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Eighteenth Century Lit.

20 12 95

New Hero--Old Story:

**A Comparative Analysis of *The Dunciad Variorum* and *The Dunciad*
in *Four Books*¹**

***The New Hero*²**

. . . in the *greater epic*, the prime intention of the muse is to exalt heroic virtue, in order to propagate the love of it among the children of men; and consequently that the poet's first thought must needs be turned upon a real subject for laud and celebration; not one whom he is to make, but one whom he may find, truly illustrious. (*Pope* 711-712)

With the epic-hero deemed here of such elemental importance, it seems, according to this principle, that Pope's

¹As usual, several many footnotes are included solely for the reader's (and author's) amusement and in accordance with the understanding that, like Theobald, they become phantom-like, ceasing entirely to exist, at the moment of final academic evaluation.

²Cognisant of standard MLA guidelines which disallow the need of sub-headings in such short papers, we here deny the shortness and affirm the need.

substitution of Theobald for Cibber entirely undermines his "little epic"³(Pope 712). In actual fact, Ricardus Aristarchus--otherwise Warburton--presents, in this prefatory essay, support for Cibber as hero of *The Dunciad*, suggesting that there should exist some analogue between heroes of the "greater epic" and "little epic" both. Since the constituent qualities of the former are "wisdom, bravery and love, from whence springeth heroic virtue,"(Pope 712) according to the parodic nature of the latter, the defining qualities here should be "vanity, impudence and debauchery, from which happy assemblage resulteth heroic dullness."(Pope 712) There follows a dense and detailed proof--with frequent appeal to the autobiographical *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*⁴--showing Cibber as indeed such a fellow.⁵ Warburton not only

³Described in *The Oxford Authors* as not here representing the epyllion, but formal satire, a natural descendant of epic.

⁴The irony being that the autobiography of such a dunce should cause a wit such studious examination.

⁵"Ricardus Aristarchus of the Hero of Poem" is acknowledged in *The Oxford Authors* as being penned satirically in the style of Bentley's scholarship, though, besides one or two possible instances, this suggestion is both unlikely and unsupported by other editors. Indeed, Richard Bentley, a Yorkshire-man--and so anomalistic in his unfortunately ignobility--who, despite an academic record that included: questioning the antiquity of Aesop's *Fables*, despotic rule over Trinity College, dismissal of Pope's

supports Cibber as the ideal hero of such a work, but effectively admits there never was any other, that the previous incarnation was nothing more than an hallucination made solid in the words of Scriblerus's own faulty introductory essay.

This lengthy and somewhat diatribal introduction to *The Dunciad in Four Books* reveals a covert admission, by Pope,⁶ of certain uncertainties in recasting the heroic role in a mock-epic already extant.

In assessing the suitability of Cibber as *Dunciad's* hero, some knowledge of his true person--as well as the conditions leading to his eventual crowning--must be measured against the demands of the role.

Comment: try to change

Cibber's literary quarrel with Pope ostensibly began in 1717 with the opening of *Three Hours After Marriage*. Co-written by John Gay, Dr. Arbuthnot and Pope, it starred Cibber and was an immediate flop, closing after the seventh performance. Several weeks later, in a revival of *The Rehearsal*, Cibber improvised comic yet blunt references to *Three Hours After Marriage*, provoking the ire of an overly sensitive Pope. As Helene Koon

Homer, and especially an arbitrary revision of *Paradise Lost* based upon the assumption that Milton was abused by an incompetent amanuensis and careless editor, all of which qualified him for a major role in *The Dunciad*, actually makes only one brief appearance in Book IV, (201).

