonard Welsted, John Oldmixon, Abel Boyer, Jeremy Collier, Hilkiah Bedford, John Oldmixon, Elkanah Settle, and John Anstis—all participants in the literary war against Pope, or defenders of cultural and political stances that Pope strongly opposed. Symptomatically, these associations indicate Dennis’s pivotal role in some of the most heated debates of the epoch: Curll’s defamatory campaign against Pope, Jeremy Collier’s pamphlet war against the “profaneness” of the stage, the arguments about the institution of laureateship, the Ancients/Moderns debate, the defense of the classical rules and the sublime in art, the influence of political and social conditions upon the production of letters, the role of religion in art and as a social unifier, and so on.

Two of Pope’s paratextual references are particularly interesting as they describe Dennis as being at the center of some of the epoch’s literary coteries (Figure 7). The first one appears in the *List of Abusers* in Appendix II, where Dennis is presented as a member of the “Club of Theobald, Moore, Concanen, and Cooke.” The reference is quite specific: it indicates that these authors used to hold weekly meetings which resulted, much like the meetings of the Scriblerians, in offensive pamphlets against their rivals. One of these attacks, a letter against Pope signed by W.A. (probably William Arnall) and published in *Mist’s Weekly Journal* on June 8, 1728, is directly referenced in *The Dunciad*. Corroborated with the fact that the *Mist’s Journal* published a number of anonymous attacks against Pope, we may assume that some of them had been contributed by the members of Dennis’s “Club.”<sup>227</sup> Tellingly enough, all of the authors mentioned in relation to Dennis published extensively against Pope: Theobald’s *Shakespeare*

*Restored* appeared in 1726, and his *Works of Shakespeare* (with a Preface against Pope) in 1734; Matthew Concanen's *A Supplement to the Profound* was published in 1728, and was followed by a series of anonymous slugs in *The Speculatist* (1730) and *A Miscellany on Taste* (1732); Thomas Cooke published the famous *A Battle of the Poets* in 1725, as well as a series of *Scandalous Chronicles* (1726), letters (*Letter to Atticus*, 1730; *A Letter in Prose to Mr. A. Pope*, 1732) and a Preface to the opera *Penelope* (1728) in which he assailed Pope. James Moore Smythe authored, with Leonard Welsted, *An Epistle to Mr. A. Pope* (1732), but, more importantly, he was the author of *The Rival Modes* (1727), a play in which he quoted from Pope's poetry without the author's permission, this action winning his place in *The Dunciad* as the "phantom poet"—a plagiary courted by mercenary booksellers.

The second reference to Dennis's cultural leadership appears in Appendix VI, "Of the Poet Laureate," where he is identified as "the worthy president" of the Grub Street Journal "society" of authors. This affiliation seems to point to a category of authors belonging to a specific locale rather than to authors who had their works published in the journal. Indeed, in *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) Swift makes numerous references to the "Society" of Grub Street, or "the Grub-street Brotherhood" (43) seen as a "spacious Commonwealth of writers" (41) located, significantly for Dennis's case in particular, in the immediate vicinity of the "Bedlam" mental hospital.<sup>228</sup>

Dennis's name appears eight times in the *List of Abusers* alone, and it is significant that the lists of works published against Pope before and after *The Dunciad* open with pamphlets by Dennis (*Reflections on Essay on Criticism*, and *An Essay on the Dunciad*, respectively). They indicate the critic's inflamed reaction to materials containing personal offense, an attitude

considered by Pope unsuitable for a critic and used to his own advantage every time he launched a new offensive against his dunces. Theobald's branding of Dennis as "Furius" in the *Censor* of 5 January 1717 fits the critic perfectly: in Appendix VIII alone (*A Parallel of the Characters of Mr. Dryden and Mr. Pope*), Dennis's artillery aims at Pope no less than seventeen times, accusing him of being "a mortal enemy to his country," "a popish rhymester," an incompetent translator, but also an ape, an ass, a frog, a coward, a knave, a fool, and "a little abject thing." The notes to the poem abound in Dennis's remarks on Pope's deformity, (lack of) education, his "depravity of genius and taste," his want of genius or admirers, and substandard knowledge of English and Greek. Dennis's omnipresence in the footnotes to *The Dunciad* and in the apparatus construct the poem's paratext as a cultural space ruled by the furious madness of incompetent critics, a space that mirrors in a ludicrous way some of the serious plights affecting London's cultural milieu at the time.

Acknowledging Dennis as the uncrowned king of the textual periphery needs to be understood less as Pope's victory cry against his most spiteful attacker, and more as an indication of his concern about the critic's role as a cultural and social regulator.<sup>229</sup> England's leading critic in the first decades of the century, Dennis held a central position in the literary landscape of the time: his contributions to establishing an English canon by reassessing the influence of the ancients on modern thought and emphasizing the importance of rules in art in *The Impartial Critick* (1693), *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) and *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704) still pass the test of time. Better known today for his theory of enthusiasm and of the sublime as "rational" delight, Dennis is also seen as a precursor of the Romantic movement, exerting a direct influence on Wordsworth and Coleridge. More

importantly, though, Dennis epitomizes for Pope the seminal role of the critic in shaping opinion and acting as a liaison among cultural, political, and religious spheres. Dennis published extensively about the political, social and religious benefits of the government's regulation of the theater (*The Stage Defended*, 1726), as well as on other issues of public interest, such as the foreign influences on the nation (*An Essay on the Opera's after the Italian Manner*, 1706), or public morality (*Vice and Luxury Publick Mischiefs*, 1724). He also called attention to the role of political and social conditions on the production of letters (*A Large Account of Taste in Poetry*, 1702), and on the importance of religion in "cementing Societies" (*The Grounds of Criticism*, 1704). Pope's argument against Dennis questions, therefore, not his ideas, but his moral competence: a committed Whig with a lifelong service to various political patrons, an individual with a highly volatile temper, and a critic with a tendency "to crack nuts with a sledgehammer,"<sup>230</sup> Dennis does not meet the "impartiality" requirement of his job description.

### ***The Figure of the Cleric: John "Orator" Henley***

The 1735 edition of *The Dunciad* included in Pope's *Works* is particularly interesting for its unique use of an immediately identifiable character in the headpiece to the second book of the poem (Figure 12). The illustration describes the punishments and rewards received by the dunces during the heroic games celebrating Theobald's coronation and has in its center the figure of John "Orator" Henley, pilloried for his misplaced political and literary attacks, curiously, in the middle of a medal. The image alludes to a factual detail that makes Henley a perfect candidate for Pope's satire: in 1723, Henley opened the so-called "Oratory" in Newport Market, where he started his peculiar lectures on issues religious and mundane, enjoying a lasting popularity with

the crowds. In order to attend this early modern talk show, one had to purchase “medals of admission” in gold, silver, or bath metal, at prices between two and five guineas each. Henley’s medal is accurately reproduced in the headpiece, which contains the eight-pointed star and the Latin motto *Ad Summa, Inveniam Viam aut Faciam* (“Towards the highest things, I will discover a road or I will make one”) of the original. The idea of one’s virtues or vices impressed on one’s face as value on a coin is here ingeniously translated in the image of the medal in which Henley is literally trapped, stamped, and pilloried all at the same time—a deserved objectification alluding to his pecuniary interests and to the low value of his public performance. The road to the “highest things” is obviously a dead-end, and the cudgels, clubs, and whips surrounding the pillory suggest deserved punishment methods for Pope’s dunces, whose childish behaviour requires adequate corrective methods.

Nowhere else does the visual paratext of *The Dunciad* identify so clearly one of Pope’s dunces, and none of them deserved more than Henley the public disclosure of his blatant mercantilism. One of the celebrities of London’s public life, placed at the centre of a number of long-lasting literary, religious, and political controversies, Henley is, at the same time, one of the most productive and vituperative of Pope’s attackers, one of the few who continued to assail him long after his death. Although Henley’s attacks are always shamelessly personal, Pope’s raillery finds in Henley, just as in Dennis’s case, the perfect recipient for his broader critique of contemporary religious values, threatened by the commercialism and rapid change in taste of early modern life. That Pope’s attack aims at a whole social category responsible for the moral integrity of the nation is clearly spelled out by Henley himself, who produces in support of his “typicality” a long list of names “dunciaded” by Pope along with his:



To every one of whom your Character of your humble Servant in the *Dunciad* is equally applicable, as Restorers of the good Old Stage, Preachers and Zanies at once, decent Priests for Monkey Gods (who, by the way, are better Deities than the Devil you worship, who delights in bloody Humane Sacrifices, like Moloch,) and as to Divines, who are Dunciaded through my Sides, all Occasionally Zanies, Buffoons, and Merry-Andrews, they are numberless, Dr. Hicks and Collier, Non-jurors, one a Dean and a Bishop; Dr. Sherlock and Smedley, Deans of the Church of England; Alsop, Rule, Buchanan, and Sam. Fisher; Dissenting Ministers; Dr. Beaumont, James, Covell and Balderston, Heads of Colleges, and some of them Professors; DR. Heyling, Birkenstead, Stubbes, Rogers, Trapp, Yalden, Delany, and Sacheverell, High-Church-men; Dr. Fuller, Edwards, Bentley, Creech, Boldero, Whitby, Low-Church-men, or Middle Church-men; Erasmus, between Papist and Protestant; Penn, a Quaker; Whiston, A Modern Rabbet Prophet, an Apostolical Man, your Fellow Labourer in abusing me, as Codex and Company are; Daniel Burgess, Mr. Earbery, etc. A Million more, all are, with me, in the *Dunciad*...<sup>231</sup>

Henley is, indeed, an emblematic figure of the beginning of the century, one of the most enduring celebrities who attracted the live interest of diverse social categories. Much of his popularity is due to his thirty-year long career as a dissenting preacher and manager of his Oratory, where he held energizing public performances attended, according to his own report, by “Some of the Greatest Persons of Church and State.”<sup>232</sup> Lord Bolingbroke, Robert Walpole, and Duchess of Norfolk were among his audience, and even foreign visitors such as Voltaire, who allegedly ensured Henley that his plan “might be encourag’d by the King of France if I propos’d it as an improvement on the French Academy.”<sup>233</sup> Although a “dull Clark,” Henley was “an overactive theatrical preacher” and his Oratory “was more like a Theatre than a place of worship,”<sup>234</sup> so much so that “it became a fashion for ladies and gentlemen to make parties to hear his lectures.”<sup>235</sup> The topics of his sermons, the advertising methods, and the delivery itself bore a distinctive Henleyan signature. Although some of his lectures dealt with moral themes, such as “the natural happiness of religion,” “the Travesty of the Universe,” or “Mother Church in

Good Humor,” most of them had a more topical and even burlesque content: “Oration on the ministers and Favourites of Princes,” “the World Toss’d at Tennis, or the Lesson for a King,” “the Report of a Pop-gun in White-powder; the Mulberry-Garden Silk-worms turn’d to Butterflies: Amphibious Animals in the Com----ns,” “On Dancing,” “Oration on the Skits of the Fashions [...] Ruffs, Muffs, Puffs manifold; Shoes, Wedding-Shoes, two Shoes, Slop-Shoes, Heels, Clocks etc.” Henley’s advertising technique used the “puff” in all its varieties, emphasized the scandal and the topical, and raised curiosity in his audience, who was invited to hear the latest gossips and to enjoy the energetic performance of the preacher. His delivery method involved engaging in lively debates with his congregation; as Henley himself described it in one of his pamphlets, “Professors of most Parts of Literature, many Clergymen, Students from both the Universities, Poets, Counsellors, Physicians, Dissenters of all sorts, Romish priets, Carmelites, Jesuits, Dominicans, Benedictines, Gentlemen of all Ranks, ingenious Artists, have maintain’d publick Disputation there, very frequently.”<sup>236</sup> These debates (and the Orator himself) were generously represented in the visual satire of the time, which pointed to Henley’s celebrity status and blatant mercantilism.<sup>237</sup>

Henley’s oratorical business triggered his conflict with *The Grub Street Journal*, which launched in 1730 a sustained campaign against the preacher. Between 1731 and 1734, Henley was attacked on a monthly basis, being assigned a wild variety of nicknames that emphasized his political servility and marketing skills (“the Puffing Orator,” “Pufferus Primus,” “Mr. Orator-We-Hear,” “Mr. Auditor Henley,” “Pufferus Hip-Oratoricus,” “The Restorer of Ancient Eloquence”). The range of these attacks was impressive, and played on the incongruity between Henley’s public function and his public persona; as Graham Midgley suggestively puts it, “as a

grammarian, poet, Grub Street hack, preacher, heretic, he was presented as a demented Duncce and upstart ignoramus.”<sup>238</sup> Convinced that “the Contrivance of the GRUBSTREET Journal [was] encourag’d by Mr. Pope,” Henley started, in turn, a systematical attack against the poet in the *Hyp-Doctor* (1730), a pro-Walpole weekly paper that assaulted Pope both politically and personally. Although it is true that Pope was the one who had started this paper war with the publication of *The Dunciad* in 1728, Henley’s replies were disproportionately virulent and abundant. Only one week after the publication of the poem, Henley lectured on nonsense at the Oratory, one of his immediate targets being, expectedly, Pope.<sup>239</sup> He continued by attacking Pope’s *Pastorals*, his translation of Homer, his edition of Shakespeare, his *Moral Essays*, his *Epistle on Taste*, his *Epistle to Bathurst*, his *Fourth Satire of Dr. John Donne*, his *Epistle to Augustus*, his *Essay on Man*, his physical frailty, moral philosophy, and political allegiances.<sup>240</sup> The climax of these concerted attacks was the pamphlet *Why How Now, Gossip Pope? Or the Sweet Singing-Bird of Parnassus taken out of its pretty Cage to be Roasted* (1736), a neurotic and acrimonious battery against Pope that attempted to answer all the poet’s accusations against him formulated in *The Dunciad*. The pamphlet contained a detailed commentary, almost line by line, of Henley’s characterizations and intellectual alliances, and described Pope as an “Idolified” “Ape of Poetry” “imparadised in Twickenham,” where he was concocting “Romances” “with the Art of a Pick-pocket, the Address of a Juggler, and the Principles of Jonathan Wild” (10). Interestingly, Henley did see beyond the factual details of the “recipe” used by Pope that he was attacked not so much for his own flaws, but for his representative value as dissenting minister:

Take a quantity of Meanness and Nonsense, Impudence and Affectation, Absurdity and Inconsistence, Preacher and Zany, Stage and Pulpit, Aegypt and Monkey-Gods, Priestly Stalls and Butchers, Meek Modern Faith and Toland,

Tindal and Woolston, a Pound or two of this, and Ounces and Drams of one and the other, without a Scruple of Honesty in the Poet, the *Dunciad* is perfect, and the Portrait is immortal. (11)

The “recipe” is also remarkable for its colorful summary of the main attack against Henley launched by Pope in *The Dunciad*. It occurs in the third book of the poem, lines 199-212, which are followed by a substantial biographical note by Leonard Welsted, one of Henley’s supporters:

Imbrown’d with native bronze, lo! Henley stands,  
 Tuning his voice, and balancing his hands.  
 How fluent nonsense trickles from his tongue!  
 How sweet the periods, neither said, nor sung!  
 Still break the benches, Henley! with thy strain,  
 While Sherlock, Hare, and Gibson preach in vain.  
 Oh great Restorer of the good old Stage,  
 Preacher at one, and Zany of thy age!  
 Oh worthy thou of Aegypt’s wise abodes,  
 A decent priest, where monkeys were the gods!  
 But fate with butchers plac’d thy priestly stall,  
 Meek modern faith to murder, hack, and mawl;  
 And bade thee live, to crown Britannia’s praise,  
 In Toland’s, Tindal’s, and in Woolston’s days.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, 199-212)

The parallel between Henley’s “gilt tub” and a theatrical stage is clearly emphasized in the poem, while the reference to “Priestly Stalls and Butchers” alludes to his Oratory, initially located in Newport Market, Butcher-row. The “Monkey-gods” is a veiled reference to Henley’s separation from the Anglican Church and to the doctrine of primitivism he had developed based on the Gothic, Gallican, Ethiopic, and Mazarabic rites (Midgley 108). Particularly interesting are the references to John Toland, Matthew Tindal, and Thomas Woolston, whom Henley singled out from Pope’s longer list of clergymen that the Orator had affinities with: they indicate a similar pro-government position, controversial religious ideas, and excessive behavior. John Toland was known for his Deist beliefs and for supporting the Court of Hanover, while Tindal was a

freethinker, religious controversialist, and close friend to Edmund Curll. The affiliations with the bookseller, although not spelled out, are cleverly embedded in this reference: Henley had met Curll soon after his arrival in London in 1720, published with him no less than nine books, and was introduced by Curll to Robert Walpole's world of secret service, becoming a diligent supporter of his political agenda in return for money and favor. The reference to Thomas Woolston is even more displeasing, as he was known at the time for his controversial religious pamphlets which had brought him accusations of blasphemy, madness, and eventually imprisonment. The implication is that, like Woolston, Henley was a victim of his own unrestrained behavior: accused of seditious libel in 1728 and of infringement of the Act of Toleration in 1729, Henley was briefly arrested, albeit without being pilloried, as suggested by *The Dunciad* headpiece mentioned above.

The networks of relations highlighted by Pope's poem branch out even more, pointing to Henley's involvement in the literary, religious and political controversies of the day (Figure 9). The references to Thomas Sherlock, Edmund Gibson, and Francis Hare, all prominent clerical figures, bring to the fore the more delicate issue of Henley's political commitments and highlight the corruption of the clergy by the tide of immorality sweeping the nation. Thomas Sherlock, the Bishop of London, was a Tory who had advanced in the church hierarchy due to his shrewd political behavior. Edmund Gibson, also known as "Walpole's Pope," was a strong pro-Hanoverian who had openly admitted his political subservience to the minister's agenda. Francis Hare was one of Queen Caroline's favorites, a government devotee, and a *Daily Courant* contributor, endorsing Walpole's political program. Their steady involvement in political life propelled them to high positions in the church hierarchy, *unlike* Henley, whose moral

compromises were not rewarded with similar advancements. Although Pope underscores here the contrast between the two clerical camps represented by Henley's dissenting position and the accepted position of the official church, the implications are that they both are accountable for political servility, a phenomenon that caused a systemic crisis of religious authority in the decades after the 1688 revolution.

The map of relations having John Henley at its center emphasizes, in Karl Mannheim's words, the "concrete bond [...] created between members of a generation" when they are exposed to "a process of dynamic destabilization."<sup>241</sup> The text's density of references to clerical figures, respectable or not, wearing the hat of the official church or not, is not so much significant in itself, but in what it is less visible at a hasty analysis: their shared loyalty to the Whig party and the Hanoverian regime. This emphasis is also supported by a second direction of Pope's attack—Henley's position as a government journalist—which is repeatedly emphasized in the poem. In this quality, Henley is brought into the same relational loop with James Ralph and the "band of ministerial writers" publishing for *The Daily Gazetteer*, Walpole's principal organ of propaganda (I, 215-216). Described repeatedly as a "writer for the Booksellers... [and] Ministers of state" (III, note to l. 199), Henley participated in an unsettling process of commodification of the religious act. The matrix of relations "bonding" Henley to a record number of religious and cultural figures of the time emphasizes, indeed, a symptomatic destabilization of the ethical norm, a process of contamination of the pastoral realm by political controversies and audience-oriented practices meant to serve narrow interest groups. As Henley himself acknowledged, Pope's argument went beyond the particular biography he painted on his

epic canvas: what's "dunciaded" here is not Henley's political compromises or his "buffoonry" rhetoric, but a set of practices meant to alter the nation's social fabric in irreversible ways.

***Coda: Book Covers, Graphs, Maps***

His Study! with what Authors is it stor'd?  
 In Books, not Authors, curious is my Lord;  
 To all their dated Backs he turns you round,  
 These Aldus printed, those Du Sueil has bound.  
 Lo some are Vellom, and the rest as good  
 For all his Lordship knows, but they are wood.  
 For Locke or Milton 'tis in vain to look,  
 These shelves admit not any modern book.  
 (Alexander Pope, *Epistle to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington*)

The verses describing Timon's study in *Epistle to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington [Of the Use of Riches]* rehearse one of Pope's favorite themes, the vanity of the "men of Fortune" who collect books as objects of display and markers of status, instead of valuing them for the wisdom of their authors. Timon's library is described as a refined collection of book *covers*, with "dated Backs" indicating their age, with expensive morocco or vellum bindings, with gilded spines decorated by artisans whose famous names add to the value of the object. Magnificent and ancient and rare as they are, engraved with gold fillets and labeled in elegant letters, displaying decorative flourishes to their fore-edge and bound in expensive leather, Timon's books are never identified by title, they are not collected for the reputation of their authors, but for the craftsmanship of their makers. Never read beyond the cover, never opened to be perused for the beauties *inside* them, Timon's books are reduced to vacuous spaces, "painted books of wood" filling the shelves with splendid spines containing nothing of consequence for the collector, and thus stamping on him, with gold tooled, capital letters, the label *DUNCE*.

Pope's lines illustrate in a suggestive way the original meaning of the term "dunce"; in Thomas Fuller's words, a dunce is a person "void of learning but full of books."<sup>242</sup> The useful chapter on *Books* of his *Holy State* (1642) provides an illuminating commentary on the value of good books: they should be fewer rather than many, thoroughly read, and written by "Authors of consequence" (199). The fads of the day should not guide the taste of the wise: "Yet as a certain Fool bought all the pictures that came out, because he might have his choice; such is the vain humour of many men in gathering of Books: yet when they have done all, they misse their end, it being in the Editions of Authours as in the fashions of clothes; when a man thinks he hath gotten the latest and newest, presently another newer comes out" (199). A dunce is never enriched by the study of books, but turned into a dull pedant who prates on the knowledge of others, just surface-level deep into it. Or, as Pope implied, cover-level deep.

There is no surprise, therefore, that the visual paratext of *The Dunciad* represents Pope's most prominent dunces as book covers piled together, invariably presided over by an ominous owl, the emblematic figure of the dull. The 1728 frontispice to the poem, drawn by William Kent but very likely drafted by Pope himself, shows an altar made of books authored by Colley Cibber, the Duchess of Newcastle, John Dennis, John Ogilby, Lewis Theobald, and Sir Richard Blackmore (Figure 13). The books are displayed from various angles, showing either their rounded spines with generous compartments sheltering the author's name (Newcastle), or their back covers with fancy leather patterning and lozenge in the centre (Ogilby), or, an even fancier feature, the author's name and the title written across their fore-edges (Cibber, Dennis, Theobald, and Blackmore). The books, thick and thin, are neatly stacked in an altar on top of which sits Dulness's owl, a possible avatar of the bookseller Edmund Curll. Similarly, the title page of the



1729 edition of the poem shows an owl on top of a pile of books carried by an ass (Figure 14); the books have the titles or the authors' name inscribed on the top leaf edge, a possible sign that they belong to a circulating library. The books are authored by Eliza Haywood, John Oldmixon, Lewis Theobald, John Dennis, Ned Ward, and Leonard Welsted, and the ass is, most likely, Richard Bentley, the Keeper of the Royal Libraries.<sup>243</sup> The books stand for authors, and their piling together suggests ideological alliances not obvious at first sight, but clarified by the owl, the ass, the thistles, the daily newspapers, and the pastry shop in the background, all indicating their low value and undignified reuse as wrapping paper for pastries and pies. Cibber, Dennis, Haywood, Theobald, Bentley, and Curll appear as building pieces in an absurd system of cultural campaign, as books without content in a library actively circulating non-value and shaping the public opinion in a damaging way.

It has been my intention to illustrate how some of these characters act on the social canvas described by the poem, how they emerge as centers of intensity from which branch out intricate networks of relations that create a close-to-life representation of the literary milieu of the time. Pope's method of piling up "books" in order to suggest hidden associations among the authors they stand for is analogous to my method of graphing out the social networks in which the characters are engaged and it has the same goal: to make visible patterns of relations otherwise difficult to see due to the mere density of the network or to the absence, at times, of important informational links that explain less obvious connections. Little can be made of an author like Giles Jacob, for instance, one of the least developed characters in the poem, if not noticing his constant pairing with John Dennis, the leading critic of the time, and their pervasive presence in the apparatus. The role of Bernard Lintot, Edmund Curll's opponent in the

bookseller's contest, can only be understood when filling in the sparse information offered by the footnotes with factual details that link him to Moore Smythe, the "phantom" poet offered as a prize to the winner. When trying to make visible these relationships I have worked, like Pope himself, with a view to the system as a whole, using the graph as a tool for evidencing relations of alliance or opposition, thematic intersections, conflicting narratives developed in the poem and in the apparatus—in short, what Henri Lefebvre called the "multiplicity" of social spaces that "attain 'real' existence by virtue of networks and pathways, by virtue of bunches or clusters of relationships" (86). Cibber, Curll, Dennis, Haywood and Henley cover key segments of the cultural, political, and religious life of the time, and open up important discussions on the theatricality of the public life, political leanings, gender bias, promotion practices, genre hierarchies, print trade, and canon formation, issues of paramount importance in the construction of publicness as a moral and political category in the early stages of modernity.

By bringing together in a recognizable landscape various *character spaces* the graphs become maps, simple connections are built into networks of relations that unveil issues of cultural, political, and moral import. The social spaces described in this chapter have a distinctively Cartesian nature, they are spaces of relations that coalesce around selected centers of intensity, and they are significantly more than the sum of their parts. They guide the reader along new hermeneutical paths that offer, in Franco Moretti's words, a new "model of the narrative universe," bringing to the surface "hidden patterns" of contacts and exchange.<sup>244</sup> The intersection of the networks of relations created by Pope around the five characters analyzed in this chapter reveals, for instance, a surprising inner "circle of infamy": as seen in Figure 10, the references touch, again and again, on twenty-two names that seep in all these networks,

circulating from one social network to another with remarkable mobility. Thus, the two hundred dunces have their own representative figures, who are typified, besides the five dunces already analyzed, by John Ozell, John Oldmixon, Lewis Theobald, Giles Jacob, Laurence Eusden, Elkanah Settle, Thomas Cooke, John Dennis, Bernard Lintot, Charles Gildon, George Duckett, Leonard Welsted and Richard Blackmore. With the notable exception of Eliza Haywood (who was an active Tory), all these dunces a) share Whig sympathies, b) belong to the literary sphere, and c) although arguably influential in their time, are not figures belonging to a cultural elite. A few conclusions emerge: that politics and literature were probably more closely allied at the time than at any other moment before or since; that Pope's thesis about ethical issues impeding on aesthetic value was fundamentally correct; that Pope's cultural instinct in distinguishing between fashionable and enduring functioned flawlessly. The relational loop in which these characters are involved is also an indicator of their highly developed defense mechanism and grouping instinct: the dunces' circulation from one character space to another is explained by their active support of various anti-Pope camps against a common enemy. Their dynamic participation in the public sphere has resulted, as I have tried to indicate, in the creation of important ideological trends that shaped the direction of modernity in ways still recognizable today.<sup>245</sup>



The maps of relations suggested by this analysis describe networks of communication and exchange meant to re-create (i.e., to describe in a *new* way), “the historical tissue” of the epoch.<sup>246</sup> They propose, in other words, innovative routes of investigation: they map time–plot and character development—in a spatial configuration, and represent in a diagrammatic form complicated, reticular trajectories of intersecting or diverging events. The visualizations have

been generated by using GraphViz, a program that automatically creates topological graphs from sets of dyadic relations: each graph represents a view of the social network data expressed directly and indirectly in Pope's *Dunciad*, either as a NEATO algorithm ("spring model" layouts of undirected graphs) or as a CIRCO algorithm (circular layouts for undirected graphs). They have been created to serve a number of goals: a) to map out the relations developed around each of the selected dunces, considering four criteria: similarity, dissimilarity, characters attacked, and characters defended; b) to identify the poem's characterological and thematic core by highlighting the intersection of the five social networks considered; c) to point out the sometimes different roles played by the selected characters *in the poem* and *in the apparatus*, based on their frequency rate and density of the individual networks. In what follows I recapitulate some of the most important findings resulting from these projections:

**1. Intertwinement of spaces.** Although selected for their representative value (as "figures" covering precise areas of expertise), Pope's dunces are socially transgressive, crossing political, religious, and cultural spaces with remarkable mobility. Cibber's position as laureate, failed cleric, actor, author, and theatrical manager gives him access privileges to the main circles of political decision. Curll, Henley, and Dennis support, all of them, the governing party, while also acting as authors, cultural promoters, and moral counselors of the public. Finally, Haywood is deeply involved in various cultural arenas (literary coteries, theater, press, print trade) and is also at the center of some moral debates that would fashion the new perceptions about femininity and authorship in the first half of the century.

**2. Theatricality.** All select dunces are engaged in various degrees with the stage(ing), either as authors (Cibber, Dennis, Haywood), actors (Haywood, Cibber), or promoters of their

own brand of product (Curll, Henley). Curll's performance on the public stage of early modern London involved a sort of puppeteer work that engaged a large number of authors in a literary war promoted in a celebrity-oriented way, while Henley's marketing of his public persona involved theatrical delivery techniques and unabashed self-promotion. Pope's prejudice against performance has a lot to do with the generic innovations taking place on the Georgian stage, but, more importantly, reflects his rejection of an emerging celebrity culture promoting public figures based on political and populist criteria.

**3. *Innovation.*** All the “dunces” discussed here distinguish themselves as innovators in their fields: Cibber as theatrical manager revamping old pieces for a new audience, Curll as a publisher capitalizing on the new appetite of the public for topical subjects, gossip, and scandal, Dennis as a defender of a brand of sublime that will gain celebrity half a century later, Haywood as an author who established the novel on the literary marketplace, Henley as a pioneer of a new advertising technique—the “puff”—still used in its basic approach by the mass media today. As evidenced by these graphs, Cibber and Curll's social networks are impressively dense, pointing to the fact that they function as “connectors”—nodes with an unusually large number of links that are important as they start fashions, spread fads, and create new cultural trends.<sup>247</sup>

**4. *Topicality.*** All plot networks generating from the character spaces analyzed intersect on a number of themes of social and moral relevance: patronage practice and political involvement as deterrents of worthy literary productions, the ineffectual defense of public morality in religious and cultural arenas, the corrupt practices of many representatives of the London print trade, high vs. popular culture, the competition between gentleman author and hack

writer, etc. They reflect some of the fundamental ideological battles that shaped the public sphere at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

**5. *Social visibility.*** There is a direct correlation between the complexity of the network and the social visibility of the character from whom it emerges. The more dense the network of allies, emulators, or enemies, the higher the visibility of a particular dunc in the early modern cultural landscape. Expectedly, Colley Cibber's association with the theatrical and political field places him in a leading position both in the poem and outside of it, while Eliza Haywood and John Henley, early promoters of new types of cultural products and culturally marginalized figures in their time, have significantly fewer supporters or imitators.

**6. *Camp visibility.*** The graphs clarify social roles and relationships of partnership or hostility otherwise obscure, either because of the profusion or the scarcity of references: Edmund Curll's relationships with Edward Young, Thomas Osborne, or Elizabeth Thomas, for instance, are peripheral on the larger canvas of the poem, whereas his relationships with Richard Blackmore, Ned Ward, John Dennis, or Bernard Lintot are shared by a number of other dunces or enemies, being part of the main plot network of the poem. Also, less obvious connections, such as Matthew Concanen's or James Moore Smythe's relationships with John Dennis, for instance, are clarified by their network distribution: all belong to a "Club" of authors publishing in *The Mist's Journal*, and all are active supporters of Curll's anti-Pope campaign.

**7. *Competing stories: the poem vs. the apparatus.*** Whereas in the case of Cibber, Haywood, or Henley the notes are meant to elucidate the poem, accurately glossing of real facts that either detail their conflict with Pope, or emphasize their involvement in key events or cultural trends of the time, in the case of Curll and Dennis the poem and the apparatus present

competing stories. Presented as an epic hero in the poem, Curll is a despicable character in the apparatus, which offers a wealth of details about his corrupt practices. Interestingly, these practices are rarely spelled out, but more often suggested *through the network of relations in which Curll is involved*, which contains the highest concentration of print trade *and* political figures of the poem. In Dennis's case, the argument is developed in different ways: while the critic is mentioned in only three fleeting instances in the poem, Dennis is the most developed character in the apparatus, being turned by Pope into the uncrowned king of the textual periphery. Dennis is thus described as doing his work of cultural policing from a cultural underground where the value criteria are fundamentally flawed.

**8. *De-fictionalizing effect.*** One of the most obvious conclusions drawn from comparing the character distribution in poem and in the apparatus is that the two networks are notably unequal, and this raises important questions about the role of the footnotes and apparatus at large in the economy of the poem. The main role of the notes, commentaries, lists, indexes, and visual paratext is to provide or allude to factual details that originate from London's social life during Pope's time, and thus they act as a material link between the *fictional* space of the poem and the *real* space of the city. As such, Pope's text does pose a generic dilemma, acting as a fictional work and as a historical document at the same time. The social space described by the apparatus is inhabited by the same characters and describes the same events as the social space of the city, creating, thus, a physical borderline between fantasy and reality never experimented within any fictional works to the extent Pope does in his poem.<sup>248</sup>

So, what do these maps of relations do? Just like Pope did, when binding together between expensive leather covers his dunces' most venomous attacks, these maps function as

instruments of control, giving the essentialized narrative of a case of public indictment of otherwise epic proportions. They also highlight, by bringing together in a small and therefore more comprehensible space, issues of key interest for the early stages of modernity, guiding our reading in new directions of investigation. Most importantly, they are *inclusive* and *relational*, describing a lively conversation among a large number of characters, evidencing less visible alliances or conflicts, and providing clues to questions about social roles, civic involvement, and camp affiliations. They also suggest the magnitude of the debate that took place on the public arena of early modern London, contradicting the exclusionary nature of the Habermasian public sphere, which discriminates based on gender, social status, and property ownership. Immediately reactive to issues regarding their private interests but also displaying stern group discipline and loud combativity, Pope's dunces have played an essential role in shaping the cultural and political milieu of their time, a role that justifies their inclusion in a revised list of alternative publics.



CHAPTER IV

BROWSING *THE DUNCIAD*: TEXTUAL SPACES

THE  
DUNCIAD\*  
TO  
DR. JONATHAN SWIFT

---

BOOK THE FIRST

---

The Mighty Mother and Her Son who brings  
The Smithfield Muses to the Ear of Kings,

The mere visual display on the page of *The Dunciad in Four Books* (1743) reaches a point of spatial elaboration which is baffling even for a postmodern reader of the poem, already used to the most peculiar typographical innovations. The landscape of the city of the text is

**REMARKS**

\*It is one of the paradoxes of the *Dunciad* that one cannot but footnote the text indefinitely. This is caused by the historic distance that obscures many of its references (a problem Swift warned Pope about soon after the publication of the poem), but it is also due to the nature of Pope's satire, which builds meaning upon meaning, and sometimes even against meaning. The textual game involves, on this first page, a number of striking typographical oddities, such as the layered reading of the text and of the double commentary, the emphasized position of the dedicatee that trades places with the author, and the stifling of the main poem by an overflow of critical prose. If the main job of the footnote is to interrupt one's reading, one consequence of this is the introduction in the text's linear flow of unexpected

detours. In this case, after perusing the title of the poem, one has to skip the text and go straight to the subtextual note which gains, thus, primacy over the poem.

VER. 1. *The Mighty Mother and Her Son*, ζc. ] The first note to the 1743 edition of *The Dunciad* is extremely interesting in itself, as it is a rare case of a note annotating a note. The previous 1729 note, authored by Scriblerus, glosses the first line of the poem: "Books and the Man I sing, the first who brings....," ridiculing James Ralph's confusion of the author with the hero of the poem (*Sawney: An Heroic Poem*, 1728). Given the change of the first line in the 1743 edition, Warburton's note contradicts Scriblerus', cautioning that "the Mother, and not the Son, is the principal Agent of this Poem."

**IMITATIONS**

*The mere visual display on the page.* The splitting of Pope's footnotes in *Remarks* and *Imitations* was inspired by the 1716 Geneva edition of Boileau's *Works*. Boileau is commended in the "Letter to the Publisher" signed by William Cleland (but widely attributed to Pope) as "the

greatest Poet and most judicious Critic of his age." In his 1751 edition of Pope's *Works*, Warburton emphasizes this parallelism by introducing a third category of notes present in Boileau's text, i.e. *Changes*, which recorded Pope's successive revisions of *The Dunciad*.

rigorously mapped in distinctive spaces, with higher forms of relief bursting in titles of various font sizes and highlighting shapes, with the main text almost imponderably floating above the sewers, the ditches, the precipices of modern criticism, shown in vociferous conversation with the deep waters of the ancient verse. In all editions of *The Dunciad* published during Pope's time the footnotes are clearly separated by typographical spaces into whimsical *Remarks*, ventriloquizing the modern criticism, and *Imitations*, indicating the author's Ancient (or just exemplary) sources of inspiration (Figure 15). This subtextual divide, constantly ignored by all subsequent critical editions of the poem, suggests, nevertheless, the resolute impenetrability of the two spheres, the deep oceans that separate territories of Greek and Latin learning from Albion's intellectual mercantilism. This map suggests a more layered reading of the critical notes than usually considered, a hierarchy of values which represents in a striking visual way William Temple's memorable metaphor from *Of Ancient and Modern Learning* (1690): the Modern man as a dwarf standing upon the "shoulders of the giants" of classical thought.

Considered in their relationship with the poem above, the footnotes represent, as Pope himself intended them, an essential key to understanding the text, and as such I will read them as the legend to a textual map that takes its explicatory function to its ultimate consequences. The topographical contours, surface features, or submerged areas of the text, its inhabitants, buildings, roads, and boundaries are explicated by this legend with an almost obsessive consideration for the insignificant and circumstantial, with a jocose verbosity calling attention to the proliferating intersections of the text's interpretive routes. Pseudo-scholarly debates on spelling issues, admiring commentaries on the beauty of an allegory, fastidious bibliographical references to obscure sources, hypocritical warnings against a literal reading of the text, biased

biographies of dull authors, editorial gaffs, political commentaries, pedantic references to sources in their original language—all are meant to make sense of the text, but end up creating a disorienting cacophony of directions that finally get the undiscerning reader lost in a Moderns' heterotopia. An imprecise legend parasitically feeding on the text, aggressively larger than the map it is supposed to elucidate, *The Dunciad*'s apparatus rewrites, indeed, the initial 1728 edition of the poem in a dramatically new way. One of my intentions in this chapter is, therefore, to help the reader experience the difficulties (and rewards) of such a textual design by disposing of historic distance and shaping my own text according to Pope's imaginative blueprint. The *Remarks* attributed in Pope's poem to Modern critics or Scriblerian voices will be my own, and I will be helped in this enterprise by a number of very real characters who owe their existence to

### REMARKS

*Helped in this enterprise by a number of very real characters.* As voices of modernity, the following characters will help me recap some of Pope's main directions of attack, detailed in his notes to *The Dunciad*; as fictional characters inspired by Pope's satire, they will help illustrate the enormous literary output, venomous, commendatory, or copycat in nature, that followed the publication of his poem:

*Sir Iliad Doggrel.* The fictional author of *Homerides: Or a Letter to Mr. Pope Occasioned by his intended Translation of Homer* (1715). The work was actually authored by Sir Thomas Burnett and George Duckett; they attacked Pope's successful subscription scheme for *Iliad* and made hilarious suggestions about "improving Homer" by modernizing his epic.

*Tibbald.* The main hero of *The Dunciad* until its last revision of 1743. In 1726, Theobald published *Shakespeare Restored: or a Specimen of the Many Errors as Well Committed, as Unamended, by Mr. Pope in his Late Edition of this Poet*. The work was a pointed attack against Pope's edition of Shakespeare's *Works*, published in 1725.

*A Hypercritic.* Edmund Curll, unscrupulous bookseller based in Fleet Street. He published, among other scurrilous works against Pope, *A Compleat Key to the Dunciad* (1728), and authored *The Curliad*, A

*Hypercritic upon the Dunciad Variorum. With a Farther Key to the New Characters* (1729). His line by line commentary on *The Dunciad* was a fertile source of inspiration for Pope, who brilliantly mimicked Curll's use of scandalous details in his notes to *The Variorum*.

*Namby Pamby.* The nickname (by H. Carey) of the poet and dramatist Ambrose Phillips, whose artless *Pastorals* were published along with Pope's in 1709. He was also the author of *Codrus, or the Dunciad Dissected* (1728), a vile personal attack against Pope published by Curll.

*Furius.* John Dennis, the most formidable critic of the time. Starting with 1711, when he taunted Pope for his deformity in *Reflections, Critical and Satirical*, Dennis attacked Pope and his works systematically. His raillery culminated with *Remarks Upon...the Dunciad* (1729), where he allied himself with Theobald, Gildon and Jacob to prove Pope's impudence and lack of taste.

*Margelina Scribelinda Macularia.* The assiduous annotator of *The Old Woman's Dunciad* (1751), created by the writer William Kenrick. Allegedly authored by Mary Midnight, one of the numerous pseudonyms of the poet Christopher Smart, the poem ridiculed the sublime "Improvements of our Language" by imports from the "Gomerian or Welch tongue."

Pope's publication of his poem, and who had a meteoric but combustible presence on the London literary stage. The *Imitations*, containing, in the annotated *Dunciad* Pope's admired sources of inspiration, include citations of the respected critical authorities I am going to use. Thus outlined, my analysis touches upon the history of *The Dunciad*'s avatars in its fifteen years of insistent authorial reworking, addresses the politics of the poem's paratextual frame, and ends up with a return to the text that suggests a new way of reading it, closer, I think, to Pope's own intentions. Finally, a few brief observations regarding Pope's rhyme and the subversive way in which it builds meaning concludes this mapping out of the textual space of *The Greater Dunciad*.

### ***The Context: How Many Dunciads?***

The hesitation between using the singular or the plural form of the noun in the very first line of the 1728 *Dunciad* ("Books and the man, I sing..." in the duodecimo edition of the poem, "Book and the man..." in the octavo edition), suggestively encapsulates the complicated problem of the poem's multifariousness, of its textual identity and continuous intentional vacillations. Was *The Dunciad* initially designed as a concerted attack against Theobald's edition of *Shakespeare Restored*, and as such intended mainly as a satire against the affected pedantry of the "Grammatical minds"? Or were its intentions from the very start broader, aiming at disclosing, in a mock epic echoing Virgil's *Aeneid* in its very first line, the cultural ineptness of a "hoard" of dunces launched in publishing enterprises they were seriously unqualified for? *The Dunciad* itself, constantly revised and enlarged in its more than twenty years of authorial labor, is not one "book," but a number of significantly different "books": as David Vander Meulen has

### ***IMITATIONS***

*The Dunciad* itself... is not one "book." See, to this effect, David L. Vander Meulen, *Pope's Dunciad of 1728. A History and Facsimile*, Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1991.

established, the poem went through three major revisions, thirty-three separate editions, and about sixty impressions by 1751, the year of Warburton's posthumous edition of Pope's *Works*. The changes it encountered, ranging from paratextual additions to more significant alterations, such as the unexpected replacement of the initial hero of the poem, Lewis Theobald, with Colley Cibber, in *The Dunciad in Four Books*, reflect, indeed, the author's reconsidered sympathies and antipathies, his cunning compositional schemes and marketing strategies, but also a sort of authorial acribia, a preoccupation with polishing the line and the meaning of his poem to an almost crystalline purity. *The Dunciad*'s revisions reveal Pope's preoccupation with constantly updating and broadening the cultural critique started with "Essay on Criticism" (1711) or *Peri Bathous* (1727), as well as his very precise marketing instinct which pushed him to refine a literary formula that turned into the most fashionable and culturally resonant phenomenon of the early eighteenth century. This highly dialogic sort of mock-epic satire, generously and ingeniously accommodating replies and counter-replies in its textual space, displays an unprecedented broadness of critique: it addresses political and religious issues, urban life, material culture, antiquarianism, scientific whims, linguistic affectation, cultural mercantilism, civic participation, public taste, educational and theatrical fads—all issues that necessarily required Pope's continuous revisiting of his initial project. This relentless engagement with the most current issues concerning the everyday life and the moral issues of the Empire, the cunning print strategies meant to spark off duncical reactions whereas avoiding, at the same time, the libel charges imposed by the Copyright Act of 1710, turned *The Dunciad* into one of the most vigorous participants in the process of formation of a literary public sphere in early eighteenth-century Britain.



