

THE MEANING OF DULLNESS IN POPE'S

DUNCIAD

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by

Allan Sheldon

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INTRODUCTION

Pope first published The Dunciad in 1728. From that time until 1742 it remained with periodic slight alterations an attack in three books of mock-epic on the dullness of the Grub-Street writers, their associates and their book-sellers in London. In 1742 the poet published The New Dunciad, a poem in one book which saw the prophecy of the restoration of Dulness' Empire fulfilled. In 1743 the two Dunciads were incorporated into one four book poem, The Greater Dunciad. In the process the original hero, Lewis Theobald, was replaced by the current poet laureate, Colley Cibber.

This thesis attempts to discover what Alexander Pope meant by dullness in The Dunciad. A knowledge of the meaning of dullness is fundamental to an understanding of the poem. A reading of the poem will probably convince most people that Pope had something very serious on his mind when he attacked dullness, and further reading must show that Pope's vision of dullness was more than a belated critical outburst expressed on paper, if for no other reason than the span of time which separated the original Dunciad of 1728 from the poem as it finally appeared in 1743. Finally, study of the poem within the context of Pope's canon must, as this thesis

will show, reveal that Pope's vision of dullness grew from very early in his life, and is by no means something entirely apart from much of his other poetry.

The question then is absolutely basic, and I make no apology for treating such a subject. The fact is that none of the students of Pope has given an adequate explanation of the problem. All recognize that dullness in Pope's view is very serious indeed, and many nod at this in passing. A typical admission is made by G. Wilson Knight, when he writes, ". . . (Pope's) accusation of 'dullness' goes deeper than you might think, implying, as it does, a lack of mental vitality, and therefore, of all those cosmic contacts on which the Essay on Man insists."¹ James Sutherland quotes Elwin and Courthope: ". . . in the word 'dullness' Pope intended to include 'every sort of rebellion against right reason and good taste.'"² Scholars write such things as "Dullness . . . is the Dunciad counterfeit of death,"³ and ". . . to be a Dunce is to have given up all meaningful ties with ordinary nature, thus ceasing to be human."⁴

¹G. Wilson Knight, Laureate of Peace: On the Genius of Alexander Pope (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 62.

²James Sutherland, ed., Alexander Pope: The Dunciad, Vol. V of The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt, 6 vols. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1939-61), p. xxxvi.

³Arthur W. Hoffman, John Dryden's Imagery (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962), p. 138.

⁴Thomas R. Edwards, Jr., "Light and Nature: A Reading of the Dunciad," Philological Quarterly, 39 (October, 1960), 447-63.

Martinus Scriblerus, whose opinion is certainly important, writes: ". . . the third book, if well consider'd, seemeth to embrace the whole world."¹ All of these passing references to the meaning of dullness are probably true, but none really goes very far towards providing a satisfactory explanation of the nature and operations of dullness.

The thesis approaches the question first through an examination of the "Grub-Street Race" whose dullness was the subject of the original Dunciad of 1728. The problem here is to discover why Pope felt such an antipathy towards the Grub-Street writers, their booksellers and adherents that he felt it necessary to write a long poem about them in which they are condemned for being dull. This also involves an examination of the reasons for the one large alteration Pope made in these first three books when he went on to produce the enlarged four book version of the poem in 1743, that is, the substitution of Colley Cibber for Lewis Theobald as hero of the piece.

The second chapter deals with dullness as it appears in Book IV. In his last book Pope nearly abandons the Grub-Street writers as he widens the range of his satire to include critics, scholars, virtuosi, freethinkers and others he considers dull. We find that the dunces of Book IV are of such importance that they really include the earlier dunces

¹Sutherland, The Dunciad, p. 51.

within the scope of their own dullness. These dunces are educated, some are even among nobility. Their dullness is more serious than the dullness of the Grub-Street writers because they are so much more influential than the latter.

The thesis turns in Chapter III to an examination of the paradoxical qualities of dullness. In it I attempt to show that dullness achieves its remarkable success by seeming to be other than it really is. Dullness is insidious because while it displays superficially attractive qualities its real qualities are all destructive.

The meaning of dullness as we find it in The Dunciad is a concept which had been long maturing in Pope's thought. It is not feasible in this thesis to include a full statement of the growing significance of dullness to Pope. The thesis does suggest that Pope's detestation of dullness as he expresses it in The Dunciad is the natural culmination of a detestation expressed only slightly less vehemently in such earlier work as Epistles to Several Persons.¹ It is implicit throughout the thesis then that The Dunciad is seen as essentially moral poetry.²

¹An abandoned study for this thesis traces Pope's conception of dullness from his "Lines On Dullness," and his early correspondence with Wycherley on the subject, some of it written before the poet was twenty.

²It is unfortunate that critics in the past have been so often preoccupied with trying to fit the poem into a mock-epic formula. Gilbert Highet, in his "Dunciad," [Modern Language Review, 36 (July, 1941), 320-43] bases his disapproval of the poem largely on his discovery that it is not a successful mock-epic as The Rape of the Lock is. One ought to be able to recognize and appreciate the epic elements used without feeling the need to try to force the poem into a mould which was never meant to fit. The Dunciad is more the successor to all of Pope's moral poetry than it is to his one mock-epic.

CHAPTER I

THE GRUB-STREET RACE

The identity of Pope's dunces has been a subject of diligent enquiry from the first appearance of the earliest Dunciad in 1728. By that time Pope was quite accustomed to the efforts of the curious and the scandal-mongers to unearth the real identity of the persons not identified in the poems. He had set himself a very difficult problem in attempting to satirize manners generally while steadfastly maintaining that satire to be effective had to be largely personal.¹ His changing tactics in the Epistles to Several Persons are a record of his struggle with the problem of how to write general satire without being charged with personal libel. In the epistle To Burlington the character of Timon was immediately taken to be the Duke of Chandos. This caused Pope real anguish, and his plaint in a letter signed with the initials of his literary ghost, William Cleland, reflects his distress. "Why in God's Name, must a Portrait, apparently collected from 20 different Men, be apply'd to one only?"²

¹George Sherburn, ed., The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956). (William Cleland) to Gay, 16 December, 1731, III, 255. Pope (in the guise of Cleland) wrote, ". . . nothing can be Just that is not Personal."

²Ibid., III, 254-7.

The author made the same point in a letter to Burlington on December 21,¹ and wrote also to Chandos to express his regret.²

If a poet cannot safely use arbitrarily made-up names for the targets of his satire, he has recourse to real names, initials, names which bear some resemblance to their originals, or names of classical figures whose characters or actions parallel their modern equivalents. Pope was so angered by the Chandos affair that he prefixed a letter to the third edition To Burlington in which he said, ". . . as the only certain way to avoid Misconstruction, to lessen Offence, and not to multiply ill-natur'd Applications, I may probably in my next make use of Real Names and not of Fictitious Ones."³

When he came to write his "next," the epistle To Bathurst, Pope did use real names for about half of his characters. He could not, however, escape from the very real predicament that to satirize very important people (such as members of the House of Lords) a poet dare not use real names.

¹Ibid., III, 259.

²This letter written on December 22, 1731, has not survived. Chandos' reply is printed in Correspondence III, pp. 262-63.

³F. W. Bateson, ed., Alexander Pope: Epistles to Several Persons (Moral Essays), Vol. III ii of The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. by John Butt, 6 vols. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939-61), p. 128.

So the difficulty went on, and so the literary detectives are kept busy right to this day.¹ Throughout his life Pope repeatedly made the point that he was satirizing kinds of people, not individuals, but it is clear that to do so individuals were often the most suitable means to the end. Thus when we meet Colley Cibber in The Dunciad we must be careful to remember that he is not just the poet laureate and man about the London stage; he is a man who embodies a certain set of deplorable qualities; he is the archetypal Cibberian, and as such he is something far beyond a mere Colley Cibber. Cibber in this sense it must be remembered is the son of the Goddess Dulness, who is herself daughter of Chaos and Night.

Almost every dunce has been traced to an original figure, and while there is value in this exercise from the standpoint of literary history and as a means of assessing the range of Pope's antipathies, the real interest lies in the kinds of dunces included in The Dunciad. Indeed, no definition of dullness is possible without an understanding of the types of dunces who contribute to the spread of dullness over the land. Further, having seen who the dunces are,

¹It is generally accepted now that Cannons, the Duke of Chandos' estate, was not Timon's Villa; however, a recent study, "Timon's Villa: Walpole's Houghton," by Kathleen Mahaffey, takes the hunt off in another direction. Texas Studies in Literature and Language, IX (Summer, 1967), 193-222.

it is necessary to see why Pope includes them among the dull. Why, for instance, is the horticulturist dull who develops a new strain of carnation? Does this mean that all horticulturists are dull? Does it mean that no one ought to develop new strains of carnations, or of anything else that grows? This man is a virtuoso. Are all virtuosi dull? These are among the questions we must answer to get at what Pope means by dullness.

From some of his earliest writings to the end of his career Pope shows a concern about people who try to be what they are not. Soon after he had moved to Windsor Forest Pope wrote to Wycherley, "We see nothing more commonly, than Men, who for the sake of the circumstantial Part, and meer outside of Life, have been half their Days rambling out of their Nature, and ought to be sent into Solitude to study themselves over again."¹ In 1712 he wrote to Steele, "Some men like some pictures, are fitter for a corner than a full light; and I believe such as have a natural bent to solitude . . . are like waters which may be forc'd into fountains and exalted to a great height, may make a noble figure and a louder noise, but after all they would run more smoothly, quietly and plentifully, in their own natural course upon the ground."²

¹Correspondence I, p. 11. Pope to Wycherley, 26 October, 1705.

²Correspondence I, p. 147. Pope to Steele, 18 June, 1712.

There are two important things to notice here. One is that men should not try to be other than they are. The other is that Pope seems to have no objection to a man being dull (in the common meaning of the term) so long as that is what he is. In the earlier letter Pope made the distinction to Wycherley between "Town-Wits" and "Country Fools," the latter of which are "most in the Right, who quietly and easily resign themselves over to the gentle Reign of Dulness . . . (who) enjoy a jovial Sort of Dulness."¹ If a man is naturally dull, then let him be true to his nature. If he tries to be something else, his dullness is not diminished; rather it is magnified into something grossly unnatural. This distinction between the common or garden variety of dullness, and the corrupt unnatural Cibberian variety is one that runs through much of Pope's correspondence and moral poetry. We are concerned only with the latter kind of dullness in this study.

The earliest important dunce is Theobald, the first hero of The Dunciad. Theobald was, and, in the poet's opinion, should have remained, an attorney. Theobald instead had become an author of plays, pantomimes, essays, poems and translations. Probably what most irked Pope about Theobald at the time of The Dunciad was that he had answered Pope's poor edition of Shakespeare with his Shakespeare Restored, a work which showed up the weaknesses in Pope's treatment of

¹Ibid., p. 11. Pope to Wycherley, 26 October, 1705.

Shakespeare. However, Theobald had been on Pope's mind earlier. In the Peri Bathous of March, 1728, Theobald was included in two categories of "Geniuses in the Profound," the Swallows, and the Eels, the former of whom are "authors that are eternally skimming and fluttering up and down, but all their agility is employed to catch flies," and the latter, "obscure authors, that wrap themselves up in their own mud, but are mighty nimble and pert."¹ In "A Fragment of a Satire," which appeared in the same volume of Miscellanies as the Peri Bathous, there is a reference to "piddling T____s," word-catchers, who live on syllables.² "Piddling" is Pope's favourite epithet for Theobald, the eighteenth century pronunciation of which was commonly Tibbald. The association with ribald is one which Pope would not have his readers miss.

Theobald as author "flounder(s)" among his books looking for material. Unfortunately his books are either by forgotten authors, such as Ogilby or the Duchess of Newcastle, or they are the "Classicks of an Age that heard of none," the "Gothic" books of Caxton and Wynkin. The true classics are absent from his library. Theobald addresses the Goddess Dulness on the subject of his own nit-picking scholarship:

¹William K. Wimsatt, Jr., ed., Alexander Pope: Selected Poetry and Prose (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1951), p. 319-20.

²Sutherland, The Dunciad, Biographical Appendix, p. 456.

Here studious I unlucky moderns save,
 Nor sleeps one error in its father's grave,
 Old puns restore, lost blunders nicely seek,
 And crucify poor Shakespeare once a week.
 For thee I dim these eyes, and stuff this head,
 With all such reading as was never read;
 For thee supplying, in the worst of days,
 Notes to dull books, and prologues to dull plays:
 For thee explain a thing till all men doubt it,
 And write about it, Goddess, and about it.¹

Theobald is a dunce because in all of his preoccupation with scholarship and authorship it never occurs to him to go quietly on being an attorney:

But what Can I? My Flaccus cast aside
 Take up th'Attorney's (once my better) Guide?
 (A, I, 189-90)

There is more to Theobald's dullness than this. He had to be dull on several counts or Pope would not have selected him as the hero of the 1728 Dunciad. Besides being an attorney who aspired to something else he was a dull author, one of that mob of scribblers who invaded the world of English letters in a day when the distinction between reading matter and literature had not yet been made.²

¹Alexander Pope, The Dunciad, vol. V of The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt, 6 vols. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1939-61), Dunciad A, I lines 161-70.

All quotations from Pope's poetry are taken from the Twickenham edition. Future references will give titles and line numbers only, except Dunciad quotations for which "A" refers to the 1729 Dunciad Variorum, "B" to the 1743 Greater Dunciad.

