

Heroic Notes: Epic Idiom, Revision and the Mock-Footnote from the *Rape of the Lock* to the *Dunciad*¹

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- 1A For this, e'er *Phæbus* rose, he had implor'd
Propitious Heav'n, and ev'ry Pow'r ador'd,
But chiefly *Love*—to *Love* an Altar built,
Of twelve vast *French* Romances, neatly gilt.
There lay the Sword-knot *Sylvia's* Hands had sown, 55
With *Flavia's* Busk that oft had rapp'd his own:
A Fan, a Garter, half a Pair of Gloves;
And all the Trophies of his former Loves.
With tender *Billet-doux* he lights the Pyre, 60
And breaths three am'rous Sighs to raise the Fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent Eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the Prize:
The Pow'rs gave Ear, and granted half his Pray'r,
The rest, the Winds dispers'd in empty Air.
Rape of the Locke, 1712, I. 51–64
- 1B For this, ere *Phœbus* rose, he had implor'd 35

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¹In preparing this paper for publication, I was grateful to be able to take account of discussion that followed its delivery at the British Academy on 27 May 1994. Maynard Mack and Howard Erskine-Hill were kind enough to read a subsequent draft, and to do so with the generosity and thoroughness that are characteristic of both. The final version owes much to their comments. Its faults are my own.

Quotations from the *Rape of the Locke* (1712) and the five-canto *Rape of the Lock*, unless otherwise noted, are from the edition by Geoffrey Tillotson, 3rd edn., 1962, and those from the *Dunciad* from that by James Sutherland, 3rd edn., 1963, both in the Twickenham Edition. Page references are, unless otherwise indicated, to these volumes.

Book and line references to the *Dunciad*, unless otherwise noted, are to the four-book (or B) version (1743). The notes to this version, not fully and exactly recoverable in the Twickenham Edition, are cited from Pope, *Poetical Works*, ed. Herbert Davis, intr. Pat Rogers, Oxford, 1978.

Propitious Heav'n, and ev'ry Pow'r ador'd,
 But chiefly *Love*—to *Love* an Altar built,
 Of twelve vast *French* Romances, neatly gilt.
 There lay three Garters, half a Pair of Gloves;
 And all the Trophies of his former Loves. 40
 With tender *Billet-doux* he lights the Pyre,
 And breaths three am'rous Sighs to raise the Fire.
 Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent Eyes
 Soon to obtain, and long possess the Prize:
 The Pow'rs gave Ear, and granted half his Pray'r, 45
 The rest, the Winds dispers'd in empty Air.
Rape of the Lock, 4th edn., 1715, II. 35–46

2 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; 150
 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, 155
 Redeem'd from tapers and defrauded pies,
 Inspir'd he seizes: These an altar raise:
 An hecatomb of pure, unsully'd lays
 That altar crowns: A folio Common-place
 Finds the whole pile, of all his works the base: 160
 Quartos, octavos, shape the less'ning pyre;
 A twisted Birth-day Ode completes the spire.
Dunciad, 1743, I. 147–62

3 But anxious Cares the pensive Nymph opprest,
 And secret Passions labour'd in her Breast.
 Not youthful Kings in Battel seiz'd alive,
 Not scornful Virgins who their Charms survive,
 Not ardent Lovers robb'd of all their Bliss, 5
 Not ancient Ladies when refus'd a Kiss,
 Not Tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
 Not *Cynthia* when her *Manteau's* pinn'd awry,
 E'er felt such Rage, Resentment and Despair,
 As Thou, sad Virgin! for thy ravish'd Hair. 10
Rape of the Lock, 1714, IV. 1–10

4A She ey'd the Bard, where supperless he sate,
 And pin'd, unconscious of his rising fate; 110
 Studious he sate, with all his books around,
 Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound!

Plung'd for his sense, but found no bottom there;
 Then writ, and flounder'd on, in mere despair.
 He roll'd his eyes that witness'd huge dismay, 115
 Where yet unpawn'd, much learned lumber lay,
 Volumes, whose size the space exactly fill'd;
 Or which fond authors were so good to gild;

Dunciad A, 1729, I. 109–18

4B Swearing and supperless the Hero sate, 115
 Blasphem'd his Gods, the Dice, and damn'd his Fate.
 Then gnaw'd his pen, then dash'd it on the ground,
 Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound!
 Plung'd for his sense, but found no bottom there,
 Yet wrote and flounder'd on, in mere despair. 120
 Round him much Embryo, much Abortion lay,
 Much future Ode, and abdicated Play;

Dunciad B, 1743, I. 115–22

THE TWO GROUPS of three passages from the *Rape of the Lock* and the *Dunciad*, with which this study is chiefly concerned, represent successive stages in Pope's treatment of epic or heroic material, and illustrate a development, though not one for which I would wish to claim a neatly progressive clarity of outline. The transitions which define this development, in both groups, occur not only from the *Rape of the Lock* to the *Dunciad* but also within successive versions of each poem. The analysis which follows, however, is not primarily concerned with Pope 'at work', with the slow and intimate charting of processes of composition, any more than it is an attempt at what used to be called 'practical criticism', or what passes now for 'close reading', though the reading is in its way intended to be close.

The textual changes within each passage, like the larger changes from one poem to the other and the still larger differences between the two groups, illustrate a series of subtle and exploratory negotiations with the heroic mode. The starting point for these negotiations is a predicament which I have tried to define in some earlier studies, and which was shared in some sense by all good writers of the period whose cultural loyalties were on the traditionalist side of the Ancients-Moderns divide:² writers who still thought of the heroic poem as the

²Pope's *Waste Land: Reflections on Mock-Heroic*, in *Order from Confusion Sprung: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature from Swift to Cowper* (London, 1985), pp. 201–21; and two chapters on 'Mock-Heroic and War' in *Satire and Sentiment 1660–1830* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 29–129. These chapters contain fuller statements and documentation on several matters to which the present study has had to refer in a more summary form.

apex of poetic achievement, whose effort or ambition was to find a heroic voice that genuinely expressed some live and ardent aspirations, but who had to recognise the impossibility of writing a true unironic epic in their own time. Pope and Dryden both projected epics which they left uncompleted. Both translated the epic masterpieces of Græco-Roman antiquity, and both discovered in high mock-heroic a vehicle for some of their most powerful writing, as though a heroic idiom had ceased to be possible except by proxy or through a filter of irony. In its primary or unironic form, it was no longer available to good poets for the elevated expression of high matter, and the epic genre, for all the reverence it continued to receive, seemed to have become disqualified as a vehicle for unforced grandeurs. In the final version of the *Dunciad* Pope achieved a negative or inverted model which was perhaps the only wholly successful example of an epic in English since *Paradise Lost*, and which was also his own poetic masterpiece. This discussion seeks to define patterns and directions in the long process through which something resembling a high epic idiom was fashioned from a mock-form, or parody, fulfilling in perhaps unexpected ways the potential implicit in Dryden's idea that the majesties of mock-heroic might make of satire a species of heroic poetry in its own right.³

Such an idea, fraught with paradox and inevitably subject to constraints and complications, seems to have inspired the practice of poets, including Dryden himself, even before Dryden gave it a resonant critical formulation in 1693. It underlies some of the transformations of mock-heroic from the 1660s to the death of Pope. The present discussion will be concerned with these, as well as with broader aspects of parody, including the phenomena which I describe as unparodying and reparodying, and with some unsuspected transitions within high Augustan satires to modes of expression we more readily associate with prose fiction or with an incipient Romanticism.

The six passages fall into two groups of three. In the first group, two versions (1712, 1715) of the same passage from the *Rape of the Lock* are considered beside the final version of a comparable passage from the *Dunciad* (1743). The second group brings together a passage from the *Rape of the Lock* (1714) and two versions of a counterpart from the *Dunciad* (1729, 1743) which underwent substantial revision. All are, I believe, familiar, and will enable me, at the

³Dryden, 'Discourse concerning Satire' (1693), *Works of John Dryden. Volume IV; Poems 1693-1696*, ed. A. B. Chambers and William Frost (Berkeley, 1974), pp. 83-4.

outset, to dispose of some bread-and-butter observations on mock-heroic, in a way which may at the same time open up what I think are some less familiar perspectives. Both sets loom large in their respective poems, indeed in successive versions of each. Those from the *Rape of the Lock* exist fully formed in the early version of 1712. In the case of 1A and 1B, indeed, the earlier version is longer by two lines, about fifteen per cent, though the early version as a whole is about two and a half times shorter than the later five-canto version of 1714/1717, with an air of brisk narrative efficiency without frills (or sylphs or gnomes). The two lines come after the 'twelve vast *French Romances*', and were followed by a variant wording of the line about garters and gloves:

There lay the Sword-knot *Sylvia's* Hands had sown,
 With *Flavia's* Busk that oft had rapp'd his own:
 A Fan, a Garter, half a Pair of Gloves;
 And all the Trophies of his former Loves.

(1712; I. 55–8)

These lines remained in the five-canto version of 1714, their removal being effected not in the 'definitive' and further enlarged version of 1717, but in the fourth edition of 1715. The idea is to provide a catalogue of fashionable social detritus, of the kind recently provided in fuller detail in John Hughes's 'Inventory of a Beau' in *Tatler*, 113, 29 December 1709, a list of items for auction after the beau's death, which includes among other things 'Five Billet-Doux, . . . a Silk Garter, a Lock of Hair, and Three broken Fans'.⁴ (Swift offers many such lists, which in his case are more often female than male). That Pope shortened his own list in his own longer version suggests some local strategy, in which particularities of social notation — which are not typically skimmed in the longer versions — here yield to a more economical, summarising style of point-making. This appears even more clearly in the change from 'A Fan, a Garter, half a Pair of Gloves' to 'There lay three Garters, half a Pair of Gloves', a further reduction in itemising, sufficient to evoke the erotic bric-à-brac of a worldly fop, but homing in with greater concentration on its almost literally half-cock incompleteness. The change seems a throwback to, or a flip expression of, Augustan notions, quite unHomeric, that the epic is inhospitable to details of ordinary life and that heroic outlines should be kept simple.

One effect, as the social particularities become fewer and more

⁴Cited *Rape of the Lock*, p. 161 n.; see *Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1987), II. 178–9.

recessive, is that the *sottisier* of epic evocation emerges more sharply in the foreground: the mock-Miltonic enjambment, the sacrificial altar, the twelve objects of sacrifice (a number with both Homeric and Biblical precedents not reported in either Tillotson's commentary or Sutherland's notes to the corresponding passage in the *Dunciad*),⁵ the three sighs, and the gods granting half the prayer, the other half being dispersed to the winds. It's as though Pope were at this point intent on establishing the mock-epic business with a textbook simplicity and completeness — a kind of summarising analogue to the extensive exemplifications of Swift's *Battle of the Books*, as some capsule anthologising of idiomatic usage in the *Rape of the Lock* (an example might be Sir Plume's sputtering outburst in IV. 127–30) is the brief counterpart to the Flaubertian cataloguing of Swift's *Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation*.

That some such impulse was tacitly at work is perhaps also confirmed by a different analogue, suggested by Tillotson, Palamon's prayer to Venus (or Love) 'in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale", iii'. Pope, I assume, would be more likely to have remembered this in Dryden's version, *Palamon and Arcite*, which appeared twelve years earlier in *Fables* (1700), though he did read Chaucer in the original and, like Dryden, made 'imitations' of some of his poems.⁶ Tillotson's sense of this analogue seems confined to the fact of the two prayers to Venus (the prayers themselves are not very resembling), and to some scattered details in other parts of the poem (II. 48, V. 13), but Dryden's imitation (and especially its third Book) has a distinct presence in the background of Pope's poem and invites comparison with it. Book III recounts how all three protagonists, Palamon, Emily, and Arcite, pray to the gods (Venus, Diana and Mars, to whom altars are erected by Theseus) before the contest, and where somewhat bolder prefigurations of other parts of the *Rape of the Lock* may be discerned:

⁵For Biblical examples, see Tuvia Bloch, 'Pope's Mock-Epic Altars', *Notes and Queries*, CCXVI (1971), 331; for Homeric examples, see below, pp. 77–8.

⁶Chaucer, *Knight's Tale*, ll. 2221ff. (text and lineation are those of the *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson and Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1988), pp. 50ff., and notes, pp. 834ff.); Dryden, *Palamon and Arcite*, III. 124ff., in *Fables*, 1700, pp. 54ff., and *Poems*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1958), IV. 1503ff., and notes, 2068ff.

Pope owned a first edition of Dryden's *Fables*, which also printed the Chaucerian originals, including 'The Knight's Tale, As it was Written by Geoffrey Chaucer'. Pope owned at least two other Chaucers, one of them from as early as 1701 (Maynard Mack, *Collected in Himself*, Newark, DE, 1982, pp. 401, 410). Although he read Chaucer in the original, it remains probable that those of Chaucer's poems which he was able to read in Dryden's adaptation would retain a special vividness in his mind in that form.