The first edition of *The Dunciad*, published on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1728, could be suggestively described as a map without a legend. The fifty-two pages of text contained almost no explanatory footnotes, the names of the dunces were left blank, and the poem was released as an anonymous piece. The only items of information meant to contextualize Pope's epic attack against his dunces were provided by the cover page, the accompanying illustration, and the brief prefatory material, "The Publisher to the Reader." With no exception, these paratextual messages were grossly misleading: the poem did not belong to the "heroic" genre (as announced by the title), its first edition was never published in Dublin, the London print was not a second edition, and its publisher was not Anne Dodd but Pope, who seems to have paid all the printing costs himself. The prefatory material, allegedly composed by the publisher, dismissed the allegations that the poem was authored by Pope, explained the lack of identification of the dunces with the statement that "the Poem was not made for these Authors, but these Authors for the Poem," and concluded in a self-undermining way by loudly spelling out the name of its main hero, Lewis Theobald. Although not disclosed in the text, some of the dunces' names appear, however, in the notorious

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*The poem was released as an anonymous piece.* is both the Publisher and Author of this Patch-Work  
However, not to keep the Reader any longer in Medley. *A Hypercritic*  
Suspence, he may be assured that Alexander Pope Esq.

### IMITATIONS

*Its publisher is not Anne Dodd.* London publisher of trivia and occasional miscellanies; her name is used by Pope for its suggestive potential: A. Dodd is a play on a "dod," short for "doddard," a favorite interjection of Old Bellair in Etheredge's *Man of Mode*. *Pope, who seems to have paid all the printing costs himself.* According to David Foxton, "Pope and the Early Eighteenth-Century Book Trade," *The Lyell Lectures*, Oxford, 1976. Typescript in British Library.

owl illustration, possibly drafted by Pope: the owl is elevated on a pile of books made up of Colley Cibber's *Plays*, the Duchess of Newcastle's and John Dennis's *Works*, John Ogilby's voluminous translations, Lewis Theobald's *Shakespeare Restored*, and Richard Blackmore's epic poems, *Prince Arthur* and *King Arthur*. The owl itself may have alluded to Edmund Curll, who had published in 1726 of a piece titled *Laus Ululae. The Praise of Owls*, where he defended them as symbols of classical learning.

The publisher's invitation for readers to "decipher" the identity of the dunces by themselves was predictably followed by an outpouring of "keys," newspaper and pamphlet attacks against Pope that he used subsequently in his first major revision of the poem, *The Dunciad Variorum* of 1729. This new version of the poem was, again, issued anonymously: given the decision to reveal the names of his dunces, Pope sought legal advice and he was urged to ask his friends, Burlington, Oxford and Bathurst, to take legal responsibility as publishers of the book. The new edition of *The Dunciad* filled in most of the names and practically quadrupled the text's length through the addition of long prefatory and back materials, as well as extensive footnotes that often exceeded the amount of poem on the page. The paratextual additions mimicked in format some of the responses to the poem published after May 1728, such as Edmund Curll's *A Compleat Key to the Dunciad*. The prefatory material contained an "Advertisement," "A Letter to the Publisher," "Testimonies of Authors Concerning Our Poet

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*The notorious owl illustration, possibly drafted by Pope.* A theory considered plausible both by Elias F. Mengel ("The Dunciad Illustrations," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Winter, 1973-1974): 161-64) and David Vander Meulen (op. cit., 36-8). As shown by his correspondence, between March 1713 and

February 1714 Pope took drawing lessons with Charles Jervas.

*The owl itself may have alluded to Edmund Curll.* An interesting theory advanced by David Vander Meulen, op. cit., 36-7.

and His Works,” and Martinus Scriblerus’ reflections on the poem. The “back matter” included “Indexes” of persons and annotators referred to in the poem, a Scriblerian Errata, and a hotchpotch of eight additional pieces (including the 1728 “The Publisher to the Reader,” Scriblerus’ emendations to the *Aeneid* suggestively entitled “Virgilius Restauratus,” and a self-defending “List of Books, Papers, and Verses” which abused Pope before the publication of *The Dunciad*), crammed in an overflowing Appendix. The poem was made more reader-friendly by Pope’s addition of “Dunciados Periocha,” which contained “Arguments,” or short summaries to the three books. Whereas the readers’ collaboration in guessing the names of the dunces was no longer required, the text remains interactive due to its satirical footnotes that needed several hermeneutic lenses to be correctly understood.

Another significant change is that of the cover illustration, the owl being replaced by an ass laden with duncical publications, a possible representation of the textual critic Richard Bentley. The load of works on its back contains Leonard Welsted’s poetry, Dennis’s, Ward’s and

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*Pope’s addition of a “Dunciados Periocha.”* There is a direct Sneer, by way of Parody, upon Milton’s *Arguments* to the Books of his *Paradise Lost*; and many of his Phrases are taken *Verbatim*, as will appear by comparing them together. *A Hypercritic*

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*An ass laden with duncical publications, a possible representation of Richard Bentley.* A theory advanced by James Sambrook, who calls attention to an episode from Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, where the ass is described as a carrier of mysteries. The proverb is applied to “Those who were prefer’d to some Place they did not deserve, as when a Dunce was made a Library-keeper” (“The *Dunciad* Illustrations,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Winter, 1974-75): 211-12). Bentley was for a while the Keeper of the Royal Library, and was also identified in Pope’s satire with Aristarchus, the head of the Ptolemy’s’ library at Alexandria.



Oldmixon's works, Theobald's plays, and Eliza Haywood's novels (with *The Secret History of the Court of Caramania* singled out for its scandalous content). To these are added short-lived newspapers, such as *The Mist's Journal*, *British Journal*, *Pasquin*, *London Journal*, and *Daily Journal*; spread on the ground is *The Baker's Journal*, and next to a shrub of blooming thistles, the literally flying *Flying Post*. Most of these journals were included in Appendix II as papers abusing our author, but they were also known as shameless political organs of the Whig party. The owl appears again on top of the load of books, but in a much diminished form, which might suggest, in Elias F. Mengel's reading, the obliteration of *The Dunciad's* text (for which it stands) by the critical apparatus of the *Variorum* (167). A second illustration opens the first book of the poem, containing, again, the owl, the thistles, and two asses—all framed by a Latin motto which reads (in translation) "no one harms me with impunity." The motto is that of the Order of the Thistle, and it establishes a connection between the thistle and the "Satyrical Itch" of the Scottish satire. The owl wears a fool's cap and its angry expression helped its identification with the critic John Dennis, whose nickname at the time was "Furius" (Mengel 167). The reiterated presence of the two scowling asses could suggest, together with the angry owl, "the impotent rage of the whole dunce tribe" (Mengel 169) following the publication of *Peri Bathous* and the 1728 *Dunciad*.

The story of the poem's avatars does not end here: its continuous and intricate elaboration makes it, indeed, the book historians' delight. The publication of *The New Dunciad* in 1742, initially released as an independent book, was shortly followed by *The Greater Dunciad*, or *The Dunciad in Four Books* of 1743, the last major revision of the poem. The apparatus was further expanded, the "Front Matter" including three additional pieces: a proclamation of the new hero,

Colley Cibber, Dennis's remarks on Blackmore's *Prince Arthur*, and "Ricardus Aristarchus of the Hero of the Poem," a critical essay contributed by Warburton. The *Remarks* to the text were displayed in two columns, emphasizing even more the dialogical nature of the undertextual debate between Ancients and Moderns, and they were revised to reflect the radical changes dictated by Pope's reconsidered targets. *The Greater Dunciad* crowned Colley Cibber, the Poet Laureate, as the new King of the Dunces, replaced a number of dunces with new ones, and added a fourth, more allegorical book, which showed the complete religious, political, and cultural bankruptcy of the nation under the annihilating rule of goddess Dulness. As Warburton called attention in the very first note to this new edition of the poem, Pope's main aim was no longer to celebrate the coronation of the new King of the Dunces, but to caution against the restoration of the Empire of Dulness in Britain.

The play between the visual paratext and the text started in *The Variorum* is continued here: the spoof royal arms that illustrate Colley Cibber's proclamation as King of Dunces strikingly resemble the coat of arms of King George II, making visible the insinuation about the interchangeability between the two. The conflation of the two kings is further emphasized by the lion's facial features, which resemble both Cibber's and George II's, and by the graphic representation of the lion's genitalia, pointing to the sexual notoriety of both characters. Finally, the cryptic signature on the proclamation (two interlocked C's, the first one reversed) may belong to Colley Cibber, as Chancellor of Plays, but also, in James Sutherland's interpretation, to

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*The cryptic signature on the proclamation may belong to... Charles, second Duke of Grafton. According to James Sutherland, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems* of Alexander Pope, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (New Haven and London, 1963), 252.*

Charles, second Duke of Grafton and Lord Chamberlain, who made Cibber Laureate to George II and who acts here as the king's proxy. The signature recalls the royal monogram of Charles II, Grafton's grandfather, the illustration supporting, thus, the more obvious political critique of the poem as a whole.



While explaining to a certain extent his insistent revisiting of the poem, Pope's intention to act as a cultural gendarme does not, however, account for his initial reticence to disclose his authorship, the name of his dunces, or the identity of his publishers. With each new revision, *The Dunciad* was a significantly different text, and as such it required different marketing strategies in order to protect the author from libel charges and, equally important, to bring him the profit that would make his enterprise financially meaningful. Under the Act of Anne (1710), claiming the responsibility of a work also meant to admit liability for its content and, given the vitriolic nature of his poem, Pope understandably tried to transfer that liability to third parties, while seeking for means of shielding them against legal charges. Anne Dodd, for instance, the alleged publisher of the 1728 edition of *The Dunciad*, was not the actual holder of the book's copyright;

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*Pope's intention to act as a cultural gendarme.* [I]f P. has the Misfortune to fancy himself a Person of the highest Distinction and Character in Literature, as he plainly infers that he does, his Pericranium is certainly as much out of Order, and he as much wants to be trepann'd, as if he had declar'd himself Grand Signor, Emperor of China, or the Great Mogul. *Furius* *Financially meaningful.* I speak without a Fee, or Bribe,/Here's Pen and Ink – good Sirs, subscribe,/Six Guineas each at least, I hope,/Gads me-'tis done by Master Pope. *Sir Illiad Doggrel*

as the entry in the Stationers' Register on May 30 shows, the one who deposited there the nine copies required by the law was the printer James Bettenham. Things were even more complicated in the case of *The Dunciad Variorum*; as Jody Greene suggestively describes it, it required three Earls, a Prime Minister and a King to shelter Pope from legal liability. Although the imprint on the book's cover still mentioned Anne Dodd as publisher, the one who entered the work in the Stationers' Register on April 12 was Lawton Gilliver. His copyright, however, was successfully contested in court by the printer James Watson and the booksellers Th. Astley, John Clarke and John Stagg, who had released a pirated copy of the poem under the fictitious editorial name A. Dob. As they proved before the Chancery Court, Gilliver had not entered the author's name in the Stationers' Register, nor had he provided evidence that he owned the copyright. Gilliver had to reenter the book in the Register on November 21, this time with the consent of Pope and of his previous assigns, Burlington, Bathurst, and Oxford; he owned the copyright until 1743, after which Pope published *The Dunciad in Four Books* under his sole ownership.

Pope's publishing strategy had crucial consequences on shaping the poem itself, as well as on engaging, in various ways, the attention of all the participants in the print marketplace. As

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*Three Earls, a Prime Minister and a King.* On March 18, 1729, Pope sent Walpole a copy of the *Variorum* and asked him to present it to George II. On March 13, he decided to have the work distributed privately by the earls of Burlington, Bathurst, and Oxford, who were thus made the unofficial "owners" of the poem. For a detailed publishing history of the *Variorum*, see Jody Greene, *The Trouble with Ownership. Literary Property and*

*Authorial Liability in England, 1660-1730* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 150-94.

*As they proved before the Chancery Court.* Indeed, Anne Dodd, who had participated in the sale of many anti-Pope pamphlets, the *Key to the Dunciad* included, testified in court that she had never owned the work prior to the "Dob" edition.

Savage so vividly described it, “On the Day the Book was first vended, a Crowd of Authors besieg’d the Shop,” attempting “to hinder the coming out of the *Dunciad*,” while “on the other side, the Booksellers and Hawkers made as great efforts to procure it.” Publishers and vendors, attacked authors and their defenders, “Popelings” and “Dunciadiers” clashed over mercantile, personal and political issues in a dispute that had ample social reverberations. The war with the dunces was started, and for the next fifteen years the poem would strongly polarize the reading public, provoking intense reactions with every new edition and fuelling an unprecedented cultural commotion.

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*As Savage so vividly described it. See A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose, Which Have Been Publish’d on Occasion of the Dunciad, by Mr. Savage (London: printed for L. Gilliver, 1732), vi.* “Popelings” and “Dunciaders.” See *A Compleat Key to the Dunciad*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (London: Printed for E. Curll, 1728), vi.

***The Paratext: Front and Back Matter***

Here to her chosen all her works she shows;  
 Prose swell'd to verse, verse loitering into prose:  
 How random thoughts now meaning chance to find,  
 Now leave all memory of sense behind:  
 How prologues into prefaces decay,  
 And these to notes are fritter'd quite away:  
 How index-learning turns no student pale,  
 Yet holds the eel of science by the tail...  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, 273-286)

The thick frame provided by *The Dunciad* apparatus exceeds by far the normal justifying gestures required by authorial protocols. The mere amount of prose preceding, following, and footnoting the poem, as well as its uncertain authorship, raises, therefore, normal questions regarding the functions, effects, and even necessity of such explicatory additions. Moreover, as W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley argued, the use of notes raises serious generic and intentional issues: should they be judged as integral part of the literary text, or as unassimilated material indicating authorial intention? Are they, as explicatory text, necessary for establishing the meaning of the verbal symbol? Their categorical answer is no: such additions illustrate a particular case of intentional fallacy, a critical impulse to base one's interpretations on the expressed or implied intentions of the author, and as such they are neither necessary nor desirable for experiencing the text. The author's gesture to clarify his work is not relevant, as the poem "is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to [...] control it" (5). Or, in Barthesian terms, the "death of the author" is the *sine qua non* condition of a work's

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As Wimsatt and Beardsley argued. See W.K. Wimsatt, "The Author," in *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory. A Reader*, ed. K. M. Newton, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 120-23.  
*The Verbal Icon. Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1954).  
 Or, in Barthesian terms. Roland Barthes, "Death of

ontological possibility.

The limits of such an approach are obvious in the case of Pope's *Dunciad*. One evident reason is that his apparatus is not oracularly prescriptive; authored by Pope's allies as well as by a boisterous host of dunces, it only at times represents Pope's voice or defends a coherent position which might clarify the meaning of the whole. Contributions by Scriblerians or Warburton are brought into dialogue with classical sources and interventions by Theobald, Bentley, Dennis, Curll, Blackmore, or Jacob. Whereas they definitely reflect (in quite ricocheting ways) authorial intention, the narrative voice is clearly stifled by the mere number of the participants in this unusually inclusive conversation. As such, whereas never innocuous or accurate, the notes and the appended materials are fundamental pieces in the poem's architectural composition. The text simply does not build meaning the same without its apparatus, whose cacophony of voices contributes in a fundamental way to its satirical intent. Much of the text's energy, comical effects, impression of chaos, and meaningless clash of ideas comes from this framing which brings other opinions than the author's in the debate.

The author remains, nevertheless, very much present in this dispute, a masterful puppeteer pulling the strings of a highly elaborated show. Devised as a satiric reaction to the pedantry of the "verbal critics," such as Bentley, Theobald, or "the exact Mr. *Tho. Hearne*,"

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"*Verbal critics.*" The best explanation of this kind of criticism is offered by Pope himself in the introductory note to Book II of *The Dunciad*: "Two things there are, upon the supposition of which the very basis of all Verbal criticism is founded and supported: The first, that the Author could never fail to use the *best word* on every occasion; the second, that a Critic cannot chuse but know *which that is*. This being granted, whenever any word doth not fully content us, we take upon us to conclude, first, that the author could never have used it; and, secondly, that he must have used *that very one* which we conjecture in its stead."

Pope's frame works, indeed, as "a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction" in which the meaning of the whole is madly negotiated in the most unexpected way. However, one can hardly consider that the author intended to put this paratextual frame, as Genette depicted it, "at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it" (2). What the introductory and back prose of *The Dunciad* does, through its gargantuan spreading out on dozens of pages, has, instead, a lot to do with the reading public and their natural distaste for dull elaborations. The Front Matter opens one door after another of introductory protocols, postponing experiencing the text, contextualizing its purpose, advertising not a work but a literary war, and constantly subverting readerly expectations. Similarly, the never-ending appendices provide anti-climactic lists, advertisements, indexes and excerpts, almost obsessively delaying the closing of the book. The obvious ceremonial function of the frame, the "pomp" of *The Dunciad*'s subsequent printing, is not meant to comfortably install the reader into a "transitional zone" and clarify the meaning of the text. On the contrary, its amassing method is obviously reader-repellent, and it is quite doubtful that many pre- or postmodern booklovers perused the apparatus in its entirety, fully enjoying the joke. The difficulties raised by its numerous and ambiguous codes, as well as by the mere length of these textual additions were well-known to Pope and used, I suspect, purposefully to disclose the

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"A zone between text and off-text." Gerard Genette, E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.  
*Paratexts. Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Janey



ridiculous affectation of this kind of annotative wisdom. One of the essential functions of this frame, still unaddressed by current criticism, is to create a sort of Bermuda-triangle effect, to engender a temporal and spatial loss of the reader's attention in a Bentleyan, anti-textual zone of pedantic and tedious scholarship. What I am trying to suggest is not that the apparatus is not meant to be read (and for those tenacious enough it does provide intellectual rewards), but that its main function is to inhibit reading, to call attention to a textual method that feeds up on its very object of research, and whose discrete readership proves its ridiculous worthlessness.

This statement requires some clarifications. The generous paratextual antechamber of the 1743 *Dunciad* contained almost ninety pages of critical prose which have to be read in the context of Pope's attack against Lewis Theobald's *Shakespeare Restored*, a work which seriously shattered Pope's reputation as a reliable textual editor. In his critique, Theobald admiringly evoked Bentley's method, which was based on a historicist study of ancient sources and involved the emendation of "corrupt" passages by substituting, on a conjectural basis, words or phrases of similar sound but allegedly better sense. Bentley's approach is probably best illustrated in his controversial *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (1713), a work written with all the authority of a reputed classicist (Bentley was at the time Master of Trinity College and Keeper of the Royal Libraries), and which played a major role in the Ancients vs. Moderns debate. His *Dissertation* proved that the *Epistles of Phalaris*, recently edited by Charles Boyle

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*Lewis Theobald's Shakespeare Restored.* No Vein of to this Work: It is a Sacrifice to the Pleasure of  
Pedantry, or Ostentation of useless Criticism incited me SHAKESPEARE's Admirers in general. *Tibbald*

and used by William Temple as an example of ancient work surpassing the Moderns' creations, were not genuine. Bentley's findings triggered the harsh criticism of the supporters of classic tradition, Pope included, as an instance of pedantic scholarship doubled by a severe lack of taste. Add to this Bentley's expert remarks on Pope's translation of the *Iliad* ("A pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer."), or his uninspired attempt to restore Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the context of Pope's criticism becomes clear enough. Mocked initially by Dr. Arbuthnot in *The Variorum*, where an appendix piece, "Virgilius Restauratus," listed a series of Virgilian quotes in Latin ludicrously altered in Bentley's manner for better effects, the scholar would be given in the fourth book of *The Dunciad* a more substantial attention in the figure of Aristarchus, "the mighty Scholiast," whose "unweary'd pains/Made Horace dull, and humbled

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Bentley's findings triggered the harsh criticism of the supporters of classic tradition. As a defender of his patron, Sir William Temple, Swift was the first to attack Bentley in the *Tale of a Tub* and the *Battle of the Books* (1704). Arbuthnot ridiculed Bentley throughout the notes of *The Variorum*, and authored two other satires against him, *An Account of the State of Learning in the Empire of Lilliput; together with the History and Character of Bullum the Emperor's Library Keeper* (1728), and *Critical Remarks on Capt. Gulliver's Travels by Doctor Bentley* (1735). Pope joined them late, after the publication of

Bentley's edition of Milton (1732), with "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" (1735), "Sober Advice from Horace" (1735), "Epistle I" of the *Imitations of Horace* (1737), *The Memoirs... of Martinus Scriblerus* (1742), and, of course, the fourth book of *The Dunciad*. For more details about this concerted attack, see the excellent Notes to Scriblerus' *Memoirs*, ed. Charles Kerby-Miller (New York: Russel & Russel, 1966).

"A pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer." Qtd. in R. C. Jebb, *Bentley* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 202.

### REMARKS

Mocked initially by Dr. Arbuthnot in... "Virgilius Restauratus." I cannot help but disagree at this point with otherwise gripping analysis of Anthony Grafton, who infers that Pope's "intended readers knew the procedures and paraphernalia of scholarly annotation well enough to savor detailed, technically adept parodies of them" (*The Footnote. A Curious History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts:

Harvard University Press, 1997), 118). It is quite obvious that only a discreet number of readers had the needed scholarly expertise, not to mention Latin language skills, to understand the parody developed in this piece. "Virgilius Restauratus" was, indeed, one of his most obscure paratextual additions, and Pope would eventually drop it from his subsequent editions.

Milton's strains." The fact that Theobald openly praises Bentley in the Preface to his attack against Pope's edition of Shakespeare could only increase Pope's distaste for his editorial methods. Theobald's commentary, although apparently defensive and overtly laudatory of Pope's "inimitable" achievements as a poet, didn't fail to constantly call attention to the "epidemical Corruption" of his edition and to his failure to offer the readers the "true reading" of Shakespeare's works. Such a reading should display a Bentleyan attention to the most trivial details:

For my own part, I don't know whether I am mistaken in Judgment, but I have always thought, that whenever a Gentleman and a Scholar turns Editor of any Book, he at the same Time commences Critick upon his Author; and that wherever he finds the Reading suspected, manifestly corrupted, deficient in Sense, and unintelligible, he ought to exert every Power and Faculty of the Mind to supply such a Defect, to give Light and restore Sense to the passage, and, by a reasonable Emendation, to make that satisfactory and consistent with the Context, which before was so absurd, unintelligible, and intricate. (v)

The emendatory method Theobald alludes to was one of Bentley's innovations, as it was his predilection for excessively long introductions (Bentley's *Dissertation* contained no fewer than 100 pages of prefatory material), complemented by a pedantic Back Matter which included multiple Indexes, Addenda and Errata. Pope obviously mocks Bentley's textual choreography

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*Theobald's commentary, although apparently defensive.* The vituperative nature of his attack against Pope's editorial skills can be clearly seen from a delightful quote by Mr. Sewel, an obscure figure nevertheless invoked in Theobald's Introduction as a Shakespearian authority. The quote compares the careless printers with the Indians who are "disfiguring a good

Face with Scars of *artificial* Brutes" [emphasis mine]. The parallel between the typographic errors on the page and the artifice-inducing effects of the paint on the faces of the good Indians is involuntarily suggestive of the increased anxiety against the popular prints, in savage proliferation at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

when including seven pieces in the Front Matter of the 1743 *Dunciad*, each meant to serve a distinctive paratextual function. The new edition of the poem is opened by a brief “Advertisement to the Reader,” supposedly by Warburton but probably drafted by Pope, whose purpose is to warn the reader about a new addition of notes “of a more serious kind,” meant to counterbalance Scriblerus’ humorous interventions. The piece also contains a justification of Pope’s choice of a new and “more considerable Hero” in the person of Colley Cibber: the playwright’s damaging reflections on our poet, published in his notorious “Letter from Mr. Cibber, to Mr. Pope” (1742), his undeserved laureateship, and his utter shamelessness in promoting himself as a public figure. This brief clarification is followed by a more playful intervention in the form of a sham official proclamation of the new hero, strikingly evocative of a royal statement, and endorsed by a spoof royal arms in which Kings Cibber and George II are cunningly confused with each other. The archaic blackletter of the proclamation enhances the affected tone of the document, which orders the “Pretender, Pseudo-Poet, or Phantom of the name of Tibbald” to utterly “vanish and evaporate out of this work.” The political joke is blatant, and an attentive reading of the language used in proclamation confirms the fact that this is not only about Cibber replacing Theobald as the King of the Dunces, but also about the Hanoverian King himself: the “Pretender” may allude to the Jacobite claimant to the throne of James II’s son, Francis Edward Stuart, in 1714 (the year George II was crowned), whereas the “abdicated and vacant” throne may well be a hint to James II’s flight to France during the Glorious Revolution (1688), which vacated the throne for William and Mary. The two introductory pieces seem to imply that a fake king supports a fake poet, and they collapse ideas of undeserving political and cultural succession in a quite remarkable way. Not only do they clarify the satire but also provide

social and political context to its several layers of meaning, contradicting Theobald's and Bentley's compulsive plea for only one "right" reading of a text or (why not) a historic event.

Following this political jibe, the defenses of the satire on bad writers by some of Pope's dunces (Dennis, Theobald, Charles Gildon, and Matthew Concanen) seem somehow out of place. The joke is that the philosophical recommendations they make actually describe Pope's own intentions, which are, indeed, "to distinguish good writers, by discouraging the bad," to divulge the lack of wit of the "Poetasters of the town," and to bring before the court of taste the "wicked Scribbler" in a merciless "Satyr upon Dulness." Read as prefatory material to William Cleland's "Letter to the Publisher," the dunces' defenses act as justificatory gestures for Pope's own satire: the poet civilly agrees with his dunces' theoretical standards and uses their own (bad) works to prove that they are right— in principle, but not in practice. A literary strategy that is defensive and offensive at the same time, applauding the critic as a critic while sweeping him off as a writer, is successfully employed here, testing the readers' power of discernment.

As Pope put it in the following piece, the "Letter to the Publisher" (the attribution to Cleland is strategically fictitious), *The Dunciad* is meant to show the dullness of his heroes who, "they themselves [...] testif[ied] under their hands to the truth of it." This prefatory letter is interesting at more than one level: it establishes Pope's innocence by pointing out that the dunces were "the first aggressors," it renders his poem a sort of retrieving device without which the dunces' works would be "irrecoverably lost," and answers three fundamental objections to the

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*The attribution to Cleland is strategically fictitious.* Squire Cleland's *Letter to the Publisher* is undoubtedly written by Mr. Pope; as he formerly subscribed Mr.

Wycherley's Name to a Copy of Verses before his *Pastorals*, wrote, in his own Praise, by himself. *A Hypercritic*

poem: that his dunces are too obscure, too poor, and too foolish for his satire. In doing so, the author develops a self-flattering comparison with Boileau, “the greatest Poet and most judicious Critic of his age and country,” claiming that they both were “equally abus’d by the ignorant pretenders to Poetry of their times.” The issue at stake here is authorial fame, and the proper way of dealing with the host of dunces launched in substandard attacks against cultural models is laughter, a laughter whereby the author “is not indulging his own ill-nature, but only punishing that of others.” The clarification is important: what we witness here is not the ingenuous Swiftian laughter triggered by the ludicrous disproportion between Gulliver and the giants of Brobdingnag, for instance, but the whipping laughter of a satirist who watches his victims making fools of themselves, and turns their frustration into a public performance. Pope’s laughter is not indulgent but penalizing, and what makes it the more devastating is the fact that his intervention in unveiling his dunces’ silliness is minimal: *The Dunciad*’s satirical mirror reflects Pope’s victims as they actually are, in all their unflattering nakedness.

The following two prefatory pieces introduce a new advertising strategy (authorial testimonies) and a very vivid character in the person of Martinus Scriblerus. A fictional pedant whose birth occurred much earlier, Scriblerus had been properly celebrated by Pope only two

### ***R E M A R K S***

*His dunces are ...too poor.* It is as much out of the Way, to make Poverty the Subject of his Satire; since had he been humble enough to look behind him, he would have remembered that his Father was but a Husbandman on Windson-Forest; and that the private Tutor which he seems to suggest his Father kept to teach him Greek and Latin, was a Secular Priest of the Church of Rome, whom his parents [...] sheltered by Turns, in order to

make Proselytes. *Namby Pamby*

*A fictional pedant.* Martinus Scriblerus (and allegedly his *Memoirs* as well) is the product of the collective imagination of the Scriblerians, a group of writers that included Pope, Swift, Gay, Thomas Parnell, Robert Harley and John Arbuthnot. The character illustrates their satire on false learning.

years before the final version of *The Dunciad*, in *The Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discovery of Martinus Scriblerus* (1741). The work definitely deserves perusing: it presents Scriblerus as a “voluminous Writer,” displaying “acute Wit,” an unusual “fertility of Fancy,” and an almost Julesvernian resourcefulness. Interesting for evaluating his role in *The Dunciad*’s apparatus, the ninth chapter of the *Memoirs* identifies Bentley as one of Scriblerus’ *alter egos*, whose particular talent is “to convert every Trifle into a serious thing, either in the way of Life, or in Learning.” In *The Dunciad in Four Books*, Scriblerus starts by collecting a number of “Testimonies of Authors Concerning Our Poet and His Works”—a parody of the apparatus of a learned edition, innovatively displaying “not only [the opinions] of different authors, but of the same author at different seasons.” The strategy had been employed before in the “Letter to the

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*An almost Julesvernian resourcefulness.* I shall mention only a few of his Philosophical and Mathematical Works:

1. A compleat Digest of the Laws of Nature, with a Review of those that are obsolete or repealed, and of those that are ready to be renew’d and put in force.
2. A Mechanical Explication of the Formation of the Universe, according to the Epicurean Hypothesis.
3. An Investigation of the Quantity of real Matter in the Universe, with the Proportion of the specific Gravity of solid Matter to that of fluid.
4. Microscopical Observations of the proportion in which the Fluids of the earth decrease, and of the period in which they will be totally exhausted.
5. A Computation of the Duration of the Sun, and how long it will last before it be burn’d out.
6. A Method to apply the Force arising from the immense Velocity of *Light* to mechanical purposes. An answer to the question of a curious Gentleman; How long a New Star was lighted up before its appearance to the Inhabitants of our earth? To which is subjoin’d a Calculation, how much the Inhabitants of the *Moon* eat for Supper, considering that they pass a Night equal to

fifteen of our natural days.

7. A Demonstration of the natural Dominion of the Inhabitants of the Earth over those of the Moon, if ever an intercourse should be open’d between them. With a Proposal of a *Partition-Treaty*, among the earthly Potentates, in case of such discovery.

8. Tide-Tables, for a Comet, that is to approximate towards the Earth.

9. The Number of Inhabitants of London determin’d by the Reports of the Gold-finders, and the Tonnage of their Carriages; with allowance for the extraordinary quantity of the *Ingesta* and *Egesta* of the people of England, and a deduction of what is left under dead walls, and dry ditches. *Alexander Pope, Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life...* (Dublin, 1741), 158-60.

*Identifies Bentley as one of Scriblerus’ alter egos.* His Terence and Horace are in every body’s hands, under the names of Richard B\_ley, and Francis H\_re. And we have convincing proofs that the late Edition of Milton publish’d in the name of the former of these, was in truth the Work of no other than our Scriblerus. *Alexander Pope, Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*

Publisher”: the dunces are given the floor, make fools of themselves, and the readers are encouraged to draw their own conclusions “not only of a critical, but a moral nature,” without any assistance on the critic’s part. The method is, indeed, highly effective: once applied, Dennis, Oldmixon, Theobald, James Moore Smith, or Leonard Welsted emerge as a class of spiteful and inconsistent “hypercritics.” Their opinions are contrasted with those of authority figures such as Joseph Addison, John Garth, Matthew Prior, James Hammond or David Mallet, but also with their own previous assessments, when unaware of the fact that the works they had commended, for instance, belonged to Pope. Leonard Welsted’s nasty remarks on *Essay on Criticism* and the Moderns’ predilection for “pert, insipid heap of common place” are, thus, paralleled to his enthusiastic comments on the “unknown author” of the *Essay on Man*, whose work he sees as being, “indeed, above all commendation.” Similarly, Colley Cibber grants *The Dunciad* “to be a better Poem of its kind than ever was writ,” to immediately undermine his own position by describing it as “a victory over a parcel of poor wretches, whom it was almost cowardice to conquer.” Although Scriblerus’s cumulative method lacks any concluding gesture of its own, we can definitely hear in the background Pope’s voice defending his work:

But from all that hath been said, the discerning reader will collect, that it little availed our author to have any Candour, since when he declared he did not write for others, it was not credited; as little to have any Modesty, since, when he declined writing in any way himself, the presumption of others was imputed to him. If he singly enterprised one great work, he was taxed of Boldness and Madness to a prodigy: If he took assistants in another, it was complained of, and represented as a great injury to the public. The loftiest heroics, the lowest ballads, treaties against the state or church, satyrs on lords and ladies, raillery on wits and authors, squabbles with booksellers, or even full and true accounts of monsters, poisons, and murders; of any hereof was there nothing so good, nothing so bad, which hath not at one or another season been to him ascribed. (68)



This programatically unobtrusive and oblique way of advertising the man and his work is abandoned in “Martinus Scriblerus on the Poem,” where *The Dunciad* is admiringly included in an illustrious epic tradition started by no other than Homer. *The Dunciad* is described by Scriblerus as a legitimate continuation of the lost comic poem *Margites*, allegedly authored by the Greek bard, and whose hero “Antiquity recordeth to have been *Dunce the first*.” A number of other classic affiliations are also alluded to, Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Le Bossu’s *Traité du poème épique* included, to support the magnitude of this poetic enterprise, while the allegory, action, characters, machinery, and diction of the poem are mentioned in a highly commendatory way. The essay includes hints to themes subsequently addressed in the poem in a satiric form, such as poetic tradition, the artist’s duty as a chronicler of his time, poverty as an incitement to poetic output, particular (authors) and universal (vices), anonymity vs. celebrity, proper language vs. scatological content, etc. Most importantly, the piece reflects a symptomatic print anxiety, a concern that the easy availability of paper and the increase in the number of printers could result in a “deluge of authors” of ephemeral notoriety, who might fuel with their productions a promiscuous press. As Harold Weber notes, the poem is marked from the very beginning “by the

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| <p><i>Poverty as an incitement to poetic output.</i> Notwithstanding Tom Brown has written a long and learned Dissertation, in <i>Praise of Poverty</i>, and Mr. Moore an admirable Fable to prove that Want is the greatest Help to Genius; yet there are few, even Poets,</p> | <p>I believe, but think the jingling of one Guinea against another, infinitely better Rhime than Pope, Gay or Moore ever wrote in their Lives, and would approve a Bank Note of an hundred Pounds, as the best Prose they ever read. <i>Margelina Scribelinda Macularia</i></p> |
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### ***IMITATIONS***

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| <p>As Harold Weber noted. See “The ‘Garbage Heap’ of Memory: At Play in Pope’s Archives of Dulness,” <i>Eighteenth-Century Studies</i>, vol. 33, no. 1, special</p> | <p>issue on Eighteenth-Century Print Culture (Fall, 1999), 13.</p> |
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poles of memory and oblivion, its monumental status mocked by the extinction towards which modernity rushes.” Scriblerus’s interventions highlight the fact that the paratextual space of the poem is but another version of the confrontational public sphere: they express an evident disregard for popular taste and a profound distrust in the dunces’ attempts at literary immortality.

The last prefatory piece included in the 1743 *Dunciad*, “Ricardus Aristarchus of the Hero of the Poem,” belongs to Warburton, who presents Bentley as a heartfelt supporter of Colley Cibber, the better hero of this new, “more lively and choleric” “little Epic.” Bentley’s characteristic method of referencing sources with titles, editions, and page numbers at a mind-numbing rate is brilliantly mimicked in the description of the three constituent qualities of a “lesser” epic hero, i.e. Vanity, Impudence and Debauchery. Cibber’s self-promoting diligence is given by Bentley-Aristarchus proper space in this eulogy, every single comparison of the Laureate with his betters being promptly referenced in a neatly lettered footnote that creates a wild visual display of textual sophistry:

Hear how he constantly paragon himself, at one time to ALEXANDER the Great and CHARLES the XII of SWEDEN, for the excess and delicacy of his Ambition<sup>o</sup>; to HENRY the IV of FRANCE, for honest Policy<sup>p</sup>; to the first BRUTUS, for love of Liberty<sup>q</sup>; and to Sir ROBERT WALPOLE, for good Government while in Power<sup>r</sup>: At another time, to the godlike SOCRATES, for his diversions and amusements<sup>s</sup>; to HORACE, MONTAIGNE, and Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE, for an elegant Vanity that makes them for ever read and admired<sup>t</sup>; to TWO LORD CHANCELLORS, for Law, from whom, when confederate against him at the bar, he carried away the prize of Eloquence<sup>v</sup>; and, to say all in a word, to the right reverend the Lord BISHOP of LONDON himself, in the art of writing *pastoral letters*<sup>w</sup>.

<sup>o</sup>Life, p. 149. <sup>p</sup>P. 424. <sup>q</sup>P. 366. <sup>r</sup>P. 457. <sup>s</sup>P.18. <sup>t</sup>P. 425. <sup>v</sup>P. 436, 437. <sup>w</sup>P. 52.

Pope’s annotative shrewdness is devastating: while the capitalized names bring together a pleiade of illustrious cultural and political personalities, the footnoted words (“ambition,”

“policy,” “liberty,” “power,” “amusements,” etc.) recap Cibber’s most despicable attributes, attentively referenced, callout, title and all, at the bottom of the page.



The attack against the verbal criticism of Bentley & Co. is continued in the Back Matter, which contains twelve paratextual additions grouped in numbered Appendices, Indexes and Declarations. These additions represent, in fact, a condensed history of *The Dunciad*’s coming into being, with useful details about the early stages of Pope’s war with his dunces. A first Appendix contains the “Preface Prefixed to the five first imperfect Editions of the *Dunciad*, in three books, printed at Dublin and London, in octavo and duodecimo, 1727”; the material is nothing else but the 1728 Preface to the first edition of the poem, shorn of the final paragraph in which the hero of the poem is identified with Theobald, and augmented, instead, with detailed lettered footnotes *à la manière de* Bentley. The very first of these notes is particularly interesting as it contains the famous anecdote about the early draft of the poem being snatched from fire by Swift (a real life event reworked later in the famous library encounter of Theobald/Cibber with goddess Dulness), and explains the joke circulated at the time about Swift being the actual author of the poem. The Preface also justifies the publication of a new edition of the poem, footnoted and with the names of the dunces revealed, allegedly triggered by the author’s intention “to invalidate this universal slander” started by the newspapers, which were maliciously speculating on the identity of his dunces.

The Preface is followed by “A List of Books, Papers, and Verses in which our Author was abused, before the Publication of the *Dunciad*; with the true Names of the Authors,” abuses printed by “mercenary Booksellers” without any concern for their truth, and produced by Pope as

evidence of the constant persecution he was subjected to. The list contains early attacks by Dennis, Gildon, Thomas Burnett, George Duckett, Susannah Centlivre, Thomas Cooke, Eliza Haywood, John Oldmixon, Jonathan Smedley and the fictitious Joseph Gay. The more interesting part of this list, though, actually not advertised in the title, is that it includes a selection of vituperative responses published *after The Dunciad*, which gives an interesting insight into the literary alliances formed following Pope's retaliation. A reference to the "Club of Theobald, Dennis, Moore, Concanen, and Cooke" identifies one of the many anti-Pope factions, a faction, nevertheless, with numerous ramifications: Dennis and Curll also defended authors like Giles Jacob and Richard Blackmore, Thomas Cooke seconded Henry Baker, Thomas Gilbert and Joseph Mitchel in supporting Leonard Welsted, while a large number of more or less representative figures of the literary market, such as Edward Ward, Jonathan Smedley, John Ralph, John Oldmixon, Edward Roome, or Colley Cibber launched powerful attacks against Pope, joining one camp or another as their interests required. The function of these pieces is informative and justificatory, providing the historical and cultural context of Pope's war with his dunces in a quite straightforward way.

The next appended piece is the 1729 "Advertisement to the First Edition with Notes, in Quatro" of *The Dunciad*, an ad authored by Pope (disguised as the publisher) in order to justify

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*A selection of vituperative responses published after The Dunciad.* What a Pity it was that the *Author* of the *Dunciad* had not placed himself before a Looking-glass, while he wrote that Inimitable Piece; for tho' it can't be suppos'd, he was unacquainted with his own *Symetry*, yet it might have prevented his falling foul on that of others.  
*Namby Pamby*

Was there ever such an empty, such an impudent Scribler? Did ever any fanatical Ægyptian of old offer more Incense to one of Pug's Ancestors, than Pug has offer'd to himself, who is at once the Votary and the Priest, and a little mimicking, mischievous, ludicrous God upon the Altar? *Furius*

the use of names in the new edition of the poem, as well as the newly introduced subtextual commentary. As the author warns us, the latter is “unequally written,” containing notes by “several [Scriblerian] hands,” and also articles barely transcribed from Jacob, Curll and “other writers of their own rank,” who “have drawn each other’s characters on certain occasions.” The collective authorship emphasized here is meant to cover-up Pope’s legal liability, but also to mock the scholarly pretensions of the work, demonstrated by the “authority” figures engaged in the debate, Scriblerus included.

An “Advertisement of the First Edition, separate, of The Fourth Book of the *Dunciad*” (1742) follows, evoking a new episode in the poem’s continual avatars. It feigns ignorance as to the identity of the author, advertises the new book by employing the found manuscript convention, and relates it to the previous editions of the poem, as an “accomplishment of the prophecies therein.” The next piece opens an unexpected temporal accolade, taking us back in time to the year 1713: it evokes the moment when young Pope published his *Pastorals*, and reproduces a harsh article against our author, allegedly printed in *The Guardian* issue of April 27. The article (actually authored by Gay and Pope) mimics Tickell’s style from a real editorial published in 1713, in which he had highly praised Ambrose Phillips’ pastorals while

### **R E M A R K S**

*Articles barely transcribed from... Curll.* Having examined all that relates to myself, in the three Books of the *Dunciad Variorum*; I find in their *Appendix*, that the Author, Editor, and Remarker, Apologize for One Blunder by making *Another*. It must be observed in the first place, that these witty Gentlemen have printed an

*erroneous Text* in order to shew their Learning in a very correct *Errata*. [...] Now from this single Fact, fairly stated, I submit it to the Publisher—whether Scriblerus is not a most egregious Blunderer in Literary Chronology! *A Hypercritic*

### **I M I T A T I O N S**

*Articles &c.* Among the materials alluded to, Giles Jacob’s *The Poetical Register* (1719-1720) and Edmund

Curll’s *Characters of the Times* (1728) are important sources for Pope’s satire.

systematically overlooking Pope's. The method used is evocative of Theobald's *Shakespeare Restored*: the reviewers present a series of parallel excerpts from Pope's and Phillips' poems, with the purpose of highlighting the latter's superior "knack of versifying." In doing so, they show a biased selection of verses, praising some ludicrously bad samples of Phillips' work (or fabrications by Pope in his style). A similar article adaptation follows, this time of a material printed in *The Grub-Street Journal* on November 19, 1730: it deals with the qualities necessary to become a Laureate and describes the ceremonial investiture with the title. The candidates at laureateship are Stephen Duck, John Dennis, Lewis Theobald and Colley Cibber, and the purpose of the piece is to provide the reader with background information relevant to the events taking place in the poem. Another brief "Advertisement," printed in an unidentified *Journal* in 1730, is used to introduce a frothy joke about how a dunce can turn into a Wit: the author recommends him to procure "a Certificate of his being really such, from any *three of his companions* in the *Dunciad*, or from *Mr. Dennis singly*, who is esteemed equal to any three of the number." The humor of these pieces comes from the blatant exaggeration of the flaws of the protagonists and of their works, and they gesture toward the corruption of the cultural and political milieu of the time, which made possible the promotion of grossly unqualified figures in positions of literary celebrities.

