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**Order and Chaos in *The Dunciad Variorum*<sup>1</sup>**

Utility ought to be the principle intention of every publication. Wherever this intention does not plainly appear, neither the books nor their authors have the smallest claim to the approbation of mankind. (qtd. in Fadiman xxv)

William Smellie, in his 1768 preface to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, exhibits the distinctively eighteenth century penchant for didactic literature. Satire, Augustan literature's foremost genre--besides being the only *bona fide* Latian invention--at least ostensibly is supported by pillars of didacticism and is the choicest of choices for both Pope specifically and Neo-classicists generally. Utility then, in one aspect or another, practical or moral or, as in Richardson's *Pamela*, practically moral, shows itself as the virtual driving force behind much eighteenth century literature. The utility of Smellie's *Britannica*--initially a modest collection of bound pamphlets--and that pursued by Pope in his *versificated* satires is, of course, differentiated by much more than this practical/moral dichotomy and is keenly

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<sup>1</sup>With as much focus on Book II as seemed possible.

described by their respective audience as a fundamental philosophic schism.

With entries as varied as "BUG: *Cheap, easy, and clean mixture for effectively destroying [bed] Buggs,*"<sup>2</sup>(Fadiman 65) which goes on to provide a comprehensive recipe; "MELANCHOLY AND MADNESS . . . Melancholy may be looked upon as the primary disease, of which madness is only the augmentation";(22) and "WOMAN, the female of man";(29) the first edition of *Britannica*, besides providing a literary dig of eighteenth century relics, might reasonably be taken as a symbol of the democratisation of knowledge--a work that embodies an inclusive philosophy that points to the future. Pope's *The Dunciad*, as neo-classical tractate, is essentially elitist and embodies an exclusive philosophy that points instead to the past. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* and *The Dunciad* then maintain utilitarian goals and reliance upon variant collective wisdom<sup>3</sup> both, though their undeniably antipodal natures portray not merely a variant epistemological philosophy but the rank and file of two opposing forces which might be described as Neo-classical and Romantic, illiberal and progressive, or at the very least, Court and Grubb Street. As with Swift's *The Battle of the Books*, it is this conflict which provides both context and current for the primary theme

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<sup>2</sup>This should be cross referenced to *The Itch*.

<sup>3</sup>In the case of *The Dunciad* the reference points particularly to classical wisdom.

of *The Dunciad*: order and chaos.

Besides the deliberate thematic use of order and chaos, a useful point of departure is the more intrinsic and inadvertent manifestation inherent in the very structure of *The Dunciad*. For all the sparkling brilliance of the work, there exists an unquestionable confusion in principles of organisation. Although, for the purposes of economy, we shall examine only two major examples, this structural chaos has multiple sources suggesting that there is, in effect, chaos to the very chaos.

Our first exemplification is the footnote prose and verse poetry wrangle.<sup>4</sup> At risk of traipsing about in platitudinal clod-hoppers, the footnotes, by disturbing the narrative flow--such as there is--with often unkept promises of clarification, initially baffles the reader. The amassing of obscure contemporary references in the verse, chaotic in itself, which the footnotes ostensible seek to clarify, make further war for the readers' attention. There is yet more confusion in the very multitudinousness of the footnote voices, a fact noted by no less than Colley Cibber himself:

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<sup>4</sup>Despite the millions of words written upon *The Dunciad*, surprisingly little of solid footing has been offered in reference to the aesthetic effect and meaning of these almost anomalistic annotations. With this vacuity in mind, this paper moves its bias away from the poem proper and towards the footnotes.