⁶Although not penned by Pope, its predominant inclusion is certainly solely at his behest and so is marked with his design.

points out in her introduction to *A Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope*, although this genesis has been unanimously accepted by scholars, its main source is the admittedly biased *Letter*, with the only other confirmation appearing in a correspondence from Montagu Bacon to his cousin:

I don't know whether you heard, before you went out of town, that *The Rehearsal* was revived . . . and Cibber interlarded it with several things in ridicule of the last play, upon which Pope went up to him and told him he was a rascal, and if he were able he would cane him; that his friend Gay was a proper fellow, and if he went on in his sauciness he might expect such a reception from him. The next night Gay came accordingly, and, treating him as Pope had done the night before, Cibber very fairly gave him a fillip on the nose, which made them both roar. The guards came and parted them, and carried away Gay, and so ended this poetical scuffle.(qtd. *Letter i-ii*)⁷

The initial backstage barney concluded, according to Cibber, with the avowal:

". . . since you have attacked me in so monstrous a Manner; This you may depend upon, that as long as the play continues to be acted,⁸ I will never fail to repeat the same words over and over again."(*Letter 19*)

⁷The above is provided for its value as entertainment, but also as an indication of the lustiness of this literary quarrel, with its ability to transmogrify from the cerebral to the corporeal.

⁸The play was actually to see sixty years of repeated success.

In December of the same year, Pope made written application to Cibber for tickets to his *The Non-Juror*: a play, as Pope well knew, whose theme was guaranteed to rile his Catholic and Tory sensibilities. The occasion for further offence was apparently his design, providing, as it would, justification for continued satirical usage of Cibber. Indeed, Pope shortly composed an anonymous pamphlet lambasting the play and turning its meaning upside down. Cibber, refusing to take the bait, remained silent. Pope next corresponded with several friends suggesting the play was "damned." Cibber remained silent. In 1727, a decade after the initial insult that was no insult, Pope ridiculed Cibber in *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*, refuting his acting skills and accusing him of plagiarism. Cibber remained silent. In 1728, the first edition of *The Dunciad* appeared, in which Cibber met sundry insults. Several *Grub Street Journal* issues further featured Pope's invective and were followed, in 1733, by *First Satire of the Second Book of Horace*, in which Cibber becomes the earliest target. Cibber still remained silent. In *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Pope offers the scandalous, "And has not Colley still his lord and whore?" (Pope line 97) As always, Cibber kept quiet during this endless onslaught, though finally and inevitably broached the subject in his *Apology*:

I never look upon those Lines as Malice meant
to me . . . but Profit to himself: One of his points
must be, to have many Readers: He considers that my
Face and Name are more known than those of many
thousands of more consequence in the Kingdom: That

therefore, right or wrong, a lick at the *Laureate*
will always be a sure Bait. . . .⁹(*Apology* 25)

The suggestion of capitalised¹⁰ "Profit," of course, entirely undermines Pope's claim that service to the muse was his only motivational principle. It is also the limit of his Cibber's ribaldry. When Cibber later offers an anonymous quotation from the 242d *Tattler*:

"In all Terms of Reproof, where the sentence
appears to arise from Personal Hatred, or Passion,
it is not then made the Cause of Mankind, but a
misunderstanding between two Persons,"(*Apology* 26)

Pope's high pretensions become low obsessions, revealing a mean-spirited poet lobbing abuse from behind satirical fortifications, with sanctimony forming the bulwark, and tenets of Augustanism fashioning each merlon--though it is ironically Cibber occupying the moral high ground.

The New Dunciad--book IV--is a likely response to *Apology*, for Pope's continued usage of Cibber in such blunderbuss satire aimed at general socio-cultural decline argues that "Personal Hatred" is incidental, and that Pope's cause is indeed the "Cause of Mankind." In simple terms, the more Cibber appears in satire the more he must rightly be the right stuff for satire and so perceived less as a victim of

⁹This same quotation is offered by Ricardus Aristarchus, in his introduction to *The Dunciad* as proof of Cibber's vanity.

¹⁰Pun intended.

maliciousness--with Pope accordingly absolved.