Even more interesting, the following "Parallel of the Characters of Mr. Dryden and Mr. Pope. As drawn by certain of their Contemporaries" describes the two poets' similar abuse as religious, political and moral beings by a hoard of mischievous dunces. The two pieces, displayed as mirror images on the pages of the book, contain similar subtitles ("Mr. Dryden's Virgil," "Mr. Pope's Homer"; "Names bestow'd on Mr. Dryden," "Names bestow'd on Mr.

Pope,” etc.) under which are collated defamatory allegations about the two poets and translators. An impressive list of personal abuse concludes these accounts (both Dryden and Pope are qualified as “apes,” “asses,” “frogs,” “cowards,” “things,” etc.), suggesting the virulence of the attacks and clarifying once and for all (with titles, page numbers, and dates) their precedence over Pope’s own satire. Bentley’s voice is heard again from a footnote to the subsequent “Declaration” (first included in the 1735 edition of the poem), whereby the author of *The Dunciad* “strictly enjoin[s] and forbid[s] any person or persons whatsoever, to erase, reverse, put between hooks, or by any other means directly or indirectly change or mangle” any of the 1,754 lines of the poem. The declaration alludes to Bentley’s conjectural emendation method applied to improve the Miltonian text, and it is completely ignored by the critic, who loudly corrects the author’s first and last words of the poem, as well as the actual number of lines (only 1,012), so that it conforms with the number of lines in the *first* edition of *The Dunciad*, the one Bentley logically assumes to have been “revised” by our author.

The “Index of Persons celebrated in this Poem” and the “Index of Matters Contained in this Poem and Notes” conclude the series of pieces appended to *The Dunciad*, memorializing, as promised, the names of Pope’s dunces, and providing the less thorough reader

### **R E M A R K S**

*Defamatory allegations about the two poets.* As to the *Parallel of the Characters of Dryden and Pope*, two things are only to be observed: 1. That Mr. Dryden fell foul upon the Church of England in his *Hind and Panther*, and wrote a Satire upon some Persons of Distinction, for which he was well drubbed in the Mall. 2. That Mr. Pope, besides the *Dunciad*, has wrote several Libels; and his drubbing is to come. [...] The Parallel will hold in no other instances than their Politicks, Religion,

Morals, Scurrilities, Profaneness and Obscenity; for there never was a more scurrilous, or a more profane Writer than Mr. Dryden, and in all these laudable Qualifications, Pope Ape’s him to a tittle. *A Hypercritic*

*An impressive list of personal abuse.* “A little scurvy, purblind-Elf;/Scarce like a Toad, much less himself./Deform’d in Shape, of Pigmy Stature:/A proud, conceited, peevish Creature.” *Namby Pamby*

with a quick survey of the main topics addressed in the poem. The entries are humorous and enchantingly fresh, including titles such as “Braying, described,” “Booksellers, how they run for a Poet,” “Bailiffs, how poets run from them,” “Caroline, a curious Flower, its fate,” “Ears, some People advis’d how to preserve them,” “French Cooks,” “Flies, not the ultimate Object of human study,” “Gazetteers, the monstrous Price of their Writings and the miserable fate of their Works,” “Madmen, two related to Cibber,” “Owls and Opium,” “Oranges, and their use,” “Thunder, how to make it by Mr. Dennis’s Receipt,” and so on. The index also includes issues discussed in footnotes or apparatus, like the entries on “Verbal Critics,” or “Tibbald, not Hero of this Poem,” which clearly indicates that the author considered the footnotes as an integral part of his epic, a fact which complicates its generic classification. Moreover, by being strategically placed at the end of the work, like a sort of more detailed and humorous Table of Contents, the “Index of Matters” is turned into an ingenious marketing device, anticipating the more straightforward ads placed on the back cover of a book which became popular a century later.

As shown so far, Pope’s paratextual frame is functionally complex, and for all his loudly declared anti-modernism it demonstrates a quite innovative use of literary conventions and print technologies. It is meant to clarify the satire while simultaneously burlesquing contemporary scholarship; it allows Pope to defend himself and justify his work while incriminating, at the same time, the dunces exposed in the poem; it addresses an inclusive readership while cautioning against the democratization of taste and proliferation of popular culture. Furthermore, it controls the readers’ reactions through a variety of tonal changes (irony, humor, false candor or pedantic affectation), while describing, in fact, a hyperactive version of the literary public sphere they are a part of. Pope’s paratextual frame, while excessive in length and critique, indicates a clear



awareness of how the books are consumed, and of their huge, albeit still modestly capitalized, performative power. As a transitional space, it has a versatility that the actual text lacks, allowing multivocal interventions, encouraging heated debates, manipulating literary conventions to its own purpose, ventriloquizing the affected pedantry of the verbal scholars, and experimenting early in the history of printing practices with generic changes, self-referentiality, and visual strategies. More importantly, its anti-Bentleyan and anti-Theobaldian agenda seriously complicates the text's possible "readings," giving the work as a whole an almost postmodern intricacy.

### ***Remarks and Imitations***

*The Dunciad* is going to be printed in all pomp... It will be attended with *Poeme, Prolegomena, Testimonia Scriptorum, Index Authorum, and Notes Variorum*. As to the latter, I desire you to read over the text, and make a few in any way you like best, whether dry raillery, upon the style and way of commenting of trivial critics; or humorous, upon the authors in the poem; or historical, of persons, places, times; or explanatory; or collecting the parallel passages of the ancients.  
(Alexander Pope, Letter sent to Swift on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1728)

Pope's famous letter of June 28, 1728, sent a month after *The Dunciad*'s initial publication, invited Swift to a collaborative writing of the apparatus and delineated the five classes of footnotes Pope intended to append to his poem. Indeed, as Harold Weber points out, Pope's early intentions in using the notes were to serve not only satirical, but also historical and explanatory functions (15). They were meant to ridicule both authors and critics who fell short of talent and wit, to set a better example in the Ancients' texts, and to offer the topographical, social and political background of the war with the dunces. In doing so, Pope seemingly addressed one

of Swift's concerns, best formulated in his letter of July 16, 1728: "I have long observ'd that twenty miles from London no body understands hints, initial letters, or town-facts and passages; and in a few years not even those who live in London... [I]t will be a great disadvantage to the poem, that the persons and facts will not be understood, till an explanation comes out, a very full one..." While the eventual exposure of his dunces' names had always been part of Pope's promotion strategy, the heavily annotative enterprise he launched himself in, together with a bunch of his collaborators, seems to have been an afterthought, a joke whose immense potential was immediately sensed and brilliantly capitalized by the author.

Consequently, "hints" and "town-facts" will be unveiled to the public in an overflow of footnotes that increased by 54% his 1729 *Dunciad Variorum*: the 358 lines of pentameter verse were "elucidated" by approximately 7,000 lines of notes (Zerby 54), but notes provided without any concern for accuracy, assignment of authorship, or decorum, and meant to denigrate his dunces even worse than the poem itself. The decision to footnote *The Dunciad* had important generic and reception consequences, the most important being that his satire became dangerously

### REMARKS

*Together with a bunch of his collaborators.* With very few exceptions, the actual authorship of various notes, or the extent of his contributors' involvement in drafting them is, unfortunately, impossible to establish.

*Notes meant to denigrate his dunces.* I may justly affirm, that any Scandal or Calumny published against [any Man of Distinction] must be utterly shocking to

any Man of Good Sense, or Candour, or Integrity, or Humanity, though perhaps it may be pleasing enough to P's Hundred thousand Admirers: For People of their Capacities are always Levellers, and when they find it impossible for them to raise themselves to an Equality with merit, they politickly lay hold of any Opportunity to bring Merit down to their Level. *Furius*

### IMITATIONS

"I have long observ'd..." See *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford, 1956), vol. 2, 504-505.

personal; Pope's confessed intention not to disclose the identity of his dunces was finally substantiated as hypocritical, and the poem was mainly read for its scandalous content. As David Vander Meulen correctly observes, "The special interest of contemporary readers was in the satire as a *poème à clef*; their response has helped sustain the unquenchable charge that Pope was more interested in vilifying individuals than the follies they symbolize" (19). The footnotes provide, indeed, the necessary "keys" to approach his satire, allow the readers to partake in the "Secret" surrounding the identity of Pope's dunces, and contextualize his defamatory assaults, with only one major problem: they are too many to actually help make sense. The mini-narratives they provide are contradictory, incomplete, and obviously biased; they shed only the right amount of light to raise questions as to his dunces' competence, but rarely provide reliable answers to these questions. In a sense, they are suspectly undermining: if one of their purposes is to disclose in a laughable way the worthlessness of Pope's dunces, the signatures of Theobald, Bentley, Ozell or Scriblerus cannot by any means authorize his satire. The "discerning" reader is expected to sort out the confusion by using the keys not to open doors they are not fit for, but to play with them, to laugh at their pretense to unlock meaning, and to acknowledge that their real function is to fail at opening any doors at all, and in doing so, to reveal the incompetence of the dunces they stand for.

### ***R E M A R K S***

*His satire became dangerously personal.* This Venom,  
long with Pain conceal'd,/In private Satire was  
reveal'd:/And those whose kind, indulgent Care,/Whose  
Fortune did his Grandeur rear,/Were sure to have the  
largest Share. *Namby Pamby*

*To laugh at their pretense to unlock meaning.* [I]t is  
seldom, very seldom, that our Author writes without a  
Meaning, though it is possible an ordinary Genius may be  
at a Loss to find it out. *Margelina Scribelinda Macularia*

The joke has to be understood in the context of the eighteenth-century tradition of using footnotes as an indicator of scholarly expertise, but also as a form of literary art. Growing from the sixteenth- to early seventeenth-century scholarly editions *cum notis variorum* (“with the commentaries of various critics”), the footnote enjoyed in the age of polite conversation, experimental vogue, and print revolution an unprecedented popularity. Its use encouraged textual clarifications, additions, corrections, or asides meant to explicate the text’s intricacies, to color it tonally, and to create a second level of discourse meant to add depth and conversational appeal. The huge argumentative potential of the marginal, intertextual, or subtextual note is now fully exploited, allowing the readers to witness a “double story” (Grafton 23), a story involving authorial sympathies or antipathies, heated debates, and scandalous abuse; in short, they function as a lively replica of the disputes occurring in coffeehouses and in the city streets. The authority-building function of the scholarly note is thus undermined in the Age of Satire by a functional diversification of the authorial footnote, which becomes digressive, disorderly, additive, misleading, chatty, slanderous, belligerent, or utterly cryptographic. The line between the erudite footnote and the footnote as the “quintessence of academic foolishness and misdirected efforts” (Grafton 24-25) is fine enough to encourage satirical onslaughts, and the eighteenth-century annotative tradition “reserve[d] the most polemical or sarcastic barbs of the discourse for the

### ***REMARKS***

*A story involving authorial sympathies and antipathies. The Dunciad*, it seems, is to mimic a Weather-Glass, and vary every Impression as the Author’s Malice increases to One, or abates to Another. *A Hypercritic*

### ***IMITATIONS***

*The ersatz footnote.* For Pope’s use of this kind of footnote as a subtle dig at Aphra Behn’s pioneering use of dramatically integrated footnote, see Chuck Zerby, *The Devil’s Details. A History of Footnotes* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 45-58.

notes” (Genette 327). Pierre Bayle, Edward Gibbon, Voltaire and, of course, Pope used the ersatz footnote for satiric purposes, in an effort to undo their opponents by relentlessly glossing their incompetence.

There is no surprise, then, that the very first targets of Pope’s annotative abuse are, as indicated by his June 28<sup>th</sup> letter, the “trivial critics,” whose “style and way of commenting” are mercilessly disclosed. Pope’s letter specifically refers to their formal idiosyncrasies, a clarification which helps identifying his targeted dunces. The most important of them is, again, Richard Bentley, “the era’s most formidable annotator” (Zerby 54) whose work on the *Epistles of Phalaris* had a distinctive visual display: his marginal notes fed inside the text at the place of their occurrence, and they were also identified by alphabetically ordered callouts. Pope mocked his method (as well as Bentley’s habit of leaving his references in Latin or Greek, clarifying nothing for a non-specialist) both in the prefatory and back material of *The Dunciad*, and repeatedly alluded to it in the footnotes and poem itself.

Another victim of his attack is Lewis Theobald, whose admiration for Bentley’s emendatory technique is callously unveiled. The reason for Pope’s antipathy is obvious: in his “Examination and Correction” of Pope’s edition of Shakespeare, Theobald used a wide array of marginal notes meant to demonstrate in a systematic way Pope’s editorial incompetence. The commentator’s classifying criteria were profuse, branching in False Printing, Omissions

### **R E M A R K S**

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| <p><i>Pope’s editorial incompetence.</i> [W]hat Man [...] can stand up in the Defence of a Scoundrel, or Blockhead, who has, at one Time or other, Betrayed or Abused almost every one he has conversed with? Yet now he</p> | <p>kicks and winces because his assuming Arrogance has been exposed on the one hand, and his gross Ignorance on the other, by Mr. Theobald in his <i>Shakespeare Restored. A Hypercritic</i></p> |
|--|--|

Supply'd, False Pointing, Conjectural Emendations (with First, Second, and Third Conjecture as subclasses), Occasional Conjecture, Occasional Emendation, Text Conjecturally Restored, Correction from Various Reading, Various Reading Restored and Asserted, Various Reading Restored and Explained, etc., etc. Theobald's philological craze was actually bad enough to deserve Pope's injunction: in his corrections to *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, for instance, he used both marginal and subtextual notes (the latter ones providing mainly etymological explanations), further enlarged in more than sixty pages of appended material. Although it is true that, by showing "that reading the books Shakespeare would have known, and comparing his grammar and idioms with those of his contemporaries, produced answers to textual problems very different from those which had resulted from Pope's reliance on taste" (Rumbold 8), Theobald's "branching in many classes" of Pope's errors is hardly appealing to any normal reader, and definitely galling for our author. It is therefore not an accident that the very first note to the poem is credited to Theobald, and refers to a spelling issue of major consequences (whether the title of the epic ought to be spelled *Dunceiad*, as the etymology demands, or not), and that other not so trivial matters, such as the suitability of a comma or the unsuitability of a "supernumerary Syllable," are punctually addressed, echoing Theobald's observations in *Shakespeare Restored*.

Another example of formalist tic exposed at this entry point in Pope's subtextual spaces is Thomas Hearne's predilection to signal errors with Latinate flourish instead of silently

### **R E M A R K S**

*A spelling issue of major consequence.* The alteration of a letter, when it restores Sense to a corrupt Passage in a learned Language, is an Achievement that brings Honour to the Critic who advances it. *Tibbald*

*Other not so trivial matters, such as the suitability of a comma.* This Passage bears some Dispute; as it is

questioned, by many, whether there should be a Comma between these two Words [...]. I have considered the Point very seriously, and, finding so many Reasons on both Sides, must leave it to the Decision of the Grammarians. *Margelina Scribelinda Macularia*

correcting them, mimicked by Pope in the title of his first note: “*The Dunciad, sic MS*” (“thus read the manuscript”). Antiquary Hearne is further ridiculed in a series of footnotes to Book III due to his fondness for “ancient Words” of Saxon or Latin origin, or for his characteristic tone of “hysterical over-insistence” in defending his position (Rumbold 243). Introduced as a chief representative the verbal critics who “delight in matters of difficulty,” Hearne is suggestively described in *The Dunciad*’s footnotes as belonging to a particular category of scholars whose “heads were Libraries out of order” (III, note to l. 192). Useless to say that Pope had them all wrong, that the subject of his gibe has become common scholarly practice, and that current textual criticism relies heavily on some of the very methods he ridiculed in his work. This didn’t prevent Pope, however, from winning in his subtextual joke: Theobald’s spelling argument is refuted by two notes to his own note authored by his role model, Dr. Bentley himself, Hearne’s Latinate interventions signal unnecessary corrections, and the three musketeers of verbal criticism are presented as contradicting one another while politely considering all the “conjectures” of the issue at stake.

A second category of “humorous” notes “upon the authors in the poem” is quite difficult to distinguish from the “historical” or “explanatory” notes listed by Pope in his letter, as in most cases it includes profuse contextual details pertaining to his dunces. The magnitude of a dunce is reflected by the frequency with which (s)he is footnoted, and by the length of the footnote:

#### **R E M A R K S**

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| <p><i>His fondness for “ancient Words.”</i> We have before observed the Beauty of Latinizing our Language... [N]otwithstanding the Herd of Critics of low Taste, inveigh bitterly against this Practice, and call it a bastardiz’d Innovation of dialect, I advise all, who</p> | <p>would make any Figure in these Days, to lug in by the Ears all Manner of uncommon Phrases and Epithets they can lay hold of, and subject them to their own Use as lawful Prizes. <i>Margelina Scribelinda Macularia</i></p> |
|---|--|

among them, Dennis, Theobald, Cibber, or Curll get extensive and elaborated entries, whereas lesser authors, such as Edward Ward, Eliza Haywood, Susanna Centlivre, John Ogilby, or Aaron Hill, are more briefly glossed. The humor comes from the pretended innocence of the details provided, as well as from the subtle dialogue of the author with other “trustworthy” voices who attempt to eulogize his dunces. The commentary always suggests more than it actually says, and one of its defining characteristic is its rhetorical indirection:

‘Edward Ward, a very voluminous Poet in Hudibrastic verse, but best known by the *London Spy*, in prose. He has of late years kept a public house in the City, (but in a genteel way) and with his wit, humour, and good liquor (ale) afforded his guests a pleasurable entertainment, especially those of the high-church party.’ Jacob, *Lives of Poets*, vol. ii, p. 225. Great numbers of his works were yearly sold into the Plantations. – Ward, in a book called *Apollo’s Maggot*, declared this account to be a great falsity, protesting that his public house was not in the *City*, but in *Moorfields*. (I, note to l. 233)

Mrs. Susanna Centlivre, wife to Mr. Centlivre, Yeoman of the Mouth to his Majesty. She writ many Plays, and a Song (says Mr. Jacob, vol. i, p. 32) before she was seven years old. She also writ a Ballad against Mr. Pope’s Homer, before he begun it. (II, note to l. 411)

The naively-polite comments on his dunces’ literary output and social standing, borrowed from Giles Jacob’s *Poetical Register*, are systematically paired with oblique observations revealing their moral imperfections, never openly spelled out, but cunningly suggested in Pope’s characteristic manner. Pope’s attacks are always multidirectional, aiming not only at disclosing his dunces’ misdirected minutiae in clarifying trivial details, or their personal raillery against our author, but also their defenders’ lack of discernment in commending them. Jacob’s method of pairing his authors’ literary output with their public function as alehouse owner or wife of the royal chef, his insistence on their political sympathies, or on their (later unconfirmed) literary prodigy are cold-heartedly presented as factual gaffs, revealing nothing about the protagonists



but their modest cultural consequence. His commentaries are mimicked by Pope in apparently innocuous remarks, such as his passing observation about the “great number” of Ward’s works sold yearly in the plantations. Does this cunning praise of his author’s literary vendibility point to the fact that Ward’s readership lacks the Londoners’ urbanity? Is it a tongue-in-cheek assessment of Ward’s work as a reporter of the London underground life—a topic of interest for the rogues and whores stereotypically associated with the Caribbeans, as depicted in his own *A Trip to Jamaica* (1698)? Do the colonial undertones of Pope’s remark suggest sympathy for the lot of Ward’s works, doomed, like the slaves sold for labor, to no glory at all? Probably all of the above, but in the process of sorting his intentions a new story is told about the literary alliances which pair authors like Ward, Centlivre, and Jacob against authors like Pope, Swift, and Gay, and about the reasons of their divide in opposite camps. Projected on the background of his dunces’ inept statements or actions, Pope’s moral portrait emerges vividly as that of a detached observer of the contemporary literary life, magnanimously avoiding both qualifying his adversaries’ follies and defending his own work. This ventriloquizing method, whereby Pope expresses his own opinions through his dunces’ voice, is systematically employed throughout his commentaries, leaving his enemies to spit a venom that poisons themselves in the first place. Here is, for instance, John Dennis, contradicting his own position regarding the distasteful use of puns, in a fierce personal attack against Pope:

It may not be amiss to give an instance or two of these operations of *Dulness* out of the Works of her Sons, celebrated in the Poem. A great Critic formerly held these clenches in such abhorrence, that he declared ‘he that would pun would pick a pocket.’ Yet Mr. Dennis’s works afford us notable examples in this kind: ‘*Alexander Pope* hath sent abroad into the world as many Bulls as his namesake Pope *Alexander*. – Let us take the initial and final letters of his Name, viz. *A. P\_E*, and they give you the idea of an *Ape*. – Pope comes from the Latin word *Popa*,

which signifies a little Wart; or from *poppysma*, because he was continually *popping* out squibs of wit, or rather *Popysmata*, or *Popisms*.' DENNIS on *Hom.* and Daily Journal, June 11, 1728. (I, note to l. 63)

The etymological clarifications included and the citation protocols observed, Pope's example of how the "operations of Dulness" work is purged of almost any trace of personal involvement, exonerating him of libelous intentions. What could one say more and worse than the indicted author already did? Pope's defensive strategy has an almost mathematical beauty, leaving the reader to add up the facts and draw his or her own logical conclusions.

A final category of notes "collecting the parallel passages of the ancients" are tagged, after Boileau, as *Imitations*: they are intended to "parallel" Pope's own verses, which are inspired by them, but are also used as counterparts to the *Remarks* sampling the Moderns' mediocre but fastidious work. The *Imitations* represent, indeed, "a kind of ornamental boasting," containing exemplary excerpts of the Ancients, including Virgil, Horace, Homer, Ovid or Lucian (in this order of preference), as well as "parodies and allusions to the most excellent of the moderns," such as Milton, Dryden, Garth, Denham or Addison. An interesting branching of the Moderns in authors worth "parodying" and authors worth "alluding to" signals one of Pope's less obvious goals: that of calling attention to the fact that non-value is scattered everywhere in the literary field, that mediocre work can be easily applauded as a masterpiece, and that the lack of taste is a seriously incapacitating condition. Thus, Pope indirectly gestures toward his literary alliance with a canonical category of writers, whose verses, neatly displayed on page without any

### IMITATIONS

"A kind of ornamental boasting." See J. Paul Hunter, *and the Body*, ed. Margaret J. M. Ezell and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 59.

"From Typology to Type: Agents of Change in Eighteenth-Century English Texts," in *Cultural Artifact and the Production of Meaning: The Page, the Image*,

accompanying commentary, are set in a striking visual contrast with the spilling disorder of the *Remarks*, collecting at times several pages of trivial debates. This move on the page from the poem above to the notes below is quite telling in terms of readership and value: whereas the *Remarks* are meant to ridicule real persons, targeting readers who peruse them for their entertaining value, the *Imitations*, given in the original Latin or Greek, are accessible to only a discrete category of readers, the few who are able to taste more subtle and textually more elaborated asides.

Pope's relatively simple classification of his notes into five categories, or, visually more conspicuous, in *Remarks* and *Imitations*, hides further complexities and traps. A more scrupulous reader may identify them as assumptive or disavowing authorial notes, as allographic (allowing the editor's voice to be heard) or actorial notes (allowing the person who is subject of the note to express his opinion), as fictive authorial notes (contributed by Pope disguised as one of his dunces) or fictive allographic or actorial notes (allegedly contributed by editor or by the narrator-characters, but actually authored by Pope), or any of the combinations of the above (Genette 7-9). An even more discerning reader may distinguish between inside notes—notes of the main protagonists in the subtextual debate, such as the ones signed by Bentley or Scriblerus—and informative notes—notes authored by “various hands” and presented as pieces of evidence without authorial identification. The inside notes have an organic connection to the main text: they represent an extension in prose of the debate started in the poem, as the characters migrate from couplets to footnotes in order to gain a voice. The informative notes fuel the reader with background detail coming from outside the textual space, providing the information necessary to explain and justify the joke.

One can distinguish, thus, at least three levels of discourse: the poetic text, the commentary to the text from inside the text made by heroes themselves, and the commentary to the text from outside the text made by the collective author, who glosses on his dunces. To complicate things even more, some of the notes have an ambiguous attribution, being signed “half Theobald, half Scriblerus” (a possible hint to the leveling foolishness of their authors? a warning against the consequences of their monstrous conflation?), taking us beyond the programmatic heteroglossia of the sub-textual commentary to a zone of ultimate confusion, in which the voices overlap and identities are lost in this simultaneous delivery. Either framing the text or expanding it bathetically downwards, in the murky underground of the duncical debate, Pope’s annotations speak about his work’s impure fictionality (Genette 343), about its nourishing from an immediate reality whose spatial distribution in camps of various loyalties is mapped out there, on the very page of the text.

Functionally, most of the notes have a clear documentary value, identifying sources, signaling quotations, introducing authority voices, and corroborating information in a manner which mimics Bentleyan pedantry while circulating Curllian gossips, ephemera, and scandalous facts. Highly argumentative, they create a lively sub-textual space of debate in which issues such as literary antiquarianism, verbal criticism, scientific methods, school divines, taste and scholasticism, classic and popular culture, linguistic affectation, political patronage, or cultural commodification are programatically addressed. Most importantly, while not actually useful in terms of documenting events, historical contexts or ideological wars, they create a performative space on which episodes are enacted and characters brought to life, where Bentley, Dennis, Curll, or otherwise a comatose Tibbald are given a voice just to expose themselves in all their

strutting silliness. The “revised history” Pope thus designs, the “gallery of retouched portraits” revealed by his footnotes is not meant to create an interplay of fact and fiction which keeps the readers in a state of “mixed awareness,” as Aubrey Williams argued. Pope’s notes create layers of intertextual reading, self-contradictory statements, and loud dialogical exchanges which tell a story abounding in almost novelistic details that is meant to increase the reader’s awareness as to the human dimension of his dunces. The poetic injustice is, indeed, no longer an issue, but this is not because Pope’s goal is to “essentialize for the reader the real dunce” by highlighting the follies of real persons (Williams 71). On the contrary, Pope details these follies with a compulsive attention to particulars, turning his dunces into characters who have to be exposed for who they really are in order to prevent a cultural catastrophe. Not a “mixed awareness” are his readers supposed to experience, or confusion in sorting out real from fictional details, but the clear understanding of the fact that the story of cultural and moral collapse they are told is an immediate possibility. Pope’s is not a “revised” but an alternative literary history, a history the readers are threatened to experience, if not alert and immediately reactive, within their lifetime.

### *IMITATIONS*

*The “revised history” Pope thus designs and foll. Meaning* (Archon Books, 1968), 62-75.  
Aubrey L. Williams, *Pope’s Dunciad. A Study of Its*

*The Text: The Dunciad as Hypertext*

How, in the landscape of the city of text, can the reader know that what she builds will move the course of the river? How might what she builds present [...] an invitation to reflection and culture creating? (Michael Joyce, "Notes toward an Unwritten Nonlinear Electronic Text")

Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come. (Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*)

For a reader already used to the "double living" created by the virtual space of the hypertext, an extensively referenced (and self-referential) work like Pope's *Dunciad* looks refreshingly familiar. A sense of recognition of the text's bizarre postmodernity, a feeling of *j'ai été il y avant* emerges while skimming through its pages, back and forth, from the extended prefatory materials to its back matter, from poem to its subtextual notes, from Index to the referenced entries within the text, from one protagonist, event, or an apparently innocuous remark to their rhizomatic contextualization within the poem or the extended apparatus. Pope's text requires a radically different, more jocular, indeed, but nevertheless more complex way of reading, a reading that is more rewarding when abandoning its sequential order and approaching it as connective and branching, as oriented by a multitude of relational maps established between particular units of information. Discernible or not, spelled out or encrypted in allusions, cultural references, or in the blank space of the unnamed dunce, Pope's textual (and for that matter, his political and cultural) implications are disclosed in roundabout ways which suggest a multilayered reading, a networked text which may be accessed from various points of entry, with various keys and readerly agendas. The fundamental de-centering of the poem by the apparatus,

the text's generic hybridization, the uncertain authorship of a significant part of the footnotes or appended materials, the misleading paths of inquiry suggested by some of the explanatory notes, the conversation with the Ancients and the Moderns brought on the same temporal page by juxtaposed *Remarks* and *Imitations* are all forms of "non-sequential writing," displayed as "a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways" and "not constrained [...] by linear or hierarchical arrangements of discourse." The mentioned definitions, belonging to Theodor Holm Nelson and Stuart Moulthrop, describe the distinctive characteristics of the hypertext, the most dynamic and democratic mode of postmodern writing. The odd familiarity of *The Dunciad* comes, indeed, from its programmatic rejection of traditional reading patterns, from its constant interruption of the reading flow by digressions, gossip, and cultural allusions, from its multivocality, deliberate fragmentation, and displacement of the textual center by an overgrowing apparatus, in short, from its structural messiness supporting an authority-subverting agenda.

What I am trying to suggest is not that Pope is a visionary precursor of hypertext, but that his most ambitious poem becomes infinitely more meaningful when read, as the author himself conceived it, as a system of connecting links taking the readers to non-identical destinations. *The Dunciad* illustrates to a large extent what Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari coined as rhizome, an

### *IMITATIONS*

*Forms of "non-sequential writing.* Theodor H. Nelson is the coiner of the work "hypertext"; the well-known definition of the term included here first appeared in *Literary Machines* (Swarthmore: Self-published, 1981), 0/2.

"Not constrained... by linear or hierarchical arrangements of discourse." Stuart Moulthrop, "You

Say You Want a Revolution? Hypertext and the Laws of Media," *Postmodern Culture* 1.3 (May 1991).

*The Dunciad illustrates to a large extent what Deleuze and Guattari coined as rhizome.* See Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. Brian Masumi (Minnesota: The University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

organizing structure guided by principles of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography and decalcomania. As “a matrix of independent but cross-referential discourses which the reader is invited to enter more or less at random,” the rhizome is a structurally a-centered, nonhierarchical, de-territorializing system which is but another instance of hypertextual design. Working as a connective structure between “semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles” (Deleuze and Guattari 7), the rhizome is governed by a principle of serendipity which allows the readers to discover their own searching paths and signifying landscapes, to attach a political figure to a historic or local event, and a specific location to a socially or culturally relevant episode. Such cognitive (or hypertextual) mapping is always designed from the perspective of the user, suggesting alternative interpretive routes which, in the case of *The Dunciad*, describe an underground culture of second-hand values and emerging populism, a culture in which the marginal or subterranean forces of modernity are propelled to the fore, threatening the stability of the center. Thus conceived, the text embraces a plurality of other texts, culturally sanctioned or not; it becomes multivocal, heteroglossic, or artfully allusive, opening up a wide array of interpretive possibilities. Its particular use of irrelevant details in order to suggest, through their proliferating paths, the effect of the incidental on early eighteenth-century culture is deeply

### *IMITATIONS*

“A matrix of independent but cross-referential discourses.” I use here Stuart Mouthrop’s definition of the rhizome, for its added explicitness; for details, see “Rhizome and Resistance: Hypertext and the Dreams of a New Culture,” in *Hyper/Text/Theory*, ed. George P. Landow (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 299-322.

An underground culture of... emerging populism. I use here Theodor H. Nelson’s term, which merges “populism” with “elitism” in order to describe a writing space in which all participants have equal access to the world of data. See “How Hypertext (Un)does the Canon,” paper delivered at the Modern Language Association Convention, Chicago, December 28, 1990.



subversive, pointing to a new fabric of power arrangements, to a displacement of canonical values by an expanding, commodity-oriented culture. Pope's footnotes or paratextual additions must therefore be seen as describing fields of relations which, limitrophe or inconsequential as they may appear, betray an anxiety about the increased production of information characteristic of the print revolution era. Hypertextual in nature (hypertext is often referred to as the "generalized footnote"), such textual detours are also symptomatic for an emerging modernity, chaotic in its incipient stages, promoting a non-canonical literacy, destabilizing the status of the author, but also interactive and dynamic in nature, pushing forward the merging of various media (textual, visual, oral), genre hybridization, and the creation of more active public communities.

A hypertextual reading of Pope's *Dunciad* may be a profitable project in terms of increasing the poem's contextual accessibility, as it is surely suggested by the design of the work itself. It would provide immediate access to the paratextual messages surrounding the various editions of the poem (explaining, thus, their apparent contradictions), would link its heroes or episodes with the illustrations to its successive versions or with other visual representations,

### *IMITATIONS*

*Hypertext is often referred to as the "generalized footnote."* The definition belongs to Jakob Nielsen, and was first used in his volume, *Hypertext & Hypermedia* (Boston: Academic Press, 1990), 2.

*It would provide immediate access to the various paratextual messages surrounding the poem.* The fascinating history of the poem's paratextual avatars could shed light on issues of larger cultural relevance,

such as the nature of the intellectual property at the beginning of the century, the legal status of women booksellers on the print market, the changed intentions of the visual satire reflected by the anthumous and posthumous illustrations to the poem, the reconsideration of the notion of authorship, or the new reading strategies developed as a response to the challenges posed by collaborative writing.

would highlight through nodal, instead of sequential, connections less visible patterns of thematic or ideological associations. Such a reading would also create an easily searchable map of Pope's war with his dunces by providing access to his heroes' attacks preceding and following the publication of *The Dunciad*, or to Pope's (and his allies') own texts supporting his project of cultural renovation. Alternately, it could trace down the ideological reverberations of his project in the decades immediately following the poem's release and, later on, in the cultural consciousness of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But most importantly, it would make better sense of the text itself, providing a more exhaustive access to contextual details meant to piece together the historic, social, political, ideological, and aesthetic milieu of Pope's time.

## REMARKS

*[It] would highlight... less visible patterns of thematic and ideological associations.* One could easily imagine a reading of the poem that follows, for instance, the relations among dunces, owls, paper cone hats, fools' caps and their political, religious or cartographic connotations, as supported by the poem and by the illustrations to its 1729 edition. Or, alternately, a cognitive mapping of the subliminal messages suggested by rhymes such as "king/thing," "wits/bits," "sheets/streets" or "blown/throne" when set in an informational web including specific historical data and eventual links.

*Such a reading would also create an easily navigable map of Pope's war with his dunces.* A commendable effort of summarizing the attacks on Pope published between 1711 and 1744, mostly in pamphlet form, broadsides, books, or parts of books belongs to J. V. Guerinot (*Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope, 1711-1744*. New York: New York University Press, 1969). Unfortunately, his volume excludes almost all newspaper attacks which were not published in volume format, does not contain the defenses or pamphlets dedicated to Pope,

and none of Pope's responses to his dunces in *The Dunciad* or elsewhere, which obscures, at times, the motivations of this literary war.

*It could trace down the ideological reverberations of his project.* Such a path linking would include, for instance, the nineteenth century attacks against Pope, Byron's imitation of *The Dunciad* in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809), and any other more or less faithful reworkings of the duncical taking over theme, such as J. K. Toole's novel, *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980).

*Providing a more exhaustive access to contextual details.* The spatial limitations imposed by the traditional book format can be seen both in Sutherland's editions of the poem, in which the editor's commentaries are inserted between angle brackets inside Pope's footnotes, or in the otherwise exemplary volumes edited by Valerie Rumbold, in which the editor's notes are placed underneath the original footnotes to the poem. A hypertextual edition of *The Dunciad* would obviously allow a practically unlimited number of links glossing a given informational node.

This last observation calls for particularizing examples, as it pertains to the special nature of Pope's text, a text which requires a layered, highly proficient, and almost always intertextual reading. *The Dunciad* abounds in literary and eventual allusions—footnoted or not, accurately described or not—, it contains echoes or references to other texts by Pope or to works supporting or attacking Pope. Also, it demands expertise in classical languages as well as in recognizing epic conventions and episodes, and weaves proliferating webs of more or less obscure historical references which raise serious difficulties in navigating its sites. Indeed, Pope's *Dunciad* is considerably more significant when read as a cultural text; as such, it demands an expert knowledge of the socio-economic, political, and religious background of the time, as well as a constant effort of re-reading, contextualization, source recognition, and intentional clarification. As the author himself put it, the poem is "better borne at the second reading," when the various layers of information and annotation start to organize themselves in recognizable paths, linkages and webbing. If we look, for instance, at the opening lines to the first Book, we can easily notice the profusion of the possible communication circuits among various lexias and strings:

The Mighty Mother, and her Son, who brings  
 The Smithfield Muses to the ear of Kings,  
 I sing. Say you, her instruments the Great!  
 Call'd to this work by Dulness, Jove, and Fate;  
 You by whose care, in vain decry'd and curst,  
 Still Dunce the second reigns like Dunce the first;  
 Say, how the Goddess bade Britannia sleep,  
 And pour'd her Spirit o'er the land and deep.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, 1-8)

### *IMITATIONS*

*The poem is "better borne at the second reading."* See Sherburn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), vol. 3, 36. *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. by George

The opening eight lines of *The Dunciad in Four Books*, rich in implications and heavily annotated by several hands, illustrate in an exemplary way the rhizomatic nature of the text. A first footnote by Warburton clarifies that Dulness (“The Mighty Mother”) is the main heroine of the poem, and not “her son,” the Poet Laureate Colley Cibber. The footnote answers the frequent criticism of *The Dunciad* about the passivity of its hero, but also mirrors Scriblerus’ note which explains that the “son” is not one and the same with the author of the poem, as presented by James Ralph in his heroic poem *Sawney* (1728). In doing so, Scriblerus uses as supporting argument the first lines to the *Aeneid*, where Virgil speaks not of himself but of his hero (“Arms and the man I sing...”). At this point, though, Scriblerus feels compelled to change some Virgilian terms, in order to make better sense of the passage; the gesture is an oblique allusion to Richard Bentley and his conjectural emendation method. Scriblerus laughs at Ralph, but he is also laughed at by the author of this second footnote (probably Arbuthnot) for his misplaced acribia. In terms of pattern organization, this is a relatively simple, unidirectional string to lexia linking: each string leads to a lexia which is the ending point of the previous link (i.e. the preeminence of Dulness over her son), but also the starting point for a new link (i.e. the real identity of the son, the Virgilian epic conventions, the critique of verbal criticism, etc.). Such linking skillfully connects, *without naming them*, a number of participants in the literary arena (Dennis, Bentley, Ralph, Arbuthnot), conflates cultural with political issues (Cibber vs. George II, Empire of Dulness vs. Britannia), and indicates the two camps of classical and modern

### ***R E M A R K S***

*The frequent criticism of The Dunciad.* The Hero of the      unless it be half a line in the Third Book. *Furius*  
 Piece does nothing at all, and never speaks but once,

traditions (Virgil vs. Bentley, the Scriblerians vs. Scriblerus). Such ideological connections, however, require a level of expertise not normally found in a common reader, who may find more striking quite the opposite: the lack of purpose of this subtextual discussion, the irrelevance of the annotators' digressions, their futile investment in clarifying details of seemingly little consequence for understanding the poem. This strategy seems to deliberately hide the real implications of the verse, which lies there, in its very first words: "The Mighty Mother." The significances emerging from this string point to broader eighteenth-century concerns with the uncontrollable nature of femininity, to preconceptions about the monstrous nature of motherhood, to the perception of the female body as a liminal space between the created and the uncreated, to the anxiety about physical and literary (re)production, to the authority-destabilizing effects of the women writers' emergence on the print market—all issues substantially and repeatedly addressed at various points in the poem.

The second line is even more interesting: "the Smithfield Muses" metonymically evoke Bartholomew Fair, a site of theatrical entertainments regularly attended by the main hero of the poem, as clarified by the footnote. "The Kings" alluded to further on are George I and II; for additional clarifications, the note sends us to Book III, which elaborates on Cibber's journey

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*All issues addressed at various points in the poem.* See, to this effect, Marilyn Francus's excellent article, "The Monstrous Mother: Reproductive Anxiety in Swift and Pope," *ELH*, vol. 61, no. 4 (Winter, 1994), 829-51.

The possible significations of the goddess within the poem are nevertheless proliferating. For Dulness as an inversion of God the Father, see Charles D. Peavy, "Pope, Cibber, and the Crown of Dulness," *The South Central Bulletin*, vol. 26, no. 4 (Winter 1966), 17-27. For Dulness as a synthesis of various Oriental and Greek mythical

figures, see Thomas C. Faulkner and Rhonda L. Blair, "The Classical and Mythographic Sources of Pope's Dulness," *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 3 (Summer, 1980). For Dulness as an alter ego of Queen Caroline, George II's consort, see Francis Hayman's illustrations to the 1751 edition of *The Dunciad*, in which Dulness is surrounded by prototypical courtier figures and has a striking resemblance with the portraits of the queen by Jacopo Amigoni or Charles Jervas.

underground and his vision about the future victory of Dulness on British grounds. The unifying link between Smithfield Muses, King(s), and Colley Cibber is provided by Elkanah Settle, Cibber's guide underground, and the last City Poet: in this latter capacity, he had organized pageants for City occasions, such as fairground shows, mayoral pageants, *and* coronation ceremonies. This web of associations is supported further on by Pope's invocation ("Say you, her instruments the Great!"), which mimics Virgil's address to the muse in *Aeneid*, while simultaneously alluding to the corruption of the aristocracy under Walpole and the Hanoverians. The theme is developed in the following lines ("You by whose care, in vain decry'd and curst,/Still Dunc the second reigns like dunc the first"), which generate, again, a new relational field: the lines echo John Dryden's lines from "To My Dear Friend Mr. Congreve" ("For *Tom* the Second reigns like *Tom* the First"), which refer to the succession of one undistinguished Poet Laureate to another, but also (given the verb, the ordinal numbers, and the poem's publication date) allude to George II's succession to the throne after his father's death, in 1727. The triad "Dullness, Jove, and Fate" in the fourth line establishes a correlation among the "Mighty Mother," Roman mythology, and Christian tradition, correlation further reinforced by the biblical references to the pouring out of God's Spirit, in the eighth line. This web of associations brings together issues pertaining to divine will, epic conventions, royal succession, political corruption, poetic tradition, and cultural decay developed through one-to-many (Dulness to Fate and Holy Spirit) and many-to-one linking (Son, Fate, Jove, Britannia, Goddess to Dulness, etc.). The often implicit, rather than explicit, interconnectedness of the strings and the sinuous interweaving of various informational units, ask for extensive contextualization, increasing the amount of necessary information and creating alternative, reader-oriented interpretive routes.

