

I. Introduction

1. *The Dunciad*: An Attack against the Hack Writers

This present thesis is based on the readings of Alexander Pope's poem *The Dunciad*, prompted by his distaste for the worthless writers, who gained undue literary prominence. It was also a personal satire, to pay off many of his old scores. However, *The Dunciad* is not limited to personal satire, but has become a landmark literary satire. It was published in three different versions at different times. The first version of *The Dunciad*, amongst the three, was published in 1728. The second version, in which Pope confirmed his authorship of the work, appeared in the *The Dunciad Variorum* in 1735. The final version of *The Dunciad* was published in 1743, with a different hero in four books.

It was Joseph Spence, one of the friends and contemporary of Pope, who spurred him for carrying on with the ideas of writing a satire, upon the hack writers. It was the time (early eighteenth century), when cheap writers gained undue influence and the flavour of innovative art was fast losing its charm and due place in the literary world. Pope, encouraged by Spence, initially wrote the first version of *The Dunciad* under anonymity. However, during the second version and in the subsequent versions, he claimed his authorship over the work.

In *The Dunciad*, Pope targets all the hack writers of his time. However, he is very critical, especially on Lewis Theobald (1688-1744) and Colley Cibber (1671-1757). It was Theobald, who had earlier published a book on contemporary writers, criticizing many, including Pope and thus Pope was encouraged to pay off the personal insult in the form of *The Dunciad*. Spence in *Spence's Anecdotes* writes Pope's intention of writing a general satire targeting on the hack writers. "Pope had discussed about his intention of writing a general satire of dullness, with characters of contemporary scribblers, for some time and that it was to be published by Shakespeare Restored Publications" (23).

The Dunciad is largely based on Pope's natural sense of understanding human behaviour. Human nature for Pope, according to Ellen Douglas Leyburn in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* was "correct reasoning that was to be imminent in all things of discovery" (32). Leyburn commenting further on Pope's irony writes, "Pope considered nature as the source of inspiration and believed that nature had its influence in all writers" (324).

Pope's another brilliant satiric masterpiece *The Rape of the Lock* (1712; revised edition 1714), makes an epic theme of a trifling drawing-room episode: the contention arising from a young lord's having covertly snipped a lock of hair from a young lady's head. His most sustained irony, *The Dunciad* (1728; final version 1743), follows Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* in its elegantly pointed, often malicious but always high-spirited mockery of the literary dullards who were Pope's enemies.

Pope's literary irony was inspired, like Dryden's from classical works, notably of the *Iliad*, which was a great popular and financial success. His edition of Shakespeare's works bears witness to a range of taste not usually ascribed to him. Concomitant of a neoclassical aesthetic that flourished during his career in the early 1700s, Pope mastered both the heroic couplet and the art of satire in his poetry, producing some of the best epigrammatic verse in the English language, notably *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*. Pope practiced diverse poetic styles, imitating classical modes ranging from pastoral through satire to epic, and his poetic corpus expresses such classical ideals as order, beauty, wit, retirement, and ethics in the manner of the Roman poet Horace. Most of his writings deal with the moral, social, and intellectual climate of his milieu, which he thought vital for his satire; his poems often allude to contemporary events and the rich and famous of early eighteenth-century London life, as does his vast correspondence. In addition to translating highly respected editions of Homer's *Iliad* (1715–20) and *Odyssey* (1725–26) into the contemporary idiom, Pope also was among

the earliest writers to earn a living solely from his writings, which let him cultivate his other talents for landscape gardening, architecture, and painting.

2. Pope: Life and Work

Alexander Pope (1688-1744), English poet, was the son of a London cloth merchant. His parents were Roman Catholics, which automatically barred him from England's Protestant universities. Until he was 12 years old, he was educated largely by priests; primarily self-taught afterward, he read widely in English letters, as well as in French, Italian, Latin, and Greek. A devastating illness, probably tuberculosis of the spine, struck him in childhood, leaving him deformed. He never grew taller than 4 ft 6 in and was subject to violent headaches. Perhaps as a result of this condition, he was hypersensitive and exceptionally irritable all his life.

In 1717 Pope moved to a villa in Twickenham, west of London on the Thames River, where he lived for the rest of his life. The most celebrated personages of the day came to visit him there. He was a bitterly quarrelsome man and attacked his literary contemporaries viciously and often without provocation. To some, however, he was warm and affectionate; he had a long and close friendship with the Anglo-Irish writer Jonathan Swift and the English writers John Gay and Joseph Spence.

Pope's literary career began in 1704, when the playwright William Wycherley, pleased by Pope's verse, introduced him into the circle of fashionable London wits and writers, who welcomed him as a prodigy. He first attracted public attention in 1709 with the publications of *Pastorals*. In 1711 his *Essay on Criticism*, a brilliant exposition of the canons of taste, was published. His most famous poem, *The Rape of the Lock* (first published 1712; revised edition published 1714), a fanciful and ingenious mock-heroic work based on a true story, established his reputation securely as a writer of wit and intelligence. In 1713 Pope published *Windsor Forest*, which endeared him to the Tories by referring to the Peace of

Utrecht. In 1714 his work *The Wife of Bath* appeared, which, like his *The Temple of Fame* (1715), was imitative of the works of the same title by the 14th-century English poet Geoffrey Chaucer. In 1717 a collection of Pope's works containing the most noteworthy of his lyrics was published. Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad* was published in six volumes from 1715 to 1720; a translation of the *Odyssey* followed (1725-1726). He also published an edition of Shakespeare's plays (1725).

Pope and his friend Swift had for years written scornful and very successful critical reviews of those whom they considered poor writers; in 1727 they began a series of parodies of the same writers. The adversaries hurled insults at Swift and Pope in return, and in 1728 Pope lampooned them in one of his best-known works, *The Dunciad*, a satire celebrating dullness. He later enlarged the work to four volumes, the final one appearing in 1743. In 1734 he completed his *Essay on Man*. Pope's last works, *Imitations of Horace* (1733-1739), were attacks on political enemies of his friends.

Pope used the heroic couplet with exceptional brilliance, giving it a witty, occasionally biting quality. His success made it the dominant poetic form of his century, and his poetry was translated into many languages.

The Dunciad celebrates the goddess Dulness, who is supposedly the reigning queen of the incompetent writers and poets. *The Dunciad* follows the progress of Dulness chosen agents (unskilled literary figures), as they bring decay, imbecility and tastelessness to the kingdom of Great Britain. Pope had written characters of the various dunces prior to the publications of *The Dunciad*. Pope's intention of writing such a work is also evident from *Essay on Criticism*, where Pope had characterized some witless critics. In his various moral epistles, Pope likewise draws characters of contemporary authors of poor taste. However, the general structure owes its origins to, on the one hand, the communal project of the Scribble Writers and, on the other, the mock-heroic *MacFlecknoe* by John Dryden.

The Scribble's Club comprised of Jonathan Swift, John Gay, John Arbuthnot, Robert Harley, and Thomas Parnell most consistently and the group met during the spring and summer of 1714. One group project was to write a satire of contemporary abuses in learning of all sorts, where the authors would combine to write the biography of the group's fictional founder, Martin Scriblerus. The result was *The Memoirs of Martin Scriblerus*, which contained a number of parodies of the most lavish mistakes in scholarship.

However, *The Dunciad* clearly comes from *MacFlecknoe*, a famous mock epic by John Dryden. *MacFlecknoe* is a poem celebrating the apotheosis of Thomas Shadwell, whom Dryden nominates as the dullest poet of the age. Shadwell is the spiritual son of Flecknoe, an obscure Irish poet of low fame, and he takes his place as the favourite of the goddess Dulness.

Pope takes this idea of the personified goddess of Dulness being at war with reason, darkness at war with light, and extends it to a full adenoid parody. His poem celebrates a war, rather than a mere victory, and a process of ignorance and Pope picks as his champion of all things, colourless Lewis Theobald and Colley Cibber.

