Translation, Editing, and Poetic Invention in Pope’s *Dunciad*

by Richard Nash

The text of Pope’s *Dunciad* which one is most likely to encounter is that based on the 1743 edition, the last published during the poet’s lifetime; this version of the poem differs significantly from the one Pope originally published in 1728.¹ The most common characterization of the differences between the two versions of the poem is that the first represents an exuberant, energetic attack arising out of personal animosity, while the later version sacrifices some of the intensity of the original in pursuit of a more profound moral vision; one is a product of satiric adolescence, the other the result of poetic maturity. According to this view, the early version of the poem pillories Lewis Theobald for no greater crime than being more successful than Pope in his rival edition of Shakespeare, while the revision of the poem deepens and elaborates on the Christian allusions inherent in the original.

John Sitter’s full-length study of the poem considers Pope’s revisions and attempts “to show that they are, like most of Pope’s revisions, improvements.”² Sitter recognizes the complexities surrounding this issue, and chooses not to entangle himself in them: “There remains one problem which I have skirted rather than solved. It is frequently mentioned that there are really two distinct *Dunciads*: the first fully completed by 1729 in three books with Lewis Theobald as its “hero,”


and the second, with Colley Cibber enthroned, complete in four books and published in 1743. The argument is more problematic than it might first appear, for it presents one of the rare instances of bibliographical history and critical evaluation becoming inextricably intertwined. More recently, Dennis Todd has examined the poem’s revisions less for what they tell us about Pope’s formal achievement, but for what they suggest about his ambivalent attitude toward the dunces: “The numerous revisions of the poem suggest that Pope was conscious of his ambivalence and tried to resolve it.”

In this essay I suggest that a more literal conception of Pope’s revisions in Dunciad “B,” one which enables us to “re-view” Dunciad “A,” can shed light on Pope’s satire of Lewis Theobald. This strategy of reading the poem reveals Pope’s position in what Joseph Levine has described as an opposition between “philological” and “materialist” approaches to history. Pope’s attitude toward the past, revealed in his satire of deception in antiquarian collecting, bears on his conception of the roles of translator and editor, and grows out of his beliefs about poetic invention. In such a context, Pope’s satire emerges as an illustration of the conflict Michel Foucault describes between poet and madman, in which profoundly similar but opposed ideologies clash with one another.

In the “Annius/Mummius” episode of Dunciad “B” (IV. 347–96), Pope grounds in the context of Christian moralism a satiric discussion of the poet’s proper relationship to the past, with particular reference to the moral dimension of literary reputation. In doing so, he distills into a relatively brief episode a moral argument that, made more diffusely in the original characterization of Theobald, was overshadowed by issues of personal animosity.

Over twenty-five years ago, elaborating on observations first made by Aubrey Williams ten years earlier, Jessie Rhodes Chambers identified the Annius/Mummius episode of the Dunciad as a detailed parody of the Annunciation, Conception, Visitation, and Incarnation of Christ. Williams had addressed the episode’s general satire on materi-

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3 Sitter, 4–5.
5 “They share, then, on the outer edge of our culture and at the point nearest to its essential divisions, that ‘frontier’ situation—a marginal position and a profoundly archaic silhouette—where their words unceasingly renew the power of their strangeness and the strength of their contestation.” The Order of Things (New York: Random House, 1973), 50.
alism, in which, "the 'thing,' the physical object, is deified." Chambers presented convincing evidence that the structure of the episode paralleled biblical accounts of Christ's incarnation. Without disputing the elements of biblical parody observed by Williams and Chambers, I would like to explore how the themes they present of deception and false creation reveal something of Pope's attitude towards the past, as well as his conception of literary reputation that lies at the heart of the poem.

In Pope's poetics, great poetry—like Christ himself—represents a fusion of the human and the divine. Thus, in *Windsor Forest*, for example, he describes divine creation with Horace's phrase of *concordia discors*: "Not Chaos-like together crush'd and bruis'd, / But as the World, harmoniously confus'd" (l. 13–14). Pope's parody of the incarnation of Christ ("the Word made flesh") in *The Dunciad* has a particular reference to literary creation and especially to those translators who corrupt literary translation by preserving not the spirit, but the objects, of the original. The episode's satire is directed at rival translators from whom Pope wishes to distinguish himself.