The above-mentioned map of search paths suggests, of course, only the most obvious way of organizing one's reading of the opening lines of the poem. One of the defining characteristics of hypertext remains, however, its rhizomatic proliferation, its non-hierarchical growth of new linkages which brings the inconsequential, the marginal, the less obvious under brief but revelatory light. If one chooses, for instance, to read the reference to "the ear of Kings" in its literal instead of metonymical sense, the text opens up in surprising new ways. A very interesting reading, advanced by J. Paul Hunter, connects this opening line with the mock heraldic headpiece illustrating the first book of the 1729 *Dunciad*, an image designed by William Kent and approved, if not suggested, by Pope himself. The headpiece contains an owl, a bunch of thistles and two asses, framed by a Latin motto which reads in translation, "no one harms me with impunity." The "ear" alluded to in the poem is visually represented on the same page in the two pairs of long, asinine ears, which seem to act as quotation marks to the motto between them. Their juxtaposition to the text below forces an identification of the two asses in the headpiece with the two Hanoverian kings, as suggested by the controversial sixth line of the first book: "Still Duncce the second reigns like Duncce the first." This may also identify the ass on the cover page of the same 1729 edition with King George II; the correlation is reinforced in the 1735 edition of the poem, where an added footnote mentions the king as a reader of the poem, and, through an elaborated intertextuality, by the lines in *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* published just a

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*A very interesting reading.* See J. Paul Hunter, "From Typology to Type," 61-5.  
*An image approved... by Pope himself.* See Elias F. Mengel, "The *Dunciad* Illustrations," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Winter, 1973-1974):161-78.

year before, which refer to the long ears of the mythological king Midas.

By developing this web of associations even more, the same reference may be read in connection with one of the most ludicrous episodes of *The Dunciad*, the vociferating contest, where, moved by Blackmore's sonorous "strain," his brethren into duncehood "prick all their ears up, and forget to graze" (II, l. 262). The description broadens the significance of the ass illustration to the 1729 edition of the poem, identifying the dunces with asses and the image on the cover with the portrait of a prototypical dunce. The humorous potential of the ass's "length of ears" is also capitalized at the opening of Book III, where Pope alludes to Elkanah Settle's ears being cropped in the pillory. The event, unconfirmed historically, is used to actually draw attention to a spelling mistake, the line being supposed to refer, instead, to Settle's respectable "length of years" (III, note to l. 36). In such a reading, royal and print authorities seem to be equally undermined by implications of ridiculous arrogance, corruptibility, and foolishness emerging from their interlocking paths of associations.

If the opening lines of the poem that introduce the two main characters and the general theme of the epic may be less surprising as examples of proliferative interpretive strings, more obscure references may explain even better the *modus operandi* of Pope's non-sequential associations. Take, for instance, the brief reference to one of his least prominent dunces, Giles Jacob, legal author of some prestige and a meteoric presence on the literary scene at the beginning of the century:

Jacob, the Scourge of Grammar, mark with awe,  
Nor less revere him, blunderbuss of Law.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, 149-150)



The two lines are abundantly referenced in three successive footnotes. The first one provides a generous excerpt from Jacob's *Lives of Poets*, in which the author elaborates on his own accomplishments; the footnote ends with an apparently unrelated observation, referring to Jacob's "very grossly, and unprovok'd" abuse of Pope's friend, John Gay. A second note mentions Jacob's perplexity at Pope's attack, and his belief in Pope's regard for his judgment, as a subscriber to one of his books. The note is answered immediately by Pope with the explanation that "the appellation of *Blunderbuss* to Mr. Jacob, like that of Thunderbolt to Scipio, was meant to his honour." And Pope's remark can definitely be taken that way: Jacob is remembered today for his *New Law Dictionary* (also known as "Jacob's Law Dictionary"), which remains, in spite of his then very popular "Rape of the Smock" (1717), his most enduring work. As supporting evidence of his innocent intentions, Pope mentions his subscription to John Dennis's *Works*, mistakenly taken by the author as a sign of Pope's repentance. The annotator uses Dennis's alleged misunderstanding of his intentions (Pope subscribed to Dennis' book but did *not* repent) to suggest a similar misunderstanding on Jacob's part (Pope subscribed to Jacob's book, too, but he did *not* have any regard for his judgment, as proved by Jacob's misinterpretation of his "commendation").

Finally, the last note is an untranslated line from Virgil's *Aeneid* ("The two Scipios, thunderbolts in war, the destruction of Libya!"), which seems to suggest a deeper connection

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*His very then very popular "Rape of the Smock."* republished and anthologized frequently in the epoch, Jacob's rewriting in scatological register of Pope's together with other writings by Pope. masterpiece, "The Rape of the Lock"; the poem was

between Dennis and Jacob than their both misunderstanding of Pope's intentions. Indeed, by filling in the missing information, the motives of Jacob's inclusion in *The Dunciad* start clarifying themselves. The work that triggered Jacob's conflict with Pope was *The Poetical Register: or, the lives and characters of English Dramatick Poets* (1719-1720), the very work quoted in the first note. Although having written extremely favorably about Pope, who was praised for his "great Ease" and the "Strength of his Compositions," Jacob criticized *Three Hours after Marriage* (1717), a comedy authored by "three mighty Bards" (John Gay, Pope, and Arbuthnot), for containing "some extraordinary scenes [...] which [...] trespass on Female Modesty" (I, 115). Even worse, in the same work he praised *The Confederates* (1717), a production of the phantom poet Joseph Gay (aka John Breval), an author hired by Curll to attack Pope and his allies. Consequently, Pope included Giles Jacob in the 1729 edition of *The Dunciad* as a punishment for his attacks against his friend, John Gay, and against Scriblerians at large. Jacob immediately allied himself with John Dennis, who included Jacob's letter to Pope in his notorious *Remarks Upon the Dunciad* (1729). Here, he revealed "the true secret History" of the "selfish Mr. Pope," who allegedly had written the "high Praises and Commendations" to his address contained in *The Poetical Register* himself. Pope's appellation of Jacob as "the Scourge of Grammar" clarifies itself at this point: it cannot refer to Jacob's *A Law of Grammar*, as the volume was published only in 1744, but it may indicate Pope's substantial copyediting of his own presentation (by Jacob) in *The Poetical Register*, which sets straight Jacob's accusations that Pope authored his own praise. Considered from this broader perspective, the reference to "blunderbuss," "thunderbolt," and "the two Scipios" gestures toward the alliance between

Dennis (famous for his invention of a new kind of thunder as a stage effect) and Jacob, both of them “thunderbolts in [the] war” against Pope and his allies. The two lines tell, in short, the story of the literary war between Pope and his dunces, a story copiously footnoted with excerpts from Jacob’s *Lives*, and told ingenuously by dunces themselves.

The case in question illustrates the importance of the “factual paratext” (Genette 8) in unveiling authorial intentions, as well as the role of the intertextual reading in clarifying the multiple layers of allusions embedded in each line. More importantly, intertextuality shifts attention from the triad author/work/tradition to text/discourse/culture, and in so doing, Pope starts a conversation which democratically opens up to all the participants in the public sphere, both popular and elite. The risks involved in such an approach are obvious: the inclusion in the fabric of his poem of other texts, opinions, and voices contributes to a dilution of the authorial presence which, added to Pope’s initial denial of authorship, raised serious intellectual property problems at the time of its publication. Moreover, as Kathleen Burnett has warned with regard to hypertext, “the introduction of non-canonical texts and authors into the canon disrupts the foundations of the canon altogether,” and Pope’s heterotopias, his imaginative projections of real spaces in distorted futures of duncical conquest are nothing else but symptoms of this process of

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*Dennis (famous for his invention of a new kind of thunder).* Dennis’s last play, *Appius and Virginia* (1709), although a failure when performed on Drury Lane, is remembered for his use of a new kind of thunder, performed by troughs of wood with stops in them. The method was used later on during a performance of *Macbeth* witnessed by Dennis, who denounced it tempestuously: “That is my thunder, by God; the villains will play my thunder, but not my play!” (Robert Shiells, *The Lives of the Poets in Great Britain and Ireland, to the time of Dean Swift, Compiled from ample materials scattered in a variety of books, ... by Mr. Cibber*, vol. 4, London, 1753).

*Intertextuality shifts attention from the triad author/work/tradition to text/discourse/culture.* See Thais T. Morgan, “Is There an Intertext in This Text?: Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intertextuality,” *American Journal of Semiotics* 3(1985): 1-40.

*As Kathleen Burnett warned with regard to hypertext.* See “Toward a Theory of Hypertextual Design,” *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 3, no. 2 (January 1993).

cultural erosion caused by the replacement of value with non-value and of classical excellence with cultural underground. The rhizomatic nature of *The Dunciad*, its subtextual and peripheral extensions mirror, at formal level, the insidious spread of massification, bureaucracy and cultural commodification Pope and the Scriblerians insistently cautioned against.

The consequences of conceiving his text as rhizomorphic, a-centered, indeterminately connective, and heteroglossic are not to be ignored. Pope's (apparent) lack of authorial mastery, his strategy of presenting facts from various angles and through various voices without evaluating them, accounts for more empowered readers—readers who build meanings of their own, testing out their proficiency in deciphering an overcoded text. In turn, this process of creation of a more active public brings about important stylistic shifts at textual level meant to accommodate the reader's new needs and desires: the text becomes messier, its connective links are replaced by the reader's capricious choices, essential and superfluous facts are erratically juxtaposed, a plurality of codes are offered for interpretation, and “missing links” of necessary information are expected to be worked out. As in the case of hypertext, too many links may produce the sense of an atomized text, a text of sliding cognitive maps: as Deleuze and Guattari have put it, it becomes “open and connectable in all of [its] dimensions,” as well as “detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” (12). Oriented by subjective choices, conventional interpretation inevitably collapses, pressing for a radical reconsideration of the notions of authorship, readerly compliance, and textual inviolability.

*Coda: A Brief Excursus on Pope's Rhyme*

Quoth *Cibber* to *Pope*, tho' in Verse you foreclose,  
I'll have the last Word, for by G\_d I'll write Prose.  
Poor *Colley*, thy Reas'ning is none of the strongest,  
For know, the last Word is the Word that lasts longest.  
(Alexander Pope, "Epigram. On *Cibber's* Declaration  
that he will have the Last Word with Mr. Pope," 1742)

Pope's conflict with *Cibber* has a long and intricate history, involving issues of cultural representativeness and social prestige, political patronage and moral authority, and, as the above-mentioned verses suggest, something else that has to do with the vogue of a new genre which emerged vigorously on the literary market, rapidly building a public of its own. In 1740, the comedian published his infamous *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*, which pioneered a British tradition of theatrical autobiography and represented a successful attempt at turning the actor into a celebrity figure. Pope's lines betray an acute awareness of the threat posed by the accessibility of the genre to a non-sophisticated public—less for the public itself, whose voracious taste for news, gossip, and ephemera was satisfied in a timely manner by new literary formulas, and more for an established hierarchy of values placing the classics at the top, and the epic poetry above prose. The issue is of monumental importance at a time when the pamphlet, the periodical essay, and the novel brought to an end the glorious Age of Satire, but Pope got there by evoking a very personal event, *Cibber's* attack in his *Letter from Mr. Cibber, to Mr. Pope* (1742), which gained him the role of King of Dunces in *The Greater Dunciad*. *Cibber's* famous resolution, "I will now, Sir, have the last Word with you...", is used in Pope's epigram not to evoke a text rich in personal abuse, but to defend a literary genre threatened by the new champion of modernity, the much acclaimed Prose. Again, this is less about *Cibber* and Pope, and more about two conflicting traditions, one glorious and worth defending, and one not.

Cibber's condescending words are, indeed, ironical, as "the last word," "the word that lasts longest" and whose echoes reverberate both in the aural memory of the listeners and in the cultural memory of the past two millennia, is the rhymed word.

Pope's defense of rhyme is an important chapter in his war with the dunces: it is part of his broader concern with showing proper reverence to the classical tradition and promoting a correct hierarchy of values. Indeed, as Hugh Kenner remarks, one could base a whole theory of satire on the way Pope uses his rhyming words to convey meaning, and the above-mentioned verses are a case in point. Whereas read horizontally the first two lines are an indictment of Pope's use of versification, when read vertically, the rhyming words say exactly the opposite: "foreclose/Prose" because the "strongest [rhyme]/[lasts] longest." Pope's defense of classical tradition is an important point of his argument, but another case Pope makes here refers to the value of good reasoning, as nothing lacking logic (like Cibber's involuntary gaff) can last. As Pope argued earlier in *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), "The Sound must seem an Echo to the Sense," it has to correlate in pace and modulation with meaning, it has to vary in tone to suggest "alternate Passions" and highlight emotions. The poet has to adeptly use the rousing "Powers of Musick," to play with vowels, consonants, meter, and rhyme and suggest atmospheric, eventual, or emotional changes through an almost alchemic combination of aural effects at the couplet

### *IMITATIONS*

As Hugh Kenner remarks. For further details, see Kenner's insightful article, "Pope's Reasonable Rhymes," published in *ELH*, vol. 41, no. 1 (Spring, 1974), 74-88. "The Sound must seem and Echo to the Sense." See, to this effect, W. K. Wimsatt's classic study on Pope's versification, "Rhetoric and Poems," op. cit., 169-85.

level. The advice of the twenty-three-year-old Pope is the more valuable as he doesn't just prescribe rules, he also gives telling examples:

Soft is the Strain when Zephyr gently blows,  
And the smooth Stream in smoother Numbers flows;  
But when loud Surges lash the sounding Shore,  
The hoarse, rough Verse shou'd like the Torrent roar.  
When Ajax strives, some Rocks' vast Weight to throw,  
The Line too labours, and the Words move slow...  
(*An Essay on Criticism*, 366-371)

The symmetrical cadence of the first two lines, the insistent echo of the vowel "o" throughout the couplet, and the recurring use of the word "smooth" to enhance the sound effect and to build parallel structures of meaning ("Streams" are like poetic "Numbers") suggest a formal regularity which accords perfectly with the peacefulness of the landscape. Alternately, the consonant thickness of the following lines (abounding in plosives, trills, and fricatives "r," "t," and "h"), the insistent use of monosyllabic words, and the syncopated syntax suggest a more rapid pace, an acceleration of rhythm which reflects the action-filled development of the lines. Pope's *Essay on Criticism* contains, indeed, a theory of poetic diction in a nutshell, and a special chapter is reserved here to the couplet, whose correct "Numbers," "smooth"-ness or "rough"-ness are not enough to make a "Poet" from a "Man of Rhyme." Lack of variability and fulfillment of expectations (the "sure Returns of still expected Rhymes"), aural monotony and irregular metrics are never (but for teaching purposes) an indicator of poetic deftness, as Pope explains it, again, in a magisterial way:

Where-e'er you find the cooling Western Breeze,  
In the next Line, it whispers thro' the Trees;  
If Chrystal Streams with pleasing Murmurs creep,  
The Reader's threaten'd (not in vain) with Sleep.  
Then, at the last, and only Couplet fraught

With some unmeaning Thing they call a Thought,  
 A needless Alexandrine ends the Song,  
 That like a wounded Snake, drags its slow length along.  
 (*An Essay on Criticism*, 350-357)

The fragment is an inventory of overused rhymes (“Breeze/Trees,” “creep/Sleep,” “song/along”) supporting ordinary thoughts (“cooling Breeze,” “Crystal Streams,” “pleasing Murmurs”)—the sort of rhymes accountable for the reader’s tedium and the decline of the verse form in the new, prose-saturated literary environment of the beginning of the century. The final alexandrine offered as an instance of unnecessary deviation from the overall ordinariness of the whole is, nevertheless, in Pope’s rendering, a brilliant example of how form *should* support meaning: the slow sequence of the vowel sounds /æ/, /ai/, /o/ and the high frequency of the liquid consonant /l/ suggest the sluggish movements of the serpent, whereas the fricative /s/ makes audible the presence of the snake in the (purposely capitalized) “Song.” Alexander ends the song fully aware of the futility of his enterprise and the poetic deafness of his dunces, who are trapped in the jingling sound of their own “dull Rhimes.”

Not by coincidence, all the instances in which “Rhyme” is mentioned in *The Dunciad* define the term negatively, by explaining what rhyme should *not* be: it should not be used as a formal aid for unnatural associations (“Maggots half-form’d in rhyme exactly meet,/And learn to crawl upon poetic feet”), it should not be used as a penalizing tool (“He may indeed (if sober all this time)/ Plague with dispute, or persecute with rhyme”), it should not make concessions to the uncultured taste (“Nor sail with Ward to ape-and-monkey climes,/Where vile Mundungus trucks for viler rhymes”), and it should not become an instrument of social advancement (“There march’d the bard and blockhead, side by side,/Who rhymed for hire, and patronised for pride”).



Most importantly, it should not turn into punning or into an easy exercise in matching like endings:

Each songster, riddler, every nameless name,  
 All crowd, who foremost shall be damn'd to fame.  
 Some strain in rhyme; the Muses, on their racks,  
 Scream like the winding of ten thousand jacks;  
 Some, free from rhyme or reason, rule or check,  
 Break Priscian's head and Pegasus's neck;  
 Down, down the 'larum, with impetuous whirl,  
 The Pindars, and the Miltons of a Curll.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, 157-164)

There is reason in rhyme and it goes beyond the formal juggling with similar sounding words; it goes beyond the sense-supporting architectural adeptness of the line; it goes, as the quoted lines suggest, beyond the narrow textual space of the couplet to address larger cultural, aesthetic, and, why not, pecuniary issues. "It is when Pope tries to map human relations onto textual relations [...] that rhyme starts to reveal the flexibility of his thinking over what causes some people and ideas to be drawn together, and what causes them to draw apart." The couplet's formal binarism supports ideological tensions or coalitions branching out from particular nodes of intensities (historical characters, local events, classic allusions), and links particular narratives, ancient or modern, into intricate patterns of meaning. Even more importantly, as I attempt to

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*Pecuniary issues.* There are indeed but two Things to be considered in every Heroick Poem; first, how to write the Poem, secondly, how to make it sell. *Sir Illiad Doggrel*

### IMITATIONS

"It is when Pope tries to map human relation onto textual relations." See Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, "Alexander Pope: 'Renown'd in Rhyme'," in *Literary Milieux. Essays in Text and Context*, ed. David Womersely and Richard McCabe (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 248.

demonstrate further on, “reading a poetic form [...] *can* provide insights into political, ethical, and economic issues—and especially into a historical era’s way of framing and trying to resolve them.” The “jingling sound of like endings” creates, when used adeptly, points of contact with significant cultural reverberations.



What happens when we analyze Pope’s rhyme outside the relational system of the couplet, as a building unit serving independently a particular agenda? What happens when we consider his rhyme as telling a story of its own, with its own characters, events, patterns of repetition, and revealing accidents? What happens when, instead of reading his rhyme contextually, we try to uncover the rhyme’s own coding, to follow its own “circulation of intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari 10) and patterns of associations? What ideological alliances are unveiled when we consider Pope’s rhyme as a particular case of rhizomatic structure: an assemblage of non-hierarchical linkages, nodes, strings, and individual choices, organizing themselves in a variety of informational paths? What if we consider the “super-stress” imposed by the end-rhyme as a link branching into various lexias, a link that starts, as John Sitter suggests, a “discourse of parallelisms,” of faithful or distorting mirrors, of similarities or oppositions? What truths are disclosed when approaching rhyme with the tools of statistical analysis, for instance, paying attention to its repeatability rate or its distribution in various

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*“Reading a poetic form.”* See J. Paul Hunter, “The Heroic Couplet: Its Rhyme and Reason,” lecture presented at the National Humanities Center, 1996, available online at <<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/ideasv41/hunter4.htm>>.

*As John Sitter suggests.* See “Pope’s Versification and Voice,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Alexander Pope*, ed. Pat Rogers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 39.

configurations of meaning?

Such an approach provides, indeed, intriguing findings. Of the 878 pairs of rhyming words in *The Dunciad in Four Books*, only 17% are rhymes that repeat themselves, which makes for an astonishing 83% of unique rhymes in a poem of considerable length. The most frequently used rhyming pair is, surprisingly, the very normal “hand/stand” (with its combinatory variants), which appears ten times within the poem (1.13% frequency rate). At great distance come two other worn-out rhymes, “o’er/more” and “nod/God” (and their combinations), which are each used five times (0.56 % frequency rate), and the pairs “read/head,” “art/heart,” “race/place,” “praise/days,” “sit/wit,” “head/spread,” “roll/soul” which are used, in various combinations, four times (3.64% frequency rate). Rhyming words repeated three times within the poem make for 6.15% of occurrences, and the ones repeated at least two times account for 14.95% of the total number of occurrences. Interestingly, the lower the incidence of particular pairs of rhyme, the higher their critical and ideological content: these last two categories of rhyming words are the ones that most insistently refer to the urban or political milieu of the time. Pairs like “command/land,” “again/reign,” “glories/Tories,” “age/rage,” or “thing/king” (each repeated

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*Combinatory variants.* In counting the rhyming pairs in *The Dunciad* I made no distinctions based on which term comes first, or their singular or plural forms (i.e., “hand/stand” or “stands/hands”). I also did not take into consideration the different flexional forms of the verbs (“appear/ear” or appears/ears”).

*Most of them being, again, normal rhymes.* The question why Pope repeatedly chooses the same innocuous word pairs in rhyme position, de-emphasizing their privileged status, has received two very accurate, albeit completely different answers. According to Hugh

Kenner, Pope uses “incongruous rhymes for satiric observation, normal rhymes for the realm of law” (82) or for conveying permanent truths. In J. Paul Hunter’s opinion, Pope’s removal of key terms from rhyme position calls attention to a deliberate strategy of shifting the burden of meaning to an earlier place in lines, making more difficult for the readers to unfold his argument (“Seven Reasons for Rhyme,” *Ritual, Routine, and Regime. Repetition in Early Modern British and European Cultures*, ed. Lorna Clymer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 189).

three times), or “day/play,” “page/rage,” “place/face,” “wit/writ,” “Caroline/divine” (repeated twice) define the major themes of the poem, particularizing its concerns about royal succession, divine right, cultural commodification, aesthetic value, place and character, and so on.

One obvious conclusion is that Pope uses rhyme in a systematic way to support an ideological agenda, emphasizing connections other than formal through aural similarity. How this works and what it says about king, queen, *au courant* wits, or town can be easily inferred from the following examples:

Unstain'd, untouch'd, and yet in maiden **sheets**;  
While all your smutty sisters walk the **streets**. (I, 229-230)

All flesh is humbled, Westminster's bold **race**  
Shrink, and confess the genius of the **place**: (IV, 145-146)

When Dulness, smiling— “Thus revive the **Wits**!  
But murder first, and mince them all to **bits**... (IV, 119-120)

And (last and worst) with all the cant of **wit**,  
Without the soul, the Muse's **Hypocrite**. (IV, 99-100)

Where dukes and butchers join to wreath my **crown**,  
At once the bear and fiddle of the **town**. (I, 223-224)

Close to those walls where Folly holds her **throne**,  
And laughs to think Monro would take her **down**... (I, 29-30)

And now had Fame's posterior trumpet **blown**,  
And all the nations summon'd to the **throne**. (IV, 71-72)

“Oh (cried the goddess) for some pedant **reign**!  
Some gentle James, to bless the land **again**...” (IV, 175-6)

Another Phoebus, thy own Phoebus, **reigns**,  
Joys in my jigs, and dances in my **chains**. (IV, 61-62)

And nobly conscious, Princes are but **things**

Born for First Ministers, as Slaves for **Kings**... (IV, 601-602)

He ceased, and wept. With innocence of **mien**,  
Th' accused stood forth, and thus address'd the **queen**: (IV, 419-420)

Then throned in glass, and named it **Caroline**:  
Each maid cried, charming! and each youth, **divine**! (IV, 409-410)

As J. Paul Hunter has argued, “language and sound patterns can sometimes tell us things our conscious mind resists” (“The Heroic Couplet”), building meanings that may go against the overall significance of the couplet. This strategy, also employed by Dryden and Swift, relies on subliminal messages that establish cunning connections between “sheets” (of paper, but also “shits,” excrement, literary waste) and the London “streets,” between “crown” (royal authority), and the “wits” of the “town” (cultural authority), between town (“place”) and its disingenuous representatives (“race”), between “wits” and their obsessive attention to particulars (“bits”). At times, the political commentary becomes explicit, as in the case of the term “throne,” for instance, which always rhymes with words bearing a negative connotation (“down,” “blown”). Even more interestingly, the couplet referring to King James I as a “gentle” schoolmaster for his favorite, Robert Carr, may well express, if we ignore the explicatory footnote, the author’s nostalgic wish that another James, the second this time, may “reign/again,” deposing the Hanoverians from the English throne. The same subversive commentary is contained in the reference to queen Caroline’s “mien” (a disguise for aurally similar enough “mean”), or to her “divine” status, which creates a transparent correlation between George II’s consort and queen Dulness. In all these instances the rhyme expresses in an indirect way the author’s value system and beliefs, adding new layers of meaning to the message conveyed at the couplet level.

The rhyme's "reason," its functioning as an instrument meant to convey or disguise meaning, is always doubled in Pope's poem by a formal artistry that gives his rhyme its distinguishing quality. One of Pope's favorite rhyming techniques (opening, at the same time, a practically unlimited combinatory field) is that of pairing various speech parts with proper names, or of two proper names with each other, bringing them into a mutually illuminating relationship. "Ear/Gulliver," "Rome/Broome," "Rock/Locke," "Thick/Burgersdyck," "Here/Moliere," "attone/Bayonne," "fall/Clare-hall," "De Foe/below," "Zeal/Commonweal," "Corneille/Ozell," "Roll/Hockey-hole," "High/Ogilby," "Bog/Log," "uplift/Swift," "Paris/Maries," "Gift/Swift," "Own/Addison," "all/Breval," "sluice/Arethuse," "whirl/Curll," "Bays/praise," "Join/Proserpine," "Baal/call," "Saul/all," "Sport/Port," "Advance/France," "One/Gormogon," "France/dance," "Aristarch/remark"—are only a few examples of Pope's linguistic resourcefulness. Another method used by Pope in order to add new word pairs to the otherwise limited stock of rhymes available in the English language is to use letters or abbreviations in rhyming positions ("K\*/sing," "A/K," "profess/F.R.S."), or to rhyme English words with words of foreign origin ("house/*Nous*," "advance/complaisance," "snore/encore," "stoop/soupe"). Moreover, Pope is never shy about rhyming identical words

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*A disguise for aurally similar enough "mean."* The observation belongs to J. Paul Hunter; for additional remarks regarding Pope's versification strategies, see the now classic, "Seven Reasons for Rhyme."

*Rhyme expresses in an indirect way the author's value system and beliefs.* The examples could continue beyond the political field: rhymes such as "blind/mind," "dispense/sense" or "fool/school" contain a harsh

critique of the educational system of the time; "day/play," "show/below," "perform/storm," or "rage/stage" expose Pope's antipathy for theatrical entertainments; "strife/wife," "dame/shame," or "explor'd/whor'd" suggest internalized stereotypes about women, while the twice repeated "shape/ape" may indicate Pope's acute self-consciousness about his physical deformity.

(“doubt it/about it”), or about using imperfect, or eye rhymes, to supplement his poetic inventory (“Eye/Poetry,” “garrets/chariots,” “appear’d/reward,” “conveys/Operas,” “glare/war,” “Luxury/pye,” etc.). His stock of original rhymes is outrightly impressive, and, as Hugh Kenner correctly observes, they often emphasize a satirical intent. Rhymes such as “carry/Secretary,” “then/aldermen,” “lines/Magazines,” “sky/progeny,” “portraiture/endure,” “bears/Gazetteers,” “fly/Pillory,” “polite/write,” “share/Commissioner,” “y-pent/besprent,” “aside/prophecy’d,” “brag on/dragon,” “wit/Hypocrite,” “fool-renown’d/ground,” “Court/transport,” “atmosphere/air,” “strirr’d/Humming-bird,” “find/Cockle-kind,” “lies/dogmatize”—contain either an embedded critique (the “y-pent/besprent” rhyme, for instance, mocks Thomas Hearne’s use of antiquated, Anglo-Saxon words), or a condensed but revelatory narrative (like in the pair “brag on/dragon,” which alludes to Settle’s droll, *St. George of England*, where he wore a dragon costume of green leather of his own invention—an oblique allusion to his shifting political sympathies). Pope’s formal pyrotechnics are the more spectacular when coding particular controversies, rumors, animadversions, biases, and dislikes, whose importance is highlighted by being placed in a stressed rhyming position. The rhyme “*whirl*/Curll,” for instance, makes adroit use of almost all literal and figurative meanings of the main term (social bustle, a fluid in swift circling motion, spinning movement, the sickening effects of such motion), all of them alluding to particular episodes in the poem. It can be read in the context of the commotion started by Curll’s anti-Pope pamphlets, as an indicator of the publisher’s competitiveness on the print market (as a victor of the pissing contest), as a hint to the humiliating episode of Curll being tossed in a blanket by the scholars of Westminster, or as a wicked allusion to the effects of the emetic potion Pope administered to Curll, in return to his unauthorized publication of Gay’s

poems. Particulars serve here to illustrate broader concerns regarding commercial trustworthiness and intellectual property, the quality of the publishing act and its servility to the public's taste, or the value of the printed text and the emergence of profit-driven entrepreneurs in a field where aesthetic and not monetary value should prevail. More often than not, reading Pope's rhyme involves an effort of unveiling political, economic, or moral codes and the epoch's underlying attitudes toward them.



In the *Letter to the Publisher* signed by William Cleland, the alleged defender of the poem presents Pope as a magnanimous figure, a man of good spirits and superior wit. A series of rhetorical questions, however, take by surprise the readers who know that Pope, and not Cleland, is the author of the letter, as a bizarre instance of Pope ventriloquizing his own voice. Here is how Pope reports *Mr. Pope's* delight at his dunces' presumptuous attacks: "Now what had Mr. Pope done before to incense them? He had published those works which are in the hands of everybody, in which not the least mention is made of any of them. And what has he done since? He has laughed, and written *The Dunciad*."

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*As a wicked allusion to the effects of the emetic potion Pope administered to Curll. The whole of this Charge is false. [...] The Profit arising from the Sale of [Gay's poems] was equally to be divided between Mr. John Oldmixon, Mr. John Pemberton and myself. And I am sure my Brother Lintot will, if asked, declare this to be the same State of the Case as I laid before Mr. Pope, when he sent for me to the Swan Tavern in Fleet-Street, to enquire after this Publication. My Brother Lintot drank his half Pint of Old Hock, Mr. Pope his half Pint of Sack, and I the same quantity of an Emetic Potion (which was the*

Punishment referred to by our Commentator) but no threatening past. *Mr. Pope*, indeed said, *that Satires should not be Printed* (tho' he has now changed his mind) *I answered, they should not be wrote, for if they were, they would be Printed. He replied, Mr. Gay's interest at Court would be greatly hurt by publishing these Pieces.* This was all that passed in our Triumvirate. We then parted, Pope and my Brother Lintot went together to his Shop, and I went Home and Vomited heartily. I then despised the Action, and have since, in another manner, sufficiently Purged the Author of it. *A Hypercritic*



If there is any doubt as to Pope's ability to laugh lightly at his dunces' follies, without the bitterness or apprehensions breathing out from poem and extended apparatus, one should take a look at his humorous rhymes, generously spread throughout *The Dunciad*. His wit sparks here in unexpected associations, his irony is amiable, and his paired words delight in *double entendres*. The following rhyme, for instance, is a biting reference to Dennis's invention of an instrument for producing a thunder sound on stage, and to his emotional investment in a trifling matter:

Let others aim: 'tis yours to shake the **soul**  
With thunder rumbling from the mustard **bowl**... (II, 225-6)

Another example refers to Osborne, one of the participants in the pissing contest, who is compared to a gardener clumsily operating a fountain. The rhyme, however, unveils the real meaning of the contest, whose prize is, as we know, Eliza Haywood's favors:

Thus the small jet, which hasty hands **unlock**,  
Spurts in the gardener's eyes who turns **the cock**. (II, 177-8)

The sexual innuendo contained in the following rhyme sets up a suggestive connection between political and moral issues (the young aristocrats rebelling against Dulness are tamed by being encouraged to indulge in debauched behavior):

Now to thy gentle shadow all are **shrunk**,  
All melted down in pension or in **Punk**! (IV, 509-10)

The following example illustrates one of Pope's more refined techniques: the rhyming words provide a definition of the term placed in the most emphasized position, at the beginning of the couplet: "the critic eye" [is defined by] "wit" [in small] "bit":

**The critic eye**, that microscope of **wit**,  
Sees hairs and pores, examines bit by **bit**... (IV, 233-4)

In a different context, the deflating effect created by rhyme serves to unveil the Freethinkers' political Epicureanism as a sort of amorous relationship in which parties indulge themselves, and which ends as soon as their physical love is consumed:

That Nature our society **adores**,  
Where Tindal dictates, and Silenus **snores**. (IV, 491-2)

Finally, the following pair plays with the idea of misleading frailty vs. actual authority; it is one of Pope's (and of many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poets') favorite rhymes, revived by Allen Ginsberg in the seventies:

Each with some wondrous gift approach'd the **power**,  
A nest, a toad, a fungus, or a **flower**. (IV, 399-400)

*Mr. Pope's* laughter seems to be triggered by incongruous associations, risqué parallelisms, and paradoxical delineations. The linkings established by his finest rhymes rely on aural harmony and conceptual distortion. Like any map, they look innocuous when contemplated from the distance, but reveal their satiric power once one zooms in and unravels the poetic spaces they describe. "Souls" crammed in "bowls," "mold" thriving on "gold," "fools" brought forth by "schools," "towns" ravished by "gowns"—all describe an absurd space in which normal values and standards of behavior are turned upside down. *Mr. Pope* may have laughed at their pretentious grotesquerie, he may have delighted in his dunces' choler, but the one who *authored* *The Dunciad*, the one who carefully mapped its spaces and chiseled its rhyme to the letter, was Pope himself.

## CHAPTER V

### INTERPRETING *THE DUNCIAD*: HETEROTOPIAS

Map-makers, rather than they will have their maps naked and bald, do periwig them with false hair, and fill up the vacuum, with imaginary places. (Thomas Fuller, *The Historie of the Holy Warre*, 1639)

The first epistle is to be to the whole work, what a scale is to a book of maps; and in this, I reckon, lies my greatest difficulty: not only in settling and ranging the parts of it aright, but in making them agreeable enough, to be read with pleasure. (Pope's remarks on *Epistle on Man* as qtd. in Joseph Spence, *Anecdotes, Observations and Characters, of Books and Men*, 1858)

Alexander Pope died in 1744 at the age of fifty-six, after a nearly lifelong fight with Pott's disease, a tuberculosis of the spine that hindered his growth and led to a painful deformation of his body. His last days were a combination of moments of sharp lucidity and delirium, of bitter humor on his inevitable departure from this world, and fantastic visions of spiritual transfer to another's body. In his last moments of consciousness he was recalled as sending his ethic epistles to friends, and jokingly identifying himself with one of the pillars of Greek antiquity: "Here I am, like Socrates, distributing my morality among my friends, just as I am dying." The gesture is significant not only for Pope's lack of self-pity that was characteristic of his whole life, but also for the light it sheds on his own assessment of his work. We know from Spence's testimonies that, days before his death, Pope had admitted that his life's most important project had been to complete his ethic work in four books: one was an *Essay on the Nature of Man*, the second an *Essay on Education*, "part of which I have inserted in the *Dunciad*," the third an *Essay on Government*, "both ecclesiastical and civil" (his unfinished epic

*Brutus*) and the final one an Essay on Morality.<sup>249</sup> This confession maps out his body of work in ways that make new sense of its parts: his whole opus is built, more or less, around four thematic landmarks that he pursued throughout his career. His deformed body was the receptacle of a mind that strived toward poise, exemplarity and moral excellence, and of a man who imagined himself as a moral guide of his generation.

The fact that *The Dunciad in Four Books*—the last major work published before his death—is mentioned in Pope’s legacy, is significant not only as a *part* of a life-long project. In many ways, his mock-epic brings together all these four strands of imagination in a work constantly revised, amended, supplemented, and refined for a period of about seventeen years. Indeed, Pope’s poem is remembered today not only for its acid satire on the effects of bad education or the limits of knowledge, but also for its merciless attack on human flaws, for its ruthless unveiling of corrupt political practices, and for its broader concern with the morality of an age firmly engaged on its road to modernity. From this perspective alone, *The Dunciad* is an unparalleled work of art: it speaks of its author’s lifelong preoccupations with the moral life of the city and of his compulsive attempt at formal flawlessness. It also speaks, in the poem’s last book published only months before his death, about an imaginative space that is no longer confined to Cibber’s dreamscape about the future of the Empire of Dulness, but that is deeply rooted in the “now,” into the contemporary realities of London in the early 1740s. Cibber’s dream gains an eerie reality in this last book, which describes a present when the Grub Street denizens set up the standards of value, a realm in which the dull celebrate their victory on British grounds. The special nature of this space, a real space but at the same time a substitute describing the “Kingdom of the Dull upon earth” (*Argument to Book the Fourth*) turns the poem into a

carefully worked heterotopia, indeed a “counter-site [...] in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault 24). Pope’s last major work is a final indictment of Dulness’s “New World” of theatrical entertainments, operatic representations, foolish virtuosi, bad rulers, and mindless educators, but it is also an acknowledgement that this duncical space is, in spite of its preposterous folly, an actual possibility.

### **Modernity as Heterotopia: *The Dunciad*’s New World**

Led by my hand, he saunter’d Europe round,  
And gather’d ev’ry Vice on Christian ground;  
Saw ev’ry Court, hear’d ev’ry King declare  
His royal Sense, of Op’ra’s or the Fair...  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV, 311-14)

[I]t is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity.  
(Aristotle, *Poetics*)

*The Dunciad* starts, before the poem itself, with a long note to the title posing a spelling dilemma, and ends in its 1743 version with the fall of the curtain on Dulness’s theatrical stage. This reworking of the text from an attack on verbal criticism into a critique of the spectacle that governs all areas of modern life is suggestive of the dunces’ emergence from their private “cells” onto the public stage of the city. It is the same critique of the numerous flaws of the mind that turns into this last book into a systemic, rather than a local and relatively contained malady. After Cibber’s private attempt at self-immolation in Book I (his books being nothing but live manifestations of the author), the poem turns into a huge display of public shows following in quick succession: the games celebrating Cibber’s coronation as King of the Dunces in Book II,

Cibber's dream vision of the past and future of the Empire of Dulness in Book III, and the carefully mounted set pieces of royal receptions and degree giving in Book IV. In real terms, these fictional events describe easily identifiable events: Lord Mayor's Pageant and coronation ceremonies, fair shows, pantomimic and operatic representations in which Cibber played a role as a promoter or an actor, and court ceremonials celebrating strategic victories. The space of the poem is, indeed, as Brean S. Hammond has put it, "assumptive of other spaces," but Pope's spatial strategy is more than a calculated attempt "to reimpose cultural control in the face of perceived threats."<sup>250</sup> It is, I argue, a carefully designed effort to describe the urban space as an intersection of spaces that provide distinct, mutually informing, and even competing narratives of the city in order to offer, more than a cautionary tale, *an actual representation* of these possibilities. Moreover, Pope's textual design engages in less obvious ways with discourses about the role of the poet as imitator, the function of the epic hero, and the control of the public's emotions through acts of shared viewing that point to his constant preoccupation with performativity, with the capacity of his satire to stage the human spectacle. The fundamental theatricality of his poem points to Pope's concern with the effects of one's actions when publicly displayed, and his spatial intersections are used in order to re-present, that is, to present again in a revised form, a real space morphed into a "new World" (IV, l. 15) that acts as a signifier for these consequences.



In his seminal study, "Of Other Spaces" (1967), Michel Foucault described the theater as a space of "superimposed meanings": the theater "brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after another, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another," creating a space of illusion

meant to expose the real space (25). The dangers of such an enterprise, in Pope's reading of the stage, is that the possibilities created by this alternative space can be wildly abused for commercial purposes: the fair show, the pantomime, the edulcorated adaptations of older plays, the Italian opera—all are examples of shows that take their subject matter to its absurd extremes. Here is Colley Cibber, the manager of Drury Lane, applauding transported his own staging of John Thurmond's *Harlequin Doctor Faustus* in 1723:

His never-blushing head he turn'd aside,  
 (Not half so pleas'd when Goodman prophesy'd)  
 And look'd, and saw a sable Sorc'rer rise,  
 Swift to whose hand a winged volume flies:  
 All sudden, Gorgons hiss, and Dragons glare,  
 And ten-horn'd fiends and Giants rush to war.  
 Hell rises, Heav'n descends, and dance on Earth:  
 Gods, imps, and monsters, music, rage, and mirth,  
 A fire, a jig, a battle, and a ball,  
 'Till one wide conflagration swallows all.  
 Thence a new world to Nature's laws unknown,  
 Breaks out refulgent, with a heav'n its own:  
 Another Cynthia her new journey runs,  
 And other planets circle other suns.  
 The forests dance, the rivers upward rise,  
 Whales sport in woods, and dolphins in the skies;  
 And last, to give the whole creation grace,  
 Lo! one vast Egg produces human race.  
 Joy fills his soul, joy innocent of thought;  
 What pow'r, he cries, what pow'r these wonders wrought?  
 Son; what thou seek'st is in thee! Look, and find  
 Each Monster meets his likeness in thy mind.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, l. 231-252)

The above episode describes Colley Cibber's encounter with his own production, *Dr. Faustus*, during his journey to the underworld in Book III of *The Dunciad*. We are still, in the poem, in a realm of possibilities: Cibber, the newly crowned King of the Dunces, is asleep, and a prophecy about the glorious future of his empire is presented to him by Elkanah Settle, the former City

Poet of London. The episode described is one of momentous importance for the English stage: it marks the emergence of the pantomime, which will become the dominant theatrical form of the 1720s and 1730s,<sup>251</sup> and whose popularity surpassed that of any other stage entertainments at the time. The way the whole episode is presented in Pope's poem, though, is problematic, especially in its spatial translation: the pantomime described is not Cibber's *Faustus*, but John Rich's take on it, *The Necromancer, or, Harlequin Doctor Faustus*, which was acted at Lincoln's Inn Fields in December 1723, a month after Cibber's performance. Moreover, the reference to the "vast Egg" producing the human race is an allusion to another famous performance, *Harlequin Sorcerer*, in which Rich played the lead role. The confusion is intentional: the footnote indicates that Faustus was "the subject of a sett of Farces, which lasted in vogue two or three seasons, in which both Playhouses strove to outdo each other" (note to l. 233) and that these farces are mocked for their wild stage extravagances. Cibber watches, therefore, a spectacle that takes place on his own stage at Drury Lane, but which was acted in reality at Lincoln's Inn Fields: in this prophecy, two real spaces are collapsed into one due to their similar function, that is, to entertain the public with absurd transformations. Moreover, these spaces are real in that the performances evoked took place, indeed, in the last months of 1723, but in fictional time they are still prophecies, *possibilities* describing what the Empire of Dulness *might* bring with it once taking over the British Isles. This spatial indiscrimination has important consequences: it renders absurd the fierce competition between Cibber and Rich, theater managers for the only two authorized theaters in London after the Licensing Act of 1737, but it also points to a deeply subversive play with temporalities. The coincidence between the future time described by the epic and the present time of Pope's London is recognized by the contemporary reader of the poem, who is



already familiar with Cibber's and Rich's performances, and who experiences the poem in a non-fictional key. Cibber's dream does not describe a possibility, but an actuality that unfolds in the space of the city, and the "new world" of the stage, this "other" world governed by its own laws, describes the otherness of a space that Pope's contemporaries already inhabit.

