Creating the Female / Female Creators: Pope, Women Writers and *The Dunciad*

By

Nastasia Kotsovolos

Thesis Supervisor: Frans De Bruyn

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UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the transformation of gender identity in the early eighteenth century; it demonstrates the ways in which the entry of women into print culture destabilized traditional gender norms; and it demonstrates the effect of such changes upon the life and poetry of Alexander Pope.

The first chapter, which is mainly historical, contextualizes women's participation in print culture. It describes how their presence in print signified gender as an artificial or socially constructed category (as opposed to traditional notions of it as absolute and essential). This paradigm shift in gender identity generates a kind of cultural anxiety since it threatens the traditional identity of patriarchal culture itself. Thus, an overwhelming concern with restabilizing or naturalizing gender norms occurs during this period, as the culture at large, but especially members of the literary milieu, attempt to fix gender identity by aligning the masculine with the public sphere and the feminine with the private sphere.

The second chapter surveys various poetry and correspondence of Alexander Pope in order to demonstrate the difficulties and anxieties experienced by Pope as he attempts to deal with fluctuating gender codes of the day. He requires a stable notion of the private feminine Other in order to establish his masculine and public self, yet it is shown that Pope is inexorably linked with the feminine Other from which he endeavours to distance himself; thereby, he unwittingly contributes to the slippage of these terms.

The third chapter ties together all the issues discussed in the previous two chapters through a close reading of *The Dunciad.* Pope's anxiety about gender identity is revealed: he represents his culture, especially literary culture, as having fallen into "feminization" because it has ostensibly rejected masculine values in preference to feminine ones. The reign of Queen Dulness engenders the conditions whereby the body has enslaved the mind, madness has overpowered reason and empty rhetoric has replaced meaningful language. Although Pope attempts to distance himself from all that he represents as corrupt and effeminate in *The Dunciad,* he is, nevertheless, implicated in the perversion of the very patriarchal systems which he is attempting to uphold.

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CHAPTER 1

"The dang'rous sallies of a wanton Muse": Eighteenth-Century Women Writers and the Construction of Gender

As for the scholarly woman, she uses her books in the same way as her watch, for example, which she carries so that people will see that she has one, though it is usually not running or not set by the sun.

Immanuel Kant

In order to investigate the reasons which caused women to enter print culture during the eighteenth century, and to discuss the effect such an entrance had upon these women and their society, certain cultural dynamics must be discussed; since all is contextual, this issue must be examined in reference to the economic, legal, political, medical and other cultural practices of the era. Crucial to the manner in which both women and men negotiated print culture was the relationship, both real-life and literary, between the sexes. Numerous scholars of the eighteenth-century have discussed the subject of men and print culture as a phenomenon which was simultaneously shaped by the cultural dynamics of the time, while it helped fashion, not just the nature of the literary milieu, but the eighteenth-century cultural identity. Since writers are always a product of their culture, certain elements of their particular historical place and time will be interwoven into their texts, and thus available to generations of readers who encounter these texts. However, certain writers have also influenced the way their society perceives itself, both while they were alive, and some instances, hundreds of years after their death. The latter, in particular, are the kinds of writers we consider to be denizens of the literary canon. This process can be simply understood, as Harold Bloom termed it, "You are or become what you read."[1] Or, with a more complex understanding of the influence of such texts upon culture, Barbara Hernnstein Smith notes that particular authors and texts can create an environment whereby their standards become the standards of the culture. Thus, through cultural activities such as inclusion of these particular texts in academies or libraries, their values are

disseminated; readers' evaluation of the value of these texts is influenced by the standards set up by the texts themselves.[2] For instance the "universal" values upheld both by Pope and other Augustan writers, and by philosophers like Hume and Kant had, until relatively recently, a monopoly upon academic and artistic perspectives, and, as a result, on Western civilization's cultural identity.

Women's writings have also been evaluated in reference to men's established canons of learning and literature, mostly with the consequence that they were found wanting for their apparent lack of learning or style; yet, the literary output of women in the eighteenth century has rarely been considered in terms of its impact on the men writing at the time, nor has it been given due significance as an influence upon the way that culture constructed itself. Until fairly recently, eighteenth-century women writers (historically effaced under the shadow of the female members of "The Great Tradition," such as Jane Austen and George Eliot) were not even given credit for influencing the genre of novel-writing. Fortunately, recent scholars have brought to light the influence epistolary correspondence between women had in the evolution of the novel; the degree to which women were prolific novel writers themselves, although condemned by their society for being associated with that "unlearned" genre; and the extent to which the genre has been formed by female readership. However, women writers' and readers' impact on the development of the novel is only one example of their participation and agency in the literary world. In this chapter I will outline the relationship between eighteenth-century women, society, and print culture in order to demonstrate that

women writing had a profound effect on the way that both male and female members of eighteenth-century society understood themselves, and I will also demonstrate that literary women made a significant impression on men writing during this period, especially on the canonical writer Alexander Pope.

Women's place within society slowly altered in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in conjunction with and in response to what Maynard Mack calls a "general crisis of authority."[3] This crisis occurred at multiple levels of the culture - scientific, political, economic, and psychological. Mack succinctly summarizes the kinds of developments that were taking place during this period, and their significance to both the individual and social understanding of self:

> The new cosmology, associated with Newton, the new 'scientific learning fostered by the Royal Society; the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 on behalf of liberty and property (a phrase in which liberty usually meant the free consolidation of property in the hands of the few); the execution of one *de jure* monarch and the exiling of another, with all the disturbance to ancient loyalties that this entailed; the growing economic power of the dissenting groups, who were now beginning to constitute the larger part of a new moneyed as opposed to landed class; the steady expansion of forms of individualism both ethical and esthetic, affecting taste as well as conscience and gradually redefining roles and values in the family ... all these changes were fracturing traditional consensus, leaving most lines of authority apart from personal self-assertion tentative and insecure. [4]

Although much of the literature and art produced by Augustan artists reflect the principles of balance, symmetry and order, what many of these artists were attempting to accomplish was to impose, through art, equilibrium and stability onto a system that was essentially in a state of flux and crisis. This artistic intention is exemplified by the proliferation of satirists during this age: they used form and

humour (and linguistic lashings) in an attempt to inscribe proper behaviour and moral standards, hoping thereby to stabilize and overcome the "crisis in authority" brought about by the modernizing process. As Lawrence Lipking points out. "the symbolic enactment - through language and behaviour - of a system of order signifies not order but crisis, implying through the very invocation of stability an effort to rectify a felt condition of instability."[5]

The cultural understanding of gender was, during this period, just as much a concept in crisis as the others already noted. Male and female roles within society and more abstract concepts of masculinity and femininity were beginning to be reconfigured during this time, especially through advances in empirical science and the economic and political empowerment of the expanding middle class. Thomas Laqueur and other critics have noted that a conceptual shift from an ancient and Renaissance notion, which understood the relationship between the sexes to be hierarchical, gave way to a new eighteenth-century ideology, which re-visioned the relationship as one of spheres of incommensurability. Traditionally women had been understood as the obverse of man: whereas men had hot and perfect humours, women had cold and imperfect ones; whereas men embodied the active, formative principles, women embodied the passive, material ones. Medical perspectives on the female body defined it absolutely in relation to the male body. The male body was considered the stable element against which the female body was measured: the female body was deemed similar but opposite to the male body.[6] For instance, female genital organs were thought to be the same as the male genitals

but inverted and interiorized. Therefore, the pre-Enlightenment medical and cultural understanding of women was based on a fairly fixed notion of opposition and inferiority to man. What developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was the differentiation of women and men. As a result of the emergence of empirical science and experimentation, women's sexual organs came to be understood by the medical establishment of the eighteenth century as different from rather than similar and opposite to men's: a stable model of hierarchy was no longer operable. What resulted from this conceptual shift was the introduction of gendered spheres of incommensurability: men were to occupy the public, women the private or domestic sphere; both ideological spheres being ostensibly equal but different.

All claims to equality notwithstanding, the associational spheres possessed radically divergent claims to empowerment. Involvement in the public sphere entailed privileges of power and political and economic influence which the private or domestic sphere did not. The various medical and empirical explorations conducted during this time had succeeded in destabilizing notions of natural or essential gender roles and identity; consequently, the social construction of spheres of incommensurability was a necessary cultural reconstruction of sexual identity. Of course the reconfiguration of sexual identity was no easy process, and the early eighteenth-century's struggle to fix gender categories intersected with its struggle to fix cultural identity.

As a corollary to the empirical refiguring of the sexed body was the changing role of women within the economic and cultural world. Middle-class women's role

in the family shifted from active-wage earners who contributed to the household income, along with the male members of the family, to increasingly economically and socially unrecognized domestic individuals who were expected to facilitate the work and leisure of the males in the family. Ironically, this created the time and opportunity for some women to read and write, and thus publish. As Nancy Armstrong points out, the various conduct books written for women during the eighteenth century contrasted with earlier domestic economies in that they ceased, for instance, to include instructions on how to conduct farm labour, such as caring for livestock, or advice on how to create medical compounds: important jobs were left to the purview of men whereas other, more tedious labours were left to the servants.[7]

This bifurcation of gender spheres into a private sphere for women and a public sphere for men led to an entirely new signification of the sexes themselves. The reconceptualizing of sexual identity was, in part, an effect of the embryonic stage of middle-class hegemony. As women became associated with the domestic sphere, they functioned as a status symbols for the public man. Since English society was becoming more commercially active, the old hierarchical system based on the superiority of the landed aristocracy was starting to weaken. This meant that classes which were traditionally stratified could become increasingly mobile through the new monied economy. If a female member of a family became what was known as a leisured lady, then she functioned as a marker of that family's rise in class position.[8] Her dress, make-up and jewels were also indicative of family ranking: of

course the more expensive and exotic these commodities were, the greater the status attributed to the husband and family. Ironically, this meant that such a woman had to display her wealth publicly. This in itself was highly problematic, for public display was associated with prostitution, yet the woman was expected to maintain modesty and reticence. Therefore, in this particular instance, and in culture generally, woman functioned as something of a highly-charged semiotic sign.

The formidable cultural agenda of the period was to make the moralized, privatized female body co-terminous with the commodified, sexual public female body. The process through which this complex associative model was established can be exemplified by James Bland's *An Essay in Praise of Women; or, A Looking-glass for Ladies to See their Perfections in* (1733). Bland asserts in his chapter on woman's industry that her role is entirely confined to the home: for instance, she is responsible for having "Cloth made, both Woollen and Linen, which serves for the Use of her Husband, herself, Children or Servants."[9] It must be noted that the woman is not responsible for making the cloth herself, but is only made accountable for choosing, buying and arranging to have it made. She is not to take on duties that she can contract out to her servants or tradespeople. As Bland notes, one of her primary domestic duties is "her *Frugality* in laying out her Money to the best Advantage, and in encouraging those who are most ingenious and industrious in their respective Callings."[10] Her role in the commercialization of society is described in terms of charity: if she gives to society, whether through charitable donations or by spending money on herself and her family, she is praised for

advancing industry and thus enlarging the prosperity of the nation. Bland asks:

> Whether one suit of Cloaths given to those who want them, will not more redound to their Salvation, than spinning one or many more for themselves?
>
> And whether riding out one Day, and spending their Money freely with their Neighbours, who consequently rejoice at their Bounty and Liberty, is not more conducive to the Interest of their Country, than staying at Home twenty, to rob poor Tradesmen and Women of their Bread, by following those Employments which their Livelihoods depend on?[11]

Economic consumption was, therefore, one of woman's main domestic responsibilities. Her opportunity for consumption was augmented by the increased leisure time of middle and upper-class ladies who had money at their disposal. Women were objectified as commodities, as the "exchange-value" between men, yet they were also associated with materials and commodities in circulation within culture.[12] Paradoxically, middle-class women were expected to stabilize the private sphere by maintaining a semblance of domestic modesty and reservedness, and thus reinforce the masculine public sphere, yet their cultural and symbolic association with commodification, with the items of trade and accumulation, highlights the artificiality of this gender construct. As a result, "the commodified female figure becomes a powerfully sexualized figure of difference that then serves as the locus for problems of male as well as female sexuality."[13] Just as the female body was the site of discourse among the medical establishment, so too it became the site of commodification for the culture, even as it was expected to function as the locus of social morality and well-being. Instead of stabilizing gender categories, the female body as a site of discourse became the battle-ground upon which

conflicting eighteenth-century ideologies struggled for supremacy.

As a result of the eighteenth-century cultural correlation between women and commodification, their dress, conduct and general negotiation with cultural prescriptions is of primary importance. Laura Brown points out that "[t]he association of women with the products of trade is a strong cultural motif in this period, and the concern with female adornment and particularly dress is a prominent expression of that association."[14] This correlation and the problematic cultural ambivalence toward it are especially apparent in poems written by male writers such as Pope and Swift. For instance, in *The Rape of the Lock* Belinda's "toilet" enumerates her entanglement with trade and consumption:

> Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and here
> The various Off'rings of the World appear;
> From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,
> And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil.
> This casket *India*'s glowing Gems unlocks,
> And all Arabia breathes from yonder Box.
> The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,
> Transform'd to *Combs*, the speckled and the white (1.129-136).[15]

These dainty and feminine items, some from Arabia and India, some made from exotic materials such as the ivory comb, serve the dual purpose of heightening Belinda's good looks, while cosmetically concealing her faults. Both author and reader appear unsure whether to admire the effects created by these imported items, or to condemn Belinda for needing to compose a dissembling public face. Swift, in a less ambiguous manner, illustrates the association between women and commodification in "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed." His disgust with women's ability to alter their appearance cosmetically is made obvious by his

horrific description of Celia's body at various stages of undress. However, the ambivalence again sets in when the reader is unable to choose between sensations of repulsion from the deformed prostitute or pity for her. "Dress and make-up are [seen as] the outward signs of female falseness derived from a commodified culture," yet these signs are, to a certain extent, imposed upon women by their society. The connection of women "with the commodity and all its corollaries of indiscriminacy and acquisition also serves to attach an abstract imputation of moral indiscriminacy and deceit to female character."[16] Of course even during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance women were linked with dissimulation. In *Othello*, for instance, Iago utilizes this stereotype in order to undermine Othello's trust in Desdemona. Iago reveals his opinion of women to both Desdomona and Emilia:

> Come on, come on! You are pictures out of doors,
> Bells in your parlors, wildcats in your kitchens,
> Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,
> Players housewifery, and housewives in your beds. (2. 1. 109-112)[17]

After Iago infects Othello with his ideas, Othello can no longer perceive Desdemona as pure and good, but only as a deceitful "subtle whore":

> She says enough; yet she's a simple bawd
> That cannot say as much. This is a subtle whore,
> A closet lock and key of villainous secrets;
> And yet she'll kneel and pray; I have seen her do't. (4.2. 21-24)

Thus, in the pre-Enlightenment years the myth of woman as deceiving Eve was actively in circulation, yet this had less to do with women's association with commodities than with religious constructs of women's characters as being simply good or simply evil. This is the tragedy in *Othello*: Othello cannot understand

Desdemona as a complex human being; instead he can only perceive and position her according to these limited cultural myths. Once her flawless character is understood as having even a microscopic flaw, she loses all claims to goodness and purity . But in the eighteenth century this Mary/Eve myth is complicated by the dual demands of a commodified culture. The simultaneous projection of domestic and commercial values onto the woman tended to blur the boundaries of private and public spheres, distinctions upon which early modern culture was increasingly dependent for its identity.

The increasing popularity of conduct books attests to the strong need in the period to bring women into line with their idealized cultural role. The proliferation of conduct books not only disseminated cultural ideals of feminine behaviour and dress, but it also spread the values of an increasingly literate middle-class, thereby contributing to the growth of middle-class hegemony. John Essex in *The Young Ladies Conduct; or, Rules for Education, Under Several Heads; with Instructions upon Dress, Both Before and After Marriage* (1722) makes explicit the domestic role of women in society: "A Woman's Capacity is here limited properly to the Province assign'd her within Door, in which the most discerning Judgment is requisite; for here is a large Field to exercise her Industry, her Prudence; and her virtue in."[18] Lady Sarah Pennington illustrates the way that such rhetoric stigmatizes women who attempt to gain wordly knowledge: "It has been objected against all female learning, beyond that of household economy, that it tends to fill the minds of the sex with a conceited vanity, which sets them above their proper business - occasions

an indifference to, if not total neglect of, their family affairs - and serves only to render them useless wives, and impertinent companions . . . ."[19] Most conduct books published during this age contend that women's interests must remain confined to the home and must not cross over into masculine areas of concern; if this prescription of behaviour is not followed, then, it is asserted, transgressing women will lose their social utility and value.

Even though theories of individualism and social justice were being espoused at this time by influential thinkers such as John Locke, an individuated identity for women was foreclosed. Though Locke refused to grant men "Political Power" over their wives, he still granted them "Conjugal Power," which is "the Power that every Husband hath to order the things of private Concernment in his Family as Proprietor of the Goods and Land there, and to have his Will take place before that of his wife in all things of their Concernment; but not political Power of Life and Death over her, much less over anybody else."[20] So although some women were experiencing the benefits of companionate marriages, almost all were still struggling with conventions which placed them politically, economically and psychologically under the authority of men.

Even conduct books which contended that women were not intellectually inferior to men, and thus promoted women's education, did so on the premise that learning in a woman would benefit her role in the family, rather than function as a form of social or political empowerment, as it did for men. Hannah More notes in her late-century tract on women's education,

> The chief end to be proposed in cultivating the understanding of women, is to qualify them for the practical purposes of life. Their knowledge is not often, like the learning of men, to be reproduced in some literary composition, nor even in any learned profession; but it is to come out in conduct. A lady studies, not that she may qualify herself to become an orator or a pleader; not that she may learn to debate, but to act. She is to read the best books, not, [sic] so much to enable her to talk of them, as to bring the improvements which they furnish, to the rectification of her principles, and the formation of her habits.[21]

Such conservative attitudes toward women's education, when expressed by a female writer, must be considered not merely as the perspective of the writer, but also perhaps as a rhetorical tool used by the writer to mask her underlying radical demands. It was easier to gain male support for educational rights for women if the demands were couched in language that expressed deference toward the masculine order. In the passage just cited, women's potential ability to compete with men is down-played, while the benefits of female education for men is implied by the "correction" of women's habits and principles according to acceptable standards of female decorum. Nevertheless, social concern about women's behaviour, education, dress and duties is made apparent by the ever-widening circulation of conduct books. Their existence presupposes a general social interest in establishing feminine norms: those books which explicitly address "the ladies" also presuppose the existence of a female readership.

In order to understand female readership, it is important to understand the state of literacy in Britain during the eighteenth century. Statistics on literacy rates in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century are far from being accurate but historians have been able to reach a few conclusions. David Cressy points out that illiteracy was still predominant in the seventeenth century. According to his figures

the rural rate of illiteracy remained at an average of approximately 70%.[22] Throughout the country there was a direct correlation between rates of literacy and class position. Three different levels of class have been correlated with three different levels of comparable literacy: "The gentle and clerical elite were well distanced from the yeoman and tradesmen, who in turn maintained a solid superiority over the husbandmen and labourers. Women were mostly illiterate and were clustered with the most illiterate group of men."[23] Interestingly, while the class and occupational divisions between men are highlighted by the levels of their literacy, women occupy a generalized cross-class position which places the entire sex alongside the lowest class. However, the statistics shift dramatically when literacy rates in London are considered. Residency in London seemed to demand literacy, and compared to rural areas the city "was uniquely hospitable to developing female accomplishments."[24] The rise in rates of literacy in women residing in London was dramatic. Around the 1670s rates of illiteracy for women in London and its suburbs hovered at about 78%, below even the rural percentile. In the 1680s it declined to 64%, and again to 52% in the 1690s, and as Cressy notes, "The improvement continued, although its pace may have slackened , to just 44% illiterate in a sample from the 1720s."[25] The geographical specificity of what could be considered a revolution in literacy for women may have been owing to such factors as increased educational opportunities for women in the city, greater concentration of wealth within the metropolis, permitting women more leisure time, and the increased

availability of published works as a result of the proliferation of booksellers and the lowering of prices for printed material.[26]

In addition, the rise of circulating libraries, as distinct from academic or personal ones, was particularly associated with female and lower-class readership. Circulating libraries were an especial concern to the well-educated upper class. Isobel Grundy explains the cause of this concern:

> Those libraries that were gendered female, the lending or circulating libraries, inspired distrust among the book-owning class, whether genteel, professional, or academic. To make books, especially fiction, cheaply available was seen as corrupting the young, the uneducated, and especially the female who would feed their fantasy life and diminish their productive labour.[27]

What reinforced the gendering of these libraries was their practice of selling various items such as paper and perfume, which in turn gave them the poor reputation of catering to "commercial, female, non-serious identity."[28]

Traditionally, learning was perceived as a masculine domain reaching back to the "fathers" of civilization in classical times: it was considered the exclusive intellectual property of men. In fact, the lower classes and women were particularly intimidated by the archaic languages, such as Latin, used by upper-class and religious men up until the Reformation. The field of learning and reading was opened up for lower-class men and, to a lesser extent, women by the revolutionary position of Protestant religions which encouraged a direct relationship between people and their God. Protestantism, in part, set the foundations for an increasingly literate public during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Protestant sects

advocated the removal of an intermediary or "middle man" between believers and God; therefore, people learned to read in order to gain personal understanding of the Bible. The Quakers were especially successful at promoting literacy among their adherents of both sexes. As a result, a number of religious tracts were written and published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Quaker women. These women were impelled to publish, not for any kind of secular or commercial reason, but because they felt that in doing so they were fulfilling their duty to God. Some even believed that God had expressly commanded them to publish religious works in order to bring about social improvement and religious conversion. Evidently these women felt their writings would have some positive or corrective effect on the people who read them.

As the public became increasingly literate it was inevitable that the religious, didactic function of reading would infiltrate the secular world, where, once again, reading could be used by the culture as a way of promulgating "useful" information that would lead to a general secular "reformation of 'manners and morals' . . . in the crusade against social vices."[29] Women especially justified their learning to write as a means to further these laudable aims. Even before they entered print culture, a tradition of women writing for themselves and for other women had been in existence. Women penned journals and diaries which were often passed down from one generation of women to the next. They wrote epistles to each other and composed poetry and other imaginative works which they may have passed around for friends to see.

With the technological advances that led to the growth of the printing industry, a monumental improvement of literacy in urban centers was stimulated; however, the relationship between female readership/authorship and growth of the printing industry was highly paradoxical. As Katherine Shevelow points out, the growth of periodical publishing, on the one hand, enabled and promoted "women's participation in print culture," while on the other, it "engaged in containing" this very participation.[30] The inexpensive popular periodical both distributed information and gossip, and encouraged a forum of exchange by inviting epistles, comments, essays and even poetry. This capitalist venture encouraged female readership and participation in order to expand the literary marketplace and, consequently, augment the publishing industry's financial success. Thus, the periodical, more than any other printed medium, provided an outlet for the female voice to be heard publicly; yet, it limited this voice to topics that were considered suitable to the feminine world (marriage, love, children, domestic duties).

While women did begin to contribute to periodicals, men almost always maintained editorial control. The material written by women which was accepted for publication often articulated a feminine norm of conduct. By reading about female conduct, women readers could measure the extent to which their own conduct or appearance achieved social acceptability. By "establishing the boundaries and conditions of women's representation within the periodical," publishers and contributors used it as a "means of addressing their conduct outside it."[31] For instance, Steele, in *The Tatler* , insists that merely two castes of women exist, the

"destroying fiend or guardian angel": "The ill [women] are employed in communicating scandal, infamy, and disease, like furies; the good distribute benevolence, friendship, and health, like angels."[32] By using the verb "communicating" Steele emphasizes the social unacceptability of women voicing their views publicly. In contrast, he describes the more proper role for women in terms of silent, moral behaviour. In *The Tatler* 116, Steele again reinforces the impropriety of some women speaking when he describes the physiognomy of a scold: "But when through rage females are vehement in their eloquence, nothing in the world has so ill effect upon the features; for by the force of it I have seen the most amiable become the most deformed; and she that appeared one of the Graces, immediately turned into one of the Furies."[33] He uses biblical and literary allusion to reinforce his criticism of women who speak in anger, citing Eve's condemnation of Adam in *Paradise Lost* after they have succumbed to the serpent's words. By implying that Eve's improper address to Adam occurred because of the fall, Steele links eighteenth-century women's public discourse with the fall from grace, and sinful behaviour. In this way, Steele helped to shape notions of feminine codes of behaviour, which were often aligned with middle-class values of modesty, chastity, silence and obedience.

However, as already noted, women were encouraged to contribute to these periodicals. By publicly exposing private experiences or opinions, they actually transgressed the very norms of feminine conduct they were attempting to uphold. Although they were supporting the demarcation of public and private spheres,

women writing about acceptable "feminine" concerns nevertheless always already embodied the possibility of rupturing social norms. As a result, a stigma was attached to women writing, composing poetry, and generally displaying their wittiness or learning, especially if their energies were not directed at improving the conduct of their sex. Even to verbalize wit was considered a serious social *faux pas* for well-bred young ladies, as John Essex warns:

> A YG lady ought to beware of the reputation of being Witty, for vitation it may gave her of Intriguing and turning Critick, are above her Capacity; the Inconvenience attending reater than any advantages she can propose; for as a Maic speak but little, and that with Deference and Respect; so she ou en among her own Sex to avoid the Character of being thought a Wit, tho' her Memory and ready Turns, qualify her to say what she pleases; for this will but render her Contemptible to her own Sex, and a Prey to the Men, who by that means will take the Advantage of her Talkativeness to her Prejudice; while a regular, decent Behaviour, and modest Temper, will recommend her as the greatest Ornament of her Sex, those being far more necessary to her than Wit or Raillery.[34]

Wit, learning, and literature belonged to the masculine sphere; they were the intellectual property of men. If a woman brazenly attempted to display her wit and learning by publishing it, she faced the possibility of damaging her reputation. In women "[v]erbal antics were confounded with the sexual and the pen became a female instrument of lubricity. Restoration prostitutes were known for their wit, a dangerous possession for a woman, always faintly suggesting erotic impropriety."[35] Lennard Davis suggests that novel writing in particular revealed erotic possibilities for the reader. He cites Delarivier Manley's prefatory remarks to *Queen Zarah* as an example of the author's awareness of the sexual provocation inherent in writing:

> '...the reader is filled with a curiosity and certain impatient desire to see the end of the accidents, the reading of which causes an exquisite pleasure when they are nicely handled; the motion of the heart gives yet more, but the author ought to have an extraordinary penetration to distinguish them well, and not to lose himself in the labyrinth.'[36]

Both the author and the reader are seemingly clandestinely involved in sexual activity. The female writer, in this case Manley, by publicly disclosing private experience and knowledge, is in a sense exposing her self, an activity considered somewhat taboo. In Manley's case, her writing evoked strong responses from her contemporaries, not only because she metaphorically displays the "body," but also because, in works such as the *History of Rivella*, her own history and body are at the crux of the narrative.[37]

Women's public display of knowledge was related to display of body and thus prostitution. What heightened the comparison between writing and prostitution was the opening of the field of literature to the professional writer; women were paid for penning articles or publishing their own material, such as miscellanies, political tracts, and memoirs. The sale of works written by women was analogous to the sale of a woman's body as a commodity. In both cases, the activity could lead women from economic dependence on men to economic independence; therefore, women who published posed a direct threat to patriarchal systems. Not only could they possibly earn an independent living, but they could also function as examples to young girls who might follow in their footsteps. Thus, women writers implicitly challenged the family structure, a threat which in turn could endanger the larger system of patriarchal control founded upon the traditional family structure. Simply by writing, women put pressure on the cultural codes of gender, and called into

question the artificiality of the construct itself. As Jane Spencer notes,

> Because of the very low opinion of women's intellectual capacities generally held in male cultural tradition, a woman writer seemed, by the very act of writing, to be challenging received notions of womanhood; and to this extent all early women writers, whatever their own opinions on women's position, were engaged willy-nilly in feminist discourse.[38]

Women who were learned, especially those who encroached upon the traditional male territory of poetics and politics, became especially vulnerable to social ridicule and antagonism. When Pope, in *The Rape of the Lock*, describes the female writer suffering equally from "Hysteric or Poetic Fit," he is articulating a common eighteenth-century biological argument against women attempting the pen (4.60).[39] When poetry or other material written by women began to appear in print, it was often mocked and degraded for its lack of sophistication and classical influence. Since female-penned material was rarely modelled on ancient material and since it partially eschewed accepted literary conventions, it was considered a transgression of both cultural and natural standards. These works condemned for being "unnatural," but their female creators were also criticized for being "abnormal."