Finally, Cibber made a direct response to Pope's abuse, publishing an open letter which, although maintaining a tone of respect, includes an anecdote in which the main actor is Pope--affectionately type cast as Homer--the scene, "a certain House of Carnal Recreation, near the *Hay-Market*," (*Letter 47*) and the love interest a "Girl of the Game." (*Letter 47*) It is Cibber himself, according to Cibber himself, who:¹¹

. . . found this little hasty Hero, like a terrible *Tom Tit*, pertly perching upon the mount of love! . . . I fairly laid hold of his Heels, and actually drew him down safe and sound from Danger.^{12,13} (*Letter 48*)

During Pope's composition of *The Dunciad in Four Books*, Cibber published *A Second Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope*.

¹¹This introduction is borrowed from *Order and Chaos in The Dunciad*, my previous paper.

¹²Koon suggests knowledge of this whore-house adventure as being a more likely source of their feud, though it seems Cibber's own account of its genesis, along with such corroboration as supplied by Montagu Bacon's epistle, earlier quoted, offers sufficient proof to the contrary.

¹³Although this duplicity of footnotes might seem an abuse of the system, the abuse rests not in the duplicity but in the system. This anecdote forms the only low hitting thrust of *A Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope*, and was likely a response to, "And has not Colley still his lord and whore?" (*Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, line 97)

In Reply to Some Additional Verses in His Dunciad, Which He Has not yet Published. The frequency and force of Pope's invective in this definitive version of *The Dunciad* saw the final volley in this war of words: Cibber's *Another Occasional Letter*, in which he finally oversteps the boundaries that had so marked his previous restraint, drawing particular attention to Pope's physical deformity. It was indeed the end of the war, for Pope soon fell to ill health and then to death. An epitaph by Cibber, forms a fitting finish:

Our pious praise on tombstones runs so high,
Readers might think, that none but good men die!
If graves held only such: *Pope*, like his verse,
Had still been breathing, and escap'ed the hearse
Tho' fell to all mens failings, but his own,
Yet to assert his vengeance, or renown,
None ever reach'd such heights of *Helicon*!
E'en death shall let his dust this truth enjoy,
That not his errors can his fame destroy.(qtd.
Ashley 149)

When W. Powell Jones, in his introduction to *Sawney and Colley and Other Pope Pamphlets* suggests:

. . . one is convinced that Pope must have been heartily hated to be attacked so fiercely, and conversely that Pope showed considerable restraint in what seem to be his personal attacks on Cibber and others,(i)

he suffers clearly from the common malady which causes the critic to admire--even at the cost of truth--the poet, as much as he venerates the poetry; but also he expresses a sentiment

echoed by many Pope scholars, and one which this brief outline demonstrates to be entirely removed from the truth. The entire wordy war was both instigated and propagated by Pope, with Cibber generally maintaining a dignified and good humoured silence.¹⁴ Indeed, Cibber was--and not merely in his theatrical capacity--more of a wit than a dunce, a determination entirely supported in his letters to Pope, his *Apology* and in his plays which remained perennially popular.

Pope's *The Dunciad* doubtless is difficult to digest, and the indigestibility stems primarily from the essential stuff of the satire: cultural combat--an abstraction based upon quantified aesthetics¹⁵--composed of personal animosity. The abstract and bitter and controlled *Dunciad* provides an interesting antipode to *Clarissa*, the *Magnum Opus* of contemporary moraliser, Samuel Richardson. Equally

¹⁴In 1743, when *The Dunciad in Four Books* appeared, Cibber was already--for the times--an elderly gentleman of some seventy-two years--surely deserving, at the very least, the respect of silence, though meeting the increased volume of satirical scurrility. For his own epitaph, we might underscore his generosity: "I grant the *Dunciad* a better poem of its kind than ever was writ." (*Letter 10*)

¹⁵Brean Hammond, in *Pope*, suggests that in an age when widespread literacy was still new, all printed matter was still considered literature; accordingly, he suggests Pope not only supported high-culture but was the ultimate aesthetic authority, defining what was classic and what was popular.

parsimonious though less lugubrious, for all the laboriousness of those million *Clarissa* words, there is a sense of Richardson's own captivation by the immorality he proscribes, a sense of vicarious living in the damnable deeds of Lovelace, a sense of morality supplanted by an organic text that grew perhaps beyond control. The essential stuff of Richardson's moralising then is the less abstract human appetite run rampant--a much tastier offering.