Pope's attack here aims at the composite nature of the stage: by "juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 25) the pantomime violates the laws of probability expressly formulated by the ancient Greeks. In Aristotelian terms, "it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity" and in doing so, he must act as an "imitator of "one of three objects,—*things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be.*"<sup>252</sup> The pantomime's "new world" is problematic because it doesn't describe any of these possible spaces: it is not, may not, and should not be as it is represented on the stage. It is, indeed, "another" space "to Nature's laws unknown," a space in which planetary orbits change ("Another Cynthia her new journey runs,/And other planets circle other suns. "), the laws of gravity no longer apply ("the forests dance, the rivers upward rise"), and various mediums collapse in one ("whales sport in woods, and dolphins in the skies"). By bringing spaces otherwise incompatible together, the pantomime epitomizes the dangers of replacing order with disarray, rational expectations with wild surprise, belief in divine creation with versions of genesis that demote humans to animal scale ("Lo! one vast Egg produces human race"). It is a world of pure emotions, unhindered by any rational limits: here "Gorgons hiss, and Dragons glare," "Giants rush to war," and "Gods, imps and monsters" are brought together in an incomprehensible jumble of "music, rage, and mirth." Pope's description of this space

emphasizes its monstrosity, hyperactivity, havoc, turmoil, noise, in short, its deviant nature due to *excess*. “Joy innocent of thought” reigns supreme, and laughter, noise, and commotion meet in a space where wit is replaced by dullness and admiration by jest. The modern plays violate, in Pope’s assessment, the natural way of thinking, and are the more dangerous as they manipulate the audience in ways that render it subhuman, herd-like, unified in its shared reactions of “delight”:

Nothing seem’d more plain to our great authors, than that the World had long been weary of natural Things. How much the contrary is formed to please, is evident from the universal Applause daily given to the admirable Entertainments of *Harlequins and Magicians* on our Stage. When an Audience behold a Coach turn’d into a Wheel-barrow, a Conjurer into an Old Woman, or a Man’s Head where his Heels should be; how are they struck with Transport and Delight? Which can only be imputed to this Cause, that each Object is chang’d into That which hath been suggested to them by their own low Ideas before.

He ought therefore to render himself Master of this happy and antinatural way of thinking to such a degree, as to be able, on the appearance of any Object, to furnish his Imagination with Ideas infinitely below it.<sup>253</sup>

The excerpt from *Peri Bathous* (1727) calls attention to another threat posed by the public’s exposure to modern forms of entertainment: they are not only irrational, manipulative, leveling, inciting to disorder, and arousing of excessive emotional reactions, but also trigger in audience “low ideas,” replacing sublime emotions and noble sentiments with the baseness of the bathos. Through its insistence on pantomime’s effects on the audience, the *Faustus* episode raises, therefore, fundamental concerns about the morality of the stage and its role in shaping the minds and behaviors of the public. The episode is deeply political in its implications: echoing Hobbes, the excess of passions produces madness,<sup>254</sup> and thus the lines portray Cibber, George II’s Poet Laureate, as a sort of king’s fool, applauding passionately the abortions of his own mind. The

absurd stage of the pantomime is collapsed, again, with the real stage of the court, due to Cibber's unique qualifications as theater manager, professional actor, and Laureate to the King.

A king in the fictional space of the poem and a fool in the real space of the city,<sup>255</sup> Cibber is ideally equipped to bring the "the Smithfield Muses" from Bartholomew Fair, through "the Theaters of Covent-garden, Lincolns-inn-fields, and the Hay-market," to the "reigning pleasure of the Court and Town" (note to l. 1). The poem itself starts with a reference to the fair and ends with the fall of the curtain on Dulness's theatrical stage: the fair and the theater are the master metaphors of Pope's satire, and the figure of the king-clown a cunningly construed embodiment of his cultural and political critique. The fair, therefore, is not only significant as a manifestation of time "in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect" (Foucault 26), that is, as a space in which the momentary fads and craze of the day are indiscriminately hosted; it is, like pantomimes themselves, a space of social and moral disorder:

Yet lo! in me what authors have to brag on!  
 Reduc'd at last to hiss in my own dragon.  
 Avert it Heav'n! that thou, my Cibber, e'er  
 Should'st wag a serpent-tail in Smithfield fair!  
 Like the vile straw that's blown about the streets,  
 The needy Poet sticks to all he meets,  
 Coach'd, carted, trod upon, now loose, now fast,  
 And carry'd off in some Dog's tail at last.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, l. 285-292)

This episode is rich in references to contemporary events: Elkanah Settle, Cibber's guide to the "Elysian Shades," remembers one of his best-known drolls, *St. George for England*, where "he acted in his old age in a Dragon of green leather of his own invention" at Bartholomew fair (note to l. 283). As a former City Poet, Settle plays an important role in the poem's construction of meaning: he is invoked in this episode for his staging of annual pageants for the Lord Mayor's

show, for his involvement in popular entertainments, and also for his frequent change of political allegiances. Settle's associations with pope-burning pageants of the Exclusion Crisis, his employment by the show-woman Mrs. Mynn to perform at Bartholomew Fair, and his authorship of *The Siege of Troy* (1707), allegedly the most famous of the Bartholomew-Fair drolls, are invoked in the poem as evidence supporting Pope's argument about Settle's lack of moral compass that justifies his flipping political sympathies. Moreover, Settle's association in this particular episode with Anchises, Aeneas' father, turns him into a father figure for Cibber himself, who shares with him the same characteristics of political petulance, lack of talent, and dubious taste. Indeed, just like Settle, Cibber did set up performances at Bartholomew Fair, and two of his children, Theophilus Cibber and Charlotte Charke, acted in the same place or shared stage-booths with obscure theater impresarios.<sup>256</sup> The fair's description as a space where sideshows, prize-fighters, wire-walkers, acrobats, puppet shows, freaks and wild animals are openly displayed, as well as a meat and cloth market, emphasizes its intolerable mix up of high and low, of desirable and grotesque, its profit-driven nature that replaces aesthetic with commercial value. The episode is a pointed attack on Cibber, whose unusual success as a theater manager, in spite of his repertorial choices, was based on his adept response to the audience's taste for comedic farces, sentimental dramas, and pantomimic representations. "The needy Poet" sticking "to all he meets" stands here for the hack author whose sycophancy ensures him only a transitory respite while in the capricious favor of a patron, be it a political figure or the rabble.

Pope's critique in this particular episode is never openly stated, but implied in his skillful play with spaces temporally and ethically incompatible. His binary oppositions construct an impossible space of absolute dullness, but a site that describes, to use the Aristotelian terms, a

“probable impossibility,” due to the unifying figure of Colley Cibber as King. The epic space of Troy, the cradle of civilization, is contrasted here with the moral baseness of the London streets: the noble transfer of legacy from Anchises to Aeneas is translated in Settle’s bequest of his “serpent-tail in Smithfield fair” to his Laureate son, and the uplifting space of the classic theater is replaced with the outrageous space of the farce, in which dragons, serpents, and other monsters become signifiers for deviance, irrationality, and abuse. In this representations, the fair itself turns out to be an ideal site that provides “a powerful means of grasping reality”<sup>257</sup> in its very process of becoming, a heterotopic site reflective of a real place whose operating laws unveil the meaning and direction of early modernity.

The last target of Pope’s satire on stage during Cibber’s prophetic vision in Book III is opera itself, “the third mad passion” of Dulness’s “doting age.” The listing of music in a series of negatively-loaded human emotions (“music, rage, and mirth”) unveils one of the poem’s insistent critiques of the Italian opera as an agent of irrationality and excess:

Already Opera prepares the way,  
The sure fore-runner of her gentle sway:  
Let her thy heart, next Drabs and Dice, engage,  
The third mad passion of thy doting age.  
Teach thou the warb’ling Polypheme to roar,  
And scream thyself as none e’er scream’d before!  
To aid our cause, if Heav’n thou can’st not bend,  
Hell thou shalt move; for Faustus is our friend:  
Pluto with Cato thou for this shalt join,  
And link the Mourning Bride to Proserpine.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, III, l. 301-310)

Although relatively short, this episode is, nevertheless, rich in particulars: the lines contain references to Nicolo Porpora’s *Polypheme*, an opera produced in 1735 by the Opera of the Nobility and badly translated by Cibber, to John Thurmond’s *Dr. Faustus*, and to Lewis

Theobald's *Pluto and Proserpina*, both pantomimes replete with musical interludes produced by Cibber in 1724 and 1727, respectively. A forerunner of Dulness, opera is described as a space of madness and noise, a space in which passions run wild and unchecked emotions trigger a hysterical amplification of action ("Teach thou the warb'ling Polypheme to roar"). The critique of the operatic shows rehearses the same argument against the stage as a realm of incompatibilities, but when the references to music include theatrical afterpieces the argument becomes more complicated and it is articulated, again, in spatial terms. The afterpieces were short, one-act farces, comedies, or pantomimes that were meant to lighten the long tragedies they were coupled with, such as Addison's *Cato* and Congreve's *The Mourning Bride*, some of "the best Tragedies" put on stage by Cibber during his management of Drury Lane. The strategy of coupling them together, however, has as an effect the dilution of the tragedy's impact on the audience, and violates the unity of space that is one of the fundamental laws of the Greek tragedy: they juxtapose the classical realm evoked by the tragedy to the ludicrous space of the afterpiece, the high with the low, the fear and pity for human loss to the "rage and mirth" of an absurd performance. Spaces artistically incompatible are collapsed on the same stage, triggering in the audience contradictory emotions with damaging consequences for their mental and emotional sanity.

The earlier versions of *The Dunciad* (1727, 1729) end in this point of spatial indeterminacy, inside the King's mind, leaving the readers to contemplate a dreamscape that may or may not become an actual reality. Settle's prophecy about the future of the Empire of Dulness leaves the poem open to a realm of possibilities, it sketches the spatial coordinates of a fictional space that *might be*, and which, as we have seen, has a special relation to the real space that it

anticipates. But Cibber's dreamscape gains a new meaning with the addition of the last book of the poem, in 1743, which is a detailed indictment of the school deputies, virtuosi, flatterers, critics, botanists, collectors, minute philosophers, freethinkers, priests and political class in the form of a "General, not particular Satire."<sup>258</sup> This last book completes the poem by giving Cibber's dream a fictional reality: it celebrates Dulness's taking over of Britain in a series of carefully mounted set pieces that display, in some critics' opinion, clear operatic qualities.<sup>259</sup> The addition of a book in which Cibber's dream comes true, fifteen years after the first publication of the poem, is not only meant to bring closure to an *opera aperta* but represents, I argue, an implicit acknowledgement of the fact that the symptoms of dullness mocked in the initial versions of the poem have become systemic, and that they are acknowledged by Pope *as reality* in this reworked ending of his epic.

Significantly, the whole fourth book has a striking resemblance to a stage performance: here, Dulness's disciples pay their homage to the queen in a series of attentively choreographed set pieces (the dispute of the botanists, the mockery of the Grand Tour, the granting by Queen Dulness of orders and degrees, etc.). The change in method from particulars to general triggers a change in focus from identifiable characters to fields of knowledge affected (or promoted) by Dulness's conquest: Science, Wit, Logic, Rhetoric, and Morality become the main victims of the queen, while Sophistry, Chicane, Casuistry, and "Mad *Mathesis*" are corrupt embodiments of law, religion and science. But the most spectacular transformation is that of Opera herself, which turns in this last book from a list of outrageous representations clearly identified by name into a character in its own right:

When lo! a Harlot form soft sliding by,  
 With mincing step, small voice, and languid eye;  
 Foreign her air, her robe's discordant pride  
 In patch-work flutt'ring, and her head aside:  
 By singing Peers up-held on either hand,  
 She tripp'd and laugh'd, too pretty much to stand;  
 Cast on the prostrate Nine a scornful look,  
 Then thus in quaint Recitativo spoke.  
 O *Cara! Cara!* silence all that train:  
 Joy to great Chaos! let Division reign:  
 Chromatic tortures soon shall drive them hence,  
 Break all their nerves, and fritter all their sense:  
 One Trill shall harmonize joy, grief, and rage,  
 Wake the dull Church, and lull the ranting Stage;  
 To the same notes thy sons shall hum, or snore,  
 And all thy yawning daughters cry, *encore*.  
 Another Phoebus, thy own Phoebus, reigns,  
 Joys in my jiggs, and dances in my chains.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV, l. 45-62)

Opera's representation as Harlot connotes a wide array of meanings, ranging from frivolity, arrogance, foreignness, incomprehensiveness, corruption, indiscrimination, dissonance, to a soporific or uplifting effect on the audience. A note to line 45 felicitously summarizes the flaws epitomized by the genre: "its affected airs, its effeminate sounds, and the practice of patching up these Operas with favourite Songs, incoherently put together," are features that point to the unnatural stage effects increasingly becoming a hallmark of the genre. The underlying contradictions of the genre contribute to the poem's argument about the mad competition within the same political faction: the reference to the "singing Peers" upholding Opera's hands alludes to its patronage by the royal couple (sponsors of the Royal Academy of Music), and by their estranged son, Frederick, Prince of Wales (supporter of the rival Opera of the Nobility) and implies "Divisions" that transcend the operatic stage and "reign" the nation as a whole. More interesting for my argument, though, is the fact that Opera turns from an easily identifiable



performative space (i.e. Drury Lane or Lincoln's-Inn-Fields), into a protagonist acting *on the stage of the poem*. Opera inhabits, thus, in the final book of the poem a fictional space that stands for a broader signifier than Cibber's theater at Drury Lane: it is the space of the city represented in a distorted way, a heterotopia describing nothing else but modernity itself.



I have started my argument about the use of spaces in *The Dunciad* by pointing to Pope's critique of "modern" theatrical representations as violating the Aristotelian law of probability. The pantomime, the farce, and the opera are flawed because they do *not* describe "how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity."<sup>260</sup> In other words, they map out improbable spaces—spaces that are disorderly, unnatural, irrational, excessive, spaces that trigger in the audience a sort of maddening delight that leads to a herd-like behavior (like "buzzing Bees" the dunces conglobed around "their dusky Queen"—IV, l. 80). This "new world, to Nature's laws unknown" describes an "other" space, a stage where "another Æschylus" and "another Phoebus" reign, and where the laws of unity defining the ancient tragedy are repeatedly violated. The modern shows employ improbable plots, mix up temporalities, and bring spaces otherwise incompatible together; they rely, in short, on mere spectacle, and in doing so they "create a sense not of the terrible but only of the monstrous"<sup>261</sup> that is strange to the purpose of tragedy. They describe, in Foucault's terms, a heterotopia of illusion, a site reflective of the real space in ways that emphasize its baseness, deviance, and moral corruption, but at the same time they pose the genuine problem of describing a space that is impossible and real at the same time. Because they don't relate "what may happen," that is, "what is possible according to the law of probability," the modern shows

describe an impossible realm; at the same time, though, they are easily identifiable as *real* performative spaces the contemporary readers may recognize due to their familiarity with the early eighteenth-century stage. Cibber's *Dr. Faustus* describes an illusory space, but at the same time it mirrors the disorder, irrationality and excess of the world that generated it.

The key to this apparent quandary lies in the unique play with spatialities that *The Dunciad* poses. The poem is a magisterial demonstration of how to use the Aristotelian laws so that "the absurdity passes unnoticed": it presents, indeed, "what may happen" by imagining a possible future in which Dulness reigns supreme on the British grounds. In doing so, the poet acts as an imitator, drawing his plot, hero and themes from the specific realities of his time. The poem has a unified action ("the Restoration of the Empire of Dulness in Britain") and uses the irrational to describe a wide array of "improbable possibilities" (Cibber's journey underground, the epic games following his coronation, etc.). Moreover, the poet skillfully avoids speaking in his own person by employing a sophisticated use of the poem's paratextual spaces. *The Dunciad* turns, thus, into a demonstration of how to stage the irrational and the outrageous without violating the classic laws: it stages the theatrical and processional extravagances of the years 1720-1740 by using similar performative strategies (employment of the monstrous and ludicrous, conflicting spatialities) in a frame, though, that allows the poet to abuse his dunces to the rule. Just like the pantomime, opera, or the fair show, the poem is an overlapping of spaces, but, unlike them, its spaces are *compatible* in themselves and therefore mutually informing. Cibber's journey to the Elysian Fields, the final resting place of the souls of the virtuous, is contrasted in Book III to the contemporary space of the stage on which Cibber performs, gloriously enough, transporting nonsense. Although the two spaces represent strikingly different systems of values,

they are the same in their hosting of the most distinguished representatives of the high and the low (the “greater” and the “lesser Epic Hero”).

Moreover, the poet refines his argument by using the real spaces of the city to build a semi-fictional frame for his epic: the readers of the poem, dunces or not, insert themselves into the imaginary spaces of his mock-epic and vocally comment on its heroes and their actions from footnotes, testimonies, appendices, and prefatory and back materials. This loud heteroglossia surrounding the text gives Pope’s satire a dialogical quality that reflects in many ways the combustible nature of the public sphere of the time. This frame is also a pointer that the poem should be read in a non-fictional key: what Cibber sees on this Elysian stage is recognized by the commentator of the textual underground as real and thus anchored in the contemporary debates of the time. The heterotopia of illusion staged by the theatrical and operatic representations is reworked in Pope’s satire as a heterotopia of modernity, an *ad litteram* translation of the world-as-stage metaphor that describes it, in terms quite different from the Addisonian culture of politeness and sociability, as a space of social disorder, moral corruption, and political compromise.

The changed conclusion of the poem in the 1743 edition illustrates the use of one more Aristotelian rule that offers a possible key to unveiling the author’s intentions. *The Dunciad in Four Books* ends by bringing the readers back to a site previously evoked in Book I, Dulness’s Cave of Poetry and Poverty; here we assist to an upside-down version of the Genesis in which “the uncreating word” of goddess Dulness brings to an end the rule of reason in Britain:

See skulking *Truth* to her old Cavern fled,  
Mountains of Casuistry heap’d o’er her head!  
*Philosophy*, that lean’d on Heav’n before,

Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.  
*Physic* of *Metaphysic* begs defence,  
 And *Metaphysic* calls for aid on *Sense*!  
 See *Mystery* to *Mathematics* fly!  
 In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.  
*Religion* blushing veils her sacred fires,  
 And unawares *Morality* expires.  
 Nor *public* Flame, nor *private*, dares to shine;  
 Nor *human* Spark is left, nor Glimpse *divine*!  
 Lo! thy dread Empire, Chaos! is restor'd;  
 Light dies before thy uncreating word:  
 Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;  
 And Universal Darkness buries All.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV, l. 641-656)

Britain as a geographically identifiable space implodes, in this final episode, under its own dullness, being replaced with the Empire of Dulness, a *possible* space that becomes *real* in the poem's fictional universe, confirming Settle's prophecy. It is a world in which public and private spaces become indistinct, crammed in the narrow and comforting site of the primordial cave, a metaphor for Dulness's fertile womb. This conclusion is an attentively crafted argument about the end of the Augustan order and its substitution with the moral and reasoning dis-order of the Moderns. Philosophy, Physics, Mathematics, Metaphysics, Religion and Morality expire, turning this "Restoration of Night and Chaos" under Dulness's rule into an elaborated burial scene. As such, *The Dunciad* concludes, according to the Aristotelian rules of the perfect plot, with an unhappy ending. An ending, I contend, that expresses Pope's own acknowledgment of the Augustans' lost battle with modernity.

### **Heterotopias of Indefinitely Accumulating Time: The Memory-Space of the Library**

Everything begins 'in' a library: in books, writings, references. Therefore nothing begins. Only a drifting or disorientation from which one does not emerge. (Jacques Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth")

Next to Bedlam, deep in the Cave of Poverty and Poetry, Cibber's "Gothic Library" hides his books. The place is cluttered with the "supperless" hero's aborted productions—"future Ode[s]" and "abdicated Plays"—and gives off an intense sense of despair: the author "gnaw[s]" his pen and "dash[es]" it on the ground, "Sooterkins of Wit" crawl on his cave's floor, and nothing but ill-formed embryos materialize from the "vast profound" of his mind. The cave is no longer consolatory or protecting, it no longer shelters the author in its capacious womb; on the contrary, it seems to exert an unbearable strain on the hapless author's body that has disastrous effects on Bay's procreative faculties: under the stress of an unnatural birth, his head "cracks" in "Zig-zags" through which abortive nonsense precipitates. Bay's reproductive faculties are represented here in a life-giving act which identifies Bays as a feminized, disempowered agent, but they also imply the idea of repetitive, or commercialized production, which suggests the author's work of literary recycling, his unscrupulous acts of thievery. Incapable to produce viable original work, Cibber has no other recourse but to steal from his betters and revamp their works to the new requisites of the stage:

Next, o'er his Books his eyes began to roll,  
In pleasing memory of all he stole,  
How here he sipp'd, how there he plunder'd snug  
And suck'd all o'er, like an industrious Bug.  
Here lay poor Fletcher's half-eat scenes, and here  
The Frippery of crucify'd Moliere;  
There hapless Shakespear, yet of Tibbald sore,  
Wish'd he had blotted for himself before.

(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, 127-134)

Bay's library is thus a redemptive space, his only escape from the oppressions of the cave. The "Bug"-like work of the hack writer, his *juissant* appropriation of somebody else's oeuvre, his literal devouring of the books that fill the shelves of his library to weave the cobweb of his own immortality are all described here through an agglomeration of sensory images that suggest the parasitical nature of Cibber's work. Obscure authors, such as John Fletcher, or literary giants, such as Shakespeare and Moliere, are "suck'd" and "sipp'ed" and "plunder'd snug," in a sort of love-relationship whose abusive nature destroys its object of desire. "Crucify'd," "hapless" and "sore," their books are all made "his": Shakespeare's *King John* becomes Cibber's *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John* (1745), Moliere's *Tartuffe* becomes Cibber's *The Nonjuror* (1717), and Fletcher's *The Elder Brother* and *The Custom of the Country* are merged into Cibber's highly popular *Love Makes a Man* (1700). Works of the past are stored in this confined space not for aesthetic delight but for satisfying the voracious appetite of a new public. As such, Cibber's books give a new sense to the idea of library as "a place of all times": rather than describing a sort of general archive placed "outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages,"<sup>262</sup> Cibber's works build on old temporalities, devour the past to regurgitate a new future, and rewrite the classic age into a flimsy, crippled, and abortive modernity.

Cibber inhabits, thus, a textual heterotopia, a space that stores the works of the past not to preserve but to recycle them into "more solid Learning," a form of knowledge that sinks under its own weight into bathetic profound. The architecture of this space unveils a complicated hierarchy of value, one that builds on the classics to evolve to the ornamental and voluminous.

Like Virgil who guides Dante through Inferno, Pope leads his readers through the library's circles of folly:

This Library is divided into three parts: the first consist of those authors from whom he [Cibber] stole, and whose works he mangled; the second, of such as fitted the shelves, or were gilded for shew, or adorned with pictures; the third class our author calls solid learning, old bodies of Divinity, old Commentaries, or old English Printers, or old English Translations; all very voluminous, and fit to erect altars to Dulness. (Note to l. 135)

While the first section of Cibber's library contains culturally sanctioned works that inspire his own subpar productions, its second section describes a space in which books lose their sacred role and turn into objects of useless contemplation, a *summa* of spines, covers, shiny lettering, and illustrations that fill in the shelves with a display of "Out-side merit" that hides their inside vacuousness:

The rest on Out-side merit but presume,  
Or serve (like other Fools) to fill a room;  
Such with their shelves as due proportion hold,  
Or their fond Parents drest in red and gold;  
Or where the pictures for the page attone,  
And Quarles is sav'd by Beauties not his own.  
Here swells the shelf with Ogilby the great;  
There, stamp'd with arms, Newcastle shines complete:  
Here all his suff'ring brotherhood retire,  
And 'scape the martyrdom of jakes and fire:  
A Gothic Library! of Greece and Rome  
Well purg'd, and worthy Settle, Banks, and Broome.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, 135-146)

Cibber's books are no longer signifiers but signs emptied of their polysemantic aura, solid *objects* that have lost their ability to turn into meaningful *things*. They furnish the space, instead of expanding it with luminous worlds, they are spatial fillers that fit in a given niche not because they bear meaning, but because they are cut to the size. The books come to life not to address the

reader, but to assert their cover-deep materiality. They stand for the authors themselves, joined in a “suff’ring brotherhood” of inept cultural figures: religious poet Francis Quarles is ridiculed for his use of grotesque visual allegories in his volume of *Emblems* (1635); John Ogilby is included here for the lavish illustrations that adorned his translations of Aesop and Homer; Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle is mentioned for her prolific work as a poet, romance writer, and playwright collected in eight folios “adorned with gilded covers”; Elkanah Settle, John Banks, and Richard Brome are singled out as “parallel to our Hero” in his capacity of Laureate, author of tragedies, and plagiarist. The pleasure of reading seems to be replaced in this space by the pleasure of collecting; prosopopoeia emphasizes even more the frailty of the author reduced to a beautiful cover, his substitution with an object vulnerable to the lapse of time and the perils of fire. A commodified world stamps its imprint on a space no longer sheltered from the outside time.

The third circle of this Inferno is Cibber’s own authorial realm, the upper shelves that preserve his works alongside the mummified “bodies” of the old divines:

But, high above, more solid Learning shone,  
 The Classics of an Age that heard of none;  
 There Caxton slept, with Wynkyn at his side,  
 One clasp’d in wood, and one in strong cow-hide;  
 There, sav’d by spice, like Mummies, many a year,  
 Dry Bodies of Divinity appear:  
 De Lyra there a dreadful front extends,  
 And here the groaning shelves Philemon bends.  
 Of these twelve volumes, twelve of amplest size,  
 Redeem’d from tapers and defrauded pies,  
 Inspir’d he seizes...  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, l. 135-157)



The “Classics” of this “Gothic library” are not that old but do belong to the dark ages; they describe, in Pope’s reading, a regress to a time of cultural barbarism. William Caxton and Wynkin de Worde are mentioned as printers of worthless corruptions of Virgil adapted for the large public, Thomas Stackhouse’s 1000-page plus *Complete Body of Divinity* (1729) is alluded to for its literal heaviness, Nicholas de Lyra (actually Nicholas Harpsfield), a Catholic apologist, is indicted as a “very voluminous commentator” on John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, among other works,<sup>263</sup> while Philemon Holland is included here for his prolific work as a translator—indeed, profuse enough “to make *a Country Gentleman a complete Library*” (note to l. 154). Embalmed in “spice” that preserves their worthlessness, these authors seem to be brought together by their shared lack of originality: none of them, Cibber included, produced works that were not inspired, translated, or did not comment upon other’s author’s piece. As Barthes has put it in a different context, their work is “caught up in a process of filiation,”<sup>264</sup> it is all the same in that it parasitically feeds upon its host. Cibber’s “amplest” volumes describe, in fact, a *terminus* point of literary (and literal) consumption, the insatiable appetite of the hack author, exemplary in that it displays an unparalleled ravenousness. Rescued from being reassigned new uses, such as lighting candles or wrapping pies, these books are preserved in a space that illuminates the logic of their production as being one of voracious consumerism.

Classic books, gilded books, voluminous books.... Cibber’s library assigns them all discriminated spaces: the exemplary ones are crammed under the beautiful, the lavishly adorned are stifled under the pedantical, or, in Cibber’s case, the books of a plagiarist. The library is, indeed, a “hecatomb” (I, l. 158), a sacrificial space where the valuable is mauled and the worthless is saved from fire. Like the Borgesian library, it seems to be governed by the infidels’

law that “Library is not ‘sense,’ but ‘non-sense’: it is a “feverish Library, whose random volumes constantly threaten to transmogrify into others, so that they affirm all things, deny all things, and confound and confuse all things, like some mad and hallucinating deity.”<sup>265</sup> Creatures of unnatural issue spring from pouring classical works into modern molds, and “Fruits of dull Heat” that lack sense, shape, and beauty emerge from the hack writer’s frantical un-doing work. The memory it preserves—the “pleasing memory” of Cibber’s thievery—is that of a past rewritten by the present in the wrong key, an irreverent appropriation of the classics by incompetent modern epigones. Cibber’s library turns, thus, from a space of cultural preservation into a space of cultural confinement; it is no longer safe but oppressive, uncanny, and swarming with monsters.

Cibber’s library is a threatening space, though, not only for the mangled works of the classic authors, but for Cibber’s productions as well. In a singular moment of resolve, “inspir’d he seizes” his books and throws them into a sacrificial pyre. We can find here Cibber’s most celebrated works—*The Careless Husband*, *Perolla and Izadora*, *Ximena: or, The Heroic Daughter*, *Caesar in Egypt*, *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John*, *The Nonjuror*, commonplace books used as sources of inspiration—all topped out with “a twisted Birth-day Ode” that Cibber wrote as part of his duty as a Laureate. This episode is of momentous importance as it is the only time when Cibber displays some sort of agency, acting on his own to change his line of work. Disheartened by the intense effort involved in being a professional author, Cibber decides to set on fire his past work and resort to religious or political gambling. The episode is a splendid staging in a diminutive space of the classic episode of setting the Alexandrian library on fire, a bathetic rewriting of the event that complicates the scene both spatially and in terms of its overall significance. Cibber’s library suddenly expands to include a glorious historical past,

becoming a spatial counterpart of the greatest library of the ancient world. These overlapping spaces—the meager library of a hack writer and the most celebrated collection of books of antiquity—are collapsed in order to highlight the severe disparity between the high cultural aspirations of the past and the low standards of the present; it is, indeed, a new illustration of the Ancients vs. Moderns debate. Cibber’s private library, the scene of writing, becomes a theatrical space, a space where the author acts to destroy, rather than bring to life, his work. Given the cramped space of action, Cibber’s gesture is also a bizarre act of self-immolation, an act that condemns to extinction both the work and the author himself. By burning his books, the author literally sets himself on fire:

The opening clouds disclose each work by turns,  
Now flames the Cid, and now Perolla burns;  
Great Caesar roars, and hisses in the fires;  
King John in silence modestly expires:  
No merit now the dear Nonjuror claims,  
Moliere’s old stubble in a moment flames.  
Tears gush’d again, as from pale Priam’s eyes  
When the last blaze sent Ilion to the skies.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, l. 249-256)

The scene is beautifully illustrated by Francis Hayman in the 1751 edition of the poem (Figure 16), with a significant change: whereas in Pope’s text the books are carefully identified by title, in this later edition they are reduced to mere objects bearing no identification mark whatsoever. Cibber’s books are no longer relevant in themselves: their particular argument is overshadowed by the confrontation between Cibber and queen Dulness, who puts out the fire started by our hero by using Ambrose Philips’s unfinished (and therefore still “wet”) epic *Thulè*. While the illustration emphasizes the theatricality of the episode by insisting on the characters’ movement and setting details, it loses some of the force of Pope’s argument that lies in the very specificity

of his references to particular titles. Pope's books stand for authors, they come to life to "roar" and "hiss" in the fire, they weep, suffer, and expire in the blaze—in other words, they are trapped in a scorching inferno and their all-human reactions trigger feelings of compassion and empathy from the reader. Moreover, they come with their own stories of origins, reception, and filiation that complicate the scene by adding additional narrative threads that need to be explored in order to clarify the satirist's particular choices. The text proliferates in particulars, takes the readers back and forth from the past of a specific editorial event to the present of the immolation scene, and contains in the small space of only a few lines interlocking narratives that give the episode true epic proportions. Coming to life in moments of emotional strain, Cibber's books reveal themselves as more than gilded covers on the shelves: behind their spines, they witness, terrified, the madness of their author, and are deeply aware of the precariousness of their condition.

The books as avatars of their authors is a recurrent cultural theme that turns the space of the library into an overpopulated scene, either a congregation of akin spirits or, as staged by Swift in his *Battle of the Books*, a theatre of war. As suggested by Maynard Mack's study on Pope's Twickenham library, one's books indicate special interests, personal associations, and cultural attitudes that are revelatory of one's moral and cultural standards. We know today who Pope's friends and admirers were based on the volumes he received or offered as gifts,<sup>266</sup> as we know that his interests ranged from Greek, Latin, French and Spanish literature, to theological and philosophical speculation, to visual arts and landscape gardening.<sup>267</sup> Pope's marginalia also speaks of the extent of his engagement with his books: we know that he revered and reread Cicero, Horace, Juvenal, Lucretius, Martial, Ovid, and Quintilian, but also English writers such Chaucer, Langland, Spenser, Sidney, Jonson, Herbert, Milton, Butler, Dryden and Rochester. We

know that he admired Montaigne, that he read attentively Rabelais, Dante, Petrarch, Malherbe, Corneille, Descartes, Fontenelle, and Le Bossu, and that he had a copy of the Koran in Arabic and Latin on his shelves. The marginal notes he wrote in his books speak of a dialogue of sources, they reveal a live conversation between Pope and the authors he loved or despised during which he takes sides, sets things straight, or makes appreciative remarks. In contrast, Cibber's library is a conflicting space in which the books are silenced, mangled, and physically abused, in which the authors themselves are irrelevant, used solely to provide the raw material that inspires a hack author's work. Cibber's associations with Caxton, de Worde, or Holland is suggestive of his marginal cultural status: his models reveal the man. This fundamental difference in their attitude toward books is subtly encapsulated in the description of Cibber's pyre: although it contains his own rewritings of classical works, what we see and emotionally engage with is the agony of the Cid, Perolla, "Great Cesar," King John, Moliere and "pale Priam"—in other words, the victims reveal themselves in the fire to be not copies, but the original heroes and authors of the works the readers previously perused and fell in love with. The fire distills the counterfeit into the original, exposing the true significance of Cibber's immolation scene.

The whole episode is a cautionary tale about the dangers of cultural incompetence: the Modern author in the library is a thief and an arsonist, he is there to steal from his betters and to destroy, both figuratively and literally, the books sheltered by the library's walls. His folly is threatening because it is no longer contained, it spreads out and sets on fire his cultural environs to build on their ashes misshapen replicas of an exemplary past. His madness comes with selective memory and microscopia: the books are there to remind him of a recent past of personal

triumphs, they are vacuous signs of the self that justify him, rather than teach him standards of excellence.<sup>268</sup> Cibber's relationship with his books—be they authored or just owned by him—is clearly abusive, and is reflective of the nature of print culture in the first half of the century: over-using the classics for commercial profit, mangling their work to fit the taste of a public thrilled by gossip and scandal, shamelessly wrapping the vacuous in gilded covers in order to sell. The episode breathes an odd library anxiety understood not as a feeling of loss in the labyrinthine paths of information, but as a phobic impulse to control existing information triggered by one's inability to (re)produce it. The modern author's presence in the library is a cultural anomaly: Cibber's confusion of space, temporalities, and value is a consequence of his misguided relationship with his books. Although Dulness's intervention ultimately saves the library from destruction, this rescue action is falsely liberating as it is specifically directed to Cibber's books. By salvaging the hack author's work, queen Dulness propels subpar productions to notoriety, starting a process of cultural defilement through which classical works are turned to "nonsense," and "things destroy'd are swept to things unborn" (l. 242). Ironically, neither Cibber, nor queen Dulness are here to solve a crisis, but to explode it. In spite of the happy ending of the episode, Pope's verdict is unambiguous: the ruthless forces of modernity have set the library on fire.

### Heterotopias of Deviation: Body as Prison

Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies. (Aristotle, *Poetics*)

In *Peri Bathous*, Pope offers a suggestive description of the “Rhetorical Chest of Drawers” as a carefully ordered space of confinement. As the poet depicts it, the chest consists of

[...] three Stories, the highest for the Deliberative, the middle for the Demonstrative, the lowest for the Judicial. These shall be divided into Loci or Places, being Repositories for Matter and Argument in the several Kinds of Oration or Writing; and every Drawer shall again be sub-divided into Cells, resembling those of Cabinets for Rarities.<sup>269</sup>

The image of the chest provides a striking visual representation of the carceral space as an exquisite cabinet of curiosities: its stories, drawers, and cells are meant to lock up aberrant rhetorical styles in a closed space of scientific contemplation. As such, the rhetorical chest is brimming with significances: it is a space of order in which disorder is systematically displayed; it unveils the intimate connection between language, an instrument that distinguishes humans as rational beings, and madness, a malady that renders language, and thus humans, unreasonable; it is, moreover, a frantically compartmented space that aims at controlling the absurd by containing it. It is, at the same time, the virtuoso’s toy, a space of regularity, classification, and entrapment that unveils in its compulsive mechanism of normalization the psychosis of the collector himself. The cells of the chest are spaces of imprisonment but not only for the extra-ordinary object; they also display the folly of the collector, his entrapment in a space of indolence, madness, and inconsequence that unveils his microscopic view of the world.

The prison, the madhouse, and, to a large extent, the duncical body itself describe, in Foucault's terms, heterotopias of deviation, spaces "in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm" are hopelessly confined. *The Dunciad*'s insistent references to *empty*, distorted, or malfunctioning bodily spaces and their hosting environs—Bedlam, Dulness's "private Academy" of poets, Cibber's cell, the Empire of Dulness itself—suggests, as Helene Deutsch compellingly argues, that "deformity for Pope is both a biographical fact and a literary method," "a vehicle for imagining an invisible order."<sup>270</sup> Even more, I argue, it is a way of suggesting the limits of the duncical space, its carceral nature that condemns Pope's dunces to a spatial and cultural liminality. The imagery employed throughout the poem, the constant reference to maggots, embryos, madmen and monsters suggests that his dunces inhabit a peripheral space—the slum, the madhouse, the footnote, the textual appendix—a space indicative of their own marginal and inconsequential status. The mis-created duncical body inhabits an "uncreating" world of chaos and darkness, a world in which Pope's dunces are entrapped by the poem, but which they also imagine as a precisely demarcated space, manically building the walls of their own confinement.

In the opening of the poem, we are introduced to Cibber's cell, located "close to the walls where Folly holds her throne"—nothing else than the lunatic asylum Bethlehem, which is turned in the poem into the "Magnific College of Bedlam" (note to l. 33). The college is situated in Moorfields, close to Grub Street, and is flanked by two statues by Caius Gabriel Cibber, the Laureate's father: Melancholy and Raving Madness. The statues are identified as "Cibber's brazen, brainless brothers," and an extended footnote explains the connection between dullness and madness in the following terms:



The cell of poor Poetry is here very properly represented as a little *unendowed Hall* in the neighbourhood of the Magnific *College* of Bedlam; and as the surest Seminary to supply those learned walls with Professors. For there cannot be a plainer indication of madness than in men's persisting to starve themselves and offend the public by scribbling ("Escape in Monsters, and amaze the town"), when they might have benefited themselves and others in profitable and honest employments. The *Qualities* and *Productions* of the students of this private Academy are afterwards described in this first book; as are also their *Actions* throughout the second; by which it appears, how near allied Dulness is to Madness. This naturally prepares us for the subject of the third book, where we find them in union, and acting in conjunction to produce the Catastrophe of the fourth; a mad poetical Sibyl leading our Hero through the Regions of Vision, to animate him in the present undertaking, by a view of the past triumphs of Barbarism over Science.

The "private" nature of this Academy points to its exclusionary nature: this space is restricted to unworthy scribblers who produce "nameless Somethings," and imagine themselves as educators of the nation. The Academy, however, is nonetheless a penitentiary; as Foucault explains in his analysis of the carceral, the madhouse, the prison and the workhouse function as chief centers of confinement, they are all part of the same disciplinary network meant to regulate the deviant by containing it.<sup>271</sup> "The public" is offended by the scribbler's lack of a "profitable and honest employment," and therefore acts in a segregationist way: dullness should remain private, restricted from circulation, and its social uselessness carefully controlled. The dullness of the scribbler is a species of madness in that it doesn't produce a valuable result either for society or for the dunces themselves: the scribblers "starve themselves" with no apparent purpose other than offending the public with sub-par productions. As such, it must be perceived, as Foucault has argued, "through a condemnation of idleness": "If there is, in classical madness, something which refers elsewhere, and to other things, it is no longer because the madman comes from the world of the irrational and bears its stigmata; rather, it is because he crosses the frontiers of

bourgeois order of his own accord, and alienates himself outside the sacred limits of its ethic.”<sup>272</sup>

We should remember that the added fourth book of *The Dunciad* is expanded to include a number of episodes exemplifying the “employment” of a particular category of dunces, the “Indolents”: its representatives are engaged “in the study of Butterflies, Shells, Birds-nests, Moss, etc. but with particular caution not to proceed beyond Trifles, to any useful or extensive views of Nature, or of the Author of nature.” Both the language of the note and the description of the Indolents in the Argument to Book IV are striking in their employment of economic terms that establish clear distinctions between the private nature of the cell, madhouse, or the virtuoso’s collection and the public realm of shared benefits and profit.

Interestingly, the alliance between Dulness and Madness is also expressed in spatial terms: the two are “near” not only in terms of their close family relationship (Cibber’s association with his “Brothers at Bedlam”), but also in its spatial coordinates (Cibber’s cell is “close” to the Bethlehem mental hospital). Moreover, Cibber himself is described elsewhere as “Bedlam’s Prophet,” a designation that calls attention to a typological, but also topographical inclusion. The Hobbesian differences between dullness and madness seem to have collapsed here, being relegated from the realm of emotion to one of public action: whereas in the *Leviathan* dullness is described as displaying “weak,” or “defective” passions, and madness as “an excess of passion,”<sup>273</sup>—the two being, in other words, polar opposites—in *The Dunciad* they share the same space, the same blood, and the same spectatorial politics. The public games following Cibber’s coronation in the second book are, the note implies, examples of folly gone wild, dullness escaped in the space of the city to rewrite its laws in a carnivalesque way. As a

“threatening space of absolute freedom,” the “unreason”—be it dullness or madness—reinvents the space of the city and turns upside down its established order.<sup>274</sup>

The disciplinary effort of the “public” is justified, therefore, by the fact that the scribblers’ madness produces monsters, and their unified actions are meant to lead to a historical “catastrophe.” The dunces’ “productions”—malformed or aborted bodies—are threatening because they have the potential of escaping from this careful confinement and contaminate the civilized world:

How hints, like spawn, scarce quick in embryo lie,  
How new-born nonsense first is taught to cry,  
Maggots half-form’d in rhyme exactly meet,  
And learn to crawl upon poetic feet.  
Here one poor word an hundred clenches makes,  
And ductile dulness new meanders takes;  
There motley Images her fancy strike,  
Figures ill pair’d, and Similies unlike.  
She sees a Mob of Metaphors advance,  
Pleas’d with the madness of the mazy dance...  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, 55-68)

The metonymy works here beautifully: the mad scribbler escapes his confinement through his own “new-born nonsense,” the aborted work is the (mad)man himself, the “motley Images” are physical manifestations of the lunatic’s *imaginarium*. The spawn, the embryo, the crawling maggots, the indistinguishable and mob-like productions of the scribbler’s mind are, to use Bakhtinian terms, bodies “in the act of becoming,”<sup>275</sup> newborns coming out of Cibber’s cell as from a mother’s womb. While seemingly fecund, the cell is nevertheless the host of an unseen disease that distorts the bodies of the newly born, or hinders their complete development. These “unformed things” (note to l. 55-56) made into Poems and Plays are nonsensical in their “ill-pair’d” images and “unlike” employment of similarities: they are not only repulsive in

themselves, as bodies ill-formed that miraculously survive to claim a place among rational beings, but also as bodies of work that fill in the marketplace with the dissipation, stupidity, or madness of their authors.