The testimonies also included commendations from Pope's friends, as well. The words of Edward Young, James Thomson, and Jonathan Swift are brought together to praise Pope specifically for being temperate and timely in his charges. The conclusion of *The Dunciad* asks the reader to choose whether you will incline to the testimonies of authors avowed or of authors concealed.

Pope had a long term cause for choosing Lewis Theobald as the King of Dunces for the first version of the *The Dunciad*. The proximate cause was Theobald's publication of a satire book on the contemporary writer 1726. This book was a specimen of many errors committed by Pope in his late edition of *Reading of Shakespeare Restored*. However, Pope had designed the text to correct and flourish the writings, especially the cheap puns of

Shakespeare but they were full of flaws. Pope had smoothed some of Shakespeare's lines, had chosen readings that eliminated puns, and had, indeed, missed several good readings and preserved some bad ones.

Taking this point in consideration, Theobald, had openly criticized Pope in *Shakespeare Restored*. In *The Dunciad Variorum*, Pope complains that he had put out newspaper advertisements when he was working on Shakespeare, asking for anyone with suggestions to come forward, and that Theobald had hidden all of his material. During the period, Pope and Theobald had a public spat over the issue, making each other eternal enemies. However, when Pope produced a second edition of his *Shakespeare Restored* in 1728, he incorporated many of Theobald's textual readings.

The Dunciad's action concerns the gradual sublimation of all arts and letters into Dulness by the action of hireling authors. Theobald, as a man who had attempted the stage and failed, plagiarized a play, attempted translation and failed to such a degree that John Dennis referred to him as a notorious idiot. Further, he attempted subscription translation and failed to produce, and who had just turned his full attention to political writing, was an epitome, for Pope, of all that was wrong with British letters. Additionally, Pope's goddess of Dulness begins the poem having control over the state poetry, odes, and political writings. So Theobald as King of Dunces is the perfect man, who can lead her to control the stage as well. Theobald's writings, in particular, are signalled out within the *The Dunciad* as abominations for their mixing of tragedy and comedy and their low pantomime and opera; they are not the first to bring the Smithfield muses to the ears of kings, but they ferried them over in bulk.

Pope's *The Dunciad* is a political and cultural satire in every specific manner. Rather than merely lambasting vice and corruption, Pope attacks very particular degradation of political discourse and art. The political attack is on the Whigs, and specifically on the Hanoverian Whigs, a group of politicians formed in 1714. The poem opens, in fact, with the

goddess Dulness noting that "Still Dunces the second rules like Dunces the first," (1) which is an exceptionally daring reference to George II, who had come to the throne earlier in the year. Moreover, his blatant irony is focused on Theobald, King of Dunces, who writes for the radical *Tory Mist's Journal*. Pope hammers at radical Protestant authors and Conservatives, as well.

The cultural attack in *The Dunciad* is even broader than the political one, as it sometimes overlaps, even the latter one. Pope attacks, over and over again for those who write for pay. Pope's attack is not on those who get paid, but those who will write on cue for the highest bid. However, the irony is, Pope himself was one of the earliest poets to make his living solely by writing. So it is not the professional authors, but the mercenary author that Pope derides. He attacks hired pens, the authors who perform poetry or religious writing for the greatest pay alone, who do not believe in what they are doing. He objects not to professional writers, but to hackney writers. His dunce booksellers will trick and counterfeit their way to wealth, and his dunce poets will wheedle and flatter anyone for enough money to keep the bills paid.

II. General Survey of Irony

“Irony” is derived from *ironia*, a Latin word, which referred to “pretended ignorance” (source: *Students Microsoft Encarta 2008*). It is a literary device that uses contradictory statements or situations to reveal a reality different from what appears to be true. *Oxford Dictionary* defines irony as, “a word/s that has another layer of meaning, intended than said or written.” Irony is the form of satire in literature – prose or verse that employs wit in the form of allusion, or outright derision to expose human wickedness and folly. Irony is the conflict between two meanings, which has a dramatic structure peculiar to it. Initially one meaning, the appearance, presents itself as the obvious truth, but when the context of this meaning unfolds, in depth or in time; it discloses a conflicting meaning. The reality measured against which the first meaning now seems false or limited and in its self-assurance, blind to its own situation. Irony lies, but it does so only as a dramatic means of bringing two meanings into open conflict.

In words of Richard Rorty, irony is a “theory of meaning.” Further explaining his concept he writes in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, he comments:

Irony, as recognition is that what we say is really not a representation of what is and that we ourselves are nothing more than our ways of speaking. Irony is theory of meaning or language: an attitude towards truth and representation defined in terms of edifying ways of speaking. It is more than a speech; it is an act within language. (10)

It is the recognition of the way language works in general. But if we take irony as a possible speech act seriously, it is also the case that the performance of irony actually precludes.

Irony is a term that has been used to encompass several related phenomena. The term itself takes its name from a stock character in Greek comedy, *ieron*. This character got the best of opponents through wit and resourcefulness (Beckson and Ganz). Over time, however

the concept of irony has been expanded to include at least four distinct concepts. Socratic Irony, Irony of Fate, Dramatic Irony and Verbal Irony. Although many other types of irony have been suggested (e.g. nihilistic, paradoxical, and tragic) the four types of irony described next have emerged as the basic descriptors of ironic

Irony, in drama and literature is a statement or action whose apparent meaning is underlain by a contrary meaning. Claire Colebrook in *The Meaning of Irony*, classifies some of the major types of irony as follows:

- i. *Conscious Irony* is recognized by the characters in a story or play. For example, in English dramatist William Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, Mark Antony bitterly describes the men who have murdered Caesar as "honourable."
- ii. *Structural Irony* is sometimes also called "irony of situation." Structural irony typically takes the form of a discrepancy between appearance and reality, or between what a character expects and what actually happens.
- iii. *Verbal or Rhetorical Irony* is expressed through dialogues. It is exposed through oratorical skills. Both Verbal and Structural Irony share the suggestion of a concealed truth conflicting with surface appearances.
- iv. In *Unconscious Irony* words or actions are understood as ironic by the audience or readers' thought not by the characters. In Shakespeare's tragic play *Othello*, the title character, Othello repeatedly describes treacherous Iago as "honest." Misled by Iago's lies, Othello becomes convinced that his innocent wife is dishonest. Othello recognizes Iago's deceptions only at the tragic conclusion of the play.
- v. *Tragic or Dramatic Irony* is used structurally in a novel or a play; it is tragic, sometimes also called *Dramatic Irony*. In *Oedipus Rex*, by Greek dramatist Sophocles, Oedipus attempts to find the murderer of Laius, king of Thebes, unaware that he himself is the culprit. The audience, which knows the truth,

perceives the dimension of his tragedy early in the play and anticipates consequences that Oedipus does not expect. His statements become unconsciously ironic – when, for example, he prays that the murderer's life be consumed in evil and wretchedness.

- vi. *Socratic Irony* is associated with Greek philosopher Socrates. Explanation of Socratic irony depends upon seeing the position, personality or way of life of Socrates as an attitude adopted towards ordinary meaning. When Socrates asks what justice is, he accepts the sophist's claim that justice can be defined. However, the irony of Socrates' position cannot be explained by saying that he possesses a different or superior definition, but that the very possibility of definition once the interlocutor is, upon scrutiny. However, Socratic irony feigns ignorance to expose the flaws in his opponents' views.
- vii. *Romantic Irony* occurs when speakers or writers ridicule their own seriousness, as in one of the cases of Lord Byron's mock epic *Don Juan*. Byron describes a woman in stereotypically glowing terms, as following:
- viii. Pretty were but to give a feeble notion
Of many charms in her as natural
As sweetness to the flower, or salt to ocean,
Her zone to Venus, or his bow to Cupid B.
- ix. Here, simile of the last idiom is trite and stupid, making it Romantic Irony.
- x. *Modern Irony* is precisely attributed to position or point of view which is rendered problematic. It is a sense of the inevitability of perspective of position alongside impossibility of reducing an utterance to a perspective or position. Any described perspective or point of view – any delimited context – already suggests a higher position from which that point of view is seen as a point of view.