In response, many women advocated improved female education. Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, wrote that women were "Education's, more than Nature's fools, / Debarr'd from all improve-ments of the mind, / And to be dull, expected and designed."[40] Rather than gaining support for this reasoned argument, the women who quested for knowledge, education and other

opportunities beyond what they needed to fulfill their destiny as good wives and mothers were further condemned for being unchaste and perverse. As a result, the learned lady functions as a metaphor for the "unnatural" woman who disturbs and threatens the role of the male sex and has the power to corrupt other women with her ideas. [41] As Lady Mary Wortley Montagu revealed, "[t]here is hardly a character in the world more despicable, or more liable to universal ridicule, than that of a learned woman: those words imply according to the received sense, a tattling, impertinent, vain and conceited creature."[42] Anne Finch, whose poetry was more esteemed by the male poets of her day than that of almost any other woman writer, still remonstrated about the hostility with which verses published by a woman were received:

> Alas! a woman that attempts the pen,
> Such an intruder in the rights of men,
> Such a presumptuous Creature, is esteem'd,
> The fault, can by no vertue be redeem'd" (9-12).[43]

Finch articulates the power politics in play clearly and forcefully. She goes on in the same poem to use biblical allusion to assert the right to female education and literary freedom, thereby reversing the common practice of citing scriptural authority to justify the subjugation of women.

In the poem "On Sir J-S- saying in a Sarcastic Manner, My Books would make me Mad. An Ode," Elizabeth Thomas voices concerns with improving female education and asserting the liberty to write, as does Anne Finch in "The Introduction"; however, her tone is more satrirical and scathing:

'Alas, poor Plato! All thy glory's past:
What, in a female hand arrived at last!
'Sure,' adds another, 'tis for something worse;
This itch of reading's sent her as a curse.'
'No, no,' cries good Sir John, 'but 'tis as bad,
For if she's not already crazed, I'm sure she will be mad.'
'Tis thus ye rail to vent your spleen,
And think your wondrous wit is seen:
But 'tis the malice of your sex appears.
What, suffer woman to pretend to sense!
Oh! how this optic magnifies the offence,
And aggravates your fears!
But since the French in all ye ape,
Why should not your morals shape?
Their women are as gay and fair,
Yet learned ladies are no monsters there.
What is it from our sex ye fear,
That thus ye curb our powers?
D'ye apprehend a bookish war,
Or are your judgments less for raising ours?
Come, come, the real truth confess
(A fault acknowledged is the less),
And own it was an avaricious soul,
Which would with greedy eyes monopolise the whole;
And bars us learning on the selfish score,
That conscious of our native worth,
Yet dread to make it more" (58-84).[44]

Particularly telling of the treatment of learned women by the culture is Thomas's observation that in France, unlike England, "learned ladies are no monsters." Her poem also shows that one of the common allegations against women who attempted too much learning, and especially those who revealed their abilities, was insanity. This charge of madness was intrinsically connected to the common female illness of spleen; therefore, writing/learning as a state of female mind, the female body, and madness were often collapsed.

For writers like Thomas, who depended upon publishing in order to secure some kind of livelihood (because their class position did not allow them simply to

write for leisure and recreation), the obstacles which held women back from achieving success and thus financial reward were particularly debilitating. Since Thomas spent some years in a debtor's prison, her perspective is even more poignant and is indicative not just of gender difference, but also of class-based prejudice. What is clear in the passage quoted above is that women were not only implicitly challenging cultural prescriptions, but also explicitly defying tradition. Thus, Sarah Fyge Egerton throws out a challenge to masculine domination of realms of learning, wit and literature:

> Say tyrant Custom, why must wee obey
> The impositions of thy haughty sway?
> .....
> And shall we women now sit tamely by,
> Make no excursions in philosophy,
> Or grace our thoughts in tuneful poetry?
> We will our rights in learning's world maintain;
> Wit's empire now shall know a female reign (1-2, 28-32).[45]

Such openly feminist sentiments could only have incurred general social condemnation. So, while many of these poems were written in response to the social antagonism to female learning and writing, they frequently resulted in eliciting more vehement general censure.

What complicated the issue for women who needed to write for money was the precedent unintentionally set by Aphra Behn and Katherine Phillips; Behn's scandalous reputation was used to bolster stereotypes of immorality in women writers, whereas Phillips' unblighted reputation offered only a severely restrictive model for women writers to emulate. Aphra Behn was continually attacked from literary and other quarters for both her writing and her promiscuous lifestyle. Of

course, her participation in the world of theatre, long associated with lasciviousness, together with the bawdy imagery and language of her words and poetry, contributed to her bruised reputation. For instance, her poem "The Disappointment," describing the attempted love-making between Cloris and Lysander, results in a humorous proclamation of Lysander's impotence, knowledge that women were not supposed to possess, let alone disseminate. Behn also articulated an explicitly feminist position which lamented the continual submission of women to men. In the Epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy* Behn asks, "What has poor Woman done, that she must be/Debar'd from Sense and sacred Poetrie?" and she deplores the custom which maintains that to men women "must submit/ Our Reason, Arms, our Laural, and our Wit."[46]

However, what made her most objectionable to fine ladies and gentlemen was that she wrote for money. She was probably the first woman to achieve financial independence through her published writing and the staging of her plays. Therefore, in a sense, Behn paved the road of independence which all women writers after her could follow, but those who travelled the road proceeded at their own peril. Because Behn's reputation was so degraded it tended to stigmatize all women who published after her. For example, the mid eighteenth-century poem, *The Feminead*, though intended to honour women writers, nonetheless, enumerates the disreputable women writers whose participation in print culture established a negative or immoral tradition, one that "honest" female writers had to work against:

> The modest Muse a veil with pity throws
> O'er Vice's friends and Virtue's female foes;
> Abash'd she views the bold, unblushing mien
> Of modern Manley, Centlivre, and Behn;
> And grieves to see One nobly born disgrace
> Her modest sex, and her illustrious race.
> Tho' harmony thro; all their numbers flow'd,
> And genuine wit its ev'ry grace bestow'd,
> Nor genuine wit nor harmony excuse
> The dang'rous sallies of a wanton Muse:
> Nor can such tuneful, but immoral lays,
> Expect the tribute of impartial praise:
> As soon might Phillips, Pilkington and V---
> Deserv'd applause for spotless virtue gain. (139-152)[47]

Interestingly, John Duncomb (the writer of these lines) lists the names of women who either participated in the world of theatre as playwrights or those who were well known for writing their (frequently scandalous) memoirs -- genres which were considered exceptionally transgressive. Duncomb's characterization of women's inspiration as "dangerous" and as "wanton Muse," indicates the degree to which women's partaking in these literary genres was seen as both threatening and undesirable. The use of the word "dangerous" is particularly revealing because it establishes the speaker's opinion of the immorality of women writing, while also implicitly illustrating the kind of power women writers were seen to possess. Moreover, Duncomb articulates the common eighteenth-century view that although material written by women may be aesthetically commendable -- it may have "harmony", good form and "genuine wit" -- nevertheless women's moral imperative overrides any aesthetic achievement. This was rarely a condition stringently applied to works written by men (although, as we shall see later, a similar line of argument was used against Pope).

One way in which women sought to escape the same fate as Behn and thereby salvage their reputations was by acknowledging the inspiration of the virtuous poetess Katherine Phillips and disavowing any affiliation with Behn. Jeslyn Medoff notes that "critical acclaim for Orinda's poetry and widespread approval of her chaste and modest persona" provided women with a credible muse and example.[48] The formula followed by Phillips was never to sanction personally the publishing of her poetry, and even more stringently, never to include her name if it was published. On one occasion when a poem attributed to her was distributed without her authorization, she wrote another poem defending herself by disclaiming her involvement in its printing. Women intentionally omitted their names from their published works in order to protect themselves from public condemnation and in order to indicate their lack of over-arching pride or unfeminine ambition for fame (although it should be noted that men, to a lesser degree, used the same tactic to avoid public scandal). If a woman's name appeared on the title-page, dedication, or preface to her work, especially if it was a secular one, she "risked having her name bandied about in lampoons and scandal fiction, touted about town by ambitious booksellers, and used in 'commendary' poems that flattered her in compromisingly light tones."[49]

Women's desire to distance themselves from the quest for fame was also in part influenced by Margaret Cavendish Duchess of Newcastle, who openly admitted in the early seventeenth century that one of her motivations for writing was the achievement of fame and power and who included her name on all that she wrote.

She explains in *Natures Pictures*

> I have not read much history to inform me of the past Ages, indeed I dare not examine the former time, for fear I should meet with such of my Sex, that have outdone all the glory I can aime at, or hope to attain; for I confess my Ambition is restless, and not ordinairy; because it would have extra-ordinairy fame: And since all heroick Action, public Imployments, powerful Governments, and elequent Pleadings are denied our Sex in this age, or at least would be condemned for want of custome, is the cause I write so much.[50]

Cavendish was accused of various degrees of eccentricity and madness for her exceptionally transgressive position. In *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf describes her as a woman writer/researcher who had the potential to achieve greatness but was stifled by the lack of opportunity for education, guidance and mentoring for women:

> What a vision of loneliness and riot the thought of Margaret Cavendish brings to mind! as if some giant cucumber had spread itself over all the roses and carnations in the garden and choked them to death. What a waste that the woman who wrote 'the best bred women are those whose mind are civilest' should have frittered her time away scribbling nonsense and plunging ever deeper into obscurity and folly till the people crowded round her coach when she issued out. Evidently the crazy Duchess became a bogey to frighten clever girls with.[51]

Most women writers who followed distanced themselves as much as possible from examples like Cavendish and Behn in order to preserve their reputations. Some omitted their names, others wrote apologias for attempting the pen, and others dedicated their works to the fair and virtuous "Orinda" in hopes of being associated with her modest reputation. Even by the end of the century when women novelists had achieved some kind of social approbation and financial reward for their work, they were still apologizing for appearing in print. In *The Female Advocate* (1799),

Mary Anne Radcliffe is perhaps more self-deprecating than most women writers of the early part of the century:

> The author , at the same time, wishes it to be understood, that she has not been stimulated, from vain and ambitious views, to appear in print, but rather from the pure philanthropic motive of throwing in her humble mite towards the much-wished-for relief of these most pitiable objects of distress; numbers of whom, from the want of a fair representation of their case, she greatly fears, are unable to obtain shelter under the auspicious shade of Christian charity; and, consequently, are compelled to share the fate of the most wretched of human beings. She wishes to represent the case of those who would be industrious, if they might, but are held down by the most powerful influence of custom, and misrepresentation; and, consequently, are incapable, without the kind assistance of humanity, to find redress, or even again to tread the paths of virtue. But, alas! finding herself to [sic] feeble an advocate, she can only hold the pen of Truth, whilst Reason and Justice plead their cause.[52]

Unlike men writing at the time, who could keep their personal ethical selves separate from their artistic aesthetic, women writing inevitably collapsed the aesthetic into the ethical. A critical judgment of a female-authored text, was also a judgment upon the female author.

By investigating the treatment women received at the hands of historians, anthologists and biographers, Margaret Ezell illustrates the degree to which a woman's literary output was judged in accordance with the cultural attitude toward the author herself. She observes that the values of the period during which a given scholar lived and published directly influenced his choice of those to be included or excluded in an anthology or history. In *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain: who have been celebrated for their writings or skill in the learned languages, arts and sciences,* Ballard completely overlooks Susan Centlivre, Delarivier Manley and

Elizabeth Thomas while including others because they emblematize Christian and feminine values. The criteria seem to have less to do with the quality of these writers' works than with the degree to which these excluded writers pursued money or fame.[53] By the nineteenth century, "[v]ery few of the women celebrated by the early anthologists and encyclopedists emerge unscathed by the Victorian watchdogs of feminine delicacy."[54]

There were other criteria which established the social acceptability of both the work and the woman. For instance, women's poetry was judged according to the degree of manliness or femininity of the verse. These categories were, however, inherently contradictory: the categorization of verse as "manly" could be both compliment and detraction; the same thing was true for classifying verse as "feminine." A commendation of femininity is exemplified by John Duncomb, who praises Katherine Phillips for the softness of her verse:

> The chaste ORINDA rose; with purer light,
> Like modest Cynthia, beaming thro' the night:
> Fair Friendship's lustre, undisguis'd by art,
> Glows in her lines and animates her heart" (110-114).[55]

The repetition of words such as "chaste", "purer light" and "modest" denote the decorum of Phillip's virtuous verse and chaste sexual conduct.

However, the classification of verse as feminine could also degrade it because it was then exposed to charges of being unlearned and trivial. Anne Finch laments,

> Did I, my line intend for publick view,
> How many censures, wou'd their faults persue,
> Some wou'd, because such words they do affect,
> Cry they're insipid, empty, uncorrect.

> And many, have attain'd, dull and untaught
> The name of Witt, only by finding fault.
> True judges, might condemn their want of witt,
> And all might say they're by a Woman writt (1-9).[56]

Since women were denied most forms of academic education and because they were often unfamiliar with classical traditions or rhetorical tools, the injustice of this charge caused much resentment and anger.

Of course the characterization of poetry written by men as being in any manner "feminine" was never an honour. In fact, proponents and admirers of certain male writers of the time would commend male-authored work by dissociating it as far as possible from all aspects of femininity, while aligning it to masculine qualities such as strength, vigour and classical heroism. For instance, George Granville praises William Wycherly by asserting the masculine nature of his writing and contrasting it with the effeminate writings of other male poets who sacrifice meaningful content for empty form:

> Where Justness is wanting in the Design, and Spirit in the Execution, the finest Colouring Art can invent, is but Paint upon a frightful Face: Yet many of our modern Writers look no farther, they lay the whole stress of their Endeavours upon the Harmony of Words; like Eunuchs, they sacrifice their Manhood to a voice, and reduce Poetry, like Echo, to be nothing but Sound.
>
> In my Friend, every Syllable, every Thought is masculine; his Muse is not led forth as to a Review, but as to a Battle; not adorn'd for Parade, but Execution; he would be tried by the sharpness of his Blade, and not by the Finery: Like your Heroes of Antiquity, he charges in Iron, and seems to deplore all Ornament but intrinsick Merit.[57]

The characterization of failed poets as having painted faces, being desexualized, and composing poetry which is emblematic of nothingness directly associates masculine literary failure with a misogynist view of feminine character. For male writers of

the time, the farther they distanced themselves from the cultural feminine, the greater the possibility of securing their reputations. What this signifies is that masculinity was less an intrinsic quality than one artificially conferred upon an individual.

Poetry and other writing by women could also be complimented by classifying it as masculine. John Dryden wrote to Elizabeth Thomas that her poems were "'too good to be a woman's; some of my friends to whom I read them were also of the same opinion....'"[58] In "The Monument of Fair Maiden Lady" Dryden commends the commixture of feminine form and masculine mind:

> So Pious, as she had no time to spare
> For human Thoughts, but was confined to Pray'r.
> Yet in such Charities she pass'd the Day,
> 'Twas wond'rous how she found an hour to Pray.
> A Soul so calm, it knew not Ebbs and Flows,
> Which Passion could but curl; not discompose/.
> A female Softness, with a manly Mind ...(28-34).[59]

Margaret Ezell notes that by lavishing praise upon women for writing in a masculine style, a style embracing principles of rationality, organization, learning, and wittiness without explicitly revealing the gender of the author, women writers were able to rival or outdo their male counterparts.[60] As she notes, Cowley's poem on Katherine Phillips indicates women's ability to outdo men in literature and learning: "'Ah! Cruel Sex, will you depose us too in Wit?/ Orinda do's in that too reign./.../ We our old title plead in vain,/ Man may be Head, but Woman's now the brain.'"[61] This kind of praise indicates the extent to which women entering the learned and literary world affected the masculine literary milieu.

However, what most reveals cultural anxiety about women writing is the way in which charges of masculinity were used to degrade women writers and their works. Aphra Behn asks in the preface to *The Lucky Chance Works* for "Privilege for my Masculine Part the Poet in me," thereby asserting her claim to the role of a "hero" who desires fame for her works.[62] In so doing she demonstrates that the domain of poetry, which has traditionally belonged to men, is a domain she desires to appropriate and thus re-create for herself. Hence, she exposes herself and future female writers to criticism of being overly masculine, and of possessing a deformed nature. Women who were overly learned or those who addressed sexual topics were perceived as partaking too much of the masculine sphere: as a result they were occassionally called Amazons or accused of hermaphroditism or even witchery:

> 'The 'Female Pedant,'... is defined as constituting a third sex. She has only, by her much reading spoil'd a good Pudding-maker, and neglected those useful, tho' humble culinary Arts, more properly adapted to a female Genius, to make herself that prodigious uncouth kind of Hermaphrodite, a deeply-read lady.'[63]

In other words, the "Female Pedant" refuses to comply with the cultural identity that patriarchal culture has created for her. In so doing she has crossed the boundaries separating the sexes, and, therefore, become something neither male nor female - a hermaphrodite.

Samuel Johnson, a frequent supporter of women writers, also displayed his concern about their entering fields unsuitable for their mentality and thereby becoming something other than women. He uses martial imagery in order to illustrate the unnaturalness of women "assailing" the literary world:

> In former times, the pen, like the sword, was considered as consigned by nature to the hands of men; the ladies contented themselves with private virtues and domestic excellence; and a female writer, like a female warrior was considered as a kind of eccentric being, that deviated, however illustriously, from her due sphere of motion, and was, therefore, rather to be gazed at with wonder, than countenanced by imitation. But as these times past are said to have seen a nation of Amazons, who drew the bow and wielded the battle-ax, formed encampments and wasted nations; the revolution of the years has now produced a generation of Amazons of the pen, who with the spirit of their predecessors have set masculine tyranny at defiance, asserted their regions of science, and seem resolved to contest the usurpations of virility.[64]

By categorizing the male domination of certain modes of learning as tyrannical, Johnson seems to have sympathy for the female position, but this passage also reveals his disapproval of the increasing number of women "invading" the masculine literary world. It is worthwhile noting that images of women taking up the pen and the sword are explicitly phallic, therefore indicating both the sexual and intellectual threat that was posed by women transgressing their domestic sphere.

In a far more virulent attack against female writers Richard Polwhele also employs martial imagery to accuse women writers, especially Mary Wollstonecraft, of embracing masculinity to the degree that they have become monstrously "unsexed":

> Survey with me, what ne'er our fathers saw,
> A female band despising NATURE'S law,
> As 'proud defiance' flashes from their arms,
> And vengeance smothers all their softer charms.
> I shudder at the new unpictur'd scene,
> Where unsex'd woman vaunts her imperious mien;
> Where girls, affecting to dismiss the heart,
> Invoke the Proteus of petrific art (11-18).[65]

The juxtaposition of women writers to Proteus is indicative of the hazard they pose: their transgression of feminine norms and consequent association with the masculine signify the culture's inability to fix gender boundaries. The female refusal of containment within the socially sanctioned domestic realm highlights the cultural anxiety over the lack of gender distinction: "The Sexes have now little apparent Distinction, beyond that of Person and Dress: Their peculiar and characteristic Manners are confounded and lost: The one Sex having advanced into Boldness, as the other have sunk into Effeminacy."[66]

An additional complication regarding the imputation of masculinity to women writers is that some women, especially those working in theatre, were beginning to discover the freedoms available to them in cross-dressing. Studies on this phenomenon are as yet in their infancy, but indicators show that women did appropriate male dress. For instance a poem written by a Mr. E.R., entitled "The Fair sex turn'd Amazons: or, a new poem made on the lady's hatt's," a poem with obvious pornographic characteristics, indicates the social concern over these masquerading women

> *Phenthesilea* at the *Trojan* War,
> Whom *Achelles* flew with his Iron Barr,
> Did not Appear, nay, half so stout in Arms,
> As our Manly Females, void of all their Charms,
> Thus, Walks in State, in a Masculine Robe,
> Damn's her *Adam*, Robbs her Innocent *Job*,
> Of all his Cash, his Horse, his Pistol, Watch,
> His Wigg and Hatt, what ever she can Catch.[67]

The express concern in this poem is that women have become masculinized enough to rob men of their trappings of authority and virility. The poem goes on to

articulate the male poet's fantasy of subduing these Amazonian women by making "their Belly's Raise"; in so doing he would be reasserting masculine authority and control.

An example of a literary woman taking on male dress is playwright Charlotte Charke, the daughter of Colley Cibber. Charke was disowned by her father for her personal and career choice, and ended up living in virtual destitution. She even wrote an autobiographical memoir in hopes of a reconciliation with Cibber, but the results were ultimately disappointing. Kristina Straub points out that women such as Charke, who chose to dress as men, especially women who were involved in the primarily specular world of theatre, endangered notions of gender distinction. She notes that Charke's masquerades "gesture toward the performative nature of male sexuality, questioning its 'naturalness' through strategic mimicry."[68] Since the definition of masculinity was conceptualized as the opposite of femininity, and femininity in this case is undermined by cross-dressing, the meaning of masculinity itself becomes problematized.

What becomes apparent in the study of social attitudes toward women writers is that their detractors commonly described them and their work in terms of either lack or excess. Women who were too learned or literary were accused of suffering from feminine bodily ills; they were victims of hysteria or the spleen. Others claimed that these women were lacking in feminine qualities, and thus were a manifestation of some third "unsexed" gender. These criticisms illustrate several things. They indicate the extraordinary cultural concern about learned ladies and

women writers, which concern suggests that their presence in print culture and the public world was substantial. As well, criticisms of their lack/excess suggest that their existence made conspicuous the social fashioning of gender roles: the criticism attempted to bring into line women who eschewed cultural norms.

Disapprobation of women writing could be buttressed by attacks on the style in which women often wrote. Since they lacked the formal education to guide them in poetic conventions (although most women writers had at least some exposure to popular poetry of the day, and would have most likely come into contact with works written by Dryden, Swift and Pope), their use of poetic form was generally looser and less grammatically correct than the male poets' terse and crafted verse. Because their knowledge of classics was, with rare exception, quite limited, they frequently depended upon religious language and natural imagery in their poems. While such lack of learning provoked condescension from male writers, women writers were, however unconsciously, creating their own aesthetic voice because they were writing about their experiences, desires, and fantasies as women. Occasionally, female-penned poetry implicitly criticized patriarchal culture by envisioning an alternative existence for women, one which opened a space for the positive experience of female imagination. For Anne Finch in "The Petition for an Absolute Retreat," the female experience becomes everything that it is not supposed to be according to social conventions of the day: Edenic, lush, freely passionate, and based on natural cycles rather than male economy:

Clothe me, Fate, though not so gay,
Clothe me light and fresh as May;
In the fountain let me view
All my habit cheap and new,
Such as, when sweet zephers fly,
With their motions may comply,
Gently waving to express
Unaffected carelessness.
No perfumes have there a part,
Borrowed from the chemist's art,
But such as rise from flowery beds,
Of the falling jasmine sheds! (64-75)[69]

The definition of "nature" in this poem moves away from the ordered, systematic notion of it, to a more "romantic" one. This imaginary region, functioning as an alternative and idealized reality, is home to the speaker where she is joined by a partner "suited" to her mind and where she lives without "domestic cares."[70] The recurring imagery in this poem, and in other poems written by Finch is that of windings and shade; imagery which, Salvaggio convincingly argues, represents the region where the female writer is displaced by a culture which does not accept her calling; yet, paradoxically, this imagery also suggests this imaginative area may be the isolation she needs in order to recoup her true (sensual/sexual) identity as an autonomous individual rather than one defined by man. In a sense "The Absolute Retreat" is the writer's room of her own and of her own making. By articulating her idealized version of reality, Anne Finch also emphasizes the degree to which reality fell short of fulfilling feminine desire.

Similarly in"The Lover: A Ballad," Lady Mary Wortley Montagu describes an idealized and imagined lover:

> No pedant, yet learned; not rake-helly gay,
> Or laughing, because he has nothing to say;
> To all my whole sex obliging and free,
> Yet never be fond of any but me;
> In public, preserve the decorums are just,
> And show in his eyes he is true to his trust (16-21).[71]

She writes that if she had such an understanding lover and a relationship based upon respect and companionship, she would never endanger it by acting inappropriately. Thereby, she implicitly lays the blame for women's wrong-doing upon the shoulders of the men they marry. The virgin flies from the "lewd rake" and the "fopling," yet Lady Mary's lament, "but where shall I find/Good sense and good nature so equally conjoined," indicates that perhaps women have few options open to them other than marriage to such despicable men. What the poem does explicitly is to commend virtuous wifely behaviour towards a respected and physically desirable partner, but implicitly it emphasizes, from a female perspective, the deficiencies of the masculine world, and the imperfections of the traditional marital state.

An even more overt condemnation of man and matrimony is articulated by Elizabeth Thomas in "Epistle to Clemena. Occassioned by an Argument she had maintained against the Author."[72] In this poem Thomas's anger is directed at the custom which permits unequal license for husbands and wives; that "The man may range from his unhappy wife,/But woman's made a property for life." The abusive husband Nefarious is described as a fop, a drunk and a lecher, representative of most husbands of the day, who, although they may not be as vile as Nefarious, are "villains in their kind." By her misfortune of marrying this man, Aminta

"survives an evil worse than death." Thomas depicts Nefarious as emblematic of the ills of eighteenth-century society; consequently, her poem becomes a scathing critique of patriarchal institutions and beliefs. Although women were certainly not the virtuous angels that society wanted them to be, even those who were corrupt were not as dangerous as a man like Nefarious: his corruption is more poisonous because he has more power over the people he comes into contact with, in both his public and private life. By denouncing the conduct of a group of men and in fact the entire patriarchal family structure, as well as specific individuals, Thomas destabilizes normalized social relationships and threatens the very foundation upon which the culture bases its identity. She especially endangers the masculine identity which sets itself up as an exemplum, a "superior" to the "inferior" sex . In this poem, Thomas asserts that *natural* masculine superiority is non-existent, that men tyrannize women through custom.

It is hardly surprising to observe that the more vehement spokeswomen were often working-class and generally received less approbation for their work than did aristocratic ladies. The lower-class women were emblematic of the changing status of literature and authorship in society: they were highly visible examples of the professionalization of authorship. Women's entry into print culture meant the possibility of their achieving financial independence, no matter what their class status. These working-class women writers not only destabilized gender codes by publicly displaying their work, and making money from their writing, but also they heralded the changing class-identity of the literary world and the transformation of class structure within society in general. Women who wrote, or seemed to write, for

money or for fame were symbolically proclaiming the ascendancy of Grub Street and "the moderns," over those who hoped to preserve classical tradition and "the ancients."