The episode is a masterpiece of beautiful display of the ugly, an exquisite example of what David Fairer has called “the unashamed beauty”<sup>276</sup> of some of the most offensive passages of *The Dunciad*. The neat parallel structure of the couplet (“How hints, like spawn, scarce quick in embryo lie/How new-born nonsense first is taught to cry...”), the fluidity of the lines suggesting the serpent-like trajectory of dullness (“And ductile dulness new meanders takes...”), the adeptness of the rhyme supporting the message of the verse through parings of similar sounds (lie/cry, meet/feet, strike/unlike), the carnivalesque movement of the scene suggestive of the disorder defining the dunces’ creations—are all aesthetically appealing while also highly effective in depicting one of the most unsightly scenes of the poem. This is also a particularly relevant episode as it is one of the rare moments when Pope includes himself as an illustrative example in his argument. The note to line 63 (“Here one poor word an hundred clenches makes...”) elaborates on John Dennis’s inconsistency in applying his own aesthetic rules (i.e. to restrain oneself from using puns as substitutes for sound judgment) when attacking Pope for his religious beliefs and physical deformity:

63./ It may not be amiss to give an instance or two of these operations of *Dulness* out of the Works of her Sons, celebrated in the Poem. A great Critic formerly held these clenches in such abhorrence, that he declared “he that would pun would pick a pocket.” Yet Mr. Dennis’s works afford us notable examples in this kind: “*Alexander Pope* hath sent abroad into the world as many *Bulls* as his namesake *Pope Alexander*. ---Let us take the initial and final letters of his Name, viz. A. P---E, and they give you the idea of an *Ape*. --- *Pope* comes from the Latin word *Popa*, which signifies a little Wart; or from *poppysma*, because he

was continually *popping* out squibs of wit, or rather *Popysmata*, or *Popisms*.” Dennis on *Hom.* and Daily Journal, June 11, 1728.

Although he was the most distinguished critic of his time, Dennis’ judgment of value is blurred here by personal animosities against Pope and an unrestrained temperament that won him one of the most notorious places in *The Dunciad*. But the note is also significant for its employment of the same theme of the deformed, or grotesque body from a new angle when applied to the poet himself. Whereas the poem elaborates on the ill-formed bodies as signifiers for lack of value, bad moral character, or short-lived literary productions, the footnote points to the meaningless attack on the poet for his physical deformity that renders him, in the punologist’s view, inhuman. The allusion to Pope’s diminished stature or to his ape-like appearance caused by Pott’s disease is an indication here of the critic’s despicable moral character, veiled under a clever discussion of Dennis’s theoretical inconsistencies. The text and the note point to the complex implications of physical deformity in the poet’s life and work: as Deutsch pointedly notes, “to read Pope’s deformity is to delineate the limits of form itself for his cultural field; it is to see the reflection of this poetry’s finished surface, the roots of his hard-won Augustan ‘originality,’ the marks of his monumental cultural entrepreneurship and self-possession, in illicit ambiguity” (12). Pope’s own authorial projection is obviously at odds with the diminished image of his body, but this particular textual moment seems to suggest more than that: the description of the body as a recipient of moral character and talent conflicts here with its description as a carceral space in which the dunces and the poet himself are irreversibly trapped. Describing himself somewhere else as “the Least Thing Like a Man in England,”<sup>277</sup> Pope admits to a social impotence that condemns him to the isolation of his library, “the only place where I make a figure,” “seated with

dignity on the most conspicuous Shelves...”<sup>278</sup> Pope’s words are strangely evocative of the scene in which Cibber contemplates his books in his fictional library, and suggests the complicated relationship between the author and his oeuvre, between his physical or moral deformity and the material or figurative expression of his work. The dignified “figure” Pope makes through his exemplary works is implicitly contrasted here with the image of Cibber’s “mangled” books: Pope’s misshapen body is thus a recipient of judgement and wit, whereas Cibber’s spectatorial body is a gilded cover that hides the author’s moral deformity.

The enclosures that surround Cibber, the future King of the Dunces, have impenetrable walls: the Cave of Poetry and Poverty, his “Gothic library,” the dreamscape of his future empire are confined spaces where the hero does very little and the little he does is of no real consequence. Cibber’s only voluntary act in the poem, his unsuccessful attempt to set on fire his works, is hindered by Queen Dulness who crowns him as King Log. What follows for Cibber is just a sequence of moving scenes that place him in a spectatorial role: the public games during the coronation day, the long dream vision in Book III, and the deep sleep of the hero throughout the last book of the poem describe Cibber as incapable of any self-initiated act. Cibber’s confinement, though, is not counter-productive: in spite of inevitable casualties of ill-formed “embryos” and aborted bodies, “Bays’ monster-breeding breast” (I, l. 108) feeds a large “mass of Nonsense” consisting of “imps,” “monsters” (III, l. 238), and “Sooterkins of Wit” (I, l. 126). Moreover, the king feverishly recycles “things destroy’d” to “things unborn” (I, l. 242) in a manic impulse that resembles the busy industriousness of the mentally insane. Cibber’s descent to the underworld in the third book of the poem is just another opportunity for the undertextual commentator to elaborate on the close relationship between dullness and madness:

15.] This allegory is extremely just, no conformation of the mind so much subjecting it to real *Madness*, as that which produces real *Dulness*. (...) But the common people have been taught (I do not know on what foundation) to regard Lunacy as a mark of *Wit*, just as the Turks and our modern Methodists do of *Holiness*. But if the cause of Madness assigned by a great Philosopher be true, it will unavoidably fall upon the dunces. He supposes it to be the *dwelling over long on one object or idea* : Now as this attention is occasioned either by Grief or Study, it will be fixed by Dulness; which hath not quickness enough to comprehend what it seeks, nor force and vigour enough to divert the imagination from the object it laments.

Confined in his own mind “refin’d from Reason” (III, l. 6), Cibber imagines a space of dullness that encompasses the whole world, with its epicenter in contemporary London. The king is the victim of his obsession with his own cultural consequence: “dwelling over long” on the same idea and incapable of comprehending the end result of his acts, Cibber delves in his own dreams of grandeur that feed his delusion while disguising his entrapment in a very narrow mental space.

The theme of the ill-formed body is rehearsed again in the second book of *The Dunciad*, during the famous episode of the booksellers’ chase after “phantom More.” The episode, whose main protagonists are Bernard Lintot and Edmund Curll, two of the most productive publishers of the time, presents them in the race to catch the “phantom” of James Moore Smythe, better known at the time for his comedy, *The Rival Modes* (1727). The playwright is presented here as a plagiarist, that is, having only the *appearance* of an author, and hence his phantasmagoric representation:

All as a partridge plump, full-fed, and fair,  
 She form’d this image of well-body’d air;  
 With pert flat eyes she window’d well its head;  
 A brain of feathers, and a heart of lead;  
 And empty words she gave, and sounding strain,  
 But senseless, lifeless! idol void and vain!  
 Never was dash’d out, at one lucky hit,  
 A fool, so just a copy of a wit;

So like, that critics said, and courtiers swore,  
 A Wit it was, and call'd the phantom More.  
 (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, l. 41-50)

The episode alludes to Moore Smythe's inclusion of eight lines authored by Pope in *The Rival Modes*, after the poet withdrew his permission to use them. In spite of the bad reception of the play, Bernard Lintot, one of the main participants in the race, published it and offered the author a generous £105 as copyright payment. Moore's representation as a vacuous body ("idol void and vain") describes him as an absence—of sense, sentiments, and decorum—and also as a lost "prize" for Lintot, whose stinginess at paying Pope for his translation of the *Odyssey* triggered the poet's resentment. Moore's emptiness, his "well-body'd air," or, as seen when Curll tries to grab his prize, his "shapeless shade" of a "tall Nothing" stand for the lack of talent, reason, and value, but also for an incapacitating disorder: the play on words involved in the use of his name ("moria," or folly and "moron," stupid fellow) suggests, in an oblique way, the connection between dullness and madness, between the innocuous lightness of a dunce's brain ("a brain of feathers") and the insanity of imagining his work as having any cultural value whatsoever (Moore as a "fictitious" author). The "phantom" is just an illusion, the "shade" of a body whose literary and use value is grossly overestimated.

In a fundamental study for the understanding of the complex interrelationship between place, body and discourse, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White address an apparent paradox that defines the poetry of the "great champions of classical discursive body" such as Dryden, Swift and Pope: the fact that

[they] spent so much time writing the grotesque, exorcising it, charging it to others, using and adopting its very terms whilst attempting to purify the language of the tribe. The production and reproduction of a body of classical writing



required a labor of suppression, a perpetual work of exclusion upon the grotesque body and it was that supplementary yet unavoidable labour which troubled the identity of the classical. It brought the grotesque back into the classical, not so much as a return of the repressed but as a vast labour of exclusion requiring and generating its own equivocal energies. [...] It was the natural site for this labour of projection and repulsion upon which the construction of the public sphere depended.<sup>279</sup>

The creation of the bourgeois public sphere is thus intimately related to a process of regulating the grotesque collective body by exposing it for what it really is. It involves a process of negation, contestation, and inversion that transforms the real space of the city and the body of its denizens into fictional spaces of entrapment and ridicule. The Augustan satire contains the deviant in its amber drop in order to preserve the public's sanity and draw clear demarcation lines between the classic and the popular, the high and the low. From this perspective, Pope's work reflects a clear effort to discipline public behavior by translating cultural trends in physical representations of deformity and excess. The vacuous, deformed, or malfunctioning bodies in *The Dunciad* are heterotopic spaces in which dullness, ineptness, and madness are contained. They are described in the poem in a language that suggests a clear association between the monstrous and the morally defiled, between ill-formed bodies and aesthetically subpar literary productions. Physical deformity is thus a pointer of moral deformity and of the dangers posed by passions when not ruled by the intellect. Significantly, Pope's dunces inhabit spaces adjacent to institutions for the mentally insane, spaces described as private, cavernous and confined. Their imaginary escape outside the limits of this confinement is an assault of the deviant against the norm, an escape of the private outdoors, in the public space of the city. The consequences of this breakout are momentous: they involve a systemic process of replacing classical order with the

manic disorder of modernity that gains physical representation in the deformed bodies produced by a bedlamite's imagination. In Pope's understanding of the term, being "modern" translates in a mental deformity that his dunces share unaware of its zombification effect.

### *Coda: The Beauties of Pope*

In spite of his compulsive effort of self-definition and cultural authorization, Pope's immediate posterity showed a reception of his work that the poet might have found odd. In his *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1756), Joseph Warton's predicted that "the reputation of Pope, as a poet, among posterity, will be principally owing to *Windsor-Forest*, his *Rape of the Lock*, and his *Eloisa to Abelard*"—"for Wit and Satire are transitory and perishable, but Nature and Passion are eternal."<sup>280</sup> Collected *Beauties of Pope* published in 1783 and 1796, respectively, were prefaced by edulcorated accounts of the poet's life and his "poetical character" that underscored his physical disability and behavioral oddities. The volumes contained "beautiful Incidents, Situations and Descriptions" excerpted from Pope's work, as well as "epistolary beauties" that sampled "several entertaining extracts from Mr. Pope's private letters to his friends."<sup>281</sup> The selections included pastoral poetry, philosophical or moral pieces, Horatian imitations, select passages from his longer poems and, in the 1796 edition, excerpts from his famous translations of Homer. The popular culture of the time seemed to have preserved the same one-sided image of the poet. A beautiful 1793 handkerchief, now in the Lewis Walpole library collections, displayed Pope's portrait flanked by the words "Valentine's Day" and a scene of courtship accompanied by pastoral verses of unknown authorship—an interesting pointer of Pope's popularity as a pastoral poet at the turn of the century. A new audience, more concerned

with the depth of one's feelings and idealized representations of the poet as a liminal figure reinvents Pope as a solitary genius who wrote his "beautiful" oeuvre in his country retreat at Twickenham.<sup>282</sup>

Interestingly, this strange process of reassessment starts working its way during the last years of the poet's life, transforming him into a celebrity figure the public admires and belittles at the same time. Here is Sir Boswell's depiction of Pope in 1742, two years before his death, during Lord Oxford's auction of paintings at Covent Garden:

The room was much crowded. Pope came in. Immediately it was mentioned he was there, a lane was made for him to walk through. [He soon heard the name of Mr. Pope, Mr. Pope, whispered from every mouth... Immediately every person drew back to make a free passage for the distinguished poet, and all those on each side held out their hands for him to touch as he passed.] Everyone in the front rows by a kind of enthusiastic impulse shook hands with him. Reynolds did likewise with the rest and was very happy in having that opportunity. Pope was seldom seen in public, so it was a great sight to see him. [He was, according to Sir Joshua's account, about four feet six high; very humpbacked and deformed; he wore a black coat; and according to the fashion of that time, had on a little sword.]<sup>283</sup>

Pope's public appearance is presented as a public event, and bears all the marks of an extraordinary encounter with a celebrity figure. It is a telling account of Pope's recognition as a "distinguished poet" not by his equals, but by an anonymous crowd that reacts in the same way in the presence of a canonical figure as any current audience: holding out their hands, touching his body, expressing their veneration by reaching out to him in order to validate his extraordinary physical presence. Pope's arrival triggers the crowd's excitement but also its compassionate—or disparaging—remarks: his "great sight" is juxtaposed in the above account to remarks about his undersized body, embellished by a "little sword." Moreover, the very idea of a "fashionable"

deformed body contains an exceptional allure given its mixed messages of power and vulnerability, representativeness and solitude, sensationalism and frailty.

Significantly, the above portrait records none of the poet's reactions. One can only wonder what Pope was thinking at that moment, surrounded by an excited crowd, shaking hands with people he didn't know, hearing his name whispered around the room. The encounter may have made him painfully aware of his own physical deformity, or may have triggered an ironic remembrance of a similar scene from his *Dunciad*, in which Queen Dulness is surrounded by an "involuntary throng" of dunces, caught in the vortex of her power:

And now had Fame's posterior Trumpet blown,  
And all the Nations summon'd to the Throne.  
The young, the old, who feel her inward sway,  
One instinct seizes, and transports away.  
None need a guide, by sure Attraction led,  
And strong impulsive gravity of Head:  
None want a place, for all their Centre found,  
Hung to the Goddess, and coher'd around.  
Not closer, orb in orb, conglob'd are seen  
The buzzing Bees about their dusky Queen.  
(*The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV, 71-80)

Turned into a celebrity figure, Pope is no longer seen as a vitriolic presence, but as a cultural paragon whose work sets standards of excellence for years to come. The irony of the situation is that, in this position, he participates in a process of commodification that turns the poet into a *summa* of his parts: the interest in the artist is replaced by an interest in his deformed body, and his work is seen as an excerpted collection of "beauties" that the public consumes in small bits. Embalming his dunces in the amber of his satire, Pope, in turn, is worked into a public figure by a celebrity system against which he seemed to have fought—or manipulated—his whole

life. Celebrated by a duncical world, Alexander Pope emerges as a paradoxical victor in his lost crusade against modernity.

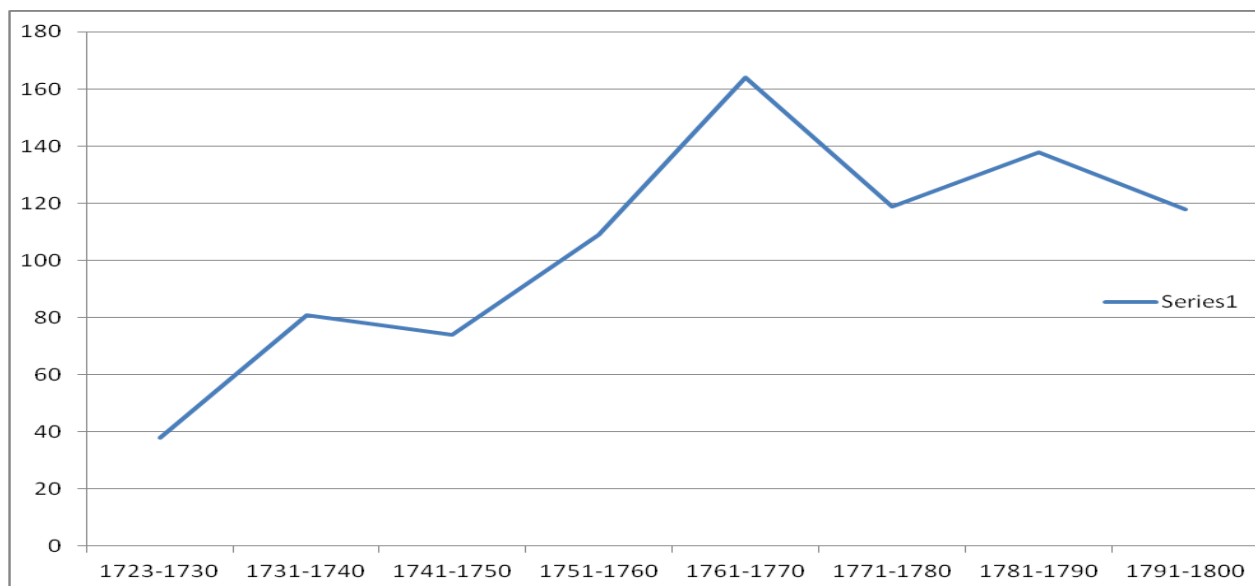
## Annex I



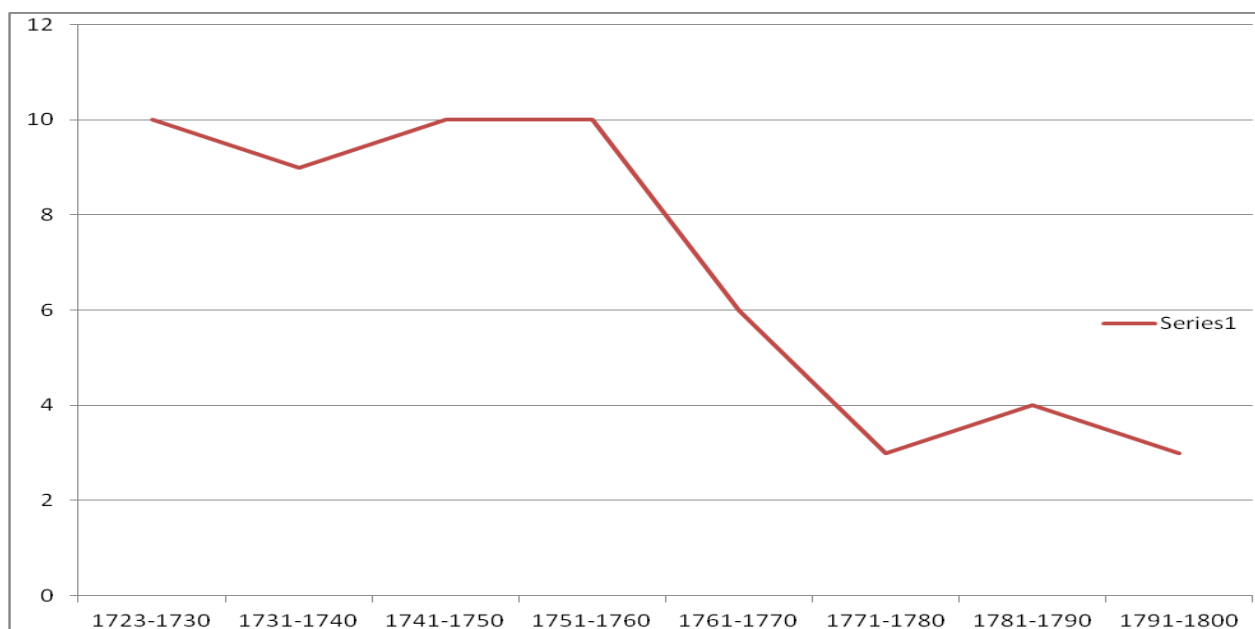
Figure 1. John Strype, *A New Plan of the City of London, Westminster and Southwark*, in *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (London: Printed for A. Churchill et al., 1720). Motco Enterprises Limited, [www.motco.com](http://www.motco.com).

## Annex II

## Scriblerus in the Public Sphere, 1723-1800



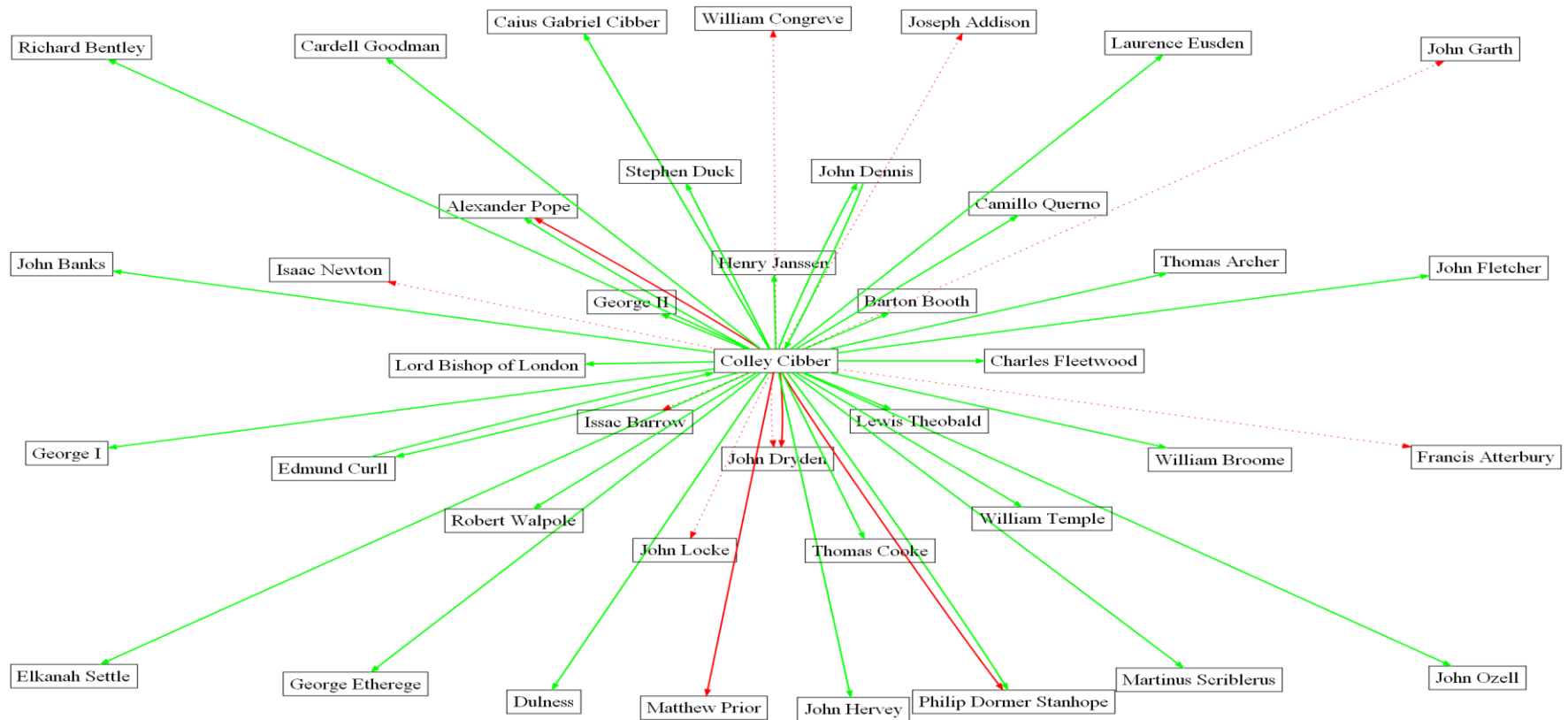
**Figure 2.** 841 works mentioning Scriblerus in the entire document between 1723 and 1800 (ECCO); this data includes reprints.



**Figure 3.** 55 works attributed to Scriblerus, his relatives, or in which Scriblerus is a main character between 1723 and 1800 (ECCO); this data does not include reprints.

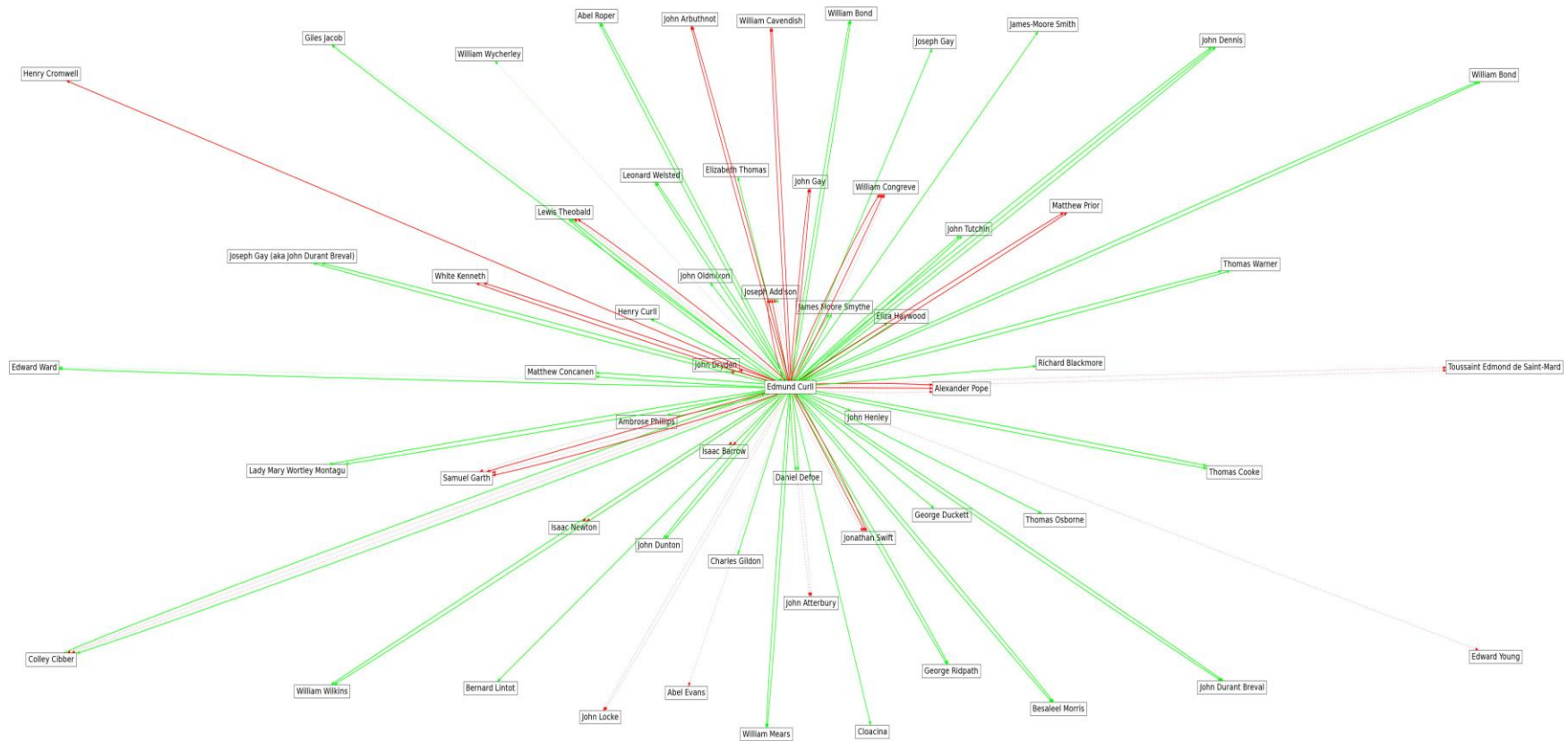
### Annex III

#### *The Dunciad's Social Networks*

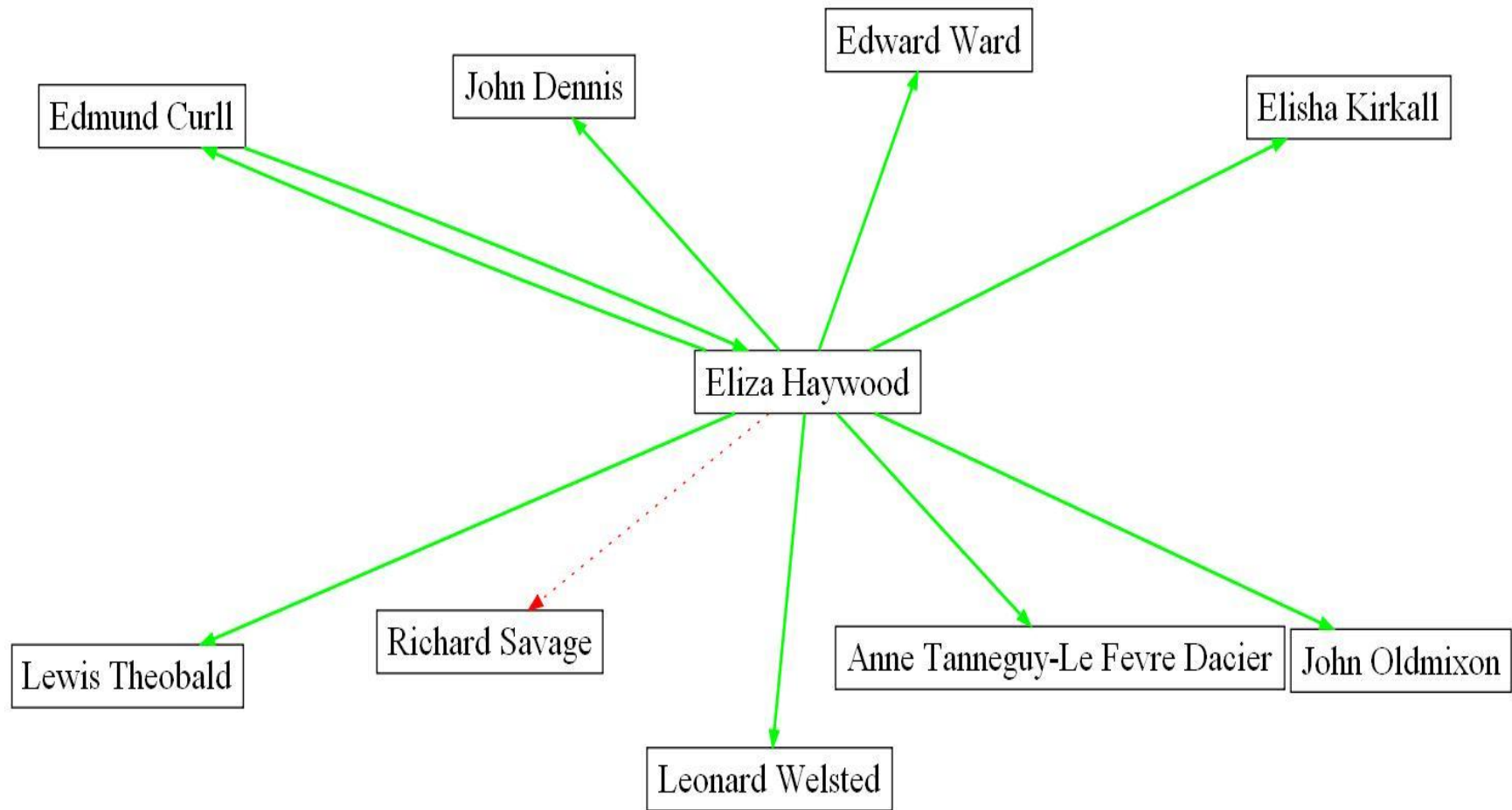


**Figure 4.** Graph describing Colley Cibber's relations in poem and apparatus (NEATO). The relations described indicate similarity (green), dissimilarity (dotted red), characters attacked (red), and characters defended (dotted green). The ratio of Cibber's presence in poem and apparatus is 40:73.

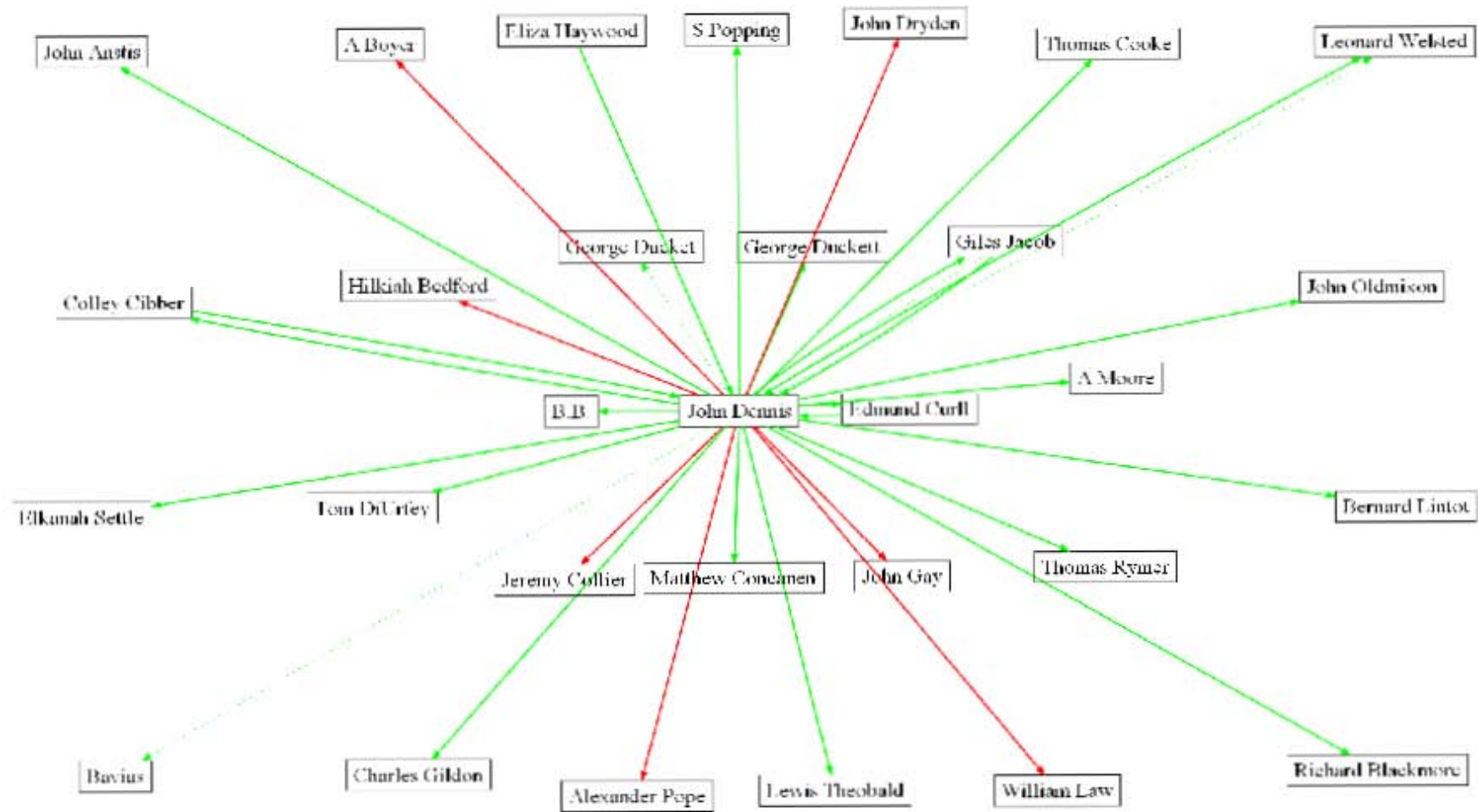




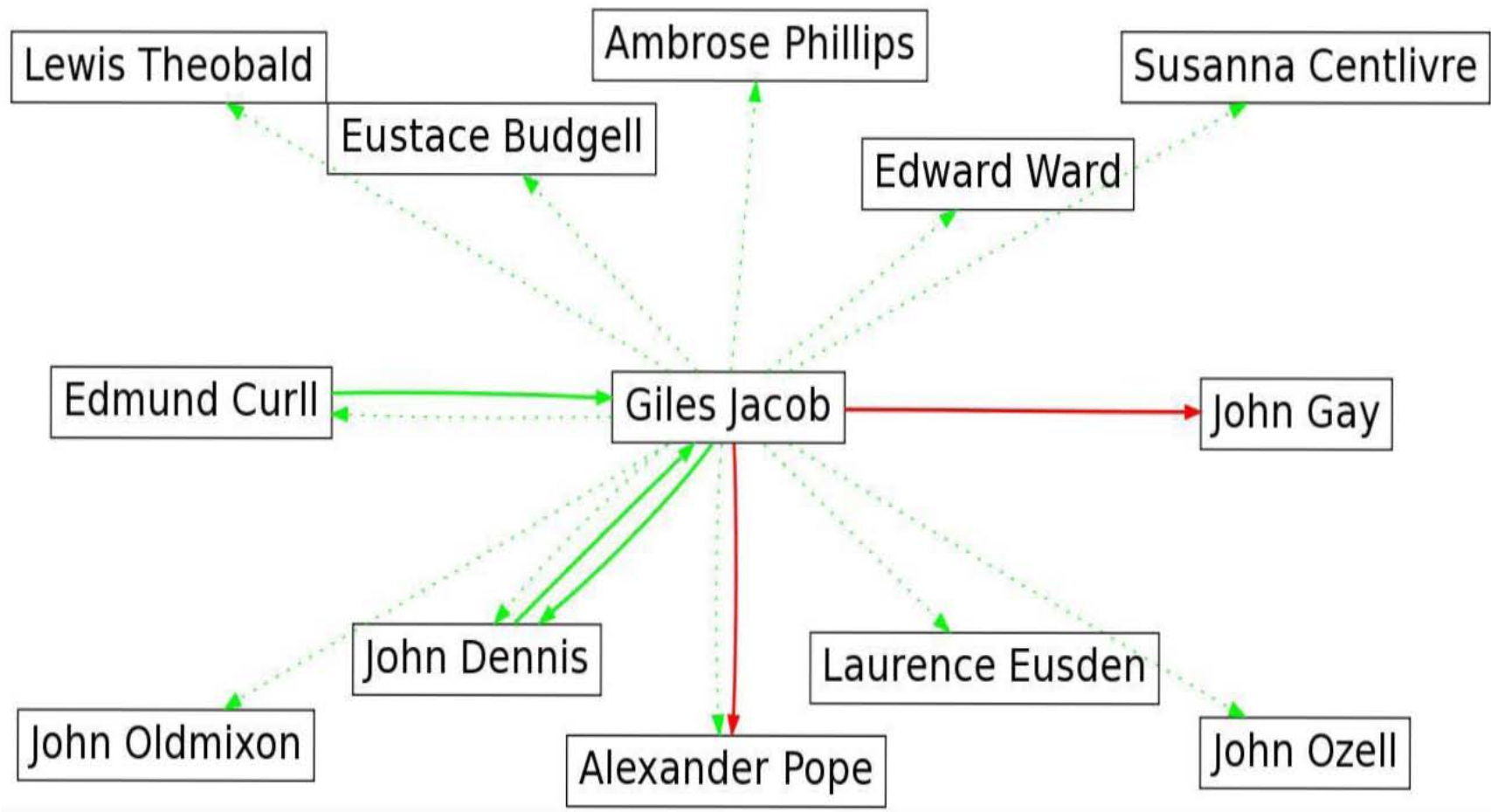
**Figure 5.** Graph describing Edmund Curll's relations in poem and apparatus (NEATO). The relations described indicate similarity (green), dissimilarity (dotted red), characters attacked (red), and characters defended (dotted green). The ratio of Curll's presence in poem and apparatus is 11:55.



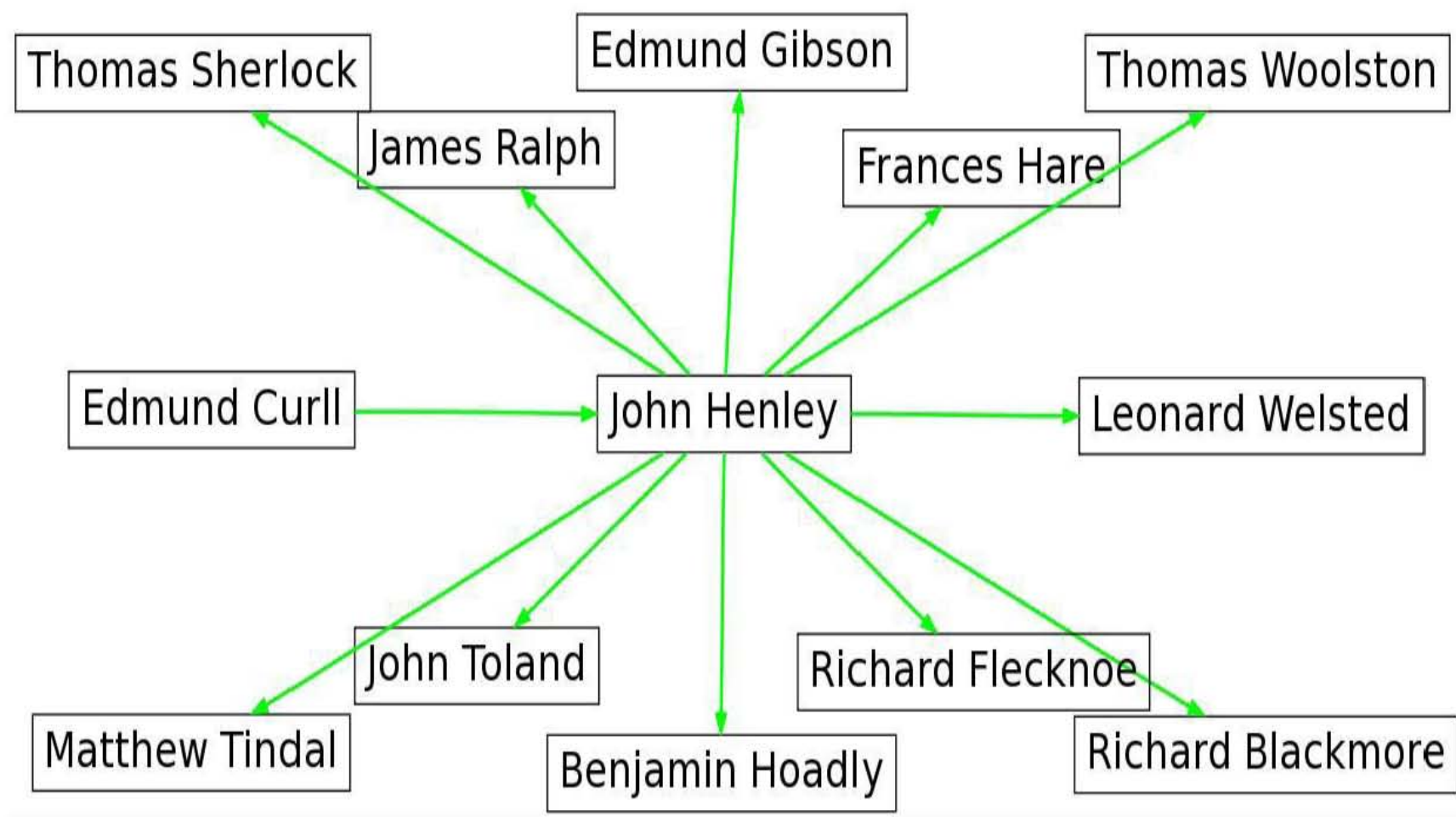
**Figure 6.** Graph describing Eliza Haywood's relations in poem and apparatus (NEATO). The relations described indicate dissimilarity (dotted red), and her relationship with characters sharing similar attributes (green). The ratio of Haywood's presence in poem and apparatus is 3:15.



