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**THE CLASSICAL AND THE GROTESQUE
IN THE WORK OF
ALEXANDER POPE AND JONATHAN SWIFT**

**The Classical and the Grotesque in the work of
Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift**

Clark Lawlor, MA.

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SUMMARY

This thesis takes Mikhail Bakhtin's definitions of the classical and the grotesque, uses various other theorists to problematise and extend these concepts through an engagement with gender categories, and applies them to the work of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift. Although the first part deals with the 'theory' of the classical and the grotesque, the following sections on Pope and Swift seek to recognise the historical specificity and complexity of these modes as they intersect with the cultural, material, and psychological circumstances of the writer. The methodology is not solely 'biographical', 'political', 'cultural', 'feminist' or 'textual', but combines those approaches most relevant to the particular text in question, sometimes engaging more directly with the political environment, for example, at other times placing greater stress on mythological and generic allusions. The thesis shows that the classical and the grotesque emerge from a long social and literary tradition, yet the ways in which they manifest themselves in the time of Pope and Swift are very specific and constructed at least partially in response to contemporary cultural contexts such as the publishing trade, the present monarchy, the situation of Ireland and so on. Extending the work of Susan Gubar, particular attention is paid to the figure of the female grotesque, a common and yet varied image that is made to stand for a variety of cultural and moral ills in the writing of Pope and Swift. In contrast the figure of the 'classical' woman or 'softer man' is found to be symbolic of order as the unruly 'natural' substance of woman is transformed into masculine 'Culture' through social and textual containment. Classical and grotesque constructions of the masculine are also examined, especially in relation to the author's perceptions of his own masculinity. The thesis concludes with a brief analysis of the classical masculine friendship between Pope and Swift.

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Many other people have helped me in innumerable ways, indeed too many to mention, for which I apologise, whilst hoping that I will someday be able to return the favours that have been so kindly given.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Ehrenpreis* Ehrenpreis, Irvin, *Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age*, 3 vols (London, 1962-83)
- Journal* *The Journal to Stella*, edited by Harold Williams, 2 vols (Oxford, 1948)
- Pope Corr* *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, edited by George Sherburn, 5 vols (Oxford, 1956)
- Pope PW* *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope*, edited by Norman Ault and Rosemary Cowler, 2 vols (Oxford, 1936-86)
- RW* *Rabelais and his World*, translated by H. Iswolsky (Indiana, 1984)
- Swift Corr* *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, edited by Harold Williams, 5 vols (revised edition, Oxford, 1965)
- Swift Poems* *The Poems of Jonathan Swift*, edited by Harold Williams, second edition, 3 vols (Oxford, 1958)
- Swift PIW* *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, edited by Herbert Davis, 14 vols (Oxford, 1939-68)
- TE* *The Twickenham Edition of the Works of Alexander Pope*, general editor John Butt, 11 vols (London, 1939-69)

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to examine the work of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's terms, the 'Classical', and the 'Grotesque'. Using and adapting these categories under the influence of more recent critical theorists, I will attempt to show their relevance to authors who show a strong tendency to write in both modes.

The structure of this work has three major components. Firstly, there is a 'theoretical' section, in which I will define Bakhtin's terms and then introduce a further theoretical element: the issue of gender. Although critical theorists have recently started to see the potential in Bakhtin's concepts of the grotesque and classical body no one has yet made substantial links between his ideas and those of other theorists of grotesque and classical women, such as Gilbert and Gubar, Klaus Theweleit and Lynda Nead, and investigators of the classical masculine economy, again including Klaus Theweleit and Lynda Nead. Bakhtin's insight that perceptions and images of the human body are socially constructed is particularly fruitful as it unfolds a method of relating seemingly individualised physical circumstances to wider issues of gender, class, religion and so on. This method has been exploited in recent years by anthropologists like Mary Douglas, who have shown that the body 'speaks' of and to the society it inhabits. The first section sets out to illustrate the complex ways in which male and female bodies can be represented as both classical and grotesque, depending on the specific context in which the image is generated. Broadly speaking, to be masculine is to be classical, a symbol of culture, order and physical containment; to be feminine is to be grotesque, a sign of nature, chaos and bodily transgression. Particular subject positions are more complex than this, however, as the analysis shows.

The second section begins by briefly looking at the reception of the classical and the grotesque in the time of Pope and Swift, a time that I shall loosely call 'Augustan', with all the reservations that imprecise labels such as this require. The focus then narrows to Pope, examining his largely Scriblerian attitudes to the classical through his theoretical statements, both in prose and poetry like *An Essay on Criticism* and *An Essay on Man*. His joyful disapproval of the grotesque and carnivalesque is shown in the ironic *Art of Sinking in Poetry*, a text I consider to be almost wholly Pope's work, although it does reflect the views of the other Scriblerians. Pope precedes Swift in this

thesis because, although Swift is chronologically earlier, Pope's perspective on the classical and the grotesque is generally that of Swift, and Pope's theoretical statements are more directly engaged with these issues than Swift. There are of course differences between the two Scriblerians, as we shall see in the Swift section. The general introduction to Pope continues with a consideration of the contrast between Pope's awareness of his grotesque actual body and his construction of an ideal masculine classical body for himself in his poetry, particularly the Horatian poems.

The second part of the second section analyses three of Pope's major works in detail, tracing the interaction of the classical and the grotesque through *Windsor Forest*, *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*. Although each poem is treated as a separate work produced at a specific historical moment, their chronological progression allows an overview of the development of classical and grotesque themes and images as Pope's career continues and is influenced by 'external' conditions such as the political situation and so on. Spanning almost the whole of Pope's poetic life, these poems illustrate the complexity and density of his influences and frames of reference. Whilst presenting a kind of classical capitalist utopia ruled by the classical figure of Queen Anne, *Windsor Forest* nevertheless points to the grotesque possibilities of the failure of the Stuart line, embodied in the grotesque female Discord and the wayward nymph Lodona. Ovidian mythic sources combine with Renaissance iconography and contemporary politics to generate an allegorical narrative that equates England's problems with the figure of the female grotesque and seeks reassurance and stability in the guise of the patriarchal figure of Father Thames.

This Popeian need for fatherly control is restated in *The Rape of the Lock* where a line of classical masculine figures, including the poet himself, is contrasted with effeminate grotesque men like Sir Plume. Even more marked is the contrast between the men and the grotesque figures of the rebellious Belinda and the Goddess Spleen. This poem particularly exploits the antifeminist medical ideology of hysteria to mark 'the Sex' as being inherently grotesque in mind and body.

The Dunciad, in both its versions, is the great grotesque poem of English literature. Pope's increasingly gloomy assessment of the political state of the nation and the consequent erosion of classical virtues, especially in the book trade, results in a poem that feeds the many anxieties of the poet into the most imposing female grotesque of them all: the goddess Dulness. Dulness is shown to be a complicated mixture of female grotesques from ancient myth, more recent literary grotesques,

and the present monarch's powerful wife, Queen Caroline. The male followers of Dulness, particularly the 'hero' Cibber, become grotesque by assuming feminine characteristics such as passivity, chaotic behaviour and attraction to other men. In this poem the classical power of the poet is confined to the ordering activity of the heroic couplet as a grotesque Orphic fate overwhelms him.

The third and final part of this thesis moves on to Swift, who requires a different treatment to Pope since he is not only a poet and writes a certain kind of poetry. I have limited my analysis of Swift largely to his poetry, where the contrast between the grotesque and classical female is most pronounced, although I do deal briefly with the most relevant prose texts such as *The Battle of the Books* and *Gulliver's Travels*. The general structure of this part divides into two sections: the 'grotesque' Swift and the 'classical' Swift. Although entire poems are analysed, my general strategy is to deal with groups of poems such as the 'scatological' poems or the 'Market Hill' poems, as Swift tends to write shorter poems in clusters rather than the more extended single (although often revised) items that Pope composed.

In the 'grotesque' Swift the development of the grotesque, especially the female grotesque, is charted in chronological order, from the early rejection of his 'malignant Muse' in favour of the masculine classical figure of Apollo, to the grotesque figure of Scotland in *The Story of the Injured Lady*, and to that precursor of many Augustan female grotesques, the Goddess Criticism in *The Battle of the Books*, with her effeminate male followers, Wotton and Bentley. The poetry of Swift's middle period is then examined, most notably the 'Progress' poems, and in particular *The Progress of Beauty*, an early manifestation of the 'scatological' group that is analysed in the next section. The disruptive and diseased body of the Swiftian female grotesque is brought under close scrutiny here, although the role of male grotesques such as Strephon and Cassinus is also considered, posing the question of whether there is some kind of equality in male and female grotesquerie. The complicity of the poet with his male characters and his strategies for keeping his own classical body pure are further issues addressed in this section.

The 'classical' Swift section deals with Swift's presentation of his classical Palladian women, engaging as much with his biography as with his poetry. The structure of this section is dictated by the chronology of the three attempts Swift made to control the female figures in his life, attempts bolstered directly through the medium of his poetry. Hence this part has a tripartite structure

examining Swift's poetry and prose concerned with Esther Johnson ('Stella'), Esther Vanhomrigh ('Vanessa'), and Lady Anne Acheson ('Daphne' or herself). The main poems inspected are the Birthday poems to Stella, other miscellaneous poems to Stella including *To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems, Cadenus and Vanessa*, and the 'Market Hill' poems addressed to Lady Acheson, written after the deaths of Stella and Vanessa. A process emerges in which Swift as Pygmalion, shaping his women in art and life, is also found to be Swift as Narcissus, attempting to cast these ladies in his own image: by giving them masculine classical virtues he can transcend the fearful chaos of the desiring female body. Unfortunately for him, this proves impossible, even with Stella, the earliest and most malleable of his subjects. Despite his most ingenious efforts to nullify and purge the 'turbulence of the blood' that his classical women have a disturbing habit of expressing, the cracks in the classical facade that he makes of them in his poetry insist on reappearing, suggesting grotesque difficulties behind. A dichotomy also emerges between the classical Swift who idealises his ladies in poetry and advocates a bracing regimen of long walks and diets, and the grotesque Swift of the *Journal to Stella* and the correspondence with Vanessa, the man who turns from 'Priest to Beast' in the salacious language games with his 'wheedling sluts' that he initiates and controls.

The thesis concludes with a consideration of the economy of masculine classical friendship that binds Pope and Swift, particularly their surprisingly passionate correspondence. This is the ideal relationship for the Augustan man: where sameness overcomes difference; where, as Swift puts it, 'ev'ry Being loves its Like'.

PART ONE: CLASSICAL AND GROTESQUE

CHAPTER ONE

BAKHTIN'S THEORY OF THE BODY

The Classical

Introduction

In his seminal study *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin offers two ways of describing both specific artistic movements and reality itself: the 'grotesque', which in turn is related to the social phenomenon of the 'carnavalesque', and the 'classical'. I will be working through the concept of the classical as Bakhtin employs it in this first section, but initially I will point out the attitude he himself claims to take to the two canons:

while contrasting the grotesque and the classic canon we will not assert the superiority of the one over the other. We will merely establish their basic differences. But the grotesque concept will, of course, be foremost in our study, since it determined the images of the culture of folk humor and of Rabelais. The classic canon is clear to us, artistically speaking; to a certain degree we still live according to it (p. 29).¹

It is as well to bear in mind from this point that this statement of neutrality is not all that it might seem. Bakhtin clearly has a preference for the liberatory grotesque over the tyrannical classical, and this informs the bias of his work to a certain extent, as I will show. Furthermore, it is worth asking whether the classic canon is indeed clear to us, and whether Bakhtin's version of it corresponds to what we understand to be the case. I hope to answer this question in the following sections.

Bakhtin also explains that his use of the word 'canon' is not used in a narrow sense as a means of describing certain norms and rules in relation to the representation of the human body, although the classic canon can be thought of in this way 'at certain stages of its development'. Instead he employs 'canon' to mean 'a manner of representing the human body and bodily life': in other words, perception of the body is constructed by the culture in which the body is found, and the body 'speaks' of that culture, semiotically overcoded by its various discourses. Bakhtin finds in the art and literature of the past two modes of representation which he calls the classical and the grotesque, pointing out that he has 'defined these two canons in their pure, one might say extreme, form'. However in 'history's living

¹ Henceforth abbreviated to *RW*: page references will be in the main text.

reality' these canons are not monolithic, experiencing 'various forms of interaction: struggle, mutual influence, crossing, and fusion' (*RW*, p. 30). I will follow Bakhtin initially by attempting to present these canons in their 'pure' forms before examining the particular way they interact in the eighteenth century.

The classical body and aesthetics

In the introduction to *Rabelais and his World* Bakhtin elaborates his definition of the classical, and in particular the classical body which is a material manifestation of classical ways of thinking, a representation of the body which implies an obedience to rules rather than transgression, closure rather than openness. I will quote Bakhtin's rather lengthy description of this body in full:

The concept of the body in grotesque realism as discussed in the introduction is of course in flagrant contradiction with the literary and artistic canon of antiquity, which formed the basis of Renaissance aesthetics and was connected to the further development of art. The Renaissance saw the body in quite a different light than the Middle Ages, in a different aspect of its life, and a different relation to the exterior nonbodily world. As conceived by these canons, the body was first of all a strictly completed, finished product. Furthermore, it was isolated, alone, fenced off from all other bodies. All signs of its unfinished character, of its growth and proliferation were eliminated; its protuberances and offshoots were removed, its convexities (signs of new sprouts and buds) smoothed out, its apertures closed. The ever unfinished nature of the body was hidden, kept secret; conception, pregnancy, childbirth, death throes, were almost never shown. The age represented was as far removed from the mother's womb as from the grave, the age most distant from either threshold of individual life. The accent was placed on the completed, self-sufficient individuality of the given body. Corporal acts were shown only when the borderlines dividing the body from the outside world were sharply defined. The inner processes of absorbing and ejecting were not revealed. The individual body was presented apart from its relation to the ancestral body of the people.

Such were the fundamental tendencies of the classic canons. It is quite obvious that from the point of view of these canons the body of grotesque realism was hideous and formless. It did not fit the framework of the "aesthetics of the beautiful" as conceived by the Renaissance (*RW*, pp. 28-9).

If there is a necessity to close off the classical body, then there is a need to suppress those parts of the body which are most likely to stress its contact with the world of other bodies and objects, the 'Other' of the classical body. These parts are the ones which are passages for the flows of solids and fluids out of the body, and those which introject foreign matter. In this 'new bodily canon' 'all the orifices of the body are closed' as the body becomes an 'impenetrable facade' and an 'opaque surface', the most notable example of this being the classical bodies of Renaissance statuary: we remember Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses* searching in vain for the anus of a marble sculpture in a museum (*RW*, p. 320). This process of closure is usefully described as a form of 'reterritorialization', a term used by the French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to imply the imposition of a totalising, gridded and

finite space on a variety of subjects including art, language, mathematics and music.² I will be using this term to refer to the tendency of the classical to police the territory of the body and hence the society related to that body. Transgressions beyond the regulated space of the classical body are reterritorialized, brought back within this 'safe' zone of control.

Bakhtin also draws attention to the linkage of the classical mode of thought with philosophico-mathematical concepts, particularly the Pythagorean theory of mathematics that pervaded antiquity and beyond. The 'sacred numbers' were also thought to determine the structure of art and literature. The Pythagorean mathematical basis for reality is closely bound up with the characteristics of the classical body: 'If we somewhat simplify this conception, we may define the antique and medieval aesthetics of the number by saying that it must be determined, finite, rounded, symmetrical. Only such a number can be the basis of the completed (static) whole' (*RW*, p. 463). We will see later that Leonardo's 'Vitruvian Man' is a precise example of the classical body based on purely geometrical principles. This kind of science must be totalising, comprehensive, leaving nothing outside of its boundaries and categories. Implicit in the classical science is the religious scheme of the divine logic ordering the universe, and with it the knowability (at least by God) of the hierarchy of creation.

As a consequence of the classical regulation of the physical 'the verbal norms of official and literary language' forbid the mention of bodily processes such as 'fecundation, pregnancy, childbirth' as 'familiar speech' and 'correct' language are sharply distinguished (*RW*, p. 320). Bakhtin refers to Montaigne's comments on the formation of the canon of polite speech that was to prevail in the seventeenth century in which 'the genital act' is taboo yet 'the words, kill, rob, betray' are freely talked of (*RW*, p. 230).³ Mary Douglas has shown in her anthropological studies that the presence of a taboo indicates that a society has needed to repress an aspect of its existence for certain structural reasons, and we shall be looking later at what these reasons might be.⁴

²Deleuze and Guattari introduce this concept in their notorious *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. Lane (Minneapolis, 1983), but I would advise a gentler introduction in the more readable *A Thousand Plateaus*, translated by B. Massumi (London, 1989).

³See Norbert Elias's 'history of manners', *The Civilizing Process*, translated by E. Jephcott, 2 vols (New York, 1982). I. for more on bodily containment and shame.

⁴*Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966).

Walter Jackson Bate, writing a book on the classical which very much takes this mode at its own face value, draws attention to the tendency of classical and Renaissance sculpture and painting to 'embody the ideal potentialities of the human figure' that transcend the particularities of 'specific locality or time'. Only exemplary 'heroic ideals' and noble universal passions are valued.⁵ Such an art seeks to 'form and control' the 'affections and associations of the beholder' through 'an imitation of the ideal':

Such a purpose is ethical in the very broadest sense of the word: for the classical attempt to embody, in plot, design, rhythm, or visual proportion, an 'imitation' of the fundamental order and decorum of the universal is not to be viewed as 'abstraction', but rather as 'integration' and completion; it aspires to present an ideal end and a finished totality which the distinctive 'expression' of the model, as a particular, cannot give (p. 19).

This reinforces Bakhtin's interpretation of the classical body as 'monologic', closing itself off into a 'finished totality' that rejects dialogue or interchange with anything outside it. Bate sees this ordered totality as mimetic of 'a general conviction of the absoluteness of divine law' (p. 20) as does Bakhtin, although Bakhtin also relates monologism to social control: 'a monotone character of thought and style almost always prevails in the official spheres of art and ideology' (*RW*, p. 433). Such a monologism also requires an intolerant seriousness, an expunging of all laughter from the cleansed environs of the classical, as laughter is generated by a certain ironization of its object, and irony is foreign to the classical mode as it cannot tolerate anything beyond itself, beyond its own closed economy.

Classical Structures: time and space

Bakhtin's concept of time and space in relation to the classical is illuminated if one reads *Rabelais and his World* in tandem with his essay 'Epic and Novel'.⁶ In this text one finds that the idea of 'Epic' corresponds to the idea of the classical. For Bakhtin epic is a form that always looks backwards in time towards a national heroic past, a world of 'firsts' and 'bests', an originary world of 'beginnings' forever superior to the degenerate present. As Julia Kristeva puts it in her introduction to Bakhtin's work: 'Within epic monologism we detect the presence of the "transcendental signifier" of "self presence" as highlighted by Jacques Derrida'.⁷ In comparison to this past the present can only be

⁵*From Classic to Romantic* (Harvard, 1946), pp. 7-8.

⁶*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by M. Holquist, translated by C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin, 1981), pp. 1-40.

⁷*The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi (Oxford, 1986), pp. 34-61, (p. 34).

a fall from grace. As with the pedestalled classical statue, there is an absolute separation between observer and observed, an absolute epic distance. Hence the singer of the epic and the listener experience the epic at the same present moment, but the world of heroes is locked in a closed past inaccessible to contemporary reality. Interaction of the classical epic with the present is actively discouraged because the heroic past is a valorised category, the 'single source and beginning of everything good for all later times as well', 'monochronic' in orientation. One can only accept the epic with reverence as it is a completed, finished genre when it reaches the reader's present: 'it is impossible to really touch it, for it is beyond the realm of human activity'.⁸

Bakhtin describes the classical relation to time in terms which recall the space of pedestalled classical statues: he considers all the 'high' and 'official' genres of the classical era, a time of linguistic 'monoglossia' and stabilisation, to be 'structured in the zone of the distanced image, a zone outside any possible contact with the present in all its openendedness' (p. 19). This 'distanced image' is always associated with the monologic closure of 'authority and privilege', 'lofty significance and grandeur' (p. 20). It imposes its will on the people because it removes the possibility of debate and resistance to an imposed ideology. As well as epic its literary manifestations include lyric and tragedy, the 'serious' genres that also idealise the past and therefore discourage change in the present. From the 'monolithic' (p. 29) perspective of the classical, the future is perceived as negative because it threatens the order and authority of the past, unless it attempts to reproduce the epic in the future, a project inevitably doomed to failure. Epic resists the contemporaneity of (low) comedy which uses a zone of familiar contact to uncrown the high genres through laughter. Comedy relies on proximity, removing the content of epic from its distanced plane, transforming stasis into process, being into becoming.

Toward the Modern Classical

It has already been indicated that the phenomenon of the classical is regarded by Bakhtin as having traits not only confined to 'classical' or 'neo-classical' periods. The time of Rabelais marked the transition from the medieval world order to that of the Renaissance, and Bakhtin makes the point that there is a certain continuity between the two periods. The 'new order of the absolute monarchy' stabilised in the seventeenth century and Descartes' rationalism combined with the 'aesthetics of

⁸*The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 15, 17.

classicism' to 'reflect the fundamental traits of the new official culture' (*RW*, p. 101). Although less dogmatic than medieval feudalism, the new order remained 'authoritarian and serious' as it presented its new concepts as 'eternal truths'. This relative continuity intensifies the movement of the classical towards the monologic as in 'the new official culture there prevails a tendency toward the stability and completion of being, toward one single meaning, one single tone of seriousness' (*RW*, p. 101). This results in the suppression of the grotesque as 'the exalted genres of classicism' expel it into 'the lower canonical genres' like comedy, satire and the new non-canonical genre of the novel; the popular stage too admitted the influence of grotesque laughter. These genres are all characterised by 'a more or less oppositional character that permitted the grotesque to enter their sphere, whilst still remaining within the limits of official culture' (*RW*, p. 102). Bakhtin sees this as a degradation of the role of the grotesque as classicism triumphs over the folk tradition of laughter.

The Grotesque

Classical Reception

The anti-classical nature of the grotesque as exemplified by the 'dainty, innocuous frescoes decorating the walls of Nero's Domus Aurea, or Golden Palace'⁹ is best evinced from the reactions of Renaissance neo-classical contemporaries, as evaluated by Bakhtin, who observes that Vasari, following the crucial classical figure of Vitruvius 'the Roman architect and art expert in the time of Augustus', was the first to theorise the grotesque. Vasari backs Vitruvius in his negative appraisal of this art form, condemning 'the new "barbarian" fashion of covering walls with monsters instead of the "bright reflection of the world of objects"' (*RW*, p. 33). Bakhtin notes that Vitruvius attacks the grotesque 'from the classic standpoint' as it violates 'natural forms and proportions'. The views of Vasari and Vitruvius persisted until 'the second part of the eighteenth century' when attitudes towards classicism in general began to change.

Harpham also examines the judgements of classical arbiters of taste, finding that the reception in Rome was distinctly hostile. Horace saw the grotesque as an 'artistic absurdity', demanding in his *Ars Poetica* what could be made of 'a man's head, a horse's neck, the wings of a bird, and a fish's tail'.

⁹Geoffrey Harpham, *On the Grotesque* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1982), p. 23.

Harpham too looks to Vitruvius's opinion, considering it to be 'one of the most important denunciations in the history of aesthetic criticism'. In his *De Architectura* (ca. 27 BC.) Vitruvius made his opinions clear:

'On the stucco are monsters rather than definite representations taken from definite things. Instead of columns there rise up stalks; instead of gables, striped panels with curled leaves and volutes. Candelabra uphold pictured shrines and above the summits of these, clusters of thin stalks rise from their roots in tendrils with little figures seated upon them at random. Again, slender stalks with heads of men and animals attached to half the body.

Such things neither are, nor can be, nor have been. On these lines the new fashions compel bad judges to condemn good craftsmanship for dullness. For how can a reed actually sustain a roof, or a candelabra the ornaments of a bagle, or a soft and slender stalk a seated statue, or how can flowers and half-statues rise alternatively from roots and stalks? Yet when people view these falsehoods, they approve rather than condemn' (Harpham, p. 26).

Evidently what annoys both Horace and Vitruvius is the flagrant contradiction of accepted boundaries by the grotesque. It depicts impossible mingling of forms, things that are not real, or at least fragments of reality indecorously combined. This ignores the fact that classical mimesis by no means desired to depict reality, as we have seen. But Horace and Vitruvius recognise that they are in the presence of an art form which flouts the classical rules of propriety and are accordingly hostile to it.

Harpham also picks up on E.H. Gombrich's remark that all art can be divide into two terms, classical and non-classical, taking the above passage as the point of discrimination (p. 26). At the end of the eighteenth century Winkelmann and others could divide the non-classic style into two parts:

'Gothic being increasingly used as a label for the not-yet-classical, the barbaric, and borocco for the no-longer-classical, the degenerate'. In other words, the style Vitruvius attacked, which had no descriptive name, and violated all categories, has provided the means of distinguishing all our major stylistic categories and so has contributed crucially to the study of art history as it is generally conceived.

In a sense, what Gombrich has tried to do in the interpretation of art history, Bakhtin has tried to do in the interpretation of literary history, taking the grotesque Rabelais as his starting point. It is not until recently that the grotesque has been understood as a form; as Bakhtin said, the classical canon is familiar to us; we have until recently lived by its norms. By contrast the grotesque has been unreadable and therefore not understood.

The Carnavalesque

Bakhtin traces the origins of the medieval grotesque to the social arena of folk culture, a culture which he sees as the Other of the official, 'classical' culture of the elite. 'Folk festivities of the carnival type' and the various attractions of the fairground such as 'clowns and fools, giants, dwarfs, and jugglers' together with parodic literature all belong to 'one culture of folk carnival humour' (*RW*, p. 4). Bakhtin asserts that medieval culture, and other cultures besides, have been misunderstood due to the exclusion of the non-elite aspect of that culture. He sees this world of folk carnival culture as being a second existence within medieval society which had nothing to do with official oppression and expression. 'Sharply distinct' from official ceremonial this alternative world 'based on laughter' offered a profoundly different perspective on the world (*RW*, pp. 5-6).

In the strict hierarchy of the Middle Ages, the official feast is authoritarian, whereas the unofficial carnival is democratic, an 'institution' of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is this influential form of social expression that Bakhtin chooses to oppose the ceremonies of the official and the classical. In one sense carnival resembles the medieval spectacle, but 'the carnival nucleus of this culture' is not purely art, but 'is life itself ... shaped according to a certain pattern of play'. Carnival is not a spectacle that has merely passive spectators as in the classical, but demands total participation, being a process rather than a representation: as Bakhtin puts it, 'carnival does not know footlights'. In the time of carnival there can be no spectators, only actors, because for the duration of the carnival 'there is no other life outside it'. Everyone takes part in 'the world's revival and renewal' as the 'universal' laws of carnival freedom are applied (*RW*, p. 7).

Carnival is therefore not a static, classical event, in which the spectator is forever at a distance from the 'action' which has already passed and which must be accepted as a *fait accompli*. Carnival is a process, not a product, and a process in which the people participate, which they actively create in the present. This process is not subject to external rules, but generates its own laws: there is nothing pre-ordained in carnival.

Bakhtin takes the idea of carnival to be wider than the social event that it is commonly taken to be. It has ramifications for the glimpsing of a different world from the one which one presently inhabits, a utopian world freed from the restrictions of official culture. Even modern day carnival still has 'fragments of an immense, infinitely rich world', the world of 'the varied popular-festive life of the

Middle Ages and the Renaissance', and it is this wider sense of the carnivalesque that Bakhtin uses (*RW*, p. 218). In carnival, the people 'for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance' (*RW*, p. 9). This was in direct opposition to the rules of everyday life dictated by the ecclesiastical authorities as it liberated the people 'from the prevailing truth and from the established order'. All classical hierarchies and rules are discounted in carnival time. Unlike the stasis of the classical carnival is 'the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal', 'hostile' to any form of completion or eternal stability (*RW*, p. 10). Carnival has a levelling effect as it marks 'the suspension of all hierarchical rank', breaking down the vertical structure of medieval society and thought. The low is brought in contact with the high in this egalitarian time. Taking place in the open town square it unites people normally segregated by barriers of class, wealth and age. These 'free, familiar contacts' in such a highly structured society were 'deeply felt' and allowed people to be 'reborn for new, purely human relations' (*RW*, p. 10).

A classless collectivity is an essential condition of carnival and the carnivalesque. Bakhtin sees the carnivalesque crowd as being organised 'in their own way', beyond the structures of the classical official order. The carnival is experienced physically by its participants as the contact of bodies pressing together gives the individual the sense that he is 'a member of the people's mass body'. The individual's body is no longer quite his own as carnival allows the exchange of bodies 'through change of costume and mask'. In opposition to the abstract rationalism of the official culture which denies and punishes the body, carnival stresses the 'sensual material bodily unity and community' (*RW*, p. 255). But the body of carnival is not the discrete classical body; it is the body in process, the body in 'exchange' and renewal. It becomes a body interacting with other bodies, thus unifying the people into one collective body in this specific sense.

Given the tendency of carnival to emphasise process rather than product, being rather than becoming, it is not surprising that it is temporally concerned with the present and the future rather than the past. Again it is directly opposed to the orientation of the classical: 'Popular-festive forms look into the future. They present the victory of this future, of the golden age, over the past. This is the victory of all the people's material abundance, freedom, equality, brotherhood. The victory of the future is ensured by the people's immortality' (*RW*, p. 256). This struggle over the past is presented

very much as a war, with the carnivalesque future of the people pitted against the authoritarian past of the elite.

The World Turned Upside Down

The characteristic feature of carnival is its inversion of all hierarchies or oppositions to be found in the normal world of official and everyday time, in keeping with its suspension of all the norms of societal order. Such a mode rejects the Aristotelian logic of finite categories as it demands 'ever changing, playful, undefined forms'. The 'characteristic logic' of the carnivalesque is one that relativises accepted truths, 'the peculiar logic of the "inside out" (*a l'envers*), of the "turnabout", of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings'. This inversionary logic betrays carnival's relation to classicism as 'it is to a certain extent a parody of the extracarnival life, a "world inside out"' (*RW*, p. 11). In other contexts 'the world inside out' is known as the 'World Turned Upside Down', and this reversal of usual norms has the effect of illuminating the hidden boundaries and hierarchical oppositions in the life of a particular society.

Even class structure does not escape parody and inversion: a jester would be turned into a king; a clownish bishop would be elected at the 'feast of fools' and a mock Pope was chosen in those churches directly controlled by the pontiff. At feasts such as the Epiphany and St. Valentine's day a ruling monarch would preside over feasts for a day. Even in minor things such as the wearing of clothes inside out and trousers put on heads 'the same topographical logic is put to work; shifting from top to bottom, casting the high and the old, the finished and completed into the material bodily lower stratum for death and rebirth' (*RW*, pp. 81-2).

This principle also extends to the body as one sees 'the essential topographical element of the bodily hierarchy turned upside down; the lower stratum replace the upper stratum'. This is most obvious in the figure of Harlequin where the buttocks replace the head: the commonest representation of this figure is the handstand, the head over heels in a literal physical inversion. The Harlequin embodies 'the logic of opposites, the contact of the upper and lower level' (*RW*, p. 309). Gender roles do not escape this fate either as 'men are transvested as women and vice versa'. Even the most common objects such as ladles, spoons, knives and brooms can be transformed into swords and

instruments of war: 'we find a similar logic in the choice and use of carnival objects. They are, so to speak, turned inside out, utilized in the wrong way, contrary to their common use' (*RW*, p. 411).

Grotesque Realism and Degradation

The aspect of carnival which draws upon the concrete physicality of the people and folk tradition is considered by Bakhtin to stand against the unreal ideological constructions of official culture. Carnival therefore (literally) embodies a form of realism that Bakhtin chooses to call 'grotesque realism' (*RW*, p. 18). This grotesque realism feeds into the writing of Rabelais through his representation of 'the culture of folk humour' with its earthy stress on the material facts of life.

Grotesque realism is a literary and artistic manifestation of the carnivalesque, and it shares with carnival the capacity to invert the high and the low. Bakhtin makes it clear that 'the essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity' (*RW*, pp. 19-20). Degradation deconstructs the mind/body dualism, the gap between the earthy world of the folk and the spiritual otherworld of the classical. The classical is unable to deny its exclusive relation to the lower folk sphere when the carnivalesque principle of degradation is applied.

In step with Bakhtin's appraisal of the carnivalesque as a positive force, the topography of carnival is directed toward a generative lower stratum which performs something of the function of a mythic mother earth, a descent into the reproductive regions of the body. In grotesque realism the 'upward' is heaven and 'downward' is the ambivalent earth, an element that both 'devours, swallows up (the grave, the womb) and at the same time an element of birth, of renascence (the maternal breasts)'. This cosmic topography is related to bodily topography, the upper part of the body, 'the face or the head', being opposed to the lower part, 'the genital organs, the belly and the buttocks'. Degradation is therefore to bring what is higher down to the earth and the 'lower stratum of the body' which concerns itself with 'the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth'. To degrade is not merely to negate and destroy, but to enter 'the reproductive lower stratum', 'the fruitful earth and the womb' which 'is always conceiving' (*RW*, p. 21). The object entering this zone of grotesque realism is reborn through degradation.

The Grotesque Body

The extremely physical tendencies of grotesque realism have already been noted, and this is true of the grotesque canon as a whole. Harpham quotes Meyer Schapiro's observations on the grotesque: 'No other art in history offers so abundant an imagery of the naked and clothed body as a physical engine. Free from classic norms, the artist experiments with the human frame as the most flexible, ductile, indefatigably protean, self-deforming system in nature' (p. 36).

Bakhtin places a particular emphasis on the role of the grotesque body, a body which is not subject to the singularity of the classical, as Bakhtin shows in his primary example of the grotesque:

In the famous Kerch terracotta collection we find figurines of senile pregnant hags. Moreover, the old hags are laughing. This is a typical and very strongly expressed grotesque. It is ambivalent. It is a pregnant death, a death that gives birth. There is nothing completed, nothing calm and stable in the bodies of these old hags. They combine a senile, decaying and deformed flesh with the flesh of new life, conceived but as yet unformed. Life is shown in its two-fold contradictory process; it is the epitome of incompleteness. And such is precisely the grotesque concept of the body (*RW*, p. 25).

These hags embody logical contradictions in true grotesque style. Their suspension between two states mocks the closure of the classical body, denying the aura of otherworldly serenity exuded by classical statuary. Given the grotesque body's principle of connection rather than division, 'the stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world'. Specifically this includes 'the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose'. This open body insists on those parts that transgress its own limits, and those processes that emphasise its unfinishedness such as 'copulation, pregnancy, child birth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation' (*RW*, p. 26). In opposition to the classical tendency to reterritorialize, the grotesque body is always involved in the process of what Deleuze and Guattari call 'deterritorialization'.¹⁰ This term implies the opening up of territories, the transgression of boundaries and an impulse to connect with other bodies and other spaces. Deleuze and Guattari generally see deterritorialized space in terms of multiplicity rather than the monologic and logocentric zone of reterritorialization.

¹⁰Again, I advise *A Thousand Plateaus* as a good introduction to this concept.

Bakhtin ensures that we do not forget that the grotesque body is not individualised in the way of the classical body. His vision of the grotesque body is one of collective connection and renewal, of a cosmic, universal unity. The 'material bodily principle' is not to be found in 'the bourgeois ego', but in the collective body of the people, 'a people who are continually growing and renewed'. The economy of this utopian body is one of excess, 'a brimming-over abundance' in direct opposition to the restrictive classical economy of 'the private, egotistic "economic man"' (*RW*, p. 19). The distinction that Bakhtin draws here is between the biological, physiological body that moderns understand to be the limit of the individual, and the body that is connected to the earth and materiality without being confined to its singularity.

Ambivalence and Excess

The archaic ambivalence of the grotesque became, as we have seen, unreadable, out of step with new ideology and aesthetics. Ambivalent grotesque images seem 'ugly, monstrous', and 'hideous from the point of view of "classic" aesthetics, that is, the aesthetics of the ready-made and the completed'. The grotesque is now given a 'new historic sense' whilst retaining the traditional images of the body in process, remaining 'contrary to the classic images of the finished, completed man, cleansed, as it were, of all the scoriae of birth and development' (*RW*, p. 25).

The image of cleansing is important for classical aesthetics, the idea of ridding itself of the loose connections, the dirt and impurities that grotesque ambivalence brings along with it. Likewise the grotesque underworld pollutes the finishedness of the classical. Bakhtin claims that the grotesque brings the classical into a zone it does not wish to enter: 'debasement is the fundamental artistic principle of grotesque realism; all that is sacred and exalted is rethought on the level of the material bodily stratum or else combined and mixed with its images' (*RW*, pp. 370-71).

If the classical is a frugal economy of recuperation, an economy which always draws what is outside itself back into its own restricted boundaries, then the carnivalesque celebrates the rupture of these boundaries. The carnivalesque traditionally marks the end of Lenten rules, the ascetic fasting and praying, and its main trope is therefore hyperbole: 'they were under the direct influence of folk festival and carnival forms, hence a pronounced hyperbolism of bodily images, especially those of eating and drinking' (*RW*, p. 63). In carnivals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gigantic sausages would be carried by dozens of men in a transgressive festival gesture. The carnivalesque, and

with it the grotesque, manifests itself in an economy of expenditure without reserve, flouting the decorum of the classical.

This economy of excess is not only to be found in the gastronomic grotesque, but also in the physical. For Bakhtin excrement is not merely waste but 'gay matter', 'an intermediate between the living body and dead disintegrating matter that is being transformed into earth, into manure'. Similarly excrement mediates between earth and body, 'relating the one to the other' (*RW*, p. 175). Excrement is bodily excess, something which both is and is not part of the body, a symbol of the body in process. It is always in the position of the 'intermediate': dead matter, yet fertile. Bakhtin finds that the excremental vision is closely linked to carnival activity. In the 'feast of fools' excrement replaced the incense in the service, whilst after the service 'the clergy rode in carts loaded with dung' and threw it at the crowd as they drove through the streets (*RW*, p. 147).

The grotesque lower bodily stratum naturally draws the excremental into not only its imagery, but also its speech. The 'traditional debasing gestures' of hurling excrement and urine are usually to be found in the language of a society. Bakhtin states that most languages have expressions such as 'I shit on you'. These references to the 'lower bodily stratum' are ambivalent for Bakhtin because apart from debasing they also remind one of the generative powers of this zone (*RW*, p. 148).

Problems with Bakhtin

There are problems with Bakhtin's view of the classical and the grotesque, some of which we have already seen. One of the main difficulties is his interpretation of carnival as being outside of all normal laws. In an obvious sense this is true, but it is a clear fact that carnivalesque activities were coopted by the catholic church and slotted into the religious calendar as a means of controlling these heathenish customs. As Terry Eagleton has observed, carnival is 'a *licensed* affair in every sense'.¹¹ The church sees carnival as related to, and in a sense part of, the classical body, in so far as the existence of carnival permits the continued order of the church for the rest of the year. The truth of the matter is that carnival, depending on its specific historical context, could be either a force for social control or a liberatory festival of the people. In his study of carnival in Romans, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie observed that carnival was very frequently the site of political revolt and disturbance, partly

¹¹Walter Benjamin: *or, towards a revolutionary criticism* (London, 1981).

supporting Bakhtin's theory.¹² What Bakhtin has tended to do, however, is to stress the folk elements of carnival without reminding one of the specific context and culture of the carnival event. That is, in what ways a carnival taking place at a certain time and in a certain place differs from one happening at a different time and in a different place. Bakhtin has a tendency to idealise and generalise carnival, ignoring the unpleasant phenomenon of what Stallybrass and White call 'displaced abjection', 'the process whereby "low" social groups turn their figurative and actual power, not against those in authority, but against those who are even "lower" (women, Jews, animals, particularly cats and pigs)'.¹³

Geoffrey Harpham astutely draws attention to the nostalgic, originary pull of Bakhtin's definition of the grotesque. Bakhtin encourages us to think that the liberatory grotesque can restore 'fullness of meaning, purity of being, and natural innocence', yet it also reminds us 'that though dualism may be temporarily abolished, it has invaded the structure of thought itself'. The grotesque is in fact a sign of alienation, of the transformation of unifying myth into the grotesque at the time of the Domus Aurea's discovery. Bakhtin believes 'that unity was still attainable by sixteenth-century folk culture through the universal laughter of carnival', whereas the grotesque actually signifies division and alienation. Harpham compares Bakhtin to Derrida's Lévi-Strauss, 'imposing on his subject a "sad, negative, nostalgic, guilty Rousseau-ist" sense of loss deriving from an unspoken "ethic of presence ... of nostalgia for origins"' (pp. 72-3).