Antiquarian deception is the episode's central theme. Annius, who purchases antiquities in order to resell them to collectors, is also a forger who dupes his noble clientele and prays to the goddess who governs his enterprise: "Grant, gracious Goddess! grant me still to cheat, / O may thy cloud still cover the deceit!" (B. IV. 355–56). Mummius interrupts the prayer with a complaint that Annius has deceived him. In his greed for collecting, he has purchased some coins which Annius had swallowed to prevent their being stolen. Annius protests his innocence, claiming that he still bears the coins and that he has been stuffing himself at the table of Pollio, another noble collector, in order to hasten their "second issue":

- that thus I eat,
- Is to refund the Medals with the meat.
- To prove me, Goddess! clear of all design,

8 As Chambers has noted, the character's name alludes to Virgil's "Pollio," evoking for an Augustan audience Classical and Christian prophesies of the birth of a savior rather than of a coin. Cf. Pope's "Messiah: A Sacred Eclogue, in Imitation of Virgil's Pollio."
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.
(B. IV. 389–94)

After the Latinate parade of masked identities, the English “Douglas” leaps out to claim attention. Sutherland is almost certainly right when he suggests in the biographical appendix to the Twickenham edition that Douglas is suffering for his involvement in the Mary Toft hoax of 1726. In that case a woman had claimed to give birth to seventeen rabbits in the course of a month before Dr. Richard Manningham was finally able to force a confession from her. While Douglas took down the confession and had been sceptical from the beginning, he appeared to have been as much taken in as any and was often satirized for his involvement. Like Mary Toft, who faced criminal charges as “a Vile Cheat and Imposter,” Annius is presented as a “knave,” imposing (with the help of Dulness) his deception on the “fool,” Mummius. Douglas, operating as midwife and go-between, serves in this instance (as he did in satirical treatments of the Toft hoax) as both “fool” and “knave,” his own folly leading him to further Annius’s knavery.

Douglas’s role in the deception is as a facilitator of the kind of anal/vaginal confusion characteristic of some types of “poemagogic” imagery. Anton Ehrenzweig coins this phrase in discussing the final “depressive” phase of the creative process. According to such a view, all artistic creation involves translation from primary process creative vision to its embodiment in secondary process products (painting, poem, etc.). Poemagogic imagery reflects the artist’s concern with the necessary loss that accompanies such translation: “The creative vision is befouled by the process that brings it into the work(l)ed.”


out his career, Pope's poetry reflects a concern with the translation of poetic vision into poetic language. In "On Silence," an early imitation of Rochester's poem "on Nothing," 13 Pope brings together three creations—divine, human, and literary—in a single triplet:

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.
(ll. 4–6) 14

In each line of the triplet, Pope's language evokes the divine creation of Genesis: "Heav'n was form'd or Earth," "Creation's Birth," the "Word" or Logos. Moreover, in the context of the poem, the events of this triplet occur simultaneously, each separate description of a single instantaneous creative act, following conventional interpretations that the creation was an immediate act of will and that the temporal mediation of speech was intended only figuratively. 15 Yet the language evokes not just the moment of divine creation, but the physical process of human creation: "fruitful," "conceiv'd," "Midwife," and "Infant." The order of these words suggests a development from a period of fertility through conception and birth to a completed delivery. By joining these two images of creation, Pope obtains the force of a dynamic creative process and the power of an immediate creative act. The effect results from the manipulation that is in fact the subject of the stanza. The creation described is the creation of language; "Thine" refers back to the "Silence" that precedes creation. 16 The image of divine creation