²Professor Sutherland discusses this point in his introduction to the Twickenham Dunciad, p. xlv.

To Pope the very preservation of the language, to say nothing of the maintenance of cultural--and therefore moral--health, depended on the functioning of a body of writers whose lives were devoted to the knowledge requisite to their craft.¹ All others were a threat to literature. Theobald was also a scrupulously meticulous scholar whose study in Pope's view led him ever farther and farther from the true significance of literature. In a long note on this aspect of his dullness Pope parodies what he regards as Theobald's pedantic Shakespearian scholarship in a commentary on Double Falsehood, a play by Theobald.² In the 1742 Dunciad Theobald is replaced by Cibber, but Theobald has not been excused. His Shakespeare now is one of the sources from which Cibber steals ideas and expressions.

There hapless Shakespear, yet of Tibbald sore,
Wish'd he had blotted for himself before.

(B I, 133-4)

¹The fear that Pope felt for the future of literature in the hands of dunces is indicated in his note on James Ralph: "He was wholly illiterate, and knew no Language not even French: Being advised to read the Rules of Dramatick Poetry before he began a play, he smiled and reply'd, Shakespear writ without Rules. He ended at last in the common Sink of all such writers, a Political News-paper . . ." (A II, 159n.) A writer who knows "no Language," i.e. neither Latin nor Greek, is a threat to Civilization.

²Dunciad A, p. 181-2n.

In The Dunciad of 1742 Warburton is explicit about the faults of the "Grub-Street race." In a note to Pope's lines on the cell of poverty and poetry he writes

. . .there cannot be a plainer indication of madness than in men's persisting to starve themselves and offend the public by scribbling,

Escape in Monsters, and amaze the town.

when they might have benefited themselves and others in profitable and honest employments . . .

(B I, p. 27ln.)

To be obstinate in the pursuit of a particular activity rather than to be satisfied with one's proper vocation is not merely to be dull; it is to be mad. Dullness and madness in this respect are very nearly synonymous as Warburton points out in the same note. From this cell or academy

. . . Miscellanies spring, the weekly boast
Of Curl's chaste press, and Lintot's rubric post:
Hence hymning Tyburn's elegiac lines,
Hence Journals, Medleys, Merc'ries, Magazines:
Sepulchral Lyes, our holy walls to grace,
And New-Year Odes, and all the Grub-street race.

(B I, 39-44)

. . . The Qualities and Productions of the students of this private Academy are afterwards described in this first book; as are also their Actions throughout the second; by which it appears, how near allied Dulness is to Madness . . .

(B I, p. 27ln.)

The same point is made at the opening of Book IV, when the fulfilment of the prophecy is presaged by an eclipse of the sun:

Sick was the Sun, the Owl forsook his bow'r
The moon-struck Prophet felt the madding hour.

(B IV, 11-12)

The moon becomes predominant during this eclipse, which occurs at "the very time when Dulness and Madness are in Conjunction." (B, p. 340n.)

The note, of course, is Warburton's, not Pope's. But the assessment is accurate. The cave of poetry and poverty is situated "close to those walls where Folly holds her throne," (I, 29) "where o'er the gates, by his fam'd father's hand / Great Cibber's brazen, brainless brothers stand." (I, 31-2) It is in other words situated near Bedlam Hospital. Cibber's "brazen, brainless brothers" are the two statues of madness carved for that hospital by Colley Cibber's father. From there ". . . Bards, like Proteus long in vain ty'd down, / Escape in Monsters . . ." (I, 37-8). There is little doubt about the madness of the Grub-Street scribblers. In the chaotic seething abundance of nonsense the poet suggests madness within the cave. The juxtaposition of this scene with the neighbouring Bedlam reinforces the idea of madness. The difference is implied: in the cave of poetry and poverty madness is unconfined. Dulness looks into this scene which is "Chaos," (55) "where nameless Somethings in their causes sleep." (56) She observes the teeming mass from which "new-born nonsense" is given birth. She is "pleas'd with the madness of the mazy dance" (68). The general description of what she sees culminates in the raging of "all the mighty Mad in Dennis." (106) She finds her "Image full exprest" (107) in Cibber's "monster-breeding

breast" (108). He sits, trying to write, "Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound! / Plung'd for his sense, but found no bottom there" (118-19). "Nonsense precipitate . . . slip'd thro' Cracks and Zig-zags of the Head" (124). All of his nonsense was begotten "on Folly" by "Frenzy" (125). As he prepares the sacrifice of his works to Dulness he prays

. . . if to Wit a coxcomb make pretence,
Guard the sure barrier between that and Sense;
Or quite unravel all the reas'ning thread,
And hang some curious cobweb in its stead!

(B I, 177-80)

Cibber is a "Coxcomb," (110) he does make a pretence to wit, but he prays that Dulness will not allow his "wit" to become sense, and will "unravel" whatever "reas'ning thread" might appear, replacing it with an airy cobweb of nonsense.

What then remains? Ourselves, Still, still remain
Cibberian forehead, and Cibberian brain.
This brazen Brightness, to the Squire so dear;
This polish'd Hardness, that reflects the Peer;
This arch Absurd, that wit and fool delights;
This Mess, toss'd up of Hockley-hole and White's;
Where Dukes and Butchers join to wreath my crown,
At once the Bear and Fiddle of the town.

(B I, 217-24)

In "brazen Brightness" and "polish'd hardness" he is neatly associated with his "brazen, brainless brothers," the Bedlam statues of "Raving Madness" and "Melancholy Madness" (B, I, p. 271n.)¹

¹For a recent study on aspects of insanity in The Dunciad see David B. Morris, "The Kinship of Madness in Pope's Dunciad," Philological Quarterly 51, No. 4, (October, 1972), 313-31.

The accusations made against Theobald are adapted to fit Cibber, a man whose father had intended to educate him for the church. According to Pope's note, Cibber believed that he had missed his calling by a month because one month before he entered university, the powers that were had not yet decided between King James and the Prince of Orange. Had King James been restored, of course, there would have been no career for a minister of the Church of England.¹ Hence, Pope's lines,

What can I now? my Fletcher cast aside,
Take up the Bible, once my better guide?

(B I, 199-200)

The earlier lines about his books,

There, sav'd by spice, like Mummius, many a year,
Dry bodies of Divinity appear.

(B I, 151-52)

indicate that what Cibber ought to be concentrating on has been put aside and forgotten.

Cibber, then, like Theobald, belongs in the ranks of those who are dunces because they try to be what they cannot be. In Cibber's case this was acting, writing plays, pamphlets, and, as Poet Laureate, "New-year Odes," when he ought presumably to have accepted the quiet unassuming life of an Anglican parson. What we need to understand beyond this, then, is why Theobald was allowed to step down, and why Cibber achieved the signal honour of reigning forever as King of the

¹Dunciad B, I, p. 284n.

Dunces.

A major premise of Pope is that art is of great value to society, and that a poet has as much social value as a statesman:

Of little use the Man you may suppose,
Who sings in verse what others say in prose;
Yet let me show, a Poet's of some weight,
And (tho' no Soldier) useful to the State.
(Imitations of Horace, Ep. II,
i, 201-204)

Cibber, of course, was a notoriously bad poet, but he was also for years in charge of the theatre at Drury Lane. He was also chief reader, and no play was likely to be produced there unless he gave it his approval. If Pope is right that poetry, (and elsewhere he suggests the same of drama), is of social value to a nation then a man of Cibber's abilities is an anti-social menace.

In his dissertation, "Cibber's Crown of Dulness: A Re-Examination of the Pope-Cibber Controversy," Charles D. Peavey shows that Cibber in his influential position in the theatre was overtly partial to Whig dramatists, and was at all times outspokenly anti-Roman Catholic. More significantly, though, he notes that "If any single action of Cibber's can be pointed to as instigating Pope's ultimate crowning of him as the Prince of Dulness it must be his authorship of The Nonjuror."¹

¹Charles D. Peavey, "Cibber's Crown of Dulness; A Re-Examination of the Pope-Cibber Controversy (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1963), p. 21.

That play is entirely Whig and Protestant in its sympathy, and it is violently anti-Roman Catholic. It is dedicated to a Hanoverian king, who rewarded Cibber with a cash grant for it, and he received political favours of the nobility after its production. Cibber himself is said to have given sole credit to The Nonjuror for gaining him the laureateship.¹

Pope's objections to The Nonjuror were not merely personal, although he had good reason to object on those grounds. He objected to it on artistic grounds. In The Plot Discovered, or, a Clue to the Comedy of The Nonjuror, Pope complains of the language of the play. "Cibber, he says, 'puts bad English into the mouths of most of his personages, so that indeed scarce any of 'em talk at all like English folks, but perpetually make use of an uncorrect foreign jargon.'"² He seems to have seen in this play by Cibber what ultimately becomes his greatest concern--the disintegration of the moral and cultural fibre of England. The play is symptomatic of this disintegration not only in itself, but in its reception. Peavey writes,

Not only was the play tremendously popular with the public, but it immediately won Cibber friends in the government, a cash grant from the king, and an invitation to play before the royal family at Hampton Court. To Pope this was indicative of corruption and degeneracy in the very circle that should have been upholding the artistic and moral values of the nation.³

¹Ibid.

²Quoted in Ibid., p. 22°

³Ibid., p. 35.

Here I think Peavey puts his finger on the source of the Cibberian dullness. Far more than Theobald, Cibber was in a position to influence standards of taste. Theobald, for reasons I have already mentioned, was dull, but in no large way was he ever a real threat to society's values; and, in fact, in the realm of Shakespearian editing from which his reputation derives he was at the head of the field. Merely in choosing Cibber to replace Theobald as hero Pope was taking a major step in his condemnation of those whom I shall call the Greater Dunces.

It is at the close of Book II after the mad heroic games are ended that we see folly laid to rest. Folly is laid to rest, of course, by the lengthy intoning of "H____ley's periods" and "Blackmore's numbers" (II, 370). Several of the Grub-Street writers of various kinds are mentioned, and it is suggested that in the death of their folly can be seen their natural state.

At last Gentlivre felt her voice to fail,
 Motteux himself unfinish'd left his tale,
 Boyer the State, and Law the Stage gave o'er,
 Morgan and Mandevil could prate no more;
 Norton, from Daniel and Ostroea sprung,
 Bless'd with his father's front, and mother's tongue,
 Hung silent down his never-blushing head;
 And all was hush'd, as Folly's self lay dead.
 Thus the soft gifts of Sleep conclude the day,
 And stretch'd on bulks, as usual, Poets lay.
 Why should I sing what bards the nightly Muse
 Did slumb'ring visit, and convey to stews;
 Who prouder march'd, with magistrates in state,
 To some fam'd round-house, ever open gate!
 How Henley lay inspir'd beside a sink,

And to mere mortals seem'd a Priest in drink:
While others, timely, to the neighb'ring Fleet
(Haunt of the Muses) made their safe retreat.

(B II, 411-28)¹

The Argument to Book III begins, "After the other persons are disposed in their proper places of rest the Goddess transports the King to her temple . . ." (B, p. 319). This statement clarifies the insinuation at the end of Book II that when the noisy mob of dull writers, critics and publishers is lulled to sleep and "Folly's self lay dead," their true vocations can be seen. Their "proper places of rest" are not very pleasant; sleeping on bulks, visiting the stews or roundhouses, lying dead drunk in the gutters or seeking the sanctuary called the Liberty of the Fleet as this was one place where a person was immune to arrest for indebtedness. The significant point to note here is that Pope is not interested in satirizing people who visit prostitutes, who drink to excess, who cannot afford lodgings, who are escaping arrest. He is concerned with satirizing people whose natural inclination is to this kind of life, but

¹Pat Rogers argues convincingly the importance of London topography as a symbolic framework for the work of Pope and other eighteenth century satirists:

"(A) rhetorical stratagem is to insinuate that literary vice, because it is practised in the same dingy quarters as social wrongdoing, is directly equivalent. Everyone knows the famous couplet about Lady Mary, in the Horatian satire addressed to Fortescue:

From furious Sappho scarce a milder Fate,
P___x'd by her Love, or libell'd by her Hate . . .

What The Dunciad shows is that you got yourself libelled in just the same districts as you got yourself poked."
Pat Rogers, Grub Street: Studies in a Subculture (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 12.

who are determined at the same time to clutter up (and damage) the world of literature. These people, who are the enemies of literature, would be dull no matter what they were doing, but in combining their ordinary dullness with pretensions to literary ability they are elevating harmless dullness to the devastating Cibberian variety. Scriblerus warns the readers of both the 1728 and the 1742 Dunciad after the prophecy of the dunces' destructiveness in Book III:

It may perhaps seem incredible, that so great a Revolution in Learning as is here prophesied, should be brought about by such weak Instruments as have been described in our poem: But do not thou, gentle reader, rest too secure in thy contempt of these Instruments. Remember what Dutch stories somewhere relate, that a great part of their Provinces was once overflow'd by a small opening made in one of their dykes by a single Water-Rat.

(B, p. 336n. A, p. 192n.)

The warning is there for all to read. To allow the dunces access to the learning, arts and letters of a civilized nation is like allowing the water rats access to the dikes of Holland. It is to inundate the nation and thereby lose all that has been gained. If the analogy can be stretched a little, a water rat is harmless so long as he keeps to his water rat business, but when he interferes in the world

The ramifications for literature of the very location of Grub Street should not be underestimated. It is the breeding ground of dullness, and nothing good can come from it. In this respect the Rogers book is essential reading.

of man's works he becomes a destructive force out of all proportion to his size. Similarly a dunce, when he aspires to literary endeavours is capable of darkening all enlightenment.