In the final analysis, and after a somewhat lengthy though worthwhile chronology and commentary, it seems clear that the heightening state of mutual animosity was the primary reason for Pope's adoption of Cibber, rather than his suitability to the role; and yet, Cibber as *poet laureate* was clearly anomalistic and so a genuine candidate. Indeed, so uninteresting were his poetic achievements that all record of them is virtually erased. *An apology for the life of Colley Cibber* offers a smattering of verse--originally published pseudo-anonymously--sufficient to demonstrate the general limping quality:

I

Ah, hah! Sir *Coll*, is that thy Way
 Thy own dull Praise to Write?
 And wou'd'st thou stand so sure a Lay
 No, that's too stale a Bite.

III

Who sees thee in *Iago's* Part
 But thinks thee such a Rogue
 And is not glad, with all his Heart,

To hang so glad a Dog?

IX

Thunder, 'tis said, the Laurel spares
Nought but thy Brows could blast it:
And yet---O curst, provoking Stars!
Thy Comfort is, thou *hast* it.¹⁶ (*Apology* 33)

At the same time, Theobald, as the potty pedant, had outgrown his role with his poignant criticism of Pope's Shakespeare and the publication of his own scholarly effort, and now represented more Pope's error of judgement than his own shortcomings.

The question though remains as to the effectiveness of Pope's usurping the Crown of Dullness in the name of Cibber. Certainly the job seems at times hasty and incomplete. When, for instance, in *The Dunciad Variorum*, we discover Theobald sitting amongst his books, *The Dunciad in Four Books* features significant changes of incidental detail as well as twenty lines of new text, (120-140) and yet, despite this effort, the results remain less than satisfying.

"But, high above, more solid Learning shone,/The Classics of

¹⁶These stanzas originally appeared in *The Whitehall Evening Post* as an ironic denial of authorship in respect of some anonymously published praise of Cibber. Although they are included in *Apology* as a intimation of his magnanimity and good humour--qualities essentially true--they unwittingly reveal his bad poetry.

an Age that heard of none,"(*B. Dunciad* 157-148)¹⁷ a text unchanged from the original version, forces the following footnote:

Some have objected that books of this sort suit not so well the library of our Bays, which they imagine consisted of Novels, Plays, and Obscene books; but they are to consider, that he furnished his shelves only for ornament, and read these books no more than the *Dry bodies of Divinity*, which, no doubt, were purchased by his Father when he designed him for the Gown.¹⁸¹⁹(*B. Dunciad* fn. 147)

We might also wonder why, "She ey'd the Bard, where supperless he sate,"(*A. Dunciad* 109) becomes, "Swearing and supperless the Hero sate,"(*B. Dunciad* 115) for though Theobald suffered from nummary embarrassment effecting the occasional missed meal, this is hardly the case with Cibber.

Elsewhere, textual changes pertaining to Cibber are either incidental or else effectively incorporate the new hero, as in the opening of book II, where the original "Great Theobald sate: the proud Parnassian sneer"(*A. Dunciad* II, 5) simply becomes "Great Cibber sate: the proud Parnassian sneer."(*B.*

¹⁷Where necessary, *The Dunciad Variorum* and *The Dunciad in Four Books* will be distinguished in citations by the respective prefix A. and B.

¹⁸Cibber claimed youthful inclinations to the cloth.

¹⁹It might also be mentioned that Cibber's shelves also featured Pope's own *treatment* of Homer, a work so removed from its source as to be perfectly suited to the role of "ornament."