Bakhtin's treatment of Rabelais is similarly idealistic. Rabelais becomes what Bakhtin wants him to be: 'Rabelais' basic goal was to destroy the official picture of events ... Rabelais did not implicitly believe in what his time "said and imagined about itself"; he strove to disclose its true meaning for the people, the people who grow and are immortal' (p. 439). As Richard Berrong notes in his *Rabelais and Bakhtin*, Rabelais actually excluded popular culture from *Gargantua* just as Bakhtin ignored classical and elitist elements in Rabelais.¹⁴ For Berrong Bakhtin's version of Rabelais is as monolithic as the official culture he seeks to condemn. A further effect of Bakhtin's construction of the classical

¹²*Carnival - A People's Uprising at Romans 1579-1580*, translated by Mary Feeney (London, 1980).

¹³*The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London, 1986), p. 53.

¹⁴*Rabelais and Bakhtin, Popular Culture in Gargantua and Pantagruel* (London, 1986), p. 38.

into this binary opposition is to simplify the changing structure of the classical and to ignore its positive elements, which Bakhtin ironically praises in Rabelais' humanism.

Another related area of difficulty that we have touched on is the relationship between the classical and the grotesque. Clair Wills puts the problem well:

Bakhtin, claims Stallybrass and White, wavers between a theory of the grotesque of carnival as oppositional, popular festivity which acts as a negation of the social symbolic order, and carnival as 'hybrid' - a mediation between high and low forms of culture rather than the Other of official culture. Emphasising the importance of the later theory, they argue that it is fruitless merely to positivize the various elements of carnival, to celebrate the body. In this respect, although it is clear that much of their theorizing is indebted to Lacanian and Kristevan concepts, the authors are keen to distance themselves from what they argue is a dangerous tendency in theorists such as Kristeva and Foucault to analyse carnival in terms of its liberatory qualities. Celebratory claims for the power of the carnivalesque to undo hierarchies are merely a fetishising of the repressed, a repetition of the desire for 'lost' domains which their book analyses as constitutive of bourgeois subjectivity.¹⁵

It would seem to be the case that carnival is a hybrid form, a form that may be useful to the official world when it acts as a safety valve, and yet a form that possesses inherently unstable qualities. The characteristic inversion of the world does indeed cause one to look at the world with different eyes, and this can result in the kind of disorder described by Le Roy Ladurie, and the consequent attempts of the authorities to ban the carnival altogether. Thus carnival can at certain points be the Other of the classical as Bakhtin suggests, and yet at other times and in other contexts it can be brought under control enough to be almost an institution of the classical. This ambiguity can be fruitfully applied to the manifestations of the grotesque in art and literature, as we shall see with Pope and Swift.

Before this is done however, other links need to be made with later theorists who have the benefit of a later perspective than Bakhtin on these and other, related, issues.

¹⁵'Upsetting the Public', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, edited by Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd (Manchester, 1989). pp. 130-51 (p. 137).

CHAPTER TWO

GENDER, THE CLASSICAL AND THE GROTESQUE

Bakhtin

In one of the first critical writings to connect Bakhtin's theory of the body with the issue of gender, Mary Russo observes that 'Bakhtin, like so many other social theorists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, fails to acknowledge or incorporate the social relations of gender in his semiotic model of the body politic, and thus his notion of the female grotesque remains, in all directions, repressed and underdeveloped'.¹ Bakhtin himself tends to equate the feminine with the grotesque through woman's reproductive capacity: she is 'essentially related to the material bodily lower stratum' because 'she is the womb' (pp. 240-41).

Bakhtin's strategy is to posit woman as a principle of degradation, and he achieves this by drawing on the usually negative formula of woman as body. I say usually negative as woman's supposed inability to cope with logic, language and reason is normally used to posit her inferiority and therefore to justify exclusion from male activities in public life and so on. Bakhtin, however, stands this principle on its head, true to the idea of the world turned upside down, and finds such a position to be to woman's advantage. It must immediately be objected that this stance is still complicit with the original binary opposition of woman/body versus man/reason. It has been reversed, but not deconstructed. This said, it nevertheless becomes clear that Bakhtin is developing ideas of woman as a principle of becoming rather than being, of flow rather than stasis. Her reproductive capacity is an affront to patriarchy in the sense that it stresses the unfinished nature of being, showing 'the parts through which everything passes'. Thanks to deconstructive French feminism such ideas are now commonplace, but Bakhtin, writing before these developments, manages to add a new twist to idea of woman escaping male logic by stressing the mythic folk context of the carnivalesque body of woman.

¹'Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory', in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, edited by Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington, Indiana, 1986), 213-229 (p. 219).

Natalie Zemon Davies also points out that women often had a role to play in rioting or political change, and that this rioting was often associated with the time of carnival.² This purely positive image of grotesque woman presented by Bakhtin is not the whole story, however, as we shall now see when the more complex examination of female representations put forward by various theorists is analysed in the light of Bakhtin's theory.

The Female Body

In recent years there has been an upsurge in research on the subject of the female and male bodies in many areas of study, including psychology, anthropology, feminism and literature. In this section I will show some useful links between these ideas and those of Bakhtin, without attempting to conflate these relatively disparate discourses into one coherent whole. I will focus especially on the work of Lynda Nead, Klaus Theweleit, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar as these are all writers who have identified a split in the imaging of the female body which corresponds to the division of the classical and the grotesque. Nead and Theweleit also have much to say about the male classical body and its implications for the construction of masculine identity.

In her recent study of the representation of the female body in art, *The Female Nude*, Lynda Nead shows that the female nude has been a means of containing femininity and female sexuality.³ This is because high art transforms the base and chaotic matter of unformed femininity or 'Nature' into 'the elevated forms of culture and the spirit' (p. 2). Although Nead does not seem to be aware of Bakhtin, she does formulate her conception of the female nude in terms extremely similar to those of the classical body. For her, artistic conventions 'have worked metaphorically to shore up the female body - to seal orifices and to prevent marginal matter from transgressing the boundary dividing the inside of the body and the outside, the self from the space of the other' (p. 6). Nead uses the anthropological work of Mary Douglas to identify bodily margins as crucial to a society's awareness of its own cultural boundaries, its social order and disorder. As Douglas puts it, again in Bakhtinian terms: 'Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolise its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most

²'Women on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe', in *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, edited by Barbara Babcock (London, 1978), pp. 147-90 (p. 171).

³*The Female Nude* (London, 1992).

obvious kind. Spittle, blood, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body ... The mistake is to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins'.⁴ Nead, Douglas and Bakhtin all relate the transgression of the body to social disruption and regulation of the body to social regulation.

Nead's analysis draws attention to the importance of the margins of the body in 'the production of a rational, coherent subject' (p. 7). The Aristotelian 'classical ideal of unity and integrity of form' leads to the construction of a unified body and identity which can be verified in art through the imaging of a closed and bounded body, the order and symmetry of which is said to constitute beauty. Nead considers the female nude to be 'a metaphor for these processes of separation and ordering, for the formation of the self and the spaces of the other. If the female body is defined as lacking containment and issuing filth and pollution from its faltering outlines and broken surface, then the classical forms of art perform a kind of magical regulation of the female body, containing it and momentarily repairing the orifices and tears' (p. 7). A specific example of this is the painting of the virtue *Chastity* by Giovanni Battista Moroni, a sixteenth century Italian artist: she carries a sieve like that of Tuccia in her lap. Tuccia was a maiden who proved her chastity by carrying a miraculous sieve full of water that did not escape: its continence proving her own. The perimeter of the inviolate female body is represented by the sieve, the skin becoming a smooth, unbroken, non-porous layer, an armour between the inside of the body and the outside world. There is an ambiguity here, as Nead points out: 'Of course, there is something worrying and incomplete about the impermeable sieve as a figure for the virtuous woman. If nothing is allowed in or out, then the female body remains a disturbing container for both the ideal and the polluted. Although the impermeable boundary may go some way towards answering fears concerning the female body, the problem does not go away, but is simply contained, staunched, for a while' (p. 8).

The regulation of the female body by this classical aesthetic is not the only form of containment though. Nead shows that Kenneth Clark's theory of the nude presupposes the regulation of the perceiver as well as the perceived, 'the potentially wayward viewer whose wandering eye is disciplined by the conventions and protocols of art' (p. 6). The classical depends on the separation of viewer from

⁴Nead, p. 5, and originally Douglas. *Purity and Danger* (London, 1966), p. 121.

the object of study: there must be no interaction between them. If this occurs, then the female nude can become pornographic and obscene, that which is beyond representation. Nead maps the art/obscenity opposition onto Kant's distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. Kant considers the beautiful to be very much in the mould of the classical: a contemplative, static state in which the viewing subject is separated from a limited, framed and pleasurable object of contemplation. The sublime, on the other hand, is limitless, kinetic, unrestrained by boundaries and is therefore more often to be found in nature, freed of aesthetic control. If the beautiful is an economy of recuperation and limitation then the sublime is one of excess. The perception of the sublime is an explosive encounter where the viewer is overwhelmed by the object of the experience. The viewing subject is disturbed by the sublime as it reveals 'the transient nature of all boundaries, including the boundary between the self and the other' (p. 26). Nead goes on to describe how the category of the sublime has been reinvented and reappropriated as a female mode by such theorists as Cixous and Irigaray who seek to exploit its potential as a destabilizing form. Clearly the notion of the obscene body as one that arouses and includes the spectator by shifting beyond frames and boundaries in constant movement is one that fits very closely with Bakhtin's grotesque, and indeed Kant's notions of the beautiful and the sublime may well have been major influences on Bakhtin's work.

Nead observes that Julia Kristeva's category of 'abjection' is very like her own category of the obscene, an ambiguous state of incompleteness. For Kristeva the most important border is that between the subject and the object, between the body and the outside world. The subjectivity of the individual is based on this distinction and particularly 'the expulsion of that which is considered impure from the clean and proper self' (p. 32). Physical functions must be disavowed when the subject constructs a unified sense of self, although this disavowal is never totally achieved and therefore constantly threatens to undermine this unified sense of self. The experience of abjection occurs when the individual recognises 'the impossibility of a permanently fixed and stable identity'. Abjection is triggered by bodily transgressions like urine, faeces, tears and so on as the distance between the subject and the object is traversed. The abject occupies the space in between just as the grotesque does. Kristeva identifies the state of abjection as being related to the feminine because it stands in opposition to the patriarchal Symbolic. Like Bakhtin, Kristeva sees the state of pregnancy as that which best exemplifies abjection as it is an ambiguous bodily condition that challenges normal

perceptions of the self as a closed and stable entity. Parturition emphasises what Bakhtin would call the grotesque body in process. The 'clean and proper body' (*corps propre*) is evidently the Kristevan equivalent of the classical body, a purified entity that stresses unity, order, decorum, subjection to the Law and self-control, although Kristeva addresses the question of the classical body from the perspective of the subject's perception of her/his own body rather than the external artistic or societal judgement.

Nead contrasts Kristeva's primary emphasis on the formation of the subject in relation to body margins with that of Mary Douglas who gives no particular priority to physical boundaries, seeing them 'as symbols of and responses to social orderings'. This contrast reflects the differing although related concerns of the psychoanalyst and the anthropologist. I will attempt no reconciliation of these emphases here, beyond the observation that both writers intersect with Bakhtin's formulations of the power that lies at the margins of 'socially constructed categories'. Of course it was Kristeva who was instrumental in bringing Bakhtin's work to the attention of Western scholars in the late nineteen sixties.

Gilbert and Gubar

Nead's division of male representations of women into two categories is paralleled in Sandra Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's influential text *The Madwoman in the Attic* which deals largely with nineteenth-century literature.⁵ Gilbert and Gubar assert that two basic images have been provided for women characters by male authors from classical times onward: firstly, the 'angel in house', the example of controlled femininity, classically decorous and territorialized within the male domain as far as is possible; secondly the 'monster' woman, the 'madwoman in the attic' who is the grotesque representation of uncontrolled female desire, an active rather than passive woman who deterritorializes the male domain:

Specifically, as we will try to show here, a woman writer must examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of 'angel' and 'monster' which male authors have generated for her. Before we women can write, declared Virginia Woolf, we must 'kill' the 'angel in the house'. In other words, women must kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been 'killed' into art. And similarly, all women writers must kill the angel's necessary opposite and double, the 'monster' in the house, whose Medusa-face also kills female creativity (p. 17).

⁵(London, 1987).

Gilbert and Gubar take their cue from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*: 'The female forms Aurora sees in her dead mother's picture are extreme, melodramatic, gothic - 'Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite ... Significantly, however, the 'copy' selves depicted in Aurora's mother's portrait ultimately represent, once again, the moral extremes of angel ("angel," "fairy," and perhaps "sprite") and monster ("ghost," "witch," fiend")' (p. 19).

As with Nead, Gilbert and Gubar turn partly to the discipline of anthropology to explain this tendency to divide women into the moral and physical extremes of the female grotesque and the classical woman:

In her analysis of the question 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' the anthropologist Sherry Ortner notes that in every society 'the psychic mode associated with women seems to stand at both the bottom and the top of the scale of human modes of relating'. Attempting to account for this 'symbolic ambiguity', Ortner explains 'both the subversive feminine symbols (witches, evil eye, menstrual pollution, castrating mothers) and the feminine symbols of transcendence (mother goddesses, merciful dispensers of salvation, female symbols of justice)' by pointing out that women 'can appear from certain points of view to stand both under and over (but really simply outside of) the sphere of culture's hegemony'. That is, precisely because a woman is denied her autonomy - the subjectivity - that the pen represents, she is not only excluded from culture (whose emblem might well be the pen) but she also becomes herself an embodiment of just those extremes of mysterious and intransigent Otherness which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing. As 'Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite', she mediates between the male artist and the Unknown, simultaneously teaching him purity and instructing him in degradation (pp. 19-20).

Again, when terms such as top and bottom, transcendent and subversive are being used, one instantly thinks of the classical and the grotesque as being relevant terms. Woman as Other to the male inspires two opposite yet related imaging responses: the angel and the monster, teaching the male artist the 'purity' of the classical, and the 'degradation' of the grotesque. As Ortner notes, the feminine is identified with Nature and is therefore excluded from the masculine world of logic and culture, or at least only admitted to it in the form of a spiritual catalyst or muse for the creative male.

Gilbert and Gubar go on to attempt to trace the origin of the angel in the house image. 'There is a clear line of literary descent from divine Virgin to domestic angel, passing through (amongst many others) Dante, Milton, and Goethe' (p. 20). Dante claimed to know God through Beatrice, the Virgin's virgin attendant. Milton similarly has a vision of his 'late espoused saint' who bears heavenly mysteries. Goethe's vision of the 'Eternal Feminine' (the eternal principle symbolised by woman) with which Faust concludes presents these 'female intercessors' drawing us 'to higher spheres'. 'Meditating on the exact nature of this eternal feminine, moreover, Euchre comments that for Goethe the "ideal of

contemplative purity" is always feminine while "the ideal of significant action is masculine." Once again, therefore, it is just because women are defined as wholly passive, completely void of generative power (like "Cyphers") that they become numinous to male artists. For in the metaphysical emptiness their "purity" signifies they are, of course, self-less, with all the moral and psychological implications that word suggests' (p. 21). Clearly the definition of femininity as passive and contemplative and masculinity as active is related to the Kantian definition of the beautiful and the sublime. As in the general classical mode, sexuality here is overridden or disguised, the orifices of the body emphasising interaction with the outside world are removed, leaving only a virginal purity 'completely void of generative power'. In this condition they are merely 'Cyphers' for the masculine power that creates and contains them, cleansing them of their femininity.

Gilbert and Gubar choose a quote from Goethe's late novel *Wilhelm Meister's Travels*. Eichner describes the female character Makarie:

'She ... leads a life of almost pure contemplation ... in considerable isolation on a country estate... a life without external events- a life whose story cannot be told as there is no story. Her existence is not useless. On the contrary... she shines like a beacon in a dark world, like a motionless lighthouse by which others, the travellers whose lives do have a story, can set their course. When those involved in feeling and action turn to her in their need, they are never dismissed without advice and consolation. She is an ideal, a model of selflessness and of purity of heart' (p. 22).

Makarie is a direct descendant of this tradition of cloistered virgins and a type for Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House*. She is classically placed beyond the flux of becoming, an 'ideal' whose life has no event, no 'story', no real time.

Moving into the nineteenth century Gilbert and Gubar point out that the angel-woman can become an angel of death. Florence Dombey assists the passage of the dying to heaven, welcoming the sufferer from the other side of death: 'But if the angel-woman in some curious way simultaneously inhabits both this world and the next, then there is a sense in which, besides ministering to the dying, she is herself already dead' (p. 25). This straddling, liminal state between death and life sounds as if it should be a quality related to the grotesque, but in this instance, as Gilbert and Gubar agree, it is only a sign that the woman has been subsumed into the classical and is herself 'already dead'. She has become a male art object:

At the same time, moreover, the aesthetic cult of ladylike fragility and delicate beauty - no doubt associated with the moral cult of the angel-woman - obliged 'genteel' women to 'kill' themselves (as Lederer observed) into art objects: slim, pale, passive beings whose 'charms' eerily recalled

the snowy, porcelain immobility of the dead. Tight-lacing, fasting, vinegar-drinking, and similar cosmetic or dietary excesses were all parts of a physical regimen that helped women either to feign morbid weakness or actually to 'decline' into real illness (p.25).

One should note here the relevance to the statuesque, the 'porcelain immobility of the dead' which describes well the unbroken surface of Bakhtin's motionless classical statuary.

An important point to make clear is the unreality of such women: they are constructs of the male psyche, not living beings, although, as we have seen, the tendency of patriarchy is to force women into its ideology in real life as well as in art. But these women are essentially unreal because they have no independent existence away from the reterritorializing male. They have no self, no identity: 'Whether she becomes an objet d'art or a saint, however, it is the surrender of her self - of her personal comfort, her personal desires, or both, that is the beautiful angel-woman's key act, while it is precisely this sacrifice which dooms her both to death and to heaven. For to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead' (p. 25).

This is the classical image of woman, but male imaging of women is more complex than this:

But if, as nurse and comforter, spirit-guide and mystical messenger, a woman ruled the dying and the dead, might not even her admirers sometimes fear that, besides dying or easing death, she could bring death?

Such a hint helps explain the fluid metamorphoses that the figure of Aurora's mother undergoes. Her images of 'Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch and sprite', we begin to see, are inextricably linked, one to another, each to its opposite. Certainly, imprisoned in the coffinlike shape of a death angel, a woman might long demonically for escape. In addition, if as death angel the woman suggests a providentially selfless mother, delivering the male soul from one realm to another, the same woman's maternal power implies, too, the fearful bondage of mortality into which every mother delivers her children. Finally, the fact that the angel woman manipulates her domestic/mystical sphere in order to ensure the well-being of those entrusted to her care reveal that she can manipulate; she can scheme; she can plot - stories as well as strategies (p. 26).

Clearly there is a repressed underside to the classical image of woman. She is reterritorialized, yet in this very movement the male fears the female capacity to deterritorialize his monologic ideologies. As in Bakhtin, the female reminds one of birth and death, shattering the marble rigidity of the phallic economy as Friar John observes. The desire for transgression is a grotesque desire, as transgression of boundaries is the essence of the grotesque. Woman can become writerly rather than readerly. She is now a threat to the male psyche:

If we define a woman like Rossetti's dead wife as indomitably earthly yet somehow supernatural, we are defining her as a witch or monster, a magical creature of the lower world who is a kind of antithetical mirror image of an angel. As such, she still stands, in Sherry Ortner's words, 'both under and over (but really simply outside of) the sphere of culture's hegemony'. But now, as a representative of otherness, she incarnates the damning otherness of the flesh rather than the inspiring otherness of the spirit, expressing what - to use Anne Finch's words - men consider her

own 'presumptuous' desires rather than the angelic humility and 'dullness' for which she was designed. Indeed, if we return to the literary definitions of 'authority' with which we began this discussion, we will see that the monster-woman, threatening to replace her angelic sister embodies intransigent female autonomy and thus represents both the author's power to allay 'his' anxieties by calling their source bad names (witch, bitch, fiend, monster) and, simultaneously, the mysterious power of the character who refuses to stay in her textually ordained 'place' and thus generates a story that 'gets away' from its author (p. 28).

The 'witch or monster' is 'a magical creature of the lower world', the grotesque domain, and is an 'antithetical mirror image of an angel', an ex-centric female character who deterritorializes the male classical grid, his scheme of things. Gilbert and Gubar identify this mirroring as a commonplace in patriarchal writing: 'repeatedly throughout most male literature, a sweet heroine inside the house (like Honoria) is opposed to a vicious bitch outside' (p. 29).

The description of Becky Sharp in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* represents her as half monster beneath the surface. As 'emblems of filthy materiality, committed only to their own private ends, these women are accidents of nature, deformities meant to repel, but in their very freakishness they possess unhealthy energies, powerful and dangerous arts' (p. 29). Gilbert and Gubar use the example of Error in Spenser's *Fairie Queene* as 'a prototype of the entire line', half woman and half serpent. 'Her filthiness adumbrates that of the two other powerful females in book I, Duessa and Lucifera. But because these other women can create false appearances to hide their vile natures, they are even more dangerous' (p. 30). Duessa is deformed below the waist like Error, with monstrous genitalia, deceiving and trapping men by assuming the shape of Una, the beautiful heroine who represents religion, passivity and so on. Lucifera's seemingly splendid House of Pride conceals the rotted foundations. 'Both women use their arts of deception to entrap and destroy men, and the secret, shameful ugliness of both is closely associated with their hidden genitals - that is, with their femaleness' (p. 30).

These female monsters, half woman and half serpent, announce their transgressive (anti)natures in a specifically transgressive form: the grotesque. The natural boundaries between categories of animal and man are broken down by such scheming women. Their visual representation as monsters corresponds to their usurping of the male/female hierarchical opposition, a move from female passivity to activity which is in itself monstrous. Whereas the genitalia are completely elided in the classical mode, the grotesque draws attention to their existence as a means of plugging into the world, and this presentation of the female grotesque is no different. Here, however, the connotations of the

grotesque are negative because the perspective is male: what is displayed is the female out of (male) control.

The eighteenth century is found to be no exception to the tradition of the female grotesque: 'Descending from Patristic misogynists like Tertullian and St. Augustine through Renaissance and Restoration literature ... the female monster populates the works of the satirists of the eighteenth century, a company of male artists whose virulent visions must have been particularly alarming to feminine readers in an age when women had just begun to "attempt the pen"' (p. 30). Susan Gubar has focused on the particular manifestations of the female grotesque in this period, noting the way in which writers like Swift and Pope expressed anxieties about their own creativity and mortality through the overdetermined symbol of the monstrous woman who recurs in their poetry and prose.⁶ Here the female monster is conflated to the physical and the reproductive, the gross natural functions of the body that can have nothing to do with the masculine world of culture and decorum. Female writers were especially targets for transformation into the female grotesque as their connection with culture and language was denied by the threatened male writer. Not only are creative literary women reminding men of their physical infirmities through their power to bring new life into the world, but they also invade the masculine cultural space.

Identification of women with the body is, therefore, an inverse attempt to erase masculine fear of his own non-classicality, his own lack of immortality. Man is himself grotesque in the sense that he is inevitably becoming, caught up in the change, flux and deterritorializations of the body that he would wish to deny:

In all these incarnations - from *Errour to Dullness*, from *Goneril and Regan* to *Chloe and Caelia* - the female monster is a striking illustration of Simone de Beauvoir's thesis that woman has been made to represent all of man's ambivalent feelings about his own inability to control his own physical existence, his own birth and death. As the Other, woman comes to represent the contingency of life, life that is made to be destroyed. "It is the horror of his own carnal contingency," de Beauvoir notes, "which (man) projects upon (woman)".

The female monster appears not only in literature, but in mythic representations of women also: 'male ambivalence about female "charms" underlies the traditional images of such terrible sorceress-goddesses such as the Sphinx, Medusa, Circe, Kali, Delilah, and Salome, all of whom possess duplicitous arts that allow them both to seduce and to steal male generative energy' (p. 34). Of course

⁶'The Female Monster in Augustan Satire', *Signs*, 3 (1977), 380-94.

these mythic figures feed into literary representations of women, as we will see later. This is also the case in folk tales, a hybrid form of writing somewhere between archaic myth and modern literature. Gilbert and Gubar analyse the Snow White tale, describing Snow White as the passive and patriarchal other self that the wicked, plotting, creative Queen wants to destroy. The poisoned apple seems to do the trick. However, 'After the Queen's artfulness has killed Snow White into art, the girl becomes if anything even more dangerous to her "step" mother's autonomy than she was before, because even more opposed to it in both mind and body. For, dead and self-less in her glass coffin, she is an object, to be displayed and desired, patriarchy's marble "opus", the decorative and decorous Galatea with whom every ruler would like to grace his parlor (p. 41).' The division here posits a reterritorialized, passive and classical representation of woman as against a deterritorializing, active and grotesque representation. The grotesque is identified with the struggle of woman to overcome patriarchy, or at least her potential to do so. She refuses to be the classicised 'marble opus' symbolising contained femininity, the object of the male gaze. She denies her position as a 'readerly' text, as an object for the gaze of the male subject, and breaks out into 'writerly' activity as the plotting of the Snow Queen suggests.

Klaus Theweleit

The division of women into the two images of the angel and the monster in the work of Gilbert and Gubar is uncannily mirrored in the work of Klaus Theweleit in his *Male Fantasies*, a compendious study of the novelistic fantasies of male fascists called the Freikorps who were the volunteer armies that fought the revolutionary German working class in the year immediately after World War I.⁷ Between 1923 and 1933 they went on to become key components in Hitler's machinery of fascism. Although Theweleit is concerned with the specific effects of the fascist male's imaging of women in relation to fascism, his wider historical survey suggests that these fantasies are in part a common feature of Western patriarchal culture, and this fits in with the ideas of Gilbert and Gubar, although each of these writers seems to have no knowledge of each other's work (the English translation of Theweleit did not appear until 1987).

⁷*Male Fantasies*, translated by Stephen Conway, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1987): all references will be to the first volume unless stated otherwise.

Theweleit claims that these males divided women into two main groups. The first type is related to the grotesque monster woman of Gilbert and Gubar, and is called the 'rifle woman' by the Freikorps, and the 'castrating woman' by Theweleit. These are proletarian, communist women who were fantasised in the novels of the Freikorps soldiers. These women are appropriators of phallic power, carrying guns which they are all too prepared to use on hapless wounded Freikorps men. They are characterised by their extreme cruelty, and by their specific tendency to castrate, or symbolically castrate, the male: 'The woman jumped onto his face, grinding his monocle, that accursed symbol, over and over again into his eyes with the heel of her rough shoes' (p. 72). As Freud's story of the *Sandman* reminds one, the putting out of the eyes has long been seen as a symbol of castration. The castrating woman is also seen to be a threat in so far as she is constantly represented as a whore, readily available to all the soldiers she is fighting with. Her sexuality is active, freely in circulation, beyond a regulative economy. Moreover, these women are always named, whereas:

Married women remain nameless so that they do not take on the contours of figures in concrete reality. Their fictionality allows men to continue to associate or equate them with representations of other, unnameable, forbidden women. The lack of a name also seems to guarantee that there is no penis. The fact that the rifle-woman, the woman with the castrating penis, is expressly named suggests that the name itself has a sexual and an aggressive quality: that it functions then, as a penis attribute. Just like waitresses, barmaids, cleaning women, prostitutes, dancers, and circus performers, the rifle women are given only first names. Women who have only first names are somehow on offer to the public; whether movie stars or servants, they are somehow prostitutes. They usually come from the bottom rung of society; their origin and status do not bear the stamp of a family (pp. 74-75).

Dancers and circus performers prompt thoughts of the carnival especially in connection with its very public and 'lower' nature. This lack of lineage, despite their ostensible position as objects of service to men, gives them an ambiguous, 'footloose, powerful, dangerous' aspect.

One of the authors of the fascist texts, Dwinger, has his character Marja state: 'I stand nature on its head. With me, rivers flow uphill.' Theweleit has the view that 'She is a natural catastrophe, a freak. The sexuality of the proletarian woman/gun slinging whore/communist is out to castrate and shred men to pieces. It seem to be her imaginary penis that grants her the hideous power to do so' (p. 76). From our perspective, it is significant that the trope of the world upside down is used to describe the monstrous woman who refuses to accept the boundaries allotted to her by the fascist males. This kind of woman was often shot for hiding weapons under her skirts (whether this was true or not), and Theweleit notes that they were often seen to be alluring by the Freikorps men until their true identity

as rifle women was discovered. What seems innocence on the surface can be a serpentine danger beneath.

Related to the rifle woman is the 'Red nurse', a more real figure than the rifle woman: 'in all the struggles of the worker's Red Army against the army and security police in the Ruhr, these women were always to be found near the front line (p. 79).' These women would go off to battle with or without boyfriends or husbands, but 'they apparently needed some rationale for their participation, since they all called themselves nurses, whether or not they had the relevant training.' Again, as with the rifle women, the fascists branded them as prostitutes, claiming that they had been recruited from brothels, and even seemed to have some sympathy for the men of the Red Army, whose manly strength had been contaminated and sapped by the presence of these women. Theweleit reads the presence of the red nurses in the captured Sythen castle as especially galling to the fascists as it represents 'proletarian whores and their menfolk laying waste to the aristocratic body of the mother', where the castle is symbolic of the womb, the mother, and therefore the high-born woman (p. 87).

This leads us to the second image of women fantasised by the Freikorps soldiers: the 'white nurse'. Sythen castle, for instance, has a countess who heroically holds out 'in the midst of brutish hordes', inspiring others by her courage, free of all association with sexuality. As Theweleit puts it: 'Pure mother figures of this kind seem to represent a type that is diametrically opposed to the castrating woman (p. 91).' Such women come to be 'mother, sister (-of mercy, nurse), and countess all in one person', not unlike the Dickensian angels in the house identified by Gilbert and Gubar. Theweleit's description emphasises this: 'Such is the holy trinity of the 'good' woman, the nonwhore. Instead of castrating, she protects. She has no penis, but then she has no sex, either. Her body is "completely enveloped in a white apron, her pale face sternly framed by the white cone of her Russian cap"'. Willmut is no exception in succumbing to her charms:

'When a dying man from the Second Squadron was laid down in front of her and, at the sight of her, called out in a failing voice for his mother, the student actually saw her smile.

Otherwise her face remains a cold (nobly beautiful) mask. It draws itself up into a smile only when its bearer, as Mother Death, is preparing a bed for one of her adopted sons'.

Up to this point, three heroic mother figures - the countess of Sythen Castle, the wife of the Stoppenberg doctor, and Countess Fermor-have exemplified the concept of the 'good woman.' As mother figures, they offer their 'sons' either protection, or a model for bearing up under suffering. All of them narrowly escape rape, or threatened death, at the hands of the Reds. There is no allusion to any love relationship they might have, and they have no children of their own (p. 95).

As in Gilbert and Gubar, this angel mother sacrifices her self in her suffering role. Her classical body is removed from the sexual sphere, whited out into a statuesque coldness. She becomes almost an art object in the way that the life is drained out of her due to her proximity to death. It must be mentioned that this nursing role can also be occupied by the wounded man's sister, again a disinfected and desexualized figure. The point is that both mother and sister are separated from the soldier by the incest taboo: they are classically pure and cleansed of the filth of sex. As Theweleit says: 'We can see now that the "white nurse" is given a pre-eminent role in the psychic security system of the men. She is the essential embodiment of their recoiling from all erotic, threatening femininity. She guarantees the maintenance of the sibling incest taboo, as well as the connection to a caring mother figure, who transcends sensuousness' (pp. 125-26).

Theweleit also has an explanation as to why the profession of the nurse should figure so pervasively in this imaging of the pure (and conversely impure) woman:

In a historical sense as well, then, the white nurse is an emblem of the bourgeois woman's renunciation of her female body. The nurse's is a dead body, with no desires and no sexuality (no 'penis'). She unites in herself the opposing poles of mother and sister, burying all of their dangerous enticements inside: the fiction of a body, which men need in order not to feel threatened.

All of that is signalled, in the end, by the nurse's uniform. 'White' signifies untrodden ground; no stream of red has ever been let loose within that uniform, never a stain on its fabric. The nurse is a blank page and condemned to remain so, if she is to function as a terrain for male fantasies (p. 134).

Whiteness is a defence against contamination, or rather it shows that no contamination has taken place, whereas redness is a staining, a polluting and, in the case of women, suggests sexual or menstrual activity. In the second volume of *Male Fantasies* Theweleit introduces the related figure of the 'white wife', the passive and willing white woman of the people (*volk*) as opposed to the devouring femininity of the proletarian masses (p. 95). This white wife has no active part in sex, indeed she maintains the rectitude of the fascist male by desexualising herself. This figure leads us back to the question of masculine identity and Lynda Nead's observations on Theweleit's investigations into the classical male.

The Classical Male

The 'white wife' represents the subjugated interior of man himself, the 'lower' (grotesque) regions rendered harmless. This is one of Theweleit's main points: the fascist male erects a psychic body armour which in effect is his ego. He seeks to eliminate flux and dissolution from the environs of his

body, seeking to maintain (in our terms) a classical body structure which closes off orifices that could lead him into contact with an unstable outside world. If the world were to intrude into this body armour it would be a threat to the male identity. Lynda Nead connects this 'body armour' with Kenneth Clark's formulations of the classical male nude. Clark describes the male nude as conveying 'harmony, clarity and tranquil authority ... calm, pitiless, and supremely confident' (p. 17). Clark takes his model from the Greek ideal of the nude which is 'based on mathematics, proportion, and harmony'. The male torso in this ideal is depicted, particularly in sculpture, as a powerful and vital centre of the masculine being. The epic and heroic male body is characterised by the *cuirasse esthetique*, 'a kind of muscle - architecture, a formal and schematic disposition of muscles which was used in antiquity for the design of armour'. Because the fascist male perceives the female body to be a nebulous mass of flesh and blood, a threatening flow of waste substances, he attempts to seal off his own body through this impermeable 'muscle - architecture'. The Freikorps men see themselves as fixed points rising above the proletarian and feminine Red flood, dry and geometrically solid as opposed to the flow of scum from the unruly masses, and their attitude to their physicality reflects this sense of threat. Their attempts to keep their bodies inviolate from contaminating femininity are reminiscent of Kristeva's (psychically) 'clean and proper body'. Theweleit asserts that the education of these males (beatings, cold baths and so forth) results in a body whose periphery (skin) has been de-eroticised, and therefore leads to a view of its interior as incarcerated, flowing with filth and dangerous waters. The classical surface of the male body therefore acts as a defence against his own interior, his own feminized and grotesque formless mass.

The fear of this filth is projected onto the outside world, primarily directed against the examples of eroticised femininity that we have already seen. The female womb is felt to be a morass of blood and excrement as it is involved in the ambiguous activities of sex, menstruation or childbirth. As Theweleit puts it in Book I, the soldier males freeze up in the presence of female sexuality, not just because of a fear of castration, but because it is a way of holding himself 'together as an entity, a body with fixed boundaries. Contact with erotic women would make him cease to exist in that form. Now, when we ask that man keeps the threat of the Red flood away from his body, we find the same movement of stiffening, of closing himself off to form a "discrete unity"' (p. 244). This is connected with the themes of pollution and purity we have frequently encountered. Theweleit quotes Christian

Enzensburger from his *Expanded Essay on Dirt* to explain this link: 'people regard anything that is only ambiguously part of themselves as unclean', and 'this is probably the basis for the indelible connection between dirt and the primary type of commingling: sex'. There is the fear of decay, 'when something at the bottom moves toward the top, or something at the top moves toward the bottom'. This fear of decay, fear of inversion of top and bottom is the resistance of the classical to the grotesque as it is cast in Bakhtin, and here it is stated in almost exactly the same terms.

On the higher level of the 'dirt of the mass', 'people despise anything that throngs or sprawls, any mass in which they might become caught up and irretrievably lost' (p. 385). Fascists want to remain above the dirt of the masses, above the moist murkiness of the female. For them, everything good comes from the top, not the bottom (p. 399). Hence the split image of woman into, as Sherry Ortner has observed, the 'top' and 'bottom' scale of values, the positive and the negative, the white nurse/mother/wife and the rifle woman/red nurse/whore. Women occupy a hybrid state, exalted into classical goddesses, purified of any stain, yet are associated with various types of impurity and hybrid substances that they encounter in washing, cooking, cleaning as well as the obvious activities of menstruation and childbirth. Women deal in swampy filth, a work which is branded as women's work. Men don't soil their hands with it; they rise above it. Although women work to clean up this mess, they are associated metonymically with it, becoming contaminated themselves.

Therefore it is not coincidental that the Freikorps soldiers would beat proletarian women to death with their gun butts in order to reduce them to a bloody pulp rather than merely despatching them with a bullet. They transform the transgressive female into the grotesque pulp that they fear is within themselves. Evidence of their own eventual death is transformed literally into that of someone else. Similarly, the soldiers desire war because this is a legitimate way of explosively rupturing the body surface, the classical shield of muscle, and achieving a oneness with their own grotesque interiors that would otherwise be denied to them by the insulating boundary (p. 240).

Although Theweleit does not extend his study too far in this direction, it is also clear that the fascist use of classical sculpture and architecture to suggest a monumental, monolithic and closed image of the body as opposed to the grotesque others of the Fatherland is an area which would reinforce his argument as well as my own. One can trace a direct line from the rise of Prussian Neo-classicism in the eighteenth century to the architecture of fascist Germany. A prime example of this is

the construction of the Brandenburg gate in 1788 derived directly from Doric Greek architecture, the most 'masculine' of the classical modes. The centre of Berlin was also strictly planned by Schinkel, the designer of the gate, to reflect the regimented militarism of a highly ordered society.⁸ Nead also finds the classical aesthetic to be less than innocent, revealing as it does a male fear and disgust of feminine sexuality and a construction of the male identity based on 'self-denial, destruction and fear' (pp. 17-18).

This description of a classical masculine identity has much in common with Gilbert and Gubar's observations on the attempts of the male writer to retain control over his textual 'identity'. They discuss the idea of 'literary paternity' in which the writer fathers the text in the same way as he fathers children: his pen is analogous to his penis, his textuality directly connected to his sexuality (p. 6). As a consequence, the literary father owns his production, treating his text as a sealed entity that must be read according to his own regulations. Its possible connotations must be limited to the meanings allowed by the author: if alternative transgressive readings are performed the integrity of the classical text is breached and the result is a grotesque parody of the original. The 'aesthetic patriarch' attempts to limit the outflow of his energies in a reterritorialization of that which is beyond his 'textual body', especially the errant text:

Finally, that such a notion of "ownership" or possession is embedded in the metaphor of paternity leads to yet another implication of this complex metaphor. For if the author/father is owner of his text and of his reader's attention, he is also, of course, owner/possessor of the subjects of his text, that is to say of those figures, scenes, and events - those brain children - he has both incarnated in black and white and "bound" in cloth or leather. Thus, because he is an author, a "man of letters" is simultaneously, like his divine counterpart, a father, a master or ruler, and an owner: the spiritual type of a patriarch, as we understand that term in Western society (p. 7).

The unified text becomes an extension of the unified subject: an attack on the classical integrity of the text therefore an attack on the identity of the author. Thomas Docherty's *On Modern Authority* deals with the need of the classical author to limit the play of meaning in his text, and I will show later the relevance of this struggle to maintain literary identity in the work of Pope and Swift.⁹

⁸Stephen Jones, *The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 55.