The dunces of the 1728 Dunciad are all meddlers in the world of polite letters; writers of inferior prose, party hacks, playwrights, and poets with neither ideas nor technique. Along with these go their accessories, the Curlls and Lintots, who, by paying for and printing the dunces' nonsense acquire an equal share of the blame. The attacks on Pope after the appearance of this poem were numerous and fierce.¹ This reaction can hardly have surprised Pope, who, after all, had written the poem in the first place in reaction to even earlier attacks. The dunces he had treated so scathingly in The Dunciad were the very ones who had it most in their power to reply. They were writers, however bad, and they had publishers who had nothing to lose, and everything to gain by controversy (discounting reputation, which does not appear to have entered much into the affair). The world, however, was not populated entirely by literary dunces. The Goddess had other sons as well. Thus the schools and the teachers, the "grand tour" and other paraphernalia of education came into the satirist's scope. The schools may have been a reminder of disciplines other than the literary

¹See Sutherland's Introduction to The Dunciad, Vol V of the Twickenham edition, p. xxii ff.

kind. It must have been obvious that just clearing away the Grub-Street kind of dunces would not solve the whole problem. The world would still be populated with other dunces of other kinds. When Pope's ammunition was ready he published The New Dunciad in 1742.

Some of the concerns Pope evidenced in his New Dunciad were by no means new to him. He had years earlier recorded his intention to include a study of education in his "Magnum Opus," an extended version of the Essay on Man, and some of the lines once intended for that poem found their way instead into The New Dunciad.¹ I do not wish to oversimplify the means by which Pope came to expand his vision of the world of dullness between 1728 and 1742. I have only suggested in the briefest way some idea of the kind of growth which took place, with some indication of the lengthy care and preparation that went into it. What is important is that in 1742 the world of dullness opened out into a vast new creation with ramifications far beyond the narrow confines of the literary world of London.

Before we look at the kinds of dunces which occupy the New Dunciad (or, as it soon became, Book IV of The Greater Dunciad), we should refer to some of Pope's letters written during the last few years of his life. Several letters

¹Twickenham, III, ii, p. xviii ff.

during the period from 1742 to his death make reference to a "Greater World" or "the Great ones" of the world. It is fairly clear from the context of Pope's correspondence that the "Great" are aristocrats in general, especially those with political power. In a chapter entitled "Mighty Opposites" Maynard Mack discusses the term, and especially makes clear that the one "Great" most detested by Pope was Sir Robert Walpole.¹ Most of his letters at this time are concerned with the forthcoming publication of The New Dunciad, and its probable reception by people satirized in it. There is in this correspondence clear evidence that Pope was resigned to the fact that however angry they could be made, dunces were not likely to be reformed.²

¹Maynard Mack, The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope 1731-43 (London: Oxford, 1970).

²Pope best expressed himself on this point in a letter to Dr. Arbuthnot written in 1734:

I would indeed (manifest my disdain and abhorrence of Vice in my writings) with more restrictions, and less personally; it is more agreeable to my nature, which those who know it are not greatly mistaken in. But general satire in times of general vice has no force and is no punishment: people have ceased to be ashamed of it when so many are joined with them; and it is only by hunting one or two from the herd that any examples can be made. If a man writ all his life against the collective body of the banditti, or against lawyers, would it do the least good, or lessen the body? But if some are hung up, or pilloried, it may prevent others. And in my low station, with no other power than this, I hope to deter, if not to reform.

(Imitations of Horace, p. 313n.)

His resignation is almost petulantly expressed in a letter to Ralph Allen. "Once more I tell you, I am sick of this World & the Great ones of it . . ."¹ In January he wrote to the Earl of Orrery, "I have lost all Ardor and Appetite, even for Satyr, for no body has Shame enough left to be afraid of Reproach, or punish'd by it . . ." ² Pope goes on to cite Cibber as an example of what he means, for Cibber, far from being chastened, had just then published a self-glorifying book of Confessions. We must not get the idea that Pope's resignation meant his giving up the struggle entirely. During the months of these letters he was polishing first The New Dunciad, and then The Greater Dunciad, which in a sense as we shall see express if not the resignation at least the reasons for it. In a fine letter to the Duchess of Marlborough, Pope took metaphorical insect wings to inform the duchess

. . .When I can arrive in London I will endeavour to set up my Rest there against Winter, and constantly keep my Hive, tho not an Assembly, for I hate a Buzz and I will drive out Drones. I don't call those that sleep, so, but those that go droning about, & do nothing, no sort of good at least, tho they look bigger than the rest of their Species, and only plunder the Flowers without making Honey, and rob others who can make it. But I'll say no more of these Great Ones. God³ hates them, & you hate them, and that's sufficient.

¹Correspondence, IV, p. 431. Pope to Allen, 8 December, 1742.

²Ibid, p. 437. Pope to Earl of Orrery, 13 January, 1742/3.

³Ibid., p. 465. Pope to Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, 6 August, 1743.

In this letter Pope is equating "Drones" with "Great Ones."

(It would be wrong to claim that Pope considered every powerful aristocrat a "Drone.") In his Dunciad the poet sees dunces as drones when he writes

None want a place, for all their Centre found,
Hung to the Goddess, and coher'd around.
Not closer, orb in orb, conglob'd are seen
The buzzing Bees about their dusky Queen.

(B IV, 77-80)

The Greater Dunciad was then finished and would make its appearance in about two months, on October 29.¹ It is as clear here as it is in the Scriblerus note about the water rat in Holland that a dunce is in no way harmful so long as he confines himself to his natural vocation. The harm in the drones is in the disproportion between their size and noise and their usefulness. They are bigger, noisier, and more active than others of their species. They "plunder the Flowers" and rob from those who can make "Money," thus negatively spreading want. In the world of men, which is usually the world Pope is writing about, the dunces' frenzied activity creates unproductive confusion in which culture cannot survive. This is as we shall see part of the very essence of their destructiveness. That these "Drones" are nothing less than morally evil is as explicit in the letter as it is in the poem. "God hates them . . . and

¹All of the letters referred to--to Allen, Orrery, and the Duchess of Marlborough--were written during the period when the New Dunciad was being incorporated into the Greater Dunciad. It would be difficult to prove, but I think

that's sufficient."

The first three books as they appear in the Dunciad of 1729 are concerned with cultural destruction on a relatively narrow scale. The damage done to Britain's literature is a serious matter, but it is implicit in the poem that the other arts and attributes of culture are not greatly affected. Nor does the destruction of literary values extend on a broad scale far into past history. Though they may presently be overlooked the true classics and even the significant works of Britain's own past writers are still there. There is in other words some hope for an eventual recapture of standards in literary taste.

The 1729 Dunciad was written during the years of Pope's "middle" period and belongs chronologically with the Epistles to Several Persons which followed during the next few years. What is perhaps more obvious in the Epistles than in The Dunciad is Pope's positive belief in the ability of a body of alert artists (and aristocrats) to reconstitute the arts, to cure them of their present maladies. Beside his indictment of false taste and the misuse of wealth Pope sets his exemplae, Burlington, Bathurst, Cobham, Miss Blount and good men of modest means such as the Man of Ross. The arts are in danger, beset from every direction by dunces,

entirely possible nevertheless, that in his frequent references to "Great Ones," "Greater World" etc. Pope is pointing a finger directly at the inhabitants of his Greater Dunciad.

but there are still those capable of rescuing them. By 1743 Pope's optimism on this point had almost totally disappeared.

CHAPTER II

THE GREATER DUNCES

In the fourth book Pope seems much less interested in any element of personal satire than in the first three. He has had his day with the Grub-Street scribblers, who were named perhaps because being such a motley crew they were less capable of inclusion in any grand metaphorical scheme. Strategically, coming after so many real names, the use of manufactured names sets up an apparent equivalence; a Paridel now is no less nor any more real than a Hackmore. In Book IV Aristarchus, who was certainly Dr. Richard Bentley, is immediately identifiable as a real individual,¹ but even he is used primarily only as a symbol of the scholar's characteristic that

The critic Eye, that microscope of Wit,
Sees hairs and pores, examines bit by bit.

(B IV, 233-4)

Other dunces in Book IV have been tracked down by literary detectives, but that has not been Pope's fault. People like Annus, Mummius, Pollio, Paridel and all the rest might very well be modelled upon individuals, but there is little

¹Real names such as Kuster, Burman and Wasse and some of the free-thinkers and theologians of the time are used only in passing, but are never treated extensively as are Theobald, Cibber, Blackmore and many others in the first three books, or the "fictitious" dunces of this.

evidence that Pope was primarily concerned with criticism of particular persons. The dunces of Book IV, indeed, are perhaps the best instances in Pope's work that the personal element can be held in the background without detracting from the force of the satire. The personal element is there, of course, but the reader does not necessarily have to concern himself with it.¹ The identities of Montalto and the "Spectre" are known, and those of Paridel, Annius, Mummius etc. are now established though with less certainty. "Nothing can be Just that is not Personal."² If some are "real", then are not all of them "real"? Of course they are, and in a sense which is much more essential than their nominal identity.

The fourth book opens upon a scene of cosmic madness, an appropriate foreboding of the universal darkness to follow. The sun is in eclipse, the moon predominates, a situation which prevails, as Warburton points out in his note to line 11, when "Dulness and Madness are in Conjunction." Into this

¹David Morris argues, perhaps too dramatically, that Pope intended the passage of time to blur the identities in the poem as time darkens the pigmentation of a painting: "He intended that a poem celebrating dunces should reach us in the condition of a Gothic ruin, full of dark corners and mysterious passages." David B. Morris, "The Kinship of Madness in Pope's *Dunciad*," Philological Quarterly 51, No. 4 (October, 1972): 813-31.

²When the personal is entirely lacking--as in the carnation grower, the butterfly collector and the French chef--the satire operates in a rather different way as we shall notice presently.

Then rose the Seed of Chaos, and of Night,
To blot out Order, and extinguish Light.

(B IV, 13-14)

The Goddess Dulness, "Seed of Chaos and of Night," mounts her throne to receive her dunces. Her head is suitably hidden in clouds, and at her feet are her servile subjects: Science, Wit, Logic, Rhetoric, Morality and the nine Muses, all in chains, and on the point of death. Only mathematics, "Mad Mathesis," being too mad to bind, and History, which goes free to promise "vengeance on a barb'rous age," are unconfined.

The "Harlot form" which personifies Italian opera, is the first dunce to appear. Her "mincing step, small voice, and languid eye" are evidence of the effeminate affectation which was believed characteristic of Italian opera. Her "patch-work" garment indicates the indiscriminate putting together of diverse elements, the mixing of genres, which was such anathema to all of the great Augustans. She speaks in "quaint Recitativo," neither speech nor song, neither nature nor art, but a bastardized something in between. "Joy to great Chaos! let Division reign," she cries, and "Chromatic tortures soon shall drive them hence." "Division" and "Chromatic" allude to various means by which the harmony fails to follow the sense, as when one syllable is broken into several notes. However minimal Pope's understanding of music

may have been he uses Opera here in a typically Augustan English way.¹ Her function has already been announced; to prepare for Dulness

the way,
The sure fore-runner of her gentle sway.

(B III, 301-2)

The dullness of Opera is not primarily in the form itself. Dulness propagates and spreads over the land. Opera appears "by singing Peers up-held on either hand" (49); that is, the most important men in England are cavorting shamelessly with her. The implication is that when men of the highest rank fall prey to vice and folly others can only follow the

¹The Scriberus/Pope/Warburton note to line 61, supports this view with a quotation from Bouhours, translated by Oldmixon. See also Spectator, No. 314, which was not written by Addison as mentioned in n. 60, p. 347, but by Steele. Steele's objections to Italian opera concern the ridiculous action: ("the graceful Manner" with which Nicolini put the lion to death in Hydaspes), the foppish foreign custom of calling "encore," and the fact that the operas are sung not in English. Dr. Charles Burney in his A General History of Music, generally prizes good music of whatever kind, but quotes from Cibber, Steele and other eighteenth century writers showing in what contempt Italian opera was frequently held at the time. Charles Burney, A General History of Music From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period (1789), vol. 2, 1784 (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1957), pp. 654ff.

example set for them.¹ In this and in her effect on the church Opera is immoral. She will "wake the dull Church," or, as Warburton points out, "dissipate the devotion. . . by recitative and song-song " (58n., p. 347). We are reminded of the music in Timon's chapel;

Light quirks of Musick, broken and uneven,
Make the soul dance upon a Jig to Heaven.
(Epistle to Burlington," 143-4)

Opera introduces the mob of dunces who are drawn inexorably to Dulness. The next individual dunce to appear, however, is Montalto. Unlike Opera, who is "a Harlot form soft sliding by," "There mov'd Montalto with superior air " (105). Montalto typifies the pompous editor; he is carrying his pretentious critical edition of Shakespeare as an offering to Dulness. He is pushed aside, however, by "bold Benson . . . propt" on the unequal crutches of his critical productions, an edition of Milton, and one of Johnston's Psalms. The two scholars in their mutual antipathy show the extent to which pride in minute criticism leads to dullness. Dulness herself praises their efforts devastatingly:

¹Pope's view of the ideal function of a nobleman is perhaps best summed up in his epitaph "On Charles Earl of Dorset," which stands in glaring contrast to his description of the foppish "singing Peers:"

"Dorset, the grace of courts, the Muse's pride,
Patron of arts, and judge of nature, died:
The scourge of pride, though sanctified or great,
Of fops in learning, and of knaves in state."