**Figure 7.** Graph describing John Dennis’s relations in poem and apparatus (NEATO). The relations described indicate similarity (green), dissimilarity (dotted red), characters attacked (red), and characters defended (dotted green). The ratio of Dennis’s presence in poem and apparatus is 2:92.



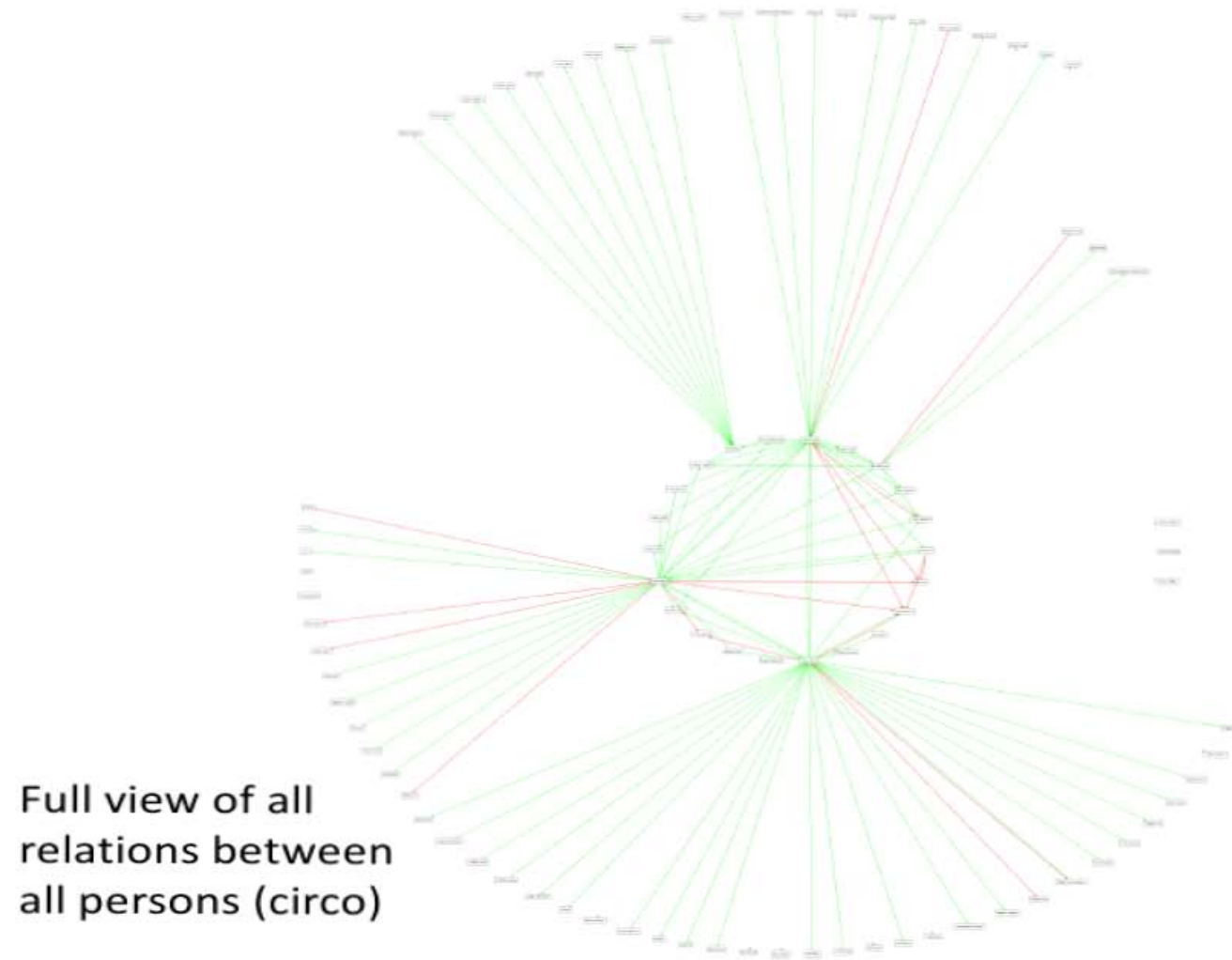
**Figure 8.** Graph describing Giles Jacob's relations in poem and apparatus (NEATO). The relations described indicate similarity (green), characters attacked (red), and characters defended (dotted green). The ratio of Jacob's presence in poem and apparatus is 1:21.



**Figure 9.** Graph describing John “Orator” Henley’s relations in poem and apparatus (NEATO). The relations described indicate his relationship with characters sharing similar attributes (green). The ratio of Henley’s presence in poem and apparatus is 5:4.

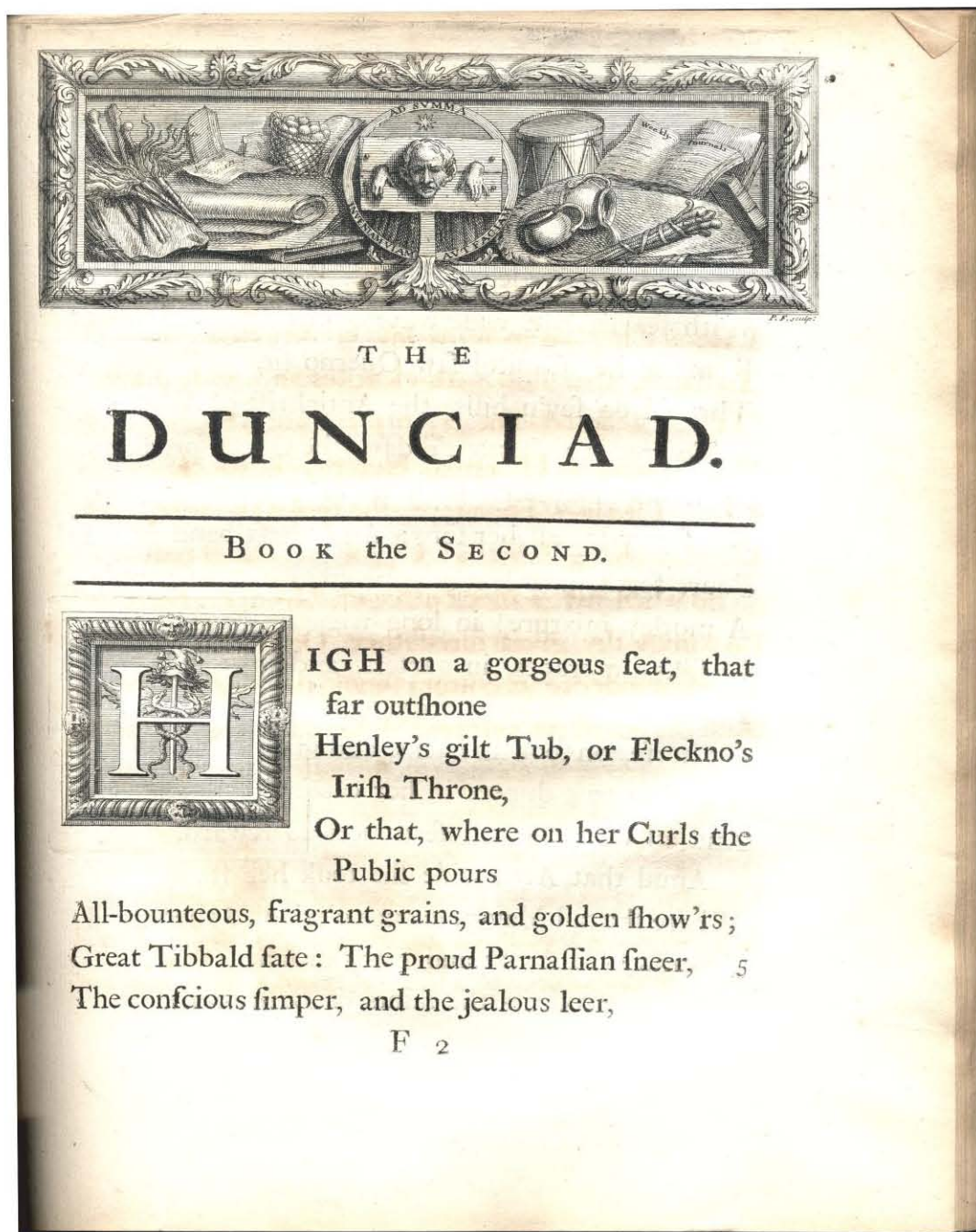






**Figure 11.** *The Inner Circle.* Full view of all relations of the six dunces considered (CIRCO). The graph evidences the intersecting trajectories of the characters who appear in more than one network, a nucleus of recurring names that identifies the main protagonists of the poem and apparatus.

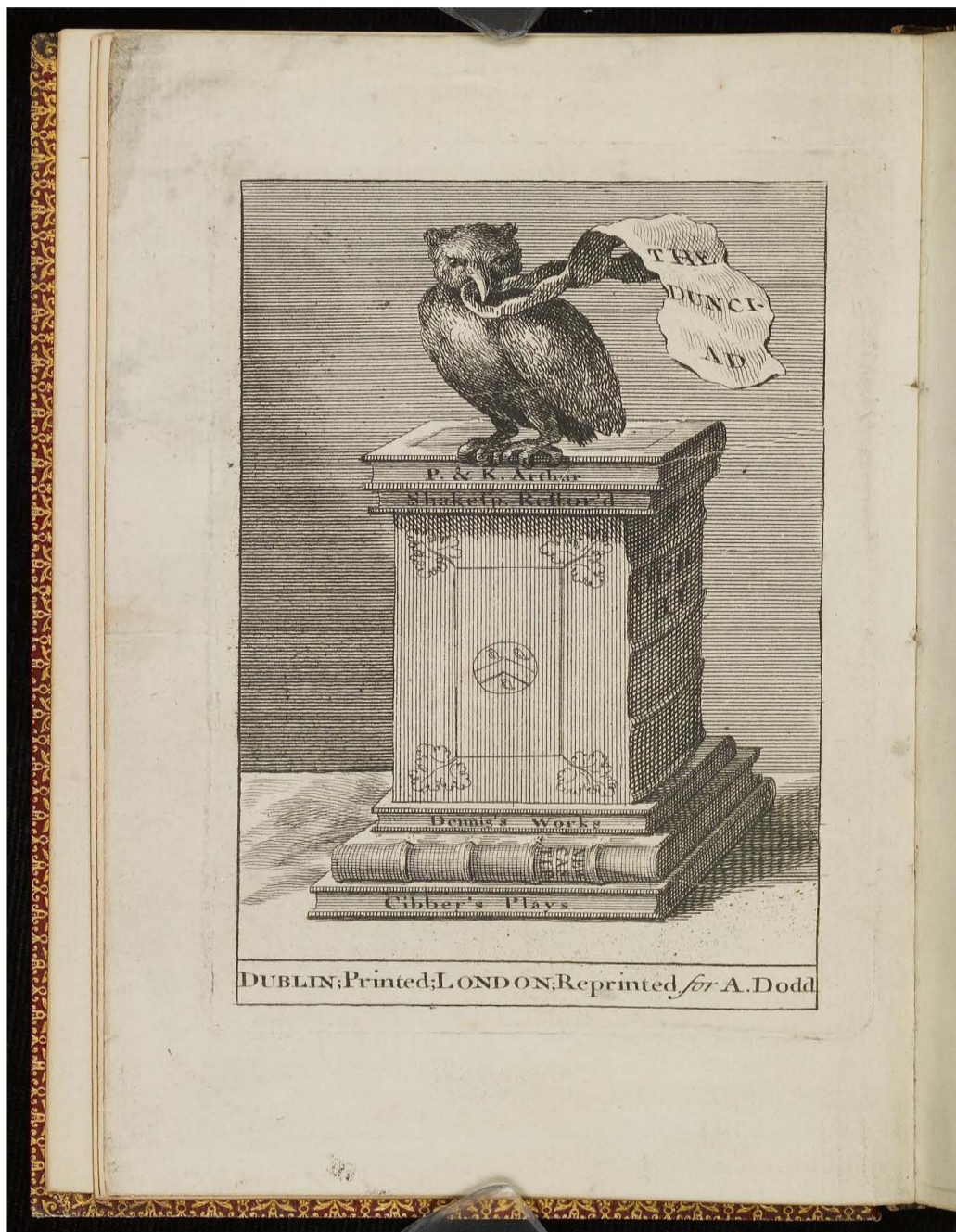
## Annex IV



**Figure 12.** Page containing the headpiece to Book II of *The Dunciad Variorum*, published in *The Works of Mr. Alexander Pope*, vol. 2, 1735. Courtesy of Professor David Vander Meulen, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.



## Annex V



**Figure 13.** The owl frontispiece to *The Dunciad: An Heroic Poem, In three Books*, 1728 (Special collections, Call No. PR 3625.A1 1728). Courtesy of the University of Virginia Library.



## Annex VI



**Figure 14.** Title-page of *The Dunciad, Variorum. With the Prolegomena of Scriblerus* (1729), containing the image of the ass. Courtesy of Professor David Vander Meulen, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

## Annex VII

## Book II. The DUNCIAD.

83

- With arms expanded Bernard rows his state,  
 And left-legg'd Jacob seems to emulate.  
 Full in the middle way there stood a lake,  
 70 Which Curl's Corinna chanc'd that morn to make :  
 (Such was her wont, at early dawn to drop  
 Her evening cates before his neighbour's shop,)  
 Here fortun'd Curl to slide ; loud shout the band,  
 And Bernard ! Bernard ! rings thro' all the Strand.  
 75 Obscene with filth the miscreant lies bewray'd,  
 Fal'n in the plash his wickedness had laid :

## REMARKS.

VER. 70. *Curl's Corinna*] This name, it seems, was taken by one Mrs. T——, who procured some private letters of Mr. Pope's, while almost a boy, to Mr. Cromwell, and sold them without the consent of either of those Gentlemen to Curl, who printed them in 12mo, 1727. He discovered her to be the publisher, in his Key, p. 11. We only take this opportunity of mentioning the manner in which those letters got abroad, which the author was ashamed of as very trivial things, full not only of levities, but of wrong judg-

ments of men and books, and only excusable from the youth and inexperience of the writer.

VER. 75. *Obscene with filth, &c.*] Though this incident may seem too low and base for the dignity of an Epic poem, the learned very well know it to be but a copy of Homer and Virgil ; the very words *ὄψ'ε* and *simus* are used by them, though our poet (in compliance to modern nicety) has remarkably enriched and coloured his language, as well as raised the versification, in this Episode, and in the fol-

## IMITATIONS.

VER. 73. *Here fortun'd Curl to slide ;*]

*Labiur infelix, cæsis ut forte juvenis  
 Fusus humum viridesque super madefecerat herbas —  
 Concidit, immundoque fimo, sacroque cruore.*

Virg. *Æn.* v. of Nisus.

VER. 70. *And Bernard ! Bernard !*]

— *Ut littus, Hyla, Hyla, omne sonaret.*

L 2

Virg. *Ecl.* vi.

**Figure 15.** A page in *The Dunciad in Four Books* (1743) showing the complex display of the footnotes: the parallel columns suggest the vocal dialogue between the Moderns, while the separate rubrics, *Imitations* and *Remarks*, suggest the categorical split between Pope's contemporaries and his exemplary Ancient models.



## Annex VIII



**Figure 16.** Colley Cibber setting on fire his books. Illustration to Book I of *The Dunciad in Four Books*, published in *The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq.*, vol. 5, 1751. Courtesy of Professor David Vander Meulen, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books*, ed. by Valerie Rumbold (New York: Pearson Education Ltd, 1999). Subsequent references to Pope's poem are to this edition; book and line numbers are given within the text.

<sup>2</sup> Laura Brown, *Alexander Pope* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 3.

<sup>3</sup> J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels. The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Letter sent by Jonathan Swift to Pope on July 16, 1728. See *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), vol. 2, 504.

<sup>5</sup> Pat Rogers, *Hacks and Dunces. Pope, Swift and the Grub Street* (London and New York: Methuen, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> Pat Rogers, *Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Aubrey L. Williams's *Pope's Dunciad. A Study of Its Meaning* (Archon Books, 1968).

<sup>8</sup> Jakob Nielsen, *Hypertext & Hypermedia* (Boston: Academic Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16 (1986), 24.

<sup>10</sup> Aubrey L. Williams's *Pope's Dunciad. A Study of Its Meaning*, Pat Roger's *Hacks and Dunces. Pope, Swift and Grub Street*, and Douglas Brooks-Davies's *Pope's Dunciad and the Queen of Night. A Study in Emotional Jacobitism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) remain, to date, the most insightful analyses of the events depicted in the second book of the poem.

<sup>11</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 124.

<sup>12</sup> Hunter, op. cit., 116-17.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur J. Weitzman, "Eighteenth-Century London: Urban Paradise or Fallen City?" *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36, No. 3 (1975), 474.

<sup>14</sup> The threat of the dull and dullness was a pervasive literary theme before and even more forcefully after the publication of *The Dunciad*. The following are only some of the works in which Dulness is mentioned either as a social disease or as an allegorical character, published before 1728: John Dryden, *MacFlecknoe* (1678; 1682), Thomas Brown, "To the Cheapside Knight, on his Satyr against Wit" and "Epigram upon King Arthur" (1700), Lady Mary Chudleigh, *The Female Advocate* (1700), Samuel Cobb, *Poetae Britannici* (1700), Digby Cotes, "Upon the Death of Mr. Dryden" (1700), Edward Ward, "A Paradise of Pleasure" (1700), Thomas Yalden, "The Temple of Fame" (1700), Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), William Wycherley, "To A Young Courtier" (1704) and "A Panegyrick on Dulness" (1728), Richard Blackmore, *The Kit-Cats* (1708), Alexander Pope, "On Silence" (1702; 1712) and *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), Thomas Newcomb, *Bibliotheca* (1712), Henry More, *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* (1712/13), Lewis Theobald, *The Cave of Poverty* (1715), Leonard Welsted, "Triumvirate, or a Letter in Verse from Palemon to Celia from Bath" (1717). However, as both Aubrey Williams

and Emrys Jones suggested, the interest in the theme can be traced back to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* (1509), or to the Renaissance authors' concern with true fame.

Even more interesting for the political context in which the poem was published, the stereotype of the Dutch dullness was widely circulated at the time (Arthur Wilson mentioned it in his *History of Great Britain* published in 1653), possibly triggering Pope's idea of an epic dedicated to a royal Dulness as a political attack on George II. As we know, the German province of Hanover was bordering the Netherlands and the two territories were often conflated, both spatially and symbolically, given their common denomination. The "Low Dutch" area described at the time both the sea coast of Germany and the north and north-west territories of the Netherlands and Flanders; on Isaac Tirion's 1733 map, *Nieuwe Kaart van Europa*, Dutchland indicates the actual territory of Germany.

<sup>15</sup> Cynthia Wall, *The Literary and Cultural Spaces of Restoration London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 127-30.

<sup>16</sup> Tucker, qtd. in Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 147.

<sup>17</sup> The few titles mentioned are, of course, only the tip of the iceberg. To give an idea of how pervasive the street imagery was in the literature of the time, I list here a number of lesser known works, in their order of publication. This selection is, again, only illustrative; the simple browsing of the titles indicates the range of concerns raised by the urban growth throughout the century: Th. Brown, *Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London* (1701); John Mottley, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster, Borough of Southwark, and Parts Adjacent* (1733-1735); *A Trip From St James's to the Royal-Exchange: With Remarks Serious and Diverting on the Manners, Customs and Amusements of the Inhabitants of London and Westminster* (1744); Th. Legg, *Low-Life: Or One Half of the World Knows Not How the Other Half Live* (1749); *The Midnight-ramble: or, the Adventures of Two Noble Females: Being a True and Impartial Account of Their Late Excursion through the Streets of London and Westminster* (1754); *London in Miniature: Being a Concise and Comprehensive Description of the Cities of London and Westminster, and Parts Adjacent* (1755); *The London and Westminster Guide, through the Cities and Suburbs. To which is Added, an Alphabetical List of All the Streets, Squares, Courts, Lanes, and Alleys, &c. within the Bills of Mortality, Very Useful to Every Inhabitant, as well as Stranger* (1768); *The Book of Coach-rates: or, Hackney-coach Directory. Describing above Four Thousand Fares within the Cities of London and Westminster* (1770); *English Architecture: or, the Publick Buildings of London and Westminster. With Plans of the Streets and Squares, Represented in One Hundred and Twenty-three Folio Plates; With a Succinct Review of Their History, and a Candid Examination of Their Perfections and Defects* (1756?); Walter Harrison, Esq., *A New and Universal History, Description and Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (1775); Carington Bowles, *Bowles's New London Guide; Being an Alphabetical Index to All the Streets, Squares, Lanes, Courts, Alleys, Docks, Wharfs, Keys, Stairs, &c. Churches, Chapels and Other Places of Worship; Villages, Hamlets, Hospitals and Public Buildings of Every Denomination In and Within Five Miles of the Metropolis* (1786?); *The London Companion or Citizen and Stranger's Guide through the Metropolis and Its Environs* (1790?); Ann Brookhouse, *A Narrative of the Seizure & Confinement of Ann Brookhouse; Who Was Assaulted in One of the Streets of London, and Carried off by Two Hired Ruffians* (1798).

<sup>18</sup> Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London, New York: Verso, 1989), 7.

<sup>19</sup> J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>20</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 104-105.

<sup>21</sup> Cibber's political sympathies consistently helped his appointment as Poet Laureate in 1730, to the vexation of a large number of writers, Pope included.

<sup>22</sup> Rogers, *Hacks and Dunces*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society. Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum Publishing House, 2006), 98.

<sup>24</sup> As we remember, while running to grab Moore's phantom, Curll slips in the "lake" left by Corinna on the street; the connection here is not only between the city's defilement and female promiscuity, but also between the bad writing of the women authors publishing at the time and excrement, between literal and literary shit.

<sup>25</sup> As indicated by Valerie Rumbold's note, the association of legal sites with book trade is not aleatory: "In Pope's time, the roaring was done partly by lawyers and partly by stallholders, including booksellers, who operated in the [Westminster Hall] building" (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, II, editor's note to l. 265).

<sup>26</sup> Blackmore, the winner of the vociferating contest, was William III's physician; Pope also mentions in the same episode "Rufus' roaring hall," or Westminster Hall, which was founded by William II, William Rufus, seen by Davies as a cipher for William III.

<sup>27</sup> See Wickham Legg, qtd. in Brooks-Davies, 110.

<sup>28</sup> Brooks-Davies also reminds us of a number of references scattered in the 1728 and 1729 editions of *The Dunciad*, some of them abandoned in subsequent impressions, in which the Lord Mayor of London is identified by Pope as being Sir George Thorold. During his mayoralty, the office of City Poet expired upon the death of Elkanah Settle.

<sup>29</sup> Pat Rogers, *Literature and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century England* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1985), 136.

<sup>30</sup> Rogers refers to events such as Pope's attending of the opera *Admeto* shortly before the coronation, George II's destruction of his father's will, which defrauded the Prince of Wales of his legacy, or Heidegger's staging the show that followed George II's coronation.

<sup>31</sup> Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books*, 49.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Pope, *Windsor Forest*, in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

<sup>33</sup> On May 28, 1714 Electress Sophia of Hanover died and her son, George Louis, became heir presumptive; on August 1, upon the death of Queen Anne without surviving issue, George I succeeded her to the throne. As seen in his ensuing work and correspondence, the event was considered by Pope the beginning of an epoch of corruption, hypocrisy and deluded passions. The following letter to Gay, sent from Twickenham on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1727 (during the time he was conceiving *The Art of Sinking in Poetry* and *The Dunciad*), sums up Pope's disillusionment with the Hanoverian Court: "You are happily rid of many cursed ceremonies, as well as of many ill, and vicious habits, of which few or no men escape the infection, who are hackney'd and trammelled in the ways of a Court. Princes indeed, and Peers (the Lackies of Princes) and Ladies (the Fools of Peers) will smile on you the less; but men of Worth, and real Friends, will look on you the better. There is a thing, the only thing which Kings and Queens cannot

give you (for they have it not to give) *Liberty*, which is worth all they have; and which, as yet, I hope *Englishmen* need not ask from their hands" (*Correspondence*, vol. 2, 453).

<sup>34</sup> Letter addressed by Pope to Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, on April 9, 1724, in *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 229.

<sup>35</sup> Pat Rogers, *The Alexander Pope Encyclopedia* (Welsport and London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 126.

<sup>36</sup> Sophie Graham Gee, "Waste and Restoration: The Politics of Discarding from *Paradise Lost* to the *Dunciad*." Diss. Harvard University (2002): 5-7. *Dissertations & Theses: Full Text*. ProQuest. University of Virginia Library. 29 September 2008. See, also, the revised version of this dissertation, *Making Waste. Leftovers and the Eighteenth-Century Imagination* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Waste is also, I would add, a necessary by-product of modernity: as Dr. Swift put it in a slightly different context, order springs from confusion and tulips raise from dung. The waste is not wasted when it triggers works of genuine aesthetic value, such as *The Dunciad* and many other satiric responses to the conflicting realities of the time.

<sup>38</sup> Laura Brown, "The Metropolis: The Fable of the City Sewer," in *Fables of Modernity. Literature and Culture in the English Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 39.

<sup>39</sup> Pat Rogers, "Pope, Settle and the Fall of Troy," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. Vol. 15, No. 3. Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer, 1975): 451.

<sup>40</sup> Michel de Certeau's observation regarding the "panorama-city" applies to Pope's text to a T: it describes "a 'theoretical' (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices" (93).

<sup>41</sup> Dennis Todd, "Pygmalion's Frenzy: Language, Solipsism and Pope's *Dunciad*." Diss. Emory University (1974). *Dissertations & Theses: Full Text*. ProQuest. University of Virginia Library (2 January 2009): 243.

<sup>42</sup> Colley Cibber's father, Caius Gabriel Cibber, is the author of a pair of life-like human statues representing *Melancholy* and *Raving Madness* made for the gates of the Bethlehem psychiatric hospital.

<sup>43</sup> An impressive account of the topographical, sociological and historical significance of Grub Street can be found in Rogers's volume, *Hacks and Dunces*, 21-37 and following.

<sup>44</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1750).

<sup>45</sup> *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian, and Late Patentee of the Theatre-Royal. With an Historical View of the Stage Within his Own Time. Written by Himself*. Printed by John Watts for the Author, (London, 1740).

<sup>46</sup> Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects. Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 47-68.

<sup>47</sup> The pantomime shows started to be produced in Britain around 1720, but their emergence as popular forms of entertainment occurred in the fall of 1723, when afterpieces based on the Faust legend premiered at both Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields. For a lively history of the genre in eighteenth-century Britain, see John O'Brien, *Harlequin Britain, Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690-1760* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004).



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<sup>48</sup> Letter addressed to Hugh Bethel on 21-23 May, 1742, in *Correspondence*, vol. 4, 396.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (London: Printed for M. Cooper at the Globe in the Patranoster Row, 1756), 374-5.

<sup>50</sup> The allusions to the Dulness's "Hibernian shore," Westminster Hall, and House of Commons suggest the political undertones of Pope's attack. Also, the satire of elite schools contains precise references to Eton and Winchester, to Cambridge and Oxford (metonymically identified by their rivers, Cam and Isis), and to St. John's and Clare College in Cambridge (the former being Bentley's undergraduate school). Suggestive references to Seine, Tiber, Rome, Lyon, or Venetian carnivals evoke some of the fashionable landmarks of the European Grand Tour.

<sup>51</sup> The mock-apocalypse concluding *The Dunciad* closes but also opens the poem; it is followed by a new Genesis, culminating in Darkness this time, triggered by Dulness's "uncreating word." Dulness's spirit parodies, thus, the Holy Spirit dwelling upon the face of the waters in the Book of Genesis. For the use of biblical sources and inversions of Christian themes in *The Dunciad*, see also Thomas Jemielity, "'Consummatum Est': Alexander Pope's 1743 *Dunciad* and Mock-Apocalypse," in *More Solid Learning. New Perspectives on Alexander Pope's Dunciad*, eds. Catherine Ingrassia and Claudia N. Thomas (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2000), 166-88.

<sup>52</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. and trans. by G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> Richard Bentley, *A Confutation of Atheism... Part II. A Sermon... Being the Seventh of the lecture Founded by the Honorable Robert Boyle* (London, 1693).

<sup>54</sup> My premise is that (proportions considered) Pope's method is essentially the same as that used earlier in *The Rape of the Lock*: if we look closely enough, we can see the sylphs fixing Belinda's hair as her Betty will never be able to see, we can spatially and symbolically bring various realities together and make sense of their informing interconnectedness.

<sup>55</sup> Williams, op. cit., 131-41. For Pope's reversal of the religious metaphor see also pages 141-56.

<sup>56</sup> Letter addressed to Warburton on 24 June, 1740, in *Correspondence*, vol. 4, 251.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas C. Faulkner and Rhonda L. Blair, "The Classical and Mythographic Sources of Pope's Dulness," *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Summer, 1980): 222.

<sup>58</sup> In Roman mythology, Cybele runs madly through the countryside beating a tympanum after the murder of her lover, Attis; her cult is also associated with processions through towns and countryside accompanied by ecstatic dancing. For more details about the significance of the myth, see Thomas C. Faulkner and Rhonda L. Blair's above-mentioned article.

<sup>59</sup> For the history of the genre, see F. C. Brown, *Elkanah Settle: His Life and Works* (Chicago, 1910), and Sybil Rosenfeld, *The Theater of the London Fairs in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1960).

<sup>60</sup> Rogers, "Pope, Settle and the Fall of Troy," 451.

<sup>61</sup> Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City. Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope (1731-1743)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 47-8.

<sup>62</sup> Rogers, *Hacks and Dunces*, 12 and 83, respectively.

<sup>63</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989). The German edition of this book was published in 1962.

<sup>64</sup> The Licensing Order of 1643 instituted pre-publication censorship in England which was aimed at eliminating the piracy in the printing industry, suppress royalist propaganda, and protect the parliamentary activities. The Stationer's Company acted as a censor and held the monopoly of the printing trade, while the Government controlled publication by the Law of Seditious Libel, invoked against any publication that disturbed the political establishment. The Licensing Order was allowed to lapse in 1695 as a result of the new freedoms established by the *Declaration of Rights* presented by the Parliament to William and Mary in 1689. For a complete text, see "June 1643: An Ordinance for the Regulating of Printing," in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, ed. by C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (London: Pub. by H. M. Stationery Off., printed by Wyman, 1911), 184-86.

<sup>65</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 10, Monday, March 12, 1711.

<sup>66</sup> Pope published in 1742 *The New Dunciad*, which was reprinted as a new book to *The Dunciad in Four Books* (or *The Greater Dunciad*) in 1743. There he made the first reference to the new hero of the poem as being "the laureate" and revealed the political dimensions of his future revisions: "With great judgment is it imagined by the Poet, that such a Colleague as Dulness had elected, should sleep on the Throne, and have very little share in the Action of the Poem: accordingly he hath done little or nothing from the day of his Anointing, having past thro' the second book without taking part in whatever was transacted about him, and thro' the third in profound Sleep. Nor ought this, well-consider'd, to seem strange in our days, when so many *King-Consorts* have done the like" (note to v. 20). See *The New Dunciad: as it was found in the year 1741. With the Illustrations of Scriblerus, and Notes Variorum* (Dublin: Printed by A. Reilly, 1742), 10.

<sup>67</sup> William Dunbar, "Of Sir Thomas Norray," in *The Poems of William Dunbar* (Edinburgh: Printed for Laing and Forbes, 1834), vol. 1, 126.

<sup>68</sup> In eighteenth-century London "there were actually several Pissing Alleys: in St. John's Street; between Bread Street and Friday Street, just west of Paternoster Row; in King Street, Oat Lane; and in Paternoster Row." For more details about the history of the street, see Wall, *The Literary and Cultural Spaces*, 124-5.

<sup>69</sup> Jonathan Swift, "The Lady's Dressing Room," in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry. An Annotated Anthology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. by David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 84.

<sup>70</sup> James Miller, *The Humours of Oxford. A Comedy* (Dublin: Printed for and sold by Thomas Wilkinson, 1730), 19.

<sup>71</sup> William Wycherley, *The Country Wife*, in *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. by Scott McMillin (New York and London: WW Norton & Company, 1997).

<sup>72</sup> David Porter, *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 89.

<sup>73</sup> For a compelling demonstration of the correlation between affluence and effluence, see Sophie Gee, "Ordure, Effluence and Excess in the Eighteenth Century," in *A Concise Companion to the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cynthia Wall (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2005), 101-20.

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<sup>74</sup> William Bohun, *Privilegia Londini: or, the rights, liberties, privileges, laws, and customs, of the city of London*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: 1723), 109-10.

<sup>75</sup> Habermas' distinctions between private and public spheres are at times counterintuitive: "Within the realm that was the preserve of private people we therefore distinguish again between private and public spheres. The private sphere comprised civil society in the narrower sense, that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and of social labor; imbedded in it was the family with its interior domain (*Intimasphäre*). The public sphere in the political realm evolved from the public sphere in the world of letters; through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society" (30-31).

<sup>76</sup> Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub-Street: Press, Politics and Gender in the London Marketplace, 1678-1730* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); J. A. Downie, "Public and Private: The Myth of the Bourgeois Public Sphere," in *A Concise Companion to the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cynthia Wall (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), 58-79; Steven Pincus, "The State and Civil Society in Early Modern England: Capitalism, Causation and Habermas's Bourgeois Public Sphere," in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, eds. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 213-31; Anthony Pollock, *Gender and the Fictions of the Public Sphere, 1690-1775* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>77</sup> Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, No. 25/26 (1990): 56-80; Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward and Analysis of the Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. by Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel and Assenka Oksiloff (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>78</sup> Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

<sup>79</sup> I include here Fraser's definition of "subaltern counterpublics" in order to clarify my own different approach of cultural periphery: "This history records that members of subordinated social groups—women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians—have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics. I propose to call these *subaltern counterpublics* in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (67).

<sup>80</sup> The Tories tolerated the "Popish recusants," i.e. the Roman Catholics who refused to attend the services of the Church of England, while the Whigs supported nonconformist Protestants, i.e. "dissenters" that separated from the Established Church following the Act of Toleration of 1689.

<sup>81</sup> Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 21.

<sup>82</sup> Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 109.

<sup>83</sup> For some fascinating details about this practice, see Jay Barrett Bosford, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), 162-204.

<sup>84</sup> According to Bishop Burnet, in 1701, "when the House met, reports were brought to them of elections that had been scandalously purchased by some who were concerned in the new East India Company" (qtd. in Bosford, op.

cit., 182). For literary and visual attacks against Walpole, see Jerry Beasley, "Portraits of a Monster: Robert Walpole and Early English Prose Fiction," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 14 (1981): 406-31; Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Milton Percival, *Political Ballads Illustrating the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916).

<sup>85</sup> During his four leaves to Hanover in 1729, 1732, 1735, and 1736–1737, George II left Caroline as regent, and entrusted her with authority over all English matters.

<sup>86</sup> John, Lord Hervey, *Some Materials towards Memoirs of the Reign of King George II*, ed. R. Sedgwick (King's Printers/Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd., 1931), vol. 1, 39.

<sup>87</sup> The Excise Bill of 1733 promised revenues which would permit a permanent reduction of the land tax by converting the customs duties on tobacco and wine into inland duties. The bill was attacked forcefully by the Walpole opposition, who argued that the excise duties involved giving extensive powers to revenue officers and excise commissioners, and that the Englishmen's right to privacy on their property was put at risk. The City of London presented a petition against the bill in the Commons which forced Walpole to withdraw the excise scheme the next day, to the exuberant satisfaction of the public.

<sup>88</sup> Simon Varey, "The Craftsman," in *Telling People What to Think. Early Eighteenth-Century Periodicals from The Review to The Rambler*, ed. by J. A. Downie and Th. N. Corns (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1993), 63.

<sup>89</sup> Nigel Yates, *Eighteenth-Century Britain. Religion and Politics, 1714-1815* (London: Pearson Longman, 2008), 20-25.

<sup>90</sup> Qtd. in Stephen Taylor, "Gibson, Edmund (bap. 1669, d. 1748)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn., Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/view/article/10615>, accessed 23 Jan 2012].

<sup>91</sup> William Warburton, *The Alliance between Church and State*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1767), 93-7 and 170, respectively.

<sup>92</sup> Gerald Newman, ed. *Britain in the Hanoverian Age, 1714-1837: An Encyclopedia* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), 124.

<sup>93</sup> Benjamin Hoadly, *The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church of Christ. A Sermon Preach'd before the King, at the Royal Chapel at St. James's, on Sunday March 31, 1717* (London: Printed for James Knapton and Timothy Childe, 1717).

<sup>94</sup> Anon., *A Letter to \_\_\_\_\_, Concerning the Abuse of Scripture-Terms: Occasion'd by Some Late Extraordinary Performances* (London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1743), 6-8.

<sup>95</sup> Brown, *Alexander Pope*, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Pope, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, 373.

<sup>97</sup> Pope's moderate attitude toward George I may be explained by his attempt to disperse the suspicions about his Jacobite sympathies, but may also have different motivations; as Leonard Welsted indicates in the *Testimonies to The Dunciad*, Pope received from the king a £200 subscription for his translation of Homer.

<sup>98</sup> For an exemplary biographical account, see Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope. A Life* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company), 1985.

<sup>99</sup> For an attentive analysis of the subscription lists to Pope's translations and of the poet's private links with central figures in the Jacobite movement, see Rogers, *Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts*, 118-25.

<sup>100</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Leslie Stephen, (New York: MacMillan and Co, London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1885), vol. 1, 128.

<sup>101</sup> In *Windsor Forest* Pope also applauds the Peace at Utrecht, joining other Tory supporters of the event, such as Bolingbroke, Swift, Harley, and Prior. For an interesting interpretation of *Windsor Forest* as a "crypto-Jacobite poem," see Erskine-Hill, *Poetry of Opposition and Revolution: Dryden to Wordsworth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 71.

<sup>102</sup> For a compelling reading of the coronation ceremony in *The Dunciad* as an anti-Hanoverian satire, see "Ermine, Gold, and Lawn. *The Dunciad* and the Coronation of George II," in Rogers, *Literature and Popular Culture*, 120-50.

<sup>103</sup> For a discussion of the political connotations of *The Dunciad*'s illustrations see Ileana Baird, "Visual Paratexts: The *Dunciad* Illustrations and the Thistles of Satire," in *Book Illustration in the Long Eighteenth Century: Reconfiguring the Visual Periphery of the Text*, ed. Christina Ionescu, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 329-67. In support of this reading of George II as a possible target of Pope's attack it is also relevant that Pope referred to Theobald as a "Pretender" to the throne in his final "Declaration," included in the poem in 1735. The appellation alludes to the second Jacobite pretender, Charles Edward Stuart, James II's grandson, whose attempt to restore the Stuart line to the throne ended up unsuccessfully in 1745.

<sup>104</sup> See, also, Queen Caroline's coronation portrait by Sir Charles Jervas (1727), or her portraits commissioned to Sir Godfrey Kneller (1717) and Jacopo Amigoni (1735).

<sup>105</sup> See Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 68-95.

<sup>106</sup> Qtd. in Stephen Taylor, "Walpole, Robert, first earl of Oxford (1676-1745)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn., Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/view/article/28601>, accessed 23 Jan 2012].

<sup>107</sup> Qtd. in Taylor, op. cit.

<sup>108</sup> Howard Erskine-Hill, *Poetry of Opposition and Revolution: Dryden to Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 108.

<sup>109</sup> James Ralph, *A Critical History of the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole* (London, 1743), 517.

<sup>110</sup> Jonathan Smedley attacked Swift's appointment as dean of St. Patrick's in 1713 by affixing mocking verses to the door of the cathedral. Smedley's literary ambitions were high: he styled himself as "t'other Jonathan," and in 1728 he published *Gulliveriana* (with an attached *Alexanderiana*), a concerted attack against Pope and Swift. In *The Dunciad*, Pope makes Smedley the victor of the diving contest, in a particularly acid satire on governmental journalists.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Walpole allocated over £10,997 to Arnall only, to distribute to other journalists or to meet printing costs, on top of a personal annual pension of about £400. For more details, see Philip Carter, ‘Arnall, William (d. 1736)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/671, accessed 12 May 2011].

<sup>112</sup> Indeed, a note to Book I, line 215, helps identify Walpole as a clear target of Pope’s attack: the note refers to the “band of ministerial writers, [...] who on the very day their Patron quitted his post, laid down their paper, and declared they would never more meddle in Politics.”

<sup>113</sup> Pope’s snoring Silenus (IV, l. 492) may well be Thomas Gordon, who had been appointed by Walpole as Commissioner for Wine Licenses in 1723 in order to win his support for his pro-governmental campaign.

<sup>114</sup> Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Printed for J. Walthoe et al., 1743), vol. 2, 899. See, also, Pope’s note to l. 473, in Book IV.

<sup>115</sup> Richard Bentley, *Eight Sermons Preach’d at the Honourable Robert Boyle’s Lecture*, 5th ed. (Cambridge: Printed for Cornelius Crownfield, 1724), 256.

<sup>116</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Tracts of Mr. Thomas Hobbs of Malmsbury containing I. Behemoth, the history of the causes of the civil wars of England, from 1640 to 1660, printed from the author’s own copy never printed (but with a thousand faults) before, II. An answer to Arch-bishop Bramhall’s book called the Catching of the Leviathan, never before printed, III. An historical narration of heresie and the punishment thereof, corrected by the true copy, IV. Philosophical problems dedicated to the King in 1662, but never printed before* (London: Printed for W. Cooke, 1682).

<sup>117</sup> *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), vol. 3, 360-63.

<sup>118</sup> Brian Young, “Pope and Ideology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Alexander Pope*, ed. Pat Rogers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118-33. The suspicion that Pope was a freethinker dates back to his publication of his *Essay on Man* (1733), seen by Jean Pierre de Crousaz, a Swiss professor of logic, as heterodox and Leibnizian.

<sup>119</sup> Pope’s satire is directed here at the freethinkers’ attempts to find the seat of the soul, their argument against the existence of an immaterial soul, and their explanations of the thought process as being based on the mechanical “motion of the spirits.” For more details, see Al. Pope, J. Arbuthnot, J. Swift, J. Gay, T. Parnell and R. Harley, *Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus*, ed. Charles Kerby-Miller (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 137-42.

<sup>120</sup> For a thorough analysis of the Clarke-Collins debate as reflected by Scriblerus’ correspondence with the society of freethinkers, see Charles Kerby-Miller’s notes to Chapter XII, op. cit., 280-93.

<sup>121</sup> The number of coffee houses in London at the beginning of the century varies between 500 and 3000, depending on the author. I have used here the data provided by Daniel’s Statt’s article on “Coffee and Coffeehouses” in *Britain in the Hanoverian Age, 1714-1837. An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 1997), as the most recent estimate available. For particularly insightful analyses of London’s cultural and pleasure life under the two Georges, see Jay

Barrett Bosford, op. cit., 208-42; Robert Joseph Allen, *The Clubs of Augustan London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933); Derek Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1974), 172-205; Pat Rogers, *Literature and Popular Culture*; and Roy Porter, *London. A Social History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994), 160-84.

<sup>122</sup> Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (New York: Routledge, 1986), 99.

<sup>123</sup> In his *A Tour to London: or, New Observations on England, and Its Inhabitants*, vol. 1 (Dublin: Printed for J. Exshaw et al., 1772), Pierre Jean Grosley describes the case of lord Tyrconnel who, tired of hearing nothing but politics in the gentlemen's clubs visited during his trip to England, "invited some ladies of pleasure to sup with him at a bagnio; but scarce had they sat down to table, when the conversation turned upon a subject, which was then under parliamentary debate, and highly interesting for the nation. [...] In vain did Amphitryon endeavor to change the discourse, and to make them talk of subjects more pleasing and agreeable: they persisted to talk politics: he quitted them in a passion, and made haste back to France" (176).