- xi. Cosmic Irony* characterizes works in which a character's fate seems perversely manipulate by forces beyond human control. The characters' efforts seem only to tighten the noose already prepared by destiny.

Some theorists assert that by encompassing this conflict in single structure, irony resolves in to harmony or unity. The variable factors in the ironic structure are as following:

(a) The degree of conflict between appearance and reality ranges from the slightest of differences to diametrical opposites.

(b) The field of observation in which irony may be noticed ranges from the smallest semantic unit: e.g., a pun to the cosmos. The most frequently used fields are: the relation between one meaning located in words and another meaning located either in the same words or in their context is *verbal irony*, and the relation between an event or situation as interpreted from a limited point of view and that event as interpreted with a broader knowledge of the situation or of subsequent events is called *dramatic irony* in literature. In *irony of fate*, the relation between the events and an observer's state of mind is determined by God.

(c) Irony usually has an author, who by analogy is a superman power in some fields of observation; it always has an audience, even if it is only the author amusing himself; and a *victim*, who is deceived by appearance and enlightened by reality, although an author may turn himself into a pseudo victim.

(d) The aspects of irony may be analyzed as follows. The variable factors here are the conception of reality, the degree to which author and audience sympathize or identify with the victim, and the fate of the victim -- triumph or defeat. Reality may be thought of by author and (or) audience as reflecting their own values. In this context, satiric irony reveals the defeat of an unsympathetic victim; *comic irony* reveals the triumph of a sympathetic victim.

2. Pope's Irony

In the Age of Pope (dated around 1700 to 1744), the classical spirit in English literature reached its highest point, and at the same time other forces became manifest. Dryden's poetry had achieved grandeur, amplitude and sublime within a particular definition of good taste and sense, under the tutelage of the Roman Greek Classics. To the poetry of Pope, this characterisation applies even more sternly.

Pope's reputation rests largely on his satires, but his didactic bent led him to formulate in verse the *Essay on Criticism* and *Essay on Man*. The former attempts to show that poetry must be modelled on nature; but his conception of nature, a traditional one shared by all his contemporaries, differs from that of succeeding generations.

For Pope, nature means analyzing of correct reasoning imminent in all things. Through the ages, the experience of reasonable minds has shown to be the greatest model for human beings, from antiquity to modern times. A similar conversation reappears in the *Essay on Man*, which concludes with the much debated generalization that "Whatever is is right" (32).

More than any other English poets, he submitted himself to the requirement that the expressive force of poetic genius should issue forth only in formulation of reasonable, lucid, balanced, compressed, final and perfect as the power of human reason can make it. Pope did not have Dryden's majesty, perhaps, given his predilection for correctness of details; he could not have had it. Also, the readers of succeeding times have concluded that the dictates of reason do not all converge on only one poetic formula, just as the heroic couplet, which Pope brought to final perfection, is not necessarily the most generally suitable of English poetic forms. Nevertheless, the ease, harmony and grace of Pope's poetic line are still impressive, and his quality of precise but never laboured expression of thought remains unequalled.

Pope's brilliant satiric masterpiece, *The Rape of Lock* (1714) makes an epic theme of trifle drawing room episode: the contention arising from a young lord, who has covertly snipped a lock of hair from a young lady's head. Similarly, his most sustained irony, *The Dunciad*, follows Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* in its elegantly pointed, often malicious but always high spirited mockery of the literary dullards who were Pope's enemies.

Pope's literary irony was inspired, like Dryden's classical works, notably of *The Iliad*, which was a great popular form and financial success. His edition of Shakespeare's works bear witness to a range of taste not usually ascribed to him. Concomitant of a neoclassical aesthetic that flourished during his career in the early 1700s, Pope mastered both the heroic couplet and the art of satire in his poetry, producing some of the best epigrammatic verse in the English language, notably *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*.

Pope practiced diverse poetic styles, imitating classical modes ranging from pastoral through satire to epic. His poetic corpus expresses such classical ideals as order, beauty, wit, retirement and ethics, like, in the manner of Roman poet Horace. Most of his writings deal with the moral, social and intellectual climate of his milieu, which he thought vital for his satire; his poems often allude to contemporary events and the rich and famous of early eighteenth century London life, as does his vast correspondence. In addition to translating highly respected editions of Homer's *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* into contemporary idiom, Pope also was among the earliest writers to earn a living solely from his writings, which let him to cultivate his other talents for landscape gardening, architecture and painting.

Generally, respected as one the greatest poet of his age, by his contemporaries and the following generation, Pope's canon gradually fell from favour throughout the nineteenth century. Nineteenth century was dominated by romantic aesthetics, which prevailed, until the advent of New Criticism in the early twentieth century, when crucial literary interest were revived. Since, then Pope's postmodern reputation has continued to flourish through the

efforts of feminist and cultural critics, who have investigated his writings for representations of emerging perspectives on gender, capitalism, print culture, language and politics that still resonate.

3. History of Irony: Classical to Modern Times

The concept of irony has undoubtedly appeared under different names, in different ages. Like, Aristotle's *Peripeteia*, Jean Paul's and Pirandello's *humour* (Source: Microsoft Encarta 2008), little attempt has been made to trace the idea apart from the term. The term itself, after quickly shedding most of its original meaning, has steadily extended itself from satiric and comic irony through paradoxical irony to tragic and nihilistic irony, and now encompasses all the meanings outlined above. Frequently, during this history, the use of irony has elicited intense ethical judgments, pro and con. The most influential model in the history of irony has been the Platonic Socrates. Neither Socrates nor his contemporaries, however, would have associated the word irony with modern conceptions of irony.

As Cicero puts it:

Socrates was always pretending to need information and professing admiration for the wisdom of his companion; when Socrates' interlocutors were annoyed with him for behaving in this way they called him *eiron*, a vulgar term of reproach referring generally to any kind of sly deception with overtones of mockery. The fox was the symbol of the *eiron*. All serious discussions of *eironeia* followed upon the association of the word with Socrates. (source: Leyburn's *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*)

These occurred in two contexts, the ethical and the rhetorical. In ethics, the field of observation was a habitual manner of behaving, a type of human character, and here the notion of irony as actual lying persisted, narrowed however to understatement. As generally understood, Aristotle, as quoted in the *Ethics* says, "The boaster is a man who pretends to

creditable qualities that he does not possess, or possesses in a lesser degree than he makes out, while conversely the self-depreciator disclaims or disparages good qualities that he does possess” (16). (Source: Claire Colebrook’s *The Meaning of Irony*)

Aristotle recognized that *eironeia*, might have various layers of truth, including total denial of it. To Aristotle, *Eiron*, the namesake on whom the concept of irony has developed was an even less respectable liar. According to Aristotle, “Eiron understated his own powers specifically for the purpose of escaping responsibility” (source: *The Meaning of Irony*) According to Colebrook Aristotle in *Ethics* had mentioned “affected humbugs” whose “mock humility seems to be really boastfulness” (17), a sentence that implied the full structure of irony as a lie meant to reveal the truth, it was in the rhetorical tradition that this structure came to explicit definition. Here the field of observation was narrow, limited to the brief figure of speech. As that, irony seemed ethically less censurable, and in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle spoke of it as a “gentlemanly” sort of jest.