And though I grant it a better poem of its kind than ever was writ; yet when I read it, with those vain-glorious encumbrances of Notes, and Remarks, upon almost every Line of it, I find myself in the uneasy condition I was once in at the Opera where sitting with a silent Desire to hear a favourite Air, by a famous Performer, a Coxcomby Connoisseur, at my Elbow, was so fond of showing his own Taste, that by his continual Remarks, and prating in Praise of every Grace and Cadence, my Attention and Pleasure in the Song was quite lost and confounded.(10)

Indeed, this observation from so surprising a source as the fated *dunciad* himself, beside undermining the appropriateness of his future role by virtue of its perceptivity, was picked up and passed as original observation *obiter dictum* by Richardson in his *Falling Towers*:

The overall effect of prefatory materials, notes and appendixes is to surround the poem with a multitude of muttering voices--it is almost comparable to a play being performed with the audience allowed, even encouraged, to discuss the performance as it takes place.(107-108)

Mr. Richardson, with his conditional, "allowed, even encouraged," seems oblivious to the general understanding of eighteenth century dramatic performance, outlined most particularly in *The Critics in the Audience of London Theatres*, which submits that the polite silence characteristic of the modern audience would then have been quite anomalistic.

Many of the spectators came early in order to

discuss the play before 'curtain time,' often punctuating the performance with audible and obstructing critical comment.(Smith 10)

Moving from the confusion of dithyrambic footnotes, the second structural source of textual chaos stems from the imitative aspect of the poem established in the opening lines of Book I. Pope's transformation of Vergil's: "My song is arms and a man, the first of Troy/to come to Italy and Lavinian shores"(I. 1-2) to: "Books and the Man I sing, the first who brings/The Smithfield Muses to the Ear of Kings,"(I. 1-2) establishes varied expectations, not least being the imitation and parody of *The Aeneid*. Indeed, *The Dunciad*, as mock epic, imitates and parodies varied epic conventions, such as invocations, supernatural machinery, catalogues and so on; but the very specificity of the opening lines is suggestive of more than the generic handling that *The Dunciad* finally provides.

Pope's "neurological instability"(2)--as William's so winsomely coins in his otherwise prosaic *Pope's Dunciad, a Study of its Meaning*--reshapes *The Dunciad* into a chaotic collection of vegeances. No name is too nameless nor too numerous in what becomes an almost amorphous directory of abuse. Rarely, at least in the first three Books, is there a sense of Pope naming names with the intent of typifying archetypal obliquity, and we are left wishing perhaps that

Pope had taken *ab uno disce omnes*<sup>5</sup> as a piece of personal guidance. With vengeance then becoming a controlling principle, it is hardly surprising that our structural expectations are dashed along with the structure itself, and that the narrative flow becomes more of a sceptic pool. Indeed, it has been variously noted<sup>6</sup> that Pope, in abandoning the outline of *The Aeneid*, provides us with a hero who does nothing within the confines of a narrative that goes nowhere. Pope himself faced this criticism and suggested that narrative movement does occur, that it is the movement from city to court with the hero, as King of the dull masses, leading the way. Certainly Williams examines this in detail and offers convincing support, making a further analogue between *The Dunciad* and *The Aeneid* by offering the City as Troy and the Court as Latium. Not only fair but reasonable; nevertheless this movement, by its very subtlety, is not wholly suitable to the frantic frolicking of dullness and finds itself lost in the storming of Grubb Street, whose crumbling buildings<sup>7</sup> only

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<sup>5</sup>Virgil, *The Aeneid* II 65-66: from one example you may know the rest.

<sup>6</sup>But ne'er so well express'd.

<sup>7</sup>This image, of course, is the optimistic objective of *Scriblerus* club. Far from falling, the buildings, founded upon solid scientific, (printing) philosophical, (epistemological)

add to the chaos of copious name calling and calling of names.<sup>8</sup>

Moving now from the inadvertent to the happily deliberate: *The Dunciad* speaks forever with contemporary society as an omnipresent backdrop, where the individual targets of satire are "bad" not only in themselves but serve to *baden* society by virtue of their activities, being both the cause and condition of general baseness, *The Dunciad's* most outstanding lines are lines which hang not only particular persons but general societal trends.