Now Morn with Rosie Light had streak'd the Sky,
Up rose the Sun, and up rose *Emily*,

(III. 189-90)

we read, after Palamon's prayer, in a passage which combines elements of Belinda's 'sacred Rites of Pride' and her launching out like the sunrise on the silver Thames. Emily, 'attended by her Maiden Train', worships at 'Cynthia's Fane' (the temple of Diana), with 'Incence, and od'rous Gums'. Dryden's matter is here as in Chaucer, and 'Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye' (l. 2273) is Chaucer's wording. But Dryden's idiom is ceremoniously periphrastic in the mode to which the term 'poetic diction' became attached, and which is also in these instances the idiom of the *Rape of the Lock*: 'her Maiden Train' replaces Chaucer's 'Hir maydens' and Chaucer has 'encens' but not the somewhat Virgilian flourish of Dryden's 'od'rous Gums' (ll. 2275, 2277).

Dryden articulates in this passage (with a harsher and more extended explicitness than Pope) what is in fact a central intimation of the *Rape of the Lock*, a sense, which the poet makes some pretence of intending to conceal, that (in Dryden's words) 'their chaste mysterious Rites / Might turn to Scandal, or obscene Delights' (III. 203-4). Dryden points to pagan mysteries rather than, in Pope's manner, to psycho-sexual undercurrents in the social fabric of his own time. He seems to mean something like those secrets of the good goddess, 'At whose Feasts no Men were to be present', to which he referred in note 20 (to l. 430) of his translation of Juvenal VI. Kinsley says this element was added by Dryden but Chaucer has a more innocent version of it, parading a genial Shandean mock-reticence:

But hou she dide hir ryte I dar nat telle,
But it be any thing in general;
And yet it were a game to heeren al.
To hym that meneth wel it were no charge;
But it is good a man been at his large.

(II. 2284-88)

(J. A. W. Bennett translates this as 'A full account would be delightful,

and it would do no harm to the pure-minded; but it's best to let you imagine it for yourselves'.⁷)

When Dryden's gods dispute over which prayers will be granted, Saturn sets out to compose differences. He invokes his vast powers, including a maleficent repertoire of 'Cold shivering Agues, melancholy Care, . . . And Rheumatisms I send to rack the Joints', which are Drydenian particularities surely kindred to Pope's Cave of Spleen, and not spelled out among Chaucer's medical examples except in generalised references to 'maladyes colde' and 'pestilence' (Dryden, III. 381ff.; Chaucer, ll. 2443ff.).⁸ As with the 'mysterious Rites', Dryden goes on to propose harsh suggestions from which Pope, in the relatively benign universe of the *Rape of the Lock*, would be likely to draw back, including an underworld of political malfeasance altogether outside the scope of the brainless decorative *jeunesse dorée* of his poem, though it does have a place in Chaucer's high chivalric world:

When Churls rebel against their Native Prince,
I am their Hands, and furnish the Pretence;
And housing in the Lion's hateful Sign,
Bought Senates, and deserting Troops are mine.
Mine is the privy Pois'ning, I command
Unkindly Seasons, and ungrateful Land.
By me Kings Palaces are push'd to Ground,
And Miners, crush'd beneath their Mines are found.

(III. 408–15)

Chaucer (ll. 2453ff.) has some of this, haunting, lurid, and in starker and less elaborated detail ('cherles rebellyng' *tout court*, walls merely falling on the 'mynour', and of course no 'Bought Senates' or 'deserting Troops' recalling 1688), just as the fuller specifications of medical nightmare are largely added by Dryden. From this unlikely Saturnian source, accommodations eventually come, as the phantasmagoric

⁷Dryden, *Poems*, ed. Kinsley, IV. 2069 n.; *Knight's Tale*, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (London, 1954), p. 136 n. Both Chaucer (ll. 2293–4) and Dryden (III. 211–2) refer to Statius as an authority on sacrificial procedures, but those references seem to concern the rites actually described, not those that are said to be unmentioned: for two possible antecedents in Statius, see *Thebaid* IV. 443ff. and IX. 570ff., noted in the Riverside commentary to Chaucer, ll. 2273–94 (p. 837). Statius is a source of Chaucer's immediate source, Boccaccio's *Teseida*, VII. lxxff., which does not seem to have a parallel for the secret rites or the Shandean reflection upon them.

⁸Dryden, *Poems*, ed. Kinsley, IV. 1510–1; Chaucer, p. 58. Saturn's paradoxical composition of differences consists of arranging for Arcite to be fatally unseated from his horse, after Palamon has been defeated (ll. 2684ff.; Dryden, III. 699ff.). Thus he wins the battle, but Palamon ends up possessing Emily, so no one is the loser and the rivalry is settled.

doings of the Cave of Spleen in the *Rape of the Lock* are activated by a symmetrically opposite purpose, to compound, not compose, trouble.

The Saturnian repertoire of evils in Dryden is not, like that of Spleen, contained in a Cave, though it includes a 'dark Dungeon' (III. 402; Chaucer's 'derke cote', l. 2457). But Dryden has here expanded the Chaucerian original (the Saturn episode is not in Boccaccio) in a direction which assimilates his account to the sub-genre of the cave of evils, which was becoming a staple of Augustan mock-heroic, though it has ancient originals. Such allegorical 'caves' are an old commonplace, related to epic journeys to the underworld, though the most closely resembling classical analogue to Pope's passage is Ovid's Cave of Envy (*Metamorphoses*, II. 760ff.).⁹ Mock-epic analogues include the *antre* of Chicane in *Le Lutrin* (V. 39ff.) and the lairs of Envy, Disease and Death in the *Dispensary* (1699, II. 11ff., IV. 196ff., VI. 90ff.). The major modern epic analogue, which Tillotson does not list, is the Cave of Death in *Paradise Lost*, XI. 466ff. But my immediate point is that if Tillotson was right to bring up the *Knight's Tale* in connection with the Baron's prayer, the passage in the *Rape of the Lock* is stripped clean, in the version Pope is likeliest to have used, of elements which are germane to his own poem, and which are given their head in other parts of it: the rites of pride, the perverse bawdy subtext, the pathology of caves. This is in line with Pope's general tendency, in the passage, to keep things focused on a particular piece of epic business, free of accretions, however pertinent to the larger design.

The parallel passage from the *Dunciad* underwent more changes than that from the *Rape of the Lock*, the most decisive ones having to do, directly or indirectly, with the switch of heroes from Theobald to Cibber in 1743. The evolution of the passage from its prototype in the *Rape of the Lock* and through its subsequent Dunciadic stages traces a momentous transformation in the whole generic character of mock-heroic. It also, I believe, marks a crisis in the status of epic in the European sensibility which is both an end and a beginning. I will look first at the obvious connection between the episodes in both poems, the sacrificial altar of twelve books. Twelve is a highly Homeric number, occurring some five dozen times in Pope's translation, including important sacrificial occasions: 'twelve young Heifers' are offered at Pallas's altar by the Trojan women, 'to entreat her to remove Diomed from the Fight' in *Iliad*, VI; Achilles vows to kill 'twelve, the

⁹*Rape of the Lock*, p. 183 n.

noblest of the *Trojan Line*' on Patroclus's 'flaming Pyre' in Book XVIII, captures them for the purpose in Book XXI (a 'piece of Cruelty in Achilles' which, Pope says, 'has appear'd shocking to many', explainable by Achilles's vindictive ferocity and 'the military Laws of those times', backed by their 'Religion itself' — an expression of anguish about epic which I believe underlies some radical features of the *Dunciad*), and finally executes them to Patroclus's shade in Book XXIII (the 'Argument' says baldly '*Achilles sacrifices several Animals, and lastly, twelve Trojan Captives at the Pile, then sets fire to it*'). In Book XXIV, during his reconciliation scene with Priam and the return of Hector's body, Achilles tactfully reminds him that 'Such Griefs, O King! have other Parents known' instancing the slaying of Niobe's twelve offspring by Apollo and Artemis.¹⁰

There are various analogues in the *Odyssey*, in which acts of propitiation involve twelve urns of wine, or beasts, and there is a sacrifice of 'twelve black oxen' to 'angry Neptune' in Book XIII, plus gifts that also come in twelves.¹¹ The Old Testament contains important analogues too, as Tuvia Bloch pointed out in 1971. Examples include Numbers 7. 84, 87: 'This was the dedication of the altar . . . twelve chargers of silver, twelve silver bowls, twelve spoons of gold . . . All the oxen for the burnt offering were twelve bullocks, the rams twelve, the lambs of the first year twelve . . . the kids of the goats for sin offering twelve'; 1 Kings 18. 31–32: 'And Elijah took twelve stones . . . And with the stones he built an altar . . .'; 2 Chronicles 4. 1–4: 'Moreover he made an altar of brass . . . It stood upon twelve oxen . . .'.¹²

These analogues constitute a powerful recognition factor. Sources are not at issue, but the ordonnance of Pope's mock-heroic altars suggests a mainly Homeric orientation, except that they are unsanguinary, and tacitly so. That silence is important because, as I've tried to argue in other places, the tribute to epic proposed in all the major Augustan mock-heroics comes with an astonishing reticence about bloodshed and war, considering that war is the central preoccupation of the primary prototypes and prowess in war the highest value in the

¹⁰Pope, *Iliad*, Argument to VI; VI. 116, 343, 382; XVIII. 394–6; XXI. 34–9 and Pope's note to 35; XXIII. 215, 223, and Argument; XXIV. 780, 755–66 (Twickenham Edition, ed. Maynard Mack and others), VII. 322, 329, 343, 345; VIII. 340, 422–3, 498, 485, 568–9).

¹¹Pope, *Odyssey*, II. 394ff.; IV. 858ff.; VIII. 53ff.; XXIV. 321 *et passim*; XIII. 210–11 (T. E., IX. 80, 159, 264; X. 365, 15).

¹²Tuvia Bloch, 'Pope's Mock-Epic Altars', p. 331.

heroic code.¹³ In *Le Lutrín* and the *Dispensary*, wars have shrunk to guild disputes, and missile weaponry to a few books and some pharmaceutical clutter: a few lines of Homeric bloodshed in the *Dispensary* turn out to be by Blackmore, reciting lines from his own poems as a character in Garth's, part of the subtext being that only an oafish and ungifted Modern would think Homeric imitation in his power, or, in this particular sphere decent to undertake: 'Oft tho' your Stroaks surprize, you shou'd not choose / A Theme so mighty for a Virgin Muse'. In Ozell's translation of Boileau's *Lutrín*, the Barber goes searching for iron weapons, expressly announced as being 'Not like those Arms of the *dead-doing* Kind' (a line which does not occur in the original, suggesting that the *pudeur* I am describing may be a specifically English one), and which turn out to be, in a favourite mock-heroic formula later much fancied by Fielding, 'In Vulgar Speech call'd *Nails*'.¹⁴ In the *Battle of the Books*, an extended prose *sottisier* of epic commonplaces, carnage sometimes occurs with a simulacrum of Homeric realism, but always with the reminder that no blood is spilt since it's books that are fighting and not men. In the *Rape of the Lock*, no one dies except in metaphor, in song, or in orgasm.

Fictions of derealisation were radical to this enterprise. The battle in Canto V is preceded by the reassurance that 'No common Weapons in their Hands are found, / Like Gods they fight, nor dread

¹³I should perhaps make clear that it is no part of my argument that war is a more remote or less frequently mentioned experience in this period than in earlier ones, but only that there seems to have been a *pudeur* about calling it to mind in contexts where a homage to the epic is on the agenda. Denial of actual warfare is not suggested: it is an accentuated awareness of it that, in my judgement, led to embarrassment about its centrality in epic poems. The feeling that the heroic would be contaminated by reminders of its martial character is what distinguishes mock-heroic in this period from earlier treatments of epic material, direct or oblique. Swift's evocations of war are very fierce, but are wholly or largely outside the range of epic reminder. Both Dryden and Pope were perfectly able to write about epic warfare, so long as they did it by proxy, in translations of the ancient masters: their own attempts at epic were never completed. Blackmore's epics, on the other hand, contain plenty of Homeric gore, but he was without Pope's protective loyalty to Homer, and his example was seen as one to avoid, a vivid warning that a large heroic poem is only likely, in that period, to proceed from inferior talent. Fuller evidence for these propositions is provided in the two chapters on 'Mock-heroic and War', in *Satire and Sentiment 1660-1830*, cited in n. 2 above.