The full pattern of irony was formulated around the fourth century B.C. (source: *Microsoft Encarta 2008*). Initially, irony was blame through praise and praise through blame. This definition, by shifting attention from the logical content of an ironic statement to the implied diametrically proposed value judgments, opened the way to the later, sometimes misleading formula that irony is saying the “contrary” of what one means. Also, two aspects of irony were implied by this definition: “to blame by praise” is satiric irony; “to praise by blame” is comic irony, for undesirable characteristics attributed to a sympathetic victim draw the audience's attention to his real virtues.

In the early eighteenth century, the omnipresence of French and English satiric literature brought the idea of irony out of the classroom into the intellectual marketplace. During the intervening twenty centuries it lived in, or on the edge of, rhetorical theory, the two chief fountains of which were Cicero and Marcus Fabius Quintilianus. In Cicero,

Socratic irony first became a completely admirable thing, which he distinguished into an isolated figure of speech and a pervasive habit of discourse. Generally speaking, these were the limits of the field during the following centuries.

Whereas, for Quintilianus, a Roman rhetorician as described in Aristotle's *Ethics*, was, "a man's whole life may be coloured with irony, as was the case with Socrates, who [. . .] assumed the role of an ignorant man lost in wonder at the wisdom of others" (Source: Clairebook's *The Meaning of Irony*). For Quintilianus this manner was an indication and expression of goodness that was "mild" and "ingratiating." In the early eighteenth century Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times* also described a "Soft Irony," which for him was spread alike through a whole character and life.

Irony, for Pope was more than an indication of goodness: it was the expression of a perfect way of life that aspired to others. Ethically, irony here reversed the position, it had held in the Aristotelian school, which was viewed from the subjective angle of the individual soul rather than social angle. As a result, ironic manner was only the external expression of an individual. The manner of irony, Pope described kept the degree of opposition between praise and blame very slight, avoiding ironic virulence or comic buffoonery. In this Pope's style of irony, Leyburn comments:

It was a fusion of modest self-abnegation, gentle gravity, and an apparent tolerance of all things behind which hid reservations about all things. The reservations were there because for the Neo-Platonic Shaftesbury the only important reality was the spirit within, which must tolerate but not be disturbed by the immediate changes and incessant eternal conversions, revolutions of the world. (327)

He himself might often be the only audience aware of his irony and the world might find him puzzling, but he lived disinterested and unconcerned, accommodating all appearances to his own mind and setting everything in its due light. Pope was interpreted in this modern way: he had been a perfect character; yet veiled, and in a cloud chiefly by reason of a certain exquisite and refined raillery which belonged to his manner, and by virtue of which he could treat the highest subjects, and those of commonest capacity together both the heroic and the simple, the tragic and the comic.

The critical norm of this subtly satiric attitude toward the world was the absolute value contained in the ironist's own mind; all other values were limited and relative to one another. Apart from Socrates, the rhetoricians thought of irony, as either “trope” – a brief figure of speech embedded in a straightforward context, or “schema” – an entire speech or case presented in language and a tone of voice that conflict with the true situation.

Understatement, in which Aristotle had been limited to self-depreciation, spread out to include any statement whose apparent meaning falls some degree short of the reality, e.g., to say of a muscular warrior, with comic irony, that he has “a reasonably good arm.” At first called *litotes* or *meiosis*, such understatement came to be called irony, at least by the end of the sixteenth century. The comic irony of praise through blame, which had also originated in Socratic self-depreciation, remained a minor figure of speech until the early eighteenth century, when in England, at least, Swift, Pope, and their friends recognized it as a delightful mode in which to write letters and converse. (Source: Colebrook’s *The Meaning of Irony*).

A brief synopsis of Irony in various ages, based on *Students Microsoft Encarta 2008* is discussed below in brief:

I. Greek Irony

No strong tradition of ironic poetry existed in ancient Greece. Among the few satirists were Archilochus, whose malicious verses date from the early 7th century B. C., and Cercidas

the Cynic. The archetypes of Greek satirical drama were the comedies of Aristophanes, written in the 5th century B. C. and are performed to date. Satire as a distinct literary form was the creation of the Romans, starting with Gaius Lucilius. His 30 books of verse satires present savagely outspoken views on a wide variety of subjects.

The first great satirist whose works endured and served as models for later writers was the poet Horace. A cool satirist, he preferred to “comment with a smile” on such follies as the tendency towards extremes, especially in sexual matters and impolite behaviours. In contrast to the gentle thrusts of Horace is the acidity in the 16 verse satires of his contemporary Juvenal, who ferociously exposed the vices of Roman society and contrasted them with the honesty and tranquillity of small-town life.

As a Stoic, he viewed murder, certain sexual practices, forgery, perjury, theft, gluttony, luxury, avarice, and fawning over the rich as sins of equal magnitude. He railed against soldiers’ brutality towards civilians. His misogyny prompted descriptions of the types of women he particularly disliked. His third satire, on the miseries of life in Rome, complains: “Our birthright now is lost”; it is the source of the poem “London” (1739), by the English writer Samuel Johnson. The solemn moralizing of Juvenal’s Tenth Satire inspired another of Johnson’s poems -- *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), which is a despairing commentary on the frailty of human reasons.

II. Medieval Irony

Irony was conspicuously present in many forms of medieval literature: the fabliau, goliardic verse, beast fables, and dream allegories such as the 13th-century Roman de la rose and the 14th-century English poem *The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman*, attributed to William Langland. In the French allegory, satire is aimed at women, the clergy, impostors, and assorted professional types; in the later English work, it is directed principally at hypocrisy in the Church. The 14th-century English poet Geoffrey Chaucer, who translated

part of the *Roman*, carried on its various satires; his masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*, in fact encapsulates many of the contemporary forms of satire. “The Miller’s Tale”, for example, is a fabliau, a ribald story of the cuckolding of an aged husband by his young wife; “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” is a fable about a cock and fox who match wits.

III. Renaissance Irony

With the Renaissance, satire came to be written more often in prose than in verse. Four great Renaissance masters of the genre were the German poet and humanist Sebastian Brant, the French writer -- François Rabelais, the Dutch writer -- Desiderius Erasmus, and the Spanish master Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. Brant ridiculed a whole repertory of human types in *Das Narrenschiff* (1494, *The Ship of Fools*), which reappeared (1508) in English in a version by the Scottish poet Alexander Barclay. Erasmus, speaking through the persona of Folie (Folly) in his *Praise of Folie* (1509), still makes modern readers laugh at the customs, beliefs, and behaviour of the major social and professional types of his day. Illustrations for the original edition, by the German artist Hans Holbein the Younger, reinforce the message of the text. Rabelais's *Pantagruel* (1532) and *Gargantua* (1534) are robust extravaganzas nevertheless infused with the author's humanistic ideals. Cervantes's great satire on knight-errantry, *Don Quixote* (1605-1615), arraigns society for an entire gamut of weaknesses, from blind idealism to narrow practicality

Irony appeared on the 17th-century English stage in the plays of Ben Jonson, and later in two masterly verse satires: Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1663-1678), a burlesque of Puritanism, and John Dryden's political satire *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681-1682). In France, Moliere's dramas satirized many social and moral types: hypocrites, social climbers, cuckolds, Don Juan, and medical impostors; his characterizations are still meaningful for any audience. His contemporary, the critic Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux, wrote 12 verse *Satires* (begun in 1660) probing manners and matters both public and private.