"Now turn to different sports (the Goddess  
cries)  
And learn, my sons, the wond'rous pow'r of Noise  
To move, to raise, to ravish ev'ry heart,  
With Shakespeare's nature, or with Johnson's art,  
Let other aim: 'Tis yours to shake the soul  
With thunder rumbling. . . ." (II 213-218)

The attached footnote, referring not to the games of *The Aeneid* themselves but to a section in Book VI in which Lord Anchises suggests that Romans should "Govern! Rule the world!" (Virgil VI 851) and leave the rest to the rest, provides great ironic contrast with the thunderous rumblings that exemplify the *forté* and goal of the Dull. Besides this, it serves to

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and economic (a growing merchant middle class) developments are still standing and are still occupied--by ourselves.

<sup>8</sup>The question of a correlation between the essential lack of narrative vitality and the sterility of neo-classicism as a spent socio-cultural force will here go entirely unanswered.

underscore the nature of the relationship between *The Dunciad* and *The Aeneid* not as analogue but of indirect correlative. Indeed, as Williams points out, the noise making game perhaps owes less to Vergil's epic than to Ovid's *Fasti*:

Eunuchs will march and thump their hollow  
drums, and cymbals clashed on cymbals will give out  
their tinkling notes: sitting on the unmanly necks  
of her attendants, the goddess herself will be with  
howls through the streets in the city's midst.(Ovid  
203)<sup>9</sup>

Certainly though the "sports" are a satirical imitation of the games in *The Aeneid*, though the word here, subsequent to our encounters with the scatological race, mighty urination and tickling, has a meaning less of the athletic and more of the frolic, the dalliance, the deviation from normalcy. The first thing we notice, however, is the appropriateness of the proclamation, for in this contest of loudness, the Goddess herself "cries" out. The capitalised "Noise" reverberates with the earlier preparations for the games:

She summons all her sons: An endless band  
Pours fourth, and leaves unpeopled half the land;  
A motley mixture! in long wigs, in bags  
In silks, in crapes, in garters and in rags;  
(II 15-18)

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<sup>9</sup>This extract, it seems, demonstrates a fruitful realm of comparative enquiry which, for purposes of brevity and unity will here go entirely unexamined.

Linked with the Smithfield "rabble" of Book I and "All crowd . . . /Some free from rhyme or reason, rule or check . . . /Down, down they larum, with impetuous whirl"(III 152-157) of Book III, we see a persistent imagery which describes a mob that is half the nation, the uncultured masses, a rowdy noisy unruly liberal rambunctious discordant cacophonous chattering clamorous obstreperous riotous and disorderly rabble.<sup>10</sup> Like writing without regard for rules, it is the Visigoths rampaging at the gates Rome, the scimitar wielding Saracens scaling the walls of Jerusalem, the hoarded heathens at the edge of empire building Christendom. The dangerously disordered crowds without are further linked with mental derangement within: "Daughter of chaos and eternal night . . . . /She rul'd, in native anarchy, the mind,"(I 10-14) as well as with the masses of paper which fall from the assiduous presses:

Here she beholds the Chaos dark and deep,  
Where nameless somethings in there causes sleep,  
'Til genial Jacob, or a warm third day,  
Call forth each mass, a poem or a play. (I 53-56)

The result is the creation of a complex *imageric* leitmotif which resounds of riotous chaos and a siege-like sense of imminent destruction encompassing massed people, paper, and cerebral processes. The literary tendencies of the time forms

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<sup>10</sup>In case you miss this one: each word in this "epic catalogue" represents a member of the unruly masses.

the primary focus of *The Dunciad*, but it is their larger social implication which forms the real moral crux and takes centre stage: the vulgarisation of taste, stemming from the rapid growth of literacy and of the reading public, has allowed for the development of newspapers, pamphlets, magazines and other cheap readables which themselves contribute to the vulgarisation of taste: a vicious cycle.<sup>11</sup> What might seem to modern readers as modern development--the new spirit of commercial enterprise and the dissemination of information--is viewed by Pope as the corruption not only of the arts but of society itself. Hence, "With Authors, Stationers obey'd the call/The field of glory is a field for all"(II 27-28) the "all" is again that numberless number, the principle omnipresent cause of *The Dunciad's* chaos.