¹⁴Garth, *Dispensary* (1699), IV. 232-3, in *Poems on Affairs of State. Volume VI: 1697-1704*, ed. Frank H. Ellis (New Haven, 1970), p. 104. The poem also has an unsanguinary altar, prefiguring Pope's, though without the Homeric duodecimal arrangements, III. 77ff., in *POAS*, VI. 84; *The Lutrín: A Mock-Heroic Poem . . . Render'd into English Verse*, 2nd edn. (London, 1711), p. 24, corresponding to II. 85ff. of the French text, which omits the specific sentiment of the English line quoted.

a mortal Wound' (V. 43–4). One implication is that the weaponry is sexual, but the couplet more broadly reflects a pattern in which, when humans fight, there is no bloodshed, and when there is a presumption of bloodshed (as in Satan's wound in the War in Heaven, or the severed sylph in the *Rape of the Lock*, III. 451–2), it is of a spiritous, non-sanguinary sort, and thus not, in human terms, for real. Swift in the *Battle* and Pope in Canto V of the *Rape of the Lock* rang variations on this resource, which was distantly inspired, as Pope's couplet implies, by the invulnerability of the gods, who shed ichor not blood and don't die of wounds. Behind the neutralised wound of Milton's Satan and the severed sylph lies a benign and momentary maiming of Aphrodite in *Iliad*, V.¹⁵ Milton's use occurs in a primary epic battle, albeit of a special sort, in an epic dedicated to downgrading the ethos of war, hitherto the only argument heroic deemed. It's arguable that his mock-heroic successors were more protective of the hallowed but problematic originals than Milton was in the straight version, with its openly incorporated critique: but his War in Heaven pointed the way for more discreet circumventions of intractable topics, until the *Dunciad* broke through all such attenuating strategies by going over into total denial.

As the sacrificial altars of books are without bloodshed, the *Dunciad* is an epic without war. It has everything else, the full range of stylistic routines and most of the substantive situations, heroic games, an underworld visit, an east–west journey, momentous prophecy, but no blood. The entry for blood in the concordance runs to several columns from the Homer translations, but almost the only and certainly the most telling blood-derived phrasing in the *Dunciad* is 'bloodless swords and maces' (I. 87), preceding the unsanguinary altar of books by a mere sixty lines.¹⁶ In the light of Pope's anguished Iliadic note about Achilles's sacrifice of twelve Trojan youths, it seems appropriate to note that a pair of mock-Homeric aggrandisements, in both *Rape of the Lock* and *Dunciad*, are sanitised *ab initio*, much as the *Dunciad* is as a whole, in an oddly inverted or negative manifestation of the anxiety of influence. That this occurs in a context not significantly hostile to epic, but offering a classic confrontation of its majestic forms with a lowered or pretentious modern reality unworthy of them, is the remarkable thing.

¹⁵*Iliad*, V. 339ff., 416ff.; and cf. 899ff. For Pope's rendering, see *Iliad*, V. 421–4 and nn., 505, 1009ff., T.E., VII. 287–9, 292, 320–1. For the *Dunciad*'s version of an ichor episode, see II. 92.

¹⁶Two other occurrences are 'noble blood' (III. 334) and 'Infant's blood' (IV. 142), both of them references to school floggings.

The *Dunciad*'s way with this confrontation is different from the *Rape of the Lock*'s. The earlier poem's 'twelve vast *French Romances*, neatly gilt' are vast, but also French, and thus elegant and insubstantial. The ballooning fantasia to which their insignificance is subjected falls within the standard mock-heroic scenario of a studiedly inappropriate aggrandisement, inviting deflation. A variation, itself habitual to the genre, sees to it that formal puncturing, of the kind seen, for example, in passage 3, from Canto IV, is withheld. The inflation remains in a sense uncanceled, in one of the more flippant incarnations of Dryden's insight about the majesty of the heroic devolving on the mockery, and if the passage's sober signal is of doings hugely trivial, they come over as at least hugely something.

Such effects would not be available, or not in the same way, in the reverse form of mock-heroic to which the name 'burlesque', as Tillotson informs us, later became attached (both terms were in fact used for both): the form of Scarron's and Cotton's *Virgil Travestied* or of Butler's *Hudibras*, in which high actions are recounted in low language rather than the other way round.¹⁷ Behind the distinction, seemingly a matter of inert technicality, trivially and formalistically obvious, but reverted to by substantial creative minds, from Boileau to Fielding, with a surprisingly obsessive interest, are impulses of decisive importance in the history of European, but perhaps especially English, poetry. Boileau announced his contempt for the low burlesque of Scarron in *Art Poétique* (1674), I, 79ff. It was from the preference, ratified in Boileau's foreword ('Au Lecteur') to the first edition of *Le Lutrin* (1674), for the non-'burlesque' or 'mock-heroic' mode, which he actually called a *new burlesque*, in which clockmakers speak like Dido and Aeneas, that a genre developed which, for a period of some seventy years from *Le Lutrin* to the death of Pope, engaged the highest imaginative skills of some of the best writers, and relegated the honourable alternative tradition of Scarron, Cotton and Butler to relative insignificance. The phenomenon was short-lived, culminating in the *Dunciad*, and impregnated with lingering loyalties to the epic tradition at a moment when this was manifestly no longer viable for good writers in its traditional military version. It led to perceptions that only a Modern like Blackmore would risk the Ancient form, with the kind of results Garth cited verbatim in the *Dispensary*. The mock-form, on the other hand, provided an ironic guard, protecting the author from epic preten-

¹⁷Tillotson, in *Rape of the Lock*, pp. 107–8.

sion, protecting the epic from the taint of homicidal discredit, while retaining aspirations to heroic utterance. Loyalist mock-heroic seems marked by a determination to evade the subject of war, as though to suppress the connection between a revered genre and the deplorable activity habitually celebrated within it. Though both Dryden and Pope planned and failed to complete epics of their own, it was only in poems like *Mac Flecknoe* or the *Dunciad* that they felt able to sustain with poetic conviction an epic voice which bore a strong and live relation to the heroic poems of Graeco-Roman antiquity. These mock-heroic poems made of parody a new thing, transcending the bookish joke with a wholly unprecedented seriousness, and achieving some of the finest and most ambitious poetry of the age. If the form as we know it only existed at this level of distinction in the brief period I referred to, it was in many ways an enabling model for *Ulysses* and the *Waste Land*: the latter, we recall, began as a pastiche of the *Rape of the Lock*, though its sombre intertextualities and its grand sense of a culture in decay are closer to the *Dunciad* than to the nominal source.

The twelve volumes of Cibber's altar in passage 2 are a big change from the flimsy gigantification of the *Rape of the Lock*'s twelve vast French romances. They have a solid enormity, grotesque and massive, which crystallises (or congeals) that tendency towards degradation without diminution which I have been describing as an inverted or negative epic effect. The altar has something of the monumentality of *Mac Flecknoe*'s 'Monument of vanisht minds' (l. 82), especially when one remembers that Dryden's heroic original for this line, Davenant's *Gondibert* (II. v. 36), referred, in a manner innocent of derision, to a library of deceased authors. 'Dry Bodies of Divinity' come not neatly gilt, but 'clasp'd in wood' or 'strong cow-hide', their dim weighty mass enhanced by the roll-call of names, 'The Classics of an Age that heard of none', Goths in Black Letter. Caxton is obtusely pilloried in a note and an appendix, in a style of blinkered 'anti-medievalism' that is a Scriblerian trademark, exhibited without undue scruple for fact: a note on Nicholas de Lyra (d. 1340) confuses him with Nicholas Harpsfeld, who died 235 years later (1575).¹⁸ They form 'A Gothic Library!' of

¹⁸The main note on Caxton is to this passage, in *Dunciad*, pp. 79–80, keyed to A I. 129. For other notes mentioning or deriding Caxton, see pp. 82, 83, keyed respectively to A I. 162–3, 166, and both also coupling Caxton with Wynkyn, but the first of them contrasting the two with Homer and Chaucer. For a satirical appendix reprinting Caxton's Preface to his translation of Virgil, included only in editions of 1729, see *Dunciad*, pp. 213–6, in an English whose spellings Pope clearly regarded as barbaric and antiquated. See also *Order from Confusion Sprung*, pp. 219–20n. On de Lyra and Harpsfeld, see p. 80, keyed to A I. 133.

Greece and Rome/Well purg'd', and which includes lists of more recent authors, 'worthy Settle, Banks and Broome' (I. 145-6: the modern roll-call differed in 1728 and 1729, listing an assortment of Wesley, Withers, Watts, Quarles and Blome, plus Ogilby the bathetic translator of Homer, whom Johnson said Pope loved to read as a child, and who is common to all versions).¹⁹

It is a Modernity simultaneously callow and senile, more than once got up in leather bindings. In the Lethean visit in Book III, the hero is taken to

Where Brown and Mears unbar the gates of Light,
Demand new bodies, and in Calf's array,
Rush to the world, impatient for the day.

(III. 28-30)

Pope's annotation of Brown and Mears reads: 'Booksellers, Printers for any body. — The allegory of the souls of the dull coming forth in the form of books, dressed in calf's leather, and being let abroad in vast numbers by Booksellers, is sufficiently intelligible'. 'Calf', in this allegory, evokes doltishness in empty-headed hacks and brain-dead pedants alike. Cibber remonstrated, in the last of his *Letters to Mr. Pope* (*Another Occasional Letter*, 1744), that the switch from Theobald to himself, 'even to the same Books, in his Study' which Pope 'knew would never be looked into' by him, was exceptionally inept in this context.²⁰ He had a point, of course, and Pope was unlikely to think that Caxton, de Lyra and Philemon Holland were Cibber's staple reading matter. But if the transition seems somewhat unassimilated in personal or biographical terms, the larger suggestion of an amalgam, familiar in Swift's *Tale* and *Battle*, in which the 'freshest Modern', the Bentelean antiquarian, and the race of critics from primeval times, coexist in eternal up-to-dateness, is a certified Popeian as well as Swif-tian theme. Wormius and Welsted are one.

The altar itself, 'an hecatomb', but bloodless, the 'unsully'd lays' replacing the twelve pure 'young Heifers, guiltless of the Yoke' of

¹⁹Samuel Wesley and Isaac Watts appear as 'W——y, W——s' in 1728. The full names are supplied in the copy of 1728 (p. 7) 'in which Jonathan Richardson, Jr., transcribed for Pope the readings of manuscript drafts of the poem' (David L. Vander Meulen, *Pope's Dunciad of 1728: A History and Facsimile*, Charlottesville, 1991, p. 41). On Pope and Ogilby, see Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. J. M. Osborn, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1966), No. 30, I. 14.

²⁰J. V. Guerinot, *Pamphlet Attacks on Pope 1711-1744* (London, 1969), p. 317; *Dunciad*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

Homeric sacrifice, is an odd amalgam of innocence and pollution, triviality and enormity, degradation and massiveness.²¹ The lays are 'unsully'd' by readers, like Cibber's works some seventy lines on, 'Unstain'd, untouch'd, and yet in maiden sheets' (I. 229), but they're in all other ways shop-soiled, 'Redeem'd from tapers and defrauded pies', close cousins of the 'Martyrs of Pies, and Reliques of the Bum' in Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* (l. 101) and of even more degraded and indeed unchaste analogues in other Restoration poets. In Oldham's 'Upon the Author of the Play call'd *Sodom*', Oldham thinks it fitter that the putative Rochester's poems should become not the relics but the sexual partners of the bum, as in the 'publick Jakes' they

bugger wiping Porters when they shite,
And so thy Book itself turn Sodomite.

(ll. 49-53)²²

This is as removed from the world of the *Dunciad* as the sacred rites of Dryden's Emily were from those of Belinda; and removed in a manner paralleled in the Homer translation by Pope's substitution, in *Iliad* XXIV, of 'A Show'r of Ashes o'er [Priam's] Neck and Head' (l. 202) in place of Homeric *kopros*, dung. (But we may recall that in Pope's own chaster time and beyond, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu liked the idea of using the works of Pope and Swift themselves in the *Mac Flecknoe* if not the Oldham manner, and that Chesterfield more genially proposed that his son keep a copy of Horace's *Odes*, so that he might read one poem, and then dispose of it, at each sitting).²³

The ordering of the altar, building upwards with books of diminishing size, a folio, quartos, octavos, is revealing. It's described as 'less'ning', but lessening upwards, and concludes, massively, in a 'spire', an effect well within that tradition of defiled monumentalism which Dryden established in *Mac Flecknoe* and which is a distinctive feature of English mock-heroic in this period: you don't find it in Boileau, I think, nor in the prototypes, in Tassoni or in the pseudo-Homeric *Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, though touches of it are glimpsed in Thomas Parnell's version of the latter. This effect is present only in the final version, made possible by Cibber's Laureateship, and the poem's switch to Cibber for hero. The grotesquely magnified metamorphosis of the

²¹See Pope's *Iliad*, VI. 382, T. E., VII. 345. Sutherland (p. 81 n.) says the purity of heifers on the altar is often stressed.

²²Oldham, *Poems*, eds. Harold F. Brooks and Raman Selden (Oxford, 1987), pp. 343-4.