15 Cf. the gloss on Genesis 1:3 in Matthew Poole's definitive A Commentary on the Holy Bible, Genesis to Job (rpt. London, 1968).
16 Cf. Augustine, Homilies on the Gospel According to St. John and His First Epistle (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1848), l. 9–10: "If thou canst have a word in thy heart, as it were a design or idea engendered in thy mind, thy mind giving birth to the design, and the design being in thy mind, the offspring, so to speak, of thy mind, the child of thy heart—For first, the heart gives birth to an idea, suppose, of constructing some work of art, of rearing some vast edifice on the earth: here is the idea already born into existence, and the work not yet finished: thou seest what thou art about to make; but another does not admire thy work, until thou have made and reared the pile, and brought the work to its last shape and finish: then men take note of the admirable workmanship, and admire the idea of the workmaster; they marvel at what they see, and are delighted with what they do not see: who is there that can see an idea?"
suggests the immediacy of the *logos*, while the process of human creation parallels the development of speech and poetic process: from “Silence” to “thought” to “word” to “speech.” Pope illustrates the creative power of language by describing the creation of language in the language of creation.

In the poemagogic imagery of the “Annius/Mummius” episode, however, the translation of poetic process into poetic language is accompanied by loss and corruption, resulting in monstrous births and false creations. Both of these themes were prominent in “The Discovery,” a satire on the occasion of the Toft hoax jointly authored by Pope and Pulteney. Douglas, of course, is to assist Annius in an anal birth fantasy: “at their second birth, they issue mine” (B. IV. 386). Beyond that, Annius’s prayer confesses many counterfeit creations:

> So shall each youth, assisted by our eyes,
> See other Caesars, other Homers rise;
> 
> Now see an Attys, now a Cecrops clear
> Nay, Mahomet! the Pigeon at thine ear;
> 
> (B. IV. 60, 363–64)

As Pope’s notes make clear, each of these items alludes to obviously counterfeit coins then in the hands of collectors.

Douglas unites Pope’s satire by bringing together the follies of deception and false creation involved in the Mary Toft affair with the more common folly of indiscriminate collecting. Pope’s footnote to the Douglas line makes no mention of the Toft incident, but instead draws the reader’s attention in more gentle fashion to that which would be less well-known—his collection of Horace: “A Physician of great Learning and no less Taste; above all curious in what related to *Horace*, of whom he collected every Edition, Translation, and Comment, to the number of several hundred volumes” (B. IV. 394n). Pope here plays on the word “curious,” for not only is Horace the object of Douglas’s curiosity, but Douglas himself is presented as a curiosity in the episode’s satire on antiquarian collecting. Certainly, the author of “To Augustus,” an imitation of the first Epistle of the Second Book of Horace, would enjoy the irony of one who made Horace the object of antiquarian collection: “Authors, like Coins, grow dear as they grow old; / It is the rust we value, not the gold” (*Ep. II*. i. 35–36).17 The synthesis

of follies suggested by Douglas’s appearance at the end of the episode is reinforced when Dulness grants Annius’s request: “The Goddess smiling seem’d to give consent; / So back to Pollio, hand in hand, they went” (B. IV. 395–96).

The union of such disparate follies as those involved in monstrous births and those involved in antiquarian collecting may seem strange, but it reveals Pope’s conception of the relation of poetic process and literary reputation. The satire’s two chief concerns—the creative failure of the dunces, and the threat they pose to the reputations of legitimate poets—are reconciled metaphorically in this episode. In his prayer, Annius asks Dulness to cloud the understandings of young noblemen, that they might, “Thro’ twilight ages hunt th’ Athenian fowl / Which Chalcis Gods, and mortals call an Owl” (B. IV. 361–62). Pope’s footnote offers little that immediately clarifies the line: “The Owl stamp’d on the reverse of the ancient money of Athens. ‘Which Chalcis Gods, and Mortals call an Owl’ is the verse by which Hobbes renders that of Homer.” It would seem that the line simply refers to pursuing Greek coins. If we look up the line in Hobbes, however, we find that the fowl “which Gods do Chalcis call, but Men an Owl” refers to the God of Sleep whose aid Juno has enlisted to deceive Jupiter. The allusion now makes more sense in Pope’s passage, for it suggests that the Greek coins, once found, will prove counterfeit. If we look up the same line in Pope’s translation of the Iliad, we find much to clarify Pope’s attitude toward antiquity and, indirectly, the Annius/Mummius episode:

Dark in embow’ring Shade, conceal’d from Sight,
Sate Sleep, in Likeness of the Bird of Night,
(Chalcis his Name with those of heav’nly Birth,
But call’d Cymindis by the Race of Earth.)