IV. Eighteenth Century Irony

What has been called the golden age of satire occurred in England early in the 18th century when this genre became a dominant literary form. One of the most brilliant social satires of all time was John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1728), a work that inspired a 20th-century adaptation, *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928) by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. A wealth of satire was produced by the poet Alexander Pope; the essayist Joseph Addison; the novelists Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, and Tobias George Smollett; and – most notable of them all – Jonathan Swift, whose passionate concern for individual human life paradoxically cast him in the role of misanthrope. Following one or the other of the two classic modes of satire, the Horatian or the Juvenalian, these writers either gently nudged their subjects, as in Smollett's uproarious picture of life at Bath in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), or ruthlessly devastated them, as in Pope's *The Dunciad* (1728-1743). Not fearing to launch attacks against powerful enemies, they often became the victims of reprisal, as in the case of Swift vis-à-vis Queen Anne, and of the French writer and philosopher Voltaire. The novel *Candide* (1759), Voltaire's avowal of the principles of the Enlightenment, aroused official reaction because of its criticism of all previously accepted social and religious ideas.

V. Nineteenth Century Irony

The 19th-century Romantic Movement had little taste for satire, preferring other types of expression. Modern satire, on its return in the later 19th century had various manifestations. It appears in the short stories of the American humorist Mark Twain and in more sardonic form in the work of Ambrose Bierce, notably his *Devil's Dictionary* (1906). The novels of Charles Dickens constitute a superficially humorous but deeply felt and often lacerating satire of Victorian social conventions and official hypocrisy; gentler social commentary came from such contemporaries as the novelist William Makepeace Thackeray and the poet and librettist Sir William S. Gilbert. The plays of the Irish-born writers Oscar

Wilde and George Bernard Shaw achieve different satiric purposes in different manners. Wilde's drawing-room comedies, with their use of verbal paradox, laugh at human society; Shaw's wit is directed to the improvement of that society, especially shown in the prefaces to his plays.

VI. Twentieth Century Irony

Artful handling of satire in the earlier 20th century is seen in the work of writers as disparate in subject matter and style as Sinclair Lewis, with his rather obvious attacks on American middle-class values in novels such as *Babbitt* (1922), and James Thurber, with his ironic stories and whimsical cartoons of the contemporary social scene; Evelyn Waugh, poking sophisticated fun at a variety of (usually upper class) 20th-century foibles; Aldous Huxley satirizing 20th-century Utopian dreams, as in *Brave New World* (1932); and Nathanael West with his dissection of Hollywood film society (in *The Day of the Locust*, 1939). In the aftermath of Marxism, satire tended to become more brutal and direct, often verging on Naturalism. This was true of many regional novelists in the United States, such as John O'Hara with his no-holds-barred exposes of suburban and city life, and of black novelists of protest, such as Ralph Ellison, who satirized white society and its attitudes. Later, the Russian born Vladimir Nabokov wittily portrayed the American scene, especially the pretensions of the academic world; and Gunter Wilhelm Grass exposed mid-century German life.

Irony on war in the 20th century ranges from the masterly novel sequence *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1920-1923) by the Czech writer Jaroslav Hasek to the ribaldry of *Catch-22* (1961), a novel by the American writer Joseph Heller that became the object of an appreciative cult. Satirical thrusts at the lifestyles of their fellow Americans in the second half of the 20th century have been aimed, subtly, by John Cheever and John Updike in their

stories and novels and, in more barbed fashion, by Tom Wolfe in his essays on topical subjects.

III. Irony in *The Dunciad*

The plot of the poem *The Dunciad* is simple: it is based on Alexander Pope's personal dislike towards hack writers of his time. Every characters named in the poem are created to represent a living literary figure, with whom Pope had a personal level of conflict or cold war. However, this personal level of cold war led to the creation of, one of the all time great irony in English literature, in the form of *The Dunciad*.

The level of understanding and interpretation of *The Dunciad* may differ from person to person. In this context, ultimate triumph over the so called hack writers, on whom Pope is satirizing, is impossible to measure. Like in *Tragic Irony*, sympathy for the victim predominates and satiric detachment counterbalances or dominates sympathy, but a degree of identification always remains since author and audience necessarily share the victim's plight. *Paradoxical Irony* balances these two extremes. Everything is relative: reality in part does and in part does not reflect human values; author and audience fuse, or oscillate between, identification and detachment; comic triumph and tragic defeat counterbalance each other, or the satiric norm constantly shifts.

The Dunciad begins with an epic invocation, "Books and the Man I sing, the first who brings/ The Smithfield Muses to the Ear of Kings" (1). Smithfield was the site of Bartholomew Fair entertainments, and the man in question was Elkanah Settle, who had written for Bartholomew Fair after the Glorious Revolution; Pope makes him the one who brought pantomime, farce and monster shows to the royal theatres.

Thus, *The Dunciad* starts with irony in its very first sentence. The very beginning of the poem is a bitter satire on hack writers. The goddess of dulls, named Dulness, by Pope is about to declare a new King, as the old King has died and the ceremony is on to chose the new one. The goddess Dulness notes that her power is so great that, "Time himself stands still

at her command,/ Realms shift their place, and Ocean turns to land," (1) and thus claims credit for the routine violation of the Unities of Aristotle in poetry.

On Lord Mayor's Day of 1724, when Sir George Thorold was Lord Mayor, Dulness announces the death of the current King of Dunces, Elkanah Settle. Settle had been the City Poet, and his job had been to commemorate Lord Mayor's Day pageants. Thanks to his hard work in stultifying the senses of the nation, Dulness claims control of all official verse, and all current poets are her subjects.

The goddess of dullness mentions Thomas Heywood, Daniel Defoe (for writing political journalism), Ambrose Philips, Nahum Tate, and Sir Richard Blackmore as her darlings, meaning, they were cheap writers to Pope. However, her triumph is not complete, and she aspires to control dramatic poetry as well as political, religious, and hack poetry. She therefore decides that Theobald will be the new King.

The action shifts to the library of Lewis Theobald, which is "A Gothic Vatican! of Greece and Rome/ Well-purg'd, and worthy Withers, Quarles, and Blome" (a Vatican Library for Northern European authors, and especially notable for vainglorious and contentious writing and criticism). Theobald is despairing of succeeding in writing dull poetry and plays, and he is debating whether to return to being a lawyer (for that had been Theobald's first trade) or to become a political hack. He decides to give up poetry and become an entirely hired pen for Nathaniel Mist and his *Mist's Journal*.

He therefore collects all the books of bad poetry in his library, along with his own works and makes a virgin sacrifice of them, by setting fire to the pile. Pope calls them virgin sacrifice because no one has ever read them. The goddess Dulness appears to him in a fog and drops a sheet of *Thule*. *Thule* was a poem by Ambrose Philips, a contemporary writer of Pope, that was supposed to be an epic, but which only appeared as a single sheet) on the fire,

extinguishing it with the poem's perpetually wet ink. Dullness tells Theobald that he is the new King of Dunces and points him to the stage. She shows him:

"How, with less reading than makes felons 'scape,
Less human genius than God gives an ape,
Small thanks to France and none to Rome or Greece,
A past, vamp'd, future, old, reviv'd, new piece,
'Twixt Plautus, Fletcher, Congreve, and Corneille,
Can make a Cibber, Johnson, or Ozel." (I. 235-40)

The book ends with a hail of praise, calling Theobald now the new King Log, from *Aesop's Fable*.

In Book II of *The Dunciad* centres on the highly scatological heroic games. Theobald sits on throne of Dulness, which is a velveteen tub and Dulness declares the opening of heroic games to celebrate his coronation. Therefore, all her sons come before her on the Strand in London, leaving half the kingdom depopulated, for she summons both dull writers, their booksellers, and all who are stupid enough to patronize dull writers.

The first game is for booksellers. Booksellers at the time purchased manuscripts from authors, and the proceeds from book sales went entirely to the bookseller, with the author getting no more than the advance price. Dulness, thus decides upon a race for the booksellers. She creates a phantom Poet, cited as: "No meagre, muse-rid mope, adjust and thin, In a dun night-gown of his own loose skin" (33).