²³See Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life* (London, 1985), pp. 555, 561-2; Chesterfield, *Letters*, ed. B. Dobrée, 6 vols. (London, 1932), III. 1066-7 (11 December, O.S., 1747).

cone-shaped poem into a church steeple is a baroque pictorialism of Disneyan plasticity and inventiveness. All earlier editions from 1728 to 1742 read 'And last, a little Ajax tips the spire' (A. I. 142), with a Popeian gloss identifying Ajax, as 'In *duodecimo* [i.e. one size down, or in the upside-down arrangement, up, from octavos], translated from *Sophocles* by *Tibbald*' (the attribution, like the identification of de Lyra, is, according to Sutherland, probably wrong: the translation seems to have been a collective one, perhaps with notes by Theobald, and it's amusing to remember that the *Dunciad* has its origin in the fact that Theobald was a more accurate scholar, and would eventually prove to be a better editor, than Pope).²⁴

This is one of the very few substantial and extended changes in the passage, which existed more or less fully formed, with a few verbal differences, in the earliest text of 1728. No marginalia exist for this passage in the copy of 1728 annotated on Pope's instructions by Jonathan Richardson the Younger,²⁵ though a few sparse notes exist in the same hand in a *Dunciad* of 1736. Both sets of notes are transcribed by Maynard Mack in *The Last and Greatest Art*, and derive from two Popeian manuscripts (known as the Broglio manuscripts) which, as Vander Meulen argues, *both* appear to precede the 1728 printed text. The second, described by Mack as 'the basis of the 1729 text and therefore . . . at least as early as 1728', was processed into a 1736 derivative of 1729. Excluding insignificant verbal variations ('some' against 'one', 'there' against 'here', 'those' against 'his'), it seems instructive to examine a cluster of marginalia entered by Richardson. These marginalia record manuscript variants which are in effect 'earlier readings' superseded by the printed texts of 1728 or (in this case) 1729.²⁶ (Since all *printed* versions are very close to one another, especially in parts of this passage for which manuscript variants exist, I will refer for convenience to the text and lineation of the B-version of 1743, cited above, followed by the 1729 or A-lineation to which the insertions are keyed.)

Thus line 147 (A 127), 'But, high above, more solid Learning shone',

²⁴*Dunciad*, p. 81n., and Sutherland's Introduction, pp. xiff. On *Ajax*, see also R. F. Jones, *Lewis Theobald* (New York, 1919), pp. 6-7, 130; on Theobald's work on Shakespeare, see Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1990).

²⁵Vander Meulen, *Pope's Dunciad of 1728*, pp. 7-8 of facsimile.

²⁶Vander Meulen, p. 51; *The Last and Greatest Art: Some Unpublished Poetical Manuscripts of Alexander Pope*, transcribed and edited by Maynard Mack (Newark, DE, 1984), pp. 97-100, and 133 (marginalia to A I. 127-42).

might once have been 'But far above in Time's old Varnish shone'.²⁷ Three lines later, 'One clasp'd in wood, and one in strong cow-hide' might instead have been 'Some clasp'd in wood' and continued either as 'and some in strong cow-hide' or as 'or bound in strong cow-hide'. Under this line, 150 or A 130, 'marked with a delta for deletion', Richardson recorded 'Twelve Volumes, twelve, of massy weight, & size', a trial run (or else a prematurely entered variant) for line 155 (A 135), 'Of these twelve volumes, twelve of amplest size', where, in its proper place another variant, 'of enormous' for 'of amplest', is recorded. The latter, as it stands, would have been unmetrical, but both these versions of the line show Pope, at the earliest known stage of the poem, groping amorphously and tentatively for effects of enormity whose fullest expression we associate with the final version. That in the printed texts the effect in this instance tends to be slightly toned down implies, I think, not a contrary impulse but an exercise of verbal tact, in the confidence that the point was already made and that further labouring would be excessive. In the other changes, 'more solid Learning' vs. 'in Time's old Varnish', thickness and mass replace antique phoniness, while the dropping of 'bound' in the second half of line 150 (A 130), 'or bound in strong cow-hide', seems an insignificant variation, unless the non-survival of the past participle was again designed to avoid overemphasis. A final substantive variant, 'spices' against the printed 'tapers' in line 156 (A 136), suggests no particular pattern other than a wish to avoid repetition of l. 151 (A 131), though 'spices' might also have seemed a shade exotic for the austere dulness called for by the context. The four lines corresponding to 151-4 (A 131-4) appear to have been added later than the rest and are thus described by Mack '*Ll. 131-34 are bracketed and marked: add.*' My main conclusion is that even in the earliest drafts, and even in parts of the poem which show a tendency to keep effects of enormity in check, the essential impulse is unmistakably in the direction of an atmosphere of brooding massiveness, whose culminating expression was to be arrived at, fifteen years later, in the four-book version of 1743.

* * *

Passages 3 and 4 represent a different kind of continuity between the *Rape of the Lock* and the *Dunciad*, a continuity which is also, in some

²⁷For these manuscript interventions, see *Last and Greatest Art*, p. 133.

ways, a discontinuity. Passage 3 is probably the simplest textbook example of mock-heroic diminution, with the drop into the real in line 10 offered as a structured anticlimax. I suggested in discussing passage 1 that this effect isn't the commonest one, even in the *Rape of the Lock*, where the stylistic inflation is more often kept in business instead of being neutralised by explicit disclosures. The set-piece mimicks smaller-scale, usually one-line, effects of the 'stain her Honour, or her new Brocade' type (II. 107), though this kind of zeugma, one of the most familiar features of the *Rape of the Lock*, sometimes modulates into more attenuated collocations, where the drop is perceived as less dramatic or at least as occurring from less than heroic heights, e.g. 'When Husbands or when Lap-dogs breathe their last' (III. 158). Parallel desimplifications may be observed in the related routine of the incongruous catalogue: 'Men, Monkies, Lap-dogs, Parrots, perish all!' (IV. 120) seems a simple *dégringolade*, decisively established in the second word, but 'Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux' (I. 138) doesn't quite share the same clean vertical geometry.

These are witty, inventive, delightful, but they're also transparently programmed. They have neither the harshness nor the unpredictability of typical Swiftian catalogues, 'a Lawyer, a Pick-pocket, a Colonel, a Fool, . . . a Whoremunger, a Physician, an Evidence' (*Gulliver's Travels*, IV. xii). These too are programmed, though less transparently, an accredited Swiftian routine designed not for clear-cut shocks but more continuous disturbance. The Popeian predictabilities are style-induced, as the ranting anaphora of passage 3 makes inevitable the eventual drop in line 10. Even where the substantive details don't suggest an undisturbed rise-and-fall trajectory (the 'scornful Virgins' and 'ancient Ladies' belong to a different order of elevation from the 'youthful Kings' and 'Tyrants fierce' on either side of them), the driving force of the rhetorical business overrides local complications, inexorably raising the pitch until the expected collapse becomes due.²⁸

This rhetorical flight is mock-heroic but probably not strictly mock-epic. It is not unprecedented in English satire, and Pope may have learned it from Oldham:

Not enter'd Punks from Lust they once have tried,
 Not Fops and Women from Conceit and Pride,
 Not Bawds from Impudence, Cowards from Fear,
 Nor sear'd unfeeling Sinners past Despair,

²⁸The passage was substantially in its definitive form in the 1712 version (II. 1–10), though the 'Lovers' and 'Ladies' of the fifth and sixth lines were in the singular.

Are half so hard, and stubborn to reduce,
As a poor Wretch, when once possess'd with Muse.²⁹

I'm not proposing this as a source, or allusion: structured ranting of the kind both Oldham and Pope are mimicking is commonplace. But it doesn't evoke classical epic, unless perhaps some things from the rhetorical excesses of the Latin Silver Age. If there's a specific epic allusion in the lines beginning 'But anxious Cares the pensive Nymph opprest,/And secret Passions labour'd in her Breast', it's to Dido in the *Aeneid* (also, oddly, the opening of Book IV): 'But now for some while the queen had been growing more grievously love-sick,/Feeding the wound with her life-blood, the fire biting within her'.³⁰ Dryden's translation, as Tillotson notes, strengthens the connection. It begins 'But anxious Cares already seiz'd the Queen', but neither Virgil's nor Dryden's lines have the slightest intimation of an anaphoric set piece, and I suspect that to readers of Pope (or of Oldham) such passages would be likeliest to evoke the speechifying of Restoration heroic tragedy (a genre in which, incidentally, Oldham's satires are steeped).

The heroic play was commonly viewed as a debased expression of epic aspirations, and became a lightning rod in critiques of the heroic ethos which sought to protect the hallowed masterpieces of Homer and Virgil from the opprobrium of military cruelty and thuggish codes of honour. Censures which Pope expressed with a gingerly anguished plaintiveness in his notes to the *Iliad* appear with a sharp explicitness or exuberant derision in dramatic parodies from the *Rehearsal* to the *Tragedy of Tragedies*, and the tendency in Augustan mock-heroic towards a species of generic displacement or transposition, protective of epic even as it proceeds through parody of epic forms, is something which deserves to be better recognised. So, in the *Battle of the Books*, mock-epic is constantly merging into mock-journalism, and among the 'heroic' targets of *Jonathan Wild* historians openly substitute for epic poets, and historical villains for epic heroes. If the high Augustan mock-heroic was to remain what it was programmed to be, a tribute to epic in the only mode now possible to good poets outside the practice of translation, such devices were among the possible ways of shielding epic both from the vulnerabilities of its discredited moral codes and from the corrosions of irony inherent in any mock form. Pope understood as well as Swift that if mock-heroic was to be accepted as

²⁹Oldham, 'A Satyr: [Spencer's Ghost]', ll. 271–6, *Poems*, p. 246.

³⁰*The Eclogues, Georgics and Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. C. Day Lewis (Oxford, 1966), p. 218.

mocking not the heroic but a lowered modern reality, the fall-out from the derision might readily spread to unintended targets, and they doubtless also sensed that the heroic itself could not be, for them, in all honesty, a *wholly unintended* target. Pope's control of ironic modulation enabled him to maintain complex and conflicting sympathies in something like the desired balance, though the tearaway corrosiveness of Swift's irony, as I've argued elsewhere, ensured that (with the single special exception of the *Battle*) he never attempted mock-epic at all.³¹

Passages 4A and 4B, like 3, show the protagonist in distress: Theobald in A, Cibber in B. There is no reason to suppose, as with 1 and 2, that the later passage was written with some thought of the earlier, but they have a theme, or basic situation, in common, and the transition from the *Rape of the Lock* to the *Dunciad* is as instructive as in the two altar passages, though in different ways. What is special to 4B in particular is that it lacks the display of ordonnance so ostentatiously visible in the other passages, including not only 3 but also, up to a point, its own immediate prototype, 4A. It has nothing of the spectacular set-piece simplicity of the anaphoric paragraph, its relentless clarities of structured bathos, or any trace of the quasi-ekphrastic arrangement of the altar pieces, whose formal disposition and architecture simultaneously confer an additional air of design on the verse description itself. The difference is the more striking because, like 2, the altar passage from the *Dunciad*, 4B shows Cibber among literary *disjecta membra*, here more exclusively his own writings, but as the passage continues, taking in other authors, and indeed culminating in the 'Gothic Library! of Greece and Rome/Well purg'd' which immediately precedes passage 2.

Passage 4 in all versions comes before passage 2 and indeed leads straight into it in less than thirty lines. My quotations are, of course, selective, and start and finish in mid-paragraph. The paragraph to which 4 belongs, which immediately precedes passage 2, has a larger rhythm of its own, and an even larger shape or pattern is discernible in the consecutive placing of this paragraph and the two paragraphs constituting passage 2. The paragraph to which 4B belongs is unusually long (40 lines: I. 107–46), and anything can be made to fall into place if the scheme is large enough. But one of my assumptions is that Popeian set pieces typically come in smaller units; and the other passages I

³¹For fuller discussion and documentation of these points, see chs. 3 and 4 of my *Satire and Sentiment 1660–1830*, pp. 29–129.

have discussed are in this regard more characteristic of the normal style not only of the *Rape of the Lock* and the *Dunciad*, but of most of Pope's poems.