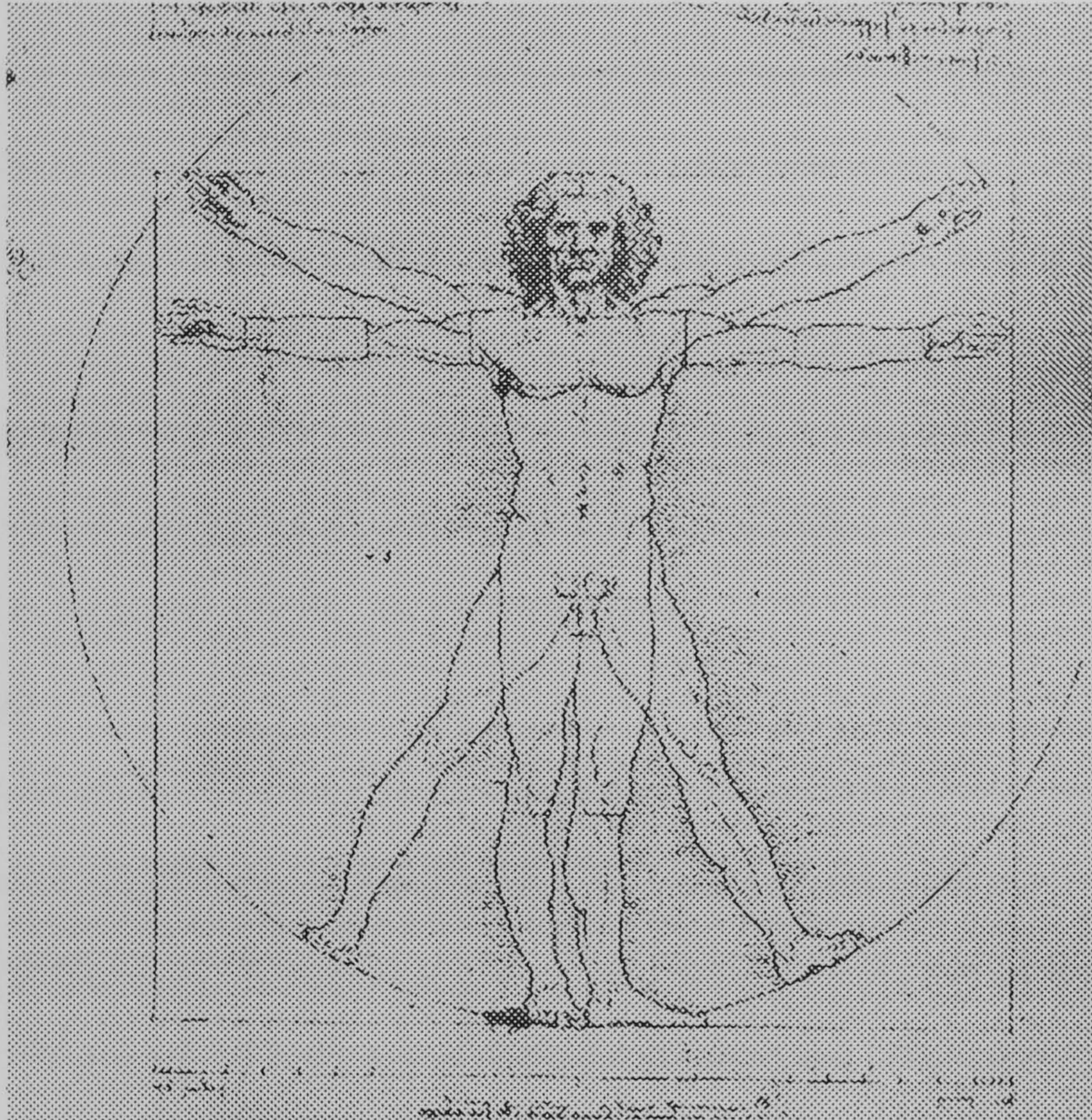
⁹*On Modern Authority* (Brighton, 1987).

Masculine Classical Women

Lynda Nead adds a further twist to the complexity of describing the male and female classical and grotesque bodies when she notes that although there is 'an absolute contrast between psychic conceptions of the male and female body ... there is a striking identity between the idealised forms of the male and female body, in both of which the threat of the flesh must be remorselessly disciplined' (p. 18). Kenneth Clark's analysis of the Capitoline Venus is shown by Nead to view the female body as 'an image of the phallus', the pose of Venus being frequently compared to a 'sheath'. The original unruly matter of the female body has become 'as regular and structured as the column of a temple' (p. 6). It is necessary for the male artist to harden the soft and formless matter of the female body, to subject disruptive feminine substance to the process of 'masculinization' (p. 18). Nead, like Theweleit, believes this necessity to arise from the fear that the male body might lose its own classical form and disintegrate into the chaotic state of the female body. By conforming to the masculine ideal the representation of the classical woman reassures men that the flesh is truly contained and that male identity is safe and sound. Nead finds the female nude to be a more symbolically loaded area in terms of questions concerning bodily regulation than the male nude, as it is the female body that is the focus for displaced masculine anxieties about the reality of the male body.

The fantasy of the male body escaping the troubles of the flesh altogether is encapsulated in Leonardo's 'Vitruvian Man' which presents the body as 'pure form', 'with the classicized male body articulated (albeit somewhat imperfectly) through mathematical relations' (p. 18) (Illustration 1). The harmony and balance of geometry constitute the matter of the body here, spatial logic replacing bone and sinew. Such a transformation is not so easy when one turns to the representation of the female body however. Nead points out that woman has been seen as the deconstructive supplement to man in western philosophy and theology; that is, she is perceived as secondary in the same way that Eve is secondary and supplementary to Adam. Eve is taken from Adam's rib in order to remedy a lack in Adam: she is hierarchically subordinate to him yet she is threatening precisely because she reveals him not to be self sufficient. Nead connects the male/female relation with the other oppositions usually found with it such as masculine culture, order and geometry set against the feminine stereotypical attributes of nature, physicality and unstructuredness; woman is the raw material of the flesh, the chaos of nature waiting for the imposition of masculine cultural order. Therefore the great

triumph of art is to transform 'pure nature' into 'pure culture', female into male. In my terms the classical male recuperates the grotesque female by making her like himself: the masculine economy demands a return to the Same rather than a tolerance of the Other. As we will see, this process of masculinization is to be found in the world of poetry as well as that of art.



1. Leonardo da Vinci, human figure illustrating proportions, ('Vitruvian Man')(c. 1485-90).

A corollary of this argument that Nead does not mention is the opposite of the process of 'masculinization' that I will call 'feminisation', naturally enough. If man transforms that which is other to himself (the feminine) into that which is like himself (the masculine), then it follows that if he wishes to denigrate or stigmatise that which is in some way like himself (another male) he will transform it into the other. Perhaps the main example of this process of feminisation is the labelling of homosexual males as women, as 'effeminate', as 'queens'. Because homosexual males share the same physical characteristics as heterosexual males, it is necessary that they should be distanced from 'true' masculinity by feminising them. Similarly, in the case of the female grotesque, the transgressive female is stigmatised by making her *more intensively* other: that is, by emphasising her female characteristics, especially those that are normally taboo in 'normal' representations of controlled femininity such as the genitals and the non-maternal breasts.

Conclusions

Clearly the introduction of gender into the equation of Bakhtin's classical and grotesque adds new solutions and new problems. Although the theorists I have examined are in many ways very different, they nevertheless share common ground in their identification of classical and grotesque women and their related interest in the masculine psyche that constructs these oppositional images. The old virgin/whore opposition becomes a more complex matter as the new terms of the female nude, the angel in the house and the white nurse/wife are set against the obscene naked woman, the madwoman in the attic and the red nurse/rifle woman. Nead makes the important step of moving beyond these oppositions to illuminate the process of 'masculinization' that constitutes the classical female body. Masculine identity regards its ideal self in terms of the sealed classical body, so the ideal woman must likewise be regulated by the male classical aesthetic. Gilbert and Gubar and Thomas Docherty see the text produced by the male author as an extension of such a male identity, an entity to be controlled within fixed boundaries by the possessive writer. After all, his writing is almost literally equated with his masculinity in a physical manner.

All these observations have been made in the context of western patriarchy dating from classical antiquity and still have relevance up to the present day, but the specific manifestations of the male and female classical and grotesque depend upon the localised circumstances of their generation within a

certain historical period. I will now show their relevance to the Augustan period and the writing of Pope and Swift in particular.

PART TWO: POPE

CHAPTER THREE

THE CLASSICAL AND THE AUGUSTAN AGE

Introduction

In recent years there have been various attempts to clarify the status of this period in relation to classicism. Generalisations about the 'Age of Reason' or the 'Augustan Age' have been subjected to a greater scrutiny which has tended to reveal the disorder within the order, the discors behind the concordia. James Sambrook for one objects that it is no more a 'classical' age than either the seventeenth or nineteenth centuries.¹ The general critical mode in recent years has been the desire to escape from generalisations about a complex society and literature, consequently moving away from descriptions of this era as a 'classical' age. In this section I will attempt to isolate the strains of classical thought applicable to Pope, Swift, and their time, particularly as they relate to Bakhtin's specific conception of the classical.

Features of eighteenth-century classicism

Bakhtin observes that the rise of neo-classicism in Europe coincided with a lack of comprehension of the grotesque and its consequent suppression, citing the condemnation of Rabelais by La Bruyère and Voltaire (*RW*, pp. 108-109, 117). More recent critics have shown that elements of Bakhtin's classical mode are to be identified with the eighteenth century in particular. Martin Battestin's study of order in this period, *The Providence of Wit*, stresses the restored confidence in the harmony of the divine creation at this time brought about by the scientific discoveries of Newton.² The regularities in Nature expounded by Newton's mathematical laws allowed the reassertion of the classical Pythagorean universe through the efforts of the Earl of Shaftesbury and his disciple Francis Hutcheson. Shaftesbury felt that man is sympathetically attuned to the underlying order (and therefore beauty) in God's creation. The Christian Humanist tradition rendered the idea of cosmic order in terms of the Pythagorean musical metaphor of concordia discors, or the harmonious reconciliation of conflicting elements; an idea most notably expressed by Pope in his *Essay On Criticism*. Battestin

¹ *The Eighteenth Century* (London, 1986), p. 207.

² (Oxford, 1974).

draws attention to the connection between theology and aesthetics in this ideal Pythagorean universe, showing how the idea of classical order ran through the interconnected disciplines of literature, architecture, landscape gardening, music, painting and sculpture. Pope is clearly a crucial figure in the English development of many of these areas, as we shall see.

The neoclassical doctrine of imitation in the arts puts the artist or poet in the position of God, recreating God's ordered universe in his own work. Battestin quotes Shaftesbury on the subject, who claims that the poet is 'a second *Maker*, a just Prometheus, under Jove', who 'forms a *whole*, coherent and proportional in itself, with due Subjection and Subordinacy of constituent Parts' (p. 56). The artist should reflect the beauty of harmonious Nature through the principles of symmetry and proportion as the rational soul of man responds to geometrical harmonies more readily than irregular forms. Especially important here is the Pythagorean idea that beauty is a visual harmony: the forms of architecture, sculpture and painting are more pleasing to the eye the more closely they approximate to the mathematical proportions that produce the musical concords (pp. 22-29). Battestin says nothing here about the central classical image of the symmetrical and ordered body, with its regular proportions used as a basis for architecture and as a metaphor for the divinely controlled body politic, but this emphasis on visual symmetry is clearly part of the same matrix of classical ideas.

Such a stress on visual order feeds through into all areas of Augustan art, according to Battestin, from the balance of Palladian architecture to the balance of the couplet form and the dominance of strict syllabic regularity from 1660-1740 (pp. 19-20). This regulation of metre is part of a wider regulation of literary form according to a neoclassical formulation of linguistic symmetries derived from the (supposed) prescriptions of the ancients. As Walter Jackson Bate puts it, 'in the classical conception, the very nature of unity or order presupposes for its delineation an ordered approach, an approach, in fact, which necessitates rule'.³ Bate particularly objects to the rigour of the neo-classical writers in making Aristotle's 'unities' of time and place fast rules (p. 17).

Similarly Bate observes that the symmetry of Augustan poetry and prose is a facet of the urge to order and regulation, noting the classical conviction that poetry should 'impose' upon the observer 'a finished ideal' (p. 17). Likewise 'the conscious attempt to achieve a confinement and regulation of

³*From Classic to Romantic*, p. 16.

style as an end in itself was supported not only by a restriction in the connotation of "reason", but also by an accompanying restriction of what constitutes decorum' (p. 41). This restriction of literary possibilities, in theory if not in practice, is part of the reason why, as a literary theorist, Bakhtin has little time for poetry. He condemns it as a monologic genre, opposed to the polyphonic and dialogic novel which he considers allows an ideological clash of voices, freeing the reader from the tyranny of the author. If Bakhtin is referring to poetry as described by Thomas Rymer, then one can see why he defines poetry as monologic, and therefore, in our terms, classical: "Besides the purging of the passions, poetry infuses order and justness of comprehension into the mind simply by its reflection, in the form and outline of its own structure, of that constant order, that harmony and beauty of Providence" (Bate, p. 13). Bakhtin's polarisation of poetry as classical and monologic, and prose as carnivalesque and dialogic is clearly incorrect even if one only concentrates on neoclassical poetry. His insufficient theorisation of poetry is partly due to the fact that he has a sliding definition of what is dialogic: in one definition he plays the dialogic off against the monologic, as here, yet in another definition he shows that all language is to some extent shot through with the sediment of other voices and therefore other ideologies that may or may not be conflictual. If one takes the second, more satisfactory definition, then one must realise that poetry has the potential to be as dialogic as the novel. In this way, one sees that the classical can only ever be asserted, not fully implemented as language is dialogic by its very nature.⁴

The classical definition of poetry proposed by Rymer can therefore be said to be classical in intent despite the possibility that the language used by the classical poet may exhibit a linguistic disorder that was not originally envisioned by the classical author. Clearly, the mirroring of the cosmic order in Rymer's kind of poetry hardly presents poetry as a conflictual genre of the type that Bakhtin sees in the novel. Poetry of this sort defines a pre-existent order which 'purges the passions', eliminates traces of the body from its formal purity, unsullied by grotesque realism or historical interference. This very much reflects Shaftesbury's thoughts in his *Miscellaneous Reflections* of 1714 when he sums up the relationship between the moral and the aesthetic: 'What is beautiful is

⁴See Ken Hirschkop, 'A Response to the Forum on Mikhail Bakhtin', in *Bakhtin, Essays and Dialogues on his Work*, edited by G. S. Morson, pp. 73-80, for a discussion of the problems of dialogism.

Harmonious and Proportionable; what is Harmonious and Proportionable is TRUE; and what is at once Beautiful and True, is, of consequence, Agreeable and GOOD'.⁵ Here there is a complete exclusion of conflict: anything that falls outside the rules of classical harmony is morally dubious, and it is from this kind of aesthetic that the tradition of caricature proceeds, in so far as caricature suggests moral ugliness through physical ugliness. Unlike carnival, there is no positive moral value to bodily disproportion. Indeed, as Sir Joshua Reynolds's complaint about the degraded modern taste of the vulgar British people shows, anything transgressing these classical rules is grotesque: 'We appear a Nation of Grotesque Thinkers, whose Idea of our Writers Excellence, like the Dutchmens Taste of Painting seems to be Nature, in a Fit of Distortion, where Grimace is placed for Dignity'.⁶

Battestin and Bate's view of the Augustan period as a classical age is shared by Ruth Salvaggio, whose poststructuralist study of Pope, Swift and Anne Finch places a greater stress on the role of Newton's science in forming Enlightenment systems of thought. She connects Newton's investigations into the nature of light with the idea of the divine light of Reason that sheds light on the darkness of chaos. Light becomes a metaphor for the logocentric Western metaphysical philosophy that reduces everything to a single divine origin. For Salvaggio the word classical means 'systems of thought built on notions of order and hierarchy', with such systems enjoying 'their most precise expression during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'.⁷ Men like Newton, Swift and Pope consolidated these classical systems as they attempted to bring anything that did not fit these systems back inside them. For this reason Salvaggio cites the French historian Michel Serres who see the 'Classical Age' as one in which 'structure and closure' were the dominant tendencies as the Enlighteners sought mastery over all areas of human knowledge and activity (p. 10). Like Bakhtin, Salvaggio sees the classical as dependent on the suppression of any phenomena that fall outside the limits of its categories and divisions. She casts this suppression in terms of gender, however, opposing masculine classical regulation to the absent presence of femininity that comes to stand for the gaps in the classical, the monstrous darkness that eludes the masculine attempt to recuperate the threat of the unknown, to bring it under the scrutiny of the light of masculine knowledge. In this sense Salvaggio is close to

⁵See James Sambrook, *The Eighteenth Century*, p. 54.

⁶*The Plain Dealer*, July 24, 1724, and Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts* (Chicago, 1958), p. 142.

⁷*Enlightened Absence*, p. ix.

Gilbert and Gubar's identification of woman as dangerous to male self-identity as she carries with her the threat of exposing the boundaries of his systems and hierarchies. Salvaggio's category of the absent feminine therefore corresponds both to Bakhtin's grotesque and Gilbert and Gubar's female grotesque as both are suppressed by classical patriarchy.

Most closely influenced by Bakhtin's classical and grotesque is *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* by Stallybrass and White, a ground breaking application of Bakhtin's categories to British cultural history from the Renaissance up to the present day. Although its section on the eighteenth century is brief, it nevertheless clarifies many of the issues Bakhtin left unresolved or ambiguous. Their study particularly stresses the increasing dominance of 'the classical discursive body' throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By the 'classical discursive body' they mean 'those regulated systems which were closed, homogenous, monumental, centred and symmetrical', systems including 'the characteristically "high" discourses of philosophy, statecraft, theology and law, as well as literature', a definition that agrees well with those of Battestin, Bate and Salvaggio (p. 22). According to Stallybrass and White the restrictive economy of the classical discursive body 'came to mark out the identity of progressive rationalism itself', linking the Lenten rule of the classical with Weber's 'rationalisation' and Foucault's 'regimen'. In the literary sphere they trace the gradual cleansing of the product and the audience through the efforts of the likes of Jonson and Dryden. Jonson's notion of 'authorship' defined itself against the grotesque and vulgar masses, the inhabitants of the fair and the popular audience of the drolls. The author is part of a classical elite, defending the high virtues of the ancients from the pollution of the lower domain (p. 67). Using Stanley Fish, Stallybrass and White point out that Jonson tried to present poetry as a 'gathered self', a classical poetic body that shuns all interaction with what is outside itself, aloof from mundane concerns in its pristine classicality (p. 78). Dryden similarly attempted to divorce the high from the low, the fair and the marketplace from the cleansed theatre and poetic page. The all too active and unruly audiences of the theatre were encouraged to become passive and silent observers of the theatrical event, transformed into a reterritorialized and self-regulating bourgeois classical body (pp. 84-89). The class factor is important here: with the emergence of the mercantile middle classes, the grotesque excesses of both the lower classes and the Restoration court were to be excluded from the hygienic environment of the new 'public sphere' of the coffee houses, tea rooms, pleasure gardens,

salons, journals, periodicals and so on. 'Manners' and 'decorum' were terms that designated a regulation of bodily behaviour in these cultural spaces, terms that fenced out the tendencies of the grotesque bodily canon. Reasonable discourse demanded the imposition of the classical discursive body.

This cleansing process continued with Pope and Swift as their rejection of the physical grotesque body signified their rationality, yet the repressed energies of the carnivalesque returned in their own satirical writing. Stallybrass and White see Augustan satire as 'the generic form which enabled writers to express and negate the grotesque simultaneously' (pp. 105-106). The task of the Augustans was to transform what they designated as grotesque into a classicised discourse, a 'discourse which is elevated, serious, refined, tending to relate to the genres of epic and tragedy, pure, homogeneous, closed, finished, proportioned, symmetrical, dignified and decorous' (p. 108). Like Salvaggio, Stallybrass and White encounter the apparent paradox of the classical age expressing itself in terms of the grotesque (or feminine), forced to name that which it intends to reject. The classical poet, as we shall see, is confronted by the Other that both repels and fascinates him.

CHAPTER FOUR

POPE, THE CLASSICAL AND THE GROTESQUE

In this section I will be investigating Pope's relationship to the classical as Bakhtin defines it, concentrating on his general theoretical statements rather than any particular work. Walter Jackson Bate gives the traditional view of Pope's connection with classicism, seeing Dryden, Swift and Pope as the sanest exponents of the classical in opposition to 'extreme neo-classic rationalism', although he also finds an expression of 'most of the other current tendencies of their age' in Pope (p. 61).¹ It is this tension between the classical Pope and the other tendencies that is so interesting, but at present it is the 'traditional' and classical Pope that will be examined.

In the previous chapter I cited Martin Battestin's argument that Augustan writers sought to reflect in their art the symmetry, harmony and order that they believed was to be found in the divine creation newly reunited by the scientific discoveries of Newton. Nature was considered to be the 'art of God' and it was the duty of the poet to mimic the natural order in his own creative acts.² Battestin finds Pope to be especially representative of the Augustan drive to order, reading his early pastoral poetry as a Virgilian recreation of the lost ideal of the Golden Age. Pope holds a Pythagorean geometrical conception of an ordered universe, a harmonious classical body where 'ORDER is Heav'n's first law' (*Essay on Man*, IV. 49) and any apparent disorder is merely 'Harmony, not understood' (I. 291).³ As Elise Knapp puts it: 'ideal beauty was to be found through the discovery of correct, mathematical, three dimensional proportions which reflected universal harmony'.⁴ Battestin, amongst others, finds this classical symmetry reflected in the 'architecture' of Pope's finely finished couplet form, 'one of the happiest instances in literature of prosody recapitulating ontology' (p. 80).

When called upon to present an image of universal harmony Pope naturally turns to the classical body:

¹*From Classic to Romantic* (Harvard, 1946), p. 61. are cited

²*The Providence of Wit*, (Oxford, 1974), p. 3; further references in the main text.

³*The Twickenham Edition of the Works of Alexander Pope*, general editor John Butt, 11 vols (London, 1939-69), abbreviated to *TE*, III i: further references in the main text.

⁴Palladio, Pope, and the Design of *An Essay on Man*, *Essays in Arts and Sciences*, 19 (1990), 65-81 (p. 67).

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
 Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
 ... To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
 He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all (I. 267-68, 279-80).

Here Nature and God form an essential unity and plenitude, informing and controlling all its constituent parts. This universal body is a regulated and monologic classical body where all its members are bounded and in proportion like the Renaissance ideal of Leonardo's 'Vitruvian Man'.

In art sculpture was an essential means of reflecting divine harmony: Jean Hagstrum describes three methods used by poets to idealise reality through the 'Plastic arts', one of which is 'by suggesting the forms and attitudes of classical sculpture' (p. 144).⁵ This idea was of central importance in the critical theory of the eighteenth century: 'Painters and sculptors alike strove to achieve ideal nature by consulting the sculptured remains of Greece and Rome ... For Reynolds such sculpture came closest to representing perfect beauty' (pp. 144-45). Hagstrum cites Pope in particular as a poet who 'felt that la belle nature was essentially sculptural'.

Closely associated with sculpture is the similarly classical art of architecture. Howard Erskine-Hill points out the connection between the classical architecture of Vitruvius, whom we remember is identified by Bakhtin with the classical body, and Palladio, the Renaissance architect who took Vitruvius as his master.⁶ Pope similarly identifies his architectural influences with the classicism of Vitruvius and Palladio through the Earl of Burlington who was to be the new Vitruvius of the age according to the *Epistle to Burlington* (191-94).⁷ Vitruvius was also of particular significance for Pope because of the link he made between the form of architecture and the form of the human body.⁸ As Palladio put it: 'Beauty will result from the Harmony and Correspondence between the Whole and its Parts, and the several Parts between themselves; for then the Edifice will appear one entire and perfect Body, in which one Member answers to another, and all of them together to the whole' (Erskine-Hill, p. 149). Pope closely echoes this description of the architectural classical body in his image of the 'well-proportioned Dome' in *An Essay on Criticism* (247-52).

⁵*The Sister Arts* (Chicago, 1958).

⁶'Heirs of Vitruvius: Pope and the Idea of Architecture', in *The Art of Alexander Pope*, edited by Howard Erskine-Hill and Anne Smith (London, 1979), pp. 144-56 (p. 144).

⁷*TE*, III ii, 123-51.

⁸See Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, translated by Frank Granger, 2 vols (London, 1931), I, 159-61.

Textual classical bodies

Pope expresses similarly Vitruvian sentiments in relation to textual 'bodies'. In the *Essay on Criticism* he asserts that seemingly 'monstrous' faults in the Ancients are merely defects of perspective which 'Due Distance' resolves (169-74). The underlying reference here is to Longinus's *An Essay upon the Sublime*, the anonymous English translation of which is quoted in the Twickenham edition: 'Tis just so with a Discourse, as 'tis with a natural Body, whose Beauty rises from the union, and just proportion of every part: and tho' each limb by itself has nothing graceful, yet jointed together they form a most beauteous frame. Thus the parts of the Sublime, when they are pulled asunder, the sublimity is quite lost' (footnote, p. 260). The classical textual body is a coherent whole, fully present to itself and unpolluted by the monstrosity of aberrant parts.

Thomas Docherty explores Pope's need to stabilise his own identity by ensuring the watertight plenitude of his own texts, denying the flux of alternative opinions and perspectives from the duncely critics who threaten to pollute the 'clean and proper body' of his works.⁹ Both Swift and especially Pope 'feared (mis)interpretation'. In the *Essay on Criticism* Pope states his position clearly:

A perfect Judge will read each Work of Wit
With the same spirit that its Author writ (233)

and

In ev'ry Work regard the Writer's End,
Since none can compass more than they Intend (255).

According to Docherty dunces are such because they lack 'a preverbal shadowy "intention"' that their poetic language should reflect without deviation. Like Gilbert and Gubar, Docherty uses the metaphor of paternity, noting that Dulness's random thoughts find meanings 'as a father might adopt a son' rather than Pope's ideal of a controlled textual 'issue' that establishes the writer's 'self-stability and identifiable name'. Securing his own 'clean and proper' text requires 'uncritical rehearsals ... of Pope's own words and intentions' (p. 245). Ideally Pope asks not to be read critically at all, thus preserving his classical textual 'body' from grotesque violation by other voices that cause it to disseminate and disintegrate in multiple conjunctions with other texts and discourses.

⁹*On Modern Authority* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 244-45.

Yet this is a logical impossibility, Pope being in a dialogue at least with himself. Nevertheless, he tries to deny such a dialogism as he imposes his ideal, legitimate and proper meaning through artificial closure of his cleansed textual body, asserting a classical-textual economy that demands finitude of meaning. Docherty shows that for Pope 'interpretation is the purest repetition, rehearsing the authorial intention, personality and identity of Pope and re-establishing, at least for the duration of the reading, Pope's own historical conjuncture. If a 'valid' reading is thus carried out, Pope's identity is assured' (pp. 244-45). Hence the reader is left in a passive position, uncritically admiring from a distance the great mind and 'voice' of the poet.

This then, is the classical Pope who invokes the positive values of the classical body in staking out his social and textual territories. In the next section I will examine Pope's negative response to the grotesque body as it threatens to disintegrate the closed structures of the classical.

Pope, the Grotesque and Satire

Having observed Pope's theoretical allegiance to classical genres, one must wonder why he chose to write predominantly in the satirical and related mock-epic modes. His theoretical statements are full of criticism of these patch-work genres which are neither one thing nor the other. This is precisely the problem with satire. Bakhtin's view of satire is that it largely proceeds from the liberatory tradition of the carnivalesque. Although this tradition is seen as being weakened in the age of Pope, Bakhtin still views it as an open mode, 'the chance to have a new outlook on the world'. In a neo-classical environment of restrictive genres and rules, it seems likely that Pope would be attracted to a form that consecrates 'inventive freedom' (*RW*, p. 34).

There remains the question of how far eighteenth-century satire and mock-epic is related to the carnivalesque, whether satire is really a liberatory genre, or whether it is endowed with elements of the classical. Bakhtin feels that the influence of the carnivalesque on the eighteenth century is 'formalized' as carnival becomes 'merely an artistic means made to serve aesthetic aims, mostly for subject and composition'. Edna Steeves considers English neoclassicism to be 'a negative doctrine'

largely derived from moralistic Horatian precepts.¹⁰ Satire here would seem to be a form designed for restraint, a form of social correction. Bakhtin fails to mention the possible use of carnival as an instrument of social control but as Le Roy Ladurie observes in his study of carnival at Romans, carnival can eliminate socially harmful elements through satire.¹¹ This 'corrective slant' of the carnivalesque suggests its possible complicity with the negative precepts of the classical. Pope certainly takes a corrective line through the image of the lash in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (303).

According to this definition of the form, satire reterritorializes what is errant from the state. It operates according to universal values of classical decorum into which the offending party is (theoretically) reinscribed. Yet in this process satire is forced to interact with the very elements that it condemns. Terry Eagleton notes that 'the mode in which the sacred and the profane can co-exist is the mode of satire: Swift's *Modest Proposal* utters the unspeakable in the context of therapeutic ridicule'.¹² Satire both is and is not a genre: it deterritorializes the classical by the inclusion of material that the classical is attempting to erase, and in the very process of attempting to erase and therefore reterritorialize this grotesque and lowly material the 'classical' form of satire highlights what it wants to repress even more. Thus we have the paradox that the seemingly anarchic Scriblerus club advocated a separation of the high and the low which is contradicted at every point by its art. The Scriblerians themselves descended into the underworld of Grub Street and low art in the very attempt to expunge the grotesque, filthy world of the dunces from the elite culture they were so concerned to defend.

Pope's attitude to the grotesque is expressed in an ironic, though informative way in *The Art of Sinking in Poetry: Martinus Scriblerus' Peri Bathous*, a prose text that Steeves and other editors agree to be almost entirely Pope's work despite its status as a Scriblerus Club production.¹³ I agree with this view as the attitudes and style of the work are in close accord with Pope's general perspective and with the style of *The Dunciad* which was published two months after *The Art of Sinking* in May 1728. The words 'Peri Bathous' invert grotesquely the model of Longinus' *Peri Hupsous* as the sublime of the

¹⁰Alexander Pope, *The Art of Sinking in Poetry: Martinus Scriblerus' Peri Bathous: A Critical Edition*, edited by Edna Leake Steeves (N.Y., Russell and Russell, 1952), p. lxiv.

¹¹Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival*, translated by Mary Feeney (London, 1980), p. 312.

¹²Walter Benjamin (London, 1981), p. 161.

¹³Alexander Pope, *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*, edited by Edna Leake Steeves, p. xxx.

ancients becomes the ridiculous of the moderns. Throughout this mock-treatise Pope's grotesque antiself, Martinus Scriblerus, transforms the high into the low in a constant degradation of the classical. The ideal modern

is to consider himself as a Grotesque Painter, whose Works would be spoiled by an Imitation of Nature, or Uniformity of Design. He is to mingle Bits of the most various, or discordant kinds, Landscape, History, Portraits, Animals, and connect them with a great deal of Flourishing, by Heads or Tails, as it shall please his Imagination, and contribute to his principal End, which is to glare by strong Oppositions of Colours, and surprize by Contrariety of Images (pp. 191-92).

Classical reasons for disapproval of the grotesque become Scriblerus's reasons for praise.

Likewise modern authors realise that nature is wearisome and that carnivalesque activity is best suited to entertain 'the British Spectator' (p. 206). The vulgar audience gives 'universal Applause' 'to the admirable Entertainments of Harlequins and Magicians on our Stage', especially appreciating the sight of 'a Man's Head where his Heels should be'. This 'antinatural way of thinking' is like 'the wrong end of a Perspective Glass, by which all the Objects of Nature are lessen'd' (p. 192). The whole treatise is a textual world upside down where Pope explores the antinatural antitheory of the grotesque/carnavalesque just as he was shortly to do in the more poetic and fictional realm of *The Dunciad*.

Pope's Grotesque and Classical Bodies

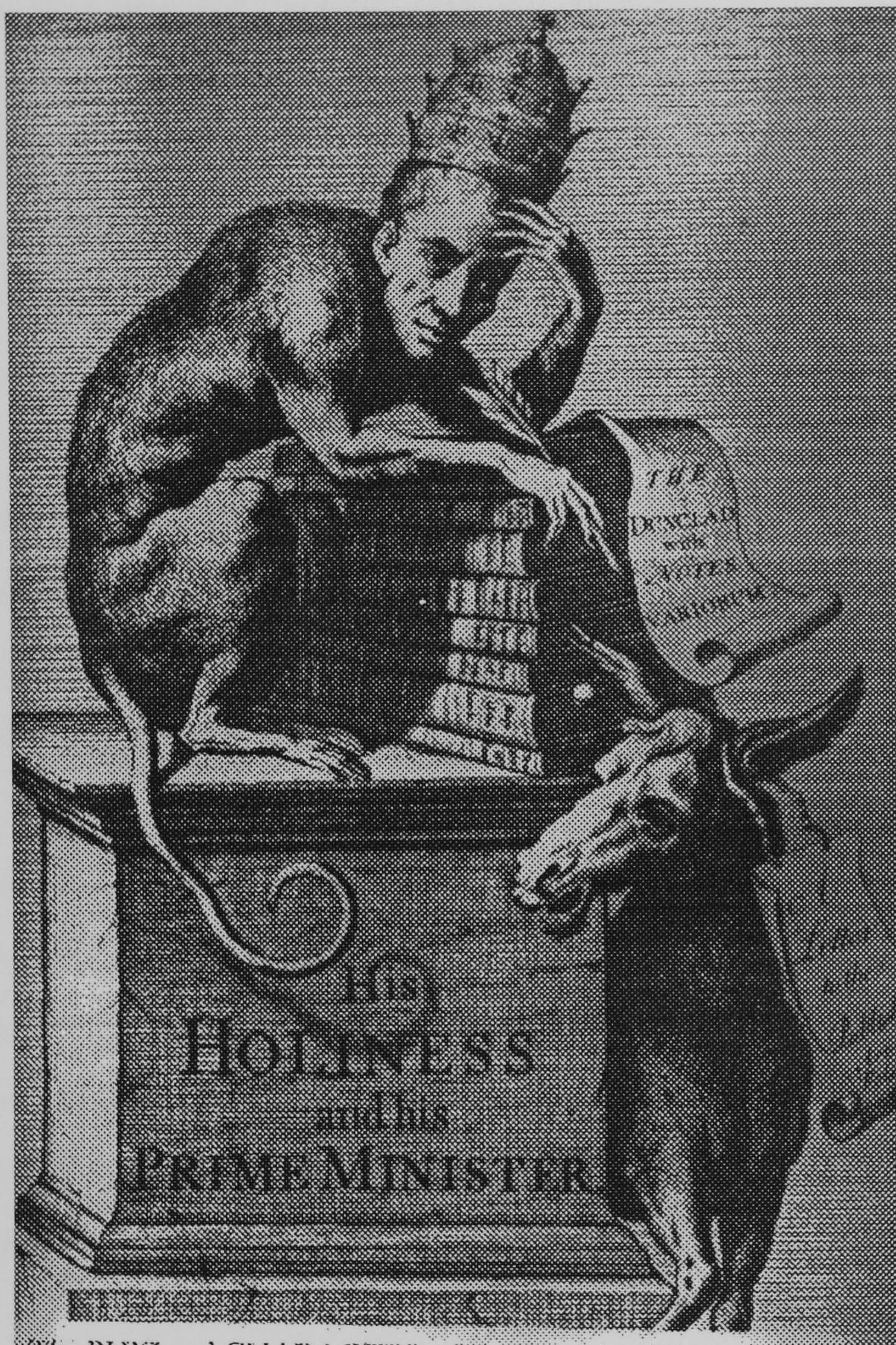
Jean Hagstrum has echoed the common critical observation that there seem to be two opposed facets of Pope's personality and poetry. One is the masculine, 'classical' Pope, the manly, rational and witty poet of good sense who is best expressed in the moral satires, whilst the other is the feminine, 'romantic' Pope who pours out his emotions in the female gothic of *Eloisa to Abelard* and the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*.¹⁴ This 'feminine' aspect of Pope's poetic output shades into the category of the grotesque when one combines it with his enemies' and his own awareness of his grotesque body, a physical body that interfered with his attempts to portray himself as ideally and poetically virile in a manly classical body.

¹⁴*Sex and Sensibility* (London, 1980), p. 137.

Pope was never allowed to forget the grotesque and unmasculine nature of his physical form, partly because of the pain he experienced and partly because of his merciless enemies. The material facts of Pope's existence were that he stood at a height of four feet six inches, and suffered from Pott's disease (tuberculosis of the spine) which gave him the appearance of a deformed cripple, combined with cardiac disorder, crippling arthritis and chronic genital infections.¹⁵ Early after the publication of the *Essay on Criticism* Dennis taunted Pope in the following manner: 'As there is no Creature so venomous, there is nothing so stupid and impotent as a hunch-back'd Toad'.¹⁶ Similarly an engraving appeared around 1729 of 'The PHIZ and CHARACTER of an Alexandrine Hyper-critick and Commentator' where Pope is depicted as having the body of an ape and the head of a human, wearing a papal crown (Illustration 2). He perches on a plinth with a quill in his hand next to a pile of books, one of which is *The Dunciad* which had been published the year before. The plinth refers to Pope as 'His Holiness'. Below the title are selections from Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus*, beginning: 'Nature herself shrank back when thou wast born,/And cry'd the Work's not mine' (1.1.135-58, Mack, p. 492).

¹⁵For greater detail on Pope's physical condition, see Marjorie Nicolson and G. S. Rousseau. *This Long Disease, My Life* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1968), pp. 8-85.

¹⁶Quoted in Mack, *Alexander Pope; A Life* (London, 1985), p. 183.



2. The PHIZ and CHARACTER of an *Alexandrine* Hyper-critick & Com[m]entator (c. 1729), engraving.

The most obvious element here is the use of the grotesque against Pope in its crudest form, transforming him into a grotesque by the joining in his body of two disparate categories of being: ape and man. The quotation underneath the title underlines the fact that nature shrinks back from Pope as being an unnatural creation: nature cannot be responsible for him. Further, however, there is the desecration of the classical which is achieved by placing the grotesque Pope on a plinth, where one would normally expect to find an exemplary member of humanity, or some ideal beauty. The papal crown complicates the representation of Pope even more, as it refers to his Catholicism, a religion regarded as grotesque in itself in England at this time. Pope is crowned with the power of the state in the classical manner, but this is the wrong state, the anti-state of church of Rome. His name gave a fortunate opportunity to his enemies to pun on his religion, a variant of this engraving being used for the frontispiece to *Pope Alexander's Supremacy and Infallibility Examin'd*.

Dustin Griffin observes that from about 1713 Pope started thinking of himself as an 'incongruous animal'.¹⁷ Lead by an enforced awareness of his own physical state, Pope began to consider the fragility of human identity that he at least occasionally considered to be 'one mighty inconsistency'. Griffin shows the early epistles of the *Essay on Man* to be considerations of man divided against himself, although the later ones reintegrate the mighty maze of fractured identity within the reassuring vision of God's plan as self love is transformed into social benevolence (p. 132). Pope refers symptomatically to the 'tottering Column' of the self, an image that suggests the threat of grotesque non-self coincidence to the otherwise stable and phallically rigid 'Column' of the classical self (*Pope Corr*, II, 253).

This sense of Pope's self as a 'tottering column' also extends to the area of sexuality: Steve Clark shows that Pope's poetic voice was seen as feminine by critics from as early as 1722, with Francis Thompson calling Dryden Mars and Pope Venus. Dr Johnson saw Pope's lifestyle as similarly effeminate, surrounded as he was by the women attendants who were required to tend his various illnesses and disabilities.¹⁸ Colley Cibber's comic letter describing his intervention in Pope's

¹⁷See Griffin, *Alexander Pope: the Poet in the Poems* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1978), p. 52, and *Pope Corr*, I, 185, 185-86.