But, instead, a fat, well dressed poet and therefore a wealthy, noble one would command sales by his title. The phantom poet is named Moore, a reference to James Moore Smythe, who had plagiarized both Arbuthnot, a historic-physical account of the South-Sea bubble and Pope's memoirs of a Parish Clark, and whose only original play had been the failed *The Rival Modes*. The booksellers immediately set out running to be the first to grab

Moore, with Bernard Lintot setting forth with a roar. Lintot had been James Moore Smythe's publisher, only to be challenged by Edmund Curll, which Pope explains as:

As when a dab-chick waddles thro' the corpse,
On feet and wings, and flies, and wades, and hops;
So lab'ring on, with shoulders, hands, and head,
Wide as a windmill all his figure spread [. .].
Full in the middle way there stood a lake,
Which Curl's Corinna chanc'd that morn to make,
(Such was her wont, at early down to drop
Her evening cates before his neighbour's shop,
Here fortun'd Curl to slide; loud shout the band,
And Bernard! Bernard! rings thro' all the Strand. (59-70)

The race seemingly having been decided by progress through bed-pan slops, Curll prays to Jove, who consults the goddess Cloacina. He hears the prayer, passes a pile of faeces down, and Curll catapults to the victory. As Curll grabs the phantom Moore, the poems it seemed to have fly back to their real authors, and even the clothes go to the unpaid tailors who had made them. Dulness urges Curll to repeat the joke, and to pretend to the public that his dull poets were really great poets, to print things by false names. Curll had published numerous works by name "Joseph Gay" to trick the public into thinking they were by John Gay. For his victory, she awards Curll a tapestry, showing the fates of famous Dunces.

In the tapestry, he sees Daniel Defoe with his ears chopped off, John Tutchin being whipped publicly through western England, two political journalists clubbed to death on the same day, and himself being wrapped in a blanket and whipped by the schoolboys of Westminster for having printed an unauthorized edition of the sermons of the school's master, thereby robbing the school's own printer.

The next contest, Dulness proposes is for the phantom poetess, Eliza Haywood. She is compared to Hera, which means "cow-eyed" in Iliad, and "of the herders," Haywood inverts these to become a; "Juno of majestic size, With cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes" (155).

The next contest is for authors, and it is the game of "tickling": getting money from patrons by flattery. A very wealthy nobleman, attended by jockeys, huntsmen, a large sedan chair with six porters, takes his seat. One poet attempts to flatter his pride. A painter attempts to paint a glowing portrait. An opera author attempts to please his ears. John Oldmixon simply asks for the money (Oldmixon had attacked Pope in *The Catholic Poet*, but claims that his real crime was plagiarism in his *Critical History of England*, which slandered the Stuarts and got him an office from the Whig ministry), only to have the lord clench his money tighter. Finally, a young man with no artistic ability sends his sister to the lord and wins the prize.

Another contest, primarily for critics, comes next. In this, Dulness offers up the prize of a "catcall" and a drum that can drown out the braying of ass, to the one who can make the most senseless noise and impress the king of monkeys. They are invited to improve mustard-bowl thunder, as the sound effect of thunder on the stage, had been made using a mustard bowl and a shot previously. The sound of the bell was used in tragedies to enhance the pitiful action. Pope describes the resulting game thus:

"Twas chatt'ring, grinning, mouthing, jabb'ring all,
And Noise, and Norton, Brangling, and Breval,
Dennis and Dissonance; and captious Art,
And Snip-snap short, and Interruption smart.
'Hold (cry'd the Queen) A Catcall each shall win,
Equal your merits! Equal is your din!" (II. 229-234)

The critics are then invited to all bray at the same time. In this, Richard Blackmore wins easily: “All hail him victor in both gifts of Song, Who sings so loudly, and who sings so long” (255).

Blackmore had written six epic poems; *Prince* and *King Arthur* in twenty books, *Eliza* in ten books, *Alfred* in twelve books, and had earned the nickname “Everlasting Blackmore.” Additionally, Pope disliked his overuse of the verb “bray” for love and battle, and so had chosen to have Blackmore's bray the most insistent.

The assembled crowd goes down by Bride well between 11:00 AM and 12:00 PM, when the women prisoners are being whipped, and go "To where Fleet-ditch with disemboguing streams/ Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames" (II 267-8). The Fleet Ditch was the sewer outlet for the city at the time, where all the gutters of the city washed into the river. It was silted, muddy, and mixed with river and city waters.

In the ditch, the political hacks are ordered to strip off their clothes and engage in a diving contest. Dulness says, “Who flings most filth, and wide pollutes around/ the stream, be his the Weekly Journals, bound” (II. 267-8), while a load of lead will go to the deepest diver and a load of coal to the others participants. “The Weekly Journals” was a collective noun, referring to London Journal, Mist's Journal, British Journal, Daily Journal, inter al. In this contest, John Dennis climbs up as high as a post and dives in, disappearing forever.

Next is the turn of Jonathan Smedley, a religious opportunist, a critic of Jonathan Swift for gain, dives in and vanishes. Smedley becomes Dulness's high priest, and the company move to Ludgate. There, the young critics are asked to weigh the difference between Richard Blackmore and John "Orator" Henley, the only one who can be the chief judge of Dulness. Three sophomores from Cambridge University and three lawyers from Temple Bar attempt the task, but they all fall asleep. The entire company slowly falls asleep, with the last being Susanna Centlivre, the one who had attacked Pope's translation of Homer

before its publication and Norton Defoe, another false identity created by a political author who claimed to be the true son of Daniel Defoe. Finally, Folly herself is killed by the dullness of the works being read aloud. The result is, appropriately, that there is no judge for Dulness, for Dulness requires an absence of judgment.

Book Three is set in the Temple of Dulness in the City. Theobald sleeps with his head on the goddess's lap, with royal blue fogs surrounding him. In his dream, he goes to Hades and visits the shade of Elkannah Settle. There he sees millions of souls waiting for new bodies as their souls transmigrate. He also sees Bavius, the god of hell, who purifies the soul in Lethe to make them dull, hails Theobald as the great messiah of Dulness. As, Bavius had dipped him over and over again, from lifetime to lifetime, before he was perfected in stupidity and ready to be born as Theobald. Theobald had formerly been a Boeotian, several Dutchmen, several monks, all before being himself: "All nonsense thus, of old or modern date, /Shall in thee centre, from thee circulate" (III. 51-2).

Here, Settle gives Theobald full knowledge of Dulness. This is his baptism: the time when he can claim his divine role and begin his mission in a parody of Jesus being blessed by the Holy Spirit. Settle shows Theobald the past triumphs of Dulness in its battles with reason and science. He surveys the Great Wall of China and the emperor burning all learned books, Egypt and Omar I burning the books in the Ptolmaean library. Then he turns to follow the light of the sun/learning to Europe and says,

“How little, mark! that portion of the ball,
Where, faint at best, the beams of Science fall.
Soon as they dawn, from Hyperborean skies,
Embody'd dark, what clouds of Vandals rise!” (75)

Goths, Alans, Huns, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Islam are all seen as destroyers of learning. Christianity in the medieval period is also an enemy of learning and reason in Settle's view:

“See Christians, Jews, one heavy sabbath keep;/And all the Western World believe and sleep” (91)

Pope lambasts the medieval popes for destroying statuary and books that depicted Classical Gods and Goddesses and for vandalizing others, for making statues of Pan into Moses.

Settle then surveys the future. He says that Grub Street will be Dulness's Mount Parnassus, where the goddess will "Behold a hundred sons, and each a dunce" (III. 130). He names two sons of contemporary dunces who were already showing signs of stupidity.

Settle turns to examine the present state of duncery, and this section of the third book is the longest. He first turns to literary critics, who were happiest when their authors complain the most. Such, scholars are described as: “A Lumberhouse of Books in every head, Forever reading, never to be read” (90).