4B was not always the form in which this part of the poem was known. In this regard it also largely differs from 1, 2 and 3, and part of the difference again has to do with Cibber's acquisition of the Laureateship and his absorption into the poem as hero, since the 'future Odes', which are among the literal creatures denoted by the imagery of the embryos and abortions at the end, like the steeple-shaped ode of passage 2, evidently refer to this activity. Cibber's Laureate odes were a standard joke of the 1730s.³² Cibber himself recognised in the *Apology* that 'the very word, *Ode*, I know', triggered derision of his efforts in that line.³³ The word had only occurred once in the whole of *Dunciad* A, which precedes Cibber's Laureateship by a year. In 1728 and 1729 the passage corresponding to the 40-line paragraph which includes 4B (I. 107–46) is almost exactly half the length, or twenty-two lines, in two paragraphs of four and eighteen lines respectively (I. 95–116 in 1728, I. 105–126 in 1729). Passage 4A (I. 99–108 in 1728 and I. 109–18 in 1729) is more or less identical in 1728 and 1729. Of the two annotated copies based on the Broglio MSS, the copy of 1728 has no marginalia for this specific extract. But that of the 1736 version of the 1729 text has some four variants in lines 110, 116 and 117: we learn that 'his rising' was preferred to 'the Birth of' (110), 'much learned lumber' to both 'the Spoils of Sturbridge' and '*Philemon's* Labours' (116), and 'size' to 'bulk' (117). All three involve a preoccupation with elevation, magnitude, or mass, in a characteristically grotesque effort to evoke a disfigured epic majesty. It is consistent that an image of 'rising' should be preferred to one of birth (though misshapen nativities are a feature of the poem as a whole, and of the 1743 version of this passage, 4B);

³²See Sutherland's Introduction, *Dunciad*, p. xxxv.

³³Cibber, *Apology*, ed. B. R. S. Fone (Ann Arbor, 1968), ch. 2, p. 23. He was speaking of a coronation ode he had to write as a schoolboy. The passage shows his pleasure in acknowledging the jeering of others, his vanity and his genial recognition of vanity: 'The very Word, *Ode*, I know, makes you smile already; and so it does me; not only because it still makes so many poor Devils turn Wits upon it, but from a more agreeable Motive; from a Reflexion of how little I then thought that, half a Century afterwards, I shou'd be call'd upon twice a Year, by my Post, to make the same kind of Oblations to an *unexceptionable* Prince, the serene Happiness of whose Reign my halting Rhimes are still unequal to — This, I own, is Vanity without Disguise . . .' The ode he then wrote, 'bad as it was, . . . serv'd to get the School a Play-day, and to make me not a little vain upon it'. His vanity 'disgusted my Play-fellows', which 'serv'd only to increase my Vanity'. But then, 'If I confess my Vanity while a Boy, can it be Vanity, when a Man, to remember it?' (pp. 23–4).

that the solidity of 'lumber' should be preferred to two alternatives that don't self-evidently evoke ponderousness or mass; and that, if there is little to choose between 'size' and 'bulk', the indecision shows Pope in the act of considering alternative ways of evoking magnitude.³⁴

The whole sequence in the earlier *Dunciad* is thus more compact, and I believe more conventionally Popeian, and the extract under special scrutiny as 4A, though obviously a prototype for 4B, has a methodical and definitional quality much closer to the other passages. It has nothing like 4B's suggestive mimicry of disintegration and incoherence, its air of deranged plasticity, with dissolving outlines and surreal shapes. 4B's embryos and abortions are only, as we know from the next line, Cibber's unfinished writings, but like the cone-shaped steeple-ode, they are transmogrified into a fantasy landscape, here not so much Disneyan, but evoking, momentarily, some lurid hell-scapes in a tradition whose most familiar pictorial expressions for us are perhaps by Bosch or Breughel. There are no embryos or abortions in 4A, though 'embryon atoms' are found in the description preceding Satan's flight through Chaos in *Paradise Lost* (II. 900) to which both versions allude, and though 4A otherwise places its Miltonic derivations in rather higher profile than 4B.

Comparison indeed suggests an unexpected retreat from, or attenuation of, Miltonising aggrandisement in the later version. The *Dunciad* in all versions is very much in the business of actualising hell on a supercharged scale, both in the landscape of the big city, and in the bottomless spaces of the hero's empty mind, the two being deeply interrelated in that mythologising of Grub Street, real place, country of the mind, and topographical site of cultural disintegration. What Eliot said in 1930 of the Baudelairean city, of Baudelaire's 'use of the sordid life of a great metropolis', and his 'elevation of such imagery to the *first intensity* — presenting it as it is, and yet making it represent something much more than itself', applies all the more suggestively to the *Dunciad* because of the centrality of infernal resonance in the imagination of the city by both poets, as in that of Eliot's own *Waste Land*, with Milton's 'populous city' in the background.³⁵ The throbbing, polluted majesties of the great city clearly went back, in Eliot's own perception, to some classic effects of Augustan mock-heroic, perhaps equal in their impact on him to those of Baudelaire. Nine years before

³⁴Vander Meulen, pp. 6–7 of facsimile; *Last and Greatest Art*, p. 132.

³⁵T. S. Eliot, 'Baudelaire', *Selected Essays* (London, 1953), p. 426; *Paradise Lost*, IX. 445ff.

the essay on Baudelaire, he was citing with admiration the Barbican passage from *Mac Flecknoe* (ll. 64ff.), with its 'Scenes of lewd loves, and of polluted joys; / Where their vast Courts the Mother-Strumpets keep', and its 'transformation . . . into poetry' of a well-known passage from Cowley's epic *Davideis* (also adapted to mock-heroic use in Garth's *Dispensary*).³⁶ We should not, in this connection, forget that the *Waste Land*, itself deeply impregnated with a Baudelairean feeling for 'the sordid life of a great metropolis', actually began life as a pastiche of the *Rape of the Lock*, coloured or overshadowed by Dunciadic and Swiftian tones.³⁷ That the infernal imagery in the *Dunciad* has a specifically mock-epic character is fully consistent with its 'epic' status (disfigured, so to speak, rather than diminished), since it's no part of the mock-epic strategy to reduce the primary model as distinct from using it, according to Dryden's formula, for elevating the base material to which it is applied. It is equally a truism that the *Dunciad*'s inferno is not a mockery of epic underworlds but an appropriation of Milton's hell to the modern London nightmare.

This nightmare, as in Milton, where hell is both a place and the state of Satan's mind, carried by him which way he flies, is solidly geographical, but also the gaping mental void of the king of Dulness. The mythologising force of the poem depends on its ability to convey the enormity of both. At all events, 'Sinking from thought to thought', and the two ensuing lines, are common to 4A and 4B. They give the hero's bottomless stupidity the dimensions of a journey through Chaos, 'like the progress of the Devil in *Milton*', as Pope's note makes sure we notice in a note to the A version (omitted from B). Rochester had used Milton in a similar way in the 'Satyr against Mankind' to evoke vast mental vacuities, and Pope, as Gilbert Wakefield noted long ago, took part of his wording from Rochester's 'Satyr against Reason and Mankind': 'Stumbling [or "Tumbling"] from thought to thought, falls headlong down' (l. 18).³⁸

But the adjacent Miltonic allusion in 4A, 'He roll'd his eyes that witness'd huge dismay', is dropped from 4B, although in the earlier

³⁶Eliot, 'John Dryden', *Selected Essays*, p. 308; Cowley, *Davideis* (1656), I. 80ff.; *Dispensary* (1699), VI. 96-7 (also IV. 1-4) in *POAS*, VI. 121, 91.

³⁷For a fuller account of these connections, see 'The Nightmares of Strephon: Nymphs of the City in the Poems of Swift, Baudelaire, Eliot, and 'Pope's *Waste Land*: Reflections on Mock-Heroic', in *Order from Confusion Sprung*, pp. 154ff., 201ff.

³⁸*Dunciad*, p. 77, Pope's note to A I. 115, not repeated in B; *Paradise Lost*, II. 927ff.; on readings of the Rochester line, see *Complete Works*, ed. Frank H. Ellis (London, 1994), pp. 72, 360.

version Pope seems to have wanted the Miltonic source to be even more clearly in the reader's mind than in the case of 'Sinking from thought to thought', and had taken the trouble to quote it (more or less verbatim) in a note: '*Round he throws his [baleful] eyes / That witness'd huge affliction and dismay*'.³⁹ One can only speculate about the reasons for the later omission, as also for the dropping in B of the note identifying Milton in relation to line 112 of A. Perhaps he was resisting overkill, just as the 1728 and 1729 versions of the altar passage had drawn back from some of the looser effects of enormity in the manuscript drafts reproduced by Jonathan Richardson. Perhaps 'he roll'd his eyes that witness'd huge dismay', with its odd evocation of a discomfited Disneyan giant, was felt to fall short of Miltonic *gravitas*, though elements of baroque visual humour are not foreign to any version of the *Dunciad* — or to *Paradise Lost* itself.

4A comes over as a good sample of the efficient definitional bravura that is a hallmark of Pope's writing in the 1720s and 1730s, with the potential suggestion of patness that sometimes goes with that at its less than best. Pope's 'He roll'd his eyes that witness'd huge dismay' may be compared with Milton's, the square brackets indicating Pope's omissions or changes: '[round] he [throws] his [baleful] eyes / That witnessed huge [affliction and] dismay'. We witness a process of efficient simplification, which is even carried over into the actual citation of Milton in Pope's note, which perpetuates the omission of 'baleful'. Pope would have called it 'correctness', and as often happens, this is cheekily set off against a presumed lack of it in Milton: the gnarled metrical intricacies, the failure to use rhyme because (as Pope supposedly told Voltaire) 'he could not', those heaving energies of the sublime that Pope needed both to exploit and to feel superior to.⁴⁰

Pope's version of Milton's line is a tidy containment that may have come to be seen as diminished by the strenuous presence of the original at the foot of the page — and diminished all the more unsettlingly (perhaps) because it seemed designed as a textbook illustration of the superior excellencies of that couplet metric through which Pope liked to 'versify' earlier poets, Chaucer and Donne no less than Milton. 'Correct couplets' are not of course abandoned in 4B, but unlike those of 4A, they create an atmosphere of tension with unruly forces rather than containment of them. It seems not unlikely to me that in the final

³⁹*Paradise Lost*, I, 56–57.

⁴⁰Voltaire, *Lettres Philosophiques*, ed. F. A. Taylor (Oxford (Blackwell), 1946), p. 174 (n. 3 to Letter XVIII).

Dunciad 'correctness' may have come to seem as in itself reductive, and acts of containment an inappropriate response to what was becoming, for Pope, an unusually intensified perception of disorderly forces. In that strictly limited sense, he had perhaps come closer to Swift, to whom the poem had been dedicated almost from the start, and whose whole writing career, from a *Tale of a Tub* to the late poems of the 1730s, had been devoted to a flatter, non-heroic rather than mock-heroic, anatomy of the chaos dark and deep.

This last distinction, on which I won't dwell long, is one which is most effectively sensed by comparing the polluted processional majesty of Pope's London waters

... where Fleet-ditch with disemboing streams
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,

(II. 271-72)

with the frenetic animation of the effluences of Swift's City Shower:

Sweepings from Butchers Stalls, Dung, Guts, and Blood,
Drown'd Puppies, stinking Sprats, all drench'd in Mud,
Dead Cats and Turnip-Tops come tumbling down the Flood.

(II. 61-63)⁴¹

Particularity is a feature of this animation, and one often regarded, by Pope and others, as inimical to grandeur. It here spectacularly differentiates two passages of not dissimilar content.

But it is a feature of 4B, and the whole paragraph to which it belongs (twice as long, I pointed out, as its 1728 or 1729 prototype), that on its own phantasmagoric plane, quite different from the headlong demented realism of the Swiftian notation, it opens up into a mode of itemisation barely present in the earlier versions, introducing not only the embryos and abortions, future odes and abdicated plays, but going on to an extended fantasy of overheated and deranged creativity, where vitality exists in a complex, half-adversarial orchestration with the lapidary doom-laden torpor, the enveloping massiveness, that is for many readers the *Dunciad's* dominant distinctive voice:

Nonsense precipitate, like running Lead,
That slip'd thro' Cracks and Zig-zags of the Head;
All that on Folly Frenzy could beget,
Fruits of dull Heat, and Sooterkins of Wit.

(I. 123ff.)⁴²

⁴¹Swift, *Poems*, ed. Harold Williams, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1958), I. 139.

⁴²These lines do not occur in the A version.

And when, more mundanely, the hero contemplates his library and 'o'er his Books his eyes began to roll' (I. 127ff.), the list of modern authors is much longer in B than in A, and the commentary about them more ample. The process is the reverse of what we witnessed in the progression from 1A to 1B in the *Rape of the Lock*. In the later poem, Pope was neither abandoning grandeur nor even enormity: perhaps by the time of the final *Dunciad* he felt sufficiently in command to put the brakes on, and to take on competing effects without inhibition.