"Shakespeare's nature" provides us with what is surely a key word in the neo-classicists arsenal--and one that is blunderbuss-like in its imprecision. Having little reference to birds and bees and flowers and trees, "nature" is more an articulation of that which is representative, universal, everlasting to the human condition. In this example, pertaining to Pope's analysis of Shakespeare's genius, it is suggestive of:

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<sup>11</sup>Pope's assessment of the tastelessness of this new reading public must be understood within the context of his own appreciations, where even newspapers are seen as entirely negative.

Yet if we look more closely, we shall find  
Most have the seeds of judgement in their mind:  
Nature affords at least a glimmering light; (Pope:  
"An Essay on Criticism" 19-21)

where "nature" is suggestive of intuitive knowledge.

The winner of the noise making game, of course, is Sir Richard Blackmore, the volume of his voice being the voluminousness of his published works. Doctor by trade and poet by tirade, he composed in coffee-houses and *en route* in his coach. The obvious political allegory of *Prince Arthur* won him a knighthood in 1697 and thus made him a perfect target for *The Dunciad* and a veritable embodiment of the general principle outlined in the opening lines of Book I.<sup>12</sup> His epics, as the following sample supports, are unquestionably bad:

Flashes of Fire from his red Eyeballs flow'd,  
Like lightening breaking from a lowring Cloud  
So when a Toad, squat on a Border spies,  
The Gardener passing by, his bloodshot Eyes  
With Spite, and Rage inflam'd, dart Fire around  
The verdant Walks, and on the flowry Ground,  
The bloated Vermin loathsome Poison spites,  
And swoln and bursting with his Malice sits.  
(Blackmore Bk. VI, 177)

Clearly Blackmore would know no equal until the equivocal appearance of William McGonagall. It was, however, his *Satyr*

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<sup>12</sup>Indeed, it seems remarkable that Blackmore was not selected as the ideal King of Dullness, for his inabilities are vastly more absolute than either Theobald or Cibber.

*against Wit* that most riled Augustinians and was the occasion for a full fledged literary skirmish. Toned down somewhat, *An Essay Upon Wit* still maintains that Wit can never prove noble and, since it finds common employment in immoral subjects and satires, is often harmful. When Blackmore states:

No Production of Human Understanding are  
received with such a general Pleasure and  
Approbation, as those that abound with Wit and  
Humour, on which the people set a greater Value,  
than on the wisest and most instructive Discourses .  
. .(Augustan Reprint Society 190)<sup>13</sup>

the tables seemed turned, for here it is the authors of satires who are shown responsible for the pandemonium of popular taste. The comment, in perfectly keeping with the tendency of William Smellie's *Britannica* preface, suggests further that neither singer nor song were singular, that Blackmore airs a common concern. <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Blackmore's prose, as this quotation demonstrates, is much more convincing and thoughtful than his verse.

<sup>14</sup>Blackmore's fecund production of epics, described by *The Oxford Companion* as "indifferent poems of great length" also reiterates the question raised in class as to the absence of a true epic in Pope's work. The decided badness of Blackmore's efforts is a mute point: the inference from their very multitudinousness is that there was no socio-historical factor making epic production an impossibility, but that the cause lies solely in the capacities of Pope.

In an early game, "Thro' half the heav'ns he pours the' exalted urn;/His rapid waters in their passage burn"(II 175-176) is attached to a particularly rich footnote:

. . . In a manuscript *Dunciad*, (where are some marginal corrections of some gentleman sometime deceas'd) I have found another reading of these lines, thus, *And lifts his urn thro' half the heavens to flow;/His rapid waters in their passage glow*. This I cannot but think the right: For first, tho' the difference between *burn* and *glow* may seem not very material to others, to me I confess the latter has an elegance, a *Jenesçay quoy*, which is much easier to be conciev'd than explain'd. Secondly, every reader of our Poet must have observ'd how frequently he uses this word *glow* in other parts of works.