Dunciad II, 5) Shortly after, "On him, and crowds grow foolish as they gaze"(A. *Dunciad* II, 8) is altered to "On him, and crowds turn *Coxcomb* as they gaze,"(my italics)(B. *Dunciad* II,8) with the next four lines entirely new and expanding upon Cibber's presence. Similarly, the alteration of, "But chief in Theobald's monster-breeding breast,"(A. *Dunciad* I 106) to "But chief in Bay's monster-breeding breast"(B. *Dunciad* I 108) is followed by nine new lines of text which further incorporate Cibber.

It is not then in textual alterations--exceptional oversights notwithstanding--that we discover problems with Cibber's displacement of Theobald, for they usually provide an easy and fitting entrance, but more with his actual character proving rather incongruous to his fictive role.

***The New Stuff*²⁰**

There is, of course, new text and textual changes that have no reference to Cibber's new standing in *The Dunciad in Four Books*. The first example, in fact, occurs in the very opening:

"Books and the Man I sing, the first who brings
The Smithfield Muses to the Ear of Kings,"
Say great Patricians! (since your selves inspire
These wond'rous works; so Jove and Fate require.(A.
I, 1-2)

This becomes:

²⁰The second promised sub-heading.

The Mighty Mother, and her Sons who brings
The Smithfield Muses to the ear of Kings,
I sing. Say you, her instruments the Great!
Call'd to work by Dullness, Jove and Fate.(B. I, 1-
4)

As with several other of Pope's alterations, the results here are mixed: Initially, we notice the text is further removed from Vergil's original, translated by Frank O. Copley as

"My song is arms and a man, the first of Troy
to come to Italy and Lavinian shores. . . ." (I. 1-2)

producing also an awkward period and so a misplaced caesura early in the third line. Also, the emphasis upon books is lost and supplanted by the Goddess, who, though symbolically important, seems somehow a disappointing replacement. At the same time, the new version avoids obscure "Parnicians" and is more direct, discarding the parenthetical structure.

Elsewhere, changes occur which, though minute, manage almighty modifications of context: "Still her old empire to confirm, she tries," (A. I 15) resolves to: "Still her old Empire to restore, she tries," (A II 23) thereby supplying a more accurate historical background to the text, pointing towards the Dark Ages as a time also of her reigned, and so authenticating the future *The Dunciad* foretells.

In other places, Pope from obscurity renders clarity:

"Grieve not at ought our sister realm acquires,"²¹(A I, 24) becoming: "Mourn not, my SWIFT, at ought our Realm acquires."(B I, 26)

Occasionally, simple improvement is the goal, as in the urination competition, when, "A second effort brought but new disgrace,"(A II, 167) is changed to: "The wild Meander wash'd the Artist's face.(B II, 176)

There are also changes which clearly seem to weaken the whole. Douglas Brooks-Davies' *Pope's Dunciad and the Queen of the Night: a Study in emotional Jacobitism* rightly points out the obscure though salient references to Thomas Shadwell, the opium addicted poet laureate who displaced Catholic Dryden after the revolution of 1689, becoming, in a sense, the laureate of revolution. Importantly, this then is the resonantly rich crown that Cibber wins. What Davies fails to mention, however, is the peculiar decision to edit out two allusions to Shadwell, (A I. 35) and (A III 315), as well as direct textual and footnote references (A II. 324) in *The Dunciad in Four Books*. What seems as a wholly appropriate vinculum between the old and the new, the bad and the becoming worse, is inexplicable abandoned.

The New Dunciad²²

²¹This particular example consumed a good five minutes of class-time upon the question of *which* realm is proposed?

²²etc.