Pope, in much of his writing, shows a pressing concern about the breakdown in standards, which is often exemplified by him in the nobility cavorting about at the entertainments meant for the masses. Note these lines from Imitations of Horace, Ep. II, i, 310-11) :

"What dear delight to Britons Farce affords!
Ever the taste of Mobs, but now of Lords."

And you, my Critics! in the chequer'd shade,
 Admire new light thro' holes yourselves have made.
 (B IV, 125-6)

Foppish dunces, each "eager to present the first Address" (136) next crowd around the goddess, but all stand back when the "Spectre" of the cruel headmaster of Westminster School arises. Of great consequence to Dulness is the pedagogy of the man.

. . . "Since Man from beast by Words is known,
 Words are Man's province, Words we teach alone.
 When Reason doubtful, like the Samian letter,
 Points him two ways, the narrower is the better.
 Plac'd at the door of Learning, youth to guide,
 We never suffer it to stand too wide.
 To ask, to guess, to know, as they commence,
 As Fancy opens the quick springs of Sense,
 We ply the Memory, we load the brain,
 Bind rebel Wit, and double chain on chain,
 Confine the thought, to exercise the breath;
 And keep them in the pale of Words till death.
 Whate'er the talents, or howe'er design'd,
 We hang one jingling padlock on the mind:

(B IV, 149-62)

Thus the pupils at Westminster School, one of the nation's most influential, are headed in Dulness' right direction, bereft of imagination, thought, reason, and wit; slaves to words, memory and the narrow way. Their destination is "yonder House or Hall," that is, Westminster Hall and the House of Commons. It is no wonder that the peers of the land end up in the company of their inferiors at such low distractions as farce and opera. They are raised to it, educated to that end in the very colleges of dullness. The headmasters and academics who do such a commendable job of raising

boys in the image of their goddess are eligible for Dulness'
praise so long as they

Teach but ~~that~~ one, sufficient for a King:
That which my Priests, and mine alone, maintain,
Which as it dies, or lives, we fall, or reign:
May you, may Cam, and Isis preach it long!
'The RIGHT DIVINE of Kings to govern wrong.'

(B IV, 184-88)

This call brings forth a vast throng of university professors, all arguing the means by which they can support the reign of Dulness. Foremost among them is Bentley, "that awful Aristarch," notorious for his edition of Milton's Paradise Lost in which he relegated "between two Hooks" those passages he believed had been "foisted in" by Milton's "editor," rather than written by the poet himself.¹ Pope sees "Aristarchus" as the leader of a band of minute critics who pick and dissect, "examine bit by bit," but will never be capable of seeing the wholeness of any subject until "Man's whole frame is obvious to a flea." If Aristarchus himself is willing to be involved in

Disputes of Me or Te, of aut or at,
To sound or sink in cano, O or A,
Or give up Cicero to C or K,

(B IV, 220-2)

his followers are apt to see the disputes as an end rather than a means. If he finds worth in the obscurities of Manilius, Solinus or Suidas, then they are apt to take these for authorities over Virgil, Pliny or Plato. Scholarship in this way

¹Dunciad B, 194n.

becomes a consumption and regurgitation of "Fragments, not a Meal."

The critic Eye, that microscope of Wit,
Sees hairs and pores, examines bit by bit:¹

(B IV, 233-4)

As long as scholarship remains solely concerned with the curious, the isolated and the superficial it stands as a threat to civilization in sturdy alliance with Dulness. In the words of Aristarchus,

"Ah, think not, Mistress! more true Dulness lies
In Folly's Cap, than Wisdom's grave disguise.
Like Buoys, that never sink into the flood,
On Learning's surface we but lie and nod.

(B IV, 239-42)

Scholars are like buffoons, and nothing is dearer to the heart of Dulness than a buffoon.

With the arrival of "Whore, Pupil, and lac'd Governor from France," (272) Aristarchus demands his hat and departs. He makes way for "a gay embroider'd race," the graduates, recently returned from their grand tours in Europe. The "Son" of Dulness, who represents this tittering group, has been "Thro' School and College, ... Safe and unseen..." (IV, 289-90). "Europe he saw, and Europe saw him too,"

¹Other expressions by Pope of this idea are:

"Why has not Man a microscopic eye?
For this plain reason, Man is not a Fly."
(Essay on Man, I, 193-4)

"'Tis not a Lip, or Eye, we Beauty call,
But the joint Force and full Result of All."
(Essay on Criticism, 245-6)

expresses contemptuously the double disadvantage for England in having her fools paraded for Europe to see while they themselves

... gather'd ev'ry Vice on Christian ground;
 Saw ev'ry Court, heard ev'ry King declare
 His royal Sense, of Op'ra's or the Fair;
 The Stews and Palace equally explor'd,
 Intrigu'd with glory, and with spirit whor'd;
 Try'd all hors-d'oeuvres, all liqueurs defin'd;
 Judicious drank, and greatly-daring din'd;
 Dropt the dull lumber of the Latin store,
 Spoil'd his own language, and acquir'd no more.
 (B IV, 312-20)

The foppish youth has not only acquired all the vices Europe can provide, he has also lost whatever benefit his own country's education has given him, (not much, as we have seen). The supreme irony of it all is that he has "All Classic learning lost on Classic ground" (IV, 321). Now he is returned to England, where Dulness accepts him as her own and frees him from all "sense of Shame." What will he do now? Perhaps he will be elected to the Commons, or will become an arbiter of taste in any one of a number of the ways he has learned abroad.¹ Whatever he does he will please Dulness because he will contribute his share to the dilution of cultural standards, which will help to bring about the end of enlightenment. The Continental diversions of the youthful university education gentleman are not very different from

¹Near the end of the poem, when Dulness grants her degrees and sends her sons from "Theory" to "Practice" (580), she assigns this task:

"Others import yet nobler arts from France,
 Teach Kings to fiddle, and make Senates dance."
 (B IV, 597-8)

those of the London hack writer who sleeps on bulks and visits the stews and roundhouses. How much more devastating to a nation's cultural heritage it is, though, when these "arts" are imported and propagated by the young men who must become its leaders.

There are dunces who accidentally avoid the ignominy attendant upon those who try to succeed outside of their own natural vocations by doing simply nothing. Such a dunce is Paridel, "stretch'd on the rack of a too easy chair " (342). Paridel stands in Book IV between those dunces who make it their business to perform serious works in duncely fashion (the scholars and teachers), and those who waste their abilities frenziedly upon the most inconsequential matters (the virtuosi, numismatists, and collectors of all kinds). Paridel is fortunate; he does not have to argue and cavort to gain the approbation of Dulness. He yawns, and Dulness' pity sheds a "benigner influence" on his "nodding head." Paridel's special treatment by Dulness is appropriate because none helps her cause more than by doing absolutely nothing.

For the virtuosi, gaining the acceptance of Dulness is a harder task. She is preparing to bestow "degrees" upon her most accomplished sons. Among the virtuosi there is strong competition because their numbers are enormous. Dulness will only accept those who are sufficiently dull. All in fact qualify, but not without bitter debate.

The first debate is between Annius and Mummius. Annius, an antique and coin collector, "false as his Gems,

and canker'd as his Coins," is a cheat. To Dulness he prays:

"Grant, gracious Goddess! grant me still to cheat,
O may thy cloud still cover the deceit!
Thy choicer mists on this assembly shed,
But pour them thickest on the noble head.

(B IV, 355-8)

If Dulness pours her "choicer mists" especially on the heads of noblemen, they will more easily be persuaded to buy and sell antiques through the dishonest broker, Annius. With Dulness' help he will keep up a brisk trade in rare coins, and headless statues spurious or genuine. In his heedless dishonesty "to make their value rise," Annius aids the cause of Dulness. In buying antiques from the poor he encourages a false sense of value, and encourages likewise the manufacture of spurious artifacts. In selling these to the rich he promotes the spread of false taste. The nobleman is apt even to postpone his marriage while he pursues a "headless Phoebe," or be led to "Honour a Syrian Prince above his own" (368). His rival, Mummius, an antiquarian, is furious because Annius has not yet produced the Macedonian coins he swallowed in the Levant, which Mummius has paid for. Annius and Mummius agree when Dulness gives consent that they shall both "sup, as well as dine" at Pollio's until the coins can be retrieved, "So back to Pollio, hand in hand, they went" (396). Annius and Mummius are two sides of the same false coin. They are dishonest and utterly without scruple. Their interest in antiquity has nothing to do with the understanding of history

in a broad sense. They make up fantastic tales to legitimize their finds,¹ they create and propagate false taste; they, like other dunces, see the part and miss the whole, but worse, the part they see does not interest them unless it can be turned to profit.

Then thick as Locusts black'ning all the ground,
A tribe, with weeds and shells fantastic crown'd
Each with some wond'rous gift approach the Pow'r.
(B IV, 397-99)

These are the naturalists, the next dunces to appear before their goddess. Nests, toads, fungi, insects, flowers are the gifts they bring; each has his own specialty, and each hates the others. The two chief disputants, though, are the carnation grower and the butterfly collector. The ludicrousness of their dispute stands in sharp contrast to the poet's expression of it. One could almost feel sorry for the carnation grower whose wonderful "Caroline" has been stepped on by the zealous butterfly collector. When the flower was in its perfect state "Each Maid cry'd, charming! and each Youth, divine! (410). But now, "No Maid cries, charming! and no Youth, divine! (414).

And lo the wretch! whose vile, whose insect lust
Lay'd this gay daughter of the Spring in dust.
Oh punish him, or to th' Elysian shades
Dismiss my soul, where no Carnation fades.

(B IV, 415-18)

The seriousness of the quarrel in the minds of the disputants, and in the words they speak makes the point of the poet absolutely clear.

¹see The Dunciad, B, 363n., 372n., 375n. etc.

Here are two grown men, one devoted utterly to a new species of carnation, the other to a butterfly. The latter, "wretch," who tramples the carnation, does it, in the eyes of the carnation grower, through vile "insect lust." The "insect lust" of the butterfly collector is unnatural no matter what interpretation is given to the expression. It may be that he has such devotion to collecting insects, that it is more a lust than a passion. It may be that in lusting after the "gay daughter of the Spring" he is displaying the morals of an insect. It may also be that his unnatural preoccupation with insects has caused him to become a lustful person. The point is forcefully made that here is someone immoral, someone who is totally perverse in his pursuits. In the world of dullness values are topsy-turvy as we have seen. Pope gives us very clearly here to understand wherein lie the misplaced values of the butterfly collector and the carnation grower. Both virtuosi are guilty of trying to usurp the functions of nature.

Fair from its humble bed I rear'd this Flow'r,
Suckled, and chear'd, with air, and sun, and show'r.

(B IV, 405-06)

The carnation grower is taking credit himself for what nature did, and worse than that he attributes to art (his own art), what belongs to nature:

Did Nature's pencil ever blend such rays,
Such vary'd light in one promiscuous blaze?

(B IV, 411-12)

Once the carnation is grown, he places it in a paper ruff, tips its head with a "gilded button," thrones it in glass, and names it after the Queen. This is no garden variety of carnation; it is the man-made product of a man who sets himself up in opposition to Nature herself. The same idea applies to the butterfly collector. To him it is nothing that the living natural butterfly he pursues is killed and mounted. To him it is "Fair ev'n in death " (436). To him the butterfly is not a natural creature; it is a member of "th' enamel'd race," a creature of art, not of nature. As evidence that moral values are indeed topsy-turvy among the virtuosi, consider: the virtuosi collectively are "thick as Locusts," the butterfly collector is an insect himself, in his "insect lust," and in his movement as he flits from flower to flower--"It fled, I follow'd...It stopt, I stopt; it mov'd, I mov'd again " (427-8). The carnation is more important than its grower; he reveres it, or at least, honours it as his sovereign. To him heaven is "th'Elysian shades ... where no Carnation fades " (417-8). No other heaven will do.

All virtuosi are interested only in trivia, and no virtuoso has any respect for the specialty of any other one. The butterfly collector is explicit on this:

Rose or Carnation was below my care;
I meddle, Goddess, only in my sphere.

(B IV, 431-2)

Every dunce, the virtuosi no less than the others, sins in

seeing only the part, and in accepting its value as the whole:

See Nature in some partial narrow shape,
And let the Author of the Whole escape.

(B IV, 455-6)

Narrowness of vision and a consequent inversion of values are at the root of the virtuoso's dullness. In the study of humming birds, the "Cockle-kind," moss, butterflies, flowers there is food for the dullest mind, so long as each one meddles only in his own sphere, and none ever tries to see his own specialty in its greater relationship with the whole of nature.