<sup>124</sup> A. Ellis, *The Penny Universities. A History of the Coffee-Houses* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956), 76-77.

<sup>125</sup> Rogers, *Literature and Popular Culture*, 1.

<sup>126</sup> The particular play that triggered the Licensing Act was *The Golden Rump* (1737), a farce of unknown authorship; however, the law was obviously a response to Henry Fielding's acid anti-Walpolean attacks in plays like *Tom Thumb* (1732), *Pasquin* (1736), and *The Historical Register of the Year 1736*. John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1724), as well as Henry Carey's *Chrononhotonthologos* (1734) and *The Dragon of Wantley* (1737) contained similar satirical barbs at Walpole's corrupt practices, his relationship with the queen, and his taxation policies.

<sup>127</sup> Porter, *London. A Social History*, 172.

<sup>128</sup> Hunter, *Before Novels*, 66.

<sup>129</sup> Hunter, *Before Novels*, 163.

<sup>130</sup> For an insightful analysis of this cultural debate in literature and the arts, see Joseph M. Levine, *Between the Ancients and the Moderns. Baroque Culture in Restoration London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>131</sup> William Temple, "Upon Antient and Modern Learning," in *Miscellanea. The Second Part. In Four Essays* (London: 1705), 363.

<sup>132</sup> William Wotton, *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (London: Printed by J. Leake for Peter Buck, 1694).

<sup>133</sup> I read here publicness, just like Barry Bozeman and Stuart Bretschneider, as a characteristic of an organization that reflects the extent to which it "is influenced by political authority" (197). For details, see "The 'Publicness Puzzle' in Organization Theory," *Journal of Public Administration, Research and Theory*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1994): 197-223.

<sup>134</sup> See note a. to Appendix I, "Preface prefixed to the five first imperfect Editions of the Dunciad, in three books, printed at Dublin and London, in octavo and duodecimo, 1727," in Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books*, 364.

<sup>135</sup> We may speculate, of course, on the irony implied in Pope's pairings of characters as well: while Dennis and Bentley were reputed scholars, each in their separate fields, Jacob's pairing with Scriblerus, a fictional pedant, may point to Jacob's inconsequential cultural stature, or, more acidly, to his "fictional" status as a critic. The poem raises justified doubts about whether Jacob wrote the *Lives of the Poets* himself, or just collected entries written by the authors included in his volume.

<sup>136</sup> As Laureate, Cibber wrote 30 birthday odes for the royal family and other duty pieces which were wildly parodied at the time. Some of them were so deplorable that they made it in the famous anthology of bad verse compiled in 1930 by D. B. Wyndham-Lewis and Charles Lee, *The Stuffed Owl*.

<sup>137</sup> John Jackson, *History of the Scottish Stage, from Its First Establishment to the Present Time* (Edinburgh: Printed for Peter Hill et. al., 1793), 368.

<sup>138</sup> Pope cites in his footnote to line 266 Cibber's own words from his autobiography. For more details about Cibber's attitude toward pantomimes, see his *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, Comedian and Patentee of the Theatre Royal*, ed. Edmund Bellchambers (London: Printed for W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1822), 436-40.

<sup>139</sup> Interestingly, Robert Walpole, Catherine's proxy, was attacked in *The Craftsman* as "The Mock Minister: or Harlequin a Statesman," being described as a political illusionist who shrewdly served his patrons' interests. For details, see Valerie Rumbold's commentary to line 233 of the poem in Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books*, 250.

<sup>140</sup> For details, see Jennifer Snead, "Epic for an Information Age: Pope's 1743 *Dunciad in Four Books* and the Theater Licensing Act," *EHL*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (Spring 2010): 195-216.

<sup>141</sup> Pat Rogers, "The Critique of Opera in Pope's *Dunciad*," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Jan. 1973): 17-18.

<sup>142</sup> Rogers, "The Critique of Opera," 20.

<sup>143</sup> Judith Milhous, "Heidegger, Johann Jakob (1666-1749)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12866>, accessed 28 Jan 2012].

<sup>144</sup> On the climate of opposition to the Italian opera see Rogers, "The Critique of Opera in Pope's *Dunciad*," 17-30. For negative reactions to the opera and associations of the genre with Hanoverian rule, see Rumbold's notes to l. 45-50 in Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books*, 279-80.

<sup>145</sup> According to Pat Rogers, "of the original sixty-three subscribers [of the Royal Academy of Music], listed in the Lord Chamberlain's records, nearly half were peers who contributed almost £ 9000 of the £15,600 subscribed" ("The Critique of the Opera," 24).

<sup>146</sup> Pope's sympathy for Handel seems to have gone even farther than that: Handel's first oratorio, *Esther*, is composed on words ascribed by some to Pope. We also know that Arbuthnot was a steady friend of Handel's, and that he published in 1728 a humorous account of the feud between two of the most renowned singers of the time titled "The Devil to Pay at St. James's; or, a Full and True Account of a most Horrid and Bloody Battle between Madame Faustina and Madame Cuzzoni; also a Hot Skirmish between Signor Boschi and Signor Palmerini." For more details, see Horatio Townsend, *An Account of the Visit of Handel to Dublin: With Incidental Notices of His Life and Character* (Dublin: James McGlashan, 1852).



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<sup>147</sup> Maynard Mack, *The Last and Greatest Art: Some Unpublished Poetical Manuscripts of Alexander Pope* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 109.

<sup>148</sup> James Sutherland, *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, vol. V, *The Dunciad* (London: Methuen & Co, Ltd., 1943), 432.

<sup>149</sup> John Wilkins, a Royal Society fellow that “entertain’d the extravagant hope of a possibility to fly to the Moon” (note to l. 452), is such an example.

<sup>150</sup> John Woodward is portrayed as Dr. Fossile in *Three Hours after Marriage* (1717), a transparent allusion to his work, *Fossils of all kinds: digested into a method, suitable to their mutual relation and affinity* published in 1728. He is also “the most frequently and severely satirized” antiquarian (203) in the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, where he is turned into the quintessential virtuoso. For more details, see Charles Kerby-Miller’s commentary to Chapter III of this volume.

<sup>151</sup> Albert-László Barabási, *Linked. The New Science of Networks* (Cambridge: Perseus Publishing, 2002), 225.

<sup>152</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Miscellanies*, vol. 3 (London: Printed for B. Motte, 1732), 100.

<sup>153</sup> This piece appears first in Pope’s 1732 edition of *Miscellanies*, but also in subsequent editions of Pope and Swift’s *Miscellanies* and in Arbuthnot’s 1751 edition of *John Bull*.

<sup>154</sup> Raphael Courteville and Francis Medley published in *The Daily Gazetteer* under the pseudonyms Ralph Freeman and Algernon Sydney, respectively, between 1735 and 1738. They advocated for individual liberty and republican values. John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon published in defense of Whig policies under the pen name Cato in *The London Journal* (1721-1722). The pen name Publicola, also assigned to Scriblerus, was used by several writers who attacked *The Craftsman* between 1728-1729.

<sup>155</sup> D[ean] S[wif]t, *Memoirs of the Life of Scriblerus* (London: Printed from the original copy from Dublin and sold by A. Moore, 1723), 17-18.

<sup>156</sup> Henry Fielding, *Tom Thumb. A Tragedy. As it is acted at the theatre in the Hay-Market. Written by Scriblerus Secundus*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Printed and sold by J. Roberts, 1730), 1.

<sup>157</sup> The Hanoverians are represented in Fielding’s play by the Apshinken family. Their helpers are Thomas the gardener (aka Thomas Pelham-Holles, first Duke of Newcastle, John the groom (aka John Hervey, second Baron Hervey), Robin the butler (no other than Sir Robert Walpole), and William the coachman (William Pulteney, first Earl of Bath).

<sup>158</sup> [John Arbuthnot], *The History of John Bull. And Poems on several Occasions by Dr. Jonathan Swift with Several Miscellaneous Pieces by Dr. Swift and Mr. Pope* (London: Sold by D. Midwinter and A. Tonson, 1750?), 227.

<sup>159</sup> Kenrick, William. Preface to *The Old Woman’s Dunciad: with notes by Margelina Scribelinda Macularia*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Printed for Theo. Carnan, 1751), 2.

<sup>160</sup> Victor Shklovski, *Theory of Prose*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. Benjamin Sher (Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991), 20. The original edition of this book was published in 1925.

<sup>161</sup> Given that *ECCO* does not digitize texts published after 1800, it is difficult to give an estimate of Scriblerus' career after this date. The character becomes more and more visible after 1750, reaches a peak of 164 works in which his name is mentioned in the 1760s, and continues to be referred to in 119 volumes in the 1770s, 138 in the 1780s, and 118 in the 1790s. According to Charles Kirby-Miller, five more editions of Scriblerus' *Memoirs* were issued between 1807 and 1832.

<sup>162</sup> Scriblerus is frequently mentioned in periodicals such as *The London Magazine: or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, in Madam Roxana's Teragant's the *Drury-Lane Journal*, in the *Berwick Museum, or Monthly Literary Intelligencer*, in *European Magazine and London Review*, as well as in the *Weekly Entertainer*, the last two periodicals being published well in the nineteenth century. The character is also mentioned in dictionaries, such as the *Supplement to the new and general biographical dictionary* (1767), in conduct books such as *Thelyphthora: or, a treatise on female ruin* (1781), or in didactic books such as *The art of teaching in sport; designed as a prelude to a set of toys, to enable ladies to instill the rudiments of spelling, reading, grammar and arithmetic under the Idea of Amusement* (1785). Political reports, such as *An Impartial Sketch of the debate in the House of Commons or Ireland* (1785) also make reference to our hero.

<sup>163</sup> As Brean S. Hammond points out, "the names of the Scriblerians are legions," including, among others, Sir Humphry Polesworth, E. Parker, Philomath, Esdras Barnivelt, William Cleland, PP, Clerk of this Parish, etc. ("Scriblerian Self-Fashioning," *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 18 (1988): 118). Postmodern authors arguably employing Scriblerian satire include James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Thomas Pynchon, and Robert Coover. For details, see also Claude Rawson's "Introduction" to *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), xii; and Patricia Carl Brückmann, *A Manner of Correspondence. A Study of the Scriblerus Club* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 135-36. For a fascinating discussion of Warburton's theory of powers in *Legation of Moses*, see also Jacques Derrida, "Scribble (Writing-Power)," trans. Cary Plotkin, *Yale French Studies*, No. 58 (1979), 117-47.

<sup>164</sup> Brian Cowan, "Mr. Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Spring 2004): 361.

<sup>165</sup> I refer here to maps such as Hans Jacob Schollenberger's *L'Art d'assiéger un Coeur* (before 1689), Robert Sayer's *A Map or Chart the Road of Love, and Harbour of Marriage* (1748), and Joseph Johnson's *New Map of the Land of Matrimony* (1772). For further details, see Franz Reitingier's enticing article, "Mapping Relationships: Allegory, Gender and the Cartographical Image in Eighteenth-Century France and England," *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 51 (1999): 106-30.

<sup>166</sup> Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 23.

<sup>167</sup> Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1995), 86.

<sup>168</sup> James R. Sutherland, "Review." *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 69 (Jan. 1942): 115-18.

<sup>169</sup> Graham Midgley, *The Life of Orator Henley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), viii.

<sup>170</sup> For a compelling reading of *The Dunciad* as a recast of Giles Jacob's *Lives of the Poets* in poetic form, see J. McLaverty's "Pope and Giles Jacob's *Lives of the Poets: The Dunciad* as Alternative Literary History," *Modern Philology*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (Aug., 1985): 22-32.

<sup>171</sup> *The Champion* (April 1, 1740).

<sup>172</sup> According to the Copyright Act of 1709, also known as the Statute of Anne, the publishers of a book were granted legal protection of 14 years with the commencement of the statute, and 21 years for any book already in print. The importance of this first copyright status is paramount, as it created a public domain for literature, putting an end to the bookseller's unlimited ownership over a book. For details, see Hector MacQueen, Charlotte Waelde and Graeme Laurie, and Abbe Brown, *Contemporary Intellectual Property: Law and Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 34, and Deazley Ronan, *Rethinking Copyright: History, Theory, Language* (Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2006), 13-14.

<sup>173</sup> See the letters to Hugh Bethel (1742) and Ralph Allen (27 December, 1742) in *Correspondence*, vol. 4, 414 and 433, respectively.

<sup>174</sup> Eric Salmon, "Cibber, Colley (1671–1757)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Sept. 2004; online edn., Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5416, accessed 27 March 2010].

<sup>175</sup> Pope, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 473.

<sup>176</sup> Colley Cibber, *A Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope, inquiring into the motives that might induce him in his satirical works, to be so frequently fond of Mr. Cibber's name*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Printed and sold by W. Lewis in Russel-Street, Covent-Garden, 1742), 26.

<sup>177</sup> Alexander Pope, *Peri Bathous, or the Art of Sinking in Poetry* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1952), 64.

<sup>178</sup> As Leonard R. N. Ashley summarizes, the poem also referred to Cibber as "a plagiarist, as a tyrannical manager, as an incompetent, and as the father of diverse abominations from bad plays to Theophilus Cibber." See *Colley Cibber*, revised ed. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 109-10.

<sup>179</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Written by Himself*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, vol. 1 (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), 21.

<sup>180</sup> The letter to John Boyle, Earl of Orrery is dated 13 January 1742; see Pope's *Correspondence*, vol. 4, 437-38.

<sup>181</sup> Colley Cibber, *A Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope, inquiring into the motives that might induce him in his satirical works, to be so frequently fond of Mr. Cibber's name* (London: Printed in the year 1742).

<sup>182</sup> See, for instance, Cibber's five-page long commentary on Pope's remarks on verse 355, or his unveiling of Pope's strategy to "unmercifully" mutilate paragraphs from Cibber's *Apology*. Colley Cibber, *Another Occasional Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope. Wherein The New Hero's Preferment to his Throne, in the Dunciad, seems not to be Accepted. And the Author of that Poem His more rightful Claim to it, is Asserted With an Expostulatory Address to the Reverend Mr. W. W\_n, Author of the new Preface, and Adviser in the curious Improvements of that Satire* (Glasgow: Printed for W. MacPharshon, [1744?]).

<sup>183</sup> A particularly explicit illustration is titled *An Essay on Woman, by the Author of the Essay on Man: Being Homer Preserv'd, Or The Twickenham Squire Caught by the Heels* (author unknown, published in London on July 31, 1742). The title says it all: the drawing represents Pope without a wig, shirt in disorder, lying on a couch next to an attractive harlot. Cibber (identified by an open volume of his *Non-Juror* lying on the floor) is pulling Pope by his feet, while addressing a third person with the words "My Lord, I have Sav'd Homer." The print is stored in Lewis Walpole Library's collection of visual satire at Yale University.

<sup>184</sup> *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Brian Vickers, vol. 2 (1693–1733) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 1.

<sup>185</sup> I concur here with Pat Rogers' opinion that "the elevation of Cibber allowed Pope to strike directly at the exercise of royal patronage in cultural matters," as stated in *Literature and Popular Culture*, 125.

<sup>186</sup> Charles D. Peavy, "Pope, Cibber, and the Crown of Dulness," *The South Central Bulletin*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Winter 1966): 17-27.

<sup>187</sup> To these should be added the frontispiece to the 1728 edition of the poem, representing Cibber in the form of a book of plays, sustaining the altar on which Dulness's owl is enthroned.

<sup>188</sup> In the previous versions, the altar was made up of Theobald's plays *The Persian Princess* (1715), *The Perfidious Brother* (1715; possibly plagiarized after Henry Mestayer), and his famous pantomime *Harlequin a Sorcerer* (1725), revised as *The Rape of Proserpine* in 1727. The altar also included a translation of Aeschylus' plays by Theobald never published in its entirety.

<sup>189</sup> Lord Hervey's defense of Cibber in *A Letter to Mr. C[ib]b[e]r, on his Letter to Mr. Pope* (1742) contains one of the most venomous assessments of Pope's career ever published during his lifetime: "I think him therefore at best a *second-rate Poet, a bad Companion, a dangerous Acquaintance, an inveterate, implacable Enemy, no body's Friend, a noxious member of Society, and a thorough bad Man.*" For details, see *Cibber and the Dunciad. 1740-1744* (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1975).

<sup>190</sup> T. Johnson, *The Tryal of Colley Cibber, Comedian, for writing a Book intitled An Apology for his Life, &c* (London: Printed for the Author and sold by W. Lewis and E. Curll, 1740).

<sup>191</sup> In 1722, Curll appeared before the House of Lords for the unauthorized publication of the *Works* of John Sheffield, Duke of Buckinghamshire; the ruling, which stood until 1845, stated that it was a breach of parliamentary privilege to publish the "Works, Life, or last Will" of any member of the House without consent of his heirs or executors. In 1725, Curll was convicted by the King's Bench Court for obscene libel, following the publication of two works: *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs* (1718) and *The Nun in her Smock* (1724). In 1729, he was pilloried for the publication of the *Memoirs* of John Ker, a double agent who had spied on the Jacobites for the Walpole government. In 1741, Curll lost the suit with Pope regarding property in personal letters; consequently, his edition of *Dean Swift's Literary Correspondence for Twenty-Four Years* was prohibited from sale. For details, see Paul Baines and Pat Roger's thoroughly documented volume, *Edmund Curll, Bookseller* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007).

<sup>192</sup> In 1707, Curll published Prior's *Poems on Several Occasions*, despite the fact that the copyright for Prior's work was owned by Jacob Tonson. He ignored, without punishment, the publisher's protests, and did it again in 1716,

with *A Second Collection of Poems on Various Occasions*, this time the author objecting to the pirated book himself. After Addison's death, in 1719, Curll started a long series of illegitimate publication of various pieces by Addison, as well as of his *Memoirs*, put together in multiple volumes by his many contributors (Giles Jacob, Charles Beckingham, and Thomas Foxton, among others.) In 1730, Curll published *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Amours of William Congreve, Esq.* as "by a hand sufficiently authorized," under the signature Cha. Wilson. In all these cases Curll used a number of low-profile authors who speedily collected the materials necessary for these improvised but highly topical volumes.

<sup>193</sup> There is no evidence that Curll actually had an affair with Elizabeth Thomas. However, he did publish some of her productions after the incident with Pope, and the satire *Codrus, or, The Dunciad Dissected* (1728) was sometimes attributed to the poetess, although generally acknowledged as being compiled by Curll.

<sup>194</sup> Warburton's edition of Pope's *Works* includes additional notes on the poem that give more details about Pope's animosity toward Moore Smythe. In these notes, Smythe is described as a plagiarist who read in public works by Pope and Arbuthnot claiming they were his own. He also galled Pope with a rude remark about the poet not being "the first of the tuneful train" (as Savage described Pope in a eulogy) as he, Moore, "had left him unrival'd in turning his style to Comedy." The incident happened during the rehearsal of *The Rival Modes*, Moore's only, and not entirely original work.

<sup>195</sup> Mathew Concanen's collaboration with Curll went beyond the support of his anti-Pope campaign through various publications: it also involved the sale of potentially injurious pieces to Curll, who was well-known for his acquisition of scandal-prone materials. One such episode is described by William Warburton in his letter to Mr. Hurd sent on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1757: "I met many years ago with an ingenious Irishman at a coffee-house near Gray's-inn, where I lodged. He studied the Law, and was very poor. I had given him money for many a dinner; and at last I gave him those papers, which he sold more than they were worth. But I must finish the story both of the Irishman and the papers. Soon after, he got acquainted with Sir William Yonge, wrote for Sir Robert, and was made Attorney-general of Jamaica. He married there an opulent widow, and died very rich a few years ago here in England; but of so scoundrel a temper, that he avoided ever coming into my sight: so that the memory of all this intercourse between us has been buried in silence till this moment. And who should this man be but one of the heroes of the *Dunciad*, Concanen by name! The papers had a similar fortune. A few years before Curll's death, he wrote me a letter to acquaint me he had bought the property of *my excellent Discourse*; and that, as it had been long out of print, he was going to re-print it; only he desired to know if I had any additions or alterations to make, he should be glad of the honor of receiving them. The writer, and the contents of this letter, very much alarmed me; so I wrote to Mr. Knapp, to go to the fellow, and buy my own book of him again, which he did; and so ended this ridiculous affair, which may be a warning to young scribblers." See John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. v (London: Printed for the Author, by Nichols, Son, and Bentley, at Cicero's Head, 1812), 535.

<sup>196</sup> The note appears in Horace Walpole's copy of Pope's *Works* published by Lintot (1741-1743), and is transcribed in *Notes on the Poems of Alexander Pope, by Horatio Earl of Oxford, Contributed by Sir William Augustus Fraser, of Ledclune and Morar, Baronet, M.A., F.S.A., M.P. From the Copy in His Possession* (London: F. Harvey, 4 St. James's Street, 1876), 82-3.

<sup>197</sup> Interestingly, Lady Mary Wortley Montague's pamphlet is modeled on Pope's own pamphlets against Curll written after the emetic episode: *A Full and True Account of a Horrid and Barbarous Revenge by Poison on the Body of Mr. Edmund Curll, Bookseller; with a Faithful Copy of His Last Will and Testament*, and *A Further Account*

of the *Most Deplorable Condition of Mr. Edmund Curll, Bookseller* (1716), respectively. Montague's full title similarly insists on the physical punishment of the "unfortunate Poet": "A Popp upon Pope: Or, A true and faithful Account of a late horrid and barbarous Whipping committed on the Body of Sauny Pope, a Poet; as he was innocently walking in Ham-Walks, near the River Thames, meditating Verses for the Good of the Publick."

<sup>198</sup> John Dunton was one of the most active booksellers of the 1690s, playing a major role in the rise of the eighteenth-century periodical. His most successful enterprise was the *Athenian Gazette* (1691-1697), whose readers were invited to send their queries on various subjects to a club of learned men meeting at Smith's Coffee House (The Athenian Society). Pope attacked Dunton in *The Dunciad* for his Whig sympathies but also for his indiscriminate public attacks (*Whipping-Post, or, A Satyr upon Every Body*, 1706; *Neck or Nothing*, 1713). The reference to "Dunton's modern bed" in line 144 is also a clue that Dunton's Athenianism was perceived by the Scriblerians as a hostile reaction to the Augustan literature. For a valuable assessment of Dunton as an important agent of modernity, see J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels*, 3-28, and following. Daniel Defoe stood three times in the pillory for seditious libel after publishing *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702), a political satire that attacked the newly enthroned Queen Anne for her intolerant position against dissenters. The "shortest-way" in the title refers to the writer's ironical suggestion to completely suppress Nonconformity by extermination.

<sup>199</sup> In 1716 Curll published *Court Poems*, a volume consisting of three "town eclogues" by Swift and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (at the time Pope's close friend). The authorship of the eclogues was not disclosed, they being written, according to the Preface, "by a Lady of Quality," but rumors went that Gay, and even Pope himself, might have been the authors. Under the pretext of trying to protect his friend John Gay, Pope met with Curll and poured an emetic in his drink. Shortly afterwards Pope brought out *A Full and True Account of a Horrid and Barbarous Revenge by Poison, on the Body of Mr. Edmund Curll, Bookseller. With a Faithful Copy of his Last Will and Testament*, a humorous pamphlet that helped solidify the stereotype about the bookseller's mercenary practices. The blanket tossing episode occurred later the same year: Curll had planned to publish a biography of the recently deceased scholar Robert South and acquired a copy of John Barber's funeral oration without the author's permission. Invited at Westminster School, where Barber was the headmaster, he was surrounded by the students, made to beg forgiveness, whipped, and tossed in a blanket.

<sup>200</sup> This stern characterization of Osborne was made by John Hawkins and was reproduced in John Nichols, op. cit., vol. iii, 649.

<sup>201</sup> The term was coined by Daniel Defoe, who in the *Weekly Journal* for 5 April 1718 attacked one of Curll's publications, *Eunuchism Display'd*, as a piece of pornography. Curll sensed immediately its marketing value and adopted the term, defending himself in a pamphlet titled *Curlicism Display'd* (1718).

<sup>202</sup> Edmund Curll, *The Compleat Key to the Dunciad* (London: Printed for A. Dodd, 1728).

<sup>203</sup> The extent of Curll's influence on Pope's promotional practices is suggested by a footnote to the satirical poem *Sawney and Colley, a Poetical Dialogue: Occasioned by A Late Letter from the Laureat of St. James's, to the Homer of Twickenham. Something in the Manner of Dr. Swift* (London: Printed for J.H., 1742). According to the anonymous author, "SAWNEY [i.e. Pope] and C---L are said to be A'kin by Trade, on Account of the former's having lately turned Bookseller to himself, selling all his own Pieces, by Means of a Publisher, without giving his Bookseller any Share in them; and likewise practicing, in all respect, the lowest Craft of the Trade; such as different

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Editions in various Forms, with perpetual Additions and Improvements, so as to render all but the last worth nothing; and, by that Means, fooling many People into buying them several times over.”

<sup>204</sup> Still to be explored are the points of intersection of Curll’s positioning in London’s space (the bookseller is associated with a topography clearly delineated by the text) and his positioning on the poem’s mythological canvas, which gives Curll his heroic stature.

<sup>205</sup> Pat Rogers, “Nameless Names: Pope, Curll, and the Uses of Anonymity,” *New Literary History*, 33 (2002): 233-45.

<sup>206</sup> For a useful account of the women writers’ role in the coterie culture emerging at the time, see Moyra Haslett, *Pope to Burney, 1714-1779. Scriblerians to Bluestockings* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>207</sup> Two other targets of Pope’s satire would have been, according to Valerie Rumbold, Mary Pix, prolific playwright and author of occasional poems, and “N\_\_n,” identified by Maynard Mack with Lady Frances Norton, an author of poems of religious inspiration. They were the main protagonists of a caterwauling episode, planned to be included in the noise-making competition in an earlier version of the poem. For details, see Valerie Rumbold, “Cut the Caterwauling: Women Writers (Not) in Pope’s *Dunciads*,” *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, Vol. 52, No. 208 (2001): 524-39.

<sup>208</sup> Eliza Fowler Haywood, *Memoirs of a Certain island Adjacent to the Kingdom of Utopia. Written by a celebrated author of that country. Now translated into English*, vol. I, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1726), 12.

<sup>209</sup> The South Sea Company, for example, allegorized in the Enchanted Well, is presented “as a perfect symbol for the intersection of private interest with the public good” (629). For more details, see Marta Kvande, “The Outsider Narrator in Eliza Haywood’s Political Novels,” *SEL* 43.3 (Summer 2003): 625-43.

<sup>210</sup> In his biography of Haywood, George Frisbie Whicher disagrees with this attribution as neither the style of the book nor the anti-feminist critique it contains fits the authoress. For details, see *The Life and Romances of Mrs. Eliza Haywood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1915), 119-20.

<sup>211</sup> In the 1728 *Dunciad* the last two lines describing Eliza Haywood read, “Pearls on her neck, and roses in her hair,/ And her fore-buttocks to the navel bare.” The cancelled passage referred initially to Mary Pix and [Frances] N[orton?], and was subsequently changed as follows: “See next two slip-shod Muses traipse along,/ In lofty madness meditating song,/ With tresses staring from poetic dreams/ And never wash’d, but in Castalia’s steams./ H[aywood] and T[homas], glories of their race.” Also, an earlier version of Curll’s Corinna was Susana Centlivre.

<sup>212</sup> Helene Koon, “Eliza Haywood and the *Female Spectator*,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Winter, 1978): 43-55.

<sup>213</sup> The following are only some of the books authored by “dunces” and sold or published by Curll, according to his catalogues of books and pamphlets (1712-1742): John Dennis, *Letters, Moral and Critical* (1721), and *The Popiad* (1728); John Oldmixon, *The Secret History of Europe. Part III* (1715; 1733), *Life of Arthur Maynwaring, Esq.* (1715), *Critical History of England* (1722), *Court Tales: or a History of the Amours of the Present Nobility, with a Compleat Key* (1735), and *History of the Reformation* (1739); Lewis Theobald, *Collection of Original Poems* (1721), *Miscellaneous Poems* (1721), and a collective translation of *Ovid’s Metamorphoses* (1721); Ned Ward, *The*

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*Life and Notable Adventures of That Renown'd Knight Don Quixote de la Mancha, Merrily translated in Hudibrastic Verse* (1712).

<sup>214</sup> The Hillarians were a circle of writers including John Dyer, James Thomson, Richard Savage, Martha Fowke, Edward Young, David Mallet and Eliza Haywood, who held regular assemblies at Aaron Hill's house. Editor of the bi-weekly paper *Plain Dealer*, Hill promoted the ideal of mutual respect between men and women and published a number of representative women writers, such as Delarivier Manley, Aphra Behn, and Eliza Haywood. Haywood's break with the Hillarians occurred around 1725, after her malicious attack against Martha Fowke in *Utopia*. For details, see Kathryn R. King, "New Contexts for Early Novels by Women: The Case of Eliza Haywood, Aaron Hill and the Hillarians, 1719-1725," in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel and Culture*, eds. Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 261-75.

<sup>215</sup> Haywood's periodicals played an important role in creating a feminist niche in the literary public sphere: they engaged women as contributors and opened the way for later protofeminist periodicals, such as Frances Brooke's *Old Maid* (1755-1756) and Charlotte Lennox's *Lady's Museum* (1760-1761).

<sup>216</sup> Eliza Haywood, *Frederick, Duke of Brunswick-Lunenburg. A Tragedy* (London: Printed for W. Mears and J. Brindley, 1729).

<sup>217</sup> According to G. Frisbie Whicher, between 1731 and 1741, Eliza Haywood produced fewer books than during any single year of her activity after the publication of *Idalia* and before *The Dunciad*. Moreover, most of these titles were published anonymously.

<sup>218</sup> According to William B. Warner, Eliza Haywood is one of the few novelists who survived the "elevation" of the novel in the 1740s. For details, see "The Elevation of the Novel in England: Hegemony and Literary History," *ELH*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Autumn, 1992): 557-96.

<sup>219</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Life of Pope*, ed. Peter Peterson (London and New York: McMillan & Co, 1899), 38.

<sup>220</sup> In *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, Being the Prologue to the Satires* (1735), Pope seems to point to Dennis's disapproval of his *Pastorals*: "Soft were my numbers; who could take offence,/While pure description held the place of sense?/Like gentle Fanny's was my flowery theme,/A painted mistress, or a purling stream./Yet then did Gildon draw his venal quill;—/I wished the man a dinner, and sat still./Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret;/I never answered—I was not in debt" (l. 147-154).

<sup>221</sup> John Dennis, *Reflections, Critical and Satirical, upon a Late Rhapsody, Call'd, An Essay upon Criticism* (London: Printed for Bernard Lintott, 1711).

<sup>222</sup> John Dennis, *A True Character of Mr. Pope, and His Writings. In a Letter to a Friend* (London: Printed for S. Popping, 1716). For Dennis's authorship of this piece, see Edward N. Hooker's compelling argument in "Pope and Dennis," *ELH*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Sept. 1940): 188-98.

<sup>223</sup> John Dennis, *Remarks on Mr Pope's Rape of the Lock. In Several Letters to a Friend. With a Preface Occasion'd by the Late Treatise on the Profound, and the Dunciad* (London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1728). Dennis's forecast of Pope's posterity is, indeed, disparaging: "For I will venture to affirm, that Mr. A. P\_\_E has no Admirers among



those who have Capacity to discern, to distinguish, and judge; and I will venture to foretell, that Time will make this Affirmation good” (Preface, vi).

<sup>224</sup> John Dennis, *Remarks upon Several Passages in the Preliminaries to the Dunciad, both of the Quarto and the Duodecimo Edition. And upon Several Passages in Pope’s Preface to his Translation of Homer’s Iliad. In Both which is shewn the Author’s Want of Judgment. With Original Letters from Sir Richard Steele, from the Late Mr. Gildon, from Mr. Jacob, and from Mr. Pope himself, Which shew the Falshood of the latter, his Envy, and his Malice* (London: Printed for H. Whitridge, 1729).

<sup>225</sup> “As to my writing in concert with Mr. Gildon, I declare upon the honour and word of a gentleman, that I never wrote so much as one line in *concert* with any one man whatsoever.” Dennis, *Remarks on the Dunciad*, 50, qtd. by Pope in his *Testimonies*.

<sup>226</sup> Dennis, *Remarks on the Dunciad*, 49.

<sup>227</sup> Given that the majority of these attacks were published under pseudonym, their authorship is difficult to establish. It is true, however, that a concerted attack against Pope was hosted in the pages of the *Mist’s Journal*, which contained a number of malicious pieces against the poet. See, for instance, *Letter XXIII, Homer’s Character Attempted in Blank Verse*, *Letter XXVII, BS’s Scurrilous Reflections upon Mr. Pope*, and *Letter LVII, The Great Mischief Accrued to Church and State from the Assaults of Illiterate Pamphleteers*, republished in *A collection of miscellany letters, selected out of Mist’s Weekly Journal*, vol. 2 (London: Printed by N. Mist, 1732).

<sup>228</sup> Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub. Written for the Universal Improvement of Mankind. To which is added, An Account of the Battel between the Antient and Modern Books In St. James Library* (London: Printed for John Nutt, 1704).

<sup>229</sup> That Pope attacked Dennis first and foremost in his public role of leading critical voice of his time is indicated by the fact that Dennis and Jacob are completely replaced in the fourth book by Richard Bentley and Martinus Scriblerus. The change in emphasis is significant: the pedant critic (Bentley) replaces the mad one (Dennis), and a fictional character (Scriblerus) replaces an amatory critic (Jacob), who has no authority in the literary field.

<sup>230</sup> Sutherland, “Review,” 118.

<sup>231</sup> John Henley, *Why How Now, Gossip Pope? Or, The Sweet Singing-Bird of Parnasus taken out of its pretty Cage to be roasted: In one short epistle (Preparatory to a Criticism on his Writings) to that Darling of the Demy-wits, and Minion of the Minor Critick*. (London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1736), 14-15.

<sup>232</sup> John Henley, *Milk for Babes: or, a Hornbook for that Able Divine, Eminent Lawyer, and Honest Politician, Mr. H-s, and his Disciples; by way of Answer to his Godly and Conscientious Scruples relating to Oratory* (London: Printed at the Oratory, 1729), 45.

<sup>233</sup> John Henley, Advertisement for 7 Nov. 1747, in Daniel Lysons, *Collectanea* (British Museum, 1889, e.6). Qtd. in Midgley, *The Life of Orator Henley*, 79.

<sup>234</sup> Anon., *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Henley, M.A., concerning his novel Project: wherein his Design is fully exposed* (London, Printed for T. Warner, 1726), 9.

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<sup>235</sup> J. W. Newman., *The Lounger's Commonplace Book*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: 1805), 141.

<sup>236</sup> Henley, *Why How Now, Gossip Pope?*, 12.

<sup>237</sup> The number of caricatures in which Henley appears during the time is, indeed, impressive. Besides the six visual satires included in Graham Midgley's biography (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum), I have found six more at Lewis Walpole Library alone, all emphasizing either Henley's political involvement in topical events (*Orator H---y Laying the Independent Rump Ghost*, *The North Star*, *A Stir in the City*, *The Apparition*), or his interest in gaining financial advantages (*The Modern Orpheus*, *Orator Humbug to Admiral Bungy*).

<sup>238</sup> Midgley, op cit., 137.

<sup>239</sup> Henley's "Dissertation upon Nonsense," subsequently published in his *Oratory Transactions* (London: Printed for Mrs. Dodd, by Temple Bar, 1729), ends with an explicit attack against Pope, the first in a long series of personal spoofs: "But that is not all the Culture given to *Nonsense*; there are celebrated Professors of it: Mr. Pope grows witty, like *Bays* in the Rehearsal, by selling Bargains, praising himself, laughing at his Joke, and making his own Works the Test of every Man's Criticism; but he seems to be in some Jeopardy, for the Ghost of *Homer* has lately spoke to Him in *Greek*, and *Shakespear* resolves to bring him, as he has brought *Shakespear*, to a Tragical conclusion" (29).

<sup>240</sup> Henley's lampoons against "Tomtit Pope" are particularly nasty, describing Pope as a "maggot" living on "Putrefaction," as a "monstrous Apparition," a "Scare-Crow," and an "Ignoramus." For more details about these attacks, see Midgley, op. cit., 170-85.

<sup>241</sup> Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1952), 279.

<sup>242</sup> Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (Cambridge: Printed by R.D. for John Williams, 1642), 199.

<sup>243</sup> Pope's intention was, indeed, to suggest the idea of a library: the image was inspired by an episode from Aristophanes' *The Frogs* describing "those who were preferr'd to some Place they did not deserve, as when a Duncce was made a Library-keeper." Qtd. in Charles Boyle, *Dr. Bentley's Dissertations on the Epistles of Phalaris, and the Fables of Aesop, Examined*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Printed for Thomas Davies, 1745), 220.

<sup>244</sup> Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees. Abstract Models for Literary History* (London, New York: Verso, 2007), 53-4.

<sup>245</sup> A significantly thinner "hall of fame" includes Dryden, Addison, Gay, and Pope, all authors systematically attacked and fed upon by figures culturally peripheral. They create a four-point system of perfect stability that provided a building base for major cultural enterprises.

<sup>246</sup> Alberto Piazza, "Evolution at Close Range," in Franco Moretti, op. cit., 98.

<sup>247</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point. How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2002), 30-88.

<sup>248</sup> An interesting recreation, to a certain extent, of Pope's extremely unusual textual space is Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), which contains a poem by author John Shade heavily annotated by a delusional commentator, Charles Kinbote. Both the poem and the commentary function, though, at the same level of reality, unlike Pope's text, which is complicated by the clash between the epic time of the poem and the contemporary time of the annotations. The "reality frame" provided by Pope's apparatus has no equivalence, to my knowledge, in any fictional work, old or recent.

<sup>249</sup> Joseph Spence and Samuel Weller Singer, *Anecdotes, Observations and Characters, of Books and Men: Collected from the Conversation of Mr. Pope and Other Eminent Persons of His Time* (London: John Russell Smith, 1858), 238-39.

<sup>250</sup> Brean S. Hammond, "The Dunciad and the City: Pope and Heterotopia," *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 38.2, Spring 2005: 221 and 228, respectively.

<sup>251</sup> For an engaging commentary on the significance of Doctor Faustus representations for the renewed popularity of the pantomimes in the first decades of the century, see John O'Brien, op. cit., 93-116.

<sup>252</sup> Aristotle, *The Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher, accessed June 4, 2011, <https://collab.itc.virginia.edu/access/content/group/83a0d97a-21ea-494b-8557-bd22e226d382/Readings/Aristotle%20Poetics%20Butcher.html>.

<sup>253</sup> Pope, *Peri Bathous*, 19.

<sup>254</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, 8.16-20, <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-b.html#CHAPTERVIII>.

<sup>255</sup> The argument is complicated even more by the fact that Cibber is actually depicted as a King's fool in the semi-fictional space of one of the poem's appendices. In "Of the Poet Laureate," a piece adapted from an article first printed in *The Grub-Street Journal* in 1730, Cibber is compared to Camillo Querno, the "father of all Laureates," a plain man of Apulia who came to the court of Pope Leo X to share his poetry, becoming the "clown" of the courts' wits. The piece, written right before Cibber's election as Laureate to King George II, considered a number of other possible candidates to laureateship, such as the poet Stephen Duck and the critic John Dennis. However, all editions of *The Dunciad* published after 1730 identified Cibber and nobody else with Leo's fool. Real and fictional spaces are, again, seeping into each other given Cibber's ideal status as celebrity figure in both realms.

<sup>256</sup> Colley Cibber performed Bajazet's role in *Tamerlaine the Great* at Bartholomew Fair in 1733, while his daughter was said to have kept a puppet show and sold sausages in the same location.

<sup>257</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984), 211.

<sup>258</sup> Pope, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, 396.

<sup>259</sup> For a persuasive reading of the fourth book of *The Dunciad* as resembling one of John Heidegger's masquerades, see Rogers, "The Critique of Opera," 15-30.

<sup>260</sup> Aristotle, op. cit.

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<sup>261</sup> Aristotle, op. cit.

<sup>262</sup> Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 26.

<sup>263</sup> Nicholas Harpsfield's *Dialogi sex contra summi pontificatus, monasticae vitae, sanctorum, sacrarum imaginum oppugnatores, et pseudomartyres* published in Antwerp in 1566 is, indeed a massive, 1000-page long work.

<sup>264</sup> Roland Barthes, "From Word to Text," in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. by S. Heath (New York: Noonday Press, 1977), 160.

<sup>265</sup> Jorge Louis Borges, "The Library of Babel," in *Collected Fictions*, trans. by Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1998), 117.

<sup>266</sup> "Association copies" or volumes received by Pope from acquaintances or friends include, among others works, Garth's *Dispensary*, Addison's *Cato*, Gay's *Trivia*, Prior's *Poems on Several Occasions*, and Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*. For more details, see Maynard Mack, "'Books and the Man': Pope's Library," in *Collected in Himself. Essays Critical, Biographical, and Bibliographical on Pope and Some of His Contemporaries* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982), 310-12.

<sup>267</sup> Mack, *Collected in Himself*, 312-16.

<sup>268</sup> For a thought-provoking discussion about the relationship between sainthood and stupidity that seems to mirror Cibber's own relationship with his books, see Michel Foucault, "The Fantasia of the Library," in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. by D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

<sup>269</sup> Pope, *Peri Bathous*, 56.

<sup>270</sup> Helen Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace. Alexander Pope and the Deformation of Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 4 and 6, respectively.

<sup>271</sup> Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 1965).

<sup>272</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 58.

<sup>273</sup> Hobbes, op. cit.

<sup>274</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 84.

<sup>275</sup> Bakhtin, op. cit., 317.

<sup>276</sup> David Fairer, *Pope's Imagination* (New Hampshire: Manchester University Press, 1984), 137.

<sup>277</sup> Pope's letter to Cromwell, 24 June 1710, in *Correspondence*, vol. 1, 89.

<sup>278</sup> Alexander Pope, *The Guardian* 78, 10 June 1713; qtd. in Deutsch, op. cit., 30.

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<sup>279</sup> Stallybrass and White, op. cit. 105-6.

<sup>280</sup> Warton, op. cit., 334.

<sup>281</sup> "Preface" to Pope, Alexander. *The Beauties of Pope, or, useful and entertaining passages selected from the works of that admired author; as well as from his translation of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, &c. ...* vol. 1 (London: Printed for G. Kearsley, 1796), vii-viii.

<sup>282</sup> For the reception of Pope's work by the Romantics and the seven-year controversy regarding Pope's place in the English canon started by William Lisle Bowles in 1819, see J.J. Van Rennes, *Bowles, Byron and the Pope-Controversy* (New York: Haskell House, 1966); Upali Amarasinghe, *Dryden and Pope in the Early Nineteenth Century. A Study of Changing Literary Taste, 1800-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962); Garland Greever, ed. *A Wiltshire Parson and His Friends: the Correspondence of William Lisle Bowles* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923); and, more recently, James Chandler, "The Pope Controversy: Romantic Poetics and the English Canon," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 10, no. 3 (Mar. 1984): 481-509.

<sup>283</sup> Excerpt from James Boswell's notes for a biography of Sir Joshua Reynolds in Frederick W. Hilles, ed. *Portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1952), 24-5.