Continuing the "action," book IV fulfils the prophesy of Settle's vision at the close of book III. Crowding about the great goddess are ignorant poets and the ignoble results of ill schooling: those taught the value of words though not the value of real knowledge. Cibber's actual position as poet laureate and his *laureateship* in *The Dunciad* initially provides an ideal analogue between the realm of the poem and the realm of England. The laurel, Roman emblem of military victory and also, by its association with Apollo--patron of the muses--an emblem of literary glory, provides an ideal symbol of *The Dunciad's* alliance with *The Aeneid*--their respective movements being from Troy to Latium and from the City to the Court²³--as well as the militaristic conquest of dullness over literature, as an emblem itself of culture.²⁴ The opening however, with Cibber resting suggestively upon the goddesses lap, is a satiric scene mostly concerned with matters epistemologic--a environment entirely appropriate to Theobald the pendant, though finding Cibber the poet strangely out of place.

As suggested by a largely faultless critic in, "Order and Chaos in *The Dunciad Variorum*"²⁵

²³See the prefatory *Martinus Scriblerus, of the Poem*.

²⁴*The Dunciad's* imitation of *The Aeneid* is, of course, much more complete than here mentioned and was more fully examined in *Chaos and Order*.

²⁵Namely: *Me* and my *Previous Paper*.

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

Similarly, to some degree, the satire of *The New Dunciad*--book IV--is superior to that of the original three, with the dull more often revealing their own dullness. This is often achieved either by means of direct dialogue:

“Leave not a foot of verse, a foot of stone,
A Page, a Grave, That they can call their own
But spread, my sons, your glory thin or thick,
On passive paper or on solid brick,”(IV 127-130)

or else by narrative which describes their dull actions:

Now crowds on crowds around the Goddess press,
Each eager to present the first address.
Dunce scorning Dunce beholds the next advance,
But Fop shows Fop superior complaisance.(IV, 135-138)

Besides this, Pope has clearly learned the inherent dangers--and chief weakness of *The Dunciad Variorum*--of naming names, though not sufficiently to dissuade his Theobald-Cibber substitution. The unpleasant ramifications of targeting contemporaries is underscored by a prefatorial “List of Books, Papers, and Verses, in which our Author was abused before the

publication of the *Dunciad*, with the true Names of the Authors," which makes page after page of effort in turning the tables and portraying Pope as the injured party. Cibber is notably absent from this and is only included by a short addendum,²⁶ "There Have Been Since Published." As a consequence, we discover here comparatively few actual persons. Indeed, an epic catalogue²⁷, featuring personifications in place of persons, begins the book, with "*Science*" groaning in chains beneath the foot stool of the goddess; with "*Wit*" dreading exile; with "*Logic*" gagged and bound. So too it ends the book, with "*Truth*" fled; with "*Philosophy*" gone; with "*Morality*" expired, and so on. As a result of this methodological change, Pope offers less personal abuse and more archetypal symbols. When proper names do appear, they frequently belong to combinations of three main categories: the first, unidentifiable pseudonyms such as:

Thee too, my *Paridel!* she mark'd thee there
 Stretch'd out on the rack of a too easy chair
 And heard thy everlasting yawn confess
 The Pains and Penalties of Idleness, (my italics) (IV
 341-344)

with footnotes offering only a vague intimations of identity:

²⁶For dull editorial reasons, this section is not included in the *Poems of Alexander Pope*--New Haven Yale University Press, and is cited here from the 1898 G. Bell and Sons edition of *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope*.

²⁷In the loosest sense of the term.

The poet seems to speak of this young gentleman with great affection. The name is taken from Spencer, who gives it to a *wandering Courtly Squire*, that travell'd about for the same reason, for which many young Squires are now fond of travelling, and especially to *Paris*.(fn. 341)

The second, identified names: ". . . Annius, crafty Seer, with ebon wand,(IV 346) rendered neutral²⁸ by their geographical discontiguity and with footnotes offering no analogous counterpart. The third, names also identified:

For Attic Phrase in Plato let them seek
I poach in *Suidas* for unlicens'd Greek
In ancient Sense if any need will deal,
Be sure I give them Fragments, not a Meal;
What *Gellius* or *Stobæus* hash'd before,
Or chew'd by blind old Scholiasts o'er and o'er,(my
italics)(IV 227-232)

though here distanced by antiquity and with footnotes strongly suggestive of type:

The first a Dictionary-writer, a collector of impertinent facts and barbarous words; the second a minute Critic ; the third an author who gave his Common-place book to the public, where we happen to find much Mince-meat of old books.²⁹(IV fn. 228)

²⁸The meaning here is not impotent but avoiding personal offence.