¹⁸Steve Clark, "'Let Blood and Body bear the fault": Pope and Misogyny', in *Pope: New Contexts*, edited by David Fairer (London, 1990), pp. 81-101 (pp. 83-84).

encounter with a prostitute referred to 'the little-tiny manhood of Mr Pope', a description echoed by Pope himself in a rondeau that turned on the refrain of his 'Thing of little Size', 'You know Where'.¹⁹ More materially, perhaps, Nicolson and Rousseau point out that Pope suffered from a urethral stricture, 'probably the result of gonorrhoea, contracted in youth' (p. 66). Throughout his life and beyond it, Pope's real and poetic masculinity was always in question: even in his own eyes there was the possibility of lapsing into grotesque femininity rather than sustaining a classical masculine integrity.

Pope adopted various strategies at different stages in his career for dealing with this problem of the unruly flesh, but the most obvious and constant feature was his use of the poetic domain to fashion an ideal realm for himself in which he could adopt an epic, classical masculinity that compensated for the shortcomings of his physical existence. From early on in his poetic progress Pope attempted to establish himself in the mold of the classical laureate poet, or, as Thomas Woodman puts it: 'the central image of the role and status to which he adheres is one of the clearest examples of a tradition that is, in Bakhtin's terms, "ideologically saturated", "unitary": one in which the poet speaks or purports to speak with a stable voice or authority'.²⁰ Dustin Griffin's study of the more conscious aspects of Pope's attempts to construct an epic and heroic image of the valiant poet notes his 'acute self-consciousness about himself and his actions' and the fact that he 'seems to have viewed the attainment of self as a process of deliberate choice of willed self-formation' (pp. 25, 29). One of the more apparent aspects of Pope's strategy to eliminate his actual grotesque body for an ideal poetic classical one is his concealment of his body in portraits. As early as 1716 Sir Godfrey Kneller had portrayed Pope as the modern Homer, poring over the *Iliad*. Kneller's 1721 charcoal and chalk drawing showing Pope wearing 'the Critick's Ivy' is, like the other one done by Kneller in that year, 'highly numismatic' according to W. K. Wimsatt (Illustration 3).²¹ Here Pope resembles a heroic Roman emperor rather than a crippled laureate poet, although Wimsatt considers Pope to be more modest in his evocation of his classical heritage in his donning of the toga and the ivy wreath: I

¹⁹See Clark, p. 85. Valerie Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 50-51, and *TE*, VI, 61.

²⁰"Wanting Nothing but the Laurel": Pope and the idea of the Laureate poet', in *Pope: New Contexts*, edited by David Fairer, pp. 45-58 (p. 45).

²¹*The Portraits of Alexander Pope* (London, 1965), p. 50.

disagree. By contrast, Pope went to great lengths to prevent full-length portraits of himself: Hoare's sketch of Pope was done unknown to the poet (p. 302).



3. Alexander Pope by Sir Godfrey Kneller (c. 1721), charcoal and chalk.

Pope's early poetic progression through the pastoral also reflects his sense of following in classical footsteps, but this writing out of the body is also evident in the gothic and distinctly unclassical *Eloisa to Abelard* and the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*. As Steve Clark observes, despite Pope's adoption of many different personae, 'there is little or no sense of situated perspective even within the later, more elaborately developed, autobiographical persona' (p. 86). Clark wonders where exactly Eloisa's voice comes from: is it the convent, the wilderness, or some meditative spiritual plane? Where and who is the speaker of the *Elegy*? In these poems Pope uses his female characters as 'conduits for extraneous passion', to paraphrase Clark (p. 89). The problems of the grotesque desiring body are displaced onto the female (poetic) body, whilst the male poet engages in a 'general repudiation of the desiring body' in order to achieve a greater classical authority, a higher virility. As Clark puts it: 'Abelard's situation can be seen as that of the poetic voice, the castrated male as recipient of the tribute of female passion and hence deemed worthy of elevation into godhead' (p. 87).

In a related move Dustin Griffin elaborates Pope's use of 'antiselves' whom he cast as the grotesque 'other' to his own classically unified poetic self. Some of these figures we will encounter in more detailed examinations of certain poems, but for the present the most obvious example used by Griffin is that of Sporus or Lord Hervey in the *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*. Griffin rightly feels that the 'crucial word' in the Sporus passage is 'manly':

Not proud, nor servile, be one Poet's praise,
That, if he pleas'd, he pleas'd by manly ways (*TE*, IV, 336).²²

At this point in his life Pope was beginning to respond in a more hostile manner to the increasingly bleak political conditions of Hanoverian Britain, not to mention the growing hostility of Grub Street and the deteriorating condition of his own body. This seems to have had the effect of causing Pope to move towards a more entrenched position, both politically and psychologically. He began to seek a stabilised identity in the cleansed classical environs of his Palladian villa in Twickenham, with its purified grotto (most unlike the sexualised caves in his poetry) and his carefully

²²Griffin, p. 180.

crafted garden.²³ In the moral satires and the Horatian Imitations especially, Pope aspired to a desexualized 'proclaimed ethical virility', as Steve Clark puts it (p. 87). Dustin Griffin demonstrates that Hervey's corrupt physical sexuality is contrasted with Pope's 'virtual sexlessness': the women encountered by the poet come only from the realm of art, and he is 'belov'd' only by male friends and judges of the poem (Griffin, pp. 187-88; lines 150, 144). This has the ring of truth in reality in that Martha Blount ('Patty'), Pope's constant female friend, was idealised by Pope because he saw her as a 'softer Man': her unruly feminine flesh undergoes a process of masculinisation, transforming her into a (still inferior) version of the Same rather than the other. Carol Flynn sees a similar pattern of unconsummated friendship with ideal masculine women in Swift (as we shall see) and Farquhar.²⁴ Pope's poetic masculinity likewise makes itself evident in a non-physical manner: his only progeny will be his poems in the type of classicised literary paternity theorised by Gilbert and Gubar and Thomas Docherty. The poet demonstrates 'a potency in standing firm against the foes of virtue' and even achieves a form of physical paternity as he rocks his mother's 'Cradle of Reposing Age' (409). For Griffin, Pope 'redirects sexual energy into forms where he can display mastery': from my perspective Pope constructs a transcendent male classical body by off-loading feminized sexuality onto the grotesque antiself of Hervey, a persistent phenomenon in Pope's work that I shall be examining more closely later on. Griffin astutely indicates that some of the qualities attributed to Sporus are plainly more applicable to Pope himself, most notably the ridiculous charge that Hervey was sexually impotent (317). It was well known that Hervey had married the beautiful Molly Lepel, sired a large family, and carried on several affairs, whereas Pope was constantly taunted about his inability to conform to masculine norms (Griffin, p. 183). Consequently Pope denies and projects the grotesque aspects of his own (physical) identity onto his poetic antiself, Hervey.

A similarly virile Popeian classical body is to be found in the other satires. Griffin documents Pope's 'phallic force ... where he points the pen (*To Fortescue*, 105), wields his sacred weapon, or draws the last pen for freedom (*Epilogue*, II. 212, 248)' (Griffin, p. 188). In the *Dunciad Variorum* Pope echoes this stance of epic hero in the announcement from the 'Publisher to the Reader' which

²³See Maynard Mack's *The Garden and the City* (Oxford, 1964) for an account of this entrenchment and the un-grotesque characteristics of Pope's villa and grotto.

²⁴See Pope's *Epistle to a Lady*, *TE*, III ii. 272, and Carol Flynn, "'A Softer Man": Pope's, Swift's, and Farquhar's Feminine Ideal', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 84 (1985), 51-62.

declares 'the Heroical disposition of the Writer, who dar'd to stir up such a formidable, irritable and implacable race of mortals'. Such a piece of self glorification was immediately noticed by Dennis who condemned Pope's 'Impudence'.²⁵ The ethical virility of Pope's pronouncements is also played off against Pope's deprecating and ironic references to his physical body ('I cough like *Horace*, and tho' lean, am short'), a tactic that emphasises the power of the poet's classical and virile mind in transcending the limitations of the grotesque and effeminate body.²⁶ Dustin Griffin best describes Pope's adoption of the classical body when he talks of 'the self-assurance Pope derived from his Horatian armor of conscious rectitude' in his attack on the antiself of Walpole (p. 189). In my terms this reminds one of the muscle architecture of the epic male hero and the contained body periphery of Theweleit's fascists. Such a 'rectitude' of the self resists the uncertain identity of the 'tottering column' to be found in earlier poetry: the instabilities of the flowing, desiring and implicitly feminine grotesque body are contained by the phallic solidity of the ordered masculine body. In the following sections I will show the operations of Pope's constructions of the classical body and its grotesque feminised 'others' in greater historical and textual detail.

²⁵*TE*, V, p. 205; Griffin, p. 270.

²⁶See Steve Clark, p. 86, and *Arbuthnot*, 116.

CHAPTER FIVE

WINDSOR FOREST: POPE AND SEXUAL POLITICS

Introduction

In the following sections I will be discussing Pope's poetic representation of various forms of the classical and the grotesque. As we move through his career, we find that he broadly moves from a reasonably optimistic mode of poetic vision to one that is driven by despair and fear for the continuation of civilisation. In my terms this would correspond to a shift between a classical, positive ideology to a negatively framed grotesque expression of the failure of this earlier perspective. I will also argue that this shift is reflected in Pope's use of body imagery, and more particularly in the limit case of the female body, a source of particular energy for the Augustan writer to exploit, as Susan Gubar has observed.¹ As I will show, however, Pope's poetic development can not merely be explained according to such a simplistic opposition as early and classical versus late and grotesque, as Thomas R. Edwards suggests in his *This Dark Estate*.² For Edwards, Pope's early poetry is written in the 'Augustan' style, a style of 'sanity' and 'daylight', whilst the later poetry, from roughly the *Imitations of Horace* onwards, adopts a 'grotesque' style in keeping with the political and social developments of the Hanoverian age. My theory is more complex than this, however. If one takes into account gender issues and combines them with the already complex political contexts of Pope's writing, one finds that one can not merely partition Pope's poetic development into two separate modes. Rather, one uncovers further oppositions and tensions within the broad opposition of classical and grotesque. And, as we have mentioned before, the definition of the grotesque depends on the perspective from which one views it. For Pope, the grotesque is bad, at least in his conscious definition of it. For Bakhtin, the grotesque seems good, given his own circumstances of theorisation. My examination of the complexities of applying these two categories to Pope and Swift will take into account the way in which women and men are constructed as classical or grotesque bodies in response to varying contexts and requirements, both psychic and political. It will be found that the capacity for the grotesque in

¹'The Female Monster in Augustan Satire', *Signs*, 3 (1977), 380-94.

²(London, 1963).

Pope exists long before the *Imitations of Horace* are written, but in an area where Edwards does not look: that of gender.

Political context

Firstly I will examine *Windsor Forest*, a poem which is ostensibly a sylvan panegyric to Queen Anne.³ Edwards follows this assessment and places it in his classical mode. For him, 'Augustan England' represents the flowering of human civilisation, the triumph of the neo-classical virtues of order and harmony over chaos and barbarism'.⁴ For 'chaos and barbarism', read the grotesque. If one is to take Anne as the embodiment of the civilised state of England that keeps out the hostile forces of political and moral entropy, then one would expect her to assume the classical body appropriate to such a body politic. As we will see, she does indeed do this to a certain extent, both in Pope's eyes, and in terms of her self-fashioning as a political leader.

However, in order to fully understand Pope's representation of Anne in the State it is necessary to outline the political and economic context of the poem. When Pope wrote the first version of *Windsor Forest* around 1704 his relation to the state was at least one of optimism. Queen Anne, who reigned from 1702-1714, increasingly favoured the Tories partially because they upheld the royal prerogative and partially because they largely supported the established church. Many Tories were Pope's friends, including Harley, Bolingbroke, Atterbury and, of course, Swift. Despite his religious difference with Anglican Tories and his pose of being above the faction of party strife Pope's overall political tendencies were towards Tory Humanism, very probably with Jacobite tendencies. The reign of Anne therefore came to be seen as something of a Golden Age for Pope and his Tory contemporaries. An optimism of tone is present to a certain extent in both versions of *Windsor Forest* which was published in full on the 7th of March, 1713, and dedicated to Lord Lansdown as the principal instigator of the peace of Utrecht, signed only a few weeks later on April the 11th. The earlier version had been written as a balanced exploration of the theme of *concordia discors* at a time when the peace was only a glorious vision. As Pope himself notes, the later version, from line 290 onwards, was written in 1713 very soon before publication when the vision had been realised by his friends. Utrecht was a Tory peace, negotiated over the objections of the Whigs, who preferred an uncompromising military

³*TE*, I, 123-94: further references will be in the main text.

⁴Edwards, p. 7.

victory. The Tories, billing themselves as comparatively peaceable, conceded territorial control in favour of trading rights with the West Indies; it was as a result of this Tory settlement that England gained the slave monopoly in the Spanish New World. In this context, then, Pope produced a poem celebrating the expansion of commerce and all the possibilities for the creation of wealth that it seemed to offer.

In another situation, however, the final version of the poem was written against the background of the Revolution Settlement that ensured the succession of the throne to the Hanoverian Electress Sophia should Anne leave no heir. At the time of writing the final part of the poem in 1713 Anne was indeed childless and ill, and Pope's fears were ultimately to be justified in every way when she died in August. Further, as David Morris observes, the threat of violence hung in the air with the Pretender, the son of the Stuart James II, sheltering in the French court and plotting his return.⁵ Although Pope may have favoured the restoration of the Stuart line, assuming Anne died childless, the threat of a civil war with the memories of previous carnage so fresh in the mind must have seemed a fearsome prospect. Although Anne is the classical bringer of peace, an Astraea returned to earth, she is also, in potential, a grotesque bringer of violence.

Anne: Woman as Monarch

In the eighteenth century, as today, a female in power over men had a considerable problem in that the very idea of a woman with power, a woman stepping out of the traditional passive role and into the active one, was very difficult for men to accept, even under the most propitious circumstances. Female monarchs, being the most obvious examples of women in power, have always had the problem of ensuring their acceptance in a generally patriarchal society. A woman wielding the strength of the nation is in a peculiarly vulnerable position in that she can always be seen as a grotesque, someone who has overstepped the boundaries of what should be 'natural' and possible. In order to combat this, Queen Elizabeth built up, consciously or unconsciously, a mythic apparatus that allowed her to inhabit the image of what I would call a classical body, the very opposite of the grotesque she feared she might be perceived as by her male subjects. A female queen had to be seen to be unfemale, and therefore ungrotesque: strong, not weak; hard, not soft; self-enclosed, not fluid and open. Queen

⁵*Alexander Pope: The Genius of Sense* (London, 1984), p. 104.

Anne, following in Elizabeth's footsteps, had to perform a similarly successful feat of self-fashioning, or what I will call self-masculinisation.

During and after her lifetime, Anne had to defend herself against charges of weakness, womanliness, or plain deviance. In his *Queen Anne*, Edward Gregg describes the acceptance by subsequent historians of Sarah Marlborough's depiction of her as a weak monarch, subject to the persuasion of her favourites.⁶ The grounds for her weakness were alleged to be her poor health, her mediocre intelligence, and her sex. It is clear that the former two elements were seen to be predicated on the latter in this period, when women were believed to be ruled by their bodies and not their minds. In fact Gregg points out her highly successful handling of foreign and domestic affairs given a schedule of work so heavy that 'sheer exhaustion must have been a concomitant of her life' (p. 137). Even during the time of her rule she had to endure attacks that played upon the unnaturalness of her position as a woman needing to masquerade at least partly as a man. One ballad accused her of a lesbian affair with Abigail Masham, 'a dirty Chamber-Maid', an accusation that was apparently made to her face by the hostile Sarah Marlborough; sisterly solidarity was not always guaranteed (p. 275). The grotesquerie of this portrait of Anne in contemporary eyes is increased by the fact that she is linked with a woman of lowly rank, one connected with the 'dirt' of the womanly terrain, which Theweleit reminds us is connected with the contaminatory flow of the non-classical. Anne's classical body therefore becomes soiled with the reviled grotesque.

Anne therefore had to sustain an image of herself as endowed with classical male qualities, and, as Elizabeth before her, she largely succeeded. Indeed she consciously linked herself with Elizabeth in a variety of ways, not least by choosing the same motto, *semper eadem*, a motto suggesting fixity and constancy, both male qualities. One of her strategies for achieving classicality was to disguise those features that suggested female weakness: hence Swift said of her (somewhat ruefully) that 'there was not, perhaps in all England, a person who understood more artificially how to disguise her passions' (p. 138). Here one gains the sense of Anne actively engaged in the process of constructing an acceptable identity for herself, removing all trace of the 'passions' which were supposed to rule women at the expense of Reason. Rather than seeing herself as a woman, or allowing herself to be perceived

⁶(London, 1980), p. 137; subsequent references to Gregg will be in the main text.

as one, Anne took on the masculine rigidity of the classical. Gregg recounts Anne's reaction when the Whig Junto was pressing her in 1707 to retract promises that she had made to Tory candidates for ecclesiastical appointments. She told Godolphin: 'Whoever of ye Whigs thinks I am to be Heckter'd or frighted into a Compliance tho I am a woman, are mighty mistaken in me. I thank God I have a Soul above that and am to[o] much concerned for my reputation to do anything to forfeit it' (p. 137).

Classical topography comes into play, moving 'above' rather than below as Anne lifts herself higher than any mere 'woman'.

Ambiguity of the moon: Isis

In *Windsor Forest*, however, we are concerned with how Anne is represented by a male poet, not by herself. Pope shared with most males of his period a fear, whether conscious or unconscious, of the potential for disruption inherent in the ambiguous figure of the female monarch. We find in this poem that Pope tends to overdetermine the grotesque and classical female imagery with his various political, economic and sexual concerns. Thus Anne becomes related to the two categories of the classical and the grotesque by one image that is nevertheless characterised by an essential ambiguity: the moon. More particularly, Anne is associated with Diana, the virgin huntress who commands the tides, rules the forest and is symbolised by the moon. Anne's role as protector of 'the Sylvan Reign,/ The Earth's fair Light, and Empress of the Main' (163) makes her obviously analogous to the classical goddess, and the poem repeatedly returns to this formula.

This is not a simple symbolic equation, as Diana, or the moon goddess Isis, is a tripartite being. As Douglas Brooks-Davies has noted, this important mythological influence on Pope's imagination has 'a threefold office'; she is Luna in the heavens, Diana upon earth, and Hecate in hell.⁷ This triple division in fact tends to collapse into a binary opposition in Pope's poetry, an opposition that corresponds to the grotesque and the classical. The classical aspect of Diana/Isis is the 'higher' part: Diana and Luna, or Luna Diana as these two were occasionally conflated into one goddess. They are characterised by a cleansed purity of body and spirit, the 'law of Diana' being the law of chastity. The grotesque aspect is the 'lower' half: Hecate, a witch who brings madness and destruction. As an image in itself, the moon carries the seeds of this paradox: on the classical side, the moon reappears night

⁷*Pope's Dunciad and the Queen of the Night* (Manchester, 1985), p. 6.

after night, and can therefore be seen as a general symbol of constancy; but in the grotesque aspect it can be a symbol of instability and uncertainty. Hence Cesare Ripa, a major influence on Pope's poetry, depicts the icon of Inconstancy as a woman in a turquoise robe contemplating a crescent moon whilst holding a bulrush and resting her foot on a crab.⁸ The colour of the robe represents the inconstancy of the sea, a common symbol of feminine instability as many writers including Theweleit and Salvaggio have argued.⁹ The bulrush indicates that Inconstancy is too weak and fragile to support anything of consequence, and the crab is a symbolically irresolute animal. The crescent moon, most significantly for our purposes, points to the fact that the moon waxes and wanes, just as the tide goes in and out, and is therefore a fitting attribute for Inconstancy, who is, of course, a woman; for above all, the moon is a symbol of the ambiguous feminine.

Diana and Luna: the Classical body

Anne is clearly associated with Diana Luna, taking on the image of the classical body: virginal, removed from the mundane physical sphere like a goddess, all orifices tightly closed. Anne becomes the virginal protectress of Windsor Forest, just as Diana rules the forests of Ortygia:

Let old Arcadia boast her ample Plain,
Th' Immortal Huntress, and her virgin train;
Nor envy *Windsor!* since thy Shades have seen
As bright a Goddess, and as chaste a Queen (159).

These lines stress Anne's classical beauty and purity, whether real or not.

Pope's precedent for this kind of treatment is not entirely original. By a myth partially of her own making Anne was also associated with another queenly virgin, Queen Elizabeth, who was similarly surrounded by a lunar and Isis cult. The extent to which Pope made reality conform to this ideal construction of the pure virginal body is made clear when one finds out that Anne had seventeen children, all of whom died shortly after birth, apart from her son, William, Duke of Gloucester, who survived until the ripe old age of eleven. The frightening realities of eighteenth-century childbirth, both for the mothers and the children, are totally subsumed under the (male) need to mythologically neutralise the grotesque flux of the female body. In order to defeat the possibility of female Inconstancy it is necessary to elevate the female into the restraint of the regulated classical body.

⁸*Cesare Ripa: Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery: The 1758-60 Hertel Edition of Ripa's Iconologia*, edited by Edward Maser (New York, 1971), p. 153.

⁹See Ruth Salvaggio, *Enlightened Absence* (Chicago, 1988).

Nursing Mothers

At another level, the virginal queenly body is allowed not sexuality, but the image of motherhood, more specifically, as the mother of the entire nation. This was a representation that Anne herself embraced as a means of bolstering her monarchical authority in terms of her gender. Her chosen text for the coronation was 'Kings shall be thy nursing Fathers, and Queens thy nursing mothers' (Isiah: 49-23). This kind of image enabled Pope to call on the link of Isis with Ceres as earth-mother or Magna Mater:

Here Ceres' gifts in waving prospect stand,
And nodding tempt the joyful Reaper's hand (39).

Here Anne becomes the ideal combination of reassuring mother/nurse, and we again recall Theweleit on the classical qualities of these 'white women'. Indeed Pope himself revered his own mother, Edith Pope, and his nurse, Mary Beach, and had a great deal to gain psychically by doing so, according to Valerie Rumbold.¹⁰ It is arguable whether later on Patty Blount came to fill both of these roles in Pope's life, but whether or not she did so in practice Rumbold clearly shows Pope's tendency to divide the women in his life into two categories: those classical women who conform to a certain passive ideal, and those grotesque women who transgress the boundaries of passivity and attempt to join the masculine world of activity. Pope's mother, his nurse and Patty would clearly belong to the first group, women writers such as Eliza Haywood and (later) Lady Mary Wortley Montagu would belong to the second. Pope somewhat naturally focused on the representation of Anne as the beneficial mother, an image of female sexuality nullified and directed to the benefit of men like himself.

Patriarchs: the Stuart Line

The classicised image of the monarch further neutralises the threat of Anne's gender in the lines after the state mother allusion. Anne's sex drops out of view: only her function as a harmonious dynastic element in the expansion of capitalism is described:

Here Ceres' Gifts in waving Prospect stand,
And nodding tempt the joyful Reaper's Hand,
Rich Industry sits smiling on the Plains,
And Peace and Plenty tell, a STUART reigns (39).

¹⁰*Women's Place in Pope's World* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 29.

The introduction to the Twickenham Edition tells us that the first Stuart, James I, set before Parliament a vision of an era of 'Peace, Plenty, Love', an era to be gained by the union of England and Scotland.¹¹ One hundred years later in 1707 Anne realised this prophecy by giving royal assent to the act of unification. This reference has been used to argue for Pope's Jacobitism, but whether or not this is so, it certainly puts Anne into a line of Stuart patriarchy which brings plenty to the land. The process started by James I is merely continued by Anne, a monarch who happens to be female anomalously carrying the blood of the Stuart line.

Thus the celebratory fertile pastoral scenery reflects the acquisition of expanded trade routes provided by the Treaty of Utrecht. The English 'Oaks' bear 'precious Loads' back from foreign lands in a rather phallic assertion of imperial power where there is no need to envy India her 'weeping Amber' or 'balmy Tree' because the "Realms (are) commanded which those Trees adorn' (29-32). Pope even spells out the synecdoche of Oaks and ships and their dominance over 'the lands whence they came'. The oaks represent England and its qualities, but there is also a reference to the oak that Charles II sheltered in after the Battle of Worcester. Since this royal oak bore the weight of Charles, the 'precious loads' borne by the sea-going oaks are the Stuarts, possibly referring to the anticipated return of the king across the water waiting in the French court, the Old Pretender, James III.¹² Indeed Douglas Brooks-Davies argues for the connection of another monarchical patriarch with Charles through Pope's mention of the star Arcturus at line 119: King Arthur, the archetypal English patriarch. Further, as Earl Wasserman observes, Pope blames all England's subsequent ills upon the execution of Charles I, also buried at Windsor, and the consequent interruption of the Stuart line.¹³

Anne's position in a line of patriarchs is further emphasised if one realises that her command,

At length, great ANNA said-Let Discord cease!
She said, the World obey'd, and all was *Peace!* (327)

was originally modelled on the divine fiat:

Let there be Peace-She said; and all was Peace.

¹¹p. 137

¹²See Douglas Brooks-Davies. 'King Arthur's Star in Pope's *Windsor Forest*,' *Notes and Queries*. 34. (1987) 338-41.

¹³*The Subtler Language* (Baltimore, 1959), p. 161: further references in the main text.

It is not clear whether Pope changed his original line because it would be too blasphemous to put a woman in place of the greatest of all patriarchs, or merely whether any mortal should be allowed such power; very possibly it is a combination of these two reasons, but the overall effect remains the same. The problem of Anne's gender is largely hidden beneath the cover of male authority and justification that is supplied not only in her blood line, but also by the divine right of kings. In other words, by the direct sanction of God.

Thames: Patriarchy continued, and the Recuperation of Anne

To complete Anne's classicisation, she is placed under the literal father figure of old Father Thames, the patriarch introduced by Pope into the final version of the poem, no doubt to provide a sense of closure through the feeling that a male is ultimately in control, mythologically if not sociologically. A contemporary review in the *Guardian* said that the poem gave 'a manly and rational satisfaction', and it is undoubtedly the case that the presence of Father Thames gives a rather irrational basis for this rational satisfaction.¹⁴ This reading is borne out by the reaction of the critic who has provided the most comprehensive reading of *Windsor Forest* so far: Earl Wasserman. He finds that Anne's banishment of Discord 'is an incomplete and wholly unsatisfactory resolution of the two conflicting themes of the poem, war and peace, activity and reflective retirement' (p. 162). For Wasserman, this is a 'deathly peace', unrepresentative of *concordia discors* because, for some reason, it does not reflect the tensions of creative energy. Much more exciting for him is the introduction of Father Thames as a virile spokesperson for the British people: 'dramatically Father Thames, the symbol of England's commerce, can now *rise* and *dominate* the final stage of the poem. It is he who makes the exalted prophecy with which the poem closes' [my italics]. This is what is really needed: the rather passive and decorous Anne gives way to a thrusting male who can 'dominate' the conclusion of the poem. After all, commerce is the perfect symbol of peaceful war, as Wasserman informs us, and war is man's work, unfit for a woman even if she is a monarch. Only a man can be 'satisfactory' and 'complete'. To make this point even more obvious, Wasserman calls Father Thames Pope's '*crowning symbol*', making it sound very much as if Thames is actually the king and, by implication, in charge of Anne, his queen (p. 163).

¹⁴ See Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts* (London, 1958), p. 214 for the quotation.

To strengthen the patriarchal dominance even further, Father Thames takes on the characteristics of Saturn, the father of Astraea and the Golden Age. Saturn too is a bearded old man with a blue/grey mantle and often with a ship or an oar as his emblems. Similarly his attributes are those of a prophet possessing great wisdom who holds all time in his hands and has the role of the spokesman for the nation. As David Hauser has shown, Anne is associated with Astraea in the poem as she too is the bringer of a new Golden Age.¹⁵ Like Anne, Astraea is mythologically connected with Diana, Ceres and the Queen of Arcadia. Thames therefore becomes the father of Anne in a mythological/biological sense. Accordingly the moon, the symbol of Diana and therefore of Anne, appears 'Grav'd ' on the Urn of Old Father Thames. Although here the moon is a symbol of Anne's power 'that guides/ His swelling Waters, and alternate Tydes' (333), it remains only a symbol. It is Father Thames who physically bears the English oaks which unite the world, and it is he who actually speaks for the nation in the poem. Anne is silent, barring the one reported statement, at which point Thames is introduced to do the real job. Anne as female remains a passive, speechless symbol, whilst Thames as male is given the active power of prophecy through the process of surrogate masculinisation. In a common strategy, woman is classicised and elevated until one can no longer hear her speak.

The Grotesque body: Hecate

However, Pope does not seem able to allow these classical representations of the desexualised, ostensibly power-wielding female to go unchallenged, so, at the crucial point in the poem, just at the end of Thames' climactic speech and before Pope closes the poem with an image of pastoral poetic contemplation, he inserts the grotesque bodies of Discord and her followers, a disruptive multiplicity of feminine disorder to be suppressed by the alternative classical body of Anne. Woman is therefore split into representations of conformist chastity/passivity and threatening physicality/aggression. The threat of a woman in power results in horrified projection of female appropriation of the phallus and its power despite the fact that she is ostensibly lauded as the bringer of peace. The raised symbolic topography of the classical Anne/Diana Luna is suitably counterpoised to the location of Discord in the grotesque lower darkness of 'deepest hell' (413). Discord, by implication, becomes Hecate, the

¹⁵'Pope's Lodona and the Uses of Mythology', *Studies in English Literature*, 6 (1966), 465-82.

sexualised and violent member of the moon goddess triad. She was considered to be the queen of hell, goddess of witches, a destroyer of men, and a general instigator of misery and *discordia* without the *concors*: 'Hecate was the name of a cruel woman, who delighted in hunting, and instead of killing or shooting beasts, murdered men. Sure she had been a fit wife for that mighty hunter Nimrod'.¹⁶

Hecate therefore becomes one of Susan Gubar's monstrous mothers, who gives death rather than birth. Her love of hunting men transforms her into a destructive Diana, and consequently links yet contrasts her with Anne, whose enjoyment of the sport was in any case well known. Swift describes her hunting activities in the Great Park at Windsor in the summer: 'she hunts in a chaise with one horse ... which she drives herself, and drives furiously like Jehn, and is a mighty hunter like Nimrod'.¹⁷ Nimrod was well known as the type of the cruel tyrant, a biblical figure who sinned by hunting men and not beasts. This comment could have less than comic tones, in that Swift was refused promotion to a desirable post by Anne, so he could indeed have seen her as tyrant of a sorts, a fitting wife for a Nimrod. It is symptomatic that Swift exactly echoes the previous description of Nimrod as a 'mighty hunter'. Swift sees the potential for the grotesque misuse of power by a woman who unnaturally is allowed access to it.

Discord

The representation of Discord and her other female cohorts such as Envy conveys the sense of powerful females waiting to wreak havoc with their power if only they could be released from the controlling might of Anne. In fact it is Jupiter who exiles Discord originally; and, given the context of who is actually speaking at the end of the poem, there is always the feeling that it is Father Thames/Saturn who is really in control. Even so it is important that Anne is seen to represent grotesque Discord's classical Other; the 'good' female who nevertheless, because she is female and therefore ambiguous, has the potential to change into her obverse state and become an 'evil' woman. Thus one finds an underground female community which becomes the hideous opposite of Diana and her female followers:

Exil'd by Thee from Earth to deepest Hell,
In Brazen Bonds shall barb'rous Discord dwell:
Gigantic Pride, pale Terror, gloomy Care,

¹⁶Alexander Ross, *Mystagogus Poeticus, or the Muses Interpreter* (London, 1648), p.153.

¹⁷Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne* (London, 1980), p.343.

And mad Ambition, shall attend her there.
 There purple Vengeance bath'd in Gore retires,
 Her Weapons blunted, and extinct her Fires:
 There hateful Envy her own Snakes shall feel,
 And Persecution mourn her broken Wheel:
 There Faction roar, Rebellion bite her Chain,
 And gasping Furies thirst for Blood in vain (413).

Not only is Discord female, but also her devilish cohorts are repeatedly indicated to be of the same gender: 'her weapons', 'her fires', 'her own snakes', 'her broken wheel', 'her chain'. These are also females with power to have a possible effect upon the state, females who have appropriated the phallic snakes (Hecate's chariot was supposed to be drawn by dragons) and 'weapons', covered in 'Gore' and thirsting for blood. This association of blood with the female also draws in the (grotesque) menstrual flows of the deterritorializing and excessive female body, another link with the unsavoury aspect of the feminine moon image.

In composing this crucial and discordant scene Pope drew upon the iconographical tradition we see in Ripa and the like. Envy in particular seems to blend into the rich pictorial tradition which precedes the Augustan female grotesques. Ripa depicts her as an aged and very ugly woman sitting half naked, her shrivelled breasts exposed. She is livid in colour and has snakes instead of hair. Resting her hand on a hydra, she eats a human heart, whilst a lean and hungry dog watches nearby.¹⁸ Envy literally eats her heart out as she is eaten away to nothing by her predominant emotion. She again is an anti-mother, incapable of giving nourishment with her shrivelled breasts. The snakes are generally symbolic of evil as well as particularly referring to the torments of Envy mentioned by Pope.

It is also clear, however, that Pope, and presumably Ripa also, drew on the depiction of Envy in Book II of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Minerva (another goddess linked with Diana/Anne) goes to see her antitype Envy. Ovid provides more detail of Envy's circumstances which is exploited here and elsewhere by Pope. Thus Minerva finds Envy's house 'filthy with black gore. Her home was hidden away in a deep valley, where no sun shines and no breeze blows; a gruesome place and full of a numbing chill. No cheerful fire burns there, and the place is wrapped in thick, black fog'.¹⁹ Ovid provides more clearly the 'low' topography of the grotesque, the womb-like gloom of the grotesque female, hidden away from the light of the classical and Reason. She actually groans when she sees

¹⁸Cesare Ripa, edited by Maser, p. 57.

¹⁹Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by F. Miller, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols (London, 1958-84), I, 113-15, lines 760-86.

Minerva's brightness. This darkness also links her with Hecate, as does Ovid's vivid realisation of her repulsive body. As in Ripa, 'Pallor o'erspreads her face and her whole body seems to shrivel up', she squints, her teeth are 'foul with mould', 'green, poisonous gall o'erflows her breast, and venom drips down from her tongue'. Hecate too is associated with poison, and Ovid's description makes more emphatic Envy's opposition to the true maternal role of the feminine. Unlike Ripa, Ovid's Envy eats snake's flesh. Ripa's introduction of cannibalism may be more horrific, but there seems to be the need to keep the snakes in the picture as an icon of evil and especially of female susceptibility to corruption.

This encounter with the female grotesque may not be confined to a mythographical context, as I have already suggested. The potential for Discord to literally emerge with bloody consequences in England was ironically potentially dependent on Anne's own wasted body. If Anne did not provide an heir, there was the potential for a struggle over the succession between the Hanoverians and the Stuarts. As it subsequently proved, this threat of violence was realised at various times in the following years with the constant possibility of a Jacobite invasion. The very presence of Discord at this stage in the poem, however shackled she might be at present, signals a possible future problem directly linked to the very problem of the grotesque connection between the monarchical succession and the female reproductive capacity. However, as we will see in the next section, Anne is not the only female in the poem who bears the ambiguous potential of grotesque violence beneath her classical exterior.

Lodona: Under the Care of Diana

I have not as yet mentioned the other pivotal female figure in the poem who is linked with both Diana and Anne: the nymph Lodona. The presence of her Ovidian rape narrative has puzzled critics, as it is not immediately clear what such a mythological episode has to do with the rest of the poem in quite the same way as those of Father Thames and Discord, for example. The Twickenham editors refer to the Lodona passage as being 'so often dismissed as a puerile Ovidian excrescence', and Reuben Brower criticised it as a 'piece of literary bric-a-brac'.²⁰ Critics such as Wasserman have rightly historicised the episode, but they do not fully account for the emotional charge carried by the

²⁰See p. 140, and *Alexander Pope, the Poetry of Allusion* (Oxford, 1959), p. 57.

attempted rape of Lodona, and it is this excitement that I will be trying to explain, as well as the related sexual/political logic of the narrative.

Pope chooses the name of the nymph Lodona as it was the name of the river in Arcadia where the nymph Syrinx met her fate in the Ovidian narrative that Pope uses as the basis of this episode. The name of this mythological river is linked with the actual river Loddon, a tributary of the Thames that flows through Windsor Forest and actually meets the Thames near Pope's former home in Binfield. The immediate connection is made between the protectress of Windsor, Anne, and the protectress of the Arcadian woods and the nymphs therein, Diana. It is said that Diana once roamed the 'Windsor shade' (in Pope's mythology),

arm'd with Silver Bows in early Dawn,
Her buskin'd Virgins trac'd the Dewy Lawn (169).

Indeed Lodona is pointedly similar to her mistress. We are told that Lodona was famed 'above the rest' and that

Scarce could the Goddess from her Nymph be known,
But by the Crescent and the golden Zone (175).

A zone is a girdle or a belt, so it is only in terms of what she wears that Lodona can be distinguished from Diana. We are also informed that Lodona 'scorn'd the Praise of Beauty, and the Care' (177) because she follows 'Diana's law' of virginity. In fact the females in the other Ovidian rape episodes that Pope draws upon at this point, those of Arethusa, Callisto and Daphne, are all followers of Diana and Diana's law, and are all compared to Diana at some point. It seems here that Lodona is linked with the positive classical control of sexuality literally embodied in Anne and Diana Luna. But there appears to be a problem with this: such controlled sexuality is not obviously employed in the service of male goals by the female hunting community of Diana, where men are punished for their intrusion into the feminised space of her wood. Such a community of women seems rather too independent, rather too happy with itself, as one sees in the passage describing their hunting activities; as we remember this is a motif that makes the link with Anne due to her interest in this sport. However, this society of women ruled by a woman who is associatively symbolic of Anne is not allowed to remain free of masculine aggression and control. Although Lodona ostensibly seems to be connected to the classical body, one finds that she too has the potential for grotesque transgression of boundaries, and this is played out in the rape narrative.

Grotesque Transgression

One crucial aspect of the Lodona episode which all the critics seem to have noted is that it is in fact the victim of the attempted rape who is at fault rather than the aggressor, that it is she who has committed a crime:

It chanc'd, as eager of the Chace the Maid
Beyond the Forest's verdant Limits stray'd,
Pan saw and lov'd, and burning with Desire
Pursu'd her Flight; her Flight increas'd his Fire (181).

There is a sense that Lodona has transgressed some boundary, has overstepped the legitimate mark of feminine activity or allotted role in her eagerness for the usually phallic sport of hunting, thus straying 'beyond the forest'. From the patriarchal perspective she has invited Pan to pursue her as she has ignored the 'limits' set out for her.