The passage in Book IV which deals with free-thinkers (line 459 ff.) provides a host of problems for the scholar who is trying to assess Pope's religious views, especially when he tries to reconcile what he finds in The Dunciad with the Essay on Man, which poem has in the past led some to consider the poet a deist. Since our purpose here is to single out the kinds of dunces and to discover why they are dunces this need not perplex us. The fact is that free-thinkers in general are included among the dunces. As early as 1729 Pope had attacked Toland and Tindal, whom he described in his note as "Two persons not so happy to be obscure, who writ against the Religion of their Country" (A II, 367n.). The earliest editions of the poem included "C____s" (Collins) at line 367 (A II). Toland, Tindal and Collins were all free-

thinkers. In Book III Thomas Woolston joined Toland and Tindal. Woolston is described by Pope as "an impious mad-man, who wrote in a most insolent style against the Miracles of the Gospel; in the years 1726, 27 &c." (A III, 208n.) Whether the "gloomy Clerk" of Book IV is Dr. Samuel Clarke as has been postulated, or whether he is quite fictitious, it is clear that he is not an orthodox Christian; he is "sworn foe to Myst'ry" (460), "damns implicit faith" (463), takes "the high Priori Road/And reason[s] downward, till [he] doubt[s] of God" (471-2). He is "Of nought so certain as our Reason still,/Of nought so doubtful as of Soul and Will" (481-2).

Narrow metaphysical inquiry forces philosophes into an unproductive situation equivalent to that of the scholars who become hopelessly bogged down in

Disputes of Me or Te, of aut or at.

B IV, 220)

Pope makes the connection explicit, for he writes of the scholars:

See ! still thy own, the heavy Canon roll,
And Metaphysic smokes involve the Pole.

(B IV, 247-8)

In his note (247n.) he is careful to explain his pun; the "Canon" is not solely military, and the "Pole" could be read "poll." Now, in connection with the free-thinkers, he returns to the idea of education:

Lo ! ev'ry finish'd Son returns to thee:
 First slave to Words, then vassal to a Name,
 Then dupe to Party; child and man the same;
 Bounded by Nature, narrow'd still by Art,
 A trifling head, and a contracted heart.

(B IV, 500-4)

Free-thinkers are dull because they lack common sense. In attempting to explain existence they first postulate a God who has certain attributes (ascribed by the free-thinkers), then they "reason downward" to the visible world. When they find that there is a disparity between the attributes of God, and what seems to exist in the world, they think not of evil, but decide that their postulated God does not exist. They will not be convinced otherwise:

All-seeing in thy mists, we want no guide,
 Mother of Arrogance, and Source of Pride.

(B IV, 469-70)

They are arrogant. They

Make God Man's Image, Man the final Cause,
 (B IV, 478)

and they "See all in self" (480). The free-thinkers are not unlike the scholars and virtuosi. They are narrowly involved in complex schemes of thought, but do not see beyond their own closed interpretations. Being arrogantly convinced that man is the final cause they will not open their minds to the "Myst'ry," that is, to religious truth known only through divine revelation. They are seekers after truth only so long as it fits into their speciously elaborated

schemes, and in their arrogance they are

Prompt to impose, and fond to dogmatize,

(B IV, 464)

so that through their listeners willing or not they too contribute to the ever spreading influence of dullness.

Near the end of the poem Silenus, who is a sort of vice-chancellor at the convocation, introduces the graduands to their Queen:

Lo! ev'ry finish'd Son returns to thee.

(B IV, 500)

His convocation address is, in Pope's and Warburton's words,

A Recapitulation of the whole Course of Modern Education described'd in this book, which confines Youth to the study of Words only in Schools, subjects them to the authority of Systems in the Universities, and deludes them with the names of Party-distinctions in the World. All equally concurring to narrow the Understanding, and establish Slavery and Error in Literature, Philosophy, and Politics. The whole finished in modern Free-thinking; the completion of whatever is vain, wrong and destructive to the happiness of mankind, as it established Self-love for the sole Principle of Action.

(B IV, 50ln., p. 391)

In closing his speech Silenus implores

Then take them all, oh take them to thy breast!
Thy Magus, Goddess! shall perform the rest.

(B IV, 515-16)

The "WIZARD OLD" in presiding over the mystical confirmation of the dunces, extends to them the "Cup of Self-love" "which causes a total oblivion of the obligations of Friendship, of Honour, and of the Service of God or our Country; all sacrificed to Vain-glory, Court-worship, or yet meaner considerations of Lucre and brutal Pleasures" (517n., p. 393).

All are confirmed in their inhuman ways

But, sad example! never to escape
Their Infamy, still keep the human shape.

(B IV, 527-8)

Dulness bestows on them "Impudence," or "Stupefaction."
"Self-conceit" gives them the power through flattery to see
themselves as "Patriot, Chief, or Saint." "Int'rest" throws
her "gay liv'ry" over their shoulders that they may be shame-
lessly enslaved to a political party. The "Syren Sisters"
of Opera administer the "balm of Dulness;" those who receive
this elixir become patrons of the opera. "A Priest succinct
in amice white" attends other dunces who will go into the
world to propagate French luxury mainly of the gastronomical
kind. As all of the dunces draw near Dulness confers her
degrees:

Then blessing all, "Go Children of my care !
To Practice now from Theory repair.
All my commands are easy, short, and full:
My Sons! be proud, be selfish, and be dull."

(B IV, 579-82)

The dunces of Book IV are in many ways inclusive of the
dunces in the first three books.¹ They are more culpable

¹Pope has prepared us for this inclusiveness as
early as the first book:

This brazen Brightness, to the Squire so dear;
This polish'd Hardness, that reflects the Peer.

(B I, 219-20)

It is also implicit in the epic theme of the
transference of the Smithfield muses to the Court.

because they are directly responsible for the standards followed by the Grub-Street race. They are the nobility, or at least the highly educated commoners. Pope is suggesting it seems to me that if the people who set standards of taste allow themselves to set low standards then little can be expected of those who "write about it, Goddess, and about it." I do not suggest that Pope is in any way excusing the Grub-Street scribblers; certainly he is not. What I am suggesting is that the activities of these inferior writers, which once seemed to epitomize for Pope the worst that he saw around him, receded into a position of secondary importance as he began to look into the reasons for their activities.

If we look at Book IV of The Dunciad in terms of theme we can gain another perspective on the attitude toward dullness which is emerging. No longer is dullness a simple matter of people meddling in literature when they are not fit to do so. Pope's early concern with the damage done to civilization by the Grub-Street writers has now to stand almost as an introduction to another world in which the madness is more subtle and the destruction correspondingly more sinister in its implications.

Gathering the major themes of Book IV together we find apparently the whole nobility of a nation seduced by low amusements in an age when a country such as England looked often to the nobility for political and moral leadership. Education is in the hands of men who are devoid of imagination, slaves to words and solely concerned with minutely

narrow scholarship. The culture of the land is being lost and replaced by artificial and foreign pastimes many of which are imported by the noble young "alumni" as a part of their education. There is a preoccupation with dishonesty and idleness, money is made unscrupulously under the pretence of cultural improvement. A large segment of society is devoting itself to minute scientific investigations the importance of which it raises to an almost sacramental level.¹ In the pursuit of religious truth God is denied, or at least relegated to a position somewhere below man in the universal hierarchy. Self-love is the only quality common to all of these groups. It is a world of parts; nothing seems to fit together to form a wholeness. Each group, each man even, functions jealously within his own isolated compartment.

Thomas R. Edwards has written that "...tragic alienation from things as they are is Pope's major theme in the Moral Essays."² If the Moral Essays show men alienated from "things as they are" at least the moral order is substantially evident. In Book IV of The Dunciad the alienation is still there, but it is no longer superimposed upon a substratum of moral order. "Things as they are" are now of a totally differ-

¹The "French priest" can be included along with the carnation grower and the butterfly collector because, although he is not pre-empting the functions of nature, he is elevating very earthly culinary arts to the status of the Holy Mass. He is very nearly pre-empting the place of God.

²Thomas R. Edwards Jr., This Dark Estate: A Reading of Pope, Perspectives in Criticism, Vol. XI (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), p. 50.

ent order. It is a part of the tragic dimension of Book IV that as the poet surveys "things as they are" he finds them everywhere wrong. This could only have been a devastating discovery for a poet who had written albeit in a different context, "Whatever is, is right."

What we find in the Epistles to Several Persons that we do not find in The Dunciad is the clear admission of an ideal in which reason is still possible. However bedevilled the world is with its Atossas, its Timons and the hordes of other anti-rational creatures of every stamp, there are still the Burlingtons, the Bathursts, the Cobhams, the Martha Blounts and the fellows of the Man of Ross. The satirist clearly believes that given a chance and some encouragement these men of reason, (or of taste, of common sense, or of "true Wit") can still bring about a balanced reasonable world. Already, though, in the Epistles it is evident that the forces of unreason by dint of sheer numbers at least, are rapidly outweighing the forces of reason. In The Dunciad the game is lost. The great figures who characterize the light of reason are significantly absent. Gay is dead, and Swift and Handel have been banished to the "Hibernian shores." The aristocracy has succumbed to dullness. There is literally nothing left to stay the forces of darkness except possibly the poet's own song, and even that must surrender: "Then take at once the poet and the song." (IV, 8) Writing of this phenomenon, Tanner states that

. . .by the end of his life's work, his (Pope's) poetry--the actual written stuff--seems to be the only vestige of order and reason in a universe given over to perversity and chaos. What one can see is the ideal gradually dwindling to a remote unattainable myth, while the actual world in all its myriad mess looms increasingly large. You could say that the evidence of unreason forcibly occupies the foreground of Pope's picture, piling up and making its presence felt, until the ideal becomes something glimpsed in the distant background and threatened by obliteration.¹

Tanner also draws our attention to a change made by Pope, who in 1729 ended the body of his poem,

Thy hand great Dulness! lets the curtain fall,
And universal Darkness covers all,

(A III, 355-56)

but in 1743 closed Book IV with

Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And Universal Darkness buries All.

(B IV, 655-56)

"The difference," writes Tanner, "is between the temporary concealment of civilization, and its total extinction."²

There is no doubt that Pope was being very deliberate in his alteration. I would also draw the reader's attention to the capital letters added to the last version in which "universal" and "all" both merit capitals; even a cursory reading of Pope shows that he uses his capital letters with considerable care.

The years between the 1729 and the final version of The Dunciad were the years which produced the Essay on Man and the Epistles to Several Persons as well as the New Dunciad

¹Tony Tanner, "Reason and the Grotesque: Pope's Dunciad," Critical Quarterly 7 (summer 1965), p 145-60.

²Ibid.

which finally became a part of the Greater Dunciad. They are years through which we can trace the growing disproportion of dullness to reason. Dullness is registered increasingly through these poems, but it is only in the last one, The Dunciad of 1743, that the forces of unreason and uncreation utterly blot out, extinguish and obliterate reason and creation as Dulness, very nearly apotheosized, assumes universal power.

CHAPTER III

THE PARADOX OF DULLNESS

When we come to consider how the dunces act the first thing that must occur to us is that they never act alone. "When troubles come, they come not single spies, but in battalions," might have been said almost as well of dunces. To say that dunces act in concert rather than singly would not be entirely true either, for concerted action suggests a great deal more organization than we typically find among the dunces. Dunces do not appear alone, but neither are they organized. They descend in a protean shifting surging mob.

The crowding of dunces can be seen in different ways. On a very basic level in the first three books especially, the sheer number of dunces is significant. The satirist could not do his work by selecting and concentrating on one, two, or a half dozen Grub-Street scribblers. A quick count of the dunces named in the first three books of The Dunciad reveals about eighty-five. The effect is sudden and devastating. If eighty-five of a city's literary population are dull, how many are left? And, of course, eighty-five is only a slight indication of the real number.

In fact, half of the population is involved. When Dulness calls her sons to join in the "high heroic Games,"

. . . An endless band
Pours forth, and leaves unpeopled half the land.

(B II, 19-20)

The exploded population of dunces is evident throughout the poem. As they arrive for the games they are

A motley mixture! in long wigs, in bags,
In silks, in crapes, in Garters, and in rags,
From drawing rooms, from colleges, from garrets,
On horse, on foot, in hacks and gilded chariots.

(B II, 21-24)

They are variously described as "th'industrious tribe" (II, 33), "a sable Army" (II, 355), "the black troop" (II, 360), "the clam'rous crowd" (II, 385). When Cibber, the new king of the dunces, descends, "on Fancy's easy wing" to the underworld of dullness to view the baptism of new dunces,

Millions and millions on these banks he views,
Thick as the stars of night, or morning dews,
As thick as bees o'er vernal blossoms fly,
As thick as eggs at Ward in Pillory.

(B III, 31-4)

As Cibber watches Dulness gathering her sons to her from over most of the world Settle tells him,

See all her progeny, illustrious sight!
Behold, and count them, as they rise to light.
As Berecynthia, while her offspring vye
In homage to the Mother of the sky,
Surveys around her, in the blest abode,
An hundred sons, and ev'ry son a God:
Not with less glory mighty Dulness crown'd
Shall take through Grub-street her triumphant round;
And her Parnassus glancing o'er at once,
Behold an hundred sons, and each a Dunce.

(B III, 129-35)

The fact of number is not, of course, confined to the first three books, but it is not employed in Book IV exactly as it is in the first three.¹ It is immediately clear that there are no vast numbers of named individuals of a single type in Book IV. The throngs are present, though, in numbers even larger than we see in Grub-Street.

The gath'ring number, as it moves along,
Involves a vast involuntary throng.