328. This is a Bird about the size of a Hawk, entirely black; and that is the reason why Homer describes Sleep under its Form. Here (says Eustathius) Homer lets us know, as well as in many other Places, that he is no Stranger to the Language of the Gods. Hobbes has taken very much from the Dignity of this Supposition, in translating the present lines in this manner.

And there Sate Sleep in Likeness of a Fowl,
Which Gods do Chalcis call, but Men an Owl.

We find in Plato’s Cratylus a Discourse of great Subtlety, grounded chiefly on this observation of Homer, that the Gods and Men call the same thing by different Names. The Philosopher supposes that in the original Language every thing was express’d by a word, whose Sound was naturally apt to mark the
Nature of the thing signify'd. This great Work he ascribes to the Gods, since it required more Knowledge both in the Nature of Sounds and Things, than Man had attain'd to. This Resemblance he says was almost lost in modern Languages by the unskilful Alterations Men had made, and the great Licence they had taken in compounding of Words. However, he observes there were yet among the Greeks some remains of this original Language, of which he gives a few Instances, adding, that many more were to be found in some of the barbarous Languages that had deviated less from the Original, which was still preserv'd entire among the Gods.18

Pope's notes reveal his anger at those translators, like Hobbes, who further corrupt rather than preserve the language of the ancients. According to the Platonic view which Pope follows in his translation, such corruption is sacrilege. Foucault accurately describes such a role for the poet in this period: "the poet is he who, beneath the named, constantly expected differences, rediscovers the buried kinships between things, their scattered resemblances. Beneath the established signs, and in spite of them, he hears another, deeper, discourse, which recalls the time when words glittered in the universal resemblance of things."19

Pope's preface to the Iliad emphasizes the importance of this Platonic notion to his own poetics. What sets Homer above all other poets is his unbounded invention, "this poetical fire, this Vivida vis animi."20 He is for Pope the God of Poetry: "that which Aristotle calls the Soul of Poetry, was first breath'd into it by Homer."21 And finally: "We acknowledge him the Father of Poetical Diction, the first who taught that Language of the Gods to Men."22 To one who has such a reverence for antiquity, the role of the translator entails a special responsibility:

If there be sometimes a Darkness, there is often a Light in Antiquity, which nothing better preserves than a Version almost literal. I know no Liberties one ought to take, but those which are necessary for transfusing the Spirit of the Original, and supporting the Poetical Style of the Translation: . . . It is not to be doubted that the Fire of the Poem is what a Translator should principally regard, as it is most likely to expire in his managing.23

19 The Order of Things, 49.
21 Ibid., 5.
22 Ibid., 9.
23 Ibid., 17–18.
Pope, drawing on Dionysius of Halicarnassus,\textsuperscript{24} then contrasts the flatness, which their friends will call simplicity but "the rest of the World will call Dulness," of translators like Hobbes to Homer's "graceful and dignify'd Simplicity":

This pure and noble Simplicity is no where in such Perfection as in the Scripture and our Author. One may affirm with all respect to the inspired Writings, that the Divine Spirit made use of no other Words but what were intelligible and common to Men at that Time, and in that Part of the World; and as Homer is the Author nearest to those, his Style must of course bear a greater Resemblance to the sacred Books than that of any other Writer.\textsuperscript{25}

Pope's remarks here bear directly not only on his relation to antiquity, but on his notions of literary immortality. Pope's translation of the \textit{Iliad} does not merely preserve that poem, it keeps it alive. He prevents "the Fire of the Poem" from "expiring," by "Transfusing the Spirit of the Original." In doing so he performs a task analogous to Homer's breathing the soul into poetry when he translated divine language into poetic diction: "The final test of the achievement will be the amount of imaginative energy that flows inside the new creation, shaping configurations which are held together by poetic force and which however different from those of the original yet resemble them in being true galaxies, spin-offs of a central sun."\textsuperscript{26}