Women writers and learned ladies were placed in a very contradictory cultural position; they were more visible and more vocal, and they were becoming a real presence as both consumers of literary goods and producers of them, yet at the same time they were placed at the physical and metaphorical fringes of society in general and literary circles in particular. They were sometimes commended for their feminine verse, sometimes for their masculine style, but more frequently they were castigated for their lack or excess of femininity. Male writers of the time attempted to marginalize literary women because within the ideology of separate spheres women were supposed to buttress the masculine sphere by being all that men were not: domestic, private, submissive, softspoken, always chaste, virtuous and kind. In this binary logic, by which men were considered the reasonable, logical, ordered, literate, educated, and progressive, and women were aligned with the imaginative, illogical, disordered, and illiterate, the ability for women to represent and disseminate their experience to the world was highly problematic for the patriarchal culture. On the one hand, if women were essentially as men thought them to be, the spread of their ideas could only infect the minds of youths and women, and result in contaminating culture. On the other hand, if they were successful in deploying their reason and demonstrating their mental capabilities, they would undermine the binary logic upon which eighteenth-century patriarchal culture rested. As the following chapters will reveal, this conundrum facing

traditional male authors of the day was an issue of deep and affecting concern. Specifically, by analyzing the reaction of Alexander Pope to the cultural and literary problematic of gender constructs, I will describe the ways in which his perspective and the women's perspective both intersected and diverged, and I will go on to illustrate the ways in which Pope deals with the "feminization" of print culture in one of his last and, arguably, most interesting poems, *The Dunciad.*

ENDNOTES

[1]Harold Bloom, cited in Annette Kolodny, "A Map for Rereading," *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. David H. Richter (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 1136.

[2]Barbara Hernnstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. David H. Richter (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 1341-1342. Hernnsetien Smith writes extensively about textual production and the ways that texts reproduce their own value and thereby influence the values within culture: "... in addition to whatever various and perhaps continuously differing functions a work performs for succeeding generations of individual subjects, it will also begin to perform certain characteristic cultural functions by virtue of the very fact that it has endured - that is, the functions of canonical work as such - and will be valued and preserved accordingly: as a witness to lost innocence, former glory, and/or apparently persistent communal interests and "values" and thus a banner of communal identity; as a reservoir of images, archetypes, and topoi - characters and episodes, passages and verbal tags - repeatedly invoked and recurrently applied to new situations and circumstances; and as a stylistic and generic exemplar that will energize the production of subsequent works and texts (upon which the latter will be modeled and by which, as a normative "touchstone," they will be measured). It [sic] these ways, the canonical world begins increasingly not merely to survive within but to shape and create the culture in

which its value is produced and transmitted and, for that very reason, to perpetuate the conditions of its own flourishing."

[3]Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life* (London: W.W. Norton and Yale UP, 1985), 170.

[4]Mack, 170.

[5]Lawrence Lipking, "Inventing the Eighteenth-Century: A Long View," *The Profession of Eighteenth-Century Literature: Reflections on an Institution*, ed. Leo Damrosch, Jr., (Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 1992), 46.

[6]Thomas Lacqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990), 22. In his article, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760" (*Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28.3 [Spring 1995], 295-322), Michael McKeon uses Laqueur's theories on the shift from sexual opposition to gender difference in the early eighteenth-century and connects them to concurrent changes in politics and class status in order to problematize totalizing theories of patriarchy. Londa Schiebinger, in her article, "Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy," in *The Making of the Modern Body* , provides an analysis which is similar to Laqueur's. She demonstrates that early modern sketches of the female skeleton, rather than being based in objective realism, served to illustatrate the "natural" suitability of women to the confines of domestic life.

[7]Nancy Armstrong, "The Rise of the Domestic Woman," *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (London: Methuen, 1987), 105.

[8]Mary Prior asserts that women have functioned within the family in such a capacity from the very late Middle Ages onwards. "In a time of crisis a woman's life might be one of bewildering and endless work," notes Prior, " but in prosperity the success of the husband was symbolized by the idleness of the wife and daughters; for the husband's power was shown most clearly where all was done by servants paid from his Purse" (96). The eighteenth-century with its incipient capitalist economy and growing middle-class seemed an especially "prosperous" age for the proliferation of these symbolic connections. (Mary Prior, "Woman and the Urban Economy: Oxford 1500-1800," *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior [London: Methuen, 1985], 93-117.)

[9]James Bland, *An Essay in Praise of Women: or, A Looking-glass for Ladies to See their Perfections in* (London, 1733), 21.

[10]Bland, 46.

[11]Bland, 47.

[12]Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One," *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Hendle (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1991), 355.

[13]Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), 20.

[14]Brown, 112.

[15]Alexander Pope, "The Rape of the Lock," *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale UP, 1963), 222.

[16]Laura Brown, *Alexander Pope* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 103.

[17]William Shakespeare, "Othello," *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York: Viking, 1977), 1029.

[18]John Essex, *The Young Ladies Conduct: or, Rules for Education, Under Several Heads; with Instructions upon Dress, Both Before and After Marriage. And Advice to Young Wives* (London, 1722), xxxiii.

[19]Lady Parah Pennington, "An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters" (1761), *Eighteenth-Century Women: An Anthology*, ed. Bridget Hill (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), 56.

[20]Cited in Ellen Pollack, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1985), 26.

[21]Hannah More, "Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education" (1799), *Eighteenth-Century Women: An Anthology*, ed. Bridget Hill (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), 56.

[22]David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980), 72.

[23]Cressy, 118-119.

[24]Cressy, 129.

[25]Cressy, 147.

[26]Cressy, 149. Raymond Williams notes that the greatest change in literacy rates occurred within the middle classes, even though they were not the group with the highest rates of literacy. He notes the relationship between middle-class readership, the evolution of genres and the growing commercialization of writing: "It is from the 1690s that the growth of a new kind of middle class reading public becomes evident, in direct relation to the growth, size and importance of a middle class defined as merchants, tradesmen, shopkeepers, and administrative and clerical workers. New forms of reading, in the newspaper, the periodical and the magazine, account for the major expansion, and behind them comes the novel, in close relation from its beginning to this particular public. The 60 London printing houses at the Restoration had become 75 by 1724 and between 150 and 200 by 1757. By the 1740s the *Gentleman's Magazine* was selling 3, 000 an issue, and leading newspapers were in the same range. The sales of novels increased, for example *Joseph Andrews* selling 6, 500 copies in thirteen months, *Roderick Random* 5, 000 a year, *Sir Charles Grandison* 6 500 in a few months. These developments affected the whole structure of relationship

between writers, booksellers and readers, and Defoe could note in 1725: 'Writing ... is a very considerable Branch of the English Commerce. The Booksellers are the Master Manufacturers, or Employers. The several Writers, Authors, Copyers, Sub-Writers and all other operators with Pen and Ink are the workmen employed by the Master-Manufacturers." (Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, revised ed. [New York: Harper and Row, 1966], 161-162.)

[27]Isobel Grundy, "Books and the Woman: An Eighteenth-Century Owner and her Libraries," *English Studies* 20.1 (Mar 1994), 2.

[28]Grundy, 2.

[29]Katherine Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London: Routledge, 1989), 29.

[30]Shevelow, 1.

[31]Shevelow, 50.

[32]Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, ed. Lewis Gibb (London: Dent, 1968), 211.

[33]Steele, 218.

[34]Essex, xvii-xviii.

[35]Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800* (London: Virago, 1989), 33.

[36]Cited in Lennard Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), 116.

[37]Davis, 118.

[38]Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), x.

[39]Pope, 234.

[40]Anne Finch, "The Introduction," *The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea*, ed. Myra Reynolds (Chicago, U of Chicago P, 1903), 6.

[41]Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women 1660-1750* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1984), 43.

[42]Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, "Works," vol. 2, cited in *The Learned Lady In England from 1650 to 1760*, ed. Myra Reynolds (Glouster: Peter Smith, 1964), 198.

[43]Finch, 4-5.

[44]Elizabeth Thomas, "On Sir J- S- saying in a Sarcastic Manner, My Books would make me Mad. An Ode, " *Eighteenth-Century Women*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (New York: Oxford UP, 1990), 41-42.

[45]Sarah Fyge Egerton, "The Emulation," *Eighteenth-Century Women*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (New York: Oxford UP, 1990), 31-32.

[46]Aphra Behn, *Sir Patient Fancy* (London, 1678), 92.

[47]John Duncomb, "The Feminead, A Poem," *Women in the Eighteenth-Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. Vivien Jones (London &New York: Routledge, 1990), 170-174.

[48]Jeslyn Medoff, "The Daughters of Behn and the Problem of Reputation," *Women, Writing, History 1640-1740*, ed. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992), 37.

[49]Medoff, 37.

[50]Cited in Elaine Hobby, "'Discourse of Unsavory': Women's Published Writing of the 1650s," *Women, Writing, History 1640-1740*, 19.

[51]Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Grafton, 1977), 68.

[52]Mary Anne Radcliffe, *The Female Advocate: or, An Attempt to Recover the Rights of Women from Male Usurpation* (1799; New York: George Olms Verlag Hildensheim, 1980), vii-viii.

[53]Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), 91.

[54]Ezell, 92-93.

[55]Duncomb, 172.

[56]Finch, 4.

[57]Cited in Carolyn Williams, *Pope, Homer, and Manliness: Some Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Classical Learning* (London: Routledge, 1993), 32.

[58]Ezell, 73.

[59]Cited in Williams, 13.

[60]Ezell, 74.

[61]Ezell, 74.

[62]Spencer, 43.

[63]Cited in Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989), 151.

[64]Samuel Johnson, *Adventurer* (No. 115, 11 Dec 1753).

[65]Richard Polwhele, "The Unsex'd Females: A Poem," *Constructions of Feminity*, 186-189.

[66]Cited in Harriet Guest, "A Double Lustre: Femininity and Social Commerce, 1730-60," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23.4 (Summer 1989-90), 483.

[67]Mr. R.E., *The fair sex turn'd Amazons: or, a new poem made on the lady's hatts* (Dublin, 1725?).

[68]Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princton: Princton UP, 1992), 135.

[69]Anne Finch, "The Petition for an Absolute Retreat," *Eighteenth -Century Women Poets*, 16.

[70]Ruth Salvaggio, *Enlightened Absence: Neoclassical Configurations of the Feminine* (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1988), 112.

[71]Lady Mary Wortley Montague, "The Lover: A Ballad," *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, 42.

[72]Elizabeth Thomas, "Epistle to Clemena. Occasioned by an Argument she had maintained against the Author," *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, 34-36.

CHAPTER 2

"Rhyme with all the Rage of Impotence": Gender, Poetry and Pope

That the poet makes no such fortune as the lawyer or the expert in other professions is due to the predisposition of *temperament* that is generally essential to the born poet: he has a natural tendency to drive care away by playing companionably with his thoughts. - But as far as *character* is concerned, a peculiarity of the poet is that *he has no character*: he is capricious, moody, and unreliable (though without malice); he makes enemies wantonly, but without hating anyone, and ridicules his friend bitingly, without wanting to hurt him. This peculiarity comes from a partly innate predisposition of his eccentric wit, which overrules practical judgement.

-Immanuel Kant

As I have shown in the first chapter, the cultural understanding of gender difference was a concept in flux during the early part of the eighteenth century . However, I have also established that authors frequently published material in order to support the splitting of spheres of influence according to gender; thereby, they hoped to stabilize the connection of the feminine with the domestic sphere, and the masculine with the public sphere (each polarity carrying with it binary associations of femininity / passivity / passion / body: masculinity / activity / reason / mind). In so doing, the cultural masculine was to be understood as centered and privileged, whereas the cultural feminine was relegated to the margins. The masculine self was defined in superior relation to the feminine other (just as within logocentricism the priority of the first term is established with the second term functioning, "as a complication, a negation, a manifestation, or disruption of the first").[1] As we have already seen, in the late part of the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century the stability of the first term and its detachment from the second term were not absolutely cemented within the social consciousness; hence, the vehement response often provoked by women publishing and transgressing "normative" standards of feminine conduct.

Alexander Pope's position and response to the cultural understanding of gendered selfhood was complex. Throughout his literary career the poet attempted to construct his public image and represent his private life according to social codes of masculinity; in fact, he attempted to assert himself as the representative of Enlightenment notions of order and reason. He also endeavoured to establish

himself as the rightful heir of intellectual genius passed down from the classical masters of literature and philosophy. One of his responsibilities as a "good" moral man and a "good" moral poet was to influence his culture to value moral behaviour, classical works and quality modern literature. Thus, he opposed what he understood to be the feminization of his culture: the frivolity of the beau monde; the wide-scale establishment of a monied economy with its accompanying luxury; the proliferation of what he perceived to be unlearned, trashy or even over-pedantic printed material; and the corruption of the literary milieu by poverty-stricken, often lower-class writers, "unlearned" women writers, and profit-driven, unscrupulous booksellers.

In order to secure his authoritative position it was essential for Pope to define his selfhood (singular and consistent) in opposition to the feminine other (multiple and capricious). This was a difficult task, not only because these gendered concepts were not yet fixed and naturalized, but also because his own social and cultural position could be regarded as problematic and "feminine." His religion, politics, and disability limited his ability to function within the public realm, while at the same time, through his poetic imagination, he could access the realm of "unreason" traditionally associated with women. Paradoxically, he upheld patriarchal values which ensured his own literary success, yet he was in many ways victimized by the very same values that he maintained. Figured within his poetry and epistles is the poet's complex negotiation with real and representational women: he aggressively asserts his phallocentric differentiation from the female other (and thus from all those "corrupt" qualities associated with femininity) by attempting to wield poetic

control over both women and public images of his masculine self. However, at the same time he can never completely separate himself from the other because he is always already identified in relation to her. To Pope, the absence of a concrete bifurcation between self and other signifies that all is reduced to the state of the same. For a poet who spent most of his life championing judgment and distinction, and for whom judgment and distinction were essential to maintaining cultural order, stability and sanity, as well as supporting his own preeminent place within society and the literary tradition, his own complicated, nebulous gender identification on both the personal and public level was a source of considerable anxiety.

Pope's alignment with the cultural feminine can be ascertained on both explicit and implicit levels. The semiotic significance of his body provides one example. Strength of body was understood to be a quality associated with masculinity, whereas bodily weakness was especially associated with women: although spleen, melancholy and hysteria were experienced by both sexes, they were principally seen as female distempers. In fact, a male suffering from these illnesses was linked not only to femininity, but also to madness. Ruth Salvaggio notes that during the eighteenth century "[t]he hysterical woman became a kind of 'other' man - a mad man inside the normal man - who threatened the very order to his being, and who became the diseased part that he would have to differentiate from himself and isolate."[2] Pope's deformed body, his constant and debilitating illness, his unusual shortness of stature, and his bouts of intense melancholy, signified disorder

and instability. Interestingly, when Samuel Johnson described the physical conditions which placed Pope in a position of dependency for much of his life, he compared Pope's demanding personality to that of a crying female infant:

> Most of what can be told concerning his particularities was communicated by a female domestic of the Earl of Oxford, who knew him perhaps after the middle of life. He was then so weak as to stand in perpetual need of female attendance; extremely sensible of cold, so that he wore a kind of fur doublet under a shirt of a very coarse warm linen with fine sleeves. When he rose, he was invested in bodice made of stiff canvas, being scarce able to hold himself erect till they were laced, and he then put on a flannel waistcoat. One side was contracted. His legs so slender, that he enlarged their bulk with three pair of stockings, which were drawn on and off by the maid; for he was not able to dress or undress himself, and neither went to bed nor rose without help. His weakness made it very difficult to be clean.... The indulgence and accommodation which his sickness required had taught him all the unpleasing and unsocial qualities of a valitudinary man. He expected that everything should give way to his ease or humour, as a child whose parents will not hear *her* cry, has an unresisted domain in the nursery. (emphasis mine)[3]

Pope is reduced to an infantile state, and feminized in that manner, and his regimen of dress also describes him in feminine terms. A bodice and stays were, after all, female items of dress. Although Pope's dependency on female domestics is pathetic and pitiable, it is also ironically evocative of Belinda's passive dependency upon the sylphs at her boudoir in *The Rape of the Lock*,. Of course, Belinda's dressing suggests frivolity rather than necessity, nonetheless the parallel is striking.

Johnson's criticism of Pope's demanding nature is a mild one in comparison to the vicious verbal attacks others made upon Pope's physical condition. In his critique of Pope's *Essay on Crtiicism*, John Dennis ends up attacking the poet more than the work itself, a practice that became fairly standard among Pope's political

and literary adversaries. In his critique, Dennis creates an image of Pope that was widely circulated during Pope's lifetime: "[a]s there is no Creature so venomous, there is nothing so stupid and impotent as a hunch-back'd Toad."[4] The image of Pope as a hunch-backed toad was then recycled in various other attacks. Typical of these is *Codrus*, a pamphlet that has been attributed to Edmund Curll and Elizabeth Thomas. Included in this attack on Pope is a poem called "Farmer Pope and his Son: Or, the Toad and the Ox, a Fable." The title is revealing of the character of the poem, in which Pope is represented as a being who is even less than a toad:

> A little scurvy, purblind Elf;
> Scarce like a Toad, much less himself.
> Deform'd in Shape, of Pigmy Stature:
> A proud, conceited, peevish Creature. (11-14)[5]

Pope was also frequently depicted as an ape, an association used both to attack his appearance and to criticize his imitations of other writers' form or style:

> But in his mimical Essays he always *sinks* as far below those whom he endeavours to counterfeit, as the Actions of a Monkey fall short of those of a Man.
>
> In his Rhapsody of *Windsor Forest*, which was impudently writ in Emulation of the *Cooper's-Hill* of Sir *John Denham*, one of the most beautiful and artful Poems that we have in *English Rhime*, *A. P-E sinks* as far below Sir *John Denham*, as the Bottom of *Windsor Forest* is below the Summit of *Cooper's Hill*.[6]

Both poet and poem are depicted as slipping down the hierarchy: the man falls to a low level of being in the Great Chain of Being and his flight of poetry is shown plummeting far below great works of art. As this passage demonstrates, Pope's appearance is made to correlate with his poetry. Although this method of criticism was constantly used against Pope, other well-known male writers of the age were

much less frequently attacked for their appearance; they were more likely to be criticized solely for their political beliefs and ideas. Criticism in terms of appearance was levelled more often at women wits and writers of the age, as Pope himself illustrates in *An Epistle to a Lady* when he describes Lady Mary Wortley Montagu:

> *Rufa*, whose eye quick-glancing o'er the Park,
> Attracts each light gay Meteor of a Spark,
> Agrees as ill with *Rufa* studying *Locke*,
> As *Sappho*'s diamonds with her dirty smock,
> Or *Sappho* at her toilet's greazy task
> With *Sappho* fragrant at an Evening Mask. (21-26)

He uses the common criticism that learned women are slovenly and unkempt to attack Lady Mary, who is depicted as Sappho in this poem; a similar method of attack is used against Pope by his opponents. Pope's physical appearance facilitated a mode of attack which not only feminized, but also dehumanized him.

Pope's concern about his physical feebleness and the restraints it imposed upon him is occasionally expressed openly, as in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, where he laments, "The Muse but serv'd to ease some Friend, not Wife,/ To help me thro' this long Disease my Life" (131-132). In his correspondence, as well, he describes the confinement he experienced because of his illness. For instance, to Martha Blount he writes:

> As to my health, I'm in a very odd course for the pain in my side: I mean a course of brickbrats and tiles, which they apply to me piping hot, morning and night; and sure it is very satisfactory to one who loves architecture at his heart, to be built round in his bed. (Oct. 30, 1719?)

Although he refers to his body in a light-hearted, humorous and often self-deprecating manner, the emasculating effect of his disabilities and his anxiety about

that emasculation are indicated by the frequency with which he mentions his condition when addressing women in his correspondence or speaking about women to other men. By admitting his deficiencies, Pope is publicly and privately displaying his adherence to the dictum of "know thyself," while at the same time he deflects the negative comments people make about him. In a letter to John Caryll, Pope describes the emasculating effect of his illness:

> Tis certain the greatest magnifying glasses in the world are a mans own eyes, when they look upon his own person; yet even in those eyes I appear not the great Alexander Mr. Caryll is civil to, but that little Alexander the women laugh at. (Jan. 25, 1711)

This comment is not only indicative of the pathos of his condition, but the seriousness of the problem for a man living in a society in which women are meant to provide an idealized reflection of men. As Simone de Beauvoir explains, men, "instead of an exact revelation, ... seek to find in two living eyes their image haloed with admiration and gratitude, deified. Woman ... is the mirror in which the male, Narcissus-like, contemplates himself."[7] In contrast, when Pope writes to Teresa and Martha Blount about a woman proposed to him by a friend as suitable for marriage, he can only see his own humiliation in such a match:

> Here, at my Lord H[arcourt]'s, I see a Creature nearer an Angel than a Woman (tho a Woman be very near as good as an Angel) I think you have formerly heard me mention Mrs. Jennings as a Credit to the Maker of Angels. She is a relation of his Lordships, and he gravely proposed her to me for a Wife, being tender of her interests & knowing (what is Shame to Providence) that she is less indebted to Fortune than I. I told him his Lordship could never have thought of such a thing but for his misfortune of being blind, and that I could never till I was so: But that, as matters now ere, I did not care to force so fine a woman to give the finishing stroke to all my deformities, by the last mark of a Beast, horns. (Sept., 1717)

Although Mrs. Jennings is described in the most glowing terms, Pope can see a relationship with her resulting only in cuckoldry and thus embarrassment for him. This is generally the kind of image of himself that women reflected back to Pope - unromantic and unheroic in the extreme.

In his epistolary relationships with real women, Pope admits knowledge of his physical deficiencies, but he does so in order to assert control over his self-representation in a manner that was impossible for him to assert over his actual physical self. In re-constructing himself within his letters, Pope attempts to control the response of women and force it into a desired, eroticized direction. This rhetorical self-reconstruction is especially dramatic in his letters to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Pope uses the circumstance of Lady Mary's travels to exotic lands to experiment with alternate cultural constructions of masculinity and beauty:

> I tremble for you the more, because (whether you'll believe it or not) I am capable myself of following one I lov'd, not only to Constantinople, but to those parts of India, where they tell us the Women best like the Ugliest fellows, as the most admirable productions of nature, and look upon Deformities as the Signatures of divine Favour. (Oct., 1716)

In his imaginative idealization, his deformities, rather than equaling lack of masculinity as they do in his culture, are read instead as signs of desirable manhood. He attempts to authenticate the constructed images of himself by assuring Lady Mary that his letters

> will be the most impartial representation of a free heart, and the truest Copies you ever saw, tho' of a very mean Original. Not a feature will be soften'd, or any advantageous Light employed to make the Ugly thing a little less hideous, but you shall find it in most respects Horribly Like. (Aug. 18, 1716)

By his stance of naked honesty, he tries to seduce her into complying with his fictive

self-construction.[8] His intention of evoking an erotic response, however, fails even under the tight control of his language. Rather than being personal and receptive, Lady Mary's letters are descriptive, poetic and critical; she maintains a cool distance from Pope, not only because of feminine decorum but also because of their class difference. She does not write herself into her epistles as he does, provoking an exasperated response from Pope:

> For Gods sake Madam, when you write to men, talk of your self, there is nothing I so much desire to hear of: talk a great deal of yourself, that She who I always thought talk'd best, may speak upon the best subject. (Nov. 10, 1716)

Her resistance to his linguistic seduction foregrounds the degree to which Pope was denied even an acceptable reflection of his masculinity. Pope's insecurity about his gender identity is very apparent in his sexually charged relationships with women.

His identification with the cultural feminine is also discernible in his poetic depiction of women. Maynard Mack writes that Pope's deformed shape and sickliness had "established [himself] in his own mind and in the minds of others as a dwarf and cripple," which condition relegated him for a large part of his life to the "retired" or private life. Thus, when Pope writes "To a Young Lady with the Works of Voiture" that "Too much your Sex is by their Forms confin'd," the reader has the distinct impression that Pope could just as easily be describing his own condition.[9]

His commiseration and identification with tragic female figures is also revealing. In *Eloisa to Abelard* the fully sexualized figure of Eloisa struggles to overcome the demands and desires of her body by sublimating them to the rationalizing procedure of her mind. This is no easy process, however, for as soon

as Eloisa achieves a semblance of control and acceptance of her confinement and physical separation from her lover, her passion punctures the illusion of control, and the struggle between her body and her mind resumes once more. Thus, the poem has a kind of ebb and flow movement until the end, where the resolution of the battle is achieved only in death. Passion is conquered only when the spirit sheds the body:

> I come, I come! prepare your roseate bow'rs,
> Celestial palms, and ever blooming flow'rs.
> Thither, where sinners may have rest, I go,
> Where flames refin'd in breasts seraphic glow.
> .....
> See from my cheek the transient roses fly!
> See the last sparkle languish in my eye!
> Till ev'ry motion, pulse, and breath, be o'er;
> And ev'n my *Abelard* be love'd no more. (317-320, 331-334)

The fire imagery which has served to symbolize physical desire ("Ev'n here, where frozen chastity retires,/ Love finds an alter for forbidden fires" [181-182]) is diffused and purified into a spiritual "glow." Understanding of Eloisa's experience can only occur with historical distance when future lovers will walk by and sympathize with the lovers' tragedy. But it is the poet who finally has control of Eloisa's story, and he does because he can empathize with her struggle:

> And sure if fate some future Bard shall join
> In sad similitude of griefs to mine,
> Condemn'd whole years in absence to deplore,
> And image charms he must behold no more,
> Such if there be, who loves so long so well;
> Let him our sad, our tender story tell;
> The well-sung woes will sooth my pensive ghost;
> He best can paint 'em, who shall feel 'em most. (359-366)

This passage has been attributed by many readers to Pope's feelings toward Lady

Mary during her absence in Turkey, but on another level, it also can be read as the artist's struggle to balance the forces of his own bodily desires with the reality of their unfulfillment; a struggle in the artistic temperament of the forces of imagination with those of reason and order.[10] Although Eloisa charges the poet to tell the story of her and Abelard's love, he chooses instead to investigate only Eloisa's individual response to her particular situation.[11] This choice is based, in part, on Pope's keeping within the tradition of Ovid; he does speak from the perspective of a melancholy heroine who is encased in Gothic surroundings and is suffering from lost or unfulfilled love. Yet his insertion of himself at the end of the poem indicates his own personal investment in the character of Eloisa: his presence in the poem highlights his ability to control through language and poetry what Eloisa was able to control only through death.

Similarly, in *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*, Pope appears to identify with a tragic heroine who also experiences confinement and denial of physical desire. Again, the escape for the woman is shown to be death, whereas for the poet, it is his poetic ability to control the telling of her story. In the poem the unfortunate Lady is forbidden to be with her lover by the cruelty of her uncle, so she commits suicide. Rather than censuring the act, Pope celebrates it. This was a rather unusual attitude toward suicide in the eighteenth century, since social and religious condemnation of suicide generally crossed lines of religious denomination and class. Perhaps for this reason, this poem more than any other of Pope's poems, provoked vehement denunciation from Samuel Johnson, who

exclaimed that "[p]oetry has not been worse employed than in dignifying the amorous fury of a raving girl."[12]

Pope versifies the unfortunate Lady's story, and he describes her act of suicide in heroic terms:

> Is it, in heav'n, a crime to love too well?
> To bear too tender or too firm a heart,
> To act a Lover's or a *Roman's* part?
> Is there no bright reversion in the sky,
> For those who greatly think, or bravely die? (6-10)

Depicting a woman's act in heroic terms is unusual in itself, but describing her act of suicide as an honourable "Roman" act is especially unusual. It seems likely that Pope's decision to handle the topic in such a manner was guided by his insertion of himself into the poem. He is related to the lady in three ways: his persona is that of her lover encountering the "beck'ning ghost," he is the man who feels similarly confined by his body and circumstance, and he is the poet who sings her story. Her ambition for spiritual release from the confines of her body is evocative of his poetic desire for release from the body:

> Most souls, 'tis true, but peep out once an age,
> Dull sullen pris'ners in the body's cage:
> Dim lights of life that burn a length of years,
> Useless, unseen, as lamps in sepulchers (17-20)

Pope's comparison of the living body to a sepulchre is quite significant considering the state of his own physical being. The connection between the poet and the lady is made explicit at the end of the poem when Pope describes the fading of the lady's worldly name and reputation as akin to the loss of the poet's name and influence after death:

So peaceful rests, without a stone, a name,
What once had beauty, titles, wealth, and fame.
How lov'd, how honour'd once, avails thee not,
To whom related, or by whom begot;
A heap of dust alone remains of thee;
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud must be!
Poets themselves must fall, like those they sung;
Deaf the prais'd ear, and mute the tuneful tongue.
Ev'n he, whose soul now melts in mournful lays,
Shall shortly want the gen'rous tear he pays;
Then from his closing eyes thy form shall part,
And the last pang shall tear thee from his heart,
Life's idle business at one gasp be o'er,
The Muse forgot, and thou belov'd no more. (69-82)

Pope, as both man and poet, appears to empathize with the lady's alienation from society and with her state of namelessness. There is the sense that although he "melts in mournful lays" about the lady, no one will be there to pay the poet a "gen'rous tear" when he departs.