Enormity and grandeur are essential to the apocalyptic theme, which is if anything heightened in the B-version and culminates in its famous finale. The idea of Genesis going into reverse, the initiating Logos of St. John's gospel metamorphosed into the 'uncreating word' of the poem's close in both versions, depends for a full sense of its dire urgency on a preservation of biblical and Miltonic resonances in something like an equal and opposite order of magnitude. The idea seems to have developed from small-scale punning origins in a short poem of c. 1727, 'Verses to be Placed under the Picture of England's Arch-Poet', in which Pope said Blackmore 'Un-did *Creation* at a Jerk', alluding to his epic poem, *Creation*. By the time the joke had worked its way through the *Dunciad*, it had mushroomed grotesquely into the vast negative nightmare we all know.⁴³

The accompanying stylistic inversion, as all readers are aware, crosses the parody barrier in a manner that seems to go beyond Dryden's observations about heroic majesties rubbing off on the satire, though it also seems a self-conscious fulfilment of the project or aspiration implicit in Dryden's *Discourse* of making satire a species of heroic poetry in its own right. In Pope's hands, this sometimes receives surprising literal applications. His couplet about Fleet Ditch taps into a large tradition of satiric writing about polluted London waters, to which Dryden, Garth, Gay and Swift all contributed, and Wakefield noted as far back as 1796 a couplet from the *Dispensary* about Fleet Ditch descending 'in sable Streams/To wash his sooty *Naiads* in the *Thames*'.⁴⁴ This is undoubtedly a germ of Pope's lines, which accented a processional movement already present in Garth, but the source of the *Dunciadic* couplet in its most distinctive effect comes from a much more recent line about 'the deep roar of disemboquing *Nile*' from Pope's own translation of the *Odyssey* (IV. 480). Such stylistic reversals,

⁴³*Dunciad*, A III. 340, B IV. 654; 'Verses', in *Minor Poems*, ed. Norman Ault, T. E., VI. 290.

⁴⁴*Dunciad*, ed. Sutherland, p. 133 n., citing Garth, *Dispensary*, 1699, III. 111-2 (*POAS*, VI. 86).

mirroring or even embodying the *Dunciad's* anatomy of a culture turned upside down, belong to a mode of unparodying, of upward reformulation, which I have discussed elsewhere, and of which a non-Popeian example might be Yeats's transformation of Dryden's satirical portrait of Zimri, 'A man so various, that he seem'd to be / Not one, but all Mankinds Epitome' into the Robert Gregory who was 'As 'twere all life's epitome', a positive modern incarnation of the Renaissance ideal of the complete man of which Dryden's Zimri had been seen as a travesty in the first place.⁴⁵

That such resublimation should take place within a satire is perhaps more arresting, though the phenomenon is up to a point implicit in the mock-heroic project itself. A pompous speech by Sloth in the *Dispensary* (1699: I. 107–8), 'Thro' my Indulgence, Mortals hourly share / A grateful Negligence, and Ease from Care', may be a disfigured parody of a customary idiom for celebrating an English Augustan ideal of easy grace, sometimes conceived as a 'Horatian' urbanity in Dryden and others, in which ideas of both negligence and ease have strong positive associations. The expected phrase, amusingly modified in Garth's evocation of slothful self-indulgence, is 'graceful Ease'. It is found in Oldham's *Letter from the Country* (l. 49), and in Dryden's imitation of the *Knight's Tale*, *Palamon and Arcite* (III. 73), which was published the year after Garth's poem and which may, as I suggested, be an active presence in Pope's mock-heroic creations: the phrase is conspicuously added by Dryden to the Chaucerian original (ll. 2165–6), where there is no trace of it, but which Dryden otherwise follows closely at this point. Both Oldham's and Dryden's lines are cited in the Twickenham commentary as analogues to the *Essay on Criticism's* assertion that '*Horace* still charms with graceful *Negligence*' (l. 653). I suggest that Garth's reformulation of what had become a cant phrase of the 'discourse' of politeness may also have a subtextual half-life in the imaginative hinterland of the line from the *Essay on Criticism*, and even in that of the *Rape of the Lock's* praise of Belinda's 'graceful Ease, and Sweetness void of Pride' (II. 15), where mock-heroic answers mock-heroic in a celebrative, or at least a more subtly satirical, register, delicately poised between derision and an affirmative loyalty.⁴⁶ Such traffic, in both directions, is inevitable and commonplace in a literary

⁴⁵For a fuller account, see *Satire and Sentiment 1660–1830*, p. 116; Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, I. 545–6; Yeats, 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory', ll. 86–7.

⁴⁶POAS, VI. 68; Oldham, *Poems*, p. 150; Dryden, *Poems*, ed. Kinsley, IV. 1502; for the two lines by Pope, see T. E., I. 313 and n., II. 160.

culture with an almost instinctive predisposition to parody, and steeped in allusive habits and modes of ironic inflection. It is part of a complicated relationship between eighteenth-century writers and their own parodic forms not all of whose manifestations have received the attention they deserve, but which in the *Dunciad* also include some subheroic itemisations which have been vividly expounded by Howard Erskine-Hill, Emrys Jones and others. Jones for example has drawn attention to the callow excited verbal contests in Book II, 'chatt'ring, grinning, mouthing, jabb'ring', with 'Snip-snap short, and Interruption smart' (II. 237, 240) and to the oddly sympathetic counterpoint this provides to the dominant themes and tonalities of the poem.⁴⁷

In a note to the *Iliad*, Pope observed that 'There are not only Replies, but Rejoinders in *Homer*,... many continued Conversations... a little resembling common Chit-chat. This renders a Poem more natural and animated, but less grave and majestic'.⁴⁸ The censoriousness is clear, part of Pope's patient and protracted mission to sanitise his Homer. That such dialogue is 'natural and animated' is conceded, but what Pope describes as animated chit-chat, a conversation between Idomeneus and Merion (or Meriones), is actually rendered by him in the following manner:

To this, *Idomeneus*. The Fields of Fight
Have prov'd thy Valour and unconquer'd Might;
And were some Ambush for the Foes design'd,
Ev'n there, thy Courage would not lag behind.

(XIII. 353-56)

As chit-chat goes, this might be thought to be somewhat heroically styled, and indeed rather short on animation. What Pope put down as chit-chat in the *Iliad* note may mean no more than dialogue anyway: the note opens with the finger-wagging remark that 'there is a great deal more Dialogue in *Homer* than in *Virgil*'. The issue is one of conversation vs. speeches, speeches being so important in the heroic tradition that one of the objections against gunpowder was, in Renaissance Europe as in Japan, that it made the combatants cut down on speeches and just shoot. As Pope put it in the 'Essay on Homer's Battels', 'before the Use of *Fire-Arms* there was... more *Leisure*... for those Harangues [Homer's] Heroes make to each other in the time

⁴⁷Emrys Jones, 'Pope and Dulness', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, LIV (1968), 231-63, esp. 253ff.

⁴⁸Pope's note to *Iliad*, XIII. 353, T. E., VIII. 122.

of Combate'.⁴⁹ I'm not sure that 'Harangues' bears a full weight of modern distaste (Johnson defines it simply as 'A speech; a popular oration'), though Pope doubtless felt for those boastful and aggressive ritual declarations the kind of ambivalence with which he viewed the whole issue of Homeric warfare.⁵⁰ But he rendered them with full honours, and they were not to be mistaken for chit-chat, as Idomeneus's reply to Merion, the furthest Pope would go in that direction, remains pretty remote from the *Dunciad*'s 'Snip-snap short, and Interruption smart', themselves animated and accorded unofficial affection, but hardly the staple idiom of that poem either.

If one wanted a *Dunciad* in chit-chat, one would have to turn to Shelley's satire on Wordsworth and his circle, *Peter Bell the Third*, a studiously flat, often brilliantly astringent downscaling. Its London is also infernal, or rather vice versa: 'Hell is a city much like London — / A populous and a smoky city' (III. i), deriving both from the *Dunciad* and from the infernal 'populous City' of *Paradise Lost*, IX. 445. The poem is a low-key patrician putdown of plebeian dunces whose Cibber is Wordsworth, another Laureate, though he wasn't yet:

Peter was dull—he was at first
 Dull—O, so dull—so very dull!
 Whether he talked, wrote, or rehearsed—
 Still with this dulness was he cursed—
 Dull—beyond all conception—dull.

(VII. xi)

Not exactly, as I've argued elsewhere, the engulfing Dulness, Daughter of Chaos and eternal Night, of Pope's poem, though undoubtedly a transposition of her to the domain of mundane chit-chat.⁵¹ Reading Colley Cibber's *Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope*, I was recently struck by a response to Pope's attacks on him, couched in terms that seem a plaintive mimicry not of the *Dunciad* as we normally read it but as Shelley rewrote it: 'What, am I only to be Dull, and Dull still,

⁴⁹Essay on Homer's Battels', T. E., VII. 260; see also *Satire and Sentiment 1660-1830*, pp. 56-8.

⁵⁰The word 'harangue', according to the *OED*, is 'A speech addressed to an assembly; a loud or vehement address, a tirade; formerly, sometimes, a formal or pompous speech', and derives from medieval Latin, Old French, Italian and Spanish terms for a 'place of declamation, arena'. Ironic or derogatory usages certainly seem, from the *OED*'s examples, to be in evidence in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but Pope's phrasing (which I read as mainly neutral or laudatory) and Johnson's definition show a strong survival of the non-ironic sense.

⁵¹*Satire and Sentiment 1660-1830*, p. 103.

and again, and for ever?'.⁵² Cibber's *Letter* appeared in 1742, after the *New Dunciad* (i.e. Book IV), but before the appearance of the full-blown *Dunciad, in Four Books*, which was published the following year with himself finally 'enthroned in the place of Theobald'.⁵³ It is thus a proleptic response, but he already had much to complain of, not only in the *New Dunciad* itself (though that had only one new offensive line specifically about him [IV. 20], plus a long note to that line), but, as he said in his opening remarks, 'for several Years past, in . . . [Pope's] Poetical Works'.⁵⁴

It's possible that he already knew, and that Pope ensured that he knew, that a revised Cibberian *Dunciad* was in the offing, and may even have intended the *Letter* as a warning or pre-emptive strike.⁵⁵ It served in fact as an added precipitant, or final trigger. In a further loop of the circle, Pope incorporated the complaint from the *Letter* in 1743 in the expanded note in *Dunciad B* (I. 109n.), as Swift had absorbed Wotton's 'Observations' into the commentary of the expanded *Tale of a Tub*. The proto-Shelleyan chatter was thus accommodated into the *Dunciad's* ultimate version, and it would be rash to exclude the possibility that Shelley might indeed have picked it up there, since *Peter Bell the Third* is impregnated with Dunciadic and Scriblerian elements, transfigured and flattened to the needs and atmosphere of his own satire. The matter of immediate interest is that Pope chose to naturalise the Cibberian contribution to this idiom into a composition whose dominant atmosphere might be thought inhospitable to it. I will be suggesting that this traffic between competing moods is a feature of the *Dunciad*, and that the notes, and the switch to Cibber, play an important part in it.

Cibber made other interesting remarks, that Dulness wasn't actually a crime, and that he didn't believe Pope *really* thought him dull, nearly

⁵²A *Letter from Mr. Cibber, to Mr. Pope* (London, 1742), p. 53 (partially reprinted in J. V. Guerinot, *Pamphlet Attacks*, pp. 288ff.).

⁵³*Dunciad*, p. lii.

⁵⁴Sutherland, in *Dunciad*, p. xxxiii; *Letter from Mr. Cibber*, p. 5. This recognition is already bumptiously on display, as early as 1740, in the first edition of the *Apology*, where he professes to admire and even enjoy Pope's attacks on him: 'Not our great Imitator-of Horace himself can have more Pleasure in writing his Verses, than I have in reading them, tho' I sometimes find myself there . . . *dispraisingly* spoken of . . . I look upon my Follies as the best part of my Fortune, . . . nor do I believe I shall ever be rhim'd out of them' (ed. Fone, ch. 1, p. 16).

⁵⁵*Dunciad*, pp. xxxii-xxxiii; Guerinot, *Pamphlet Attacks*, p. 290.

forty pages earlier.⁵⁶ He had proleptically become as obsessive about the term as Pope was to be relentless in applying it to him in the culminating overkill of *Dunciad* B, with its studiously transposed slurs and its additional insults. His grievance was exacerbated by the fact that, rather remarkably, he considered the *Dunciad* 'a better Poem of its Kind, than ever was writ', reserving his main complaint for the footnotes, which he dismissed as 'Loads of Prose Rubbish'.⁵⁷ By the time of the 'am I only to be Dull, and Dull still' passage, he had cited a good deal of offending verse too. But the accents of the complaint do have a much closer match in the style of the annotation than in the atmosphere of the poem proper. One tendency of the notes is to drag down the epic pretension in various ways: through the flattening effect of the prose medium, the dimension of gossip and low journalism, the intermittent flourishes of mundane fact or bread-and-butter defamation which reintroduce an unsettling dose of the reality principle into the portrayal of the dunces, whom the poem itself had meanwhile been converting into something rich and strange.