²⁹Our present day editor dates these three as A.D 1100, circa 130 A. D and circa 400 A.D. respectively, providing additional material of the immaterial sort.

The types are, of course, literary antiquarian, pedant and hack writer. The overall impression garnered from this new mode of composition is woefully to wish such had also been the manner of books I, II and III, for the archetype incorporates neither the limited meaning of real persons, nor the bad taste of blunt captiousness.

Moving to a closely related topic, William's, in *Pope's Dunciad*³⁰ suggests:

. . . it is in book IV that Pope most successfully creates a stage full of colourful personalities, who have their dramatic entrances and exits, who hold the centre of the stage for a brief moment, and then are shoved off by others.(89)

Although the comings and goings cannot be denied, William's emphasis in this "A Theatre For Worldlings," chapter is the theatrical qualities of book IV, though his thesis here is unusual in its weak argumentation and inadequate support. Despite these injunctions, his proposition proffers certain accuracy. At the same time, William's seems seated in some distant back row of the upper circle and can only see half the performance. The theatrical milieu he describes is combined with earlier emendations, such as "stage and town to bless,"(B. *Dunciad* I, 109) "and act"(B. *Dunciad* I, 111) "A thin third day"(B. *Dunciad* I, 114 "abdicated play,"(B. *Dunciad* I, 122) "on the stage,"(B. *Dunciad* II, 191) "Our Midas

³⁰This book remains the definitive analysis of *The Dunciad*.

sits Lord Chancellor of Plays."(B. *Dunciad* III, 324) The result is an intensification of the theatrical imagery, providing a stage most fitting for our new thespian hero, effectively balancing off some of the inconsistencies of his presence. Theatrical imagery, such as the above and even the closing of book IV: "Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall,"(655) co-exists with frequent shifts of scene moving from actual real world settings to otherworldly realms:

Where wave the tatter'd ensigns of Rag-Fair
A yawning ruin hangs and nods in air;
Keen Hollow winds howl thro' the bleak recess,
Emblem of Music caus'd by Emptiness
Here in one bed two shivering sisters lye
The cave of Poverty and of Poetry.(*The Dunciad* I 27-32)

In addition, *Dramatis Personae*, as already noted and particularly in book IV, become personifications of abstract or epistemological concepts. Although representative of book IV, such characters strut and fret upon the stage of earlier books, as in the "mob of Metaphors"(A. I, 65) and later, the prancing of punctuation.

Thus, as "Realms shift their place, and Ocean turns to land,"(A. I 70) a state of constant and persistent flux exists--rudimentary to the conquest of Chaos--moving from the real to the surreal, with characters living, dead, distant and even personifications combining with the theatrical imagery to produce something much more resembling Theatre of the Absurd.

There is, in the conclusion to book IV, an apocalyptic

triumph of Dullness filled with kinetic urgency, with the words virtually rushing themselves lemming-like over the edge and to the line below:

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* Primæval, and of *Chaos* old!

Here this brisk eager rampage of words is achieved by three types of repetition: by word, "In vain, in vain" and "She comes, she comes"; by alliteration, "she" "she" "sable" etc.; and by parallel structure both horizontal, "Of *Night* Primæval, (and) of *Chaos* old," and vertical, with the first clause in the first and third lines.