Both *Eloisa to Abelard* and the *Elegy* open with Pope's depiction of a woman's tragic plight, but end in overt poetic self-expression. Valerie Rumbold notes also that through both poems Pope "testifies to the triple association between women, substandard literary modes (in this case the Gothic) and vividness of imagination and feeling, setting a female protagonist in intolerable confinement, surrounding her with Gothic trappings (ghosts, cures monasteries, gloomy forests) and exploring with sympathy her attempts to master her situation."[13] Mastery of both situations rests, however, in the hands of the poet; yet, ironically, his projection of himself into the poems actually complicates his ability to maintain control of his own character and reputation. Condemnation of the *Elegy* in aesthetic and moral terms has already been noted, but it is also known that later on in his life,

Pope was disappointed at having written *Eloisa to Abelard*, perhaps because of the poem's association with Lady Mary, or perhaps because it was deeply revealing of a personal side of the poet, a side he did not want to survive into posterity.

In his two most well-known poems about women, *The Rape of the Lock* and *An Epistle to a Lady*, Pope is much less sympathetic toward women and their circumscribed role within his society. His attitude toward the women in both poems is paradoxical: an admixture of opprobrium and admiration toward Belinda is apparent in *The Rape*, as is his attraction to, and repulsion from, the female sex as a whole in the *Epistle*. Unlike the two poems already discussed, which delve into the intensely private world of their female protagonists, *The Rape* and the *Epistle* investigate the larger cultural significance of feminine conduct. Writing in the satiric mode, Pope attempts to demarcate proper female attitudes and behaviour, which he feels are not being adhered to: the satirist sees himself as the "voice of order in the midst of disorder" and he "hopes at least to create an attitude conducive to change."[14] In these poems, therefore, women function as metaphors for that which is threatening and disturbing to the entire culture, and the satirist attempts to bring into line their culturally transgressive conduct.[15] Most of the female figures in these two poems, except for Martha Blount, transgress the social limitations imposed upon them by refusing to situate themselves completely in a domestic world. In so doing, they refuse the role assigned to them by patriarchy as the other who reflects male selfhood, and, therefore, they challenge the social construction of both masculine and feminine identity. If women no longer reflect man's image

back to himself, if they become self-involved, then the patriarchal system is in endanger of collapsing. For Pope, their active transgression is doubly threatening because of his already precarious gender position. He attempts in these poems to wield control over the female figures and thereby bring them into line with middle-class norms of feminine decorum: he also, through his satiric persona, attempts to differentiate himself from his female victims of satire in order to protect his own social and literary legitimacy. However, no matter how much he tries to dissociate himself from the women in these poems, Pope is always identified in relation to them.

In *The Rape of the Lock*, Belinda is described as an usurper of the natural and social order. Acting as both a coquette and a prude, Belinda fears relinquishing her lock/chastity and thereby succumbing to the patriarchal order which defines women according to their relation to men.[16] Ellen Pollack points out that both prude and coquette exploit the role they are supposed to play because they are "motivated by their desire to use sexuality as a source of personal pleasure and profit rather than surrender it to the opposite sex."[17] Certainly, it is against the social order for a woman to be assaulted as Belinda is by the Baron, yet Pope make it clear that women's rejection of male advances is even more problematic:

> Say what strange Motive, Goddess! cou'd compell
> A well-bred *Lord* t'assault a gentle *Belle*?
> Oh say what stranger Course, yet unexplored,
> Could make a gentle *Belle* reject a *Lord*?(1.7-10)

Belinda's rebellion against the patriarchal system is symbolized by her refusal to reflect the Baron's image of himself, choosing instead to worship her own image in

her boudoir mirror. Pope describes this as a perverse deification: "A heav'ny Image in the Glass appears,/ To that she bends, to that her Eyes she rears" (1.125-126). Belinda's narcissism echoes the figure of unfallen Eve in *Paradise Lost* Book IV. Upon seeing her reflection in the lake Eve is filled with desire for herself, but God draws her away from self-realization in order to have her submit to Adam:

> As I bent down to look, just opposite,
> A Shape within the watry gleam appear'd
> Bending to look on me, I started back,
> It started back, but pleas'd I soon returnd,
> Pleas'd it returned as soon with answering looks
> Of sympathie and love; there I had fixt
> Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain desire,
> Had not a voice thus warnd me, What thou seest,
> What there thou seest fair Creature is thy Self,
> With thee it came and goes: But follow me,
> And I will bring thee where no shaddow stays
> Thy coming , and thy soft imbraces, hee
> Whose image thou art, him thou shalt enjoy
> Inseparable to thine, to him thou shalt beare
> Multitudes like thy self, and thence be calld
> Mother of human Race: what else could I doe
> But follow straight, invisibly thus led? (4.460-477)[18]

Eve's self-worship is denounced in this passage, and her subservient position to Adam is made clear. Similarly, Belinda in *The Rape* is satirized by Pope as worshipping herself. Belinda's narcissism is not merely a small sin or impropriety; it is a culturally threatening activity. Her introverted self-love is dangerous because it points to the possibility of solipsism: solipsism in turn indicates the possibility of madness. Belinda's loss of her chastity/lock is punishment for her self-love and her desire for self-empowerment, but it is also an exigency which reintegrates Belinda into the phallic order.[19] So although the poem is "a whimsical piece of work ... a

sort of writing very like tickling" there is a undertone of seriousness to it, perhaps best exemplified by the Cave of Spleen.

The cave as a place of darkness and degeneracy is described in Umbriel's journey to the Cave of Spleen. Various phantoms, fiends, snakes, mist, vapours and visions inhabit and comprise this region. It is associated with female multiplicity, passion and the power of the imagination unleashed. Even males are effeminized or transformed by the dominanace of the female principle: "Men prove with Child, as Pow'rful Fancy works" (4.53). Also, the Cave of Spleen is representative of madness, since in the eighteenth century "[m]adness is created not by the disappearance of reason but by the dominance of another mental power: the imagination or fancy."[20] The Miltonic echoes, such as "Unnumbered throngs" of aberrant bodies, underscore the unknowability and chaos of the place (4.47). David Fairier describes the recurrence of this cave imagery in Pope's poems involving women:

> At the surface [Belinda, Queen Dulness and Eloisa] may appear to inhabit contrasting worlds, but each contains at a more profound level the capacity for chaos - Belinda's Cave of Spleen is not different in kind from the Cave of Poverty and Poetry ... and Eloisa's melancholic mental position is not too far distant either.[21]

Significantly, Pope places the woman writer and female wit in this region of bodily excess and perversion:

> -Hail wayward Queen!
> Who rule the Sex from Fifty to Fifteen,
> Parent of Vapours and of Female Wit,
> Who gives th' *Hysteric* or *Poetic* Fit,
> On various Tempers act by various ways,
> Make some take Physick, others Scribble Plays. (4.57-62)

By juxtaposing "Vapours"with "Female Wit" and hysteria with poetry, and by placing women writers in a region of mental infirmity, physical affliction, and sexual perversion, Pope explicitly degrades and criticizes women writers. This method of criticizing women writers is also employed by Pope and his Scriblerian colleagues in *Three Hours After Marriage*, in their characterization of Phoebe Clinket. Clinket, once thought to represent Anne Finch, now considered a type symbolic of all female writers of the time, enters into the scene with her attire dishevelled and stained with ink, and pens stuck in her hair ; her disordered and slovenly appearance is meant to symbolize a disordered mind. Her uncle Fossile explicitly equates Clinket's literary inclinations with disease and infirmity: "'...the poor Girl has a Providence of the Pineal Gland, which has occasioned a Rupture in her Understanding. I Took her into my house to regulate my Oeconomy; but instead of Puddings, she makes Pastorals; or when she should be raising Paste, is raising some Ghost in a new Tragedy."[22] Clinket's writing causes her to neglect her domestic duties and the demands of feminine decorum. Although the character of Clinket is more farcical than the inhabitants of the Cave of Spleen, the same connections are made between women writers and physical and mental illness. Ironically, however, the Cave of Spleen can also be linked to Pope's own grotto at Twickenham. In *The Garden and the City* Mack explains the similarities between the Cave of Spleen and Pope's grotto, which, to Pope's contemporaries, represented the "dwelling place" of Pope's muse.[23] Therefore, although Pope presents this dangerous region of female perversity or uncontrolled imagination as something

other to masculine order and reason, it is a place that he as poet is able to inhabit.

Pope maintains his difference from the female sphere by asserting his own mental presence in opposition to Belinda's mental absence. She is shown to possess a "vacant Brain" where thoughts and intuition quickly vanish (1.120). Because she is associated with the sylphs, their insubstantiality and transparency also reflect upon her. Moreover, as the protagonist of the poem, Belinda has remarkably little to say: most of her words seem to be spoken for her by the metamorphosed male sylph Ariel.

The image of china clearly indicates Belinda's vacuity. China is symbolic of both Belinda and Belinda's chastity so that Belinda's identity can be understood as solely contingent upon her chastity. When Belinda's violation is compared to "rich China Vessels, fall'n from high/ [which] In glittering Dust and painted fragments lie," the metaphor extends to encompass her entire identity (3.159-160). Thus, Belinda is described as a frail vessel which stands ornamental and empty until masculine substance imbues it with use-value. Her association with absence is also symbolized by Umbriel's trip to the Cave of Spleen. Because Belinda is incapable of ascertaining her proper response to her violation, Umbriel must furnish her with the indignation she is supposed to feel at the loss of her lock/chastity: the gnome deposits, above Belinda's head, the bag filled with "Sighs, Sobs, and Passions, and the War of Tongues,/ ... / Soft Sorrows, melting Grief, and flowing Tears" (4.84, 86). Even so, Belinda is still incapable of making proper value judgments since she remonstrates to the Baron, "Oh hadst thou, Cruel! been content to seize/ Hairs less in sight, or any Hairs but these!" (4.175-176).

In opposition to this female absence is the masculine presence of the poet-narrator. It is through the vehicle of his satire that the reader is led to judge and pressured to condemn Belinda. As Steve Clark points out, Belinda's "mental vacancy maneuvers almost any critical commentary into a position of implicit condescension" because the commentor constantly tries to explain "from the perspective of an omniscient masculinity" what Belinda cannot understand, including her own desires.[24]

The masculine presence and control of the poet are especially apparent during the boudoir scene. Both the poet and the reader, by penetrating into the private feminine space, experience voyeuristic pleasure, while simultaneously condemning that which is pleasing. Pope seems to take particular delight in describing Belinda's dressing ritual and the minutiae of her boudoir while he satirizes her inability to discriminate between that which is important and that which is not. For instance Pope lists the items on her vanity, "puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux," as if of they are of equal importance to her (1.138). As well, Belinda's lack of discrimination is illustrated by her contact with other people: "Favours to none, to all she Smiles extends/ Oft she rejects, but never once Offends" (2.11-12). Her attitude is indicative of the state of the entire beau monde. Pope's description of Hampton court indicates the degree to which even those in power cannot distinguish important events from unimportant ones:

> Here *Britian*'s Statesmen of the Fall foredoom
> Of Foreign Tyrants, and of Nymphs at home;
> Here Thou, Great *Anna*! whom the three Realms obey ,
> Dost sometimes Counsel take - and sometimes *Tea* .(3.5-8)

By placing equal weight on Queen Anne taking counsel and taking tea, Pope shows the larger political world being infected with the same inability to judge as is displayed by Belinda. This issue is most seriously handled when the legal system is shown to operate upon principles of expediency and indiscriminacy rather than informed judgment:

> Mean while declining from the Noon of Day,
> The Sun obliquely shoots his burning Ray;
> The hungry Judges soon the Sentence sign,
> And Wretches hang that Jury-men may Dine. (3.19-22)

When the frivolity displayed by Belinda in her private space infects the public realm, the serious ramification of frivolous behaviour is revealed as loss of life.

For Pope, this kind of lack of judgment is also related to insanity. To be incapable of discriminating between one thing and another, to be incapable of apprehending variations in the value of objects, is a facet of madness. This is the same thing he condemns in *The Dunciad* when he describes the "Mob of Metaphors" (1.67). In both *The Dunciad* and *The Rape* the incapacity to make proper distinctions is imputed to femininity and emasculation. Furthermore, this kind of indiscriminacy points to the culture's loss of ability to judge good literature and bad literature. As Pope puts a great deal of effort into affiliating himself with the "fathers" of poetry and philosophy, the inability to differentiate "masters" and "amateurs" would threaten his poetic preeminence. Because Pope spent most of his life propagating a canon of what he understood to be superior literature, including his own, the threat of cultural lack of distinction was also personally threatening to him.

In *The Rape*, the power of Belinda's beauty can potentially undermine intellectual thought and tradition. The danger of her beauty is metaphorically described by her "Eyes that must eclipse the Day" (1.14). The sun is a traditional masculine image which, since Plato's Parable of the Cave, has been associated with knowledge and truth. Belinda, acting as the priestess of Beauty, upholds appearance over reality, passion over reason, and deception over truth; therefore, she undermines the system where the sun/son is ascendant. The use of the word "eclipse" is crucial, for it connotes the ability to surpass, yet it also indicates a capacity to obfuscate, darken or disgrace. Pope's compliment to Belinda's beauty is double-edged, for it becomes an insult to her and a symbol of the social danger she poses. If "ev'ry Eye was fixed on her alone," then her beauty, either as overpowering brightness or as the darkness of the eclipse, would cause universal blindness (2.6). This blindness indicates both loss of sight and loss of insight. Belinda can in this way be compared to Queen Dulness in *The Dunciad*. Both female figures obscure the light of truth, although the degree of seriousness with which Pope treats this topic is greatly heightened in *The Dunciad*. In the realm of Dulness the sun is not merely rivaled, it is completely blocked by the "Dog-star's unpropitious ray/ [which] Smote ev'ry Brain" (4.9-10). Since Pope attempts to uphold classical tradition, which privileges the sun of truth over the darkness and obscurity of the cave, the effect of Belinda's beauty and her desire for power are shown to be corrupting and unnatural. Through Pope's the control of humour and satire the reader is made to understand, judge and condemn Belinda's over-powering beauty and her affectation.

As much as Pope attempts to detach himself from the attitudes that he satirizes in *The Rape* there are various ways in which his criticism of Belinda can be seen to parallel his own character. Although he condemns her use of artifice and characterizes it as an explicitly feminine form of conduct, Pope was accused of manipulation and artifice even by his friends. Consider Johnson's characterization of Pope: "In all his intercourse with mankind he had great delight in artifice, and endeavoured to attain all his purposes by indirect and unsuspected methods. He hardly drank tea without a strategem."[25] His artifice is not merely limited to personal occasions and insignificant events; it extended to every area of his life. Throughout his career, Pope self-consciously constructed public images of himself: he was, in a sense, his own public relations expert.

Pope is recognized as being one of the very first well-known writers who operated as a professional and made his fortune through his writing rather than by inheritance or through patronage, yet he takes great pains to create a public image of himself that is more independent, gentlemanly and aristocratic. In part, Pope's need to assert his independence from patrons was a reinforcement of his masculinity: dependence was considered a feminine state of being. Consider the gendered terminology used by Salusbury to describe the power Bolingbroke wields over Pope, and Pope's effeminate submission to him:

> Salusbury [Hester Thrale Piozzi] complains that the principles expressed in Pope's Essay constitute 'too tacit a submission to the direction of his Guide Philosopher and Friend ... in whose vile Hand he was no other than an Instrument to convey & versifie those thoughts which Ld Bolinge was himself unable to express with the same Delicacy [McCarthy, "A Verse 'Essay,'" 384].' ... Salusbury's

> remark transforms Pope into the passive victim of a wicked aristocrat, like the heroine of a tragic romance. The frail, socially subordinate Pope is cast in a feminine role relative to an infamous seducer. [26]

Of course this particular passage may say more about Thrale's projections than about Pope's actual relationship with Bolingbroke, yet it does exemplify the kind of effeminate position in which Pope was constantly placed, and which he constantly battled against.

Pope represents himself as neither a beneficiary of patronage, nor a professional writer: he depicts himself as a leisurely gentleman who writes not for money, but for amusement. This is apparent in his *Preface to the Works 1717* when he asserts that "Poetry and Criticism [is] by no means the universal concern of the world, but only the affair of idle men who write in their closets, and of idle men who read there" (607). Interestingly, in *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope satirizes ladies of leisure, yet in *The Preface* being a man of leisure is, in a sense, shown to be a literary ideal. He attempts to dissociate himself from the commercial literary marketplace, even though he was one of the writers of his day who knew best how to operate in that environment. His opponents frequently attacked both Pope's financial success and his desire to create a gentlemanly image of himself:

> The large Profit Mr. Pope has made by a nominal Translation of Homer, and the little pains he took to deserve it need no Repetition; he has acquired Fame, purchased an Estate, dubb'd himself a 'Squire, and one would have thought, might have rais'd an Altar to Fortune, and sat down contented; but instead of that, weary of the tranquil Life, and wanting some particular Object to fix on, he Lampoons both Church and State, all that he knows, and all he knows not, and bids an open Defiance to human Kind, in Terms so Coarse and Filthy, that few Readers can forebear Puking at his bare Ideas, much Good they may do him.[27]

Pope wrote *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnut* in response to attacks of this kind and as a justification of his desire to write. He contends that his ability to versify is an innate talent, and that his decision to make poetry his calling is appropriate and proper. He displays his deference to the patriarchal order by invoking the approval of his father:

> Why did I write? what Sin to me unknown
> Dipt me in Ink, my Parents, or my own?
> I lisp'd in Numbers, for the Numbers came.
> I left no Calling, for this idle trade,
> No Duty broke, no Father dis-obey'd. (125-129)[28]

Again he uses the adjective "idle" to describe his profession in order to conceal his real position as a professional writer who actively seeks monetary compensation in the marketplace for his work. In the following passage, he also asserts an image of himself that does not correspond to his reality as a professional writer:

> Not Fortune's Worshipper, nor Fashion's Fool,
> Not Lucre's Madman, nor Ambition's Tool,
> Not proud, nor servile, be one Poet's praise
> That if he pleas'd, he pleas'd by manly ways. (334-337)

His use of anaphora here indicates the defensive position of the poet. To be all the things that Pope here claims he is not, is to be feminized. Pope strongly defends himself against such charges by declaring his masculinity - his "manly ways." This passage sets up a systematic contrast with the portrait of Sporus, which it immediately follows. Pope seems to displace many of the criticisms made about himself onto the metaphorical figure of Hervey; his characterization of Hervey as a vile and impotent toad is highly evocative of Dennis' characterization of Pope. More than one critic has pointed out that Pope's criticism of Hervey as "one vile

Antithesis" is rather ironic, considering Pope's own contradictory identity (325). Pope tries to cleanse his character of the imputation of emasculation by displacing the charges upon the body of Hervey, who apparently did fit the portrait.[29] After doing this Pope tries to reinscribe his public image to conform to gentlemanly decorum and masculine norms. However, his desire to differentiate himself from Hervey is never fully realizable since he is always related to the very image from which he would like distance himself. The image of the "familiar Toad" may have been more familiar to Pope than he would have liked his readers to believe.

Not only does he try to differentiate himself from Hervey, but throughout the entire *Epistle to Arbuthnot* Pope endeavours to distance himself from the Grub Street hacks whose sole motivation for writing is to make money and seek fame. It is essential for him to establish alternate reasons from theirs for writing. In the following passage, Pope defines his poetic vocation in explicit opposition to superficial hack writers, and in opposition to the feminine dependence of Sporus:

> That not in Fancy's Maze he wander'd long,
> But stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song:
> That not for Fame, but Virtue's better end,
> He stood the furious Foe, the timid Friend,
> The damning Critic, half-approving Wit,
> The Coxcomb hit, or fearing to be hit;
> Laugh'd at the loss of Friends he never had,
> The dull, the proud, the wicked, and the mad;
> The distant Threats of Vengeance on his head,
> The Blow unfelt, the Tear he never shed;
> The Tale reviv'd, the Lye so oft o'erthrown;
> Th'imputed Trash, and Dulness not his own;
> The Morals blacken'd when the Writings scape;
> The libl'd Person, and the pictur'd Shape;
> Abuse on all he lov'd, or lov'd him, spread,
> A Friend in Exile, or a Father, dead;

> The Whisper that to Greatness still too near,
> Perhaps, yet vibrates on his SOVEREIGN'S Ear-
> Welcome for thee, fair Virtue! all the past:
> For thee, fair Virtue! welcome ev'n the *last!*(340-359)

Unlike his opponents, Pope seems to say, he does not target undeserving victims; in fact, one of his reasons for writing is to defend himself against all the unfair accusations made against him. But most of all, Pope establishes his personal and literary credibility by naming the quest for "virtue" as his motivation for writing. (Ironically, this means that Pope needs the hacks, Sporus and even vice and corruption in order to write; after all, what good is a satirist who has nothing to satirize?) One of his tools of self-justification is to set himself up as a teller of truth and the keeper of social morality. This is exemplified in *Epilogue to the Satires: Dialogue II*::

> As you what Provocation I have had?
> The strong Antipathy of Good to Bad.
> When Truth or Virtue an Affront endures,
> Th'Affront is mine, my Friend, and should be yours.
> Mine, as a Foe profess'd to false Pretence,
> Who thinks a Coxcomb's Honour like his Sense;
> Mine, as a Friend to ev'ry worthy mind;
> And mine as Man, who feel for all mankind,
> Fr. You're strangely proud.
> P. So proud, I am no Slave:
> So impudent, I own myself no Knave:
> So odd, my Country's Ruin makes me grave.
> Yes, I am proud; I must be proud to see
> Men not afraid of God, afraid of me. (197-209)[30]

Even the last line, which displays an inordinate amount of pride, is justified by Pope because of his own self-constructed image as the voice of social conscience.

He also tries to differentiate himself from hack writers by placing himself in the lineage of classical writers. In the poem "To Belinda on the Rape of the Lock,"

Pope explains to the "real" Belinda, Arabella Fermor, the reasons why she should be gratified by Pope's literary attentions, not least of which is his ability to immortalize her in the same way that Homer immortalized Helen:

> Pleas'd in these lines, *Belinda*, you may view
> How things are priz'd which once belong'd to you:
> If on some meaner head this Lock had grown,
> The nymph despis'd, the Rape had been unknown.
> But what concerns the valiant and the fair,
> The Muse asserts as her peculiar care.
> Thus *Helens* Rape and *Menelaus'* wrong
> Became the Subject of great *Homer's* song;
> And, lost in ancient times the golden fleece
> Was rais'd to fame by all the wits of *Greece*.
> .....
> But would your charms to distant times extend,
> Let *Jervas* paint them and let *Pope* commend.
> Who censure most, more precious hairs would lose,
> To have the Rape recorded by his Muse. (1-10, 26-30)

In the classical tradition as Pope articulates it here, women achieve historical immortality only by having their lives sung by men. As per usual, Pope's compliment to Arabella is never solely and simply that, for this poem becomes more of a tribute to his own poetic ability than it does to Arabella's beauty and virtue. What is apparent in this and other poems is that Pope presents himself as the modern heir of classical poetic genius and tradition. But what this also illustrates is his extraordinary concern about his own reputation. In *The Rape of the Lock* some of Pope's most biting satire is on Belinda's excessive preoccupation with her reputation, yet considering the lengths he went to preserve or adjust his own reputation, Belinda's obsession pales in comparison to his own. His construction of a public self is very comparable to Belinda's construction of her public self.

This self-creation is apparent in his various epistles. In a compilation of

Pope's correspondence, James Anderson Winn convincingly argues that Pope's

> need for attractive social and moral appearance led to ... role-playing ... [which is] described in his letters - his use of rakish language in addressing women, his use of pretended aloofness to attacks from lesser writers, his elegant deference to aristocrats.[31]

Pope's epistles sometimes appear to be private and self-expressive, yet frequently they also appear contrived and obsequious. His posing is especially obvious in certain letters to aristocrats; a number of his epistles to different gentlemen are so similar that he obviously re-used one letter to address more than one person. It is rather disingenuous to appear to send a personal and complimentary letter to one person, yet to send almost the same letter to someone else.

Pope actually wrote many of his letters anticipating the possibility that they could fall into hands of any number of unscrupulous booksellers and thereby be made available for perusal by the general public. He learned this lesson early on his career when a number of his correspondences with Wycherly were published and widely distributed. Therefore, Pope is entirely self-conscious and sensible of the kind of image of himself that he wants projected in his letters. By writing with this awareness, recalling his letters from his friends, and editing and publishing them himself, Pope indicates his obsession with controlling his own public image.[32] This is exemplified in a letter he wrote to John Caryll in 1728/29:

> If you please to reflect either on the impertinence of weak admirers, the malice of low enemies, the avarice of mercenary book-sellers, or the silly curiosity of people in general, you'll confess I've small reason to indulge correspondences (in which too I want materials, as I live out of town, and have entirely abstracted my mind[(I hope] to better things), unless my friends would do (as indeed some have been prevailed upon, and as you know I have many years desired you would do) send

> me back those forfeitures of my discretion, commit to my justice what I trusted only to their indulgence, and return me at the year's end those trifling letters, which can be to them but a day's amusement, but to me may prove a discredit to posterity. (Feb. 3, 1728/29)

As if his request for the return of his letters and his publishing of them is not exemplary enough of his excessive desire for control and self-representation, his editing of the letters, as George Sherburn notes, is absolute proof of it:

> The improved official texts illustrate Pope's principles of revision. Trivialities concerning daily life or finances are omitted; so also are small indecorous remarks, either slightly salacious or profane. Personal names also are frequently excised. Perhaps the most common changes are purely stylistic: the letters are more concise, the sentences more straightforward, the diction more elegant. There is little change in the sense of any letter except such as is due to omissions. By tactful omissions the general tone is made more dignified, more worthy of the gentlefolk for whom those quartos and folios were designed. For later readers, if the aim is to get something ike what Pope actually wrote in the original letters, the octavo texts of the trade editions are far superior. In moral and literary quality the revised official texts were to Pope the more satisfactory - were 'a more perfect image of himself'.[33]

It almost seems as if Pope, through his letter writing and revision, had a life-long project of creating his own self-portrait, which he would constantly touch-up in order to create the most perfect of image of himself to display to the world; just as the sylph

> Repairs [Belinda's] Smiles, awakens ev'ry Grace,
> And calls forth all the Wonders of her Face;
> Sees by degrees a purer Blush arise,
> And keener Lightning quicken in her Eyes. (1.141-144)

Dustin Griffen compares Pope's revision of self to Pope's revisionary methods in composing poetry: "Correcting the self, like correcting a poem, was for Pope a matter of editing, rearranging, polishing, adjusting, and in some cases reinventing."[34] Pope is even thought to have fabricated a few letters to Congreve

and Addison in his collected letters because he wanted to bolster his reputation by exhibiting his friendship to Congreve and save it from the conflict known to have existed between himself and Addison.[35]

Belinda is also analogous to Pope because her inconstant, multiple character echoes Pope's own unstable personality. Pope condemns Belinda and women in general for their inconsistency and changeability: "With varying Vanities, from ev'ry Part,/ They shift the moving Toyshop of their Heart" (1.99-100), yet he was hardly the emblem of the stability and fixity about which he philosophizes in his poetry.[36] In a letter to Caryll Pope reveals his own unstable nature:

> You can't wonder my thoughts are scarce consistent, when I tell you how they are distracted! Every hour of my life, my mind is strangely divided. This minute, perhaps, I am above the stars, with a thousand systems round about me, looking forward into the vast abyss of eternity, and losing my whole comprehension in the boundless spaces of the extended Creation, in dialogues with W[hinston] and the astronomers; the next moment I am below all trifles, even grovelling with T[idcombe] in the very center of nonsense: now am I recreating my mind with the brisk sallies and quick turns of wit, which Mr Steele in his liveliest and freest humours darts about him; and now levelling my application to the insignificant observations and quirks of grammar of Mr C[romwell] and D[ennis].
>
> Good God! what an Incongruous Animal is Man? how unsettled in his best part, his soul; and how changing and variable in his frame of body? The constancy of the one, shook by every notion, the temperament of the other, affected by every blast of wind. [What an April weather in the mind! In a word], what is Man altogether, but one mighty inconsistency.(Aug. 14, 1713)

This passage exposes the incongruity of Pope being "imprisoned within a crazy carcass, a body that could never be shaped into a thing of beauty; endowed with a mind and body that were wretchedly ill-matched and a temperament as variable as

April weather."[37] Griffen also posits that this incongruity was one of the factors driving Pope to quest for the harmony and cohesion which is a constant concern in his poetry.