While this spiritual dimension is crucial to Pope's own relation to antiquity, it is utterly lacking from the characters in the Annius/Mummius episode. Their vision of the past is determinedly materialistic. Because their interest in antiquity is merely with its detritus (coins and mummies) they are particularly susceptible to fraud and corruption. While Pope attempts to keep alive the spirit of the past, the collectors attempt to preserve its mummified bodies. Void of a spiritual dimension, the physical must putrefy and corrupt, and Mummius, "like his Cheops stinks above the ground" (B. IV. 372).

The distinction Pope draws here between himself and the collectors is all the more important because the antiquaries risk confusion with

\textsuperscript{24} Steven Shankman's \textit{Pope's Iliad: Homer in the Age of Passion} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) establishes the poet's reliance on Dionysius in his comments on style (64, \textit{et passim}). As Shankman suggests, Pope is not merely parroting Mme. Dacier's notes, but expressing his own similar beliefs: "She should have welcomed Pope as a comrade in arms" (p. 83).

\textsuperscript{25} Shankman, 18.

\textsuperscript{26} Maynard Mack, \textit{Alexander Pope: A Life} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 358.
Pope himself. Maynard Mack’s bibliographic studies of Pope’s books and marginalia reveal “a marked interest in exact learning,” which leads him to speculate that Pope’s satire “might suggest a more than usual degree of personal involvement . . . because it mocks a species of folly for which the author himself had perhaps a considerable sur-
reptitious tolerance.” 27

The process by which Pope distinguishes himself is not individual, but generic. The only character in the episode whom Pope identifies by name, Douglas, links the folly of antiquarian collecting with deception and false creation. The only other figure identified in the notes, Hobbes, serves to distinguish Pope’s reverence for antiquity from the dunces’ materialistic desires. The folly of each dunce depicts the loss that accompanies the translation from poetic vision to poetic voice. In his note to line 375, Pope extracts an account from Spon’s Voyages as his source for the episode. Spon’s remarkable account describes an antiquary who swallowed valuable coins when he thought he was about to be overtaken by pirates. Having made his escape, he encoun-
ters two physicians on the road to Avignon, one of whom prescribes purgation, the other vomition. 28 For Pope and his contemporaries, this incident might well call to mind the duel fought by Richard Mead and John Woodward over the efficacy of these two treatments in cases of smallpox—a duel that had provided a field day for Tory satirists. How-
ever much the two may have disagreed over medicine, they shared a common preoccupation with antiquarian collecting. Mead’s collection contained two mummies, while Woodward (who appears to have died before collecting mummies became popular in England) was often satirized for his large antiquarian collection. The “prize” of this collection was an ancient shield which eventually was revealed to be an early renaissance hoax. 29

Joseph Levine’s study of the hoaxes surrounding Woodward’s shield

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27 “‘Books and the Man’: Pope’s Library,” in Collected in Himself (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982), 308. Pope himself had, in 1728, become an extra-regular mem-
ber of the Society of Antiquaries; see John Nichols, Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century vol. VI, (London, 1812), 13, 84n, 106.


29 Joseph Levine gives a complete history of the hoax in Dr. Woodward’s Shield: His-

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and other antiquarian collections reveals a fundamental debate over the nature of historical inquiry at the time. Ancients (like Pope) relied on a "philological" approach emphasizing the written testimonies of historians, while Moderns relied on a "materialist" investigation of the evidentiary remains of civilizations (coins, mummies, etc.). This same debate spills over into theories of translation with Moderns like Bentley and Hobbes approaching Homer with an antiquarian interest, and Pope advocating a philological approach that emphasizes "our Author's Beauties." The primary responsibility of a translator is to preserve the "fire of the original," on which Homer's literary reputation depends. In this way it reproduces the act of poetic creation, which translates "the Language of the Gods to [the language of] men." 31