From critics, he turns to the contrastive of triumphant dunces and lost merit. Orator Henley gets special attention here. Henley had set himself up as a professional lecturer. On Sundays, he would discuss theology, and on Wednesdays any other subject and those who went to hear him would pay a shilling each. Pope calls, “Oh great Restorer of the good old Stage, /Preacher at once, and Zany of thy Age!” (III. 201-202), while learned bishops and skilled preachers spoke to empty congregations. Next came the theatres: a Dr. Faustus was the toast of the 1726 - 1727 seasons, with both Lincoln's Inn Fields and Drury Lane competing for more and more lavish stage effects to get the audiences in: “Gods, imps, and monsters, music, rage, and mirth, A fire, a jig, a battle, and a ball, Till one wide Conflagration swallows all” (233).

Even though Pope was on good terms with some of the men involved (e.g. Henry Carey, who provided music for the Drury Lane version), are fighting to see who can make the

least sense. This competition of vulgarity is led by two theatres, and each has its champion of decadence. At Lincoln's Inn Fields is the "Angel of Dulness,"

Then onwards, Settle reveals some current triumphs of dullness over good sense. He mentions William Benson as the proper judge of architecture:

"While Wren with sorrow to the grave descends,

Gay dies un-pension'd with a hundred Friends.

Hibernian Politicks, O Swift, thy doom,

And Pope's translating three whole years with Broome." (325)

William Benson was a fool who had taken the place of Sir Christopher Wren and told the House of Lords that the house was unsound and falling down. It was not. John Gay never obtained a pension and yet was often remarked as one of the most jovial, intelligent, and compassionate wits of the age. Jonathan Swift had been "exiled" to Ireland, where he had become involved in Irish politics. Pope himself had spent three years translating Homer. Settle sees in these things great prospects for the coming age of darkness.

The basis of his (Pope) attack on the so-called hack writers is true. As the fact that we are moving to a position where we can look back on the dominance of the paper book, may soon be past days. Pope was able to look forward at it, and enables us to see this truth by his satire on the publication house owners, as well. Moreover the period of transition that we are going through has produced its own debates about the nature and value of the book, and book scholarship, that resonate curiously with the debates enshrined in *The Dunciad*. Since the argument is essentially about the nature of textual reproduction, it is rather appropriate that the context of this discussion should be a review of a reproduction of the first edition of Pope's *The Dunciad*.

On its publication *The Dunciad* became part of a pamphlet war, an interpretive polyphony of text and counter-text. Edmund Curll, seeing himself as a character, published a

twenty-four page *Complete Key to The Dunciad*, only ten days after its appearance. Pope issued two more printings of the poem within a month, each giving rise to a new edition of Curll's annotations, and other keys were produced to join in the fray, including a pirated edition with the blanks filled in. All of this was precisely part of the aesthetic project, since it duplicated the proliferation of editions, conjectures, and vitriol that is the stuff of editorial scholarship: it gave Pope the variety that enabled him to produce the *Variorum The Dunciad*, as, apparently, he had planned all along. This came out the following Spring: it collected and commented on the annotations and variants that the textual proliferation had produced, dealing indiscriminately, or rather with mock-discrimination, with those written by Pope and those emanating from his enemies.

This publication then elicited further keys, and further editions and revisions, and so on – indefinitely. Pope parodied and pilloried editing not only by producing a mock edition, but by inventing a self-perpetuating machine, a greater *The Dunciad*, that went on creating itself and generating jokes against bibliography long after his death. Textual and bibliographical scholarship of *The Dunciad* simply continued the project, squabbling over editions and annotations, right up to the present.

The first edition of *The Dunciad* – 1728 is imperfect and surreptitious in comparison to its later versions. Within three weeks of the first publication the second and third editions also appeared. In actuality, each of these was merely a re-impression from standing type, with roughly one gathering in each reset, with the only difference is rewriting and editing of the text, by Pope. The same is true of the third edition, which followed shortly, was much better than the first two versions.

Pope did not hesitate to satirize and thereby humiliate many of the writers of his day. It is pleasant to see that the wise aspect of this train of squabbles was flourished and the culture of irony writings in the literary trend of London reached to an epitome, never known

before. Therefore, in one sense, to become a character in *The Dunciad* was to rise above the level of minor poets and writers. Many men ripped the pages of *The Dunciad*, however, the black imagination of irony invented by Pope enriched the British literature, furthermore.

In large, Pope's *The Dunciad* succeeded in creating a book that has no boundaries. Part of the power of the printed book is that it is bounded: it is separate from its readers. As I read I create meaning in collaboration with the inked marks on the page. But there is a myth of the book that tells me (deceivably) that these marks are a boundary I cannot cross: I am on the outside of their meaning, and they are on the inside. And they are fixed, forever.

Transgression of this magic boundary is only allowed to textual editors, who rather thrillingly have in their control the right to alter the fixed text. All of this is deconstructed in *The Dunciad*.

The distinction between author and editor is mocked and subverted; the process of annotation, which attempts to control and specify meaning, is made impossible. The protagonists of this epic are not fixed individuals, but blank signifiers, whose referents were to be, as the (un)editor of the 1728 edition says, "Clapped in as they rose, fresh and fresh, and changed from day to day" (7). Since the whole point of annotation resides in the notion that obscurities are in principle resolvable, and words, especially names, have a specific, fixed, and discoverable reference, this makes the business of editorial annotation absurd. And of course Pope's mocking notes, in successive editions, add to the creative chaos, and further cast doubt on the whole business of annotation (1).

As Jonathan Richardson writes in *The Berg of The Dunciad* and transgress the boundaries of the book by making it collaborative:

The work became what our age might call "interactive," in that the text became subject to modification by readers' comments, many of which were recorded in the notes and, when they thus became part of the text, literally

affected the shape of the work. *The Dunciad*'s keys and many of its footnotes--especially those incorporating identifications from the keys--do for their host work [is to] translate fiction into fact; they connect the world in the text with the human world outside of the book. Pope's initials and blanks do not inevitably refer to living people, but the filled blanks and the notes make them do so. (25)

And every time the book is edited, the mockery continues: the Twickenham editor of the *Variorum*, with wonderful conscious irony, mixes in his own scholarly annotations in with Pope's anti-scholarly ones.

At first this justification is hard to see: as soon as one opens it one is faced with one of the problems of reproduction. It is not easy to read the text of the 1728 *The Dunciad* in this version, since the original printing was on thin paper, and the show-through is lovingly reproduced in this facsimile; harder still because the MS annotations, which are they extremely difficult to read distract from and occasionally obscure the text. But because the text was designed to take its part in a bibliographical drama of edition and counter-edition, the specificity of its appearance and the texture of its pages can be said to have a meaning that those of other works do not possess. And the annotations show a contemporary reader in the very act of interacting with the poem, and announce its collaborative, boundless, status.

However, there were other motives in the publication of this book than making the physical appearance of the 1728 versions. *The Dunciad* was available to a wider audience than the presumably extremely small number of people who have called it up from wherever it is kept in the New York Public Library. This is revealed rather clearly in a foreword by its publishers.

When the 1728 *The Dunciad* was re published in 1941, it joined what has now become a group of about one hundred and fifty early editions of Pope – a collection that

ranks only about tenth in the number of such items but stands at the forefront in their significance. Only about tenth is a revealing phrase: what complex calculations, what carefully maintained league tables it reveals. Tenth is Pope, but fourth in Dryden, perhaps, ninth in Milton, second equal in Swift.