Earl Wasserman's commentary reflects this rather perverse judgement of Lodona. He significantly notes that Pope has added the fact that Lodona is pursued because she strays beyond the limits of the forest without any hint in Ovid, and that his erudite audience would be aware of this (pp. 133-34). He believes that 'Pope's audience could be counted on to detect *something unnatural* in the impetuosity of the nymph Lodona. From the very outset the nymph is identified as the river Loddon, since she is the 'Offspring' of the Thames (170), but the river had long been notable for its slowness ... The nymph therefore can be understood to be acting contrary to the nature of the river she represents' [my italics] (pp. 134-35). Wasserman explains the strange behaviour of the nymph, or rather the strange interpretation put upon it, by revealing its true nature as a political allegory. Lodona in fact represents the English people who are controlled by Anne/Diana, and Windsor Forest is England/Arcadia, the terrain over which Anne has control. To Wasserman therefore, Lodona can be read as the English people out of control, lead by the Whigs, an 'unnatural excess of the human warring instinct, symbolised by Lodona's eagerness for the chase, that impels her beyond the confines of England, beyond the protection of the 'natural' political structure' (p. 135).²¹

Pope thus expresses grotesque political behaviour, that is, the transgression of what he regards as the 'natural' boundaries of the classical body politic, in terms of grotesque or 'unnatural' feminine

²¹Vincent Carretta sees the Lodona episode as a mythic representation of the evils that befell England when she transgressed the bounds of Gloriana's constitution. Pan, the god of irrational lust, represents the excesses that embraced England in the seventeenth century.

behaviour which crosses the boundaries of the sexual body politic. Lodona is a woman who resides in an unnaturally female dominated society, closed to male penetration. She obviously enjoys a usually male activity to the exclusion of any actual interest in men. Wasserman sees that she has 'scorn'd the Praise of Beauty, and the Care', and comes to the conclusion that 'Lodona has disdained the order, the harmony, the shaping care required to mold her wild energy into concordant strife' (p. 135). 'Praise of Beauty' must obviously come from men, and it is precisely men that she has no thought for when she herself penetrates 'with her Dart the flying Deer' (180). From the male point of view Lodona is grotesque at this point because she usurps the power and position of the male. She is active rather than passive as she engages in this strenuous physical activity. In a role that is pointedly reversed later on, she herself is symbolically the sexual aggressor as she 'wounds' the deer with her 'Dart'. The hunting of deer is obviously a common poetic trope for the pursuit of the male by the female. Like Anne and Diana who she aspires to imitate, Lodona is a female occupying the space of a male. Unlike Anne, however, Lodona can be more obviously t(h)amed to add to the 'manly and rational satisfaction' given by the poem.

Another male critic puts a rather more mythological interpretation on Lodona's rape. David Hauser comments on the fact that the fates of all four nymphs that Lodona is based on arise from that their adherence to 'Diana's law'. Their determination to remain chaste only intensifies the desire of the pursuers, and each nymph finds herself in difficulty because she attempts to achieve the status of a goddess.²² It appears that Hauser identifies that old chestnut of female pride as the cause of rape, rather than the overt desire to remain chaste. Pride, as we will remember, is the cardinal sin in the *Essay on Man*, and Pope continually attacks female pride throughout his poetic career, and most especially in *The Rape of the Lock* where Belinda's desire to retain her virginity, stay unmarried and wield female power over men leads to exactly the same symbolic fate that Lodona suffers. The male critics echo Pope's emotional judgements of the desired status of women. For them too female pride and female power is a grotesque characteristic. Both Wasserman and Hauser put the blame of the attempted rape upon the victim - a familiar outcome in a patriarchal society.

²²Hauser, p. 467.

Paradox: Institution of the Classical through Rape

Such an act of grotesque transgression is not allowed to remain uncontrolled, however, so in the middle of Pan's pursuit of Lodaona we are prepared for the restoration of the nymph to the classical, 'natural' order. At this point Pope interpolates an image of natural 'hunting' within the chase:

Not half so swift the trembling Doves can fly,
When the fierce Eagle cleaves the liquid sky;
Not half so swiftly the fierce Eagle moves,
When through the Clouds he drives the trembling Doves;
As from the God she flew with furious Pace,
Or as the God, more furious, urg'd the Chace (185).

This identification of male as penetrative solidity, the aggressive pursuer, and of the female as passive victim, receptive liquidity (although this also means transparency) and softness is a return to standard. In Bakhtinian terms the classical body has been reappropriated for the male with all the symbolic associations of the eagle with the power of the state. Eagles, like statues, are also usually raised above the populace, gazing down with a steely, penetrative, and threatening stare. The boundaries of this body are hard and closed, phallically impervious to penetration from the outside. Pope actually substituted the eagle for Ovid's hawk, the eagle also being more connected with the war which Pan partly represents. Here one must note the extreme complexity of the play of the classical and the grotesque across the genders. As we see with Theweleit, Salvaggio and Gilbert and Gubar, the liquidity of the female is regarded as grotesque in itself, but in this case not as grotesque as the usurpation of male solidity by the female. Clearly this is a double bind; in terms of male representation, women ultimately cannot win.

The effect of this passage is to prepare the reader for the reversal of the grotesque Lodaona into an orderly, classical Lodaona, both at the sexual and political levels. Thus the return to a phallic economy in this simile is paralleled in the ultimate conclusion of the myth:

In vain on Father Thames she calls for Aid,
Nor could Diana help her injur'd Maid.
Faint, breathless, thus she pray'd, nor pray'd in vain;
'Ah Cynthia! ah-tho' banish'd from thy Train,
Let me, O let me, to the Shades repair,
My native Shades-there weep, and murmur there.'
She said, and melting as in Tears she lay,
In a soft, silver Stream dissolv'd away (197).

Lodaona moves from the fluidity of the 'liquid Sky' to the literal fluidity of her metamorphosis into the river for which Pope initially named her. She is now emphatically soft, yielding, whilst the

mention of silver in reference to light recalls the light of the moon and reminds one of the Lodona/Diana/Anne chain of association. Diana, the powerful goddess is now disabled, bereft of her female strength with the intervention of the rapacious Pan, a phallic god whose carnivalesque lust is here channelled into a punitive role. Politically, Earl Wasserman relates Lodona's plea to the request of the people to be returned to the sanity of English (Tory) rule under Anne after the removal of the Whig ministry in 1710 and Marlborough's loss of his post. Lodona now begs to be returned to her native shades (p. 138). Unfortunately Diana can no more restore Lodona to her former condition than Anne could England before the war. Therefore by turning into a river that flows through the forest Lodona is in a sense returned politically and sexually.

This recuperation is confirmed in the following lines where Lodona's virginity is retained, but where it was once a symbol of her independence, it is now a symbol of her classicisation and subjection to outside forces:

The silver Stream her Virgin Coldness keeps,
For ever murmurs, and for ever weeps;
Still bears the Name the hapless Virgin bore,
And bathes the Forest where she ranged before (205-8).

Rather than the heat of the pleasure of the hunt, the activity of the female community, and, by implication, the possibility of positive female sexuality, she is sealed in the deathliness of 'her Virgin Coldness'. The repetition of 'silver' now has connotations of the coldness of the moon, now coming to represent a form of confined female power. Similarly, the liberatory flows that we have seen associated with the grotesque body and female sexuality here become a paradoxical dam, a reterritorialization of female sexuality, as Deleuze and Guattari would describe it. Although still a 'virgin', Lodona is now 'hapless', and merely 'bathes' where she once 'ranged'. Ruth Salvaggio also reads this passage as a return to classical stasis:

Nature is both colourful and 'to Advantage dress'd', splendidly ordered within this garden in which no one is tempted into transgression. Even the young nymph, pursued by a lustful Pan, retains her virginity and is transformed into a cold, silver stream. Her watery nature, far from disrupting the order of the forest, provides it with a 'Glass' mirror in which its beauty and symmetry are reflected. Nature, colour, woman-they are all fixed in place in this perfect garden, mastered by a poet who would put them all in the service of his art.²³

²³Salvaggio. p. 72.

Salvaggio is not quite correct in the sense that she ignores Lodona's original transgressive state, but she does identify the recuperation of such a state. Wasserman agrees with this interpretation, seeing Lodona as no longer impetuous, becoming the 'slow' Loddon (217): 'the formerly *chaotic* Lodona now reflects in her gentle placidity the world-harmony' [my italics]. Warring huntsmen are replaced by the Shepherd who sees 'the harmony of total representation' (p. 144). The active huntress Lodona has now given way to the passively retired and meditative river which is subjected to the controlling gaze of the (male) poet. The grotesquely active woman has been neutralised into the stasis of the classical.

Male Regeneration: Pope and Father Thames

The point of the Lodona episode is not merely to effect the parable of active femininity brought back under male rule; it does more than that in the context of the whole poem. In using a rape myth to effect the transition of the unruly female to the ruly, Pope is exploiting a long tradition of the rape (or symbolic metamorphosis) of a woman in order to benefit or reenergise men. Looking back to Ripa again, one finds his depiction of Rapine bears the motto:

The Sabine's rape, one must concede,
With the Romans peace did breed.²⁴

Whilst the Ovidian victims are dubiously consoled by being transmuted into various symbolic entities such as laurels, reeds and rivers, the pursuers appear in a positive new light: Apollo's adolescent boasting gives way to prophecy; Pan's lust yields to aesthetic creativity, and Jupiter reassumes his divine character.²⁵

Lodona's fall is ultimately fortunate in two ways: firstly and historically because she is restored, as the English people, to the cause of British Destiny (the Thames) after the Stuart Restoration of 1660²⁶, or more specifically to the Tory cause under Anne; secondly and mythopoetically because Pope as Apollo/Pan is transmuted onto a higher level of control and creative ability. Hence just before the climax of the myth and its transition into the next section of the poem:

Oft in her Glass the musing Shepherd spies
The headlong Mountains and the downward skies (211).

²⁴*Cesare Ripa*, p. 69.

²⁵Hauser, p. 468.

²⁶Carretta, p. 433.

The 'Glass' is the glass or mirror of the newly transformed Lodona, and she now becomes the Muse for Pope who inscribes himself into his own poetic landscape, emphasising his ultimate mythopoeic control over the proceedings. David Hauser has also noticed this mythological link: Astraea returns to dwell harmoniously in the new Golden Age just as Lodona returns to the forest 'and participates in its new life by reflecting it and by inspiring the poet-shepherd'.²⁷ Poetry is of course the mirror of nature in classical poetics. Indeed Pope's later call to the Muses echoes Lodona's call for help:

Bear me, oh bear me to sequestered Scenes,
The Bow'ry Mazes and surrounding Greens; (261);
'Let me, O let me , to the Shades repair,
My native Shades - there weep, and murmur there' (201).

Whereas Lodona is transformed into an object of passive inspiration for the active poetic male gaze, Pope receives the creative inspiration he requires through that very object, although this is paradoxically achieved by pastoral retreat. For Pope, Lodona's rape has resulted in poetic benefit through her return to the classical patriarchal order.

Just as Anne is placed under a line of patriarchs leading up to God, so Lodona is subordinated first to Pope, the ultimate controller of the poem, and to Father Thames, the pivotal patriarchal figure who also displaces Anne to give the poem its manly and rational satisfaction. The river Loddon is identified by Pope as the 'Offspring' of the Thames (172). In the Daphne episode in Ovid, one of the sources for Lodona, her father Peneus is a river god. She attempts to avoid marriage being another follower of Diana, hiding away in the woods to avoid men. Her father agrees to this, but her beauty defeats her aim anyway. Phoebus sees and pursues her; she runs and calls on her father, rather than Diana, to help. He turns her into a laurel tree which then becomes Phoebus Apollo's symbol of poetic achievement. Father Thames is therefore identified with Father Peneus, and the lesson learnt by Daphne/Lodona is that the avoidance of marriage is a sign of unnatural female pride and will be ultimately punished, despite the nominal retention virginity, although symbolically it has been removed due to the metamorphosis.

²⁷Hauser, p. 481.

Following this kind of logic, Lodona, having been observed by the poet, performs the advantageous function of linking Windsor Forest with London, country with city, whilst she is passed from one patriarch to another:

In the clear azure Gleam the Flocks are seen,
 And floating Forests paint the Waves with Green.
 Thro' the fair Scene rowl slow the lingring Streams,
 Then Foaming pour along, and rush into the Thames.
 Thou too, great Father of the British Floods!
 With joyful Pride survey'st our lofty Woods,
 Where Tow'ring Oaks their growing Honours rear,
 And future Navies on thy Shores appear (215).

Father Thames has not answered Lodona's cry because it is back to him that she ultimately flows, back to the 'great Father'. This is a sexual economy centred upon a return to the Same, a return to, or a teleological reabsorption back into, the Phallus, the Father who punishes all deviations and transgressions of the female and female power/sexuality. The moment of absorption back into the father is, for Pope, almost literally orgasmic, as the 'lingring Streams... /Foaming pour along, and rush into the Thames'. One way or another Lodona loses her virginity to the powerful male in a classic double-bind. The Father, of course, is rejuvenated by this affirmation of patriarchy, surveying with 'joyful Pride' his 'lofty Woods,/Where Tow'ring Oaks their growing Honours rear'. This does not need much of a gloss; Pope is in a great state of excitement at this phallic proliferation, identifying strongly with the 'joyful Pride' of the Thames at 'our' lofty woods. Both phallic and political/imperialist economies merge here as the 'Tow'ring Oaks' become the expanded phallus and the future navies of British imperialism, the oak being doubly useful due to its intrinsic associations with British nationalism, a powerful symbol of national unity.

The critics also reflect this logic of return. Vincent Carretta sees the defloration of Lodona as necessary for her incorporation into the proper order of things: 'A sadder, wiser, and no longer innocent Lodona-England is restored to the symbol of British Destiny, the 'great Father of the British Floods' (219).²⁸ Earl Wasserman notes the change of pace of the river as she rushes into the Thames: she regains her 'impetuous energy' but 'now her energy is in accord with Nature, not a violation of it' (p. 163). Lodona can flow constructively into the outside world as Thames does with commerce. Paradoxically, according to patriarchal logic, it is Lodona who 'violates' Nature, the victim who is to

²⁸Carretta, p. 433.

be blamed. The wrongs of political history are mapped onto a sexual history which provides a resolution for such problems. Tory paternalism wins the day in both areas as the Lodona myth allows Father Thames to displace and control both the transgressive females in the poem: Lodona and Anne herself.

Classical Body of Regulated Commerce.

The final institution of the classical at the end of the poem attempts to enforce regulated equilibrium states in all areas. In terms of time and space the distinction between the world's first and last ages is obliterated in Anne/Astraea and Thames/Saturn with the new Golden Age, and the result of Pan's pursuit of Syrinx can be taken to represent the natural concord of the universe.²⁹ The classical tendency to a logic of the Same, what Deleuze and Guattari would call a reterritorializing logic, is reflected in the concept of *concordia discors*, of which Father Thames is the predominant symbol.³⁰ It is he who regulates the 'alternate tydes', the inflows and outflows of goods and capital enabled by the Treaty, the deterritorializing movements of the 'Trees' of Windsor leaving their woods to discover new worlds, 'the bright regions of the rising Day', 'Icy Seas, where scarce the Waters roll', 'led by new Stars'. Such a vision promises a world opened up to all. In reality a reterritorialization takes place in the poem as well as in the later reality (Pope's vision was truly prophetic) in which all the world is conveyed back to the Thames which opened out the flows in the first place, oxymoronically couched in the rhetoric of freedom:

The Time shall come, when free as Seas or Wind
Unbounded Thames shall flow for all Mankind,
Whole Nations enter with each swelling Tyde,
And Seas but join the Regions they divide (397).

'Whole Nations' are swallowed up in Pope's paradoxical vision of freedom, hence the reversal of the 'new World' coming back to 'seek the Old' and the 'painted Chiefs' who 'admire/Our Speech, our Colour, and our strange Attire!' (401-406). Pope's vision of these willing victims of British imperialism demands a similarly willing acceptance of his mythic paradoxes. Ironically Pope himself had invested in the South Sea Company which so busily exploited the monopoly on the slave trade enabled by Utrecht.

²⁹Hauser, pp. 481, 468.

³⁰See Wasserman, p. 164.

Even Pope's economic theory follows the logic of the classical. Earl Wasserman points out the reciprocal movement of commerce was frequently likened to the circulation of a river, and he quotes Sir Francis Fane linking the subject with the Restoration of Charles:

For whereas wealth before was retir'd into solitary Creeks, and had no reflux into Community, it is now derived through bountifull Channells upon the lower grounds, and convey'd to fertilize all barren places according to their necessities: so that there is not only a mutual communication of Riches, but frequently a transmigration of Estates ... There is indubitably in the body Politique no less, than in the Natural, a Circulation: and treasure, like Blood, must first be convey'd into the Nobler Parts, then to the Rest, else there will ensue a Putrefaction of the whole Mass, a decay of Commerce, and a general Poverty.³¹

The new discourse of capitalism and trade is modelled by Fane on the rather older, but flexible category of the classical. The essential hierarchy of the classical body is observed: the high dominates the low, the 'Nobler Parts' of the 'body Politique' must be valorised over 'the Rest'. It is no mistake that Fane calls to mind the metaphor of the classical body when he wishes to describe a properly regulated condition, and it is no mistake that Pope uses a patriarchal figure as its regulator. The alternative is a grotesque female 'Putrefaction of the whole Mass', like Vengeance 'bathed in Gore'.

Conclusion

It is clear that, read in this light, the celebration of capitalism in *Windsor Forest* does indeed turn out to be just that. The celebration of Anne does not turn out to be just that, however. Through the subtle, or not so subtle, use of the grotesque as manifested in Hecate/Discord, contrasted with the elevation of Diana/Anne into the classical body, one is presented with a rupture in the being of woman. Pope dislocates the powerful woman into two equally unreal entities, one, a classical idealisation, and the other a grotesque multiplicity against which the first is placed. The split that occurs in relation to Anne is repeated with Lodona, who is initially presented as grotesque and then classicised, brought back into the fold by the pivotal figure of Father Thames, the Saturnian patriarch who brings order to potentially chaotic women, although Pope lights upon Lodona as a way of symbolising instability in the first place. Not for the last time in his poetry, Pope uses a rape narrative as a way of resolving issues both political and sexual.

³¹ *A Panegyric to the Kings most excellent Majesty* (1662), p. 3; Wasserman, p. 165.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RAPE OF THE LOCK: THE GROTESQUE RESTRAINED

Motivations

As is well-known, this most intensively analysed of Pope's poems was originally composed at the prompting of Pope's friend John Caryll to unite two divided Catholic families by mirth.¹ The cause of the rift was the theft of Arabella Fermor's lock of hair by Lord Petre; an act that, as Rumbold notes, may or may not have been 'the disastrous climax of a troubled courtship or a simple practical joke; but whichever it was, it had connotations which could make it deeply offensive'.² As a synecdoche for Arabella's honour, the lock of hair represented the possible ruination of all her marital prospects. This was bad enough, but in the closed and defensive world of the Catholic community a row between two major families could ill be afforded. Hence Caryll's plead to Pope as a 'common acquaintance and well-wisher' to 'laugh them together again'.³

Caryll's request prompted Pope to produce just such a poem, and its initial favourable reception in manuscript with the lady in question suggested that it had done the trick. Unfortunately when the first two canto version appeared in 1712 it transpired that Arabella was far from pleased with it. Pope ingenuously wrote to Caryll that 'the celebrated lady herself is offended, and, which is stranger, not at herself, but me'.⁴ If one looks at the poem from a female perspective, however, it is not at all strange that Arabella should be offended. On a primary superficial reading, the reading that has been critically dominant until recently, the poem appears to be a lavish compliment to the dazzling beauty of Arabella Fermor, or 'Cosen Bell', as Teresa and Patty Blount called her, or the Belinda of the poem (Rumbold, p. 67). This kind of 'innocent' reading is presumably the one performed by Arabella before the poem was published. After publication, however, the poem was exposed to the more cynical glance of a less charitable audience. Such an audience, composed of people like Dennis and Gildon, noticed

¹All references will be to the 1714 version of the poem unless specified otherwise: see *TE*, II pp. 139-212.

²Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World*, p. 68: further references will be in the main text.

³Spence, no. 104, in Rumbold, p. 68.

⁴*Pope Corr.*, 151, in Rumbold, p. 73.

that the poem was full of the most lewd insinuations regarding Belinda's lax moral character, and had no qualms in applying such insinuations to Arabella herself. Hence in Gildon's play *Bays the Younger* Sawney Dapper is cast as Pope, 'a young poet of the modern stamp, an easy Versifier, Conceited, and a Contemner secretly of all other'. Dapper observes that

you must make the Ladies speak Bawdy, no matter whether they are Women of Honour or not; and then you must dedicate your Poem to the Ladies themselves. Thus a friend of mine has lately, with admirable Address, made Arabella F[er]m[o]r prefer the Locks of her Poll, to her Locks of another more sacred and secret Part.

Oh! hadst thou Cruel! been content to seize

Hairs less in Sight-or any Hairs but these. [4. 175]

But this is likewise a Complement to those Parts of the Lady, to let the World know that the Lady had Hairs elsewhere, which she valu'd less'.⁵

As Gildon makes clear, Arabella is made to seem more, rather than less, duplicitous; more concerned for her reputation than her honour. If the poem is a compliment to Arabella, it is at least a double edged one. Indeed, the poem took on a life of its own as it turned into a five canto piece with the added epic machinery and Clarissa's speech, Pope's underlying concerns in the composition of the poem becoming more obvious. Dennis published his *Remarks on Mr. Pope's Rape of the Lock* in 1728 and Pope made manuscript comments on these Remarks which had originally been private letters. Contrasting Pope's poem unfavourably with Boileau's *Lutrin*, Dennis points out that Boileau's is the better poem because it has a moral: 'Tis indeed a noble and important satirical Poem, upon the Luxury, the Pride, the Divisions, and Animosities of the Popish Clergy'. At this point Pope replaced 'Popish Clergy' with 'Female sex', leading one to the conclusion that Pope considered the satirical attack on women to be the real 'key to the lock'.⁶ From the very beginning, it appears that Pope was willing to allow considerations of the actual historical motivation for the poem to be superseded by his own antifeminist concerns. His subsequent attempts at damage limitation were unconvincing to all concerned. His *Dedication* to the 1714 version notoriously attempts to sever the historical connection between Arabella and Belinda: 'The Human Persons are as Fictitious as the Airy ones; and the Character of Belinda resembles You in nothing but in Beauty'. Ironically Arabella was not considered to be extraordinarily beautiful, whilst her implied moral resemblance to Belinda had already caused problems. Pope's disclaimer was therefore already doomed to failure.

⁵*The Critical Heritage*, pp. 94-95.

⁶*The Critical Heritage*, p. 100.

This shifting quality of the poem, the tension between an illusory surface and an underlying reality has been frequently noted by the critics; the dazzling presentation of the beau monde masks concerns which seem to hint at themes more serious than the triviality of the beaus and belles. A similar feeling occurs when one considers the centrally ambiguous character of Belinda. As Ellen Pollak observes, although Belinda is in one sense at the centre of Pope's fictional universe, she is ideologically marginal.⁷ Belinda seems to possess a dazzling surface which conceals other more 'real' aspects of her personality that are the true 'key' to the poem, just as Pope used, consciously or unconsciously, the pretext of a unificatory poem to divide the sexes, and more particularly, the sex itself.

Belinda and the Illusory Classical

In the process of disguising the more unsavoury aspects of his poem, Pope presents a superficially classical Belinda. On a cursory reading, the pursuit of chastity seems entirely laudable, constituting as it does the preservation of a body closed to exterior (male) pollution, an idealised feminine rejection of immoral and grotesque influences. Such a quest is promoted by the sylphs as they defend the honour of the belle:

What guards the Purity of melting Maids,
In Courtly Balls, and Midnight Masquerades,
Safe from the treach'rous Friend, the daring Spark,
The Glance by Day, the Whisper in the Dark;
When kind Occasion prompts their warm Desires,
When Musick softens, and when Dancing fires?
'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,
Tho' Honour is the Word with Men below (l. 71).

This passage has all the apparent terminology of a classical/grotesque opposition. Classical 'Purity' prevents the grotesque 'melting' of the 'Maids': integrity of form is maintained. Terry Castle has described how Bakhtin's carnivalesque persisted socially in the eighteenth century in the form of the masquerade, an import from the continent involving the principle of hierarchy inversion which emerged directly from the tradition of the carnivalesque.⁸ Those who wished to defend public morals attacked masquerades as an affront to social boundaries, as they were well known for the practice of anonymous sexual license enabled by the grotesque masks and generally anarchic atmosphere. Pope

⁷*The Poetics of Sexual Myth*, p. 79.

⁸*Masquerade and Civilization*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-43.

appears to reinforce such an attack, conveying the sense of danger and threat to the integrity of the classical body from such immoral venues. The grotesque always carries with it the possibility of the dissolution of boundaries as the music 'softens' the rigidity of moral and physical resolution, overwhelming the mind with the body's 'warm Desires'. Dancing similarly is an activity that promotes unconscious movement of the body above the fortifying activity of reasonable reflection.

The final couplet of the passage reinforces the connection of belles and sylphs with the classical by invoking classical topography. Sylphs can only be known by the 'wise Celestials' raised above the earth in an ideal elevation, whilst the specific threat of 'Men' is to be found in the grotesque 'below' of the Masquerades. One can also understand 'Men' in the sense of 'Mankind', but in this context one thinks of the men who have tried and failed to gain the 'Honour' of belles guarded by the Sylphs.

Bound in with the defence of purity is the light imagery surrounding Belinda. An uncritical reading of the beginning of canto 2 finds the sparkle and glitter associated with Belinda complimentary and positive:

Not with more Glories, in th' Etherial Plain,
The Sun first rises oe'r the purpled Main,
Than issuing forth, the Rival of his Beams
Launch'd on the Bosom of the Silver Thames.
Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone,
But ev'ry Eye was fix'd on her alone.
On her white Breast a sparkling Cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore (2. 1).

Light is traditionally pure, truthful and indicative of moral rectitude as opposed to grotesque darkness. Light is related to the overworld rather than the underworld, especially at the time of the Enlightenment, when Newton's experiments with light seemed to be literally uncovering the truth of the universe, illuminating its most hidden recesses. Belinda's very attractiveness seems to stem from her virginal religious purity which is emphasised by the light of the 'sparkling Cross' on her 'white Breast'. Again this whiteness is suggestive of an unstained soul, unblemished by sin of any kind.

Belinda's status as a moral touchstone is reflected in the representation of her guardians, the sylphs. These too are creatures of light, seeming so pure and classicised that they scarcely partake of fleshly visibility:

Some to the Sun their Insect-Wings unfold,
Waft on the Breeze, or sink in Clouds of Gold.
Transparent Forms, too fine for moral Sight,
Their fluid Bodies half dissolv'd in Light (2. 59).

Like Belinda they are connected to the light of the sun and its golden rays, only more so. Their 'Transparent Forms' suggest that they too are bearers of truth and angelic integrity. Indeed, the later associations of the sylphs with the war of Milton's angels reinforces the idea that the sylphs inhabit the morally positive and superior position as opposed to the devilish Umbriel, for example. Ariel is therefore placed in the role of Belinda's guardian angel.

In the sense that Belinda is felt to need a guardian angel, she must be seen as childlike, and Pope exploits the ambiguous theme of childhood to his advantage throughout the poem. If one again reads the poem from the trusting perspective of Arabella, the use of the childhood motif implies innocence and therefore purity: Ariel informs her that

Some secret Truths from Learned Pride conceal'd,
To Maids alone and Children are reveal'd:
What tho' no Credit doubting Wits may give?
The Fair and Innocent shall still believe (1. 37-40).

The equation between maids and children is made twice, and in this particular context the innocence of childhood is displaced onto the virginal maids who are sheltered from sexuality and the way of the world. Doubting wits are doubting Thomases, as the Biblical parallel makes clear, putting Belinda very firmly on the side of the good and the right. Pope continues to equate the beauty of the body with the beauty of the mind in true classical fashion, punning on the 'Fair' as the generic term for women and as a compliment to Belinda's beauty.

From one perspective then, Pope provides a classical body and a complimentary world for Belinda to inhabit. She appears to be suitably regulated by her guardian Ariel, a father figure who protects her from the carnivalesque mingling of bodies that might occur in the risky world of balls and masquerades. As we have seen in *Windsor Forest* Pope's classical economy requires the reassurance of a male authority figure, a master signifier which brings an ultimate stop to the fluidity of any feminine transgression. At this early point in the poem Ariel appears to be to Belinda what Father Thames was to Lodona and Queen Anne. However, as so often occurs in Pope, things are not always what they seem.

Grotesque Realities

It does not take much consideration of the poem to realise that the complimentary classical veneer is in fact concealing obscene depths, and Pope's contemporaries, as we have seen, immediately noted this on publication, hence the change in Arabella's reaction. The addition of the epic machinery and Clarissa's speech exacerbated these problems still further, as it was seen that the sylphs, far from being the airy beings of truth, light and virtue, were, like their mistress, thoroughly dubious. Despite the angelic references, the sylphs emanate in reality from the Rosicrucian doctrine which destroys the pretence of a classical model. For one thing Ariel, the father figure, is in fact a woman:

As now your own, our Beings were of old,
And once inclos'd in Woman's beauteous mold (1. 47).

Rather than exemplifying angelic moral values, Ariel promotes ones which are satanic:

Hear and believe! thy own importance know,
Nor bound thy narrow Views to Things below (1. 35).

As Earl Wasserman explicates, Ariel echoes the way that Milton's Satan tempts Eve's pride in a dream as he whispers in her ear.⁹ This carnivalesque and 'satanic inversion of humble self-knowledge' encourages Belinda to aspire to the power of the coquette who extends her 'sway' by refusing the 'proper' subjection of marriage. If one stays out of marriage, one avoids the dominion of a husband and remains in control of one's own destiny. Far from keeping Belinda in check, Ariel and the sylphs actually promote her female vanity, a contradiction noticed by Dennis.¹⁰ What the sylphs supply is a grotesque distortion of conventional sexuality as Wasserman astutely indicates: 'the resolute coquette, according to the Rosicrucian theology, is rewarded for her virginity with the (purely imaginary) sexual embraces of ambivalent sylphs, the disembodied souls of deceased coquettes' (p. 430). Or, as Ariel puts it:

Know farther yet; Whoever fair and chaste
Rejects Mankind, is by some Sylph embrac'd:
For Spirits, freed from mortal Laws, with ease
Assume what Sexes and what Shapes they please (1. 67).

This is an extraordinary statement as it appears that Belinda can have her cake and eat it. By rejecting earthly sexual pleasures she is allowed to engage in pseudo lesbian relations with the sylphs.

⁹The Limits of Allusion in *The Rape of the Lock*, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 65 (1966), 425-44 (p. 430): further references will be in the main text.

¹⁰*The Critical Heritage*, p. 106.

Again contemporaries such as Gildon were quick to point out the oddity of this situation: 'the machinery of this poem is admirably contriv'd to convey a luscious Hint to the Ladies, by letting them know, that their Nocturnal Pollutions are a Reward of their Chastity, and that when they Dream of the Raptures of Love, they are immortalising a Silph'.¹¹

The sylphs in fact institute a self-contained female libidinal economy, achieved at the explicit expense of the rejection of men and marriage. One finds here a perverted community of women not totally dissimilar to that of Diana in *Windsor Forest*, although here Belinda is clearly a parodic goddess. Appropriately Ariel is assigned to guard, not Belinda's honour - a lesser sylph does that, but her lap dog, a notorious sexual substitute for a husband in the art of the period as Wasserman explains (p. 430). Thus the line which ends with Shock the lapdog waking his mistress 'with his Tongue' (l. 116) would instantly be recognised by any male reader of the poem as having bawdy implications. In Belinda's world, men are only admitted in the most grotesque and distorted of forms: Ariel is originally a woman; Belinda uses a dog as a dildo. Far from being the classical innocent suggested by the surface imagery, Belinda is in fact eager to receive sexual gratification. Especially revealing in this context are the illustrations of the 1714 edition of the poem. Du Guernier's illustration for canto 1 shows the sleeping Belinda with Ariel hovering above warning her of the following evil event (Illustration 4). We see the lapdog leaping up to wake her, whilst the dressing-table and mirror with which the rites of pride are performed. Also, as Halsband describes it, 'visible beneath the skirt of the dressing-table is an ambiguous form: either a leg, ending in a claw-and-ball foot, of the stool on which Belinda will sit while worshipping 'the Cosmetic Pow'rs'-or the leg and cloven hoof of a satyr'.¹² This grotesque insertion draws attention to Belinda's lascivious nature which is hidden from view initially, both Arabella's and our own. Lest this seem a little tenuous, the frontispiece confirms such a reading, being 'the most provocative of all the plates. Although the first to meet the reader's eye it does not yield up its meaning until after he has read the entire poem' (Illustration 5).¹³ The East Front of the Wren palace forms the backdrop for a group of putti, meant to suggest sylphs, floating in the air. One points up to the star that the lock has become, and another drops some playing cards. A

¹¹*The Critical Heritage*, p. 96.

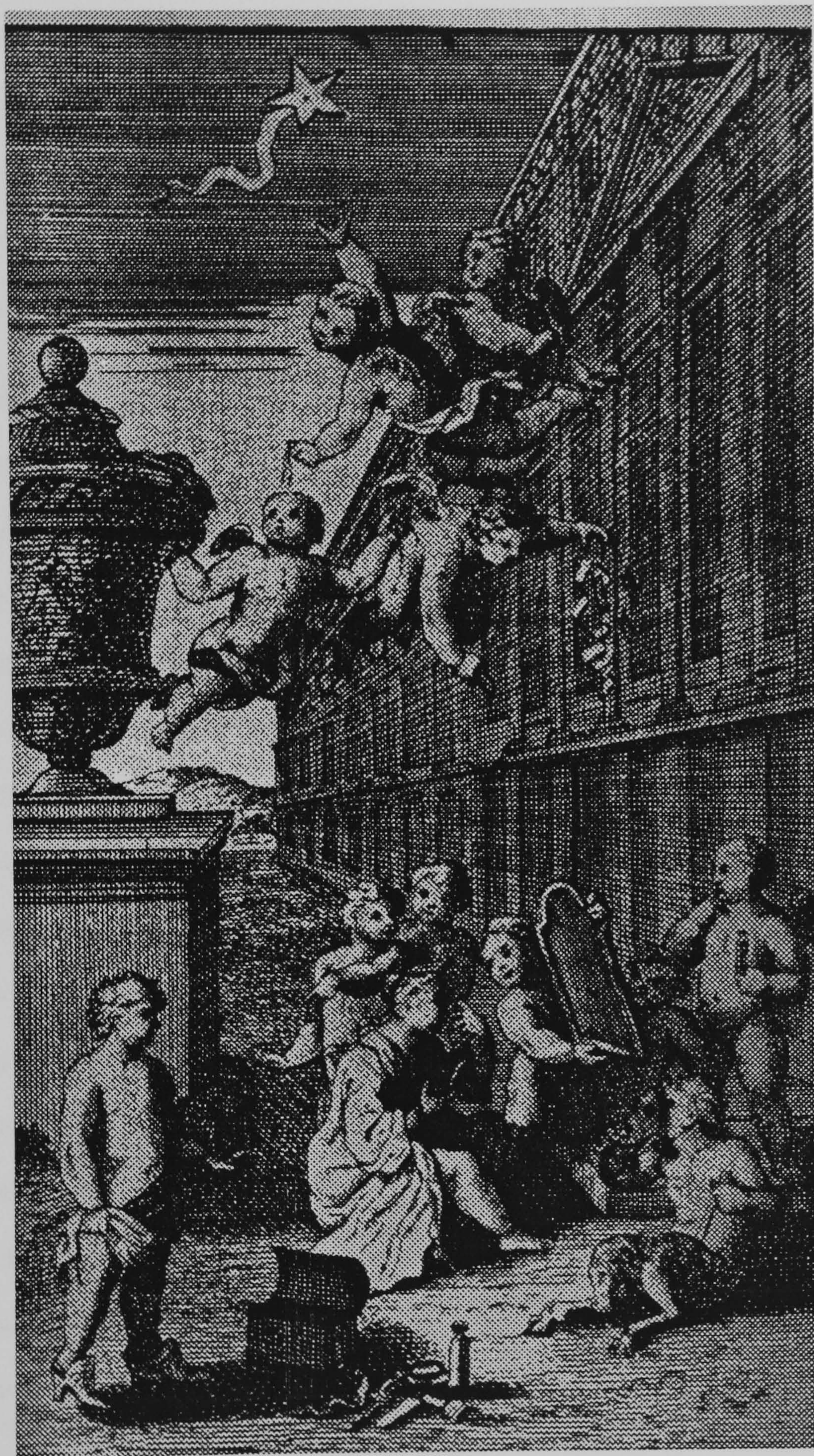
¹²*The Rape of the Lock and its Illustrations, 1714-1896* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 10-11.

¹³Halsband, p. 18.

central group on the ground include a seated female looking into a mirror implying 'a Venus-like Belinda adoring the cosmetic powers; her mirror is held before her by a putto, a common motif exemplified in Titian's and Velasquez's famous paintings of Venus adoring her reflection in the mirror held by Cupid. Her exposed leg is a highly erotic gesture. Biblical and later moralists link the mirror and exposed leg as marks of a lustful woman'. Halsband goes on to say that the figure 'is obviously intended to represent Belinda', and we can draw the conclusion that Belinda is in some sense depicted as enjoying the pleasures of the flesh despite the fact that such pleasures are taken in dreams with the unfleshy sylphs. The satyr in the foreground of the frontispiece is also indicative of the grotesque erotic charge of the poem, although Halsband does not really make anything of the fact that the satyr holds an animal mask in front of his face. In the context of 'Midnight Masquerades' I read this as an allusion to the disruptive and carnivalesque activities of the masquerades to which the unruly Belinda is equally attracted.



4. Louis Du Guernier and Claude Du Bosc, Canto I of *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), engraving.



5. Louis Du Guernier and Claude Du Bosc, frontispiece to *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), engraving.

What is really grotesque about Belinda from Pope's perspective is that she blasphemously seeks to usurp the male role, both sexually and ideologically. Both Maresca and Wasserman note the fact that Belinda creates herself as the supreme deity in a Belindacentric universe. As she undergoes the 'Rites of Pride' before the mirror, a traditional iconographical symbol of Vanitas, Belinda takes over the male roles of god as creator and poet as creator of the work of art. Belinda creates herself as the work of art and worships herself in her own religious cult:

A heav'nly Image in the Glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her Eyes she rears (1. 125).

The 'heav'nly Image' is of course her own, and one that she has created. This kind of art stresses Belinda's self-sufficiency, a worship of her own identity and existence, and this is not how Pope defined 'natural' women. Woman should be defined in relation to the masculine, and Belinda refuses to allow this. Indeed Belinda explicitly blasphemes and usurps the ultimate father figure when she issues a divine fiat of her own and 'calls forth all the Wonders of her Face' (1. 142). This blasphemy is repeated later in the mock-epic card game when Belinda takes the role of the challenging man, the 'Ombre', by choosing the trumps: 'Let Spades be Trumps! she said, and Trumps they were' (3. 46).

Belinda becomes the ruling sun of the whole world at the beginning of canto 2, producing her own light rather than reflecting it like the softer, more passive moon. As a coquette Belinda is capable of wielding her own power rather than deriving it from a husband or a father. The sun becomes an image of grotesquerie when applied to a woman, rather than the controlled classical. Apollo is the sun god, and the sun a symbol of powerful masculinity. The superficially flattering comparison of Belinda to the sun in fact turns out to be indicative of her moral failure: this is a sun which symbolises Belinda's refusal to confine her attentions to any one man:

Bright as the Sun, her Eyes the Gazers strike,
And, like the Sun, they shine on all alike (1. 13).

The dazzling light of Belinda's sun also implies a lack of discrimination, an immaturity of intellect: her mind is 'unfix'd' (1. 9) like that of a child, and it is here that we note the opposite use of the childhood image. Whereas it can be used to imply innocence on a superficial level, at a deeper and more insulting level Pope employs it to show Belinda's narcissistic self-obsession and lack of

governing reason and, implicitly, her lack of a father figure. Thus Pope links images of childish instability with belles:

With varying Vanities, from ev'ry Part,
They shift the moving Toyshop of their Heart (1. 99).

The unfinishedness of the verbs 'varying' and 'moving' stresses the very incompleteness and lack of these childish women whose hearts are like a 'Toyshop'. Their minds are grotesquely fluid as they pass from one vanity to another. Like the sun image, the theme of childhood is revealed to be ultimately insulting to 'Cosen Bell'.