Although Pope satirized Belinda for her multiplicity and dissembling, he reveals in a letter to Martha Blount the various hats he wears:

> Everyone values Mr Pope, but everyone for a different reason. One for his firm adherence to the Catholic Faith, another for his Neglect of Popish Superstition, one for his grave behaviour, another for his Whymsicalness. Mr. Tydcomb for his pretty Atheistical Jests, Mr. Caryl for his moral and christian Sentences, Mrs Teresa for his Reflections of Mrs Patty, and Mrs Patty for his Reflections on Mrs Teresa. (Nov. 24, 1714)

It is clear that Pope takes delight in doing a certain amount of role-playing according to the company he keeps; he does not, however, extend approbation to women for doing the same thing. In *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated,* he even praises himself for not fixing his political beliefs:

> My Head and Heart thus flowing thro' my Quill,
> Verse-man or Prose-man, term me what you will,
> Papist or Protestant, or both between,
> Like good Erasamus in an honest Mean,
> In Moderation placing all my Glory,
> While Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory (63-68).

Although he commends himself for lacking a political party commitment by depicting himself as a pure Erasmian moderate, his position can also be understood as being part of a larger persistent personality trait - inconsistency and lack of fixity. Certainly, Pope's opponents saw his conduct as deception rather than moderation: "He was a Whig with the Whigs, a Tory with the Tories; and some have carried their partiality so far as to call him a Popish - Whig, an Epithet directly

inconsistent."[38] So, although Pope directly condemns Belinda for her fickleness in *The Rape*, his own character is not above this charge.

Even though Pope seems to identify with Belinda in many ways, and even though he displays a certain sense of admiration of her beauty and fascination with the female toilette and boudoir, there is also something sadistic behind his presentation. Certainly Pope satirizes his culture which causes the objectification and commodification of individuals. He does, for example, condemn the reduction of women to a purely ornamental status; it is the dynamics of a certain court culture which breed the Belindas of the world. Thus Pope's criticism of female conduct can never be delimited to women exclusively, but must be considered a censure of culture at large. Yet, Pope's satire "is itself a pretext for his own objectification of the female."[39] The fact remains that the poet is intruding upon a very private activity when he enters Belinda's boudoir, a transgression that is commensurate with the way he envisions Belinda intruding upon public (and therefore masculine) activity.[40] He is the viewing subject and she the unknowing, viewed object. In discussing Irigaray's theories Toril Moi states that "[a]s long as the master's scopophilia ... remains satisfied his dominion is secure"; therefore, the act of looking is intricately related to concepts of control.[41] In fact, Pope's perception of Belinda is of almost pornographic dimensions. Brean Hammond asserts that

> We are witnessing this scene through the eyes of an implied narrator, a male who somehow has managed to penetrate the sanctity of the boudoir and remain invisible. What we are seeing is normally forbidden to the male sex.[42]

This is quite true, but Hammond does not consider the implication of this voyeuristic perception. The question that arises is why Pope is able to see the process behind the product (the dressing and the arming of Belinda)? Why does he transgress the very rules that he is attempting to uphold by revealing publicly that which is very private? I believe the answer to the first question lies in Pope's own circumstantial ability to identify with Belinda, as I have already discussed: he is able to access her feminine world because he is in many ways related to the cultural feminine, not least of which is his own experience with the process of creation through his poetry. However, by revealing his knowledge publicly, Pope is also asserting his power over Belinda. Pope can display his own mastery of Belinda by capturing her when she is most vulnerable; thus, decorum takes a back seat to masculine manipulation and poetic self-empowerment.

Belinda is a cypher of Pope's imagination which he freely manipulates in order to achieve his own ends. By losing her lock, first to the Baron, then to the poet, Belinda finally succumbs to the masculine order and reflects man's image back to himself. As he is the final controller in the apotheosis of the lock it is Pope who attains final immortality: it is his Muse which "shall consecrate to Fame" Belinda's story (5.149). This ability to subdue the female is also found in "Windsor Forest". Although the nymph in Windsor Forest could potentially disrupt the arrangement of the forest, she instead "provides it with a 'glass' mirror in which its beauty and symmetry are reflected. Nature, colour women - they are all fixed in place in this perfect garden, mastered by a poet who would put them all in the service of his

art."[43] In *The Rape of the Lock* Belinda is also contained by the poet and is placed "in the service of his art." If Belinda is in some sense a goddess of pornographic dimensions, who threatens the patriarchal power of society, Pope, by disempowering her, is her god, and the preserver of universal balance and order.

Similarly in *An Epistle to a Lady* ,the idealized figure of Martha Blount is contained by the poet through his art. Just as the poet intrudes into the ending of *The Rape of the Lock, Eloisa to Abelard* and *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady,* thereby inscribing his own powerful presence, so too does he intrude into the ending of the *Epistle.* The lady is shown to be ideal because, unlike the other women in the poem who do not act in the service of men, Blount, in the poem, reflects man's image back to himself. Because she is a "softer Man" Blount is always something less than a man; therefore, she always upholds his superiority through her own inferiority (272). She is characterized by her "feminine" ways:

> She who ne'er answers till a Husband cools,
> Or if she rules him, never shows she rules;
> Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,
> Yet has her humour most, when she obeys. (261-264)

Believing that all women desire power, Pope attempts to create the illusion that women can attain power by embracing silence and submitting to their husbands: the woman's prerogative is to maintain her husband's reputation. While seeming to speak for the kind of moderation and unity he asserts in *An Essay on Man,* Pope in *An Epistle to a Lady* actually bifurcates the roles of the sexes, subjecting the female in service to the male.

However, even Blount's status as ideal woman is questionable since,

according to Pope, "Woman's at best a Contradiction still" (270). Molly Smith makes an interesting point when she explains why even the "exemplary" Martha still seems to fall short of perfection. The explanation lies in Blount's and Pope's actual relationship. Considering that Pope (according to most historical sources) never achieved the kind of romantic relationship that he desired with Martha, her chastity, which he appears to praise in the poem, was in reality that which made it impossible for him to be more than a friend to the "virtuous" lady.[44] The ambiguity which underlies the portrait of "the lady" could possibly have its basis in the actual relationship between Pope and Blount. By inscribing Martha within the poem Pope is able to achieve an aesthetic control over her which replaces the real-life control which he could not achieve.

In contrast to the "ideal woman" who "stands in a state of grace with respect to the moral sanctions of Pope's text, her foils appear to be moral exiles, embodiments of uncontrolled sexuality and anarchic individualism who manifestly threaten social order."[45] These various women, like Belinda, pose a hazard to patriarchal society; however, in the *Epistle* Pope's own social and literary position is particularly imperiled by learned and witty women. In *The Rape*, Belinda's recalcitrance is implied by her willingness to play Ombre; since ombre is derived from the Spanish for man, her participation indicates that she desires to play men at their own game.[46] Also, although the "Earthly lover lurking at her heart" is traditionally understood as the sender of the "billet-doux," or as her subconscious desire for the Baron's assault, this image can also be interpreted as the existence of a

masculine desire lurking within Belinda herself.[47] Similarly in the *Epistle* , the women's threat to the social order is articulated as their need for pleasure and power. If "Pow'r [is] all their end, but beauty all their means," women are condemned for using their outer appearance in order to infringe upon the traditional male prerogative of control (l. 220).

Like Belinda, they are portrayed as outdoing the masculine metaphor of light. Described as dazzling, tiring "the Sun's broad beam" and as "glaring Orb[s]," the women in this poem attempt to appropriate the powerful masculine light rather than accept their traditional muted place under the "sober light" of the moon (l. 249-256). Pope demarcates the proper sphere for women when he writes:

> But grant in publick Men sometimes are shown,
> A Woman's seen in Private life alone:
> Our bolder Talents in full light display'd,
> Your Virtues open fairest in the Shade. (199-202)

By displacing women to the shade, he is able to secure his own poetic and intellectual eminence, which should be publicly displayed. Thus, "a woman can have 'sense' only to the extent that she retreats from public view and camouflages her impotence by never presuming to judge or act."[48] As I have already noted in the first chapter, the image of retreat into shade is a reccurring metaphor for eighteenth-century women poets, such as Anne Finch, because they were able to discover poetic freedom in private which was unavailable to them in the public realm; it was unavailable to them because they were constrained by the kind of attitude toward women expressed by Pope in the *Epistle.*

Just as Belinda is characterized by vacuity so are the various women in the

Epistle figured as absence. Although Martha Blount is apparently accompanying Pope in his tour of the gallery of portraits, her only significant verbal contribution to the poem is a statement made at some previous moment: "Nothing so true as once you let fall,/ *Most Women have no Characters at all*" (1-2). It is through her general silence that Pope establishes his control within the poem.[49] Martha silently stands as a supporter of Pope's attitude, lending weight to his theory since she is a female who censures others of her own sex. Since his depiction of the ladies is contingent solely upon his own imagination, these women become, in a way, the empty canvas/blank paper upon which Pope writes himself. As Laura Brown demonstrates, "'Woman' is purely emblematic in the 'Epistle to a Lady'. A painting without a model, a sign without a referent, 'woman' holds a place for male fantasy to fill."[50]

One of Pope's principal criticisms of the various characters in the poem is their multiplicity/instability. In her consideration of eighteenth-century philosophy, Crampe-Casnabet notes that women's state of being, and thus their discourse which stands as a reflection of that state of being, is understood as inherently inconsistent:

> Women's character is not constant; it is a mixture of temperaments, a compromise, unstable. That is what makes woman so hard to define, for to define a thing is to identify, beyond all accidental variations, an immutable essence. 'Who can define *women?*" [writes Corsambleu Desmahis in *Encyclopedie*], ' In truth everything speaks in them, but it speaks an equivocal language.' By constrast, masculine discourse speaks with one voice and can therefore claim exclusive possession of the dignity of true language. Hence it is up to men to speak of women.[51]

In the *Epistle*, the women are not organized around a phallocentric oneness; they are shown to be both limitless in their lack and their excess, a method of criticism frequently used to degrade women writers, as we have seen in the first chapter. This is very threatening to Pope because it indicates the empowering of passion over reason, or the female term over the male one. The unknowability and changeability of women, especially learned ones, is symbolized by Pope's characterization of them as "Cynthia[s] of this minute" (20). As well, he articulates his own difficulty in describing the fluid nature of women when he states that in order to paint them accurately he needs, not a steady hand, but "Some wandering Touches, some reflected Light, / Some flying Stroke, [which] alone can hit 'em right" (153-154).

This flux of excessiveness and lack is evident in the description of Narcissa:

> Now Conscience chills her, now Passion burns
> And Atheism and Religion take their turns;
> A very Heathen in the carnal part,
> Yet a sad, good Christian at her heart (63-68)[52]

By oscillating from one state to another Narcissa is ultimately unknowable: Simone De Beauvoir notes that "[w]oman is an enigma and she poses enigmas."[53] Expressed in religious terms, the seriousness of her instability is reinforced. Furthermore, Narcissa's instability makes her not only incomprehensible to others, but implies that she can never achieve self-knowledge. The seriousness of this criticism escalates throughout the poem, ending in the final satirical portrait of the Queen. Even in this important social position the Queen is shown to be unknowable: "That Robe of Quality struts and swells, None see what Parts of Nature it conceals" (189-190).

However, it is Pope's own poetic place which appears to be most threatened by the women of the poem. The most scathing portraits are those of the learned ladies or the women of wit. Flavia and Atossa are condemned by Pope for overstepping their feminine bounds and venturing into the masculine realm of poetics or wit. Their wit is unnatural because it is related to bodily excess: they are castigated for being unchaste, perverse and even mad. Flavia is described as possessing "impotence of mind" (93). She is depicted as too immoderate in her wit:

> With too much Spirit to be e'er at Ease,
> With too much Quickness ever to be taught,
> With too much common thinking to have a common Thought. (96-98)

The anaphoras in this passage particularly emphasize excess. Atossa is so unbalanced by her fanatical wit that she actually slips into madness: "No Thought advances, but her Eddy Brain/Whisks it about, and down it goes again" (121-122). Her mental state is evocative of the "Vortex" created by Queen Dulness in *The Dunciad*. It is Atossa's emotion, her "Fury" which "out-ran" her wit, that overpowers her reason and causes insanity.

Not only does Pope fear and therefore repel this excess onto the body of women, but he repulses it because he is also attracted to it: it is the masculine desire for the other which is most dangerous. Pope admits that to "their Changes half their charms we owe" (42). As well, in describing Calypso he reveals that "Yet ne'er so sure our passion to create/ As when she touch'd the brink of all we hate" (51-52). A similar misogynist sentiment is expressed years later in prose by Montherlant: "Ah, to desire what one disdains, what a tragedy!"[53] Pope's condemnation of the

various women is problematized by the dichotomy of attraction/repulsion which underlies his representation of them.

One of the most visceral and significant portraits in the *Epistle* is that of Atossa. What is most curious about Atossa is the similarity between Pope's personality and life and his characterization of her. When Pope writes of Atossa,

> Scarce once herself, by turns all Womankind!
> Who, with herself, or others, from her birth
> Finds all her life, one warfare upon earth:
> Shines in exposing Knaves, and painting Fools.
> Yet is, what'er she hates and ridicules (116-123)

he is in many ways describing himself. As I have already noted, Pope was hardly renowned for being at "one" with himself, yet he vehemently criticizes Atossa for her multiplicity. Just as he labels her life as being "one warfare upon earth," he depicts is own life in similar terms: "The life of a Wit is a warfare upon earth."[55] Just as Atossa exposes "Knaves" and paints "Fools," so does Pope. Considering his use of painting metaphors in the construction of this very epistle, the comparison rings doubly true. If Atossa is all that she hates and ridicules and Pope is ridiculing her for the very qualities that inhere in himself, Atossa becomes a strange and sombre parody of the poet. So although he draws Atossa as a figure representative of all that is other to stable and ordered society, and by implication all that is other to him as spokesperson for this stable system, upon closer examination Atossa appears to be, in more ways than one, closely identifiable with the poet. Felicity Nussbaum theorizes that the motives behind this kind of identification may be the satirist's unconscious attempt "to expel, or at least project, that portion of his self which he

finds most reprehensible."[56] Hence, Pope's desire for absolute difference is unrealizable since he "is always already related to all those from whom he would distance and differentiate himself."[57]

Although I have considered the manner in which Pope's own desires and fears have been projected onto the various women in his *Epistle* and in his other poems about women, I am certainly not proposing that Pope was oblivious to the plight of women in his society. I would even go as far to assert that he was, to an extent, sympathetic toward them. In fact he does admit in the *Epistle* that they are by "Man's Oppression curst" (213), and in a footnote, Pope explains that his characterization of women as creatures of pleasure and sway is "occasioned partly by their Nature, partly by their Education, and in some degree by Necessity" (567). Some critics, in defence of the *Epistle*, have made the case that, as part of the larger ethical framework of the moral essays, this epistle merely squares with Pope's rejection of all excess in the search for a "golden mean." As well, Brean Hammond attempts to fend off the charge of sexism against this poem by claiming that through "philosophical pretensions ... the poem finds itself confronting the ways in which femininity is encoded in cultural contexts."[58] However, even though Pope displays a modicum of understanding of the constraints experienced by women, I would argue that this poem does more to confirm than to confront culturally encoded norms of femininity. Considering Pope's philosophical intentions in the other moral essays, it is apparent that the degree of consistent vehemence he expresses against women, especially the women wits, is not frequently present to such an

extensive degree in the satire of the other epistles. For instance, in "Cobham" Pope philosophizes about the difficulty of solving ontological problems because of the changeability of human nature, but in the *Epistle to a Lady* the capriciousness of women is subject to extensive satiric denunciation.[59]

In his various poems about women, and his real-life experiences with them, Pope maifests a complex and contradictory position in relation to them, to his own personality, and to his culture. His own gender identification is problematic owing to such factors as his bodily deficiency, his religion, and his politics - a combination which effectively denied him action within the masculine, public sphere of influence. He was, therefore, in many ways aligned with the cultural feminine, an association which he attempted to enervate by constantly positing the difference between his self and the feminine other. He needs women to embody all that is other to society and to himself in order for him to maintain his personal, social and literary superiority. It is in his satires about women that the greatest threat to the poet is posed; in both *The Rape of the Lock* and *An Epistle to a Lady* the women rebel against patriarchal society by refusing to reflect man's image back to himself. In the *Epistle* this threat is amplified in particular by the learned and witty women. What Pope does by containing the various women in his poetry is establish his control over them, and thus place all of the female figures in the service of the masculine economy, as well as placing them in the service to his own particular art. By attempting to fix these female figures in his art he not only endeavors to detach himself from the female sphere, but he also hopes to detach himself from all the

negative qualities of his culture which he associates with its feminization. However, as I have shown, as much as Pope desires to maintain his phallic difference, he is always already related to, and even defined by, those whom he attacks.

ENDNOTES

[1]Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982), 22.

[2]Ruth Salvaggio, *Enlightened Absence: Neoclassical Configurations of the Feminine* (Chicago, U of Illinois P, 1988), 16.

[3]Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, vol II (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons and New York: E.P. Duttun & Co., 1925), 202. Valerie Rumbold also observes the use of the feminine pronoun in her discussion of this passage (*Women's Place in Pope's World* [New York: Cambridge UP, 1989], 5).

[4]Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life* (London: W.W. Norton and Yale UP, 1985), 183.

[5]Edmund Curll and Elizabeth Thomas, *Codrus: Or, The Dunciad Dissected. Being the Finishing Stroke. To which is added, Farmer Pope and his Son. A Tale* (London, 1728), 12.

[6]John Dennis in *Pope : The Critical Heritage*, ed. John Barnard (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 156.

[7]Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage, 1989), 185.

[8]Another example of Pope attempting to control the reactions of a female reader occurs in his letter to Mrs. Betty Marriot. Pope writes: "Cast your eyes upon

Paper, Madam, there you may look innocently: Men are seducing books are dangerous, the amorous one's soften you, and the godly one's give you the spleen: If you look upon tress, they clasp in embraces; Moon melts you into yielding and melancholy. Therefore I Say once more, cast your eyes upon Paper, and read only such Letters as I write, which convey no darts, no flames, but proceed from Innocence of soul, and simplicity of heart." Then after attempting to disarm the reader by establishing his innocence (by employing very seductive and mellifluous language) he begins his own overt seduction, " However, I can allow you a Bonnet lined with green for your eyes, but take care you don't tarnish it with ogling too fiercely: I am told, that hand you shade yourself with this shining weather, is tann'd pretty much, only with being carried over those Eyes- thank God I am an hundred miles off from them . . . "(1714).

[9]Mack, 153.

[10]Maynard Mack points out that "Both the *Elegy* and *Eloisa* ... concern a woman's great love for a man, something Pope could only dream of; though in both poems, it is decidedly worth noticing, our attention is brought around at the close to a 'poet' or 'Bard' who has somehow, to borrow a phrase from Shakespeare's Enobarbus in *Antony and Cleopatra*, earned a place in the story: in the first instance by actually being the object of the lady's sacrificial love; in the second by so sharing in the yearnings of his heroine that he can and does create them anew - as much for the inner audience of Lady Mary and the Blounts as for the larger readership who will buy his book at Lintot's shop" (328).

[11]Maynard Mack observes the emotional affinity of Pope to both Abelard and Eloisa: "In the person of Eloisa, he could pour out his longing to be loved: to be loved greatly, for it would take a great love, he knew, to overlook his limitations - not just his size and twisted back but his perpetual illness. In her person, too, he could express his angry sense of imprisonment in a fate he had never asked for and done nothing to deserve, together with those sensations of profound melancholy -

> Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws
> A death-like Silence, and a dread repose - (II, 165-66)

that grew on him sometimes in contemplating his future . . . " (329-330).

[12]Johnson, 153.

[13]Rumbold, 90.

[14]Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women 1660-1750* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1984), 18, 17.

[15]Nussbaum, 19.

[16]In *This Sex Which is not One* (*Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndle [New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1991], 355), Luce Irigaray discusses the way in which women have been phallically marked by patriarchy so that women's identity has been understood as an object existing only in relation to the male subject: "For woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among men; in other words, a commodity. As such , she remains the guardian of material

substance, whose price will be established, in terms of the standard of their work and of the need/desire, by 'subjects': workers, merchants, consumers. Women are marked phallically by their fathers, husbands, procurers. And this branding determines their value in sexual commerce. Woman is never anything but the locus of a more or less competitive exchange between two men, including the competition for the possession of mother earth." Although Belinda is of course associated with commodification in the poem, her refusal to become wife, mother etc. exemplified by her refusal to relinquish her chastity can be considered a rebellion against the phallic marking described by Irigaray.

[17]Ellen Pollack, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985), 16.

[18]John Milton, "Paradise Lost," *The Complete Poems*, ed. B.A. Wright (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1989), 226.

[19]Ellen Pollack notes that although the poem traces Belinda's journey into maturation, this maturation is not depicted as a coming into the self, but as a relinquishing of autonomy (92). She rightly notes that "As the center of attraction and attention in *The Rape*'s social and economic universe Belinda may function as a veritable prime mover, but what she sets in motion is a process which involves her own subduing and subordination on almost every level" (95).

[20]David Morris, *Alexander Pope: The Genius of Sense* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984), 279.

[21]David Fairer, *Pope's Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984), 20.

[22]John Gay, "Three Hours After Marriage," *Dramatic Works*, vol I, ed. John Fuller (1983, 1984;Oxford: Clarendon P, 1985), 213.

[23]Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1969), 47.

[24]Steve Clark, "Let Blood and Body Bear the Fault," *Pope: New Contexts*, ed. David Fairier (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 93.

[25]Johnson, 203.

[26]Claudia Thompson, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: South Illinois UP, 1994), 87.

[27]Curll and Thomas, 9-10.

[28]This belief that that all things should function according to their destined capacity was a commonly held belief at the time. In the "Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View," Kant asserts that one's failure to realize his or her proper calling or abilities leads to the dimming of the light of reason and thereby imperils social, individual and historicai progress: "All the capacities implanted in in a creature are destined to unfold themselves, completely and conformably to their end, in the course of time. ... An organ which is not to be used, or an arrangement which does not attain its end, is a contradiction in the teleological science of nature. For, if we turn away from that fundamental principle, we have

then before us a nature moving without a purpose, and no longer conformable to law; and the cheerless gloom of chance takes the place of the guiding light of reason" (23-24).

[29]In her article on Lord Hervey and Pope, Camille Paglia affirms the accuracy of Pope's depiction of Hervey. She describes Hervey's homosexual affairs with Stephen Fox, and later his romantic attachment for Francesco Algarotti. She also compares him to Oscar Wilde, noting not just their similar effeminacy, but also their similar cynicism, worldliness and use of irony as a mode of defense (Camille Paglia, "Lord Hervey and Pope," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 6 [1973] 363).

[30]In that same poem he also make his image as truth-teller explicit:

> Truth guards the Poet, sanctifies the line,
> And makes Immortal, Verses mean as mine.
> Yes, the last pen for Freedom let me draw,
> When Truth stands trembling on the edge of Law:
> Here, Last of Britons! let your Names be read;
> Are none, none living? let me praise the Dead,
> And for that Cause which made your Fathers shine,
> Fall, by the Votes of their degenerate Line! (246-253)

He depicts himself as not only the voice of truth, but also the defender of it: in this passage the poet's "last pen" becomes a kind of sword that he, as hero, draws to defend Britain against the onslaught of modern corruption.

[31]James Anderson Winn, *A Window in the Bosom: The Letters of Alexander Pope* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1977), 199.

[32]Mack notes how unusual it was for writers to publish their own correspondence during Pope's age: "For though many eighteenth-century writers

composed their letters, as Horace Walpole once remarked of his own, with posterity standing behind their chairs and peeping, and though the fictional letters, whether used as vehicles for politics, philosophy, satire, confession, or , eventually, the novel, was as conventional a part of daily science as the lace on a gentleman's shirt, to offer one's actual correspondence to the public as one might offer it one's essays, poems, histories, novels, sermons, travelogues, was by early eighteenth-century standards unthinkable" (657).

[33]George Sherburn, Introduction, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1956), xv.

[34]Dustin Griffen, *Alexander Pope: The Poet in the Poems* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 32.

[35]Mack, 662-663.

[36]The use of "toyshop" as an image representative of women is significant because it reveals on a number of different levels the kind of misogynist attitude circulating in the sexual economy during the eighteenth century. The image of the toyshop reduces women to the status of children; a common attitude toward women at the time, as is exemplified by the proliferation of conduct books whose purpose was to teach women how to "behave". The toyshop image also evokes the association between women and frivolity, as is outlines in #93 of *The Tatler*: "Were the minds of the sex laid open, we should find the chief ideas in one to be a tippet, in another a muff, in a third a fan, in a fourth a fardigal. The memory of an old

visiting Lady is so filled up with gloves, silks, and ribands that I can look upon it as nothing else but a toyshop."

[37]Griffen, 31.

[38]Curll and Thomas, 7.

[39]Pollack, 77.

[40]It is interesting to note the reversal which occurs after Pope's death: Pope's work in progress is perceived by a woman in the same way that he views Belinda's self-creation. Claudia Thompson describes Hester Thrale Piozzi' reaction to seeing all the scraps of information and drafts of poems Pope saved throughout his life. She had the opportunity of seeing this material in 1780 when Johnson shared it with her while he was preparing his *Life of Pope*. Thrale writes that "'Johnson says 'tis pleasant to see the progress of such a Mind: true, but 'tis a malicious Pleasure, Such as Men feel when they watch a Woman at her Toilet and see by *Degrees a purer Blush arise* ....'" Thompson goes on to analyze Thrale/Piozzi's reaction to seeing Pope's creative process: "In this reflection the poet with his rough drafts is metamorphosed from a privileged male arrogantly assuming that even his scraps have some literary value, to a Belinda unconsciously revealing the secrets behind her experience. Thrale's comparisons of Pope's drafts to her *Thraliana*, to a baby's swaddling clothes, and finally to a belle's cosmetics suggest that to at least one late eighteenth-century woman, Pope was no longer a superior denizen of the patriarchal canon, but rather a feminine figure whose writing resembled hers" (59-

60). It is fairly easy to imagine the extent to which Pope would have been horrified by Thompson's reading of Thrale/Piozzi's attitude toward him.