If this episode reveals something about Pope's attitude toward the past that illuminates his conception of literary reputation, then we may be able to use it to re-examine Pope's attacks on Theobald in the original version of the poem. His choice of Theobald as the original hero of the poem is generally viewed as retaliation for his rival claims as editor of Shakespeare, but as Sutherland argues, "it is at least doubtful if Pope considered Theobald a good editor at all." 32 Sutherland has set forth the two men's very different perceptions of what the duty of an editor was; essentially they correspond to the two notions of history discussed by Levine—Theobald, following the materialist path of the verbal critic, attempted to preserve the corpus, while Pope followed the philological approach, pointing out "the Poetical Beauties of the Author." In his "Preface to Shakespear," Pope identifies his editorial practice as "a shorter and less ostentatious method of performing the better half of Criticism (namely the pointing out an Author's excellencies)." 33

I do not wish, at this late date, to enter into Pope's defense against Theobald. Pope's views about the proper role of an editor do not today enjoy the same tolerance as his views about the proper role of a translator. Nonetheless, the two are of a piece and need to be understood

30 Poems, vol. 8, 11. Shankman suggests that precisely this methodological disagreement may be behind Bentley's notorious judgment ("A pretty poem, but you must not call it Homer"), noting that two years before Pope publishes his translation, Bentley disparages this philological view as advanced by Anthony Collins (pp. 81–82).
in terms of one another. With our emphasis on "scientific" editing and
textual scholarship, we are likely to wonder how one can endanger a
genius by getting his words right. For Pope, however, who sees editing
and translating equally as acts of historical recovery, "verbal criticism"
was far more suspect than is textual scholarship today. Theobald was
not merely a contemporary rival, but the most prominent advocate of
an attitude toward history, and particularly literary reputation, which
threatened Pope's own notions of literary identity. For Theobald it is
the text itself which survives, for Pope it is the creative genius of the
author—what he spoke of in the preface to the Iliad as "the Fire of
the Poem." 34

The difference in the approaches of the two editors reveals two dra-
astically different assumptions about literary fame; what is incidental to
the scholar is paramount to the poet. Theobald had "restor'd" the cor-
pus of Shakespeare's text, but in doing so he had sacrificed the genius
of the author which constituted his literary identity. Todd has noted
that Tibbald appears in Book I as "a parodic Christ," 35 attempting in
the words of Luke 19:10, "to seek and to save that which was lost":

Here studious I unloky moderns save,
Nor sleeps one error in its father's grave,
Old puns restore, lost blunders nicely seek,
And crucify poor Shakespear once a week.

(A. I. 161–64)

In a perversion of Christ's redemptive power, Tibbald restores the
ephemeral (errors, puns, and blunders) and destroys the spirit and
genius that should bring Shakespeare immortality. His role is directly
antithetical to those immortal poets like Homer, Shakespeare, and
Pope himself, whose creative imaginations echo the logos. The threat
of the dunces, then, is that they threaten to obliterate the identities of
the very poets whose power they lack.

This threat provides the focus for Pope's wittiest attack on Theobald
when Settle shows him the spectacles of the theater in Book III:

And are these wonders, Son, to thee unknown?
Unknown to thee? These wonders are thy own.
For works like these let deathless Journals tell,
"None but Thy self can be thy parallel."

(A. III. 269–72)

34 Poems, vol. 8, 17.
The quoted line marvellously exemplifies the fragmentation of identity which Pope ascribes to the dunces throughout the poem. The conceit of supposing "every man to contain two selves" was sufficiently widespread that Fielding could employ it to good advantage in *The Tragedy of Tragedies* (II. ix. 8n) without reference to Theobald. The line, however, is not merely from one of Theobald's own monstrous creations, but from *Double Falsehood*, which he claimed (with some success) to be a lost play of Shakespeare's. In his note, Pope charges that Theobald's dullness makes him not just a fool, but a knave:

A marvellous line of *Theobald*; unless the Play call'd the *Double Falsehood* be, (as he would have it believed) Shakespeare's: But whether this line be his or not, he proves Shakespeare to have written as bad, (which methinks in an author for whom he has a Veneration almost rising to idolatry, might have been concealed) as for example,

Try what Repentance can: What can it not?
But what can it, when one cannot repent?
—For Cognition

Resides not in the Man who does not think, &c.
MIST'S JOURN.