. . . . .  
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I am afraid of growing too luxuriant in examples, or I could stretch this catalogue [excluded] to a great extent, but these are enough to prove his fondness for this *beautiful word* which therefore let all future editions re-place here.

I am aware after all, that *burn* is the proper word to convey an idea of what was said to be Mr. *Curl's* condition at that time: But from that very reason I infer the direct contrary. For surely every lover of our author will conclude he had more humanity, than to insult a man on such a misfortune or calamity, which could never befall him purely by his *own fault*, but from an unhappy communication with another. *This Note is partly Mr. Theobald, partly SCRIBLERUS.*

Returning to the complex issue of footnotes and with no

apology for the hefty order of the above quotation, the conception here is a deliberate exploration of the order and chaos theme. The lack of morality; the lack of learning; the lack of "reason" in the critic's affirmation: "But from that very reason I infer the direct contrary"; each are offered as examples of a general condition, for *The Dunciad* is concerned not merely with individual deficiency, as already suggested, but with the removal of the Smithfield muses to the court of kings: with the social ramifications of individual deficiency. The issue of sexual infidelity, as an example, speaks of the disintegration of moral order on a larger scale, at the social level. Pope, as a satirist and moralist, must claim exception and exemption from such declining morals, which begs the question of the suitability here of tone and stress.<sup>15</sup> How fittingly does the righteous Augustan make mocking and repeated reference to the venereal disease suffered by an identified contemporary? Though seemingly aberrant to good taste--and so the balance characteristic of neo-classicist--such stuff at least bears the approval of the ancients. We need look no further than Horace to discover the broad limits constitutional to satire; indeed, such Horacian gems as: ". . . a pair of balls and hungry prick were cut of/with a sword,"(4) shows Pope a virtual paradigm of restraint. The

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<sup>15</sup>Adding fuel to the fire, Pope's *Sober Advice* here comes to mind, a piece whose obscenity would not allow the author to sign it as his own.

call here then is, "Not guilty," though Cibber, in his open letter, provides a personal anecdote in which the main actor is Pope--affectionately type cast as Homer--the scene, "a certain House of Carnal Recreation, near the *Hay-Market*,"(47) and the love interest a "Girl of the Game."(47) It is Cibber himself, according to Cibber himself, who:

" . . . found this little hasty Hero, like a terrible *Tom Tit*, pertly perching upon the mount of love! . . . I fairly laid hold of his Heels, and actually drew him down safe and sound from Danger."(48)

So it is, at least according to this account, that Pope's moralistic mocking of Curl is a virtual biographical re-enactment in which Cibber rescues a "little Gentleman of a Malady."(Cibber 49) Perhaps the best solution to this quandary is the likely truism that the moral disintegration--chaos, if you will--of an age, often more a matter of perception than reality, is likely magnified in the mind of the moralist by his very own immorality.

Similarly, Pope's scatological humour elsewhere in the games again raises the question of suitability. Sensible to this, Pope is forced to offer a footnote of defence.

Tho' 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*.(Bk. II fn, 377)

Although the scatological episodes appear sophomoric to the modern reader, justification for their inclusion rests not

only upon classical precedence but also upon literary apparatus, for there is a certain analogy between the filth in which the dull frolic and the filth--sometimes pornographic--of the gutter press. Nevertheless, the repeated supplication to canonised classical authority to justify colourful language and incident suggests that the new Augustan age, like the original, lacks the purity imagined by the modern reader and pretended by the contemporary writer. Indeed, we need look no further than *Tom Jones* to discover a century as bawdy as any. In a similar vein, Cibber, speaking of whoring, suggests:

. . . take the first ten thousand Men you meet, and I believe, you would be no loser if you betted ten to one that every single Sinner of them, one with another, had been guilty of the same Frailty.(46)

There was, particularly in the early part of the century, a concerted effort to invent a new golden age of poetry. When David Fairer suggests:

Dr. Johnson's championing of Pope's *Homer* as the peak of poetical achievement was part of his wider project to declare 1660-1744 the great age of English poetry,(Jackson 54)

we should understand the inherent self-deception at work, particularly considering the dubious nature of the actual work and the fact that Pope's knowledge of Greek only slightly

surpassed his knowledge of Laputian.<sup>16</sup> Our own vague acceptance of the notion speaks well of the salesman's banter. The Augustan ideology we take as being emblematic of the age: all that correctness and balance and reason, are in many respects strictly limited to art, for they are reflections upon an idealised age long past, rather than of contemporary society. In a sense, Grubb street offers an "art" closer to reality and so closer to nature, to use the idiomatic. The plethora of sermonising and moralising texts--to which Pope greatly contributes--is also at least partly responsible for modern misconceptions, along with our nostalgic admiration of the good old days--no matter how fanciful. Indeed, it seems impossible that those so intent upon thumbing the inky pages of classical texts would not find their hands duly stained, for classical sensibilities were far from pure. Perhaps the truest assessment of the eighteenth century moral climate lies in the dichotomy inherent in the heroes the Augustans admired: the Homeric hero is something of a simple fellow acting with obvious and understandable motivations, rejoicing in food and fighting and copulation whose sensibilities are brash; the Vergilian hero, however, faces a high and dignified manifest destiny which is often opposed to his desires and passions. As a public person, Aeneas incorporates the morality and stoicism of the eighteenth century public persona, whilst the Homeric hero struts and ruts the private. Whether we see it in terms

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<sup>16</sup>The common parlance of Laputa.

of morality and immorality, Apollonian and Dionysian, Classical and Romantic, it is essentially the age old clash of aesthetically defined order and disorder.

The main thrust of this section though is towards pedantry and, specifically, the manner in which the critic takes order, something that makes innate sense, and from it creates inane chaos. It is Scriblerus, a name by now famous in footnotedom, who claims joint authorship of this particular annotation. Cibber, for one, identifies the hand: ". . . your Friend *Scriblerus* (that is yourself)." (55). Certainly the tone and diction of those notes marked "Scriblerus" are suggestive of Pope, though Swift by name and others by implication were invited to participate freely in the composition of the "notes variorum." Nevertheless, it was at Pope's instigation that the "Martinus Scriblerus" association was formed: a group of wits joined in the job of composing the biography of a learned fool whose life and opinions would encapsulate corruptions of learning as well as the follies of the learned. This club, besides providing fertile soil suitable for the propagation of satire, the fruits of which include *Gulliver's Travels*, has a particular relevance to *The Dunciad* for the name Scriblerus brings with it a veritable cornucopia of associations. Besides the pedantry of the imaginary author himself, the Scriblerus club adopted a field of satiric targets that was positively Brobdingnagian. Essentially then, Scriblerus is a name which resonates with pedantry not only in literature, but philosophy, science, indeed all branches of knowledge, and

thus immediately broadens the scope of *The Dunciad*, rendering it almost a satire on epistemology.

In a way, the satire of this lengthy footnote is of a superior sort and figures what is sometimes lacking in the voice shifting of the poem proper. The ridiculous pedantry of our authors, Scriblerus and Theobald, is gradually and subtly revealed and, most importantly, is *self-revealed*. It is masterful irony then that provides the methodology, for what we are understood to understand is the very opposite of what we really understand.

Firstly, some manner of absurdity is established by the repetition of "some" in the opening line. Besides the marginal notes of an anonymous and deceased gentleman gaining authority over the still living author, Scriblerus and Theobald quickly establish their dullness by an arbitrary preference for the word "glow." A preference "much easier to be conciev'd than explain'd" provides an unwitting reference to Curl as a profligate husband caught with his pants down--so to speak, and forced to explain away an intimate condition to which he is undeniably devoted--so to speak.

There is also a delicate manipulation of text, at word level, which arrives quietly and unannounced: the incessant poetical appostrophisation: "deceas'd" "conceiv'd," "explain'd," entirely out of place in this prose text, draws a struggling scribbler struggling to emulate good writers though wholly ignorant of the contextual genre; the awkward deformed French spelling: "*Jenescaj quoy*" for *je ne sais quoy*;

the authors themselves unguardedly are condemned by their own words.