(B IV, 81-2)

We meet "the bard and blockhead, side by side" (101), "Courtiers and Patriots in two ranks" (107), "three hundred gold-capt youths" (117). Everywhere are large groups of dunces, but they are grouped on the whole anonymously and according to genus. "Crowds on crowds around the Goddess press," indicates this idea; they approach their goddess by group. The groups are teachers, scholarly critics, virtuosi or whatever the case may be. The dunces' numbers are so great that crowd or throng scarcely describe them. They are described as fish--"a sable shoal" (190), or as cattle--"a hundred head of Aristotle's friends" (192). The young men returned from the grand tour, "a gay embroider'd race" (275), are a whole race unto themselves. The virtuosi are a tribe:

¹Alvin B. Kernan has a good discussion of the function of crowding in satire. He writes, "The scene of satire is always disorderly and crowded, packed to the very point of bursting."

Alvin B. Kernan, The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 7.

Then thick as Locusts black'ning all the ground,
A tribe, with weeds and shells fantastic crown'd.

(B IV, 397-8)

There is no doubt that number is the most obvious means by which dullness operates. The increasingly crowded progress of Dulness and her followers, moving from the City to the Court, is Pope's means of figuring forth her larger, metaphorical spreading over the whole world. Merely by being everywhere dullness extinguishes creation. The most important fact of number in Book IV is implied rather than stated. What is more apt to happen in the last book than in the other three is the appearance of one powerful, almost allegorical figure, (in the case of Opera the figure is purely allegorical), who typifies in himself a whole genus of duncely creatures. Thus when Aristarchus speaks he speaks not only for himself, but for a whole world of scholars. "Critics like me," (214) "our Digamma," (218) "On Learning's surface we but lie and nod," (242) show Aristarchus speaking for all of the scholarly critics in his field.

For thee we dim the eyes, and stuff the head
With all such learning as was never read:

(V (B IV, 249-50)

"We [not just I] bring to one dead level ev'ry mind." (268)

The same is true of the "Spectre" of Westminster School, who speaks for his fellow pedagogues when he says, "Words we teach alone " (150). The "gloomy Clerk" represents all freethinkers and rationalizing divines.

All-seeing in thy mists, we want no guide,
 Mother of Arrogance, and Source of Pride!
 We nobly take the high Priori Road.

(B IV, 469-71)

Annius and Mummius speak for themselves as do the carnation grower and the butterfly collector, as befits such selfish creatures, but Annius and Mummius bring within their sphere all those they cheat and teach to cheat, all novice antiquarians. The carnation grower and the butterfly collector bring with them their own "tribe, with weeds and shells fantastic crown'd."

The total effect of the vast numbers which comprise dullness is in the end the swamping of the whole world. The unmistakable impression finally is that all are dull, everywhere in the world. In the presence of so much dullness the non-dull expire. When it is clear to the goddess Dulness that everyone is dull, she yawns, and it is this one enormous symbolic yawn spreading over all the lands and seas of the earth that extinguishes Fancy, Wit, Art, Truth, Philosophy, Sense, Mystery, Religion and Morality.

Along with this, which we might call the principle of number, and inseparable from it, goes another principle, that of variety. It is one of the great ironies in The Dunciad that variety, which in Pope's philosophy is essential for man's keeping his place in the ordered scheme of the universe, is denied by the mixing process so characteristic of the dull. Throughout our examination of the poem we have

noted the enormous variety of dunces; they come from every level of society from Grub-Street to Westminster, and from every profession, occupation and pastime. But when all is said and done they are the same: a dunce is a dunce. I believe that it is one of the serious characteristics of dullness that the dunces "bring to one dead level ev'ry mind."

To get to the basis of Pope's view of this threat we ought to compare what happens in The Dunciad with the expression of a universal hierarchy given in An Essay on Man. Pope writes:

Vast chain of being, which from God began,
 Nature's aethereal, human, angel, man,
 Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
 No glass can reach! from Infinite to thee,
 From thee to Nothing!--On superior pow'rs
 Were we to press, inferior might on ours:
 Or in the full creation leave a void,
 Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroy'd:
 From Nature's chain whatever link you strike,
 Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.
 (An Essay on Man, I, 237-46)

These famous lines are Pope's statement which gave A. O. Lovejoy the title for his study, The Great Chain of Being.¹ Pope is saying that the universe consists of a hierarchical chain of beings from the microscopic organism to the aether-eal; that man has his own place in the hierarchy, and that man must not try to usurp a higher place, lest his own place

¹Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936).

be usurped by lower beings.¹ He writes elsewhere that

. . . all must full or not coherent be,
 And all that rises, rise in due degree,
 (An Essay on Man, I, 45-6)

which is an expression of the principle of plenitude, that not only is there a hierarchical chain of being, but that all links must be present and "full" or the coherence of the whole is lost. In man's link this means that there must be men of every degree, the leaders and the led, the scholars and the pupils, men of every station, each useful in his own way and contributing to the fullness of the species.²

When his own link in the chain is incomplete man has nothing, and this is essentially what comes about in the world of dullness. A kind of duncely miscegenation occurs throughout The Dunciad in which people of different

¹It is interesting to note how often in his writings Pope compares men to insects when for one reason or another men are acting outside of their rightful place in the chain of being. Thus Timon is a "puny insect," Harvey "a gilded bug," Cibber an "industrious Bug," and the virtuosi "locusts." This is what happens when we "press" on "superior pow'rs." Clearly at such times, the "inferior" are pressing on "ours".

²Lovejoy writes, ". . . the universe is a plenum formarum in which the range of conceivable diversity in kinds of living things is exhaustively exemplified . . . no genuine potentiality of being can remain unfulfilled . . . the extent and abundance of the creation must be as great as the possibility of existence and commensurate with the productive capacity of a 'perfect' and inexhaustible Source, and . . . the world is the better, the more things it contains" (p. 520).

levels in society mix with the result that neither is what he was before as both are brought to one common level. The levelling produced by this miscegenation has several other implications: it produces the mixing of genre in the arts, the mixing of styles within a given art, the paradoxical nature of an education which padlocks the mind, and narrows the student in his broadening European travels. Miscegenation is scarcely an inappropriate term either when the reader views the abundance of birth, most of it premature or unnatural, which surrounds the King of the Dunces. The Goddess is described as "laborious" (I 15); she will "hatch a new Saturnian age of Lead" (28), "hints, like spawn, scarce quick in embryo lie" (59), "newborn nonsense" (60), "Farce and Epic get a jumbled race" (70). Round "Bay's monster-breeding breast" (108) "much Embryo, much Abortion lay" (121).¹ The position of humanity is weakened, and the eventual result is the annihilation of the human link in the great chain of being.

The satirist sets the scene for this mixing of the sublime and the ridiculous early in the poem, although here the mixing is literary rather than human:

There motley Images her fancy strike,
 Figures ill pair'd, and Similies unlike,
 She sees a Mob of Metaphors advance,
 Pleas'd with the madness of the mazy dance:

¹Since this paragraph was written Professor John Sitter has developed a similar idea, describing the "Miscellanies" as "the product of a kind of abstract miscegenation."

John E. Sitter, The Poetry of Pope's Dunciad (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 13.

How Tragedy and Comedy embrace;
 How Farce and Epic get a jumbled race;
 How Time himself stands still at her command,
 Realms shift their place, and Ocean turns to land.

(B I, 65-72)

"Figures ill pair'd, "Similies unlike," "Tragedy" and "Comedy,"
 "Farce" and "Epic," all are brought to a level as Dulness
 "with her own fools-colours gilds them all." (84) It is
 only a short time until the mixing of unlike literary
 conventions becomes evident in their creators.

Much she revolves their arts, their ancient praise,
 And sure succession down from Heywood's days.
 She saw, with joy, the line immortal run,
 Each sire imprest and glaring in his son.

(B I, 97-100)

Pryn shines in Daniel, Eusden becomes another Blackmore,
 Philips is the same as Tate. Individuality is lost.

Not only the writers are brought to the same level
 by dullness; men from all levels come together and find their
 lowest common denominator. At White's, Cibber's coffee
 house, "Dukes and Butchers join" to wreath the playwright's
 crown.¹ At such low meetings dukes take on the manners of

¹In the Epistle to Bathurst, Pope includes the
 "Peeress and Butler" together in a similar context. The whole
 passage in fact is very similar to the latter parts of the
Dunciad:

"At length Corruption, like a general flood,
 (So long by watchful Ministers withstood)
 Shall deluge all; and Avarice, creeping on,
 Spread like a lowborn mist, and blot the Sun;
 Statesman and Patriot ply alike the stocks,
 Peeress and Butler share alike the Box,
 And Judges job, and Bishops bite the town,
 And mighty Dukes pack cards for half a crown."

(Epistle to Bathurst, 135-42)

butchers, butchers ape the dukes, and mankind is lessened both ways. Even Cibber himself as "Master of the sev'nfold Face" is a little of everybody, but nothing of himself.

Dulness shows Cibber her works in which prose swells to verse and verse loiters into prose. She shows him

How Prologues into Prefaces decay,
And these to Notes are fritter'd quite away.

(B I, 277-78)

Even the sacred bird of Dulness is neither one thing nor another. It is "a monster of a fowl,/Something betwixt a Heideggre and owl " (B I, 289-90).

In Book II the mixing of different ranks is seen as the sons of Dulness pour forth to the games,

A motley mixture! in long wigs, in bags,
In silks, in crapes, in Garters, and in rags,
From drawing rooms, from colleges, from garrets,
On horse, on foot, in hacks, and gilded chariots.

(B II, 21-24)

Here are Knights of the Garter, students, hack-writers and noblemen held together only by the common bond of dullness.

The mess which is the "new world" of dullness is shown in theatrical microcosm near the end of Book III. The satire, of course, is directed against various stage practices in use by several of the dunces at the time. Another function of the passage, though, is to anticipate the world turned upside down which is manifested as the Empire of Dulness is restored at the end of the poem. It is a world in which there are no established levels either in the great chain of being or even within the human link:

Hell rises, Heav'n descends, and dance on Earth:
 Gods, imps, and monsters, music, rage, and mirth,
 A fire, a jig, a battle, and a ball,
 'Till one wide conflagration swallows all.

(B III, 237-40)

It is, explicitly, a "world to Nature's laws unknown," and it defies nature's laws partly because of its utter denial of the place of each being in the great scheme of the universe.

Thence a new world to Nature's laws unknown,
 Breaks out refulgent, with a heav'n its own:
 Another Cynthia her new journey runs,
 And other planets circle other suns.
 The forests dance, the rivers upward rise,
 Whales sport in woods, and dolphins in the skies;
 And last, to give the whole creation grace,
 Lo! one vast Egg produces human race.

(B III, 241-48)

The motley result of the indiscriminate mixing of high with low, of Wit with fool, and all of the other permutations of dullness remains evident throughout the first three books until Dulness, enraptured, cries

"Proceed, great days! 'till Learning fly the shore,
 'Till Birch shall blush with noble blood no more,
 'Till Thames see Eton's sons for ever play,
 'Till Westminster's whole year be holiday,
 'Till Isis' Elders reel, their pupils' sport,
 And Alma Mater lie dissolv'd in Port!"

(B III, 333-38)

In Book IV the mixtures take on an international flavour. Here we have the invasion by Italian opera, and French luxury of several kinds. Opera is, of course, "by singing Peers up-held, on either hand," (49) an indication that the nobility is stooping to and supporting low entertainment. The university graduates recently returned from

their continental tours bring back the worst that they have learned abroad. They have not only acquired false and luxurious tastes in Europe, they have lost whatever they had learned before they left home. They have not only mixed with foreigners, they have sampled life at every level:

Saw ev'ry Court, heard ev'ry King declare
His royal Sense of Op'ra or the Fair;
The Stews and Palace equally explor'd.

(B IV, 333-8)

Throughout the last book it is clear that under the reign of Dulness all are brought "to one dead level."

The satirist is explicit in terms of the idea of hierarchical degree when he writes,

None need a guide, by sure Attraction led,
And strong impulsive gravity of Head:
None want a place, for all their Centre found,
Hung to the Goddess, and coher'd around.

(B IV, 75-8)

The dunces deny the principles of the chain of being by all settling in one "place." Because they refuse to accept the place within the human link which is assigned them by nature, they bring an end to the infinite variety which the doctrine demands. The poem continues:

Not those alone who passive own her laws,
But who, weak rebels, more advance her cause.
Whate'er of dunce in College or in Town
Sneers at another, in toupee or gown;
Whate'er of Mungril no one class admits,
A wit with dunces, and a dunce with wits.

(B IV, 85-90)

The product of this kind of thoughtless and indiscriminate blend is the "Mungril," who is neither one kind of man nor

another, but is merely a dunce. A finished dunce is defined as one

Bounded by Nature, narrow'd still by Art,
A trifling head, and a contracted heart,

(B IV, 503-4)

and this definition applies to any dunce because one is as much a dunce as any other.

Dunces in their vast numbers and apparent diversity are really all very much of a kind. They appear to be a very active mob, and so they are, but what becomes clear as we read the poem is that the actions of the dunces, however varied they seem, are really very similar. Their movements are heavy and slow, tending ever in a downward direction. At the same time that the dunces are moving heavily and slowly downward a cyclical quality in their movements is often observable. It is often motion which ends where it began, or moves in widening and receding circles. All of this of course takes place within the greater spread of dullness from East to West, which, carried beyond Pope's geographical scheme, would bring the dunces back again to where they began.

The theme of the poem, the restoration of the Empire of Dulness, in itself suggests this circularity:

In eldest time, e'er mortals writ or read,
E'er Palms issu'd from the Thund'rer's head,
Dulness o'er all possess'd her ancient right,
Daughter of Chaos and eternal Night:

.....
Still her old Empire to restore she tries,
For, born a Goddess, Dulness never dies.