It may have been Swift's *Battle of the Books* that taught Pope that a simultaneous activation of mock-heroic and mock-journalese was not only possible but productive of specific imaginative satisfactions. The *Battle*, itself in prose, merges the two strands in the body of the text, having announced its journalistic character, 'A Full and True Account of the Battel Fought last Friday', in the title, before the first mock-epic note is struck. The two elements are more formally separated in the *Dunciad*, whose earliest printed version of 1728 was almost if not entirely without notes. But from the *Dunciad Variorum* of the following year, for the remainder of the work's long development, and of course ever since, the poem has been read with an immense commentary, and if Cibber felt able at the start of his *Letter* to distinguish between the text and the notes, he didn't sustain the distinction for long. Indeed the satire depends so much on the interaction of the two that no accurate reading of the poem seems possible without at least some awareness of the notes, and although I suspect few readers of the poem actually read the notes *in toto*, a sense of their atmosphere will generally percolate through, if only because their massive presence on the

⁵⁶*Letter from Mr. Cibber*, pp. 14–5; cf. *Apology*, ch. 2, p. 25, on Pope's attacks: 'I never look upon those Lines as Malice meant to me, (for he knows I never provok'd it) but Profit to himself: One of his Points must be, to have many Readers . . . a Lick at the *Laureat* will always be a sure Bait'.

⁵⁷*Letter from Mr. Cibber*, p. 9.

page makes them unignorable: Cibber's comment that 'those vain-glorious encumbrances of Notes, and Remarks, upon almost every Line of it' have 'almost smother'd your *Dunciad*' is, forgivably, not the most enlightened way of putting it, but it's a hostile way of making the same point.⁵⁸

Formally, the notes to the *Dunciad* suggest mock-scholarship rather than mock-journalism, though an insinuation of equivalence between the two is a recognisable Scriblerian turn, and Swift's *Battle* offered a precedent for that secondary amalgam also, so that the official mock-epic parody interacts with not one but two other generic divisions. The *Battle* helped to naturalise the principle that when a work of mock-heroic was offered as, or developed into, an edition of itself, with notes, marginalia, gaps in the MS, and the rest, its character as a mock-edition attracted attention to itself in partial competition with the epic joke, just as the mock-journalism did. The editorial routines have a way, and perhaps an actual purpose, of lowering the mock-epic tonalities, and play their part in diverting satirical energies away from the epic original. Such generic displacements, instinctive or designed, served a dual protective function in Swift, who used the various flattening agencies (prose, journalese, editorial apparatus) as much to neutralise any residual loftiness in his own text (to avoid, as he said, a figure scurvy), as to protect objects of official heroic veneration from unintended devolutions of the ironic slur.

I believe Pope didn't need to do that, his characteristic ironic style being loyalist, enhancing rather than undermining cherished cultural properties, even, and perhaps especially, in grandiloquent modes. No poet is as versatile and commanding in his ability to make irony and majesty coexist without reciprocal diminution. If Swiftian parody lowered lofty tonalities, Pope's preserved them, defiled but entire, as in the Fleet Ditch couplet, or 'Great Cibber's brazen, brainless brothers stand' (I. 32), which did not get into Book I until the B *Dunciad*, another product of Cibber's accession to full heroic honours, though the statues by Cibber's father to which it refers had stood 'over the gates of Bedlam-hospital' since about 1680.⁵⁹ When mock-heroic is thus compounded by mock-scholarly annotation, which dissipates energies of recognition and diverts parodic slurs from heroic pretension to learned self-importance, the primary majesties which Swift sought

⁵⁸Letter from Mr. Cibber, p. 9.

⁵⁹Pope's note to I. 31.

to stop in their tracks tend in Pope to receive an enabling boost, their protection from a prevailing atmosphere of derision reinforced rather than eroded by the generic displacement.

The remarkable and unSwiftian demarcation of styles between text and notes in Pope's poem additionally ensured that effects of diminution could be relegated to a safe area at the foot of the page. Pope's notes can be thought of as releasing the subversive potential in a controlled environment, separate from the flow of the poem, but simultaneously demanding to be read *pari passu*. When Cibber, having seen an advance version of 'brazen, brainless brothers', pointed out in a *Second Letter . . . to Mr. Pope* in February 1743 that the statues were of stone, not brass, Pope retorted that although Cibber had correctly 'remonstrated that his Brothers at Bedlam . . . were not *Brazen*, but *Blocks*; yet our author let it pass unaltered, as a trifle, that in no way lessened the Relationship'.⁶⁰ This put-down, transforming an atmosphere of lapidary enormity — a term, however, which is strictly speaking more suited to stone than to bronze — into one of mundane sibling farce, is relegated not only to a note, but to a note on another passage, even more statuesquely orchestrated, the Miltonic parody which opens Book II: 'High on a gorgeous seat . . . Great Cibber sate' (II. 1–5). This belongs to a twelve-line passage, present in both main versions but not in 1728, in which Cibber's, previously Tibbald's, 'proud Parnassian sneer' modulates in the next line to 'The conscious simper, and the jealous leer' (II. 5–6), a scaling-down, not unlike that effected by the note, to more familiar presences, lower slopes of Parnassus.

The last line is somewhat more consonant with other portrayals of Cibber by Pope and others, though even it doesn't come very close, for

⁶⁰*Second Letter*, pp. 3–5; Guerinot, *Pamphlet Attacks*, pp. 310–11. Pope was rightly determined, on poetic grounds, not to make any changes. The Twickenham note to II. 3 (p. 296) says William Bowyer had warned him about the inaccurate adjective, and that Pope replied on 13 November [1742?]: 'Just now I receive y^s ab^t y^c *Brazen* Image. I w^d have it stand as it is, & no matter if y^c Criticks dispute ab^t it'.

Cibber's *Apology* had characteristically prepared the ground for all the attention to his sculpted siblings. In ch. 1 he had remarked that 'the two Figures of the *Lunatics*, the *Raving* and the *Melancholy*, over the Gates of *Bethlehem-Hospital*, are no ill Monuments of his [father's] Fame as an Artist' (p. 8). In ch. 3, he goes on to recount how his father, having failed to get Colley admitted to Winchester, had better success with his brother Lewis, winning the school over 'with the Present of a Statue of the Founder' (p. 36). Later, he hoped to get Colley into Cambridge, where he also executed some statues, but the plan miscarried because of unlucky timing, sparing the world some 'Sermons, and Pastoral Letters', 'instead of Plays and annual Odes' (pp. 38–9). Meanwhile, his brother Lewis became a Fellow of New College, Oxford, but died of dissolute habits in 1711 (pp. 37, 330 n.2).

example, to that 'Vanity, Impudence, and Debauchery' which Ricardus Aristarchus identified as attaching to the Cibberian hero of the 'little Epic', and from which 'springeth *Buffoonry*, the source of *Ridicule*'.⁶¹ And Pope was more or less forced by Cibber to concede in the annotation that vivacity and pertness could be ascribed to him (it's wonderfully Cibberian to claim pertness for himself, in the very passage which contains the Shelleyan exclamations).⁶² But 'proud Parnassian sneer' seems an especially awkward survival, which doesn't conform at all to the strutting hyperactive busybody of traditional accounts, or the more genial but recognisable version of this in Cibber's own *Apology*. 'Parnassian sneer' had been recycled, between the two *Dunciads*, in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, not about Cibber but in an oddly coincidental proximity to a line which was fatefully offensive to him:

Whom have I hurt? has Poet yet, or Peer,
Lost the arch'd eye-brow, or *Parnassian sneer*?
And has not *Colly* still his Lord, and Whore?

(ll. 95-7)

Cibber cited all three lines in the *Letter to Mr. Pope*, but only to highlight his outrage at the last line, which provoked the notorious anecdote in the *Letter* of Pope's own sexual humiliation with a whore.⁶³ Cibber used the preceding lines as a build-up or context, evidently without feeling that they might carry any sort of appropriate description of himself. The *Dunciad*'s 'proud Parnassian sneer' confers on the portrait, as well as attributing to the subject, a species of *hauteur*, of grandee bearing, which no one would seriously associate with this particular laureate, least of all himself. (This is hardly surprising, since the lines were applied to Cibber only as an afterthought, having originally been directed at Tibbald.)

The enormity of 'Great Cibber's brazen, brainless brothers stand' remained important to Pope. Cibber had pointed out in the *Second*

⁶¹*Dunciad*, p. 259; for Cibber on his own vanity and impudence, see *Apology*, chs. 2, 6, 11, pp. 27, 102-3, 118, 200-1 (e.g. the 'usual Effect' of attacks upon him 'is to make me vain', p. 27).

⁶²*Letter from Mr. Cibber*, p. 53, cited by Pope in *Dunciad*, l. 109 n., p. 277; on accusations of pertness, see *Apology*, ch. 2, p. 29.

⁶³*Letter from Mr. Cibber*, pp. 44ff. On this episode, see Mack, *Life*, pp. 779-81: 'For Pope it was dynamite: the most shattering ridicule of his wretched carcass that had ever been delivered... Almost overnight, engravers seized on the incident...' Mack describes the revelation as having a decisive impact on the four-book *Dunciad*, which 'seems to have been completed within three months of the publication of Cibber's *Letter*' (see also pp. 292-3, 871 n.)

Letter not only that the statues in question weren't bronze, but that they lay rather than stood.⁶⁴ Pope didn't pick this up, and it clearly no more suited him to go for the less dignified posture than to forego the massive alliterative resonance of 'brazen, brainless brothers', though humiliating play with the idea of prone figures would be consistent with the obvious desire to humiliate. Enormity was stubbornly preserved, though we should note that while it rubs off on Cibber, it isn't literally about him, and the sense of the line's bold massy presence was perhaps especially vulnerable to dissipation by the prose sense of things. But the passage beginning 'High on a gorgeous seat', which includes the 'proud Parnassian sneer', as well as Cibber's simpering and leering, shows the two in negotiation in the text of the poem and not only between the text and the note. A more appropriate portrayal, involving change from the A to the B text rather than an incompletely assimilated transposition, may be seen in passages 4A and 4B, where Tibbald's studious sitting, which seems almost passive under the Mighty Mother's eye, is replaced by the manic animation of Cibber's blaspheming and damning and gnawing and dashing, an energetic comic indignity coexisting *con brio* with the high Satanic montage. Milton offered hints for the mixture, on which Addison reported interestingly,⁶⁵ and Pope's exploitation of it in its final version is no merely predictable mock-heroic adaptation, but activates a reciprocal traffic between the familiar and the sublime of a sort Pope used to be embarrassed by when he met it in Homer.

Something of the same traffic, an ambivalence or bifurcated perspective, may be observed more crudely or strikingly in Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* (a work whose history has connections with the *Dunciad's* and which was also published, after a gestation of uncertain length, in 1743, the same year as Pope's final version). The work's official purposes similarly announce an inversely 'heroic' villain of diabolic proportions, while the poetic reality gives an inept little man, comically unsuccessful in crime and in love, and at times almost genial in his obsessive entrapment by his small-time pickpocketing compulsions. That 'poetic reality' is strikingly out of step with a prose sense in which the 'heroic' formula is largely a matter of hectoring asseveration, and which resembles the *Dunciad's* neo-Miltonic production as an iron scaffolding resembles a baroque palace. In the *Dunciad*, too,

⁶⁴*Second Letter*, p. 4; Guerinot, *Pamphlet Attacks*, p. 311.

⁶⁵*Spectator*, No. 303, 16 February 1712, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1965), III. 86.

you might say that the prose sense, at least as literally embodied in the prose annotation, largely carries the alternative 'little man' dimension independently of the workings of the verse, which tends towards aggrandisement. It is the dimension Shelley brought in from *hors texte*, in what looks like a modified reversion to the old burlesque, high matter in low language, discredited for the most ambitious satire in the period after Cotton and Butler, and thus unavailable for major mock-heroic expression until the time of Byron and Shelley, when epic loyalties had become less sensitive. Shelley's Cibber-analogue was, unlike Cibber himself, one of the most considerable poetic voices of his time, or of any time, even in Shelley's own grudging perception, and Shelley flattened him to a mock-lyrical-ballad-like banality, as a denizen of a flip downsized hell, much as Fielding reduced his Satanic villain to a small-time crook; whereas Pope's primary thrust was to make of Cibber a grotesque Titanic mushroom-cloud of Dulness, with universal fall-out.

As we have seen, however, the *hors texte* sometimes becomes a subtext in the *Dunciad*. The separations, whether in Pope's poem or in *Jonathan Wild*, are neither simple nor tidy, and the large unresolved oscillation is between the same conflicting impulses and sympathies. *Jonathan Wild* harks awkwardly back to mock-heroic, which serves it more as a verbal armature than as a live fiction, and it isn't comfortably described as a novel, though it's in that category for lack of a better that it is generally viewed. It is the work of an author steeped in Augustan and indeed Scriblerian modes, who worked elsewhere to adapt these to the novelistic genre, as Pope had no thought of doing. But there seems no doubt that in the *Dunciad*, as in *Jonathan Wild*, some scaled-down novelistic perspectives are entering, with an incompletely assimilated vitality, into the world of epic imitation.