The ridiculous preference for "glow," that "*beautiful word*" despite the nonsense it makes of the text, is the very essence of aesthetics that owe nothing to learning nor nature and everything to dullness. The "unhappy communication with another" that caused the venereal disease is also analogous to the communication of the Grubb Street brigade and the spreading of chaos through what should be an ordered society.

All these then are examples of Pope's ironic establishment of critical dullness, where by the logocentric tradition is attacked by vapid deconstructionism and an asinine aesthetic sensibility. The inclusion of Theobald--whose name is correctly spelled in the footnotes, providing authenticity to the claim of authorship, as well as distinguishing this critic from the King of Dullness--serves to emphasise the chaotic potential of inane redaction, building dunderheaded and doddering speculation upon the ruins of textual integrity: a process which, much like Curl's condition, runs rampant. This condition turned metaphorical is then the very nature of Grubb street, where the derangement is pressed and repressed, proliferating to contaminate even polite society.

There is, however, one instance of Theobaldic reasoning which warrants particular consideration: the reference to Pope's employment of "glow" elsewhere in his works, wherein seven examples (excluded from the above quotation) are catalogued. In this instance, where any doubt of textual

coherence is chimerical, the result is doubtless wit. Collaterally though, we must acknowledge this as legitimate methodology, and, with the benefit of historical perspective, where Theobald lays claim to a scholarly edition of Shakespeare marked by intelligent emendation and where Pope scowls in the dusty and shadowy corner of editorial ignominy clutching his own failed offering, the conclusion here must surely be that the satirist hit by his own satire.

There can be little doubt that Pope, whose modesty is often contrived conceit, has willingly taken upon himself the task of playing God. Where God, in composing the universe, compels order from chaos, Pope, in composing *The Dunciad* prefers chaos from order, mimicking societal trends. Williams, in *Pope's Dunciad* convincingly explores the allusions to *Paradise Lost*, suggesting the ultimate conflict in *The Dunciad* is between Good and Evil. Likewise, Martin Blocksidge draws attention to the correlation, highlighting the opening of Book II as a direct parody of the second Book of *Paradise Lost* and concluding: "Thus the true epic description of Satan is being used mock-epically against Theobald." (75) Though both analysis are sound and point to Theobald as a feeble Satan removed from the orderly qualities of the sun (Kingly symbol) and operating in the disorder of darkness, they fall short of discovering Pope as the manipulative Creator.

Since many of the *Dramatis Personae* are not fictional but living persons, the effect is to distort, in very real terms, as much of reality as really exists. The most obvious example

of this concerns the creation of the phantom, "More," during the games sequence. The footnote to this, the longest of the Book, possessing almost two pages, begins with an identification, according to Curl, of the phantom as James Moore Smyth. There next follows a biographical yarn which explains more or less the plageristic injury suffered by Pope at the hands of More, and hence his inclusion in *The Dunciad*. However, it seems that the More named is not the Moore described, with the discrepancy in spelling offered as proof. A further footnote penned by Scriblerus suggests further that More is entirely imaginary and does not actually exist. Still later, when the name More reappears with numerous other writers, Scriblerus provides another footnote insisting that similarly "no such authors ever lived: All phantoms!" (Pope, fn. 379)

A more peculiar example is that of Theobald offering footnotes to a text in which Tibbald plays the protagonist, where the reader both reads and writes himself out of existence.

There is also the shrouded manipulation of historical fact: the footnote to "Curl's Corinna" charges a Mrs. Thomas with the theft of asundry letters penned by Pope and of inconsiderable quality which she thereafter sells to Curl for publication. The present day editor attempts to clarify the record by citing Curl's insistence that the letters had been a gift and that no illegal ownership was at issue. This account is strongly divergent with yet another account appearing in

*The Oxford Companion*, which states that Pope was involved in schemes to have Curl publish an unauthorised edition of his letters in order to appear himself impelled to publishing the authentic versions.