(B I, 9-18)

Restoration implies a kind of cyclical progress, and, of course, the restoration of the Empire of Dulness accomplished at the end of the poem is a return to the situation which prevailed "in eldest time." The poet here places the Empire's restoration within the great scheme of divine and human history: into chaos are placed God's creations from which follow mankind's civilization, the dissolution of civilization and a return to chaos. The history of duncely civilization then is a perversion of the Christian framework of history.

In speaking of himself Cibber compares the duncely thought processes to the arc taken by the biased bowl as it "obliquely waddles" to its mark. The "mark" or goal of a dunce is the achievement of dullness, but none is capable of thinking his way straight through to the goal.

The "phantom poet" for whom Curll and Lintot compete, is nothing, a mere phantom. The two booksellers, with "nothing" as the promised reward, run a futile race to end up with nothing. It is another instance of dunces trying to reach the goal of dullness. They run, and when they return the "prize" disappears:

A shapeless shade, it melted from his sight,
Like forms in clouds, or visions of the night.

(B II, 111-12)

The urination contest follows a similar pattern, "the salient spout" shooting to the sky only to return to wash the "Artist's face." So it is with the noise contest, the cacaphony moving out, and echoing back again:

Long Chanc'ry-lane retentive rolls the sound,
And courts to courts return it round and round.

(B II, 263-4)

The diving contest is described in terms of circularity;
falling and rising, and whirlpools:

Next Smedley div'd; slow circles dimpled o'er
The quaking mud, that clos'd, and op'd no more.

(B II, 291-2)

(Smedley, of course, returns "in majesty of Mud" some time
later further dulled by the experience, his cycle complete).

The prize in the meantime seems destined for Arnall, who

...with a weight of skull,
Furious he dives, precipitately dull.
Whirlpools and storms his circling arm invest,
With all the might of gravitation blest.

(B II, 315-18)

When the motions of the dunces are not expressed in
the futility of a circle which ends where it began an equally
futile movement can be seen in their rising high in order to
dive deeper, their "climbing" downward, or their "advancing"
backward:

The Senior's judgment all the crowd admire,
Who but to sink the deeper, rose the higher.

B II, 289-90)

No crab more active in the dirty dance,
Downward to climb, and backward to advance.

(B II, 319-20)

The ever widening circle of the influence of dull-
ness is expressed in the idea of atmospheric replenishment
or the evaporation-precipitation cycle:

Thro' Lud's fam'd gates, along the well-known Fleet
Rolls the black troop, and overshades the street,
'Till show'rs of Sermons, Characters, Essays,

In circling fleeces whiten all the ways:
 So clouds replenish'd from some bog below,
 Mount in dark volumes, and descend in snow.

(B II, 359-64)

As the dunces are lulled to sleep (again, a recurring phenomenon) we are told that

As what a Dutchman plumps into the lakes,
 One circle first, and then a second makes;
 What Dulness dropt among her sons imprest
 Like motion from one circle to the rest;
 So from the mid-most the nutation spreads
 Round and more round, o'er all the sea of heads.

(B II, 405-10)

In Book III Settle guides his successor over the history of dullness in the underworld, and explains to him his functions as king of the dunces.

As man's Maeanders to the vital spring
 Roll all their tides, then back their circles bring;
 Or whirligigs, twirl'd round by skilful swain,
 Suck the thread in, then yield it out again:
 All nonsense thus, of old or modern date,
 Shall in thee centre, from thee circulate.

(B III, 55-60)

As king, Cibber will be the axis around which the dunces move. "None want a place," as we have already noted, and part of the reason for this is the constant proximity of the dunces to their king, and to their goddess. None ever wanders far from his centre, and all inevitably return to it as the spinning top lets its thread out only to retrieve it again. The perpetual revolution of the dunces about their king has its counterpart in the duncely cycles of poets laureate, and all have their cosmic counterpart in the universe of dullness:

Signs following signs lead on the mighty year!
 See! the dull stars roll round and re-appear.

(B III, 321-22)

Alvin B. Kernan makes the point that expansion and contraction are important functions in the dunces' activities throughout the poem.¹ He writes:

The spread of ignorance and darkness quickens in Book IV. Dulness holds court and around her, at the sound of "Fame's posterior trumpet," throng the innumerable Dunces of England:

The gath'ring number, as it moves along,
Involves a vast involuntary throng,
Who gentle drawn, and struggling less and less,
Roll in her Vortex, and her pow'r confess.

(81-84)

The sons of Dulness come forward one by one to announce their destruction of sense and art, law and morality. "Night primeval" and "Chaos old" move over the land, and "universal Darkness buries All." But Pope has so arranged his poem that this expansion is at once a contraction. At the very moment that dullness becomes everything, everything becomes nothing, for dullness is finally nothingness, vacuity, matter without form or idea. This expansion which is a contraction is localized in the passage quoted just above, where as the number of Dunces becomes larger and larger, their mass becomes smaller and smaller as the crowd draws in on Dulness. The vortex is the figure Pope uses here, and it renders in geometrical terms the "plot" of the poem. The turbulent outer lip swirls round and round growing ever larger and engulfing more and more. It sucks in water and rubbish and whirls them downward through narrowing circles, which end at last in the pinpoint of nothingness.²

The growing circularity of motion which I have been discussing becomes gradually throughout the poem a stronger and stronger statement of the accomplishment of dullness. The greatest accomplishment a dunce ever makes is to blot out some branch

¹Alvin B. Kernan, "The Dunciad and the Plot of Satire," Studies in English Literature, 11 (1962), 255-66.

²Ibid.

or other^{of} enlightenment, and when the whole collective world of the dunces has done all of its work there is nothing left. The motions of the dunces are circular, leading nowhere, downward in their upwardness, or backward in their forwardness. They are also ponderous.

The heaviness of the dunces' performances is generally evidenced in their downward or sinking tendency. Kernan has collected the verbs which appear most frequently in The Dunciad. They are "pours, spreads, sluices, creeps, drawls on, stretches, spawns, crawls, meanders, ekes out, flounders on, slips, rolls, extends, waddles, involves, gushes, swells, loiters, decays, slides, wafts, lumbers, blots, o'erflows, trickles."¹ Almost all of these verbs suggest slowness of motion, and several of them suggest a downward tendency. They belie the surface impression of lightness and agility which we first get on reading the poem. If the dunces seem to be a frivolous, gay, lighthearted albeit foolish lot, it is only because in their frenzied indirection they are as often as not moving aimlessly and going really nowhere. The real motion of dullness heavily downward is best stated in the simile of the clock weights:

As clocks to weight their nimble motions owe,
The wheels above urg'd by the load below.

(B I, 183-4)

¹Ibid.

If the dunces appear pertly nimble it is not to be forgotten that it is the weight of their Cibberian brains which urges them on.

Metaphors of lead are often the basis of a description of duncely heaviness. The works of Cibber are

Nonsense precipitate, like running Lead,
That slip'd thro' Cracks and Zig-zags of the Head.

(B I, 123-4)

The best diver will receive "a pig of lead" as an appropriate prize for excellence at diving deep into filth. The whole point of restoring the Empire of Dulness is to bring back "Saturnian days of Lead and Gold."

The heaviness characteristic of dullness is seen in the nodding of heads as "H___ley's periods" and "Blackmore's numbers" are intoned during the contest "to sooth the soul to slumbers." Sleep is the state most sympathetic to dullness, and in sleeping, yawning and nodding of heads, the heaviness and downward motion of dullness is most characteristically observed:

At ev'ry line they stretch, they yawn, they doze.
As to soft gales top-heavy pines bow low
Their heads, and lift them as they cease to blow:
Thus oft they rear, and oft the head decline,

(B II, 390-93)

until all are asleep. (It is interesting to notice, too, how much of the poem passes while Cibber sleeps. His royal head nods from the end of Book II to the end of the poem.)

Then down are roll'd the books; stretch'd o'er 'em lies
Each gentle clerk, and mutt'ring seals his eyes.

(B II, 403-4)

Heaviness is apparent throughout the poem in such lines

as:

Happier thy fortunes! like a rolling stone,
Thy giddy dulness still shall lumber on.

(B III, 294-5)

To lug the pond'rous volumes off in state.

(B IV, 118)

See ! still thy own, the heavy Canon roll.

(B IV, 247)

"That awful Aristarch," then, seems to point to a contradiction when he says,

Like Buoys, that never sink into the flood,
On Learning's surface we but lie and nod.

(B IV, 241-2)

He is speaking of the duncely critical scholars, but he might very well be speaking for all dunces in whatever sphere. It is one of their essential characteristics that in the ponderousness of their lengthy and minutely detailed criticism the critics are both heavy and superficial. They produce volumes of pretentious studies, but never really get below the surface of their subjects. The idea logically extends to the other dunces; the Grub-Street scribbler plunges on from one work to another leaving "reams abundant" of print behind him, but none of it of any value, the antiquarian and virtuoso take themselves in dead seriousness, but never get beyond the superficialities of art or nature.

The light which illuminates dullness is dark, sleep is the natural state of the dull; the yawn is virtually sacramental. The poem seems infused with light.

So from the Sun's broad beam, in shallow urns
Heav'ns twinkling Sparks draw light, and point their horns

(B II, 11-12)

Thick as the stars of night, or morning dews.

(B III, 33)

See, round the Poles where keener spangles shine.

(B III, 69)

And one bright blaze turns Learning into air.

(B III, 78)

See, where the morning gilds the palmy shore.

(B III, 95)

A Newton's genius, or a Milton's flame.

(B III, 216)

Yon stars, yon suns, he rears at pleasure higher,
Illumes their light, and sets their flames on fire.

(B III, 259-60)

It should not be necessary to go on. Even one reading of The Dunciad serves to illustrate the abundance of light imagery. The essence of the light of dullness becomes clear when we read the microcosmic passage of Book III, in which "a new world to Nature's laws unknown" breaks out, and

Another Cynthia her new journey runs,
And other planets circle other suns.

(B III, 243-4)

This new world is the surrogate world of the stage, but it is a portent of the world of dullness which is soon to be established.¹ If the dunces must have light it must be artificial light:

¹See H. H. Erskine-Hill, "The 'New World' of Pope's Dunciad," Renaissance and Modern Studies 6 (1962): 49-67.

In yonder cloud behold,
 Whose sarsenet skirts are edg'd with flamy gold,
 A matchless Youth! his nod these worlds controuls,
 Wings the red lightning, and the thunder rolls.
 Angel of Dulness, sent to scatter round
 Her magic charms o'er all unclassic ground:
 Yon stars, yon suns, he rears at pleasure higher,
 Illumes their light, and sets their flames on fire.

(B III, 253-60)

The dunces are happy to shine in artificial light, although darkness visible is their "native" element. The poem flames with light, but on closer examination it is often the light of flaming destruction; "one bright blaze turns Learning into air" (III, 78), "Moliere's old stubble in a moment flames" (I, 254), "down sink the flames, and with a hiss expire" (I, 260), or it is only reflected light; "this polish'd Hardness, that reflects the Peer" (I, 220), "his Peers shine round him with reflected grace" (II, 9). Despite the presence of a seeming abundance of light the true light of dullness is dim. As the accomplishment of the restoration of Dulness' Empire draws near the world is appropriately illuminated:

Now flam'd the Dog-star's unpropitious ray,
 Smote ev'ry Brain, and wither'd ev'ry Bay;
 Sick was the Sun, the Owl forsook his bow'r,
 The moon-struck Prophet felt the madding hour:
 Then rose the Seed of Chaos, and of Night,
 To blot out Order, and extinguish Light,
 Of dull and venal a new World to mold,
 And bring Saturnian days of Lead and Gold.

(B IV, 9-16)

Dulness ascends her throne, her head as always concealed in a cloud. The clouds, fogs and mists of dullness, present from

the beginning of the poem in association with the goddess and with the hero, finally overcome all light as the Empire is restored, "and Universal Darkness buries All."

Darkness is essential to the operation of dullness. I have suggested in another context that in the world of dullness moral values are turned upside-down. Dulness operates in an immoral way, and immorality is most effectively shaded by darkness. Dullness casts a shadow which goodness cannot penetrate:

Thro' Lud's fam'd gates, along the well-known Fleet
Rolls the black troop, and overshades the street.

(II, 359-60)

Thick and more thick the black blockade extends.

(IV, 191)

Then thick as Locusts black'ning all the ground.

(IV, 397)

Dulness is magnified not by light, but by mistiness: "A veil of fogs dilates her awful face" (I, 262). She thus assumes an apparent importance out of all proportion to her real importance. In this self-imposed awesomeness she keeps herself magnified but hidden so that any who seek enlightenment are cowed and turn away. She protects herself from enlightenment by remaining shrouded in fogs. Wit, which is "true Wit" or enlightenment, is the same in The Dunciad as light: "And lest we err by Wit's wild dancing light,/ Secure us kindly in our native night" (I, 175-76). Dulness then keeps herself from all enlightenment, and keeps her subjects hidden from true enlightenment.

All of the operations of dullness must be seen as contradictions. Although there are "millions and millions" of dunces, in their nihilism the total effect of their machinations is uncreation, or the creation of nothingness. In their apparently endless diversity they are all really the same. In their frenetic movement they actually go nowhere. In their apparent speed they are very sluggish indeed. In their heavy tendency to sink downward they really act only on the surface of their preoccupations, and their light consists of darkness. One could go on to demonstrate that even in their apparent humanity the dunces are really the members of a lower order.¹

Ultimately almost all of the images used to depict the dunces refer to madness of one kind or another. In this respect early lines of the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot are a kind of prologue to Book IV:

The Dog Star rages! nay 'tis past a doubt,
All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:
Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,
They rave, recite, and madden round the land.

(Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot 3-6)

Here Bedlam and Parnassus are equated and associated with the anti-light of Sirius as Dulness and her son are associated with the cold reflected light of Saturn, which in turn is associated with the lead which runs through the cracks in Cibber's head. In raving and reciting the poets, like the

¹Images of insects and burrowing animals suggest this as has already been suggested in my remarks about the great chain of being.

hacks, give themselves up to pretence, posturing, bad art and words without meaning.¹

The beauty of the poem derives in large measure from the flashy abundance which proliferates at the surface. Hordes of colourful creatures moving about in varied and lively ways, light and shade, dancing and games, Heaven and Hell on Earth. The power of the poem lies in the growing realisation that this is indeed only the surface, that underneath it all dullness is in fact a very serious matter. Beauty and ugliness walk hand in hand throughout the poem; many of Pope's most glittering lines are about the ugliest of things:

In ev'ry loom our labours shall be seen,
And the fresh vomit run for ever green.

(B II, 147-48)

But the beauty is the temptation of dullness, and to yield is to know the ugliness.

¹For a detailed discussion of the topic of madness in The Dunciad see David B. Morris, "The Kinship of Madness in Pope's Dunciad," Philological Quarterly, 51 No. 4 (October, 1972), 813-831.

CONCLUSION

The Dunciad of 1743 must be read against the background of an understanding that Pope's final apocalyptic vision of dullness was achieved only after many years of thought and creative work. The vision was not complete in 1728 when the first Dunciad began to take shape, but by that time the poet's concern about dullness was considerably stronger than it had been even earlier. The beginning of Pope's preoccupation with dullness is evident as early as his "Lines: On Dulness" written for Wycherley by 1707. The Dunciad contains echoes of this poem, and uses lines directly from two other fragments written at the time, the "Similitudes"; "Of the Byass of A Bowl," and "Of the Weights of a Clock." Pope's attitude toward dullness early in his life reveals none of the outrage that is evident in The Dunciad. The Dunciad, however, still contains elements of resignation which hark back to the gentler attitude of Pope's early days. One critic, Thomas R. Edwards, has commented on this:

. . .We find in the Dunciad suggestions that nature is not entirely hostile to Dulness, that light may not be the ultimate reality, that the public structure of values Pope appeals to with such seeming confidence is in danger of collapsing.

We find, for one thing, that Dulness' "Ancient right" dates from "eldest time," and that she is the daughter of "eternal Night": (I, 9-12); the germ of this idea can be found in the lines Pope added to Wycherley's Panegyrick on Dulness in 1707: "So Wit, which most to scorn it does pretend,/With Dulness first began, in Dulness last must end." . . . The sinking of the Dunces leads to repose and sleep, a kind of peace that Pope does not simply despise:

Know Eusden thirsts no more for sack or praise;
He sleeps among the dull of ancient days;
Safe, where no Critics damn, no duns molest,
Where wretched Withers, Ward, and Gildon rest.

(I, 293-296)

. . . The satiric edge never withdraws, but there is also a tenderness in the tone and even a kind of yearning. Darkness may bring a welcome end to the complexities of day; sleep and intelligence are in a sense antitheses, and yet the latter may often long for the former. As Pope remarked early in his career (again in the additions to Wycherley's Panegyrick on Dulness), dullness is "the safe Opiate of the Mind,/The last kind Refuge weary Wit can find."

. . . Even the poet himself, the contemptuously detached speaker who records the saga of Dulness, cannot feel wholly secure. Among the chimeras with which the goddess fills Cibber's head at the beginning of Book III, along with "the Statesman's Scheme,/The air-built Castle, and the golden Dream," we find the "Poet's vision of eternal Fame." The irony may include Pope himself, it seems, and this supposition is confirmed at the start of Book IV:

Yet, yet a moment, one dim Ray of Light
Indulge, dread Chaos, and eternal Night!
Of darkness visible so much be lent,
As half to shew, half veil the deep Intent.
Ye Pow'rs! whose Mysteries restor'd I sing,
To whom Time bears me on his rapid wing
Suspend a while your Force inertly strong,
Then take at once the Poet and the Song.

"This astonishing poetry," which "triumphantly . . . enlists Milton into an Augustan sublime," (Leavis) daringly introduces the poet into his mock poem, demanding a response that a casual reading of the Dunciad might not have anticipated. The speaker's

comfortable superiority to his subject vanishes for a moment as he recognizes his own subjection to time's destructive power . . .

The poet's craft, that noble metaphor for human creativity in general, bows to the uncreating word of Dulness--both the poet and the song must yield to darkness and death.¹

What are we to make of this? The casual reader, as Edwards suggests, may miss the implications altogether, but certainly the more careful reader will be disturbed by what he discovers. This is no simple matter of deciding that Pope was not really as horrified by dullness as we have generally understood him to be. On the contrary, the realization that dullness and darkness may bring a welcome relief introduces a powerful tension into the poem. Edwards uses the word sadness, but I suggest that tragic is scarcely too strong a word to describe this realization. This tension which the poem communicates is the tension felt by a sensitive poet who had written, and believed, that "whatever is, is right." Now it seems clear that one thing which is is the powerful attraction dullness has for intelligence, darkness for light, analagous to the attraction sleep has for weariness. The fact of this attraction cannot be denied, but an inevitable tension arises in the poet's realisation and implicit warning that intelligence must struggle against this fatal attraction. The temptation of dullness already

¹Thomas R. Edwards, Jr., This Dark Estate: A Reading of Pope, Perspectives in Criticism, vol. IX, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 124ff.

discussed lies in the surface glitter abundantly present in the duncely rounds of activity so richly expressed throughout the poem. The fatal result of yielding to the temptation lies in the failure to realize that quantity is not quality, that neither haste nor running in circles constitute progress, that neither reflected nor artificial light are true sources of illumination, that lead is not gold.

The world of Pope was for him primarily a world of men. I see no evidence in any of Pope's writings that he ever stopped believing, at least in abstract, metaphysical terms, that "whatever is, is right," but there is in The Dunciad evidence that the view, which must have seemed an optimistic one when he wrote it, had turned for the poet by the last years of his life into the pessimistic view which it essentially is. If the world in general seems to embody more good than bad, "whatever is, is right" is on the whole an optimistic doctrine, but if the bad in the world far outweighs the good, the doctrine must enforce the blackest pessimism. Tony Tanner discusses the movement toward pessimism in Pope's writing:

In his early work, Pope's verse acts as the triumphant arbitrator between confused low facts, and lucid high visions. They marry in his vision of harmonious possibilities. In the work of the middle period--as in the Moral Essays for instance--his poetry is better seen as the tool of a hurt intelligence, feeling the vocation to do what doctoring work it can in the great hospital of the world. Then in his late works we can see Pope abandoning all urbane poise and deliberately

creating for himself a role of pessimistic self-exiled prophet, a role which allows him to speak out with full passionate outrage.¹

It is, of course, in his "role of pessimistic self-exiled prophet" that we see Pope in The Dunciad of 1743. Gone are the "harmonious possibilities" evident in the early "Lines on Dulness" and elsewhere, when dullness in its proper measure seemed to be only one small part of "whatever is," and a part by no means excessively forbidding. Gone too is the "vocation" to "doctor" in "the great hospital of the world," when the poet-physician's prescription could well have been to take one capsule of Burlington (Bathurst, Cobham, Blount or the Man of Ross) daily on rising. By 1743 it was tragically evident to Pope that not only the patient, but also the medicine, and even the physician, were destined to be the victims of dullness.

The Dunciad of 1729 should be read then partly as a prescriptive poem. Along with the castigation of the "Grub-Street Race" is the suggestion that literature would not be in such a predicament if it were in the hands of talented and dedicated men rather than inept and casual pretenders. The current lot of bad writers is considered a pestilence, but it is implicitly recognized that a pestilence can be eradicated. In this sense Theobald's position in the poem can be understood easily. He was a literary pest and so he remained to Pope, but while he was

¹Tony Tanner, "Reason and the Grotesque: Pope's Dunciad," Critical Quarterly, 7 (Summer, 1965), pp. 145-60.

a pest he had not the bad eminence required to be the leader of a mob which could put an everlasting curse on an entire civilization. Cibber, for reasons we have seen, was just such a man, and, as poet laureate he was officially at least England's premier poet.

One cannot read the 1729 Dunciad and then simply move on to Book IV of the 1743 Dunciad mainly because of the shift in the poet's vision of dullness which I have tried to describe in this thesis. Pope's decision to remove Theobald and substitute as his new hero, Cibber, is the most noteworthy signal of an altered intention. After he had written The New Dunciad and had envisaged the full devastation of which dullness is capable Pope saw the "Grub-Street Race" in a new light. As writers, of course, they do more than merely pour their shallow thoughts onto paper. They give voice in a sense to the even more profound dullness of the "Great," the schoolmen, politicians, peers, divines, virtuosi and others.

The fault of the greater dunces of Book IV lies in the destructiveness which comes about through their tendency to pervert their various disciplines. This comes down to little less than a perversion of nature if nature is seen in a very broad sense as Pope sees it.¹ If we see nature

¹Margaret M. Fitzgerald quotes Lovejoy's reminder that "the history of primitivism is in great part a phase of a larger historical tendency. . .the use of the term 'nature' to express the standard of human values, the identity of good with that which is 'natural' or 'according to nature'."

in the sense that Lovejoy suggests, as an expression of a standard of human values, or as a standard for that which is good we can see that the activities of the dunces of Book IV are regarded essentially as unnatural. Aristarchus is as guilty as the carnation grower for he misapplies the natural use of scholarship, which is to enlighten rather than to obscure. The free-thinkers are as guilty as the butterfly collector, for the former in denying God because He does not meet their requirements are failing to recognize one of the great reasons for man's special place in the chain of being. Self-love, the special quality of the free-thinkers, applies to all of the dunces in a general way because all of them put self ahead of the common good either directly or through failure to credit others for achievements they wrongly claim as their own, or in otherwise perverting what could have been a contribution to the general good of civilization. All thus are brought to the same dead level so that whether one is a wrongheaded scholar or a wrongheaded numismatist is of little consequence as each contributes in his own degree to the death of enlightenment.

Miss Fitzgerald writes also of ". . . the poets' use of Nature as a guide to their literary, aesthetic, and ethical judgments, and . . . the vivere secundam naturam as a touch-stone for interpreting poetic quarrels (all loud with appeals to Nature) that raged about landscapes, literature, and rules of life during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Margaret M. Fitzgerald, First Follow Nature: Primitivism in English Poetry 1725-1750 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), pp. vii-viii.

The definition of dullness was a job which occupied much of Pope's time throughout most of his adult years. His earliest references to the subject tell us little about his meaning. The middle years during which the emphasis of his work lay in other and more optimistic directions contribute to our understanding of dullness mainly in retrospect of the more explicit treatment given the subject in the final versions of The Dunciad.

It is in his descriptions of the manner in which dunces operate that the satirist makes his definition of dullness most understandable. He sets before our eyes herds, shoals, tribes, swarms who finally amount qualitatively to one. The crowds of dunces appear to be greatly variegated, but all in the end are the same. All are busily progressing--in circles? downward? backward? All create the impression of involvement in great depth, but all are superficial. All shed light which leaves the world around them in darkness. What is this dullness then other than the arch-enemy of civilization, the power of uncreation in the hands of men who think they are gods?

W. L. MacDonald writes,

. . . Surely Professor Courthope has gone too far in offering the opinion that "dullness" for Pope included practically everything that offended against "right reason and good taste."¹

This thesis has attempted to show that Courthope did not indeed go too far; his only shortcoming if any being that he omitted

¹W. L. MacDonald, Pope and his Critics; A Study in Eighteenth Century Personalities (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1951), p. 206.

to elaborate upon a statement which possibly seemed quite unequivocal to him. No dictionary recognizes Pope's definition of dullness, but then students of Pope have learned through their struggles with such terms as "nature" and "wit" that dictionaries do not provide the kind of definition required for the task.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, torn between his admiration of Pope's achievement and his aversion to other facets of the man, settled finally for this defence: "If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?" Read all of The Dunciad or read only these lines:

In vain, in vain,--the all-composing Hour
 Resistless falls: The Muse obeys the Pow'r.
 She comes! she comes! the sable Throne behold
 Of Night Primaeval, and of Chaos old!
 Before her, Fancy's gilded clouds decay,
 And all its varying Rain-bows die away.
Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
 The meteor drops, and in a flash expires.
 As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
 The sick'ning stars fade off th' ethereal plain;
 As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand opprest,
 Clos'd one by one to everlasting rest;
 Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,
Art after Art goes out, and all is Night.
 See skulking Truth to her old Cavern fled,
 Mountains of Casuistry heap'd o'er her head!
Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,
 Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
 And Metaphysic calls for aid on Sense!
 See Mystery to Mathematics fly!
 In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
 And unawares Morality expires.
 Nor public Flame, nor private, dares to shine;
 Nor human Spark is left, nor Glimpse divine!
 Lo! thy dread Empire, CHAOS! is restor'd;

Light dies before thy uncreating word:
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And Universal Darkness buries All.

(B IV, 627-55)

and answer this: If dullness be less than an enormity
committed against mankind, why this poetry?

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