This is a variant of a perhaps better understood process by which Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* was to incorporate the pre-emptive parody of 'L'Estrange, Dryden, and some others' in Swift's *Tale of a Tub*,⁶⁶ turning Scriblerian parody into an alternative novelistic mode, of self-expression and self-exploration, which Swift, had he been alive to witness it, would doubtless have repardied with increments. The Shandean outfacing of Swift's *Tale* is indeed itself prefigured, without the Shandean folds of indirection, in Cibber's *Apology*, with its genial

⁶⁶*Tale of a Tub*, Introduction, in Swift, *Prose Writings*, ed. Herbert Davis, 16 vols. (Oxford (Blackwell), 1939-1974), I. 42n.

acknowledgements of his stupidity and lack of talent, its vacuous complacencies in the face of derision, its miscellaneous parades of self, and its fussy immediacies. When Cibber writes, for example, 'And this very Morning, where I am now writing at the *Bath, November 11, 1738*', one may wonder at the phenomenon of an author, and *a fortiori* an author conscious of his status as a Scriblerian target, so totally giving himself over to (or, you might say, unparodying) an idiom which Swift might be said to have *preparodied* for all time in the *Tale*.⁶⁷

The *Dunciad*, which had its own internalised ways of crossing the parody barrier, was, like Swift's *Tale*, open to unparodying from unlikely novelistic or Romantic sources. The Shelleyan case is instructive, though it's perhaps an impure example, since the poem in which it occurs is itself a satire on a parallel theme to that of the *Dunciad*. But who would have guessed that Pope's pert pseudo-learned annotations, his mock-antiquarian routines, his Black Letter fabrications and his 'medieval' mimicries,

Right well mine eyes arede the myster wight,
On parchment scraps y-fed, and Wormius hight,

(III. 187–8)⁶⁸

would be re-enacted straight, within some twenty-five years of the final *Dunciad*, by a poet who came to be seen as a flower of Romantic genius, rebelling against restrictive Augustan canons? I mean, of course, Chatterton, who did these things without the Shandean self-awareness, or perhaps any awareness at all, but also (contrary to Romantic perception) without the hostility to Pope, whose Homer (that special object of Romantic opprobrium) he plundered for his own heroic effusions in both epic and drama.⁶⁹

If the Romantic perceptions of a Chattertonian revolt were in some ways off target, their emergence soon after Chatterton's death is itself part of my story, a story of the eighteenth century's strange relations

⁶⁷*Apology*, ch. 9, pp. 167–8. See *Tale*, pp. 22, 27, 132–5. For some remarks on the proleptic parody of Shandeanism in Swift, see my *Gulliver and the Gentle Reader* (London, 1973), pp. 1–6.

⁶⁸For Black Letter routines and other anti-'medieval' gesturing, see Pope's notes to I. 149, III. 187–8, IV. 18; the Caxton Appendix of 1729 and 'A Declaration' (*Dunciad*, pp. 213–6, 237–8). For bullying annotation of the kind whose tone Chatterton mimicked, see for example I. 218 n.

⁶⁹For some discussion of Chatterton's use of Pope, see 'Schoolboy Glee', *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 May 1994, pp. 3–4. On Pope's Homer and the Romantics, see Hugh Shankman, *Pope's Iliad* (Princeton, 1963), pp. 56, 99, 144ff.; H. A. Mason, *To Homer through Pope* (London, 1972), pp. 61ff.

with its own parodic forms, and they have at least one intended and one unintended truth. The first is the obvious one that even during the medieval revival of the 1760s, to write 'medievally' was to write against the grain of an older orthodoxy (an act of rebellion of sorts, as, in its more radical way, forgery itself was). The other is that Chatterton wrote straight 'medieval' poems and learned annotations which sometimes resemble the Popeian parody of pedants more than they do any other writing, and that, since he had evidently exposed himself a good deal to Pope's works, he may partly have absorbed Popeian accents from an actual Dunciadic source. Pope would of course have reparodied the unparodying, which falls exactly within the prescription, in 'A Receipt to Make an Epick Poem', to give the diction '*the venerable Air of Antiquity . . . by darkening it up and down with Old English*', adding the equally literal Chattertonian touch that this is like the painter who tried to '*make his Dawbings be thought Originals by setting them in the Smoak*'. Even poor Chatterton's appeals, when cornered, to his poverty, would have received with increments the derision lavished in both the text and the notes of the *Dunciad* on that marriage of poetry and poverty which was to be resublimated later in Romantic mythologies of indigent genius.⁷⁰

Whether Chatterton actually assimilated some of his effects from the *Dunciad*, as I think possible, or whether the resemblances are in some sense 'coincidental' in spite of his undoubted absorption of Pope's writings, Chatterton outfaced the parody almost as resolutely as *Tristram Shandy* outfaced the parody of *A Tale of a Tub*, though without the simpering awareness and self-elaboration, though perhaps not without a youthfully solemn version of Cibberian effrontery. Equally certainly, a potent presence of the derided element, in the *Dunciad* as in the *Tale*, lay germinating in the original.

This is not, I believe, simply to say that parody is doomed (by definition, since its mode is mimicry) to being like its targets, including future ones, though future targets complicate the issue in various ways; or that Cibber, or Sterne, or Chatterton, or Shelley were at some level adopting adversarial positions in relation to Scriblerian texts, so that their unparodying was itself conceived as a parodic enterprise, though the example of Sterne especially indicates complicated exercises of loyalty and defiance; or that Chatterton, unparodying the *Dunciad* in

⁷⁰Pope, *Prose Works*, I, ed. Norman Ault (Oxford (Blackwell), 1936), p. 120; on poverty see, *inter alia*, Pope's note to *Dunciad*, II. 118.

his poems and notes, or the *Tragedy of Tragedies* in his own straight attempt at a heroic play, produced what some readers would wish to call self-parody. The undoing or resublimation of parody in non-parodic writings is as deeply ingrained in eighteenth-century authors as their well-known penchant for parodic forms. It is prefigured by a characteristic pattern of circumvention in some of the classic works of formal parody, in which the thread of bookish mockery is diverted to urgent and unbookish concerns, the nature of the human animal rather than travel books in *Gulliver's Travels*, for example, or the condition of Ireland rather than economic tracts in *A Modest Proposal*.

In the case of mock-heroic, which often in this period acted as a conduit for frustrated epic aspirations, the more likely scenario is a nostalgia for the primary form rather than a relegation of it, and the characteristic impulse is not to circumvent but to transcend the parody. The culminating effort is the *Dunciad's* massive bid for epic status, in the teeth not only of all the expected ironic mimics but also of its deep suppression of the epic's central subject matter of war, exceeding all Milton's anti-war motions in *Paradise Lost* in a simple breathtaking evasion or denial. It is an act of comprehensive self-division, suggesting not only split purposes but eating one's cake and having it too. And it is compounded by a host of secondary contending energies which include the generic sidetracking into mock-scholarship and mock-journalism; the vitality of powerful strands in the poem (including parts of the portrayal of Cibber, or the behaviour of the chattering dunces in Book II), which exist not as anti- or mock-heroic but outside a frame of heroic reference altogether; and the extraordinary atmosphere of unstable circularity that dominates and irradiates almost all major features of the poem.

In this is included the vast theme of uncreation, of a return to the void, of uncreating words, as it includes the issue (which never really arises in the *Dispensary* or in the *Rape of the Lock* or *Le Lutrín*) of full-scale primary epic pretension within a mock-epic form. It is insufficient to describe this in terms of contending opposites or the resolution or tension of contraries, and what I am describing is a vast wheeling indeterminacy in which all alternative possibilities are generously and perversely present much of the time. They include those primary grandeurs whose alleged disappearance is implicit in the mock-form and explicit in the poem's formal narrative. They also reveal in the perverse and the polluted, the ugly and the idiotic, qualities of surreal splendour which are not only appealing to later tastes, schooled

in Modernist or Postmodern subversions or indecorums, but contain attractions to which we sometimes know Pope himself to have been responsive: the sickly feverish splendours of the 'Isles of fragrance, lilly-silver'd vales' (IV. 303), for example, part of his favourite passage in Book IV, or the couplet about barbaric invasions, 'Lo! where Maeotis sleeps, and hardly flows / The freezing Tanais thro' a waste of snows' (III. 87–8), which Johnson said Pope 'declared his own ear to be most gratified' by, in all his works, though Johnson added that *he* couldn't discover 'the reason of this preference'.⁷¹

These things are vivid to all good modern critics. When Maynard Mack remarks on 'the lovely movement and suggestion' of the line 'And the fresh vomit run for ever green' (II. 156), it comes home to us that there is no intelligent way of reading the line which would tell us that the 'movement and suggestion' are neutralised by the word 'vomit', as distinct from, as Mack so studiously puts it, 'stained'.⁷² The famous paragraph in Book I, which closes with the couplet about fragrant chaplets in December, and heavy harvests nodding beneath the snow (I. 77–8), is an anthology of poetic offences every bit as specifically pilloried in the *Art of Sinking in Poetry* as any Chattertonian non-language, and the notes to the passage do their relentless best to crush them under the weight of a captious derision, while readers go on responding stubbornly to what Howard Erskine-Hill has described as 'the unnatural . . . becom[ing] the beautiful' and A. D. Nuttall 'an explosion, not of absurdity, but of wild, lyric joy'.⁷³

What, to ask one of the smaller, less obvious questions, do we then make of the notes, which tell us to dislike what no reader will? 'In the lower Ægypt Rain is of no use, the overflowing of the Nile being sufficient to impregnate the soil. — These six verses represent the Inconsistencies in the Descriptions of poets, who keep together all glittering and gawdy images, though incompatible in one season, or in one scene'. The note is by Scriblerus and goes on to refer to *Guardian*, No. 40, and 'our Treatise of the *Bathos*'.⁷⁴ Is Scriblerus a modern hack

⁷¹*Dunciad*, pp. 372n, 156–7 nn.; Spence, *Observations*, etc., No. 335, I. 150; Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G. Birkbeck Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1905), III. 250.

⁷²Maynard Mack, *Collected in Himself*, p. 51.

⁷³Howard Erskine-Hill, *Pope: The Dunciad* (London, 1972), p. 31; A. D. Nuttall, 'Fishes in Trees', in *The Stoic in Love* (New York, 1989), p. 74.

⁷⁴Pope's note to I. 73; see Pope's essay in *Guardian*, No. 40, 27 April 1713, ed. J. C. Stephens (Lexington, KY, 1982), p. 161; *Peri-Bathous: or, the Art of Sinking in Poetry*, in *Prose Works*, II, ed. Rosemary Cowler (Oxford (Blackwell), 1986), pp. 171ff., esp. ch. V, pp. 191ff. on the 'anti-natural'.

whose views we discount, or his author's punitive voice, or, like Gulliver, sometimes one and sometimes the other, or is he all of the above, impossible to disentangle, not, in a Swiftian way, in order to induce panic from the reader's confusion, but to allow confusion instead to open rather than close possibilities, and become an enhancing or enabling thing, releasing the delights of things asserted to be ugly, because for example the note might partly be read as mocking itself and not the text it's annotating.

The winter blossoming of Pope's 'fragrant chaplets' is the kind of thing which *Peri Bathous* describes as 'anti-natural' and may be compared with that other, almost exactly contemporary, winter blossoming, to which Swift compares the state of Ireland in the *Short View* (1728), falsely alleged to be flourishing: 'If we do flourish, it must be against every Law of Nature and Reason; like the Thorn at *Glassenbury*, that blossoms in the Midst of Winter'.⁷⁵ The passage has an eruptive, melancholy splendour, but none of Nuttall's 'wild, lyric joy'. The pain it expresses neutralises rather than releases a surrender to that splendour, and the idea of 'anti-nature' is one which is made difficult for the reader to negotiate precisely because of its inappropriate festive suggestion of fertility, sharpening the pain and constricting the mood, rather than enlarging the scope of response. In Pope the perverse becomes beautiful, in Swift the beautiful becomes perverse, and where Pope's 'anti-nature' is released in play, Swift's turns in on itself. This occurs here, unusually in Swift's writings, without the negative agency of parodic derision, and does what Pope's negative parodic footnote triumphantly fails to do.

⁷⁵*Peri-Bathous*, V, p. 191-5; Swift, *A Short View of the State of Ireland*, in *Prose Writings*, XII. 10. See my *Henry Fielding and the Augustan Idea Under Stress* (London, 1972), pp. 50-1.



The frontispiece from *Pope Alexander's Supremacy and Infallibility Examined* (1729), an attack responding to Pope's *Dunciad Variorum*, published in that year. By permission of the British Library.