Martin Blocksidge, in *The Sacred Weapon*, draws attention to the battle between Good and Evil in the opening of book II, showing a parody of the second book of *Paradise Lost* and concluding: "Thus the true epic description of Satan is being used mock-epically against Theobald." (75) Indeed, the elemental darkness in the realm of Dullness is strongly suggestive of this epic and reverent struggle, though book IV's representation of this theme is more direct, more lucid³¹, more cataclysmic. When the End becomes in book IV, it is no

³¹More lucid in so much as it is less quixotic: "'Enough! enough!' the raptur'd Monarch cries;/And thro the Iv'ry Gate the Vision flies," (B. *Dunciad* III, 339-340) providing the original ethereal conclusion to *The Dunciad*.

ethereal flying "Vision" as closes the original book III, but a veritable catalogue of destruction, of banishment, and of absolute death when ". . . Universal Darkness buries All."(IV, 656)³²

The Dunciad in Four Books

Taken as a complete work, the adoption of Cibber as king of Dullness proves a messy business: rewritten passages attempting to hide the seams of repair sometimes become merely part of the repair. The final fourth book, though deserving of praise in its own right, dithers on the point of complete integration--illustrated in its brief publication as *The New Dunciad*, entirely separate from the rest. The possibility of monetary motivation in this singular publication is certainly relevant, with the original edition featuring an

³²There is certainly a fundamental problem with Pope's choice of the "dull" metaphor tied to the sense of sloth-like stasis and indolence, and his final cataclysmic conclusion. This is made abundantly clear:

This speech of Dullness to her Sons at parting may possibly fall short of the Reader's expectations; who may imagine the Goddess might give them a Charge of more consequence, and, from such a theory as before delivered, incite them to the practice of something more extraordinary But, if it be well consider'd, that whatever inclination they might have to do mischief, her sons are generally rendered harmless by their Inability.(IV, fn. 584)

How is it then that such a harmless mob can cause an end such as we see?

"Advertisement" offering:

We apprehend it can be deemed no injury to the author of the three first books of the *Dunciad* that we publish this fourth. It was found merely by accident, in taking a survey of the library of a late eminent nobleman. . . .(*Poetical Works* 228)³³

Besides providing an early indication of the continued annotative manipulation of reality omnipresent in the previous books, it does seem to support Cibber's notion of Pope's "Profit" motive. This idea was also adopted by Cibber's biographer, Leonard Ashley, in his somewhat harsh postulation:

"Though rich, Pope always needed money. Money was love to crippled little Pope."(Ashley 144)

None of this, of course, negates the fundamental integrity of book IV.

Problems of complete integration are also evident in the methodological change, for the parody of *The Aeneid* is entirely abandoned, further reducing the unity of the work.

At the opposite extreme, certain amendments made to books I II and III failed to sufficiently incorporate Cibber. Thus, an early footnote to book IV rationalises:

With great judgement it is imagined by the Poet, that such a Colleague as Dullness had elected, should sleep on the throne, and have very little share in the Action of the Poem. Accordingly he hath done little or nothing from the day of his

³³Again, omitted from *Poems of Alexander Pope*.

Anointing; having past through the second book without taking part in anything that was transacted about him , and thro' the third in profound Sleep. Nor aught this, well considered, to seem strange in our days, when so many *King-consorts* have done the like.(fn. IV. 20)

Such weak justification continues for the most part of a page, making numerous gybes at Cibber, though providing an explanation which is largely unsatisfactory. In fact, Cibber's activities are actually reduced in book III of *The Dunciad In Four Books* where he makes three appearances compared to five in the original.

At the same time, critical contempt for Cibber's incomplete incorporation are generally overly severe and inaccurate, a fact made patently evident with the examination of specific instances. His unsuitability for the role, however, is justly assessed. Just as Theobald provides--with qualification--the qualities of pedantic pedant, similarly Cibber as *poet laureate* provides essential literary incompetence.³⁴ Individually, neither fulfil the requirements of the role. This then is the essential weakness largely recognised and corrected in book IV: the limitations of the limited symbolic value of actual persons which, when applied to the metaphysical figure of King of Dullness, reveals the need for a composite fictive character, a *Cibbald*, able, like Aeneas, to fulfil his weary and unwelcome destiny.

³⁴Disregarding entirely Pope's accusations of plagiarism.

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