It is granted they are all of a piece, and no man doubts but herein he is able to imitate Shakespeare. (A. III. 272n)

The note strongly suggests that Theobald is deliberately attempting to pass off a forgery as genuine. Although Pope immediately qualifies this suggestion, his point remains that the play illustrates the dangers of dullness in confusing the literary identities of Shakespeare and Theobald. In one sense Pope is justified in his attack, for Theobald was profiting at the expense of Shakespeare's reputation; the play could only diminish Shakespeare's fame, while exploiting his name to line Theobald's pocket. Perhaps even more importantly, however, Pope saw Theobald undermining the very nature of Shakespeare's reputation. Shakespeare's works "afford the most numerous, as well as most conspicuous instances, both of beauties and faults of all sorts." 36 Theobald's textual approach does not attempt to distinguish between these, as the examples from *Mist's Journal* testify. The second of these, Sutherland informs us,

Theobald had quoted . . . to excuse the 'None but Itself can be its Parallel' of *Double Falsehood*. The punctuation of the first Folio—

Richard Nash

(for Cogitation
Resides not in that man, that do's not thinke)

—appeared to justify him.” (A. III. 272n)

The choice was an unfortunate one, as Pope pointed out in a note added in 1735:

The last of these is no man’s nonsense but Tibbald’s, as he might have found had he read what follows,

Who does not think
My Wife is slippery. (A. III. 272n)

Theobald is here trapped in an error of verbal criticism of precisely the nature that Pope warned against. By allowing the text an authority over the sense of the poet, he has allowed a printer’s error to create new blunders and pass them off as Shakespeare’s. Compounding the error, he has used the blunder to justify attributing a similar blunder to Shakespeare, and partly on the basis of that attribution assigns Double Falsehood to him. Theobald’s restorations, his powers “to save that which was lost,” whether a punctuation mark or an entire play, serve to corrupt rather than preserve the reputation and identity of the poet. 37

For Pope, the duties of translator and editor are analogous in that they require one to preserve the eternal genius of a poet, not resurrect the perishable corpus of his works. 38 Such a challenge reproduces the task facing the poet himself: to translate, without loss or corruption, poetic vision into poetic voice. The Word—and the poet inspired by it—performs as midwife, mediating between the imagination and the world. Bad editors, like bad translators and bad poets, function as bad midwives, mangling their offspring and producing uninspired monstrosities. Just as Douglas’s folly in the “Annius/Mummius” episode

37 In the ensuing note, which Sutherland has rightly praised for its wit (“Dull” 636–37), Scriblerus presents Theobald’s ridiculous arguments for assigning Double Falsehood to Shakespeare, and then proceeds to apply Theobald’s own methods to the play, parroting Theobald’s style all the while.

38 Theobald seems to share Pope’s view that the roles of translator and editor are analogous, for in a maddeningly condescending passage of Shakespeare Restor’d (pp. 146–47), he supports a proposed alteration in Pope’s gloss of a passage from 2 Henry IV with a lengthy digression on an error in Pope’s translation of the Iliad. Mack has noted the current of malice running throughout Theobald’s work (Alexander Pope, 431); given the disparity in their conceptions of the responsibilities of editor and translator, it must have been especially galling to Pope to have his entire Iliad held up to sneering ridicule on the basis of a single word.
leads him to further Annius's knavery, so the misguided concern with the material on the part of Hobbes and Theobald lead them to corrupt the reputations of Homer and Shakespeare.

The danger of dullness is that it threatens to become confused with genius, and thus to corrupt the transforming power of art. The poet, as another incarnation of the word, should mediate between God and man, pointing to a now lost system of signs and resemblances that once made the world cohere. The dunces, in their mad perversion of this role, alienate man by their confused productions that annihilate, rather than transform discrete identity.

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