Belinda is found to be the centre of a feminine universe then, a universe unhampered by male restraint. Wasserman points out that in the logic of this world, it is men who are the cause of the Fall. Ariel tells Belinda: 'oh Pious Maid beware! ...Beware of all, but most beware of Man' (1. 112-14), blasphemously echoing Christ's preaching to the Apostles: 'But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues' (Matt. 10: 16-17, p. 434). Wasserman explicitly equates the world of Belinda with that of the world turned upside down, one which is, in our terms, carnivalesque: 'the resolute coquette both aspires to an exclusively female society like that of the Amazons and *inverts hierarchy by usurping man's place*' [my italics]. Pope continually alludes to the alternative feminine space that is opened up by the bizarre universe of Belinda and the sylphs. Not only is she surrounded by her female attendants, the sylphs, she is also aided in the battle of the beaux by 'the fierce Virago' Thalestris, the queen of the Amazons (5. 37), who rejects Clarissa's advice to submit cheerfully to patriarchy by calling her 'Prude' (5. 36). Belinda herself is identified with Virgil's Amazon Camilla when she desires to defeat the beaux 'singly' at Ombre (3. 27), as Camilla volunteered to take on the enemy 'singly'. When the Baron prays to win the lock Pope echoes Virgil's words when Arruns asks for divine help to defeat the same Camilla, the martial virgin:

The Pow'rs gave Ear, and granted half his Pray'r,
The rest, the Winds dispers'd in empty Air (2. 44).

As Wasserman puts it, 'the Amazon is the perfect type of the coquette, implying the fantasy of a self-sufficient female society, ever victorious over men in the sex-battle'.¹⁴ Belinda is really the queen

¹⁴Wasserman, p. 435; see also the *Aeneid*, XI, 792-95, 583.

of this Amazonian band of coquettes, as the comparison with Dido, queen of Carthage at the beginning of canto 4 testifies:

But anxious Cares the pensive Nymph opprest,
And secret Passions labour'd in her Breast (4. 1).

These secret cares mirror the emotions of Dido in her love for Aeneas. More than this, however, as Douglas Brooks-Davies notes, Dido is the Punic word for 'virago', so both Belinda and Dido are queens, women with power usurping the male role.¹⁵ Brooks-Davies also relates Belinda to the armed Venus, 'Venus Armata', possessing the weapons of Minerva or Mars, when 'the Tortoise here and Elephant unite' (l. 135) as combs in the rites of Pride. The ritual arming of the epic hero is joined to symbols of chastity (the elephant) and the domestic Venus (the tortoise). Similarly the 'keener Lightnings' quickening in her eyes (l. 144) remind one of Minerva. Brooks-Davies sees this image as one in a line of many which affirm her attempt to conquer the male space: 'Belinda's initial narcissism, then, fulfils itself in the projection of a militant Venerean image which is then reflected back at her through her companions and attributes: Ariel; Thalestris; Affectation (in canto 4); the Queen of Hearts (canto 3), and so on' (p. 179). Here Belinda is very much at odds with Pope's ideal woman as outlined in his *Epistle to a Lady*:

She, who ne'er answers till a Husband cools,
Or, if she rules him, never shows she rules;
Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,
Yet has her humour most, when she obeys;
Lets Fops or Fortune fly which way they will;
Disdains all loss of Tickets, or Codille;
Spleen, Vapours, or Small-pox, above them all,
And Mistress of herself, tho' China fall (261).

Belinda is at one remove from Pope's ideal (classical) woman because she is not married or under the control of a man: she does not accept or submit. Belinda's reaction to loss at cards or of honour is to give vent to her spleen, not to rise above it with good humour, and it is clear that this passage directly alludes to this event in *The Rape of the Lock*. Belinda is 'Mistress of herself', but not in the way Pope would like; she has her 'humour' without needing to 'obey' and so does not need the self control needed to coyly manipulate an irate husband. Indeed Belinda seems closely related to another lady in the poem who has the Amazonian qualities needed to subjugate men. Whilst Belinda

¹⁵'The Mythology of Love', in *Sexuality in Eighteenth Century Britain*, edited by Boucé (Manchester, 1982), pp. 176-97 (p. 193).

confuses important things with trivial ones, 'Bibles' with 'Billet-doux' (1. 138), Queen Anne replicates this (female) tendency by mingling affairs of state with more feminine occupations:

Here Britain's Statesmen oft the Fall foredoom
Of Foreign Tyrants, and of Nymphs at home;
Here Thou, Great Anna! whom three Realms obey,
Dost sometimes Counsel take-and sometimes Tea (3. 5).

There seems to be something inherently mock-epic in the thought of a woman in power, a woman who has the alternately comic and worrying potential to move between the spheres of masculine power and feminine triviality, 'Counsel' and 'Tea'. In one way Belinda and Anne are contrasted, but in another, more fundamental way, they are compared: they are both women, both 'at best a Contradiction still'.¹⁶

Hysteria and the Grotesque: the Cave of Spleen

The Cave of Spleen is the most obviously grotesque section of the poem, the part that most critics agree can be read from the modern perspective as a reflection of her 'sexual pathology'.¹⁷ Like the world above, this is a realm dominated by a woman, the Goddess of Spleen, who Susan Gubar puts into a tradition of female monsters represented by male authors which includes Spenser's *Errour* and Milton's *Sin*.¹⁸ I would also refer us back to Envy in Ovid and to the iconographic tradition of Ripa that we saw in *Windsor Forest*. In this particular context though, Pope combines the classical tradition of the female grotesque with more recent theories concerning hysteria, a term that was interchangeable in Pope's period with the Vapours, Melancholy and the Spleen. The symptomatology of hysteria is used in the Cave of Spleen to define the transgressive nature of the coquette.

One of Pope's major influences in this episode is Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), a mixture of old and new theories of the condition, and Burton himself professed to suffer from it, as did George Cheyne later on.¹⁹ One would expect that the idea that melancholy is common to both sexes would prevent Burton from using it to specify gender relations; nevertheless he manages to do this. He claims that ancient maids, widows, nuns and barren women are likely to be afflicted by 'those vicious vapours which come from menstruous blood' (p. 272). Retention of menses was thought

¹⁶*Epistle to a Lady*, *TE*, III ii, line 270.

¹⁷Pollak, p. 97.

¹⁸'The Female Monster in Augustan Satire', *Signs*, 3 (1977), 380-94.

¹⁹(London, Chatto and Windus, 1927): references will be in the main text.

to be a specific biological cause as early as the Greeks, and here the notion of sexual unemployment is at work again; women outside the sphere of procreation are thought to be susceptible to the operations of their own bodies. Symptoms can be 'terrible dreams in the night', 'perverse conceits and opinions', 'preposterous judgement' and 'love to be alone and solitary'. Belinda is a woman who avoids marriage and consequently the process of childbirth which puts the womb to use. Her symptoms include the love of being alone, without a particular man; she is afflicted by dreams in the night, although they are only 'terrible' to Pope who disapproves of Ariel's temptations. Her 'perverse conceits and opinions' are likewise constituted by her refusal to obey men.

Belinda also fits the description of a hysteric in terms of her class. Burton claims that a 'course country wench' or 'a poor handmaid' are seldom seen to be troubled, 'but noble virgins, nice gentlewomen, such as are solitary and live idle, live at ease, lead a life out of action and employment, that fare well, in great houses and jovial companies ... such for the most part are missaffected, and prone to this disease' (p. 274). These are women who have no use value, women who are removed from the sphere of 'action and employment' due to their placing in the upper classes: their wealth condemns them to a life of enforced idleness, and the mention of 'noble virgins' implies a sexual idleness as well as an economic one. In avoiding the coarseness of the country wench and the soiled hands of the poor handmaid the upper-class hysteric is subjected to a different kind of bodily pollution in the form of this strange disease. Hysteria comes to symbolise the very uselessness of the woman who is afflicted by it; she is marked out as a female of the upper classes, whose only real value lies in exchange, in the ability of her family to transfer her to a male of a different family in order to ensure the economic well-being of one or both families. This attitude to hysteria persisted into the eighteenth century, becoming even more widespread due to the increased affluence of the middle-classes. Both Steele, writing in the *Tatler* in 1708, and Addison, writing in the *Spectator* in 1711 believed the Spleen to be caused by idleness, no doubt heavily influenced by Burton.²⁰ Thomas Sydenham, one of the major medical figures of Pope's day, echoed Burton in his diagnosis of the relation of hysteria to women; they are more prone because woman is 'endowed by Nature with a more fine and delicate

²⁰Oswald Doughty, 'The English Malady of the Eighteenth Century', *Review of English Studies*, 2 (1926), 257-69 (p. 260).

habit of body, as being destined to a life of more refinement and care'.²¹ Obviously only those women with a moneyed background could expect to enjoy 'a more fine and delicate habit of body', as not all women could possibly be 'destined to a life of more refinement and care'.

Burton's answer to this problem is the same as Pope's: to embrace what Belinda has been trying to avoid. In the case of suitable women: 'the best and surest remedy of all, is to see them well placed, and married to good husbands in due time ... to give them content to their desires' (p. 273). Sexual employment regulated by the husband is the solution advocated by patriarchal medical ideology. Burton allows for the fact that women have desires, and indeed deems it necessary that they should exist: he later curses 'Popish monasteries' that bind people to virginity against the laws of nature (p. 274). For the Protestant there is no place for the priority given to the Virgin Mary and her condition by the Catholics. Virginity is not a productive state beyond a certain point. The idle lady should not be allowed to fritter her life away in pleasure when she can be used to increase wealth and the strength of the family.

To this end Burton says he wishes to 'deter' wanton and idle housewives who abuse the state of marriage by breaking the allotted boundaries of their duties. If religion and exhortation fail, then 'labour and exercise, strict diet, rigour and threats, may more opportunely be used, and are able of themselves to qualify and divert an ill-disposed temperament'. The grotesque, unruly body of the female hysteric must be restrained, closed off within a masculine regimen, a system of discipline which will destroy this potential insurgence of the body. One of the great problems with hysteria is that it blurs the distinction between the upper and the lower, the mind and the body; it is not clear whether hysteria is truly a physical defect (of either sex) or one of the mind, as was suggested by Edward Jorden in *A Brief Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother* (1603).²² Later on Blackmore would refer to the ridicule heaped upon sufferers of the spleen because it was seen as 'an imaginary and fantastical sickness of the brain'.²³ Although Burton might suggest a dietary program for men also, his attitude to the female is one of coercion, the clearly nonchalant mention of the use of 'threats', casually dropped in the middle of the sentence, reads in an insidious manner today.

²¹Lawrence Babb, 'The Cave of Spleen', *Review of English Studies*, 12 (1936), 165-76 (p. 172).

²²Ilza Veith, *Hysteria* (London, 1965), p. 122.

²³Doughty, p. 200.

An undisguised double standard is at work, prompted by the assumption that the female body must be subordinated to the operations of male reason and medical/psychological science. In a sense Burton views the female body as soft, uncreated matter waiting to be drawn out of its chaotic state by the form-giving, classical and striating male, assigning fixity to the shapeless and fluid female.

Pope followed in the tradition of ascribing the condition of hysteria to women as a symbol of their inherent tendency towards the contingencies of the physical as well as using it to illustrate their status as commodity. As John Sena puts it, 'the symptoms and effects of hysteria helped to define for the eighteenth century the nature and character of women ... since both physicians and laymen considered the disorder to be a virtually universal affliction among women, it is probable that the age conceived of those traits as constituting the basic behavioural pattern of all women'.²⁴ As we will see in the Cave of Spleen, Pope is certainly one of those who regards women as a race infected with this disease.

In the Cave, Belinda's gleaming, childishly innocent classical body of the day is juxtaposed with the comic but grotesque underworld ruled by a female deity who is in many ways a successor to Spenser's Errour, Milton's Sin, and a precursor to Dulness in the *Dunciad*. The mock epic descent into the underworld prepares one for the traditional insight into the fantastic, a zone of deterritorialization where the rules of the normal do not apply. This is a world of female unreason where male rationality is overwhelmed by the forces of the subconscious to which women, as beings more closely related to the contingencies of nature and the body, are thought to be especially prone. Moreover, Pope makes the Cave of Spleen a specifically female environment, thus echoing a long association between woman and cave, or womb and cave.

In view of the origins of hysteria from the Greek 'hystera' meaning 'womb', there is the obvious link between Pope's cave and the female organs of reproduction, marking it very firmly as a female zone, and the ills contained therein are specifically female ills. Umbriel shares the qualities of the womb-like darkness of the lower regions, being 'a dusky melancholy Spright,/ As ever sully'd the fair face of Light (4. 13), who returns to his true environment, his 'proper scene' (15). This 'scene' is suitably endowed with splenetic characteristics as the cave is associated with what were believed to be

²⁴'Belinda's Hysteria: the Medical Context of *The Rape of the Lock*', *Eighteenth Century Life*, 5 (1979), 29-42 (p. 39).

general causes of hysteria, although the disease is confined to women in its specific effects by Pope. Umbriel reaches the 'dismal Dome' 'in a Vapour' (18); a misty climate such as that in 'the gloomy Cave of Spleen' was thought to induce the vapours, a term synonymous with the spleen. Pope puns on this term repeatedly, exploiting the associations of the physical mist with mental obfuscation, confusion and illogicality; hence 'A constant Vapour o'er the Palace flies' (39).

Like Ovid's Envy Spleen lives in a gloomy dwelling where the sun never shines, shrouded in a thick darkness. Pope cunningly combines the splenetic symptom of the 'avoiding of light' with his mythological source.²⁵ Similarly the east wind was considered to provoke the Spleen, so the splenetic topography of the cave demands that

No cheerful Breeze this sullen Region knows,
The dreaded East is all the Wind that Blows (20).

Spleen has Pain at her side and Megrim at her head due to the spleen being an organ on the left side of the body, whilst the mental disturbance is symbolised by Megrim or migraine in the 1714 version. She herself lies protected from daylight in her 'Grotto' (-esque) environment where she 'sighs for ever on her pensive Bed' (23) in a stereotypical pose of the sufferer of the vapours. This tableau is drawn from allegorical tradition of pictorial representation, as the icons Ill-nature and Affectation attend the 'Throne' of the Goddess.²⁶ Robert Halsband notes that Du Guernier's illustration of this scene, presumably approved by Pope, make Ill-nature, 'an *ancient Maid*' with a 'wrinkled Form', more witch-like than Du Guernier's illustrations of the witches in *Macbeth* (Illustration 6).²⁷ Here Ill-nature is given sharp, gnarled features; a long nose that threatens to meet her jutting chin, and skinny, pendulous breasts like those of Ovid's and Ripa's Envy. As with the female monster Discord in *Windsor Forest*, Spleen is given appropriately monstrous followers.

The other Handmaid is similarly grotesque, but stands at a different end of the age range of Spleen's subjects:

²⁵Babb, p. 168.

²⁶See Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts*, p. 222.

²⁷Halsband, p. 14.

There *Affectation* with a sickly Mien
Shows in her Cheek the Roses of Eighteen,
Practis'd to Lisp, and hang the Head aside,
Faints into Airs, and languishes with Pride;
On the rich Quilt sinks with becoming Woe,
Wrapt in a Gown, for Sickness, and for Show.
The Fair-ones feel such Maladies as these,
When each new Night-Dress gives a new Disease (4. 31)



6. Louis Du Guernier and Claude Du Bosc, Canto IV of *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), engraving.

John Butt's footnote tells us that the *Tatler* 77, 'an essay on affectation (mainly that of men), notes lisping and carrying the head on one side as two marks of affectation, the former a recent fashion at the court of Alexander'. Here Affectation is entirely given over to the female 'court' of the goddess of Spleen, as Pope attacks the use of (supposed) physical disease to ironically display the body to men. The 'fair ones' acquire a new fit of the spleen with each 'new Night-Dress', disguising their sexual 'Show' beneath the screen of 'sickness'. This has a certain thematic resonance given the Cave of Spleen's function as a revealing examination of female sexual reality, repressed as it is in the decorums of everyday life in the 'upper world'.

The grotesque nature of the Cave of Spleen is further emphasised as Pope continues his scene setting by describing the bizarre mental effects of the spleen, the hallucinations raised in realms beyond the conscious:

A constant Vapour o'er the Palace flies;
Strange Phantoms rising as the Mists arise (4. 39).

Pope then proceeds to utilise the visual displays of opera and pantomime to characterise the hysterical condition which seems to oscillate wildly between scenes of gothic hell fire and visions of absurd heavenly delight:

Now glaring Fiends, and Snakes on rolling Spires,
Pale Spectres, gaping Tombs, and Purple Fires:
Now Lakes of liquid Gold, Elysian Scenes,
And Crystal Domes, and Angels in Machines (4. 43).

Part of Pope's hostility to opera stemmed from the fact that it was a 'patch-work' form which represented a perversion both of drama and music as Leon Guilhamet has observed.²⁸ Pope's footnote to the 'Harlot form' attack on operatic singing in *The Dunciad* is a useful summation of his position: 'The attitude given to this Phantom represents the nature and genius of the Italian Opera; its affected airs, its effeminate sounds, and the practice of patching up these Operas with favourite Songs, incoherently put together' (*Dunciad*, IV. 45). In a later footnote Pope praises Handel whose music 'prov'd so much too manly for the fine Gentlemen of his age, that he was obliged to remove his music into Ireland' (IV. 54). Opera is identified as an effeminate other to masculine society, suitable only for

²⁸*Satire and the Transformation of Genre* (Philadelphia, 1987), p. 119.

women in its patchwork, bastardised and fluid nature, and is consequently transformed into a grotesque by Pope through the process of feminisation.

The splenetic attack on opera is followed by an excess of metamorphoses which were part of the hallucinatory sufferings of the hysteric. The (grotesque) theme of passing from one state to another is reiterated together with the unrestricted economy of the grotesque which disrupts the boundaries of the classical:

Unnumber'd Throngs on ev'ry side are seen
Of Bodies chang'd to various Forms by Spleen.
Here living Teapots stand, one Arm held out,
One bent; the Handle this, and that the Spout:
A Pipkin there like Homer's Tripod walks;
Here sighs a Jar, and there a Goose-pye talks (4. 47).

These hysterical bodies are beyond quantification, beyond representation in a certain way. They hang between humanity and non-humanity in a kind of domestic grotesque, where people become teapots, pipkins ('a small earthen boiler'), jars and goose pies. The domesticity of such a grotesque is at once comic in its reductiveness as there is no obvious sense of threat, and the sphere it suggests is a female sphere of food, cookery and so on, although one should remember that the likes of Belinda would not be directly concerned with such menial duties. Further, the Ovidian literary context of these metamorphoses should not be allowed to obscure the fact that these instances were taken from actual accounts of hysterical visions, as John Sena points out (p. 35).²⁹

Grotesque inversion also features in this description, as the trope of the world turned upside down is applied to the reproductive sphere:

Men prove with Child, as pow'rful Fancy works,
And Maids turn'd Bottels, call aloud for Corks (4. 53).

Men take over the role of women, whilst the usually repressed desire of 'Maids' is expressed in an extremely obvious manner. The normal silencing of women's wants, especially those of a sexual nature, is reversed into the vocal expression of sexual drive as they 'call aloud for Corks'. John Sena refers to the 'sexual excesses of maids calling for corks', yet one is forced to ask from whose perspective this is excessive (p. 39).³⁰ From the male, classicising point of view that seeks to place restrictions on the female sexual economy this is certainly the case: the maids do display a grotesque

²⁹Sena, p. 35.

³⁰Sena, p. 39.

'excess' appropriate to the Cave as a zone of female expression and power. The operation of 'pow'rful Fancy' reinforces the idea that the female mind is beyond her own control, as 'Fancy' is the unrestrained power of the imagination which needs to be restricted by Judgement, the masculine quality of discrimination. In other words, if Fancy operates on its own, it is feminine and excessive, and leads to a grotesque inversion of the 'natural' world of patriarchy.

After this presentation of feminine hysterical disorder is the notorious speech in which Umbriel makes the equation between female creativity and hysteria. His address to the Queen draws attention to her own excessive (anti)nature. She is 'wayward', errant and therefore transgressive and, like Discord in *Windsor Forest* and Dulness in *The Dunciad*, she is a 'mighty Mother' who embodies (literally) grotesque qualities of anti-culture and perverted creativity. Unlike Dulness, however, the goddess of Spleen only rules over the female sex. As yet the threat to culture is limited and controlled. But it is also made clear that her rule is universal, and linked specifically to sexual and reproductive capacities, specifically menstruation: she rules 'the Sex to Fifty from Fifteen' (58), from Ill-nature to Affectation. Feminine disorder, whether it be '*Hysteric or Poetic Fit*' (60), is prompted by the Queen and channelled through Umbriel, seemingly a devilish henchman. Such intellectual chaos is another of the recognised symptoms of the Spleen: in Sir Richard Blackmore's *Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours* he says that the malady 'turns the intellectual *world upside down*: the Mind is filled with dark images ... which however have no foundation, but in the perverted temper of the animal faculties' [my italics].³¹

Yet there is a complicated mythic illogic here. As Dennis realised, Umbriel mortifies the vanity that the sylphs promote.³² Belinda, despite all the parallelism between her behaviour and the Cave of Spleen's inhabitants, is the nymph who 'disdains' Spleen's 'Pow'r' (65). Even more complicated is the fact that Belinda is already in a furious fit of the spleen before Umbriel descends to the Cave. In one sense Umbriel could be a figure of justice, punishing Belinda with a fit of the Spleen, but in another sense he appears redundant, merely confirming what is already the ruling element in the constitution of the coquette. Umbriel therefore becomes an external agent used by Pope to give Arabella the illusion that Belinda (and therefore herself) is given to fits of petulance through outside forces beyond

³¹(London, 1725), pp. 236-37; see Babb, p. 174.

³²*The Critical Heritage*, p. 106.

her control, and not though elements in her own character as a closer reading suggests. Certainly Dennis's occasionally astute analysis reflects the opinions that could be drawn regarding Arabella's person if one equates her with Belinda: 'his fine Lady, [who] is so very rampant, and so very a Termagant, that a Lady in the Hundreds of *Drury* would be severely chastis'd, if she had the Impudence in some Company to imitate her in some of her Actions'.³³

Rape: the Return of the Father

Belinda's usurpation of the male role, symbolised by her retention of the phallic lock, traditionally the sign of an unmarried woman, is a grotesque state of affairs that is not allowed to continue in the poem. Given that Ariel is a false father figure, Belinda is left noticeably without any male control at all, and accordingly runs riot at every given opportunity. Like the huntress Daphne in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Belinda resists marriage, and like Daphne, Belinda is symbolically raped and eventually restored to the patriarchal order in a more 'natural' and ruly form. Also in comparison with Daphne, Belinda appears to bring the rape upon herself. Daphne's refusal of the marital state causes her rape, as with Belinda, but Belinda is also deserted by Ariel and the sylphs because he sees 'An Earthly Lover lurking at her Heart' (3. 144). The implication must be that this lover is the Baron. Why should Belinda look beyond the self-sufficient libidinal economy of the sylphs? Firstly, Belinda is not a particularly good student of Ariel: when she wakes after Ariel's long opening lesson in the dream she catches sight of a billet-doux, and 'all the Vision vanish'd from thy Head' (1. 117-20). Earthly sexual pleasures attract the libidinous Belinda, and it is clear that Belinda has been hiding her attraction to the Baron from the sylphs; Ariel sees the lover lurking at Belinda's heart 'in spite of all her Art' (3. 143). Secondly, it is ideologically advantageous to suggest that Belinda in some way desires the rape, that it is, underneath all her Amazonian posturing, her secret wish to be subjected to the Baron's 'little Engine'. Just like a duplicitous woman, she means yes when she says no. If Belinda is complicitous in her own downfall, what the Baron does seems much less like an act of symbolic violence and much more 'natural', much more inevitable.

The rape is the crucial and central event in the poem, the act that restores to the Baron what is rightfully his. The male critic also concurs with this view, as Wasserman's analysis of the Baron's

³³*The Critical Heritage*, p. 97.

action suggests: 'Belinda's flaw, as Clarissa makes clear, is not her pretty and domineering coquetry, but her refusal to accept *as its proper consequence* the Baron's compulsion to rape the social insignia of her virginal independence' [my italics] (p. 438). Up until this point he is merely a 'Little' man (1. 11), symbolically defeated by Belinda's Amazonian hordes in the card game. The rape of the lock occurs just after this humiliating low point in his masculinity. As Ellen Pollak observes in her crucial reading of the poem, the Baron symbolically castrates Belinda's power with his own 'little Engine', the scissors (3. 132). His phallus both penetrates Belinda's hair and mimes the severance of her honour. As we saw in *Windsor Forest*, rape acts as an energiser for the male as it physically enacts his dominance over the female. The Baron now reverses his previously subordinate position as he celebrates in epic fashion his mastery over Belinda:

Let Wreaths of Triumph now my Temples twine,
 (The Victor cry'd) the glorious Prize is mine! (3. 161)

The Baron reassumes the virile male classical body, as the 'conquering Force' of his 'unresisted Steel' (3. 178) ensures that

While Nymphs take Treats, or Assignations give,
 So long my Honour, Name, and Praise shall live! (3. 169)

Now the Baron is able to stand in classical contrast to the grotesque caricature of Sir Plume who, acting on the orders of Thalestris, demands the return of the lock in a fragmented slang which reveals the effeminate grotesquerie of his own situation, a man obeying the orders of women:

Plague on't! 'tis past a Jest-nay prithee, Pox!
 Give her the Hair'-he spoke, and rapp'd his Box (4. 129).

Pope actually made an enemy for life out of Sir George Browne, Arabella's cousin, by this unprovoked attack. The mention of his 'round, unthinking Face' (4. 125) reminds one of the Dunces who were to follow. Pope was clearly willing to sacrifice good relations with Sir George in order to put across such a contrast of the masculine classical and grotesque. This contrast is made all the more emphatic by the Baron's virile and firm command of his own language as he comments ironically on Plume's feminised linguistic disarray:

It grieves me much (reply'd the Peer again)
 Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain (4. 132).

Poetic Justice

The Baron does not have the last word, however. Belinda is not so easily reabsorbed back into the classical patriarchal order: the splenetic fit occurs after the rape, as does the final assault on the Baron to restore the unrestorable. The 'bold Lord, with manly Strength indu'd' (5. 79) is orgasmically overpowered by the aggressive Belinda's snuff, and 'dies' heroically 'on his Foe' (5. 78). This is in a sense a victory for the Baron as even in symbolic loss he gains sexual ecstasy and the 'death' of an epic hero. His masculine strength is not enough to carry the poem to its conclusion, however, as Father Thames does in *Windsor Forest*. As the ancestry of Belinda's 'deadly *Bodkin*' (5. 88) suggests, modern manhood is not what it was, and some greater virility must supply a check on Belinda and a close to the poem.³⁴

A clue as to this greater father figure lies in the controversial figure of Clarissa, the prude who was added by Pope 'to open more clearly the MORAL of the Poem, in a parody of the speech of Sarpedon to Glaucus in Homer'.³⁵ In a complicated intertextual manoeuvre Pope backs up Clarissa's speech with the moral authority of three patriarchs: the heroic Sarpedon; Homer; and himself. Pope had earlier straightforwardly translated Sarpedon's speech and now took the opportunity to transform it into a homily containing many of his familiar sentiments on the behaviour of women, as any reading of his *Epistle to a Lady* will show. Pope reminds Belinda that superficial classical beauty will be grotesquely disfigured with age and that the only true beauty lies in the acceptance of 'Huswife's Cares' (5. 21) with the inevitable 'good humour' (5. 31). Deborah Payne has explained that Clarissa here appeals to the moral sobriety of the female middle-class bourgeois readership who would see Belinda as a social-climbing party girl with aspirations to the aristocratic world of the court.³⁶ The poem thus becomes a conflict between the 'nice', productive huswives of the middle classes who have internalised the authority of the paternal voice found in periodical literature and conduct books, and the coquettish 'town' ladies, a conflict which the patriarchal voice of the poet eventually resolves. Clarissa acts as the intermediary of this patriarchal poetic voice: it is she who carries Pope's 'MORAL'

³⁴See Carolyn Williams on the bodkin in 'Breaking Decorums. Belinda, Bays and Epic Effeminacy', in *Pope, New Contexts*, edited by David Fairer (London, 1990), pp. 59-79 (p. 72).

³⁵Pope, footnote to 5. 7.

³⁶Pope and the War Against Coquettes; Or, feminism and *The Rape of the Lock* reconsidered-yet again', *Eighteenth Century*, 32 (1991), 3-24.

of the evils of female vanity and pride. She too aids the Baron by passing him the scissors. As Payne points out, the comparison of Clarissa to a lady 'in Romance' assisting her 'Knight' (3. 129) reinforces her complicity with patriarchy.³⁷

Yet Clarissa is not the figure to close the poem. Her advice falls on deaf ears as the Amazons reject her traitorous remarks and decide to make war not love. This is not the main problem, however. Her inherent and inescapable difficulty is that she is a woman. As Pollak says: 'though there may be definite Popeian "truth" in her assertions, this is a woman preaching, and her motives become accordingly suspect. Pope creates in her the image of a soothsayer made ludicrous by the very fact of presuming to speak, while the wisdom of her utterance is neither damaged nor debased'.³⁸ Like Umbriel she is 'grave' and a 'Prude', and she too engages in mischief making. Pope effectively undercuts her claim to power just as he undercut Belinda's.

Who then does this leave? The figure who is ultimately in control of the poem is of course the poet himself. When the Baron warns Belinda that she 'by some other shalt be laid as low' (2. 143) he points forward to Pope's assumption of authority at the end of the poem. Rumbold notes the continuation of the theme of 'male triumph' in the translation of the lock to the stars, which 'leaves the poet holding the stage' (p. 72). Pope's Muse, acting in much the same capacity as Clarissa, sees the lock 'upward rise' and turn into a 'sudden Star', 'Tho' marked by none but quick Poetic Eyes' (5. 123-27). Pope himself as poet causes this transformation: his own eyes are 'Poetic', and it is he who closes the poem:

When those fair Suns shall sett, as sett they must,
And all those Tresses shall be laid in Dust;
This Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to Fame,
And mid'st the Stars inscribe Belinda's Name! (5. 147)

Pope's virility is confirmed by taking ultimate control of the lock as he immortalises it in his poetry. The rape benefits Pope just as Pan and Apollo benefit from their rapes in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; Syrinx becomes the reeds which enable Pan to play his music whilst Daphne is transformed into the laurel, the symbol of Apollo's poetic achievement. Pope too finds in Belinda's rape the material of his poetry. The myth that most nearly parallels Pope's narrative is that of the rape

³⁷Payne, p. 13.

³⁸Pollak, p. 80.

of the nymph Callisto: Jupiter sees Callisto arrayed as one of Diana's warriors, so he disguises himself as Diana and, although his identity is discovered, he manages to rape Callisto. Callisto rejoins Diana's train but the pregnancy is soon exposed and, with the usual patriarchal logic of rape, she is blamed and expelled from the female community. If this were not bad enough, a vengeful Juno transforms her into a bear. Later, when her son Arcas is older, he attempts unwittingly to kill her, but before he can do this Jove stellifies them both. One could read Juno as Clarissa here, competing with Belinda for the Baron's attentions, and the expulsion from Diana's train as Ariel's desertion of Belinda, but I wish to relate Jupiter to Pope. Both are patriarchs having ultimate control; both are creators; and both cause a rape (Jove literally, Pope creatively) and subsequently metamorphose their victims into stars. Callisto's tale exemplifies the circular logic of the patriarchal classical economy: she is 'saved' by the male who raped her in the first place - a dubious favour.

This Catch-22 logic is mirrored in the other stellification myth alluded to by Pope. When Belinda's lock is compared to Berenice's lock (5. 130) it becomes obvious that Belinda's glory is being ironically contrasted with that of Berenice, who offered to give up her lock to Venus for the safe return of her husband (Wasserman, pp. 441-42). Belinda has no intention of approaching the marital state, and demands the return of her lock, not a husband. Furthermore, Berenice's lock claims that new brides do not really grieve when they leave their 'virgin chambers' as Berenice only really wept when her husband left for the wars. The implication is that 'the bride's lamentation is veiled jubilation' (Wasserman, p. 442). Again we return to the message that Belinda wished for the rape secretly, as the epigram from Martial also suggests (p. 442). The natural order of things needs to be reasserted, and it is inferred that Belinda instinctively wants to submit to this order.

Conclusion

Naturally Pope manipulates this order, an order that is congenial to the form of the mock epic. As Maresca puts it: 'it is the formal and thematic goal of epic to posit the reconstitution of a meaningful order. Achilles guarantees the fall of Troy; Odysseus restores proper succession on Ithaca ... Belinda finds her proper but humbler place in the great pattern'.³⁹ For Maresca, Belinda is moved away from the centre of her cosmos by 'proper poetry' to 'poetic immortality'. The original grotesque

³⁹Maresca, *Epic to Novel*, pp. 105, 87.

inversion of Belinda's masculine behaviour is rectified by Pope's mock-epic/classical conclusion. She is moved back out to the margins of patriarchy where she belongs, one star amongst many, and an ironic one at that, shining as she does over '*Rosamonda's Lake*' (5. 136), a notorious resort of prostitutes. Pope can now assume the role of protector and father figure to Belinda as her threat is neutralised. His tone now becomes consolatory as he becomes the knight in shining armour to superficially preserve Belinda's honour. She is now one of his 'unfortunate ladies', as Rumbold terms those women who were in some way deserted by men who should have helped them. Lord Petre, it will be remembered, did not marry Arabella, although she did marry less advantageously later on. Rumbold details Pope's psychic need to spring to the defence of these women, often supplying material help in his 'combative advocacy of wronged women' (p. 103). This assumption of the role of heroic male rescuer in some way compensated for his inability to physically compete with other men. It is therefore significant that when he mentions 'Little Men' and the Baron's 'little Engine' his *Guardian* article on 'The Club of Little Men' springs to mind. In this self-mocking piece, he terms himself Dick Distick and, in a similarly comic imitation of one of his own rondeaus, talks of his 'Thing of little Size', 'You know Where'.⁴⁰

The resonance of the word 'little' implies Pope's unease concerning his own virility in *The Rape of the Lock*, and the Baron becomes a vicarious substitute for Pope's libidinous drives, thus explaining Pope's more general interest in and use of rape narratives, where the unwilling female is forced to do the will of the eager male. Pope was unable to force himself physically on anyone of course. Rumbold has also noted 'the less innocent implications of fascination with female helplessness' in the context of *Windsor Forest* with the 'ambiguous excitement' of the lines:

And now his shorter Breath with sultry Air
Pants on her Neck, and fans her parting Hair (195, Rumbold, p. 92).

I would argue that the same excitement is present in *The Rape of the Lock* as Pope identifies with the Baron.

Hence poetic power functions as Pope's compensatory mechanism. He revealingly wrote to the Blounts that 'I am pretty sensible, that if I have any wit I may as well show it, as not; because any

⁴⁰See Rumbold, pp. 50-51.

Lady that has once seen me will naturally ask, what can I show that is better?"⁴¹ Pope's sexual power stems from his wit, not his phallus, and it is in the world of poetry that he can exercise libidinal control. Consequently in the rape narratives of *The Rape of the Lock* and *Windsor Forest* he concludes the poems by inscribing himself as the most virile, classical figure, the figure most in control of these unruly grotesque women.

⁴¹See Rumbold, p. 51.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DUNCIAD

Introduction: a Grotesque Reality.

When Pope came to write the *Dunciad* the political and economic context of his work had changed considerably. The first version of the poem, which I will refer to as *Dunciad A*, came in three books and was published in 1728 just after the coronation of King George Augustus II in 1727.¹ This version of the poem rather gloomily leads to predictions of the dire consequences of the philistine Hanoverian succession on elite preserve of classical values. As he states at the beginning of *Dunciad A*, 'Still Duncce the second reigns like Duncce the first' (I. 6), that is, George continued the Hanoverian succession, a succession that continued to be unfavourable for the Tories in opposition. With the arrival of a new king the Tories had hoped for a switch in favour away from Walpole (the Prime Minister) and the Whigs. Unfortunately for them this did not happen for at least two reasons. The attempt to install a new prime minister in the person of Lord Wilmington failed miserably as he soon conclusively proved his incompetence, so the Whig ministry was safe when the Queen told George that Walpole was the only man who could get large increases in the civil list through parliament. In the year 1727 it must have seemed to the Tories that Walpole was unshakeable in his position. Another reason for their gloom was the fact that George, like his father before him, distrusted the Tories because the Hanoverians always equated the Tory party with Jacobitism due to Bolingbroke's attempt to secure the throne for James on the death of Queen Anne. All their efforts to ingratiate themselves in the separate court of the then Prince and Princess of Wales had come to nothing; even Pope had paid court to the Prince. The opposition quickly lapsed back into cynicism.

This politically grotesque time was paralleled by developments in the economics of the book trade and the response of the monarchy as supposed patrons of the arts to these developments. Pope felt that George II's court was prone to the same low tastes as the common audience of the 'literature' and dramatic entertainments being churned out by the Grub Street hacks. Hence both Pope's 'heroes',

¹TE, V; *Dunciad A*, pp. 1-245; *Dunciad B*, pp. 246-426.

Theobald or 'Tibbald' of *Dunciad A* and Colley Cibber of the four book 1743 *Dunciad B* are mediators between the low world of the drolls and the fair and the high world of the aristocracy of St James's Palace:

Books and the Man I sing, the first who brings
The Smithfield Muses to the Ear of Kings (*A. I. 1*).

As Stallybrass and White point out, this is an area of cultural transgression: the boundaries between the discrete areas of classical learning of the elite and the grotesque farce of Bartholomew Fair which was based at Smithfield are breached in the very first lines of the poem.² Cibber, the hero of the revised version is in many ways the more suitable of the two heroes because he had been appointed Poet Laureate under George II and yet produced sensational and lavish plays which would be attended by both court and commoner, including the King and Queen themselves. Theobald had also written a number of pantomimes despite being a rather more distinguished Shakespearean scholar than Pope himself. Defenders of classical values such as Pope and Swift, although not coincidentally politically disenfranchised defenders of the classics, could only find such a situation grotesque, an attack upon polite civilisation. Indeed Swift seems to have had a hand in encouraging Pope to bring the *Dunciad A* to fruition as the Twickenham editor observes (p. xiv). The newly burgeoning capitalistic market of Grub Street wrote not from a sense of classical standards, but from the sole perspective of making a profit by pandering to the lowest and, paradoxically in the case of George II, the highest common denominator, with the emphasis on 'common'. This political and economic/cultural context for the poem is mirrored by its material context.

As Pat Rogers has shown in his *Grub Street and Literature and Popular Culture* the world of eighteenth-century London was grotesque in itself. Quite apart from the bizarre goings-on at the fairs such as the freak shows and the bear-baiting, there were the carnivalesque activities in the streets surrounding such events as executions, the Lord Mayor's day, and the ever-present threat of riots.³ Ned Ward gives a sense of Pope's experience of London life in his *London Spy* in which he describes the flinging of dead cats and filth by the mob at the Lord Mayor's show.⁴ The ludic activities of the great unwashed articulate clearly what Pope was defining himself against: the pleasures of the 'rabble'

²*The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 110.

³See *Literature*, p. 14, and *Grub Street*, pp. 99, 248, 253.

⁴(London, 1927), p. 220.

quite literally pollute all they encounter, and it was the conjunction of the mob with the monarchy in terms of pleasure that Pope feared and despised.

Grotesque Goddesses

One facet of the poem that critics have only recently begun to explore is the fact that Dulness is female, and that she comes to embody the fears of the poet concerning a whole host of issues, including the poet's sexuality, creativity, and the material conditions of the book trade at the time. Susan Gubar's ground breaking article 'The Female Monster in Augustan Satire' identifies Dulness as the greatest in a line of female monsters, some of whom we have already encountered.⁵ Dulness provides the driving force for this great grotesque poem because she is inherently grotesque: she is a woman who has power; and, what is worse, has ultimate power. In the poems that we have previously examined, Pope has managed to reimpose the male classical economy in which the female is returned to male control and the order of things is stabilised. Belinda and Lodona have been reterritorialized; Anne, although she causes uneasiness, was still a Stuart and therefore subordinated to the needs of Pope's particular version of patriarchy. Even the Goddess Spleen stays below the shimmering surface of society London. Like these women, Dulness too has the power of Divine Fiat, but her power fully betrays the destructive potential of her sex towards the rational light of masculine knowledge and control: 'Light dies before thy uncreating word' (*B. IV. 654*). Not only is Dulness God(-ess) in her own universe, but she also has the ability to destroy what she has created. She is Satanic in her inversion of the male creative impulse, filled with pride in her own capacity to generate a world without any reference beyond herself as she 'With self-applause her wild creation views' (*B. I. 82*). Unlike the permanence and beauty of God's creation, Dulness either destroys or forms 'momentary monsters' that 'rise and fall' (*B. I. 83*). This grotesque instability and fluidity of the feminine controls the world of the poem because it is the world of the poem. Even its structure is constantly collapsing and restarting due to Dulness' unstable tendency to create and then destroy and then create again, until the final book when the ultimate consequence of grotesque female power comes to pass and classical civilisation is overwhelmed utterly.