[41]Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1985), 134.

[42]Brean Hammond, *Pope* (Brighten: Harvester p, 1986,) 166.

[43]Salvaggio, 72.

[44]Molly Smith, "The Mythical Implications in Pope's *Epistle to a Lady*," *SEL* 27 (1987), 428.

[45]Pollack, 113.

[46]Alastair Fowler, "The Paradoxical Machinery of 'The Rape of the Lock'," *Alexander Pope: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. Colin Nicholson (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1988), 159.

[47]Clark, 47.

[48]Pollack, 121.

[49]Molly Smith, 431.

[50]Laura Brown, *Alexander Pope* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985,) 107.

[51]Crampe-Casnabet, "A Sampling of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy," *A History of Women: Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, eds. Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap P, 1993), 323-324.

[52]Ironically, that which Pope criticizes in Narcissa is evocative of his own self-depiction to Martha Blount which I noted earlier: "Every one values Mr. Pope, but every one for a different reason ... Mr. Tydcomb for his pretty Atheistical Jests, Mr Caryl for his moral and christian Sentences" (Nov. 24, 1714).

[53]de Beauvoir, 208.

[54]cited in de Beauvoir, 207.

[55]Pope, "Preface of 1717," *The Poems*,609.

[56]Nussbaum, 19.

[57]Douglas Atkins, *Reading Deconstruction, Deconstructive Reading* (Lexington: Kentucky UP, 1983), 135.

[58]Hammond, 189.

[59]Brown, 10.

CHAPTER 3

The "Dead Letter" of *The Dunciad*

Looked at from the height of reason, life as a whole seems like a grave disease, and the world like a madhouse.

-Goethe

The discourse of reason, solar and paternal metaphor, will never oust the fantasy structure of the cave completely.

-Luce Irigaray

In *An Epistle to A Lady* Pope asserts that women should be seen "in Private life alone" because they have been "Bred to disguise" and their driving passions are "The Love of Pleasure, and the Love of Sway." Their essentially dissembling nature, according to Pope, impairs men's ability to distinguish between their "Shame or Pride," "Weakness or Delicacy," and virtue or vice. What kind of world would it then be if the female principle became the dominant feature of culture? Pope gives his answer in *The Dunciad*. But for the poet this was not simply a matter of conjecture. By 1742, when the four-book version of *The Dunciad* was published, this is how he understood the state of society to be- full of dunces, hacks, whores, pedants, corruption, greed, narcissism, materiality, and excessive moral decay, a world-view which corresponded, in Pope's opinion, to the unnatural empowerment of the feminine principle. In this poem the system of patriarchal binary logic (in which the male principle and all the qualities associated with it are privileged while the female principle and its corollary associations are marginalized), which Pope had been attempting to uphold through his other satires, is shown to be subverted. All those elements that Pope connected to the feminization of his culture, and thus opposed, are made manifest in *The Dunciad*: male artistic creativity is collapsed into female procreativity, mental functions are enslaved to physicality, quality literature is abandoned for quantity, and truthful communication is reduced to empty rhetoric.

The literary marketplace has become inundated with material which is unlearned, meretricious, or excessively pedantic. Those who have corrupted the literary world include poor "low-class" hacks; presumptuous, and thus "loose"

women writers; and greedy, amoral booksellers. Their motivation for writing, in Pope's opinion, is not "The strong Antipathy of Good to Bad" or the desire to stabilize socially acceptable codes of conduct; rather they write in pursuit of financial gain.[1] The feminization of the literary milieu is depicted as a cause and reflection of the corruption of various other systems of being and knowing. Traditional concepts of gendered selfhood are rendered inoperative in *The Dunciad* as the dunce sons and subjects are effeminized under the powerful sway of the maternal Queen Dulness. Systems of logic and reason are dismantled in the realm of Dulness because judgment and discrimination no longer function properly; a form of madness has encompassed the culture at large. Language itself is eroded, and with it, "the means by which truth and reason [are] communicated and by which men [are] bound together in society."[2] For a poet who championed an elite literary canon, proper codes of conduct and morality, and truthful communication of ideas, *The Dunciad* represents everything that he perceives as being other to himself and to a "healthy" patriarchal society. However, as was illustrated in the previous chapter, Pope never succeeded in completely detaching from himself all that he endeavoured to establish as being separate and other to himself.

The main symbol of otherness in the poem is the ruler of the realm, Queen Dulness. It is her body which serves as a pervasive metaphor for the degeneration of patriarchal systems and for the perversion of literary practices committed by Grub Street hacks. Her procreative powers are shown to be paramount throughout the poem. In fact *The Dunciad* begins with Queen Dulness giving birth: "Here please'd

behold her mighty wings out-spread/ To hatch a new Saturnian age of Lead" (4.27-28). However, this birth is paradoxically described as a regression into the womb rather than a progression out of it. All that occurs in the poem must actually be considered as part of the *process* of uncreation. As the notes indicate, Dulness "is said here only to be spreading her wings to hatch this age; which is not produced completely till the fourth book" (722). In Book III Settle informs Cibber of the impending ascendancy of Queen Dulness in terms that echo the opening lines of the poem:

> 'And see, my son! the hour is on its way,
> That lifts our Goddess to imperial sway;
> This fav'rite Isle, long sever'd from her reign,
> Dove-like, she gathers to her wings again. (3.123-126)

The paradox of the process is revealed in this comparison, for although in Book I Dulness is "hatching" and thus expelling her realm, in the third book she is absorbing all of her progeny, a logic that is nonsensical, yet appropriate for the absurd world of *The Dunciad*. The dominating pattern in the poem of things in process or metamorphosis has conventional associations with femininity, but in this poem it is specifically linked to female procreativity; masculine product and fixity is virtually non-existent. David Fairer, in his discussion of the *Dunciad Varorium*, notes that the poem is permeated with "emergings from nothingness, fusings of hints, groans of literary childbirth"and he establishes the Queen as representative of "the imagination as process."[3] Therefore, right from the beginning of the poem a connection is established between the female body, excessive imagination, birthing, metamorphoses and deviant literary creation.

Monstrous birthing images associated with Queen Dulness, or ones that parody those images, recur throughout the poem. In the Cave of Poverty and Poetry, an empty recess which symbolizes the womb, such unnatural literary productions as miscellanies, journals, magazines and party pamphlets are generated. In the early eighteenth century these were all fairly new genres which sprung up, in part, as a consequence of the growth of middle class readership and thus they were perceived as part of "low" or popular culture.[4] As Aubrey Williams notes, "[w]ith the flood of poetic trifles and invectives, party pamphlets, scandalous 'true histories', and vulgar farces pouring daily from the presses, there appeared to be little hope of maintaining the principles and standards of literature, largely derived from the classic past, so revered by Augustans."[5] These genres are associated by Pope with female reproduction in order to illustrate their debased nature; they are considered to have fallen off from masculine standards into literary effeminacy.

Within the cave of Poverty and Poetry, literary abnormalities are characterized as promiscuous mergings of generic forms:

> Here she beholds the Chaos dark and deep,
> Where nameless Somethings in their causes sleep,
> Till genial Jacob, or a warm Third day,
> Call forth each mass, a Poem, or a Play:
> How hints, like spawn, scarce quick in embryo lie,
> How new-born nonsense first is taught to cry,
> Maggots half-form'd in rhyme exactly meet,
> And learn to crawl upon poetic feet.
> Here one poor word an hundred clenches makes,
> And ductile dulness new meanders takes;
> There motely 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:
> How Tragedy and Comedy embrace;
> How Farce and Epic get a jumbled race (1.55-70)

The purity of traditional forms is debased into a kind of generic love-in, which ultimately results in the generation of confused or racially "jumbled"genres. Also in this passage, material written by the Grub Street hacks is shown to be abortive or deformed because it is "born" - published - prematurely. Pope despised those whose writings were unseasoned; he adhered to Horace's dictum that compositions should be incubated for nine years before being displayed.

By using the childbirth metaphor, Pope not only characterizes the perversion of Queen Dulness, but also disparages the Grub Street hacks, especially the "hero" of the poem, Colley Cibber. Cibber, instead of pleasing by "manly ways," as Pope describes his own poetry in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, is depicted by Pope as monstrously effeminate:

> Round him much Embryo, much Abortion lay
> Much future Ode, and abdicated Play;
> Nonsense precipitate, like running Lead,
> That slip'd thro' Cracks and Zig-zags of the Head;
> All that on Folly Frenzy could beget,
> Fruits of dull Heat, and Sooterkins of Wit.(1.121-126)

Although procreativity is usually aligned with the cultural feminine and creativity with the masculine, here the associations are inverted in order to depict Cibber's works as perversely effeminate; Cibber's mental offspring are described as literary abnormalities. Pope's use of the expression "Sooterkins of Wit," especially emphasizes that contaminated literary works are engendered by demented thoughts. In the notes to *The Dunciad* we learn that the expression is "[a] joke upon the Dutch

women, supposing that by their constant use of stoves, which they place under their petticoats, they breed a kind of small animal in their bodies, called a sooterkin, of the size of a mouse, which when mature slips out" (726). Even though Pope attacks Cibber by collapsing masculine creativity into feminine procreativity, this passage perhaps reveals more about the poet's attitude toward the female body than it does about the nature of Cibber's works. Certainly, as Susan Stanford Friedman and Terry Castle note, "[t]he bad poet was above all a 'begetter' who breeds out of his own disten repulsive 'offspring' because his lack of reason makes him like 'the one . rth, who conceives and brings forth, [who] is nowhere in control but rather is subject to a purely spontaneous animal function.'"[6] However, Stanford also observes the predominant attitude toward women by male writers who employed the childbirth metaphor:

> Although the eighteenth century saw the dramatic rise of writing by and for women, disgust for sheer physicality or emotionalism represented by woman was common among the Augustan satirists. Consequently, eighteenth-century male birth metaphors embodied this intertwined disgust for the woman and the human body she represented.[7]

Disgust toward the female body certainly is manifest in *The Dunciad*, yet Stanford's qualification of it as existing "in spite of" women writers may be somewhat misplaced. As I noted in the first chapter, male critics of female writers often condemned women for writing their bodies into the text. Women writers were disparaged for publicly displaying their "hysterical" bodies through printed media. So I would argue that male disgust for physicality or emotionalism represented by women was more often than not enflamed by their entry into print culture. Susan

Gilbert and Sandra Gubar note that "... female writers are maligned as failures in eighteenth-century satire precisely because they cannot *conceive* of themselves in any but reproductive terms.[8] This is the same thing that the Grub Street hacks are maligned for in *The Dunciad*; they cannot conceive of themselves in any but female reproductive terms. This point is exemplified in Cibber's address to his literary progeny:

> 'O born in sin, and forth in folly brought!
> Works damn'd, or to be dam'd! (your father's fault)
> Go, purify'd by flames ascend the sky,
> My better and more christian progeny!
> Unstain'd, untouch'd, and yet in maiden sheets;
> While all your smutty sisters walk the streets. (1.225-230)

The apostrophe in line 225 emphasizes Cibber's acts of fornication and parturition. Compared to the section in the 1729 *Variorum* version which has Theobald saying a farewell to his works - "Adieu my children ! better thus expire/ Un-stall'd, unsold" (1.197-198) - the 1748 version is more explicit about the unnatural processes that have gone into creating Cibber's tainted progeny. This shift, which results in emphasizing the soiled and debased nature of Cibber's "inspired" thought, was facilitated by Pope's choice in changing the hero of his poem.

When Cibber, in his*Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*, draws an analogy between his wife's procreativity and his own artistry - "It may be observable, that my muse and my spouse were equally prolific; that the one was seldom the mother of a Child, but in the same year the other made me the father of a Play. I think we had a dozen of each sort between us; of both which kinds some *died* in their *Infancy*" (731) - he unwittingly provides the fuel for Pope's satire. Although a

convention whereby muses are figured by male poets as sexual partners does exist, Cibber completely domesticates the masculine mental process by comparing it to physical female procreativity. Although Cibber does employ the word "father," his analogy only works if he "mothers" his literary progeny. The Muses can only act as abstract inspiration; they cannot be vehicles of real production. It is up to the poet or writer to bring his poem or text into being. Consequently, Cibber's comparison here emphasizes the tension which underlies conventions of male artistic creation: if muses do bestow their sexual favours upon their chosen male poets and yet the product of the union issues from the male partner rather than the ostensibly female one, then the male artist takes on a decidedly maternal function.[9]

Pope distances himself from the problems inherent in this convention by depicting Cibber's use of tropes as sign of his effeminacy. Just as Pope and his fellow Scriblerians criticize female writing by depicting female creativity in physical and reproductive terms, so too the writing of Cibber and the other hacks is condemned through the double comparison of hack writing to female physicality and female authorship. How different, after all, is Phoebe Clinket in *Three Hours After Marriage* from Cibber in *The Dunciad*? While Clinket, a type representative of female authors, commands "Hold. I conceive" when she is ready to deliver a tragedy, "the offspring of [her] Brain," Cibber is surrounded by the "Embryo" and "Abortion" of his "future Ode, and abdicated Play."[10] Pope formulates a chasm between himself who "pleas'd by manly ways" and Cibber, yet he shortens the distance between Cibber and female writers (and, by implication, he creates an even

greater gulf between himself and female writers).[11] However, the self-consciousness with which this differentiation is established is revealing of Pope's own anxiety about his readership's ability to draw this conclusion themselves. His struggle to establish a difference between himself, "commercial hack writers [such as Cibber], women, and feminization is marked by a tension that underlies his attempts to deny his connections to what he is inextricably linked."[12] Considering that Pope's opponents constantly represented Pope's crippled physicality as a sign of his deformed thinking and writing, Pope's subsequent equation of Cibber's thinking and writing with the female body functions as a deliberate deflection of criticism aimed at himself.[13] Pope's display of loathing of the female body, and his use of it as a symbol of degradation in *The Dunciad* is not an example of simple misogyny: it is a complex issue which involves, among other things, the poet's negotiation with his own problematic physicality, with gendered norms of the age, and with his place in the rapidly changing environs of the literary coterie.

Perhaps the most overt expression of disgust for the body occurs in Pope's depiction of Annius. Again it is through the procreative metaphor that this disgust is made evident. Annius, a famous forger and cheat, is as "False as his Gems, and canker'd as his Coins" (4.349). He has, according to Mummius, swallowed gold coins for their safe keeping, and has sold these very coins, still encased in his bowels, to Mummius. In a scene which parodies court trials, Mummius makes his case to Queen Dulness that the secreted coins belong to him and that Annius has tried to cheat him. Annius replies that he has been honest to Mummius and prepares to

deliver the coins to him:

> 'Mine, Goddess! mine is all the horned race.
> True, he had wit, to make their value rise;
> From foolish Greeks to steal them, was as wise;
> When Sallee Rovers Chac'd him on the deep.
> More glorious yet, from barb'rous hands to keep,
> Then taught by Hermes, and divinely bold,
> Down his own throat he risqu'd the Grecian gold;
> Receiv'd each Demi-God, with pious care,
> Deep in his Entrails - I rever'd them there,
> I bought them, shrouded in that living shrine,
> And, at their second birth, they issue mine.'
> Witness great Ammon! by whose horns I swore,
> (Reply'd soft Annius) this our paunch before still bears them, faithful; and that thus I eat,
> Is to refund the Medals with the meat.
> To prove me, Goddess! clear of all design,
> Bid me with Pollio sup, as well as dine:
> There all the Learn'd shall at the labour stand,
> And Douglas lend his soft, obstetric hand.' (4.376-394)

The appropriately named Annius delivers a perverse, excremental "second birth." The sexually depraved underworld of the Cave of Spleen where "Men prove with Child" emerges in the forth book of *The Dunciad* as an accepted and unquestioned activity. However, Annius' product is not a living being, but coins whose authenticity is highly questionable. Annius' deceptive activity defiles the purity of the classical past in order to cater to the demands of a materially-based culture which is driven by principles of acquisition. The feminized figure of Annius and the related childbirth metaphor become the vehicles whereby Pope demonstrates the ideological problematic of an economy based on monied interests and commodification. A real child with real use-value is replaced by an artificial/material commodity with constructed exchange-value. This indicates the degree to which the disordered world in *The Dunciad* is driven by economic

motives rather than humanist principles.

Unlike a land-based aristocratic economic system based on male primogeniture, which overtly displays the status of individuals and secures reliable national allegiances, a money-based economy has the potential to breed counterfeit or inauthentic activity. Also, it weakens national ties because the accumulation or protection of land becomes of secondary interest to financial gain. According to this ideology, aristocrats who own land within a nation are far more disposed to protect their own property and thus guarantee allegiance to their nation, whereas currency-based wealth can easily cross national barriers. Without an anchor of land, these speculators can simply switch allegiance to whomever or wherever they can find potential for profit.

Moreover, political deception is facilitated by a monied economy, for financial bribery is more easily camouflaged by the exchange of currency than it is by the more obvious granting of lands. This situtation was an overriding concern to Pope on a very real level: he believed that the corrupt politics and power of Walpole and his Whig supporters were enabled by the deceptive possibilities available through currency. Through financial bribery, Walpole was able to consolidate and maintain his preeminence, office and the favour of the court. Hence, for Pope, coinage functions as a kind of slippery signifier with dubious ties to authentic value. There is an interesting intersection here between linguistic and economic exchange. Although Annius is depicted predominantly as the agent of economic deception, the footnotes to the poem also reveal his associations with linguistic forgery:

"*Annius*] The name taken from Annius the Monk of Viterbo, famous for many Impositions and Forgeries of ancient manuscript, but our Annius had a more substantial motive" (784). Thus, by utilizing the figure of Annius, Pope is able to reveal the connections between linguistic and economic corruption; both the word as signifier and the coin as signifier have mystified any absolute connection to their signified value or meaning.[14]

Also highlighted is the dunces' inability to make distinctions between human and artificial progeny. Mummius and Annius do, after all, go "back to Pollio, hand in hand," as if they were a happy couple soon expecting a joyous birth. This excremental birth seems to echo the previous births which have already taken place, such as the (mis)creating of the realm of Dulness by the Queen, and the malformed literary offspring of Cibber. All these soiled and unnatural births locate the region of Dulness, metaphorically-speaking, in the province of the female body: male creativity has been subverted by female procreativity; mental functions have been disabled by the demands of the body. Rather than operating on masculine principles, the region of Dulness, ruled by its monstrous progenitrix, operates according to all those negative qualities associated with the cultural feminine.

However, it is not simply by employing the childbirth metaphor that Pope locates *The Dunciad* and its denizens in the region of the female body. Throughout the poem, the excess of Queen Dulness's body permeates the consciousness of her dunce sons so that they become mesmerized, passive, and thus easily drawn into her uncreating womb and powerful sway. From the first book, Dulness's all-

encompassing and "ample presence fills up all the place" (1.261-3). In the third book, Cibber experiences a lunatic dream vision while his head rests in his mother's lap, a position which denotes both his extreme passivity and an unnatural sexualized relationship between mother and son:

> But in her Temple's last recess inclos'd
> On Dulness' lap th'Anointed head repos'd.
> Him close the curtains round with Vapours blue,
> And soft besprinkles with Cimmerian dew. (3.1-4)

In this passage, a pieta image is evoked by the positioning of mother and child; however, the divine and pristine image is perverted and tainted by unnatural sexuality. Then again in book four the tableau of Cibber physically, mentally and sexually submissive in the Queen's lap is repeated:

> She mounts the Throne: her head a Cloud conceal'd,
> In broad Effulgence all below reveal'd.
> ('Tis thus aspiring Dulness ever shines)
> Soft on her lap her Laureat son reclines. (4.17-20)

Michael Seidel rightly points out Cibber's state of being in the poem:

> Progeny seeks its source. Cibber, the natural successor figure in the poem, spends much of his time nuzzled in the lap of the Queen Mother. Insofar as he moves at all, he moves to return to that from which he came - any bodily orifice will do, but he naturally prefers reentrance at the point from which he gained egress. The celebration of Dulness is such that the end is an elaboration of the dark principles upon which the beginning was misconceived.[15]

Cibber, especially, but also the other dunces, experience a kind of Oedipal seduction as he is drawn into the body or womb of the maternal Queen. The scene of seduction is repeatedly played out throughout the poem. David Fairer compares Milton's Comus and the Queen because they both attempt to trap their victims

through delusion, but I propose they are comparable figures because they both function as seducers. Just as Comus seduces the Lady by mesmerizing her into physical passivity, so too the Queen Mother seduces her dunce sons and subjects by mesmerizing her progeny into passive obedience through her "ample presence" and "secret might" (1.261, 4.640).[16]

A last-ditch rebellion against the hypnotic and excessively female power of Queen Dulness is led by the heroic figure of Handel, one of the most powerful symbols of masculinity in the poem, and even he is disarmed by the Queen and banished:

> Strong in new Arms, lo! Giant Handel stands,
> Like bold Briarus, with a hundred hands;
> To stir, to rouse, to shake the Soul he comes,
> And Jove's own Thunders follow Mars's Drums.
> Arrest him, Empress; or you sleep no more' -
> She heard , and drove him to th'Hibernian shore. (4.65-70)

The threat posed by Handel is his masculinity, his active desire "to stir, to rouse, to shake[]." The martial imagery underscores his dangerous masculinity. This threat is also emphasized in Pope's note to this passage,

> Mr *Handel* had introduced a great number of Hands, and more variety of Instruments into the Orchestra, and employed even Drums and Cannon to make a fuller Chorus; which prov'd so much too manly for the fine Gentlemen of his age, that he was obliged to remove his Music into *Ireland*. (769)

Pope's searing satire on contemporary aristocratic taste is made apparent by the comparison of Handel's "manly" music to the effeminate "fine" taste of gentlemen. The gentlemen of the realm instead prefer the fickle and affected feminine Opera, a form associated with castrati singers, and therefore with unnatural sexuality and

emasculation:

> When lo! a Harlot form soft sliding by,
> With mincing step, small voice, and languid eye;
> Foreign her air, her robe's discordant pride
> In patch-work flutt'ring, and her head aside.
> By singing Peers up-held on either hand,
> She tripp'd and laugh'd, too pretty much to stand. (4.45-50)

This preference for the corrupt and spiritless Italian Opera by aristocrats and peers, the very members of society who should be maintaining high standards of taste and thus supporting "high" art, indicates the degree to which contemporary standards of taste have fallen into decay.[17] The peers in this passage are depicted as following only the drives of the body by choosing to acclaim "a Harlot form."

Hence, one of the effects of the powerful forces of the magna mater's expansive body is that taste becomes attracted to forms which are corrupt and promiscuous in their construction. Informed reason gives way to unconscious physical drives and adheres passively and indiscriminately to the will of Dulness:

> None want a place, for all their Centre found,
> Hung to the Goddess, and coher'd around.
> Not closer, orb in orb, conglob'd are seen
> The buzzing Bees about their dusky Queen.
> The gath'ring number, as it moves along,
> Involves a vast involuntary throng,
> Who gently drawn, and struggling less and less,
> Roll in her Vortex, and her pow'r confess. (4.77-84)

Humans slip down the Chain of Being as they are transformed into insignificant insects, passive and powerless under the feminine sway of the Queen. Pope utilizes Miltonic similes to portray the sheer faceless, nameless numbers of thoughtless dunce drones who revel in the maternal nothingness of Queen Dulness.

The image of nothingness is pervasive in the poem, and it has explicit connections to female genitalia. In the Renaissance the word "nothing" was regularly employed as a bawdy pun. For instance, Hamlet cruelly uses the double connotation of nothingness as mental vacuity and female genitalia in order to taunt Ophelia:

> Hamlet: Lady, shall I lie in your lap?
> Ophelia: No, my lord.
> Hamlet: I mean my head upon your lap?
> Ophelia: Ay, my lord.
> Hamlet: Do you think I meant country matters?
> Ophelia: I think nothing, my lord.
> Hamlet: That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.
> Ophelia: What is, my lord?
> Hamlet: Nothing.[18]

In the eighteenth century the concept of nothingness/emptiness still had obvious associations with female genitalia. For example, the Earl of Rochester, in his poem *Upon Nothing* calls this primal state of being from which all issues and to which all returns a "hungry Womb."[19] Pope read and was influenced by this poem of Rochester's since he composed a short poem entitled *On Silence*, which is an imitation of Rochester's *Upon Nothing*. Written in 1702 and published in 1712 ,*On Silence* seems to contains the seeds of the themes that Pope was to explore more extensively years later in *The Dunciad*. In this poem, passive Nothingness/Silence/Womb is the female, gendered ground upon which the masculine principle of thought must move in order to bring language into being:

> Silence! Cooeval with Eternity;
> Thou wert e'er Nature's self began to be,
> Twas one vast Nothing All, and All slept fast in thee.

> Thine was the Sway, e'er Heav'n was form'd or Earth,
> E'er fruitful *Thought* conceiv'd Creation's Birth,
> Or Midwife *Word* gave Aid, and spoke the Infant forth. [20]

Much more recently, Simone de Beauvoir comments on this cultural symbolism of femaleness: "the Woman-Mother has a face of shadows: she is the chaos whence all have come and whither all must one day return; she is Nothingness."[21] In the *Dunciad* the nothingness which characterizes Queen Dulness is a primeval, pre-linguistic, infantile state. The dunces do not resist their unconscious and physical drives and are easily drawn into the maternal womb; they are thus reduced to an infantilized and emasculate state of being.

Although it is described with a greater degree of seriousness, the appeal of the Queen to her dunce subjects in *The Dunciad* can be compared to the lure of the Siamese twins to Martinus in the farcical Scriblerian work, *The Memoirs of the Extraordinarily Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus.* The object of Martinus' passion is Lindamora who, with her sister Indamira, is part of a travelling caravan or circus. The sisters are placed on public display because they are attached at the back and are considered to be "abnormal" curiosities. The satire revolves around the intellectual and legal dispute over whether the sisters have two souls even though they have only one generative organ and what their possible marital status could be as a result of this condition.[22] The first time Martinus views Lindamira/Indamora he falls in love with Lindamira. His interest and desire, rather than being quelled by the apparent deformity of the pair, is enflamed by it:

> For how much soever our Martin was enamour'd on her as a beautiful Woman, he was infinitely more ravish'd with her as a charming Monster. What wonder then, if his gentle Spirit, already humaniz'd by a polite Education to receive all soft impressions, and fired by the sight of those beauties so lavishly expos'd to his view, should prove unable to resist are once so pleasing a Passion, and so amiable a Phaenomenon.[23]

The twins kindle Martinus's desire to match their deformity: "While others, O darling of Nature, look upon thee with the eyes of Curiosity, I behold thee with those of Love. Since I have been struck with thy most astonishing Charms, how have I call'd upon Nature to make me a new head, new arms, and a new body to sprout from this single Trunk of mine, and to double every member, so to render me a proper mate for so lovely a pair."[24] Of course, Pope and his Scriblerian colleagues are burlesquing romance writing (a genre associated with female writers during the early eighteenth century), but they are also exhibiting a certain amount of anxiety about the susceptibility of culture to perversion and corruption. In *Martinus* this vulnerability is exemplified by Martinus's wish to metamorphose into a monstrosity himself in order to match the object of his affections. Under the enchanting sway of the female figure, Martinus loses rational perspective. Instead of wishing that Lindamira/Indamora were separate and "normal" individuals, he wishes to becomes as "abnormal" as they are. This is the same kind of faulty judgment that Pope depicts the dunces as possessing in *The Dunciad,* who rather than attempting to differentiate themselves from the grotesque figure of Queen Dulness, are shown by Pope as embracing and mirroring all the negative female principles she represents. Just as the Queen gives birth to abnormalities, so her dunce sons mirror her activity: "In each she marks her Image full exprest,/ But

chief in BAYS's monster-breeding breast" (1.107-108). All is in the process of collapsing into sameness.