On a similar theme, Pope's charges of immoral avarice, which find there occasional way into the poem, as with:

A moan so loud , that all the Guild awake,/Sore  
sighs Sir G\*\*, starting at the bray,/From dreams of  
millions, and three groats to pay!(Bk II 239-241)

seems strangely out of keeping when we consider Pope's not inconsiderable number of shares in the South Pacific Company, a shipping business centred around the slave trade.

Another subtle alteration of history appears in an early reference to Cibber, which seems sincere and admiring, concluding with: "Mr. Jacob omitted to remark, that he is particularly admirable in Tragedy."(Pope fn. p. 368) This then could be taken, *prima facie*, as historical fact, though for those with "wit and learning" the sarcasm robs away that fact, for even at Cibber's own admission, though he wrote audience pleasing comedies, his tragedies were less than exemplary.

The question of authorship in the footnotes is similarly a matter of confusion, for Pope mixes actual comment, as in those pulled from Curl's *Key to The Dunciad*, with those less authentic, such as were penned by Theobald.

The sum total of this manipulation of reality then, besides the chaos created from seeming order, is complex. Firstly, Pope not only peoples his text, as any writer would, but also

is able to unpeople people, to write them out of existence and spectralise them. His goal, in this respect, is not merely to marginalise but to demonstrate their absolute and literal lack of being, their insignificance.<sup>17</sup> Similarly he rewrites, for the record, events and recreates himself, achieving a magical chaos where the reader is left, like the dull, entirely in the dark. But amongst all this textual and pseudo-historical chaos there is a single unifying element: the voice of the creator. If Shakespeare's art is the concealment of art, where the author becomes secondary and invisible in the truth of the invented world, Pope provides a single and omnipresent voice that reverberates through his texts like the pure song of a choirboy.

The neurosis for order outlined in this essay is underlined in the Neo-classicist's adoption of Raphael as their painter laureate. Praised for his simplicity, rationality, judgement, ease, truth to nature, exactness, justness etc., even a brief perusal of such paintings as *School of Athens*, in which

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<sup>17</sup>There is a noticeable anomaly here, for Pope's efforts to diminish the dull undermines the overwhelming threat they are supposed to pose. This is a problem that occurs in several places: see for example the foot note to line 584 of Book IV: "But if it be well consider'd, that whatever inclination they might have to do mischief, her sons are generally render'd harmless by their Inability."

balance, order, clarity and harmony prevail, is sufficient to demonstrate his worthiness of the position. Indeed, art historians are unanimous in the assessment that no other artist demonstrated more respect for the past nor was more inventive. Raphael's methodology was one of creative borrowing, reworking Perugino, Leonardo and especially Michelangelo much as Pope reworked Horace Homer and Vergil. Pope's *Pastorals* and *Windsor Forest* describe a nature which, like his Twickenham garden and grotto, is greatly reminiscent of Raphael's controlled and ordered nature. *The Dunciad*, alternately, provides an apocalyptic vision of cultural chaos and collapse, which, with hindsight, we see as being wholly sardonic and inaccurate; nevertheless it is a vision representative of neo-classicism's parochial perspective that explains both the rise and fall of the new Augustan age. Besides the inherent problems of structure, Pope in *The Dunciad* deliberately creates localised tempests of chaos in such variant regions as the pandemonium of popular taste, the madness of amassing masses, piles of paper and fantastical thinking, moral disintegration, the destruction of texts by pedantry and by his own manipulation of reality. Such as these are set off against the order represented by the satirical subtext of Wit philosophy centred about a classical past with its own essential order, and the godlike omnipresent voice of the reasonable satirist: Pope. The over all success of *The Dunciad* is dependent, perhaps, upon whether we read the "The great scurrility and fury of this writer"(Pope fn 395) to

be wholly applicable to the intended Leonard Welsed, or as an unconscious self-confession.

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