⁵p. 391.

The Dark Isis

Dulness is the latest and greatest in a long line of female grotesques as Gubar has noted, and the mythographic sources from which Pope constructs her composite figure are complex indeed. As Faulkner and Blair point out, the Great Mother or Magna Mater is mentioned five times in the *Dunciad*, not to mention the vast body of allusions to various interlinked goddesses.⁶ One of the many goddesses the Magna Mater has been linked to is Isis, the Egyptian Queen of the moon and night who, as we have already seen, is a tripartite goddess related to Diana Luna and Hecate. Douglas Brooks-Davies draws attention to the fact that Pope saw England as enduring the blackness of Isis as the Queen of the Night or Hecate rather than as the moon queen Diana Luna illuminating night's blackness.⁷ Hecate we remember is Daughter of Night, Queen of Hell and therefore identified with Proserpina, Goddess of witches and a destroyer of men. Dulness herself is 'Daughter of Chaos and eternal Night' (*B. I. 12*). Faulkner and Blair show that 'Hecate's presence is especially felt throughout the *Dunciad*' partly through the dog imagery which introduces the theme of rabid madness and blurs the distinction between mad dogs and the followers of Dulness who howl at the moon: 'Ralph to Cynthia howls' (*B. III. 165*) (p. 232). Hecate was often confused with Cynthia, although her main connection is with the infernal darkness which pervades the *Dunciad*. Hecate is also implied by the magic practised by her followers the dunces who use excrement as 'magic juices' (*B. II. 104*).

Associated with the Isis/Hecate strain of imagery in the poem is Nox, another female deity who shares the darkness of the other two, and the symbol of the owl, Dulness's bird which lights upon Cibber's head after he has been anointed. The owl is suitably grotesque, associated with both natural transgression and the carnivalesque masquerades: 'a monster of a fowl,/Something betwixt a Heidegre and owl' (*B. I. 289-90*). Heidegger was not only a promoter of masquerades, but also a provider of court entertainments of the kind that Pope so heartily despised. Nox and Isis are connected with sleep, dreams and visions. Dulness of course constantly brings an opiate sleep to her followers, and the poppy wreath won by Shadwell (*B. III. 22*) is a symbol of Nox and Sleep himself. Isis was noted for sending prophetic dreams to her followers just as Cibber is given a vision of the future in the

⁶The Classical and Mythographic Sources of Pope's Dulness', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 43 (1979-80), 213-46 (p. 213).

⁷*Pope's Dunciad and the Queen of the Night*, p. 6.

third book of the *Dunciad*. Hecate also was said to preside over dreams and watch her sleeping followers as Dulness does. The various vapours (*B. IV. 615*) and 'fogs' (*B. I. 262*) that surround Dulness and are generated by her also confirm her link with these various goddesses and her love of caves and grottos where such gloom is naturally found. Nox 's black robe similarly symbolises the darkness, both physical and moral, that we find in the Goddess of Dulness.⁸

Grotesque Underworlds

As in the Cave of Spleen, the *Dunciad* often becomes a grotesque feminized underworld, a womb-like grotto or cave where darkness and moral inversion are the norm. We have already noted the presence of vapours and fogs in the poem, and these evoke similar responses and themes to those in the Cave of Spleen, where an unnatural female sexuality prevails. These dark goddesses reinforce the specifically female source of disaster that overtakes the world of the *Dunciad*. Thus early on in the poem we meet the grotesque locale of 'The Cave of Poverty and Poetry' (*B. I. 34*) where Dulness oxymoronicly shines 'in clouded Majesty' (45) and spawns poetic creatures out of 'the Chaos dark and deep' (55). As John Sitter says, this is a 'monstrous womb' that miscreates and inverts the natural order.⁹ Like Hecate Dulness performs the witchery of seasonal disruption, where 'heavy harvests nod beneath the snow' (78). This Cave was shifted from Rag Fair in *A* to the environs of Bedlam in *B* to emphasise the mental instability of such a world, based on the inability of women to control their minds due to the rule of their bodies. Dulness is always closer to Nature than Culture, always on the outside of the civilised order which she constantly threatens to destroy from her mediatory position between civilisation and chaos; as we have seen, this is the position of all women in relation to patriarchy. Like the protean 'Bards' (37), Dulness herself, and the Cave of Spleen before it, the Cave of Poverty and Poetry is a protean space, transformed by turns into a womb, primeval chaos, a play, a courtroom, a masquerade and so on. This metamorphic grotesque tendency further emphasises the lack of cultural boundaries that the physical topography mirrors. Sitter notes the connection between this locale and the Dome of Dulness which appears later on in the first book, the spiritual womb of the worldly Cave of Poverty and Poetry (p. 17). This too is an enclosed feminine space of 'the Great

⁸See Faulkner and Blair, pp. 229-30 for more on all this.

⁹*The Poetry of Pope's Dunciad*, p. 13.

Mother' (269) where distinctions between orders of things are collapsed, where a Cibber and a Shakespeare are indistinguishable (285-86).

In the second book the grotesque topography of sinking into hellish darkness continues with the games. Amongst the general sliding around in excrement and mud as the dunces sport in a kind of primal soup Dulness hears the requests of her servants from 'her black grottos near the Temple-wall' (B. II. 98) which suggests the caves and grottos of Cybele who was often confused with Isis. Cybele was worshipped in these locations as well as in round temples. Curl takes advantage of Dulness's grotesquely rejuvenating sexuality by fishing 'her nether realms for Wit' (111), although this Wit turns out to be suitably excremental as Dulness's fertility is not a productive one in terms of good literature. Here Cloacina acts as a kind of minor goddess who rules the sewers, an intermediate part of Dulness's complex character. Pat Rogers observes that Cloacina is taken from Cloaca Venus, the purifier, but satirists treat her as a befouled Venus, building on the old adage that a woman is a temple built over a sewer, a suitable contrast between the classical surface and the grotesque underworld or nether realm.¹⁰ As the sexual reference implies, woman becomes a kind of grotesque orifice which receives any kind of personal excretion and discharges yet another; women in the *Dunciad* are conduits for grotesque flows because they partake of these flows in their very nature, being always liable to collapse back into chaotic formlessness and therefore to contaminate men with their venereal pollutions. They are, as Mary Douglas would put it, 'matter out of place'. These underground locations are echoed in the underwater caverns of the mud-nymphs later on in the games where the predatory excremental sexuality of the female continues as they suck in (332) an admittedly willing male victim. These caverns share the drugged and dream-like influence of Hecate and Nox 'wafting Vapours from the Land of dreams' (340) to lull all to sleep.

John Sitter notes the imagistic connection between the Dome and the Cave of the opening section and the underworld dominating the third book, where Cibber is actually transported to the banks of the Lethe in the Elysian shade, a realm that the 'plunging Prelate' has previously been shown by the mud-nymphs (II. 323, 339) (pp. 20-21). Based on the underworld of Virgil's *Aeneid*, as are most of Pope's subterranean set-pieces in some way, this realm is dominated by the grotesque

¹⁰*Grub Street*, pp. 143-44.

excessive economy of Dulness's reproductive capacities as Cibber sees 'Millions and millions' (III. 31) of the souls of the dull. Yet again one is led to this female realm by a disorderly female guide, 'a slipshod Sibyl' who meditates song 'in lofty madness' (15-16). Like the mud-nymphs before her, she is a polluted figure, her disorderly clothing symbolising the mental disorder that the poetic woman must be experiencing in her grotesque state of creativity rather than merely being the object of inspiration for the male author.

The fourth book continues the grotesque topography of the underworld by an ironic iconographic reversal of the binding of Discord and her female followers at the triumphant end of *Windsor Forest*. Instead of the disruptive feminine forces of Dulness being bound in fetters at the footstool of Reason or some other suitable deity, one finds that Dulness confines all such positive icons to an underworld of her own making:

Beneath her foot-stool, *Science* groans in Chains,
And *Wit* dreads Exile, Penalties and Pains.
There foam'd rebellious *Logic*, gagg'd and bound,
There, stript, fair *Rhet'ric* languish'd on the ground (IV. 21).

Especially significant is the replacement of the good by the bad in terms of the female body: the classical body of 'fair' Rhetoric is violated by her grotesque counterpart, 'shameless Billingsgate' who steals her robes (IV. 26). As Sitter observes, the Renaissance pictorial tradition is inverted here. Normally slack but sturdy chains would lead down from beneath Reason's footstool to personifications of various passions who constitute a harmonious miniature kingdom (p. 44). The underworld of Discord now becomes more of an overworld as the power of Dulness spreads beyond the confines of her subterranean haunts.

Cybele and the Carnavalesque

This love of the grotesque underworld is not the end of Dulness's character or the character of the poem. As Aubrey Williams has pointed out, the *Dunciad A* was at least partly based on the Lord Mayor's Day procession, and the poem was originally to be called *The Progress of Dulness* following in the general tradition of progress poems.¹¹ Pat Rogers has said that the *Dunciad* often gives one the sense of a poem taking place in the open air, in the streets and alleys of London.¹² How does one

¹¹*Pope's Dunciad*, p. 42.

¹²*Grub Street*, p. 64.

reconcile the womb-like claustrophobia of Dulness's grottos and caves with the feeling of expansiveness and movement? The answer lies partly in the generic complexity of the grotesque as it is employed by Pope. Dulness is not only related to Isis, but also to the Magna Mater who has 'always been confused and used interchangeably from ancient times' with Cybele as Faulkner and Blair explain: 'this confusion began in antiquity, largely due to the absorption of one foreign deity into the figure and cult of another pre-existing one, and was subsequently strengthened by the mythographers' (p. 217). Pope exploits, as we have seen already to some extent, this 'very complex web of cross-associations' in order to assemble the composite mythical parts of the Goddess Dulness. Faulkner and Blair feel that Cybele is the 'basic prototype' of Dulness, although I would hesitate to agree, merely observing that it is one of the mythical structures that exist alongside one another rather than actually being the basis for all the others.

Cybele is most closely associated with her eunuch priests, the Galli, who would dance wildly, wail loudly and create a cacophonous noise with clashing cymbals and the tympanum. She was usually shown as riding a lion-drawn chariot with a tympanum in one hand and either a pine-branch or a sceptre in the other. Clearly the Galli correspond to the noisy dunces, bereft as they are of any creative power or intellectual fecundity. It is said that Cybele fell to earth from the sky in the form of a black meteoric stone which landed in Asia Minor. Her name is thought to derive from *cubus* or cube, although other possible etymologies refer to mountains or caves. In this sense she is the fitting mother of blockheads, and is rightly connected with the grottos of Dulness. However, the poem is also one of processions, and Cybele was depicted in the processions of her cult, often carried by an ass, just as the owl sits on the books weighing down the ass on the frontispiece to *Dunciad B*. Faulkner and Blair point out that 'Pope's visual description of the Dunces is also drawn in terms similar to those used by classical writers in describing the priests of the Magna Mater in performance of their *grotesque rites* and especially when in procession, escorting the ass bearing the block like image of their goddess' [my italics] (pp. 236-37).

The description of the dunces as they 'progress' actually alludes to the Roman Saturnalia in which the usual carnivalesque inversions of clothing and behaviour apply:

A motley mixture! in long wigs, in bags,
In silks, in crapes, in Garters, and in rags (*B. II. 21*).

The bizarre carnival clothing of the dunces celebrates not the return of the Golden Age brought by Saturn, but the return of the Age of Lead brought by Dulness. Settle's vision of the Britain's future similarly refers to the Saturnalia:

Behold yon' Isle, by Palmers, Pilgrims trod,
Men bearded, bald, cowl'd, uncowl'd, shod, unshod,
Peel'd, patch'd, and pyebald, linsey-wolsey brothers,
Grave Mummers! sleeveless some, and shirtless others (*B. III. 113*).

Faulkner and Blair go on to show that the robes of the newly initiated priests of Isis are recalled in the phrase 'a gay embroider'd race' (*IV. 275*) that Pope applies to the dunces. The long robes of the Galli are even to be found on Smedley, 'the rev'rend Flamen in his lengthen'd dress' (*B. II. 354*) (p. 237). The ludic activities of the dunce's games in book two especially call on knowledge of the Saturnalia, and Lucian's account of them 'is clearly one of Pope's sources' (p. 242). His account tells of the return of Saturn to the earth for seven days in December when gaming, feasting and noise-making were promoted. In true carnivalesque fashion master and servant change place. Saturn says that he himself may 'sing stark naked, clap and shake, and sometimes even get pushed head-first into cold water with my face smeared with soot'. Of course the dunces dive into something worse than soot. In the first book Pope overtly alludes to the carnivalesque principle of inversion in the Saturnalia by mentioning the month of December in the context of the world turned upside down by the grotesque goddess: 'In cold December fragrant chaplets blow' (*B. I. 77*). The carnivalesque power of the Goddess is made even more obvious in Pope's footnote early on in the first book when he expands on her particular characteristics: Dulness includes 'Labour, Industry, and some degree of Activity and Boldness: a ruling principle not inert, but *turning topsy-turvy the Understanding*, and inducing an Anarchy or confused State of Mind' [my italics] (*B. I. 15. footnote*).

Further references to the carnivalesque occur in the illustrations to the *Dunciad* which constantly refer to the pictorial confrontation of the high with the low as Elias Mengel points out in his study 'The *Dunciad* Illustrations'.¹³ One of the illustrations to the *Dunciad A* depicts a parody of a classical altar to Athene in which Athene's owl perching on top is replaced by that of Dulness, and the altar itself is composed of books written by the dunces (Illustration 7). Here a sacred altar is desecrated quite literally, and the high attacked by the low in carnival fashion. Pope, unlike Bakhtin, desires the

¹³*Eighteenth Century Studies*, 7 (1973-74), 161-78 (p. 162).

reverse effect of the carnivalesque however; in mock-epic Pope intends the grotesque dunces to be mocked, not the sacred altars of classicism. His choice of illustrator reminds one of this; Peter Fourdrinier illustrated the *Dunciad* section of the collected *Works* of 1735, and was known for architectural engraving, having completed a volume of Palladio for Burlington.¹⁴

Particular carnivalesque motifs in the illustrations include the repeated use of the foolscap and bells on Dulness' owl and on the caduceus of Mercury, a common symbol of wit. Linked to this is the use of the harlequin in the headpiece to the third book which is intended to illustrate the passages attacking farces and pantomimes within it. The low world of folk entertainments for the disrespectful people is symbolised by the figure of the harlequin who, in his very costume and his tumbling, embodies the grotesque inversion of values that Pope perceives in the writings and plays of such as Cibber and Rich:

All sudden, Gorgons hiss, and Dragons glare,
 And ten-horn'd fiends and Giants rush to war.
 Hell rises, Heav'n descends, and dance on Earth,
 Gods, imps, and monsters, music, rage, and mirth,
 A fire, a jugg, a battle, and a ball,
 'Till one wide conflagration swallows all (*A. III. 231*).

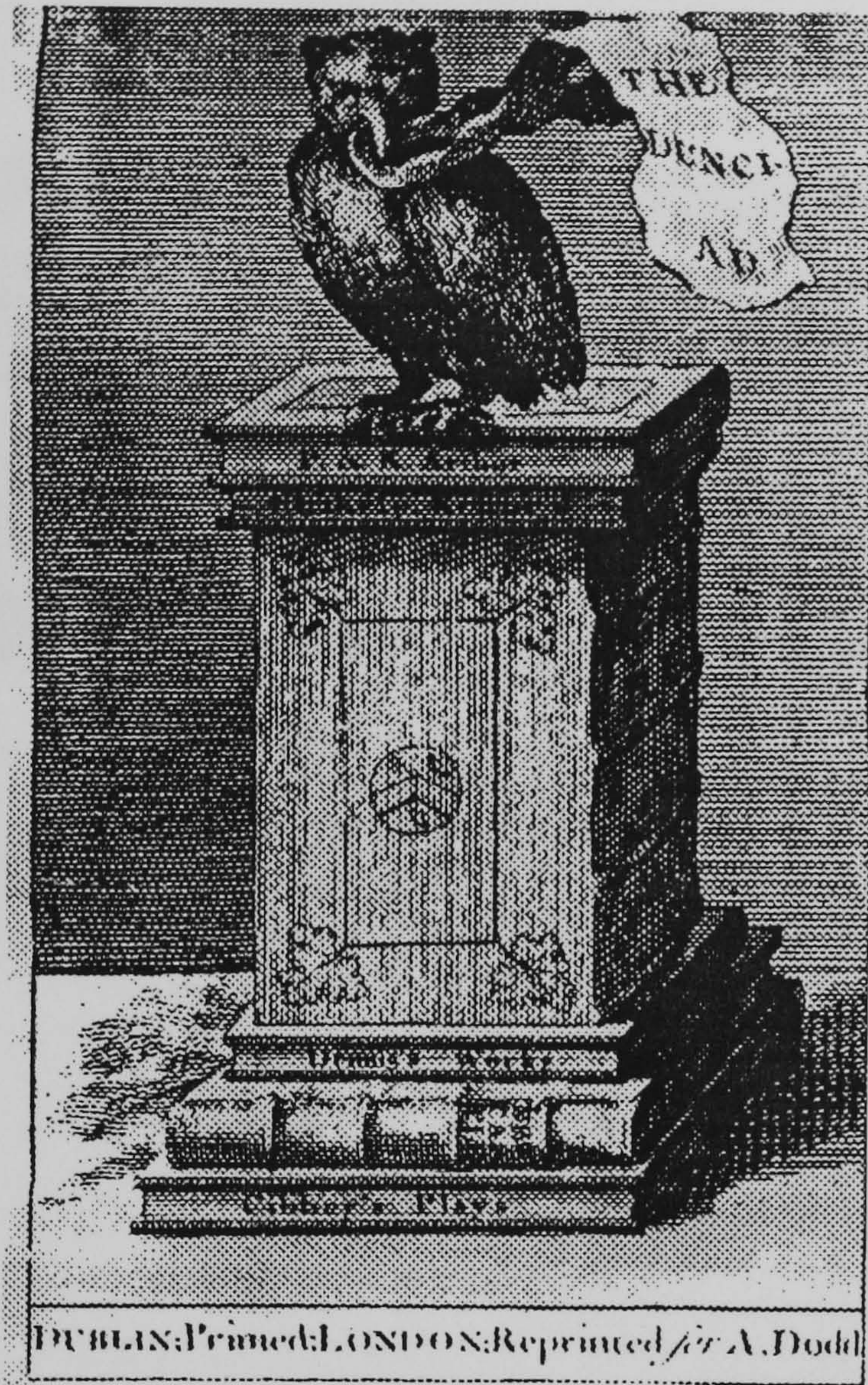
This description of stage special-effects draws attention to just such an inversion of morality, where heaven is caused to descend and hell to rise as the evil of the dunces triumphs in the apocalypse of Dulness. The illustration reinforces this by showing a dragon with the wings of an owl and the ears of an ass in the centre of the picture (Illustration 8). Like a medieval depiction of Satan eating sinners, it devours, head first, a harlequin who is also a sorcerer, possibly a reference to the series of farces based on *Dr Faustus*. To the left is a dragon excreting or giving birth to a harlequin head-first; in the context of Dulness there is little distinction to be made. The harlequin also appears to form part of the dragon's tail. On the right is another harlequin birth from a huge egg, and in the centre and left background flames are juxtaposed to the rays of the sun on the right, representing the creation and destruction of the world.¹⁵ The illustrations play out the grotesque themes of death and rebirth, heaven and hell, introjection and excretion. Indeed Patricia Meyer Spacks has shown, seemingly without knowledge of Bakhtin's exploration of the carnivalesque food and drink series in *Rabelais and*

¹⁴Mengel, p. 170.

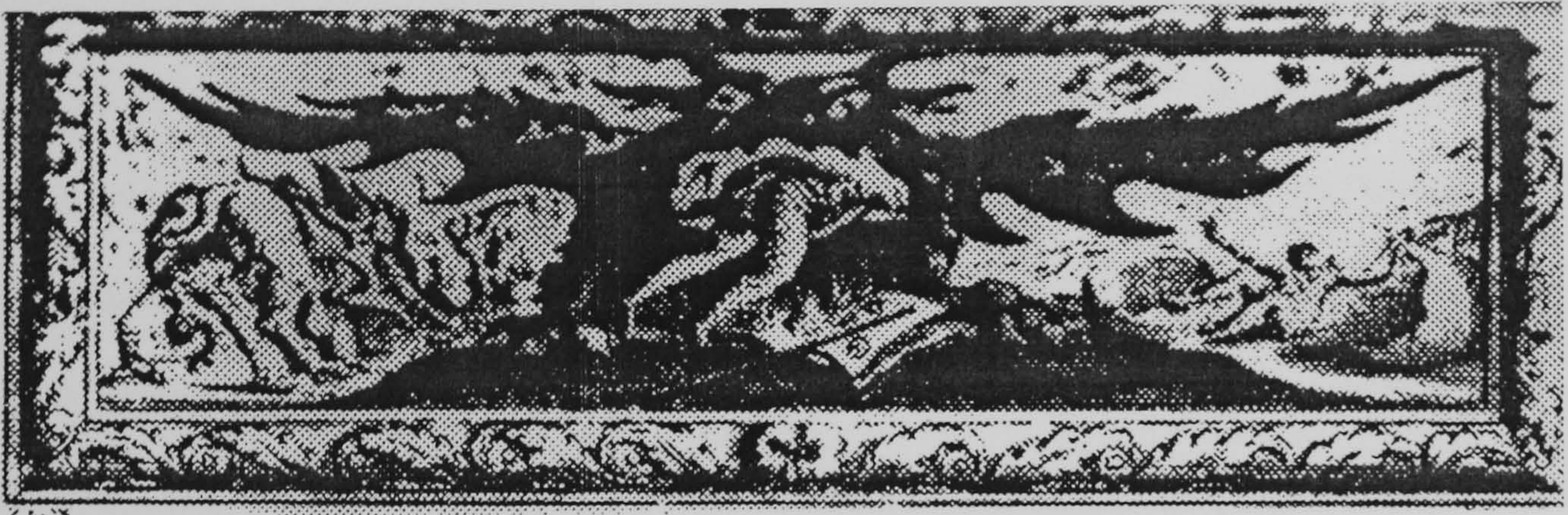
¹⁵See Mengel, p. 173.

his World, how the dunces live in a totally physical world characterised by their carnal appetites for eating, drinking and fornicating. She observes that this material emphasis 'elevates the low and eliminates the high'.¹⁶

¹⁶*An Argument of Images. The Poetry of Alexander Pope* (Camb., Mass., 1971), p. 120.



7. Frontispiece to *The Dunciad* (1735), engraving.



8. Peter Fourdrinier, Book Three of *The Dunciad* (1735), engraving.

The presence of the carnivalesque therefore allows the poem this sense of occupying the streets. The various Saturnalia and other processions such as those of Isis combine in the games and movements of the dunces, finding concrete realisation in the filthy streets of London. As I have already noted, the streets of London were already carnivalesque, and Pat Rogers observes that the fourth book of the *Dunciad* has all the features of an eighteenth-century riot: the sluggish but unstoppable impetus of the crowd, social heterogeneity, delight in destruction, a pathetic search for trophies and effigies and the careful choice of victim and rancorous envy.¹⁷ Hecate, in her role as Trivia, presides over the streets and ways just as Dulness directs the flows of people through the streets of the city; Cybele is often depicted as wearing a turreted crown to symbolise her role as protectress of cities. For Pope the city becomes the place of social estrangement and threatening mobility, and the *Dunciad* more generally is a poem about civil disorder, and this disorder is effected by the Lady of Misrule, the Goddess Dulness.

Grotesque Mothers and Grotesque Sons

The poem, although driven by Dulness as the great female monster, also constructs the male grotesque body, and it does this in terms of gender. Dulness's offspring, the dunces, parallel the servants of Cybele, the Great Mother, in their intellectual sterility. Faulkner and Blair explain that the Galli, mendicant priests of Cybele, were eunuchs, castration being part of the initiation into the cult (pp. 233-36). Named after the River Gallus, whose waters were said to induce lunacy, they would travel in processions through the towns dancing ecstatically and making a great commotion. Amongst other practices, their secret sacrifices were considered obscene and orgiastic in nature. Faulkner and Blair note that 'classical writers looked upon the cult as generally offensive and lewd, and described the sexless priests as tricksters, vagabonds, and swindlers' (p. 235). Such a classical disapproval is one shared by Pope as he too gives his dunces the ability to make a hideous din as they learn 'the wond'rous pow'r of Noise' (*B. II. 222*).

Their obscenity is clear at every point, but particularly in the games. The nature of this obscenity becomes clearer when one also learns that the Galli 'dressed as women, in long mantles'. Lucian considered them to be 'mountebanks and effeminate fellows' (p. 238). The dunces themselves are

¹⁷*Grub Street*, p. 106.

characterised as effeminate in their sexuality; castrated in mind, they are grotesque because they have accepted the role of a woman, and they are ruled by a woman who has usurped the power of a man.

The male grotesque is therefore defined in terms of the feminine; the castrated dunces too are characterised by 'lack'. Pope subjects them to the process of feminisation when he depicts them locked in homosexual acts: 'Behold yon Pair, in strict embraces join'd' (*B.* III. 179). Similarly the tickling contest to win a patron implies that the 'youth unknown to Phoebus' wins a secretaryship by touching his Grace's 'only tender part' (*B.* II. 213-20). The dunces, however, are not the only feminized males in the poem.

Cibber and Cybele

Pope's note to the first line of *Dunciad B* states that 'the Reader ought here to be cautioned, that the *Mother*, and not the *Son*, is the principal agent of this poem', answering Dennis' criticism that the hero of this mock-epic was not involved in the action. John Sitter develops this point by showing that Pope parodies the traditional epic notion that women in epic such as Helen, Circe and Dido 'embody a parochial, domestic selfishness which threatens the execution of a larger and more "significant" achievement' (p. 59). In the *Dunciad*, Dulness is the hero, whilst Cibber is feminised, adopting the passive role of the woman. Pope exploits with poetic justice the epic theory of one of his own dunces, Blackmore, who claimed that 'no Reason ... can be assign'd, why a Heroine may not be the Principal Person of an Epick'. Sitter suggests that Blackmore provides the rules for the inverted world of Dulness and Pope's anti-epic.

Cibber's relationship to Dulness is problematic in that he is both son and lover. As he nestles in her lap at the beginning of book three (*B.* III. 2) the scene recalls the connubial bliss of the newly 'Anointed' George and Caroline and the child being cradled by his mother. Carolyn Williams notes that two of the 'mighty mothers' related to Dulness are Thetis, who proposes the prizes at Achilles' funeral games, and Venus, who shelters Aeneas in cloud to save him in battle. In both cases there is a sense that the heroes are in fact mothers' boys, manipulated and protected by their goddess matriarchs. Williams argues that Pope exploits the dubious aspects of the epic originals to stress the passivity of Cibber.¹⁸

¹⁸'Breaking Decorums: Belinda, Bays and Epic Effeminacy', in *Pope: New Contexts*, edited by David Fairer, pp. 59-79 (p. 75).

Such an argument is reinforced by a further aspect of the Magna Mater myth. Cybele, in one version of her origins, was left to die on the top of Mount Cybele, nursed by wild animals and rescued by local shepherds. When she grows up she falls in love with Attys, a shepherd, who is killed by her father the king of Phrygia after their reunion. She then runs shrieking through the countryside beating a tympanum. In her absence the Phrygians are struck by a plague which can only be lifted by the disinterment of Attys and the worship of Cybele with annual games and festivals in her honour. One can see the link with the reign of Dulness here, although she actually brings plagues and fogs rather than removes them.

Two other stories are more significant, however, in that they revolve around a castration myth. In the first, the aged goddess Cybele has a priest called Attys who breaks his vow of chastity to her and castrates himself behind a pine tree, subsequently dying from the wounds. The goddess transforms him into a pine tree which becomes sacred to her. The second story again describes an aged goddess Cybele falling in love with a young shepherd, Attys. He rejects her and agrees to marry the daughter of Midas, king of Pessinus. When Cybele discovers this she breaks down the city gates with her army and causes havoc inside, eventually castrating Attys when she finds him hiding behind a pine tree.¹⁹

In the *Dunciad* there is a chain of references that link Cibber to Attys. In at least one account of the myth, Attys is taken for Cybele's son as well as her lover. As Cibber lies in Dulness's lap his head is newly 'anointed', like a newly initiated priest. He is also an unchaste priest whose chastity is lost to Dulness herself (*B. IV. 20*). When Settle calls Cibber 'our own true Phoebus' (*B. III. 323*) the Attys myth is again brought into play as Attys was thought by some to mean the sun, thus comparing him with Apollo. Clearly Attys, like Cibber, can only be a false Apollo. Cibber is a false poetic god lacking all the values of the true Apollo, the bringer of harmony and light.²⁰ Overall, Cibber is a grotesque, feminised hero, a suitable king for the similarly feminised dunces. All are passive in contrast to the guiding action of the Goddess, a castrating mother who strips them all of their potential masculinity. Cibber comes to be a miscreating mother himself as the line of Dulness perpetuates itself: 'Embryo' and 'Abortion' of 'Ode' and 'Play' surround him in his study (*B. I. 121-22*). The *Dunciad* becomes a

¹⁹See Faulkner and Blair, pp. 220-21.

²⁰Faulkner and Blair, p. 240.

poem concerning the grotesquerie of motherhood when it is applied as a metaphor of literary production, and Cibber inhabits such a grotesque feminised body.

Grotesque Mothers and Literary Strumpets

The grotesquerie of Dulness's motherhood is not confined to Cibber/Attys, however. Her reproductive ability is a transgression of social codes in itself because Dulness is free of traditional male domestic controls. She reproduces without any male intervention, or rather she forces men to submit to her predatory sexuality as the episode with Cibber demonstrates. Indeed part of her affront to the concept of motherhood in patriarchy is her intensified or 'exaggerated femininity' as Catherine Ingrassia calls it.²¹ The Magna Mater/Isis myth is again brought into play here in the form of Diana of Ephesus, a nurturing maternal deity who wears a turreted crown, a veil and has lions depicted on the lower half of her column-like body. These symbols link her with Cybele, whilst the lotus blossoms at the bottom of the surrounding two columns connect her with Isis. The crescent moon brings Diana Luna into play, but her most significant feature is the grotesque multitude of breasts she invites the viewer towards.²² She calls all of mankind to accept her fecundity, just as Dulness seeks to draw all men into her regressive maternity which offers the solace of her deathly womb, the tomb of classical learning. Dulness seeks to replace nature itself with her own anti-nature of undifferentiated matter. Spinoza asserted that 'the purpose of Nature is to make men uniform, as children of a common mother', and this is what Dulness becomes through her mythical identity.²³

The violation of 'classical' motherhood occurs in another way which is related to the central theme of the laissez-faire economics which had overtaken the book trade in Pope's time. Catherine Ingrassia explains that from the conservative view which advocated a moral economy the new economics of paper credit that had enabled the South Sea Bubble had feminised eighteenth-century economic man in a market environment where 'man symbolically gives free reign to his passions and allows his fate to be shaped by such allegorical female figures of disorder as Fortune and Luxury' (pp. 41-42). Pope's celebration of capitalism in *Windsor Forest* has now become a condemnation of this system under the present corrupt monarchy and government. The dunces, as we have seen, are

²¹'Women writing/writing women', *Eighteenth Century Life*, 14 (1990), 40-58 (p. 45).

²²See Faulkner and Blair, p. 234.

²³See Thomas Edwards Jr, *This Dark Estate*, p. 127.

effeminate and do rely upon just such an economics. Dulness herself becomes not just a mother, but a mother Strumpet, the Madam of the dunces, because she advocates the prostitution of literature to the market and its vulgar whims, its desires for grotesque entertainments. Bona Dea, another goddess identified with the Magna Mater was worshipped at night and, when linked with the old Roman goddess Maia, was worshipped also on May Day. Dulness too is a goddess of the night and darkness and she holds the games at the place of former May Day festivities:

Amid that area wide they took their stand,
Where the tall may-pole once o'er-looked the Strand;
But now (so ANNE and Piety ordain)
A Church collects the saints of Drury-lane (B. II. 27).

Anne's good work in replacing the site of pagan worship with a church is completely undone by Dulness who reclaims it for the Drury Lane harlots to ply their trade once more, just as the dunces are encouraged to sell their polluted textual 'bodies'. Indeed we have already seen the opposition between the classical body of 'fair *Rhet'ric*' and whorish 'Billingsgate' (B. IV. 26).

Dulness is the mother of a number of devolved selves who appear at various stages of the poem. A network of grotesque women reinforces ^{the} idea that bad literature is effeminate and therefore threatening to culture generally. Eliza Haywood is another mother figure considered by Ingrassia to be 'Pope's living symbol of Dulness' (p. 51). Haywood conflates many qualities to which Pope objected: a successful novelist and hack, she had also pursued a less successful career in the theatre as an actress and playwright, consorting with many of Pope's enemies. Adding insult to injury, she had attacked Martha Blount, one of Pope's classical ideal women who embodied the traditional feminine values of passivity and silence. Haywood was the very antithesis of Martha, conforming to none of Pope's requirements for the ideal woman. Worse still, like Dulness, Haywood had no husband, or rather she had separated from him. Without a restraining male figure Haywood's offensive creative autonomy became a major target for Pope. Ingrassia suggests that Haywood should also be viewed in the light of the rise of the female novel, a doubly disturbing development for Pope because it brought together issues of female authorship and the capitalistic book market which would pander to any audience and any genre. Haywood is not introduced as an active figure in the *Dunciad*, however, but as the first prize in the pissing contest:

See in the circle next, Eliza plac'd,
Two babes of love close clinging to her waist:

Fair as before her works she stands confess'd,
 In flow'rs and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dress'd.
 The Goddess then: 'Who best can send on high
 The salient spout, far-streaming to the sky;
 His be yon Juno of majestic size,
 With cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes.
 This China Jordan let the chief o'ercome
 Replenish, not ingloriously, at home' (*B. II. 157*).

Rather than nourishing breasts or the pearls of virginity Eliza shows 'two babes of love', primarily suggesting illegitimate creation despite the Virgilian allusion. She is possessed of a grotesque fecundity as the 'cow-like udders' imply. In a more sinister fashion, she is iconographically reminiscent of Nox, Sleep and Death, as Nox was often depicted holding two boys asleep, a white one on the right and a black one on the left with both of them having distorted legs, one of them being Sleep, and the other Death.²⁴ This forcefully reminds one of Eliza's true mistress, the dark Isis. The economic connection is not lost either, as Haywood becomes a strumpet-mother, a literary prostitute who is the receptacle for the excretions of any man, waiting to be 'replenished' at home just like the chamber pot. This also links her with Cloacina, the sewer goddess, another minor manifestation of Dulness. Should there be any doubt that Haywood is a willing participant in this literary/sexual economy, Pope informs us that 'the pleas'd dame' is lead away 'soft-smiling' (*B. II. 188*), a happy authoress who has found a publisher (Curl) to accept her advances.

Another female writer in the grotesque chain of women is Elizabeth Thomas, an authoress less successful than Haywood, but one who had offended Pope by publishing some of his private letters when she fell upon hard times. Her case is particularly grotesque because the factual evidence behind her literary representation serves to reinforce the equation of the grotesque female body, refusing classical self-containment and the control of Reason, with the unnaturalness of female writing.

Thomas, like Haywood, appears in the games during the race of the booksellers:

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 dawn to drop
 Her evening cates before his neighbour's shop,) (*B. II. 69*).

Curl slips into the urine that Corinna, the loose Ovidian lady, has produced. As Ingrassia observes, this public urination symbolises the transgression of a woman writing in the public realm as opposed to controlled privacy (p. 54). The excremental flows from Corinna's body were apparently

²⁴Faulkner and Blair, p. 233.

paralleled by those of Haywood in real life. She swallowed a chicken bone in 1711 which obstructed her bowel and caused her to retain bodily fluids so that her stomach swelled enormously. Relief could only be obtained by purgatives and the general passing of these fluids. On one occasion she was unable to attain such relief and twelve hours later nature took its course. She expelled, 'by stool and vomit ... about five gallons of dirty looking water'.²⁵ This episode was obviously a godsend for a poet seeking to expose the grotesque nature of the female writer, as Haywood's body becomes a mere conduit for waste matter, almost literally exploding with the filth that Pope sees as characteristic of the 'temple built over a sewer'.

Other related female grotesques occurring in the poem include Cloacina, the 'slip-shod Sibyl', and the related form of Opera. This figure 'prepares the way' (*B. III. 301*) for Dulness, being an import from the effeminate roman countries. Like the Sibyl, Opera is a conduit for Dulness, a female filled with notions of her own self-importance and prepared to supply the audience with anything it desires. Moreover, just as Dulness has her castrated Galli/dunces, so Opera has her 'priests', the castrati, who, as Pat Rogers notes, could be involved in scenes as grotesque as a Hercules singing in a soprano voice, forcing 'normal' male singers out of their proper roles.²⁶ This is of course what Dulness has done all along. Like her mistress, the female grotesque Opera has her feminised grotesque male servants.

Grotesque Queens

There is another dark Queen in the *Dunciad*, a figure taken from real life who permeates the poem far more than Eliza Haywood because she represents the very top of society, the very class that should be helping to defend English culture and civilisation, but instead, like Dulness, is actually attempting to destroy it. This figure is that of the actual Queen of England at the time of writing the *Dunciad A*. I follow Pat Rogers and Douglas Brooks-Davies in ascribing to Queen Caroline much of the 'credit' for providing the psychic energy needed by Pope to write the poem.²⁷ He produced the first three book version in 1728 during the reign of King George Augustus II and Caroline of Anspach who had been crowned in October 1727. Rogers and the Twickenham editor agree that the *Dunciad* is a creature of 1727: 'something happened during the latter half of the year which set Pope writing with

²⁵See Ingrassia, pp. 54-55.

²⁶*Literature and Popular Culture*, pp. 106-7.

²⁷See Rogers' 'Ermine, Gold and Lawn', chapter 5 of *Literature and Popular Culture*, pp. 120-150, and Brooks-Davies' *Queen of the Night*, p. 82.

an energy he had not displayed since turning to translation almost fifteen years before'.²⁸ We have already seen why Pope should object generally to the House of Hanover, but he had many reasons to dislike Caroline in particular.

Caroline was an example of a woman at the highest levels of power who displayed many qualities that flouted Pope's rules for the ideal woman. Despite the nominal control held by George, it was widely believed that Caroline was really running the show. Lord Hervey claimed in his *Memoirs* that

as soon as ever the Prince became King the whole world began to find out that her will was the sole spring on which every movement in the Court turned, and though His Majesty lost no opportunity to declare that the Queen never meddled with his business, yet nobody was simple enough to believe it.²⁹

Much like Dulness, 'her power was unrivalled and unbounded'. Like Dulness, she actively succeeded in undermining male power; as Horace Walpole put it: 'Her understanding was uncommonly strong; and so was her resolution; from their earliest connection She had determined to *govern the King*, and deserved to do so; for her submission to his will was unbounded, her sense much superior' [my italics].³⁰

Hervey's description of Caroline goes on to condense several characteristics that Pope had actively written against in his major philosophical works on women and mankind generally: 'Her predominant passion was *pride*, and the darling pleasure of her soul was *power*' [my italics] (p. 72). Dulness is described as 'Mother of Arrogance, and Source of Pride' (B. IV. 470) by 'a gloomy Clerk', a figure identified by the Twickenham editor as Dr Samuel Clarke, a divine who was one of Caroline's favourites. Pride, especially female pride, is a cardinal sin for Pope, the cause of the Fall and all subsequent woes as he clearly states in the *Essay on Man* (I. 123). Caroline was already rumoured to be victim to such a religious pride as Hervey relates: 'as she knew she had the reputation of being a little heterodox in her notions, she often (as she frequently owned) denied herself the pleasure of seeing and conversing with men who lay under that imputation' (p. 75). Hervey's previous mention of her pleasure in power, moreover, reminds one of the notorious passage in the *Epistle to a Lady* in which he asserts that women have two ruling passions, the 'Love of Pleasure, and the Love of Sway'

²⁸Rogers, p. 123.