Pope particularly pinpoints the educational system as a propagator of this cultural drive toward sameness and mediocrity:

> We only furnish what he cannot use,
> Or wed to what he must divorce, a Muse:
> Full in the midst of Euclid dip at once,
> And petrify a Genius to a Dunce:
> Or set on Metaphysic ground to prance,
> Shown all his paces , not a step advance.
> With the same Cement, ever sure to bind,
> We bring to one dead level ev'ry mind. (4.261-268)

The obliteration of difference or distinction, the bringing "to one dead level ev'ry mind" destroys all intellectual hierarchy; consequently, the system of education, which should be founded upon masculine principles of social progress through obedience to informed and capable authorities, is depicted in *The Dunciad* as eschewing its proper responsibility. Thereby, the modern educational system contributes to the break-down or feminization of patriarchal culture.

The perverse Queen progenitrix echoes such other monstrous mother figures in literature as Sin in *Paradise Lost* and Errour in *The Fairie Queen*. In particular, Dulness's effect on her progeny is similar in kind to Errour's on hers:

> And as she lay upon the durtie ground,
> Her huge tail her den all overspred,
> Yet was in knots and many bougts upwound,
> Pointed with mortal sting. Of her there bred
> A thousand young ones, which she dayly fed,
> Sucking upon her poisonous dugs, eachone
> Of sundry shapes, yet all ill favored:
> Soone as that uncouth light upon them shone,
> Into her mouth they crept, and suddain all were gone.[25]

The dunces are destroyed doubly by the Vortex/return to the maternal womb and Dulness's "uncreating word," just as the children of Errour are devoured by her womb/mouth. When Errour is choked by the Red Cross night, "Her vomit full of bookes and papers was,/ With loathly frogs, which eyes did lacke."[26] On an allegorical level she is seen as the source of false Catholic propaganda. Similarly, Queen Dulness, as the prime mover within the upside-down domain of *The Dunciad,* is shown to be the source from which both deviant writers and their deformed works issue. Her role in the poem signifies a negative image or inverted paradigm of Christian theology, as is noted by Aubrey Williams, and thus she functions as a negative creator in the spiritual sense.[27] However, she also functions as a negative paradigm of creation in a literary sense. If "the patriarchal notion that the writer 'fathers' his text just as God fathered the word is and has been all-pervasive in Western literary civilization" then Queen Dulness must be understood as a negative paradigm of literary creation, as a female writer who "mothers" her text.[28] The patriarchal tradition places male literary creation in the sphere of mental activity, so the negative image represented by Queen Dulness is female literary creativity in the realm of physicality or genitality.

Unlike "proper" masculine creation, which strives to be "disinterested" or objective, female creation is depicted as inherently narcissistic. Queen Dulness's attitude toward her self-engendered realm is described by Pope as absolute self-indulgence:

She, tinsel'd o'er in robes of various hues,
With self-applause her wild creation views;
Sees momentary monsters rise and fall,
And with her own fools-colours gilds them all. (1.81-84).

The Queen can only function according to principles of inconsistent subjectivity; stable standards of objectivity based on reason and following universal laws are beyond her grasp. Pope's use of glittering colour to describe the Queen echoes his use of colour as a symbol of female inconsistency, lack, and excess in his satire on learned ladies and female wits in *An Epistle to a Lady*:

Come then, the Colours and the ground prepare!
Dip in Rainbow, trick her off in Air,
Chuse a firm cloud before it fall, and in it
Catch, e'er she change, the *Cynthia* of this minute. (17-20)

In addition, the Queen can be aligned with the figure of Atossa in the *Epistle*:

But what are these to great Atossa's mind?
Scarce once herself, by turns all Womankind!
.....
No Thought advances but her Eddy Brain
Whisks it about, and down it goes again. (115-116, 121-122)

The magnetic abyss of Atossa's mind which swallows all reasoned thought, is comparable to the hypnotic mental/physical Vortex of Queen Dulness, an association made even more concrete when we recall that the terra incognita of Dulness is identified at the beginning of the poem as mental anarchy (1.16). Queen Dulness's state of mental vacancy (and her consequent links with madness) is mirrored by the mental state and physical activity exhibited by her favorite dunce son. In discussing Theobald's role in the *Variorum* version Patricia Meyer Spacks points out some of these connections which can be equally applied to Cibber and the 1742 *Dunciad* version:

> Bay's mental activity seems to take place in a physical setting and to be identical with the divers' physical activity [in Book II]. His minds' bottomless abyss is indistinguishable from the bottomless mud of the Thames, and both resemble Cloacina's domain, whose 'Wit' also resembles that to be found in the unplumbed depths of Bay's mind ... physical and psychic reality reflect one another so intricately that they seem interchangeable.[29]

On a certain level, everything seems reduced to a state of reflective sameness, which of course perfectly characterizes the property of dullness/Dulness.

In Book III Cibber experiences a dream-vision while resting in the lap of Dulness, "a position," according to the sarcastic narrator, "of marvellous virtue, which, which causes all the visions of wild enthusiasts, projectors, politicians, inamoratos, castle-builders, chemists, and poets"(751). He enters an imaginative fantasy world highly evocative of the Cave of Spleen in *The Rape of the Lock*, the very region where Pope locates and links the hysterical female body, unrestrained fancy, the woman writer and female wit.[30] In the Canto IV of *The Rape*, Pope describes the Cave of Spleen in the following manner:

> A constant *Vapour* o'er the Palace flies;
> Strange Phantoms rising as the Mists arise;
> Dreadful, as Hermit's Dreams in haunted Shades
> Or bright as Visions of expiring Maids.
> Now glaring Fiends, and Snakes on rolling Spires,
> Pale Spectres, gaping Tombs, and Purple Fires:
> Now lakes of liquid Gold, *Elysian* scenes
> And crystal Domes, and Angels in Machines. (4.17-18, 39-46)

Although not as palpably sexually charged as the Cave of Spleen, with its snakes, spires, bottles calling for corks, and "gaping Tombs," the underworld of *The Dunciad* is comprised of similar images of vapour, liquid, visions, and descent, as well as the classical allusion to Elysium:

> Him close the curtains round with Vapours blue,
> And soft besprinkles with Cimmerian dew
> Then raptures high the seat of Sense o'erflow
> Which only heads refin'd from Reason know.
> .....
> And now on Fancy's easy wing convey'd,
> The King descending, views th'Elysian Shade.
> A slip-shod Sibyl led his steps along,
> In loft madness mediating song;
> Her tresses staring from Poetic dreams,
> And never wash'd, but in Castalia's streams. (3.3-4, 13-18)

The "slip-shod Sibyl," guide to this underworld, is representative of female poets; Pope's description of her slovenliness echoes both the contemporary denigration of learned women and his previous descriptions of the educated and talented Lady Mary. In this version of the poem, Pope does not identify the slip-shod Sibyl explicitly, and so she serves as a type for all female writers. However, in the *Dunciad Varorium* version Pope distinguishes two "slip-shod Muses" as romance and periodical writer Eliza Heywood and playwright Susan Centlivre:

> 'Lo next two slip-shod Muses traipse along,
> In lofty madness, mediating song,
> With tresses staring from poetic dreams,
> And never wash'd, but in Castalia's streams:
> Haywood, Centlivre, Glories of their race! (D.V. 3.141-145)

Pope's decision to change the Muses to a Sibyl not only results in a closer parallel to Virgil's *Aeneid,* but also places a greater emphasis on the corrupting influence of women writers. The Sibyl, after all, is the figure who escorts Cibber into this nightmare underworld.

However, the inclusion of historical female scribblers certainly has not been neglected by Pope in the 1742 *Dunciad* version. Eliza Heywood is one of the more scathingly satirized figures within the poem. She is offered as the first prize in the

urinating game in Book three:

> See in the circle next, Eliza plac'd,
> Two babes of love close clinging to her waist;
> Fair as before her works she stands confess'd,
> In flow'rs and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dress'd.
> The Goddess then: 'Who best can send on high
> The salient spout, far-streaming to the sky;
> His be yon Juno of majestic size,
> With cow-like udders and with ox-like eyes. (2.157-164)

Her physicality and bestiality are her most obvious characteristics. In her materiality and maternity she is a daughterly dunce replica of the Queen Mother. Pope is intentionally most visceral in his depiction of her, as is shown in Scriblerus' footnote to the passage:

> In this game is expos'd in the most contemptuous manner, the profligate licenciousness of those shamless scriblers (for the most part of That sex, which ought least to be capable to such malice or impudence) who in libellous Memoirs and Novels, reveal the faults and misfortunes of both sexes, to the ruin or disturbance, of public fame or private happiness. Our good Poet, (by the whole cast of his Indignation, hath shewn his Contempt as much as possible: having her drawn as vile a picture, as could be represented in the colours of Epic poesy). (384-385)

Specifically, Pope maligns the female writers of memoirs and novels, mongrel genres especially allied with feminine writing and female readership. These genres were associated with modern commercialization and charged by Pope with sowing social disorder of the kind which permeates *The Dunciad.* Spacks observes the serious individual and social ramifications of reading genres associated with female writers, according to cultural "authorities" of the day:

> But as Dr. Johnson suggested, all power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity. Novels stimulating the fancy and encouraging vicarious enlargement of identity, thus endangering sanity in its most rigorous definition by disturbing the clear preeminance of memory. By making

> imagination as vivid as memory, by creating characters whose identities persuaded readers' belief, they threatened the truisms about continuity and responsibility.31

The characterization of female novelists and memoirists as fundamentally promiscuous is in line with contemporary stereotypes about the personal lives of female writers. Pope consistently recycles this sexual stereotype when he refers to actual female persons, types representative of female writers, and genres particularly affiliated with them.

As a result of female authorship, distinctions in literary genres are blurred; ordered meaning is reduced to randomness; "memory of sense" or standards of judgment and taste are forgotten; learning is reduced to superficiality; mental functions are so warped that classical literature is neglected in favour of modern trash; and even British masters of literature are debased at the sordid hands of dunces. The female creator thus stands as a metaphor for the corruption of literary forms, social systems, and mental functions, even though men are also perpetrators of the very same vices. After all, Pope depicts male hacks operating according to codes of cultural and textual femininity. On another level, this emasculation infects social well-being and is spread through hack writing:

> When in *The Dunciad*, the king and his nobility, the intellectual and moral preceptors of the nation, give ear to the 'voices' of a Blackmore, a Theobald, or a Cibber, and acquiesce in an invasion of the polite world by writers who pander to flaccid emotions and effeminate minds, their acts (not wholly fictional) become metaphors which suggest a general social and moral breakdown within the nation.[32]

Unlike the mock-epic characters in *The Rape of the Lock* who are depicted by Pope as essentially controllable and trivial, the Grub Street writers are guilty of significant

sins.[33]

One of the more serious indictments made against the Grub Street hacks is that they are not only devaluing the literary milieu, but are encouraging, through their writings, the loss of judgment and distinction, and therefore, endangering general mental stability. They have succumbed to the force of imagination, untempered by reason, and the demands of the body, unsublimated by the mind. The power of the imagination to override reason is at the core of Shaftesbury's description of madness

> ... if Fancy be left judge of anything, she must be judge of all. Everything is right if anything be so, because I fancy it. The house turns round. The prospect turns. No, but my head turns indeed: I have a giddiness; that is all. Fancy could persuade me thus and thus, but I know better.' 'Tis by means therefore of a controller and corrector of fancy that I am saved from being mad. Otherwise 'tis the house turns when I am giddy. 'Tis when things change (for so I must suppose) when my passion merely or temper changes.[34]

The cause of madness is a weakened or disabled reason which does not maintain discipline over the variable passions. This is what Pope describes Cibber experiencing in book III when he writes, "Then raptures high the seat of Sense o'erflow,/ Which only heads refin'd from Reason know" (3.5-6).

Just as the entire region of Dulness is depicted as existing in the space of the uncreating womb, it is also shown to be part of the disordered mind. Both the womb and mad mind are figured simultaneously as lack and excess: lacking in reason, judgment, consistency and stability, excessive in imagination, passion, and capriciousness; lacking in objective responses to the world, excessive and submerged in subjectivity. Both are symbolic of otherness within patriarchal epistemology and

both are figured as loci of mystery and potential subversion. All that takes place in *The Dunciad* occurs within the mad mind, as is shown from the beginning when Dulness is born to restore and rule "in native Anarchy, the mind" (1.16). The description of Dulness as "Laborious, heavy, busy, bold, and blind" is revealing of her symbolic associations with characteristics of madness, as Bentley observes in the footnotes: "... Dulness here is not to be taken contractedly for mere stupidity, but in the enlarged sense of the word, for all slowness of Apprehension, Shortness of Sight, or imperfect Sense of things ... turning topsy-turvey the Understanding, and inducing an Anarchy or confused State of Mind (721). Her blindness is especially indicative of unclear perception and disordered understanding. Blindness, which Foucault notes is "one of the words which comes closest to the essence of classical madness," is a metaphor used repetitively by Pope to illustrate improper perception.[35] Throughout the poem the Queen is described as cloud-compelling while she herself "Beholds thro' fogs that magnify the scene" (1.79-80). Her head is always covered by clouds and vapours while her body is revealed, an oblique suggestion that vapours are caused by bodily emissions. Swift, in his "Digression Concerning Madness" in *The Tale of the Tub*, describes this negative influence of the body upon understanding: " ... as the Face of Nature never produced Rain, but when the understanding it is so overcast and disturbed, so Human Understanding, seated in the Brain, must be troubled and overspread by Vapours, ascending from the lower faculties, to water the Invention and render it fruitfull."[36]

The magna mater is incapable of proper sight/insight because she functions

only according to the operations of body; yet, her power position is that of the perceiver rather than the perceived. A double transgression is committed by the Queen: as the gazer she is occupying a locus of power usually accorded to men and to rational beings. Her affiliations with madness in combination with her spectatorial position invert the normal relationship between visitor to Bedlam and inmate. Thus, the chaotic world of the Queen Mother becomes the standard of normalcy, while the deviants are those who attempt to uphold nature and order. If, as Irigaray notes, "the mother ... *has no eyes*, or so they say, she has no gaze, no soul. No consciousness, no memory. No language," then the empowerment of the maternal figure has some very serious consequences for her dunce subjects and culture at large.[37]

Kristina Straub points out that traditionally the split between observer and observed implicitly underlies the bifurcation of self and other, an essential paradigm for the construction of patriarchal subjectivity; however, in *The Dunciad* this paradigm is collapsed into morbid narcissism.[38] The region of Dulness is created by the Queen, all that takes place is commended by the Queen, and everything and everyone she reproduces is essentially an extension of herself: the entire poem is based in pure subjectivity and absolute female narcissism. The dunces have no self-knowledge, yet their responses to their world are plainly subjective. The Queen is "Wrapt up in Self, a God without a Thought "and the dunces "Make God Man's Image, Man the final Cause" (4.485, 479). Therefore, the dunces are unable to establish a healthy perspective in their relationship with an external world; all

responses are immersed in solipsism. In the eighteenth century, as Michael de Porte notes, "[m]adness comes to be seen as self-concern so intense as to eclipse external reality."[39]

Imprisoned within a solipsistic sphere of being and understanding, the dunce hacks and critics lose their ability to make objective value judgments. They are unable to distinguish between proper and uncivilized behaviour, good and bad literature, virtuous and corrupt leadership. Locked in their own subjective universe, they do not have the rational distance to understand the absurdity of their actions. Although they have adult bodies, the dunces are shown to have child-like minds. The incongruity of this combination places them squarely within the province of the insane, but also aligns them with femininity. In discussing eighteenth-century philosophy, Crampe-Casnabet points out the various association between imagination, insanity, childhood and women:

> This imagination, the mother of error and untruth bears the stamp of childhood. An excess of imagination could cause a person to fall ill, go mad, or die. Because the female mind remained stuck at the stage of imagination, it was childish, vulnerable, and unpredictable. Thus a kind of 'madness' was always latent in women ... .[40]

The dunces are stuck in this very stage of arrested development. In Book II, for example, the dunces participate in the most absurd and infantile games and communicate in nonsensical ways. They publicly display the private parts of their bodies in the urinating contest, roll around in filth and excrement, and wildly abandon themselves to all humiliating activities in pursuit of phantom or paltry prizes. The dunces do not use imagination as

> a force of penetration, an ennobling power capable of lifting the spirit and directing it to a proper aspiration, a means of achieving great and lasting works of literature; [instead] it becomes in their hands self-pleasuring and sordid, turning energies inward, and either yoking man to the muddy earth, or merely amusing him with glittering toys.[41]

The child-like and masturbatory actions of the dunces indicate their complete breach of masculine norms of mature and rational behaviour which entail an understanding of social decorum and public responsibility.

Self-love, notes Pope in *An Essay of Man*, turned outward and tempered by reason, "push'd to Social, to Divine" uses, is of social benefit:

> Self-love but serves the virtous mind to wake
> As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake,
> The center mov'd a circle strait succeeds,
> Another still, and still another spreads;
> Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,
> His country next, and next all human-race,
> Wide and more wide, th'oerflowings of the mind
> Take ev'ry creature in, of ev'ry kind;
> Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest,
> And Heav'n behold its image in his breast. (4.363-372)

Self-love turned inward is anti-social and solipsistic: it is a diseased state of being which affects society negatively. In *The Dunciad*, Pope seems to parody his own lines in *An Essay on Man* in the passage where the dunces are read to sleep:

> Who sate the nearest, by words o'ercome,
> Slept first; the distant nodded to a hum.
> Then down are roll'd the books; stretched o'er 'em lies
> Each gentle clerk, and mutt'ring seals his eyes.
> 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. (2.401-410)

The small pebble of self-love which softly ripples the peaceful lake in *An Essay on*

Man is metamorphosed in *The Dunciad* into copious fecal matter which spreads drowsy dulness throughout the land. Insofar as self-love is healthy it beneficently embraces and betters all that comes into contact with it; insofar as self-love is unhealthily turned inward, it enslaves to asocial subjectivity and thus defiles all.

Writing produced by the Grub Street hacks reflects the madness of the culture, while also promoting it. The print industry at the beginning of the eighteenth century widened the field of authorship and instigated generic invention in response to a new and growing middle-class readership. As Pope notes in his *Imitations of Horace Epistle 2.1,*

> Now Times are chang'd, and one Poetick Itch
> Has seized the Court and City, Poor and Rich:
> Sons, Sires, and Grandsires, all will wear the Bays,
> Our Wives read Milton, our Daughters Plays,
> .....
> But those who cannot write, and those who can,
> All rhyme, and scrawl, and scribble, to a man. (169-172, 187-188)

Poetic inspiration has been reduced to mere "Poetick Itch"which has infected the general public, regardless of status, wealth or gender: it is an indiscriminate disease which is also delusional since even those who cannot write think they can. They do not have the common sense to ponder whether they have the necessary talent to versify or write. Consider the following passage written by R. Freeman, who defines madness as a deficiency of common sense: this deficiency "is not a Want of Capacity to act agreeably to the Stations of Life they are in, and to make a proper Use of their Reason and Talents Nature has given them; but some strange mistaken Principle about themselves; some desire to appear what they are not or more than they

appear".[42] According to this perspective, a sign of madness is the desire to step out place in the social hierarchy.

Of course this is the very charge Pope defends himself against when he asserts in his *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, "I lisp'd in Numbers, for the Numbers came./ I left no Calling for this idle trade./ No Duty broke, no Father dis-obeyed" (127-129). Unlike Pope, who exercises his innate gifts and true calling through a literary career, the dunces are depicted as suffering from delusions that they can do the same although they actually have no capacity for it. Their obstinacy in refusing to follow the pattern that Nature has set for them threatened Pope in a very tangible manner, for if all decided that they were capable of versifying, then the intellectual elitism surrounding the literary milieu upon which he depended for his authority would be utterly shaken. As a result, Pope separates himself and asserts his difference from them by ridiculing the limited understanding of the writing and reading public.

What his castigation of the middle-class and female reading public actually attempts to accomplish is to erase the suspicion that Pope himself may be pandering to the very public he is criticizing. However, as Claudia Thomas points out, Pope certainly did not succeed in distancing himself from his readership. Not only was he accused during his age of being purely motivated by financial interests, but later on in the age he was especially defined as a lady's rather than a gentleman's writer:

> Thrale's disapproval also reflects late eighteenth-century identification of Pope with 'smooth' or 'sweet' verse, epithets whose gendered associations were leading some critics to demote Pope from his status as a 'great' English poet. In the preface to his translations of Madame

> Dacier's Iliad, John Ozell had discussed his ambition to produce an English verse translation: 'By Verse I do not mean Rhyme; for I always thought That too Effeminate to express the Masculine Spirit of Homer.' Throughout Pope's career, his enemies suggest that his sweet-sounding verse had made 'Tuneful Alexis ... The Ladies' Play-Thing.'[43]

Considering the images of him circulating in his culture it is hardly surprising that throughout most of his poetical career much of his effort was spent deflecting them. As is shown in the above passage, he never really succeeded in differentiating himself from all those negative qualities he associated with modern writing, including the entry of women into print culture.

Pope saw the creation of magazines, miscellanies, journals and periodicals as a sign of decline in literary integrity, even though he was certainly not above using them to publish his own opinions. They catered to a more naive and lower-class readership than had been the norm in the past. Neither the writers who published, nor the readers who read the publication were necessarily well-educated or versed in a critical understanding of language and literature. The contributors to the periodical, for instance, could be anyone who were capable of writing a question to the editor. Both men and women could be authors of published material without being "authorities" on their chosen topic. Writers frequently wrote in pursuit of financial gain rather than from a desire to use their knowledge for the betterment of culture. Mass publication was motivated by profit for writer and bookseller, a motive, argued Pope, which is entirely corrupt and corrupting. Proper value judgments were not made by the publishers: they simply printed as much material as they could in order to realize the most profit. An incipient capitalist economy

made it fiscally attractive for increasing numbers of booksellers and writers to enter the literary marketplace. A Scriblerian note to the *Dunciad Variorum* maintains that the poet's concern over this situation is the prime incentive in his choosing to write the poem:

> We shall next declare the occasion and the cause which moved our Poet to this particular work. He lived in those days, when (after providence had permitted the Invention of Printing as a scourge for the Sins of the learned) Paper also became so cheap, and the printers so numerous, that a deluge of authors cover'd the land: Whereby not only the peace of the honest unwriting subject was daily molested, but unmerciful demands were made of his applause, yea of his money, by such as would neither earn the one, or deserve the other (344).

Even though Pope himself participated in the very literary marketplace he so disparages here, profiting more than most writers of the day, he ostensibly defends himself by asserting that he, unlike the Grub Street hacks, honestly earned the applause of his readers, and thus deserved his financial rewards. In his article, "On Pope's Translation of Homer" in *Applebee's Original Weekly Journal*, Daniel Defoe defends Pope's business ethics by asserting that all writers are forced to negotiate the industry that writing has become, whether they want to or not :

> Writing you know, Mr *Applebee*, is become a very considerable Branch of the English Commerce; Composing, Inventing, Translating, Versifying, &. c., are the several Manufacturers which supply this Commercing: The Booksellers are the Master Manufacturers or Employers; the several Writers, Authors, Copyers, Sub-Writers, and all other Operators with Pen and Ink, are the Workmen employed by the said Master Manufacture[r]s, in the forming, dressing, and finishing the said Manufactures; as the Combers, Spinners, Weavers, Fullers, Dressers, &.c., are in our Cloathing Manufactures by the Master Clothiers &. c. [44]

The role of the writer within this economy is akin to that of the tradesman, a rather

devalued position compared to the classical writers' position as the voice of social conscience and morality. The booksellers are depicted as having more control over what is written than do the writers themselves. Especially interesting is Defoe's comparison of the print industry to the garment industry, since it has cultural associations with female consumers.

Before the eighteenth-century, as Robert Darton points out, readers would work through a limited number of texts which they would constantly re-read but "[a]fterwards they raced through all kinds of material, particularly novels and periodicals, seeking amusement rather than edification. The shift from intensive to extensive reading coincided with a desacralization of the printed word."[45] Here Darton is specifically referring to desacrilization as a result of readers' neglecting focused Bible reading, but he is also pointing to the general lack of reverence for the printed word. The increase in new readers intersected with an increase in printed materials and resulted in a decreased deference to writers and their works. Pope and his group of Scriblerian colleagues saw the character of the new reading community as fundamentally unstable because they were unable to ascertain properly which printed material should be valued and which should be rejected. In the case of a female and lower-class readership, this issue was of central importance, for these groups were generally not educated in critical thinking and universal standards. In the poem the dunces are constantly satirized for preferring the works of moderns over ancients and for equipping their libraries with bad translations of good writers, plagiarized texts, and bawdy or unsophisticated plays and poetry. Cibber's collection

is described as "A Gothic Library! of Greece and Rome/Well purg'd, and worthy Settle, Banks and Broome" (1.145-155). The inability to value proper genres over improper ones, manly material over feminine fluff, was a crucial issue for Pope because he felt that the printed word was capable of a great deal of influence over the way that people understood themselves and each other. Because the sexes were supposed to function according to norms of gender difference, they were expected to choose reading material appropriate to their gender. Unmonitored availability of reading material for women especially could lead these naive readers to moral degradation. In discussing *An Essay on Man* ,Maynard Mack asserts that the poem advocates the practice of a critical philosophy which "acknowledge[s] that the idiosyncrasies of individual intelligence and taste must be tried, and normalized, against the collective principles of the community of educated men" both past and present.[47] The elite"community of educated men" in the eighteenth century was increasingly undermined by the community of uneducated male and female Grub Street hacks, who did not measure their own opinions against the "collective principles" of ancient authorities; they spread their "untested" or "unauthorized" ideas to an unsuspecting audience through print and theater. This procedure bred sexual misidentification, idiosyncrasies and instability if readers depended upon the wrong voice for guidance

In *The Dunciad,* the loss of judgment and discrimination is a sign of madness and effeminacy, but so is the loss of memory. David Morris articulates the importance of memory:

> Memory enables eighteenth-century man to assert a continuity with his own past, without which he might grow as fragmented and incoherent as Swift's impersonated modern author in *A Tale of a Tub*, who both laments and celebrates th'unhappy shortness' of his memory .... Not to remember is to experience an attenuated spectral existence. For Pope, memory is not only a source of inner coherence but provides the basis of all mental activity, all inwardness. As Johnson asserts: 'Memory is the primary and fundamental power without which there could be no intellectual operation.'[48]

Thus Pope's assertion in *The Dunciad* that "Wits have short memories, and Dunces none" illustrates the degree to which their mental processes are confused and unstable (4.620). It is within the memory that individual and cultural history resides and therefore it is upon this sense of precedent or memory that patriarchal society is founded.[49] Since women's history was not recognized at this time, women in fact were aligned with the absence of history or memory. The moderns' neglect of classical literature and philosophy, the very means through which cultural memory and history is maintained and transmitted, and their preference for the superficial and trendy directly undermines patriarchal values and thus aligns the moderns with the cultural feminine. Unlike his *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*, where Pope defends and attempts to uphold literary and social legitimacy, inheritance and independence, based upon social and intellectual primogeniture, in *The Dunciad* he despairs that these already been lost. In Book IV Pope describes their disappearance when he writes: "With that, a WIZARD old his Cup extends;/ Which who so tastes forgets his former friends,/ Sire, Ancestors, Himself" (517-519). This forgetfulness is dangerous because ties are severed between the individual and himself, his culture, and his history, links which define human identity.