Merit of Pope's literary achievement has been hotly debated for centuries, beginning towards the end of the eighteenth-century in a series of letters sent to various contemporary editors. Although such late eighteenth-century tastemakers as Joseph Warton, William Warburton and Samuel Johnson acknowledged Pope as a gifted satirist, translator, and poet, none thought of his major poems as poetry of the highest degree. These appraisals foreshadowed Victorian critical views on Pope's standard, when romantic aesthetics flourished, which marked his poetic style as dated, even prosaic, and his themes as petty and ill-advised. Such attitudes persisted well into the twentieth century, when the critical strategies that define New Criticism revived interest in Pope's body of works, renewing appreciation of his poetics in terms of its own art. Modern scholarship also has refuted the common perception that Pope's later satire detracts from the grace of his early poetry. In recognition of the poet's keen intellect and emotional sensitivities, some critics have explored his verse for prototypical elements of Romanticism.

With the mid-twentieth-century publication of the definitive edition of his complete correspondence, critical biographers emerged to fill the lacunae of Pope's life, which in turn has spurred textual examinations for details of intimate relationships and relations to his vocational pursuits. By the close of the twentieth century, many scholars and cultural critics have investigated Pope's writings for signs of emerging modern ideologies surrounding diverse issues.

Postmodern commentators have begun to negotiate the role gender played in the poet's and culture's imaginative life as well as gauge the influence of colonial ideology on

formation of the professional writer and mark out changes in the social obligations of literature. Others have described the relation between burgeoning print and mercantile cultures, deconstructed linguistic ambiguities, and analyzed political implications of Pope's texts. The endurance of critical interest in Pope's literary legacy after nearly three hundred years is validated by his poetic renditions of some of the world's most wittily elegant satires dressed in the ostensibly perfect language of heroic couplets.

Pope is considered the foremost writer of the Augustan Age and one of the most forceful poetic satirists of all time. His verse is viewed as the ultimate embodiment of eighteenth-century neoclassical ideals. These ideals, such as order, beauty, sophisticated wit, and refined moral sentiment, are exemplified throughout his verse, but particularly in such works as *An Essay on Criticism* and the mock-heroic poem *The Rape of the Lock*. Like these works, virtually all of Pope's writings are concerned with the moral, social, and intellectual state of humanity, which he considered of utmost relevance to his craft.

Pope's most controversial work and most often considered his masterpiece, *The Dunciad*, severely satirizes London writers who Pope believed had unjustly maligned him or who he considered contributors to the dissolution of Augustan ideals in England. Although satire, inspired by that of Roman poet Horace, represents much of his literary corpus and claim to critical praise, Pope is also highly revered for his monumental translations of Homer's *Iliad* for his critical discussions of poetry and aesthetics.

The spirit of classical spirit of poetry reached its height in the Age of Pope, from about 1700 until Pope's death in 1744. To the poetry of Pope this characterization applies even more stringently. More than any other English poet, he submitted himself to the requirement that the expressive force of poetic genius should issue forth only in a formulation as reasonable, lucid, balanced, compressed, final, and perfect as the power of human reason can make it.

Pope did not have John Dryden's majesty. Perhaps, given his predilection for correctness of detail, he could not have had it. Also, the readers of succeeding times have concluded that the dictates of reason do not all converge on only one poetic formula, just as the heroic couplet, which Pope brought to final perfection, is not necessarily the most generally suitable of English poetic forms. Nevertheless, the ease, harmony, and grace of Pope's poetic line are still impressive, and his quality of precise but never laboured expression of thought remains unequalled.

Pope and his friend Swift had for years written scornful and very successful critical reviews of those whom they considered poor writers; in 1727 they began a series of parodies of the same writers. The adversaries hurled insults at Swift and Pope in return, and in 1728 Pope lampooned them in one of his best-known works, *The Dunciad*, a satire celebrating dullness. He later enlarged the work to four volumes, the final one appearing in 1743. In 1734 he completed his *Essay on Man*. Pope's last works, *Imitations of Horace* (1733-1739), were attacks on political enemies of his friends. Pope used the heroic couplet with exceptional brilliance, giving it a witty, occasionally biting quality. His success made it the dominant poetic form of his century, and his poetry was translated into many languages.

Generally respected as the greatest poet of the age by his contemporaries and the following generation, Pope's canon gradually fell from favour throughout the nineteenth century as romantic aesthetics prevailed. Nevertheless, *The Dunciad* remained at its height, especially when it comes to personal irony.

However, the advent of New Criticism, in the early twentieth century, when critical interests were revived, *The Dunciad* has since then achieved a literary height. Many of the issues of *The Dunciad* earlier paid less attention to or neglected came to the lime light. Issues like Press Freedom and Gender were reviewed by new critics in the postmodern era. Pope's postmodern reputation has continued to flourish through the efforts of critics who have

investigated his writings for representations of emerging modern perspectives on gender, capitalism, print culture, language, and politics that still resonate.

Nevertheless, *The Dunciad* will remain to become one of the most revered texts of irony genre. The essence of irony in the text will never cease to lessen, but, will keep growing each day influencing hordes of critics and scholars.

IV. *The Dunciad*: Flay on the Fall of Creativity

The Dunciad composed out of anger and frustration in against the hack writers of his day, Pope elegantly criticizes the then London literary culture with ease and wit. Pope's most controversial work, the multi-volume masterpiece of mock-heroic poetry initially was published anonymously in 1728, and Pope denied his hand in it through subsequent reprints until in 1735. In its first incarnation, London's literary world is reconstructed as a chaotic kingdom, ruled by dullness and populated by Dunces charged with professional ineptitude, malice, and idiocy.

The Dunciad is not only rich in irony but also resonate various social, political and economic issues. Of course, it was written to pay personal debts; however, its mastery on various, above mentioned topics cannot be ignored. The period of Pope was the age, when poetic and literary creations were at epitome. And Pope was, beyond doubt one of the best figures to represent the age.

The initial publication of *The Dunciad* was taken as the work of an incompetent pedant; however, the 1729 *The Dunciad Variorum* re-issue of the original text supplemented, with additional extensive mock-pedantic bibliographical matter on numerous London writers and critics assured its place in the genre of a great work. When, in 1742 *The Dunciad* came in new version, which was comprised in four volumes, Pope conferred the hero's laurels on England's newly appointed poet laureate, Collie Cibber, and addressed his commentary to a broader spectrum of English society that ultimately dissolves into anarchy.

Pope ridiculed the contemporary trend of reading literature through the depiction of competition such as, who could abide the most boor literature when being read would be rewarded. Similarly, he held urination contest, where the last person to tolerate the smell would be prized. These symbolic competitions were cited in *The Dunciad* to mock his incompetent literary rivals.

Irony is, undoubtedly one of the most dominant genres in literature. It provides movement to the static literary trend, thereby creating antagonism and finally the creative minds are indulged in even better literary creations. Considering the tension of opposites as moving rather than static irony, creates the true essence of life and literature. Pope, who was physically stout and a sufferer of life-long illness, better understood the bitter reality of life and hence, was reflected in *The Dunciad*. Pope understood that irony begins with the contemplation of the world's fate in the large.

The greatness of *The Dunciad* lies in the fact that Pope is not targeting one man or trend, but seems concern on the social decline in the paradigm of literature, that he feels is all but irrevocable. He has not focus on a particularly writer, but has targeted all the incompetent and imbecile writers of his era. Nevertheless, *The Dunciad* is still a satire and not a lamentation on the fall of standard of literary art. The top of society, the kings may be dulled by spectacle and freak shows, but Dulness is only one force out of the numerous present everywhere in the society. She is at war with the men of wit, and she can be opposed through the paradigm of touchstone. Though, Pope has not presented the revival of cheap arts, but in fact, in the last book, Book Four, he has shattered all hopes of rescue of art. However, when the redemption is gone, the poem is even more nihilistic.

Although, the dominant genre in *The Dunciad* is irony, the abundance of presence of other issues like, gender, print culture, capitalism, and politics cannot be ignored. Pope, not only ridicules and depicts the trend of cheap writing trend prominent during his era, but also has shown that cheap writings will degrade and ultimately ruin the literary taste and its greatness.

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