The greatest sin committed by the dunces, the one most propagated by the

Goddess Dulness, is the misuse of language. Unlike God's active and creative Word which brings into being order, light and sensibility, all is reversed in *The Dunciad* by the Goddess's "uncreating word" which brings chaos, darkness and insensibility. Whereas the Word of the Father is the harbinger of Truth, the reign of Mother Dulness sees "Skulking *Truth* to her Old Cavern fled/ Mountains of Causitry heap'd o'er her head" (4.641-642). If language is no longer capable of communicating truth, morality and meaning to the community, then truthfulness, ethics and meaningfulness become empty categories. To the poet who was ultimately concerned with maintaining the integrity of these concepts, the evacuation of their significance through the misuse of language was a serious personal and social problem. For one thing, the general understanding of language during the eighteenth century was that "[t]he use of words ... stand as outward marks of our internal ideas."[50] The dunces' flippant and loquacious use of language symbolizes the flimsy insubstantiality of their thoughts. During the games in Book II, the words spoken by the dunces are characterized as being so meaningless they are more like noises made by beasts than coherent human articulations:

> Now thousand tongues are heard in one loud din:
> The Monkey-mimics rush discordant in;
> Twas chatt'ring, grinning, mouthing, jabb'ring all,
> And Noise and Norton, Brangling and Breval,
> Dennis and Dissonance, captious Art,
> And Snip-snap short, and Interruption smart,
> And Demonstration thin, and Theses thick,
> And Major, Minor, and Conclusion quick. (2.236-242)

Although humans, unlike like beasts, are supposed to be capable of expressing reason through language, the dunces' use of language is so corrupted that they have

actually slid down the hierarchy of the Chain of Being into senseless animalism. Interestingly, Pope, by using this form of attack against his critics and enemies, redirects their criticism made against him. As has already been noted the image of Pope as an "A.P-E" was used by Dennis and others in order to condemn Pope's appearance and imitative style of writing, an image that Pope displaces from himself in *The Dunciad* by redirecting it at his detractors. Pope's critics are now attacked for their apish use of language: their incessant and incoherent "chatt'ring, grinning, mouthing and jabb'ring" is symbolic of the degree to which their own thoughts are discordant.

John Locke asserts that the problem is less that madmen are incoherent than that their use of language will convince the listener/audience of the reasonableness of their ideas: "Madnesse seemes to be nothing but a disorder in the imagination, and not in the discursive faculty; for one shall find amongst the distracted, those who phansy them selves kings, & c., who discourse and reason right enough upon the suppositions and wrong phansies they have taken."[51] Unlike Locke's, Pope's understanding of madness does include the possibility of linguistic lunacy; however, he does see and fear the danger inherent in the kind of pseudo-reasoned discourse actually motivated by madness, as outlined by Locke. His satire on the educational system is in part a satire on this specious and dangerous form of discourse.

The Headmaster of Westminister makes a seemingly rational assertion that since humans are distinct from beasts in their discursive faculty, the teaching of

rhetoric leads to greater civilization and enlightenment. However, the Headmaster clearly displays a crucial blindspot in his supposed reasoned discourse for his philosophy that students should be enslaved to words does not take into account that language differentiates humans from beasts only insofar as discourse is motivated by reason:

> '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,
> Blind rebel Wit, and double chain on chain,
> Confine the thought, to exercise the breath;
> And keep them in the pale of words till death' (4.149-160).[52]

The dunce speaker has divorced language from meaning, words from thought, simply in order to propagate the superficial use of words. As he is speaking as a representative of the contemporary educational system, the Headmaster's attitude has social ramifications that are wide-reaching. Since the educational system is the place where men of art, science and politics generally acquire the foundations of their crafts, the spread of language as mere verbalism teaches them firstly not to balance their language with morality and truth, and secondly to infect the public world with these perverted principles. In *Imitations of Horace Epistle 1.6*, Pope equates lack of balance with insanity and effeminacy: "Thus good, or bad, to one extreme betray/Th'unbalanc'd Mind, and snatch the Man away" (24-25). "Man" here is meant to be understood as reason and identity, but it also indicates that once

these qualities are lost, so is man's masculinity snatched away. As a result of Wit being blinded and thought confined through enslavement to empty rhetoric, society can never progress - all purposeful invention is suffocated under the mind-numbing educational system. Aubrey Williams outlines the ideal relationship between the public man, language and learning, a relationship which is abandoned by the denizens of *The Dunciad*:

> The ideal man of the Renaissance and of Augustan England (this is implicit in the analogies constantly drawn by the Augustans between themselves and the men of ancient Rome) was a man of learning and of moral and civil perspicacity who, above all else, found the outlet for his capacities in the realm of civil prudence. To the formation of such a man rhetorical discipline was dedicated. Eloquence, as the age regarded it, was the part by which knowledge of matters both spiritual and temporal was oriented toward the betterment of society, by which men were trained to be careful and moral citizens.[53]

The contemporary educational system, did not teach men proper attitudes toward language, and, as a result, failed to inform men of their "masculine" and moral role in society. This improper apprehension of language sinks men and culture at large into madness and effeminacy.

The scholastics and critics are charged with sinking into linguistic effeminacy because they fragment language into meaningless parts and argue over pedantic minutiae instead of perceiving language and literature holistically, according to the author's intentions. A holistic approach to language is what Pope advocates in *A n Essay in Criticism* when he writes that "A perfect Judge will read each Work of Wit/ With the same spirit that its Author writ/ Survey the Whole, nor seek to slight Faults to Find" (233-35). (Presumably, Pope would not be terribly enamoured of our

own current critical commonplace which widely proclaims the "death of the author.") Scholastics' misuse of language is paralleled to unethical experimentation; both lose sight of the creator of the work. Bentley is condemned for mincing language and bludgeoning the spirit of classical works because he refuses to approach them in the same spirit with which they were written:

> Thy mighty Scholiast, whose unweary'd pains
> Made Horace dull, and humbled Milton's strains.
> Turn what they will to Verse, their toil is vain,
> Critics like me shall make it Prose again.
> .....
> Tis true, on Words is still our whole debate,
> 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.
> .....
> Be sure I give them Fragments, not a Meal;
> What Gellius or Stobaeus hash'd before,
> Or chew'd by blind old Scoliasts, o'er and o'er.
> The critic Eye, that microscope of Wit,
> Sees hairs and pore, examines bit by bit. (4.211-14, 220-23, 231-35)

The literary critic who fragments a text without respecting the author's whole intention is similar to an empirical scientist who does not take into account the divine creator when he conducts his experiments:

> 'O! would the Sons of Men once think their Eyes
> And Reason giv'n them but to study *Flies*?
> And Nature in some partial narrow shape,
> And let the Author of the Whole escape. (4.452-455)

Thus, linguistic fragmentation is revealing of the scholastics own splintered mental state, it serves as a metaphor for other forms of corrupt perception, and it indicates the degree to which the dunces have become "presumptuous men" operating solely on their own prideful, impertinent axioms.

Since language is a system of codes whereby the standards of the community can be communicated to its members, the empty signification of words makes it impossible for morality to be taught. As a result of linguistic corruption, the moral fabric of culture becomes unravelled. Sexual promiscuity is used by Pope as a metaphor for linguistic corruption; both linguistic and sexual lubricity ultimately result in moral and cultural breakdown. The Cave of Poverty and Poetry, next door neighbour to Bedlam, is host to the bacchanalian couplings of language and literary genres:

> ...motely Images her fancy strike,
> Figures ill pair'd, and Similies unlike.
> She sees a Mob of Metaphors advance,
> Please'd with the madness of the mazy dance:
> How Tragedy and Comedy embrace;
> How Farce and Epic get a jumbled race. (1.65-70)

Therefore, "[i]f metaphors, which should in their construction call into employment the delicate combination of discrimination and judgment, exist instead as a state of mob rule, their very presence suggests the precedence of passion and whim over reason and nature. And if the most basic laws of nature are sacrificed for the convenience of pseudo-art and ignorance, then nature itself is threatened."[54] It can also be added that the empowerment of "passion and whim over reason and nature" also suggests that the traditional matrix whereby the male term dominates the female one is rendered inoperative.

Metaphor and the tropes related to it, have traditionally been defined, in part, as figures of speech based upon resemblance; as Aristotle notes, '[t]o produce a good metaphor is to see a likeness.' Thus, ".. the ideal of every language, and in particular

of metaphor, being to bring to knowledge the thing itself, the turn of speech will be better if it brings us closer to the thing's essential or proper truth."[55] Linguistic distortion by the residents of *The Dunciad* is in part a result of their inability to create metaphor based on resemblance or mimesis; indiscriminate pairings of language and ideas, signifiers and signifieds, results in widening the lacunae between human perception and the true essence of things. Pope uses the metaphor of a silkworm spinning its fibre to the point of enshrouding itself in order to illustrate the effect of the scholastics' excessive and inappropriate spinning of language into obfuscation:

> For the [Dulness] we dim the eyes, and stuff the head
> With all such reading as was never read:
> For thee explain a thing till all men doubt it,
> And write about it, Goddess, and about it:
> So spins the silk-worm small its slender store,
> And labours till it clouds itself all o'er. (4.249-254)

Rather than using language in order to reveal a certain "truth" or "essence" of things, the scholastics misuse it in order to "explain a thing" into ambiguity. If language becomes divorced from truth/meaning then human understanding becomes threatened. Eyes serve as an image of obscured sight/insight in this passage, a message reinforced by the repeated image of "clouds" covering the intellect. The eclipse is symbolic of this message:

> The poet introduceth [the Dog-star], as all great events are supposed by sage Historians to be proceeded by an *Eclipse of the Sun*; but with a particular propriety, as the Sun is the *Emblem* of that intellectual light which dies before the face of Dulness. Very opposite likewise is it to make this *Eclipse*, which is occassion'd by the *Moon's predominancy*, the very time when *Dulness* and *Madness* are in *Conjunction* . (Tillotson 690)

Hence, disordered language and literature simultaneously reflects and generates a mentally and politically disordered society.

Metaphors used without the faculty of judgment turn into an uncontrollable mob just as subjects ruled without reasoned authority can potentially turn into a subversive mob, an image that expresses Pope's class bias. Like the aristocratic gentlemen who openly prefer the common Harlot Opera, these images suggest the impropriety and insanity of connections which cross class barriers and thus weaken structures of hierarchy. It is, according to Pope, a mad world when classical and revered genres such as Tragedy and Epic become intimate with the low and declasse Comedy and Farce. However, it is decidedly ironic that Pope participates in blurring the lines of distinction between these genres himself. Although he always planned to write a serious epic, he was never able to achieve this ambition; instead, he is most well-known for his hybrid mock-epic and mock-heroic poems. The greatest irony is that in *The Dunciad* Pope satirizes and thus condemns the mergings of generic boundaries, yet the poem is itself contributing to the very literary tendency it is castigating.[56] By creating a mock-epic poem which applies heroic conventions to low subject matter and roughly follows the narrative pattern of Virgil's *Aeneid*, but replaces the heroic characters with base ones and grand epic action with a great deal of ignoble activity, Pope is actually contributing to the very literary impurities for which he condemns his Grub Street colleagues. John Sitter observes that "[i]n place of the epic's conscious, heroic action there is only unconscious, inglorious passivity in *The Dunciad*; in place of the epic's human action signifying a cultural

accomplishment there is only subhuman acquiescence signifying Nothing."[57] By alluding to the famous passage in *Macbeth* -

> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That structus and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing (5.5.24-28) -

Sitter insightfully recognizes the nihilistic undertone running throughout Pope's poem. This is partly the reason he characterizes *The Dunciad* as an anti-epic rather than a mock-epic. The satirist's use of the satiric form should be motivated, in part, by an intention to bring about some kind of social reformation, but in *The Dunciad* there is little hope for the possibility of any social change as all intellectual light is sucked into the black hole of Dulness.

This is certainly not the only example of intellectual elitism and class bias displayed by Pope in *The Dunciad*. His satire on the Grub Street hacks is largely based on their need to write and publish in order to cater to the demands of the body, such as acquiring food, shelter and clothing. He uses poverty as a whip to lacerate the hack writers, stating in essence that if they were actually good writers, and used language properly they would not be suffering under the hardships of financial want. Samuel Johnson in his *Lives of the English Poets* asserts that this is recurring theme in Pope's attacks on his competitors and critics: "The great topic of his ridicule is poverty; the crimes with which he reproaches his antagonists are their debts, their habitation in the Mint, and their want of a dinner He seems to be of an opinion not very uncommon in the world that to want money is to want

everything."[58] Considering that Pope's own financial situation was not too healthy until he profited from his Homeric translations, his searing condemnation of and complete lack of sympathy for his struggling fellow writers is perhaps indicative of his own anxiety regarding his place within the literary circle. As Curll and Thomas note in *Codrus*, Pope tries to disown his own history and class status by satirizing those who are not as financially successful: "It is also much out of the way, to make Poverty the subject of his satire; since had he been humble enough to look behind him, he would have remembered that his Father was but a Husbandman on Windsor-Forest ...."[59] Pope's virulent criticism of poverty-stricken writers opens a space for Pope's own self-creation as a man of aristocratic taste, gentlemanly class status, and it permits self-justification for his own profitable authorship. As Dustin Griffen notes, the Scriblerian myth that literature had experienced a fall in commercialization,

> permitted gentleman-writers (and those who liked to consider themselves gentlemen) to think they were excluding hordes of hacks from joining the club because standards had to be preserved - when the motive of their resistance was in part economic self-interest: if you increase the supply of writers and writing, the price of literature goes down, and patrons, so thought at least one eighteenth century observer, give up trying to choose between the better and the worse and abandon writing all together.[60]

However, Pope's role as one of the first professional and independent writers ironically set the stage for an increased commodification of the literary institution. One can only conjecture how many items of what Pope would consider to be hack writing by both male and female writers were spurred by his own invective against

this kind of writing. *The Dunciad* itself elicited numerous articles and responses, not the least of which included Curll's *Codrus*, Dennis' *Remarks Upon Several Passages to the Dunciad*, and a curious piece called *The Female Dunciad*, which may have been compiled by Eliza Heywood and Elizabeth Thomas. This work is interesting because the women writers employ a methodology of establishing their credibility which is rather similar to Pope's; they place themselves within a matrilineal line of virtuous and intellectually strong women. They published some raunchy letters written by Pope in order to undermine his self-constructed role as a good man and moral poet. Just as he condemns female writers for breaking with gendered norms of decorum for publicly displaying their private thoughts, and hack writers for slipping into promiscuous effeminacy, so do they charge him with the very same accusation of wantonness and profanity: "Can any one who reads these Letters, exempt Mr. Pope from the guilt either of *Lewdness* or *Profaneness?* or think that he has any just colour for upbraiding others with their *Carnalities*, stiled by his Mother Church *Venal Sins?*"[61]

As much as Pope attempts in *The Dunciad* to condemn and differentiate himself from all those qualities associated with the cultural feminine, he is unable to accomplish this feat completely. He satirizes the dunces for submitting to the powerful feminine sway of Queen Dulness who represents the imagination and literary creation in process (not a polished and perfected product), the demands of the body (not the disciplined functions of the mind), empty wordiness (not significant discourse) and the incipient capitalist economy (not the traditional land-

based one), yet he in his creation of her also makes available to the reading public these very features which he attempts to condemn. Although he denounced the existence of material written by women, hack writers, promiscuous playwrights and others, one of the only ways that some of these names have in some way survived for later generations is through their inclusion in *The Dunciad.* It is no surprise that more than a century after Pope's death Leslie Stephen articulated his consternation regarding Pope's decision to write *The Dunciad*: "it is a curious phenomenon that the poet who is pre-eminently the representative of polished society should openly take such pleasure in unmixed filth."[62] Certainly Pope set himself up as an icon of masculine social decorum; just as certainly he constantly slipped from the very standards that he himself established. And as much as he disparaged all the vice, ignorance and corruption circulating in his culture, he needed all these things in order to amplify his own voice as one of virtue, reason and conscience. Therefore, Pope is always related to and identified with those principles and personages whom he attacks. He is to some extent paradoxically both an intentional "representative of polished society" and an unintentional propagator of "unmixed filth." Even he, at the end of *The Dunciad,* the last voice of reason, the provider of a final glimmer of intellectual light, is rendered impotent under the apocalyptic might of chaos. Considering that *The Dunciad* is hardly ever taught in schools and in universities because of its historical obscurities, Pope, through his text, creates the conditions which make it possible for "Universal Darkness" to bury his own reputation. He is, in sense, swallowed by his own creation.

ENDNOTES

[1]Alexander Pope, "Epilogue to the Satires: Dialogue II," *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 198.

[2]Aubrey Williams, *Pope's Dunciad: A Study of its Meaning* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota p, 1971), 12.

[3]David Fairer, *Pope's Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984), 113, 124.

[4] See chapter 1, footnote 24.

[5]Williams, 9.

[6]Susan Stanford Friedman, "Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse," *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndle (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1991), 382.

[7] Stanford Friedman's interesting article places the use of the childbirth metaphor in a historical context. She concludes that male use of the childbirth metaphor can be charted alongside general social attitudes toward women at particular points in history. She agrees with Terry Castle that a shift occurs in masculine representation of women from the Enlightenment to the Romantic period: in the Enlightenment birth metaphors were used in a primarily negative fashion whereas in the Romantic period male use of birth metaphor usually had positive resonance. However, Stanford also notes "that shift from repulsion to

idealization parallels a historical evolution in the representation of women. In both periods the organic processes of human body were symbolically associated with women, along with emotion and intuition." Thus in the Enlightenment "celebration of Reason incorporated a definition of the body as the inferior, 'animal' aspect of human nature," whereas "The Romantic period's embrace of intuition, emotion, organicism · all qualities associated with the feminine - transformed the birth metaphor into something positive"(382-383).

[8]Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), 32.

[9]Pope himself occasionally uses the eroticized metaphor of himself coupling with the muses. For instance Pope writes to Cromwell, "Those Aeriall Ladies just discover to me enough of their Beauties to urge my pursuit, and draw me [on] in a wandering maze if Thought, still in hopes (& only in hopes) of attaining those favors from 'em, which they confer on their more happy admirers elsewhere" (Nov. 12, 1711). Here the creative act is figured as a sexual act, rather than one of maternity.

[10]John Gay, "Three Hours After Marriage," *Dramatic Works,* vol 1, ed. John Fuller (1983, 1984; Oxford: Clarendon P, 1985), 214, 259.

[11]Alexander Pope, "Epistle to Arbuthnot," *The Poems*, 337.

[12]Catherine Ingrassia, "Women Writing/ Writing Women: Pope, Dulness, and Feminization in the *Dunciad*," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 14.3 (November 1990), 55.

[13] Consider Edmund Curll's equation of outer appearance and inner substance, as a method of demeaning Pope, in*The Curliad* :"*Deformed Persons* are commonly even with Nature; for as Nature hath done *ill* by them so do they by Nature, being for the most Part (as the Scripture saith) *void of natural Affection*, and so they have Revenge of Nature. Certainly, there is a Consent between the Body and the Mind, and where Nature erreth in the one, she ventureth in the other" (32-33). Pope would not disagree with the logic of this statement, but he would place it in a different context, one in which he can maintain his dignity and superiority. For instance, in *The Dunciad*, one of his primary assertions is that a deformed rhetoric is indicative of a warped mind, an outer/inner equation that promotes his status since he considers himself to be a master of language and metaphor.

[14]Derrida discusses this exchange in *Margins of Philosophy*. He points out that "Inscription on coinage is most often the intersection, the scene of the exchange between the linguistic and economic" (216). Both words and coins gain value through their exchange for either dissimilar things (i.e. a coins can be exchanged for a physical items, words can be exchanged for ideas) or similar ones (i.e. coins can be compared to other coins or denominations, words can be compared to other words or languages) within a culturally-constructed system. However, there is no intrinsic stability within the signifier itself, as Derrida notes, "Its content is really fixed only by

the concurrence of everything that exists outside itself" (218). In *The Dunciad* this idea is more easily accessible through an analysis of economics; with a land-based economy, more potential for stability exists because labour and products with use-value can exist separately (but not necessarily so) from exchange-value. Linguistically, the issue is somewhat more complex, for the accusation which Pope makes against the dunces is that they are destabilizing language by not following the traditional system of usage, and are thereby revealing the lack of natural ties between words and ideas. The moderns' neglect of ancient authorities in language, literature, and philosophy results in their inability to follow the proper conventions which tie language to certain "truths." Pope denounces the modern usage of money and discourse because this improper usage has contributed to the erasure of their natural ties to value or meaning. This anxiety parallels the one displayed by Pope and other male writers of the age toward women writers because they symbolized, and often revealed through their writing, the performativity of gendered identity.

[15]Michael Seidel, *Satiric Inheritance: Rabelais to Sterne* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979), 234.

[16]However, it should be noted that a crucial difference between Comus and the Queen does exist: unlike the physically-abused Lady who escapes from Comus and thus preserves the "virtue" of her mind ("Fool so not boast,/Thou canst not touch the freedom of my minde/ With all thy charms, although this corporeal rinde/ Thou hast immanacl'd, while Heav'n sees good" [661-664]), the dunces are more completely dominated by the Queen on all possible levels of being. (John

Milton's "A Mask," *The Complete Poems*, ed. B.A. Wright [London: J.M. Dent & Sons] 47-75.)

[17] Pope observes in the footnote that "The Attitude given to this Phantom represents the nature and genius of the Italian Opera; its affected airs, its effeminate sounds, and the practice of patching up these Operas with favorite Songs, incoherently put together." As with his criticism of the "modern" practice of indiscriminately pairing genres such as Tragedy and Comedy, so does he here object to the patchwork construction of Italian Opera.

The consequence of such vice exhibited in privileged members of society is described by Pope in his *Epilogue to the Satires: Dialogue I*:

> Virtue may chuse the high or the low Degree,
> 'Tis just alike to Virtue, and to me;
> Dwell in a Monk, or light upon a King,
> She's still the same, by lov'd, contented thing.
> Vice is undone, if she forgets her Birth,
> And stoops from Angels to the dregs of Earth:
> But 'tis the Fall degrades her to a Whore;
> Let Greatness own her, and she's mean no more:
> Her Birth, her Beauty, Crowds and Court confess,
> Chaste Matrons praise her, and grave Bishops bless:
> In golden Chains the willing World she draws,
> And hers the Gospel is, - hers the Laws:
> Mounts the tribunal, lifts her scarlet head,
> And sees pale Virtue carted in her stead! (137-150)

[18]William Shakespeare, "Hamlet," *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York: Viking P, 1969), 3.2.107-115.

[19]John Wilmont, Second Earl of Rochester, "Upon Nothing," *Eighteenth-Century English Literature*, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson et. al. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace

Jovanovich, 1969), 20.

[20]Alexander Pope, "On Silence," *The Poems*, 1-6.

[21]Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshly (New York: Vintage, 1969), 147.

[22]As the notes by the editor Charles Kirby-Miller illustrate, the chapter on "The Double Mistress" is based upon a historical occurrence in the eighteenth century which took place a couple of years before the formation of the Scriblerian club. A set of Hungarian Siamese twins called Helen and Judith were exhibited in London. Their appearance aroused a great deal of curiosity in the general public, but their existence especially generated a great deal of intellectual interest and debate: "The curious formation of the twins attracted the attention not only scientists and vulgar sightseers but of the town wits, who promptly began to raise such questions as whether or not the twins possessed double souls and what their marital status would be if they reached adult life. On June 10, 1708, Swift wrote to Stearne, 'Here is the sight of two girls joined at the back, which, in the newsmonger's phrase, causes a great many speculations; and raises abundance of questions in divinity, law, and physic" (295).

[23]Scriblerus Club, *Memoirs of the Extraordinairy Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus*, ed. Charles Kerby-Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 147.

[24]Scriblerus Club, 149.

[25]Edmund Spenser, "The Fairie Queene," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams, 5th ed.,vol.1(Markham: Penguin, 1986), 15.126-135.

[26]Spenser, 20.177-178.

[27]Williams observes that, "[o]pposed to the ordered 'nature' and light of a divinely sustained creation the poem offers the disnature of a 'new world' ever verging on chaos; and opposed to God it offers the goddess Dulness" (143).

[28]Gilbert and Gubar, 4.

[29]Patricia Meyer Spacks, *An Argument of Images: The Poetry of Alexander Pope* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1971), 108-109.

[30]Pope's own associations with the female caves that he depicts have already been discussed in chapter 2.

[31]Patricia Meyer Spacks. *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1976,) 12.

[32]Williams, 40-41.

[33]John Sitter, *The Poetry of Pope's "Dunciad"* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1971), 9.

[34]Cited in Michael de Porte, *Nightmares and Hobbeyhorses: Swift, Sterne, and Augustan Ideas of Madness* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1974), 35.

[35]Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), 105-106.

[36]Jonathan Swift, "A Tale of a Tub," *The Writings of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Robert A. Greenberg and William Bowman Piper (New York: W.W. Norton &Co., 1973), 346.

[37]Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1974), 340.

[38]Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), 6.

[39]De Porte, 31.

[40]Michele Crampe-Casnabet, "A Sampling of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy," *A History of Women in the West: Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, ed. Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993), 331.

[41]Fairer, 131.

[42]Cited in Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989), 52-53.

[43]Claudia Thomas, *Alexander Pope and His Eighteenth-Century Women Readers* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1994), 60.

[44]Daniel Defoe in *Pope: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John Barnard (London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 116.

[45]Robert Darton, 20.

[46]Valerie Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1989), 89-90.

[47]Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life* (London: W.W. Norton and Yale UP, 1985), 171.

[48]David Morris, *Alexander Pope: The Genius of Sense* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984), 143.

[49]Felicity Nussbaum also notes the significance of memory to social order: "For Vincent Perronet (as for Locke), lucid remembrance - this is, present consciousness of past actions - is necessary for moral and legal responsibility: 'And indeed in [Locke's] Opinion, that God Almighty will punish no Man here after for any crime, but what is first brought home to his Mind and Conscience" (44).

[50]John Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," *Classics of Western Philosophy*, ed. Steven M. Cahn, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977), 497.

[51]Cited in De Porte, 20.

[52]Derrida articulates the tradition in which reason, meaning and referentiality are the factors in language which differentiate humans from beasts: "This is the difference between animals and man: according to Aristotle both can

emit indivisible sounds, but only man can make of them a letter: 'The Letter is an indivisible sound of a particular kind, one that may become a factor in an intelligible sound. Indivisible sound are uttered by brutes also, but no one of these is a Letter in our sense of the term' (*Poetics* 1456b22-25). Aristotle does not analyze this difference; he interprets it by teleological retrospection. No internal characteristics distinguishes the atom of animal sound and the letter. Thus it is only on the basis of the signifying phonic composition, on the basis of meaning and reference, that human voice should be distinguished from the call of an animal" *Margins of Philosophy* (236-237).

[53]Williams, 106.

[54]Sitter, 11.

[55]Derrida, 215, 237.

[56]Pope's association with the Scriblerian project is especially revealing of the degree to which he participated in blurring the boundaries of genres. All the material written by the group is a mixture of various genres, as is exemplified by the collaborative effort *The What D'Ye Call It* ,which is identified as a Tragi-Comi-Pastoral Farce. (An identification which is highly evocative of a passage spoken by the loquacious and disingenuous Polonius in *Hamlet* when the players arrive at court: "The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral."[2.2] Just as this passage indicates that Polonius is a rather ludicrous figure,

so does the echoing of it in the eighteenth-century play imply the absurdity of the play itself. The inanity is heightened once the readers become aware that the identification of *The What D'Ye Call It* parodies a parody of dramatic genres within a play.) The Scriblerian mission was to satirize the inappropriate modern usage of genres, yet their own significant contribution to this practice was never really addressed by them. In fact, if a precursor to the twentieth-century theatre of the absurd could be pinpointed, it would not be unlikely that material written by this group of writers would qualify. One simply has to read the scene in *Three Hours After Marriage* where the crocodile and the mummy make their appearance to get this sense.

[57]Sitter, 62-63.

[58]Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets* ,vol II (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1925), 205.

[59]Curll and Thomas, 3.

[60]Dustin Griffen, *Alexander Pope: The Poet in the Poems* , 184.

[61]*The Female Dunciad; containing a faithful account of the intrigues of Alexander Pope* ... (London, 1728), 3-4.

[62]Leslie Stephen, *Alexander Pope* (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 119.

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