²⁹*Lord Hervey's Memoirs*, edited by Romney Sedgwick (London, 1952), p. 44.

³⁰Walpole, Horace, *Reminiscences*, pp. 70-71, Rumbold, p. 216.

and that 'they seek the second not to lose the first' (210-214). Here pleasure and power or 'sway' are intimately related and, as Catherine Ingrassia points out, Dulness's love of 'Arbitrary Sway' (*B. IV. 182*) is constantly repeated in the poem (p. 48).

Indeed this 'Arbitrary Sway' was a feature of the Hanoverian treatment of various friends of Pope who had hoped for preferment, Swift amongst them. Like Dulness's dispensations in the fourth book, far from honouring the deserving Caroline dispensed favours to people that Pope actively disliked. Walpole for one owed his political survival to Caroline, finding his tolerant, worldly and cynical outlook coincided precisely with her own. Hervey describes their relationship baldly: 'it was understood by everybody that Sir Robert was the Queen's minister; that whoever he favoured, she distinguished; and whoever she distinguished, the King employed. His reputed mistress, Mrs Howard, and the Speaker his reputed minister, were perceived to be nothing' (p. 39). Walpole always appreciated Caroline's ultimate hegemony over her husband; he remarked crudely but perceptively: 'I have the right sow by the ear'. He collaborated with Caroline in the systematic manipulation of a king whom neither was willing to trust with policy.

Moreover, Pope's friend Henrietta Howard was mistress to the king. Valerie Rumbold in her *Women's Place in Pope's World* describes her as one of Pope's damsels in distress. That is, Pope felt happiest dealing with women who needed help in some way, and less happy when forced to confront women like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu who were self-assertive, politically active, intelligent and witty, as Rumbold has shown in some detail. Apparently Pope is only at ease when confronted by women who accept their role as characterless objects of exchange in a masculine economy; his gleeful exploitation of Patty's notorious comment that 'Most Women have no characters at all' vindicates this view. Henrietta Howard had been mercilessly persecuted by her vindictive husband, and was forced to depend on the protection of the court, enjoying none of the power that a mistress of the king might normally expect to receive. Being an easy target, Caroline used Howard as a scapegoat, forced herself 'to listen respectfully to a bore who delighted in snubbing her, to respond complaisantly to his desires for other women (such as Henrietta), and on occasion to help procure them for him'.³¹ Understandable as this pressure and consequent behaviour might be to us, it was not likely to endear Caroline to Pope.

³¹Rumbold, p. 217.

Nor was her openly aggressive use of her sexuality, most notoriously manifested in what J.H. Plumb called 'her magnificent breasts'. Apparently she 'was very proud of them, displaying them to maximum advantage'.³² In this she was more like a royal mistress herself, using George's desire for political ends. Hervey recounts that 'she knew better than anybody else that her power over the king was not preserved independent, as most people thought, of the charms of her person; and as her power over him was the principal object of her pursuit, she feared, very reasonably, the loss or weakening of any tie by which she held him'. Ironically she concealed her ruptured intestine from everyone in order to retain her sexual attraction to the king, thus leading directly to her death in 1737.

Finally irking to Pope must have been her pretensions to the intellectual sphere which he regarded as a classical space reserved for men alone. Central to the *Dunciad* is the elevation of Colley Cibber to the laureateship during the reign of George and Caroline and thus his place as King dunce in the 1743 edition of the poem instead of Theobald. Apart from this general dispensation, Caroline had personally collected Van Dycks and corresponded with Leibnitz. She prided herself on her theological discernment and regularly met Clarke, Butler, Berkeley and Hoadly. According to Hervey 'the Queen ... loved reading and the conversation of men of wit and learning', and perhaps most annoyingly for Pope 'she had the most incredible memory and was as learned both in ancient and modern history as the most learned men' (p. 74). On a more practical level, she had had her children inoculated against the smallpox at a time when it was not fashionable to do so. Women with pretensions to learning were obvious targets for Pope at the best of times, but the theme of Dulness positively invites this identification.

Caroline: a Female Grotesque

In such circumstances I can only agree with Pat Rogers that Caroline provides the driving force behind the great female grotesque manifested in the Goddess of Dulness. Dulness inverts the traditional identification of the ruling lady as divine and light-bearing as we saw with Anne, or with Elizabeth in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. She is set against the forces of order and reason, forces often symbolised in the eighteenth century through the light of Newtonian science:

Dulness o'er all possess'd her ancient right,
 Daughter of Chaos and eternal night:

³²*Sir Robert Walpole: The King's Minister* (London, 1960), p. 159; see also Rogers, p. 139.

Fate in their dotage this fair Ideot gave,
 Gross as her sire, and as her mother grave,
 Laborious, heavy, busy, bold, and blind,
 She rul'd, in native Anarchy, the mind (*B. I. 11*).

Apart from the traditional associations of woman with the chaotic, the unformed, the unsocialized and the anarchic, there is a stress laid upon the monarchical aspects of Dulness, her possession of 'ancient right' and her rule of the mind. More specifically, Caroline herself had blonde hair, whilst most Germans were labelled as unrefined, so the reference to 'this fair Ideot' who is 'gross as her sire' would not have been difficult for the contemporary reader to spot, especially, as Rogers notes, as the last major public spectacle before the first publication of the poem had been the wedding of George and Caroline, in which Caroline had rather unconstitutionally rearranged the ceremony in order to ensure that she did not have to take a back seat to the king.³³ This was one woman in the State who was not going to be overawed by traditions of male supremacy and symbolism.

Coronation parody

Pat Rogers has detailed the many parallels between the enthronement of Dulness and that of George and Caroline, and the poem is littered with references to this most recent of public events. The cry of 'God save King Log' (*B. I. 330*) at the end of the first book makes much more sense than a mere allusion to an animal fable if one thinks of King Log and George, the thick-headed German boor. George however, is an object of ridicule rather than an active agent in the poem, as the description of Dulness's ascension to the throne makes clear:

She mounts the Throne: her head a Cloud conceal'd,
 In broad Effulgence all below reveal'd,
 ('Tis thus aspiring Dulness ever shines)
 Soft on her lap her Laureat son reclines (*IV. 17*).

The traditional opposition of male activity and female passivity is reversed as Cibber, King of the Dunces rests on his parodically creative mother. Pope's footnote makes the similarly obvious connection between Dulness/Caroline and Cibber/George: he tells us that it should not seem strange that the hero does nothing 'when so many *King-consorts* have done the like'. This image is a repetition of the beginning of the third book when 'On Dulness lap th' Anointed head reposed' (*B. III. 2*). As George sleeps Caroline rules. Pat Rogers points out that the 'suggestion of indecorous personal exposure' here refers partly to Caroline's propensity to use her breasts (and therefore her feminine

³³Rogers, p. 129.

sexuality) for her own benefit like a queenly prostitute (p. 139). Ironically she was embarrassed by the ritual anointing of her bosom at the coronation, her clothing being held open by an attendant for the Archbishop of Canterbury to complete the act. Apparently she had the canopy brought down at this point to hide her from public view.

This image of George reclining on Caroline's lap may be an indication of connubial bliss, but it is also suggesting that George is a mere child to be lulled by his mother. This links with the speech Dulness makes in the first book when she states the nature of her motherhood:

O when shall rise a Monarch all our own,
 And I, a Nursing-mother, rock the throne,
 'Twixt Prince and People close the Curtain draw,
 Shade him from light, and cover him from Law;
 Fatten the courtier, starve the learned band,
 And suckle Armies, and dry-nurse the land (*B. I.* 311).

Dulness is cast in terms of an anti-mother as part of her grotesque nature. Where Anne is a benevolent Ceres bringing plenty to the state, a 'nursing mother' metaphorically suckling the whole nation, Caroline-Dulness flouts this supportive feminine role as she dry-nurses the land. Indeed this is a direct quotation of Anne's coronation speech. Here Caroline rocks the throne, both in the sense of lulling George and destabilizing the intellectual and political life of the nation. She suckles armies in opposition to Anne's promotion of peace in the Treaty of Utrecht. The fattened courtier is a type probably best represented by Lord Hervey himself, a favourite of Caroline's and the target of one of Pope's most virulent lampoons where Hervey is cast as one of Pope's grotesque feminised men who 'Now trips a Lady, and now struts a Lord'. Erskine-Hill fights shy of identifying Hervey with 'the child of heat and air' in the Butterfly/Carnation episode in book four (*B. IV.* 401) thus implying 'a sexual liaison' between the Queen and her courtier, but I see every reason why Pope would say this.³⁴ The imagistic comparison alone would imply Hervey as the butterfly. Hervey is not the only effeminate male here, however. George is also effectively a grotesque castrated king, a king who is ruled by a woman, thus becoming the Attys to Caroline as Cybele, the Great Mother of the nation. Indeed Elias Mengel notes that the face of Cibber blends into that of George on the mock royal arms of Britain in the 1743 version of the *Dunciad* (pp. 174-75). All males under the rule of Dulness must undergo this symbolic castration: even the king himself.

³⁴See *Pope: The Dunciad* (London, 1972), p. 59.

Queen of the Night.

Another part of Dulness/Caroline's motherly function is to 'shade' George 'from light'. If Anne reflects a heavenly divinity by her silvery light, then Dulness reflects no light at all, a 'cloud-compelling Queen'. The proliferation of Miltonic parodies in the poem makes this Satanic aspect more than clear. When Pope describes Dulness as shining 'in clouded majesty' (*B.* I. 45) he directs us to the Miltonic quotation:

Hesperus that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw (*PL.* IV. 605).³⁵

'Apparent' is ambiguous in that the queen is 'manifest', but also playing on 'heir-apparent', as Alastair Fowler observes: hence while the moon is clouded her majesty is only presumptive; when 'unveiled' she is 'peerless'. The point about Dulness is that her majesty is false and presumptive. She is a pretender to a divinely appointed lunar monarchy that she is bent on destroying as Brooks-Davies makes clear (p. 72). Caroline becomes the dark Isis who throws her dark mantle over light in a witch-like inversion of Milton.

Faulkner and Blair argue for Settle as the high priest or Archigallus of the cult of Dulness, and reject Walpole as the person for this role (p. 240). This is despite the fact that, as they themselves point out, Walpole is variously described as the 'Magus' of Dulness, 'a WIZARD OLD', and, in the footnote, as 'the High-Priest of Dulness' who introduces her followers into her '*greater Mysteries*' (*B.* IV. 516). Given Walpole's relationship with Caroline as her first minister and confidant, he would seem by far the most suitable candidate for the post, quite apart from the fact that Pope clearly names him as high-priest in any case. Walpole also wields a version of Circe's cup which, rather than leaving the mind in an animal's body, leaves the human body and takes away the mind (*B.* IV. 528 and note). Circe was Hecate's daughter, and this emphasises the fact that Walpole is the wizard who serves the lunar witchery of Caroline.

³⁵John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Alastair Fowler, Longman Annotated English Poets (Harlow, 1971), pp. 230-31.

The Queen is Dead

Caroline died in 1737 between the publication of *Dunciad A* and *Dunciad B* but her place as an aspect of Dulness remains in the poem, if only because the effects of her reign lived on. A significant addition to the later version of the poem was an 'oblique elegy' to Caroline in 'one of the most enigmatic, satirical, yet touchingly beautiful episodes in the poem', the death of the carnation.³⁶ The flower 'thron'd in glass' called 'CAROLINE' has a 'promiscuous blaze' as one of Pope's transgressive sun-women who usurp male power. This queen of flowers is now 'prostrate! dead!', presumably laid low by Hervey, the butterfly who has corrupted her (*B. IV. 403-16*). A number of ironies operate here, one of which is that Hervey had no need to corrupt the already 'promiscuous' (412) Queen. One parallel between this situation and real life is that Caroline had died of a suspected vaginal rupture in the most grotesque fashion, and it may be that Pope is trying to accuse Hervey of causing this in an illicit 'promiscuous' liaison prompted by his 'insect lust' (415). Certainly it was fitting for Pope that one of his great female grotesques had died in subjection to her own gender. Apparently there had been a very messy operation on the Queen in an attempt to save her, with bursting bowels and large amounts of excremental issue. Pope's epigram 'On Queen Caroline's Death-Bed' shows his cynical awareness of her grotesque death:

Here lies wrapt up in forty thousand towels
The only proof that C*** had bowels.³⁷

Even here Pope is referring, in an almost Swiftian manner, to the contrast between the ideal purified classical queen that Caroline never was, and the grotesque physical reality of her frail female body which collapses back into its constituent fluidity and chaos.

Classical Men

The mythical relays of the poem do not confine themselves to the expression of the grotesque however; Pope includes hints of a possible model of classical male order which has the power to resist the incursions of the grotesque into civilisation. We have already seen the way in which the anti-state of Dulness is contrasted with the reign of Anne, a relatively happy time for Pope despite the many

³⁶See Erskine-Hill, *Pope: The Dunciad*, p. 58, 57.

³⁷*TE*, VI, p. 390.

hardships endured by Catholics. But it is to classical times that he returns both to ground his mock-epic and to suggest a possible order for the future.

The removal of Dulness from the east and the City to the west and St James' Palace has the mock-epic parallel of the displacement of the Trojan empire to Rome, yet this is not the only movement from east to west in the poem. The cult of the Magna Mater similarly had Asiatic origins as her statue was a black stone which supposedly had fallen to earth near Pessinus. There is a mention in the *Aeneid* of the possibility of the statue being taken with the Trojans on their journey to Italy after the fall of Troy, but this was not the propitious time, so the transfer was effected in 204 BC and the cult of the Great Mother settled in Rome.

A related movement was the clandestine arrival in Rome of the Thracian cult of Bacchus that shared the tendencies of sexual debauchery, drunkenness, and the motifs of asses and ivy with the cult of the Magna Mater. Both these movements engendered cult excesses, although the excess of wine in the Bacchic orgies is of a lesser magnitude than the excess of blood in the ritual frenzies of Galli. The similarly orgiastic cult of Dulness spreads, following the supposed advance of civilisation, further west, to London. The difference between the advance of the Magna Mater to Rome and the advance of Dulness to London is in the response from the state. To Pope's horror, the cult of Dulness virtually *is* the state as Caroline is blended in with the goddess herself and Walpole becomes the political high priest. The response in the time of Augustus was very different. Faulkner and Blair note that 'the upper classes were horrified at the cult excesses' of the Galli. The state subsequently suppressed the Bacchic cult that had 'engendered vast immorality', culminating in the 185 BC Bacchanalia which involved even the Roman nobility (p. 244).

The role of Augustus as a moral leader was crucial here: he attempted to restore morality by 'reviving and purifying the religious cults' including that of the Magna Mater. Such a revival was dependent on the Romanisation/civilisation of these cults (p. 245). To this end Apollo was chosen as Augustus's patron deity in keeping with the image of the sun god as the bringer of light, harmony and the noble arts. Cibber, we remember, is the anti-Apollo of the dunces, bent on bringing darkness, dissonance and vulgarity. Horace, one of Pope's formative influences and literary heroes, started to write odes honouring Apollo that linked the name of the god with that of the emperor Augustus. Again, if one recalls that George's middle name was Augustus an extremely unfavourable contrast

emerges centred on state promotion of the arts, and in particular the appointment of Cibber as Laureate. The strong leadership provided by Augustus makes the duped figure of George look a sad shadow of a king. Where the House of Hanover promotes the grotesque cult of Dulness, Augustus deliberately suppressed Oriental cults, including, as Faulkner and Blair note, the cult of Isis, 'whose Egyptian origin associated her with Anthony and Cleopatra' (p. 245). Augustus also condemned Asiatic literary styles as meaningless and verbose as opposed to the Attic school of oratory which stressed 'careful simplicity' (p. 246).

One can see a general contrast between the virile, Roman civilisation headed by the manly Augustus (himself the object of phallic virility cults)³⁸ promoting the cause of Culture, and the feminized Oriental barbaric and enthusiastic cults lead by disruptive female deities who are aligned with the Earth and Nature. The light bearing masculinity of the classical Apollo stands firm against the grotesque moon goddess Isis who drains away the life-blood of western civilisation with her alluring Oriental ways. Pope naturally aligns himself with the masculine defenders of Culture: Augustus, Horace, and Apollo.

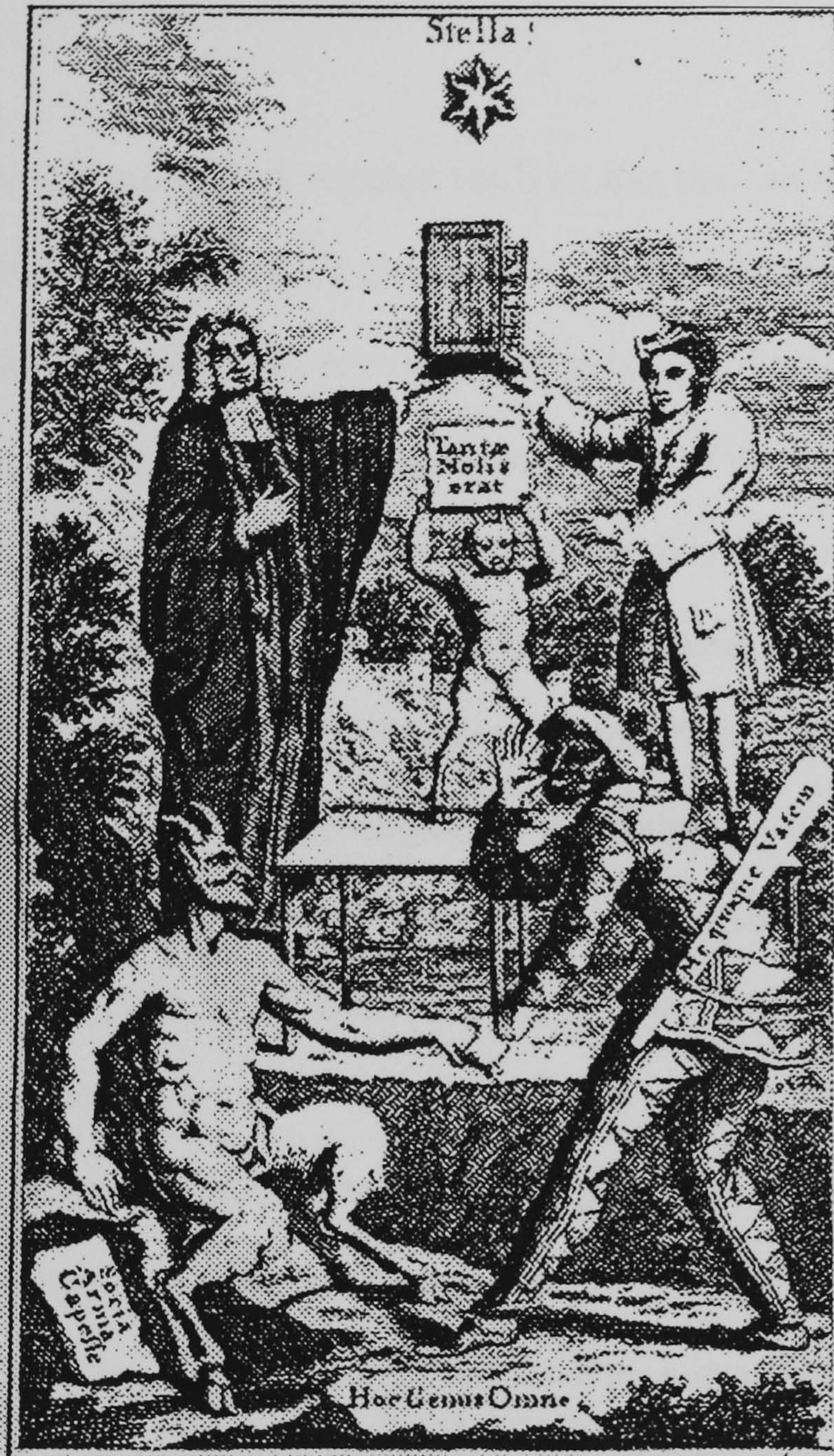
There is another poetic figure aligned with Pope as narrator of the poem, and that is Orpheus. John Regan notes that Orpheus's death and symbolic castration at the hands of the Thracian women is like that of the narrator at the hands of Dulness and her cult.³⁹ Orpheus's song was silenced by the 'howling Bacchanals' who are basically the same as the servants of the Great Mother: they too destroy poetry and culture. Pope's identification with Orpheus is a shift in the development of his poetry because he now no longer assumes the mythical guise of a poet figure who can confidently close his own poem, having returned the feminine forces of disruption to their rightful place in the order of things. He continues to identify with the classical male poet or god, but in the poem this figure is a castrated or at least a compromised one. The narrator of the *Dunciad* is impotent, unable to prevent the inevitable spread of Dulness as her ghastly uncreation conquers civilisation 'And Universal Darkness buries All' (B. IV. 656). Ironically Pope has become one of Dulness's effeminate men, a eunuch himself, robbed even of the compensation of the poetic virility he has generated for himself in

³⁸See Oscar Reutersvard, *The Neo-Classic Temple of Virility and the buildings with a Phallic shaped ground plan* (Lund, Sweden, 1971), p. 21.

³⁹'Orpheus and the *Dunciad*'s Narrator'. *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 9 (1975), 87-101.

his earlier poetry. The *Dunciad* returns him to the Orphic body of his real life, a grotesque, fragmented body to be laughed at by the ladies, or worse. The vicious laughter of a Lady Mary becomes the fearful violence of the Thracian women. Pope's symbolic classical body is torn apart by the regressive danger of the deterritorialized feminine power which finds its essence in the grotesque Goddess of Dulness, a feminine power that paradoxically constitutes Pope's greatest poetic achievement.

PART THREE: SWIFT



9. 'Stella!', frontispiece to *Gulliveriana* (1728), engraving.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SWIFT AND THE GROTESQUE

Introduction

As Ruth Salvaggio points out, Swift criticism has been split into two camps: the first defines Swift as an Augustan author, committed to the values of classical civilisation and to the ideal classicality of the Augustan vision that we have already seen in Pope. This is the Swift who longs for the restoration of the master signifier of the Golden Age, the man of the church who said that 'Method is good in all things. Order governs the world. The Devil is the author of confusion'.¹ The second sees him as an anti-Augustan, bent on the subversion of classical forms, applying a realistic perspective which undercuts the idealisations of an (early) Pope. This version of Swift is the Rabelaisian rabble-rouser who compares his language to 'the Watermen of the Thames' and who declines 'the lofty Stile'.² Salvaggio rightly asserts the need to take the dynamic coexistence of both tendencies into account, and this is what I intend to do, initially caching out Swift's attitudes in terms of the classical and the grotesque.³

Swift's uneasy relation with both the classical and the grotesque is perhaps best illustrated by

Letitia Pilkington's anecdote concerning his attempt at imitating the Roman Saturnalia:

I remember a worthy gentleman who had the honour of his acquaintance told me that the Dean and some other persons of taste, whom I do not now recollect, came to a resolution to have a feast once a year, in imitation of the *Saturnalia*, which in heathen Rome was held about the time we keep our Christmas, whereat the servants personated their masters and the masters waited as servants. The first time they put this scheme in practice was at the Deanery House. When all the servants were seated, and every gentleman placed behind his own man, the Dean's servant took

¹*The Journal to Stella*, edited by Harold Williams, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1948), abbreviated to *Journal*, I, 72. Other critics who deal with the classical Swift are: Denis Donoghue, *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, 1969); J. A. Downie, *Jonathan Swift: Political Writer*, (London, 1984); Joseph McMinn, *Jonathan Swift, A Literary Life* (London, 1991); Donald C. Mell, 'Imagination and Satiric Mimesis in Swift's Poetry', in *Contemporary Studies of Swift's Poetry*, edited by John Irwin Fischer and Donald C. Mell Jr (London, 1981), pp. 123-35; Walter J. Ong, 'Swift on the Mind, the Myth of Asepsis', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 15 (1954), 208-221.

²See *An Epistle To A Lady, Who desired the author to make verses on her in the heroick stile* (1733), *Swift Poems*, II, 628-638, lines 165-66, 218. Other critics describing a grotesque Swift are: Arthur Clayborough, *The Grotesque in English Literature* (Oxford, 1965), Chapter 6; Carole Fabricant, *Swift's Landscape* (Baltimore, 1982); Ellen Pollak, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth* (Chicago, 1985); Claude Rawson, *Gulliver and the Gentle Reader* (London, 1973).

³Salvaggio, *Enlightened Absence*, p. 79.

the opportunity of finding fault with some of the meat that was not done to his taste, and, taking it up in his hand, he threw it in his master's face, and mimicked him in every other foible which he had ever discovered in him. At this the Dean flew in a violent rage, beat the fellow, and put everything into such disorder that the servants, affrighted, fled the room; and here ended the feast of *Saturnalia*.⁴

Whether Pilkington is a reliable historian or not, this story certainly has the ring of truth, in so far as it exemplifies Swift's attraction towards the world of inversion and his fascination with it, yet simultaneously shows his disapproval of such inversions when their reality is brought home to him. Swift had no tolerance of religious dissension beyond the strict limits he allotted to it, and the same rule applies to social dissension, apart from his own of course. One feels the Dean's servant had very good reason to ridicule his strict master who evidently was in the habit of throwing his food back at the servants, nevertheless Swift is only interested in a controlled carnival, a subdued *Saturnalia*, and reasserts his Lenten order accordingly, returning to the role of the priestly scourge of unofficial culture. Clearly by the eighteenth century this kind of activity was a game to be played by the higher orders rather than an integral part of their culture; the servants find themselves in a no-win situation; they cannot totally mimic their masters, for they do not really possess any power.

Similarly Swift's response to the carnivalesque May Fair can be gauged in his *In pity to the empty'ng Town* (1709), a reference to the gentry's habit of leaving for the country in early May when the fair was put on.⁵ It transpires that this is a topsy-turvy world where 'the joys which Nature yields' are 'Inverted in May-Fair' (9-10). In this mock pastoral milk-maids are really town girls, flowers are plate (6-7), and one finds 'Fields' and fresh air in the booths (9-12). More than this, the dancing dogs and puppets 'far exceed' the attractions of the country lambs or birds (13-16).

Fascinated by such drolls that have the power to transgress Nature, Swift is compelled to record them in verse and yet disapprove of them, moving his irony against them in true Scriblerian fashion. He adopts the neo-classical stance of those who would like to suppress the fair and, as Pat Rogers notes, the authorities in the form of the Grand Jury of Westminster did put an end to the fair in 1708 although it was revived for a time in the 1740s.⁶

⁴*Memoirs of Mrs Letitia Pilkington 1712-50: Written by Herself*, introduced by Iris Barry (London, 1928, first published 1748-54), p. 369.

⁵*Swift Poems*, I, 122-23.

⁶*Jonathan Swift: the Complete Poems*, edited by Pat Rogers (London, 1983), pp. 634-35.

Ultimately one finds that Swift is very close to Pope in his general attitude to the carnivalesque in its social form although he differs from Pope in his compulsion to write in a 'lower' literary style. I intend to concentrate on Swift's poetry, where the contrast is most marked, and where Swift most fully reveals his use of the classical and the grotesque. Initially, however, I will need to explicate more fully Swift's attitude towards the body and sexuality, the area where gender issues open out the complexity and intensity of his responses.

Swift and the Grotesque

As has already been noted, Swift is often characterised as a grotesque writer, although quite what it is that characterises his grotesquerie has been open to debate. Critics such as Peter Steele argue that it is the very condition of man that prompts Swift's grotesque vision: human mortality is itself grotesque, encompassing as it does the realities of disease, filth and madness.⁷ A grotesque existence therefore calls for a grotesque art. Pat Rogers takes a more social and less existential view, observing that eighteenth-century London was grotesque in a material sense, as Swift reflects in his *Description of a City Shower*.⁸ Rogers makes the general point that both Pope and Swift responded to this environmental filth. More specifically, Carole Fabricant describes the literal depth and murkiness of the filth on the streets of the Liberties, the area of Dublin where St. Patrick's Cathedral stood, and the grotesque enormous piles of dung surrounding cabins in the Irish countryside.⁹ Swift's own poetry describing the anti-pastoral nature of the Irish landscape sharply contrasts with that of Pope which, by and large, upholds the myth of the untainted Augustan countryside as opposed to the corrupt city. There is no doubt truth in all of these perspectives and they are certainly compatible.

More recent research has begun to identify Swift's preoccupation with the grotesquerie of the body, and particularly the female body. Middleton Murry is one of a number of earlier critics who simply accused Swift of having a revulsion of the reality of woman's physical being. This reductive view has been refined by debates between the likes of Susan Gubar and Ellen Pollak as to whether his

⁷Jonathan Swift, *Preacher and Jester* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 176-206.

⁸*Grub Street* (London, 1972), p. 248.

⁹*Swift's Landscape*, pp. 24-33.

view of women is purely negative or whether he is merely an undoer of romantic myths of female ideological stereotypes.¹⁰ Ruth Salvaggio's feminist deconstruction of masculine Enlightenment systems has identified the feminine and the female body as the disruptive element in these structures of representation. For Augustan authors, classical systematicity is only possible when woman remains absent.¹¹ In my terms, woman is figured as grotesque, because she traverses discrete domains and unsettles classical logic. Similarly Carol Flynn in *The Body in Swift and Defoe* finds that Swift attempts to deal with the threat of the female body to masculine self-identity through the sublimation of sexuality into language games that he controls.¹²

I am indebted to all these studies and more as the notion of the grotesque, particularly the female grotesque, intersects in many ways with this body of work, especially that of Susan Gubar and her pioneering work on the female monster in this period. As yet her research has not really been developed with regard to the eighteenth century, and no one has followed through the development of the grotesque in Swift's poetry, female or otherwise, and this is what I intend to do in this section. Until recently work on the poetry has been concentrated on a particular poem or group of poems with the result that the subject in question comes to seem in some way unique. A notorious example of this is the group known loosely as the scatological poems which were initially used as evidence of Swift's madness at the time of writing. More recent literary investigation has shown Swift to be indebted to many literary influences including Ovid, Juvenal, Burton, Rochester, Ames and Gould, but there has been little investigation Swift's development of the female (and male) grotesque in his own poetry, a lack I hope to remove.

Early Grotesques: the Malignant Muse

One of the many paradoxes that Swift's literary career brings to light is the fact that he renounced the poetic Muse at the very beginning of his poetic career, and the image he summons to represent his disappointment concerning the deceptions of the world and its poetry is, inevitably, that of the female grotesque. In 1693 Swift wrote a poem *Occasioned by Sir W- T-'s late Illness and Recovery*, in which he introduces the first of many grotesque goddesses to appear in his writing. In

¹⁰See Gubar's 'The Female Monster in Augustan Satire', *Signs*, 3 (1977), 380-94, Pollak's 'Comment' in *Signs*, 4 (1978), 728-32, and Gubar's 'Reply', 732-33 of the same volume.

¹¹*Enlightened Absence*, pp. ix-xi.

¹²(Cambridge, 1990).

this particular case, he blames the muse for his lamentable and degrading dependence on others, notably Temple, for his living.¹³ She becomes an overdetermined symbol of his failed aspirations:

Malignant goddess! bane to my repose,
Thou universal cause of all my woes (81).

Finding that the goddess brings him no rewards for his devotion, Swift ends the poem with over fifty lines of invective against her. In many ways she heralds the advent of Pope's Goddess Dulness, being the 'Fools common-place' and 'Th'appeal of dullness in the last resort' (87-88). Like Dulness she has her duncely followers that recall the Galli:

But if thou be'est what thy mad vot'ries prate,
A female pow'r, [which] loose-govern'd thoughts create;
Why near the dregs of youth perversely wilt thou stay,
So highly courted by the brisk and gay? (103)

The goddess too is 'a female pow'r', but she does not use this power in the service of the true man. Instead, she misuses her inspirational abilities in the service of dunces, 'the dregs of youth', 'the brisk and gay'. Like Pope's female deity, the malignant muse is connected with sexual promiscuity, if not prostitution. Her thoughts are as 'loose-govern'd' as her own behaviour, mixing randomly with the wrong type of man; implicit in this phrase is the possibility of her being properly governed by Swift in a properly masculine economy rather than this erratic female one, if only he had the power to achieve his goals, literary and social. Pope too expressed contempt for his muse in a less anxious manner, calling her 'this jade of mine ... whom everybody think I love as a Mistress, but whom in reality I hate as a wife' (*Pope Corr*, I, 292, 293). Both writers purge their own 'clean and proper' classical bodies by projecting (potential) grotesque elements in themselves outwards onto the other of the female grotesque.

The muse takes on the character of deceitful female who has given Swift rules to live by in the expectation of an ultimate reward for his virtue, only for him to find that this was always an illusory hope, and that the hidden reality, which he now perceives, is that 'int'rest, flattery, or deceit' (148) are ways to gain one's promotion rather than things to be avoided as the muse advises. She now becomes a vicious illusion, grotesquely hovering between existence and non-existence:

Ah, should I tell a secret yet unknown,
That thou ne'er hadst a being of thy own,

¹³*Swift Poems*, I, 51-55.

But a wild form dependent on the brain,
Scatt'ring loose features o'er the optic vein (93).

As Ehrenpreis informs us, the poem is loosely based on an idea from Temple's essay *Of Poetry*: 'true poetry being dead, an apparition of it walked about'.¹⁴ The goddess is transformed into a ghostly belle, haunting Swift with her false shows of seeming truth:

In sum, a glitt'ring voice, a painted name,
A walking vapor, like thy sister fame (101).

The thematics of cosmetic femininity and vaporous women will be recurring ones in Swift's poetry and prose and are related to the specific grotesquerie of the female body. Early in his career Swift identifies the need to expose the deceptions of feminine wiles and illusions to specular masculine truth. Woman is figured as the bearer and concealer of evil; not an original theme in terms of classical and Christian myth, but then Swift was steeped in both. Here, the female body refuses to retain solidity, tending to dissipate itself into its constituent particles, becoming either gaseous or fluid. In *The Journal of a Modern Lady* Swift complains of the sound of female voices talking together:

The jumbling particles of matter
In chaos made not such a clatter (194).¹⁵

Feminine substance is raw Nature here, a Miltonic void of chaotic particles refusing the control of form given by God. The reference to 'sister fame' also suggests the universal nature of female deception, implying as it does the whole female race, a point much more clearly expressed in *The Journal of a Modern Lady* where all forms of female community are castigated as evil.

At present, though, Swift's attack focuses on the muse, a figure gifted with the grotesque characteristic of inversion:

From thee whatever virtue takes its rise,
Grows a misfortune, or becomes a vice (135).

Virtue becomes vice, promised success becomes actual failure, with Swift as the object of the malignant goddess's topsy-turvy behaviour. Treated thus, he renounces the 'delusion' of her 'visionary power' (152-54).

¹⁴Ehrenpreis, I, 139.

¹⁵Swift *Poems*, II, 450.

True to his word Swift subsequently took up with a masculine muse and confidant: Apollo, the god of 'learning, wit, and light', a form giving male deity rather than the chaotic female muse. This is not a simple substitution, however; as we have seen, Apollo is a problematic muse, a castrated author, lacking sexual creativity, much like his votary Swift. Apollo, like Temple, is an unsatisfactory father figure. It will also be remembered that Swift's actual father died when Swift was very young, leaving him in the care of a seemingly unreliable mother who did not feel the need to remain in the country when he was returned with his over-protective nurse from his kidnapping to Whitehaven. A pattern emerges of a Swift bereft of father figures, and a tendency to seek fathers who subsequently turn out to be unsatisfactory. Stella's mothering role will be examined later, but in this case Swift regards the muse as a grotesquely unstable 'painted name'.

There is a certain complexity in this poem, in that the Muse becomes a scapegoat for Temple's failure to live up to Swift's expectations of him, as Ehrenpreis has explained: 'Temple's figure merges with the muse. Her rules are undoubtedly his - at least, as Swift conceives them. The closing lines of Swift's accusations against her are ultimately addressed to his patron' (p. 141). Pointedly, the poem in general only encounters the stated subject, Temple's illness, in the muse's speech to Swift in the first half of the poem; instead of celebrating his recovery in verse as the muse urges, Swift displaces attention away from Temple and onto the muse's broken promises of advancement in the world for this ambitious young secretary of the great man. In fact Swift does not even mention Temple's illness in his tirade against the muse in the second half of the poem. When he berates her suggested rules as mad due to their improbable high-minded purity he is obviously aiming this criticism at Temple, yet overt criticism of his patron was impossible if Swift wished to further his career in even the smallest way. He actually left Temple in 1694 to enter the Church in Ireland, a departure which displeased his master greatly, and even then Swift found to his dismay that the Archbishop of Dublin required an exhaustive reference from Temple before he would be allowed ordination.¹⁶

This poem supplies a pattern for Swift's future writing, whereby the deficiencies of a masculine economy are embodied in a grotesque female figure. The true object of blame becomes a feminine object of revulsion. Joseph McMinn has illustrated the way in which Swift's Irish political pamphlets

¹⁶See McMinn, *Jonathan Swift*, p. 7.

blame women for the economic woes of this impecunious country. Such writings include *A Letter to the Archbishop of Dublin, concerning the Weavers, A Proposal to the Ladies of Ireland*, and his *Answer to Several Letters from Unknown Persons* where he complains bitterly of those women who 'spend the revenue of a moderate family to adorn a nauseous unwholesom living Carcase'.¹⁷ Swift's grotesque women lack the positive mythic life force of Bakhtin's grotesques. The ghostly muse and the 'living Carcase' are both oxymoronic figures, zombies suspended between life and death, scarcely deserving of their places in God's creation. As at the end of *Sir W- T-'s late Illness*, one feels Swift's urge to eliminate such matter out of place from the face of the earth: to remove such grotesques would be to cure his problems, to set things right as the disruptive feminine is purged from the classical order. The economic benefits of the masculine body are 'spent' by the wasteful and devouring carcass of the female.

In a similar textual move, *The Story of the Injured Lady* presents a female grotesque as a scapegoat for Swift's anger at England's preferential treatment of Scotland in the 1707 Act of Union in stark contrast to the lack of constitutional rights in Ireland. This national love triangle finds the male lover England being unfaithful to his female lover Ireland as he pursues a Scottish mistress. Swift endows the body of the offending country with the lack of self-control, both physically and mentally, that was to characterise his later scatological women:

As to her Person she is tall and lean, and very ill-shaped; she hath bad Features, and a worse Complexion; she hath a stinking Breath, and twenty ill Smells about her besides; which are yet more insufferable by her natural Sluttishness; for she is always lousy, and never without the itch.

As McMinn puts it, 'the Dissenter is essentially and always a witch', alluding to Scotland's alleged Presbyterianism, of which Swift strongly disapproved, as indeed he disapproved of any deviations from the true faith of (his own) Anglicanism.¹⁸ Paralleling the religious disorder, this is a body that refuses to remain within its proper (classical) boundaries: its aesthetics are grotesque in the negative sense in that she is 'very ill-shaped' rather than having the interconnectedness of earlier grotesque art found in the classical age. She is more of a caricature, an individualised grotesque who flouts the laws of proportion in a singular manner, her external deformity reflecting her internal sin. Her body does threaten to interconnect with the outside world in a Bakhtinian fashion however,

¹⁷McMinn, p. 141, and *Swift PW*, XII, 80.

¹⁸McMinn, p. 24, and *Swift PW*, IX, 3.

although in a negative mode. Her 'Breath' and 'ill Smells' are not properly contained within herself as they offensively drift towards Swift's unwilling and disgusted nose. Her 'natural Sluttishness' implies both lack of regulation of sartorial matters and the uncontrolled intensified femininity of sexual looseness that was also suggested in the description of his malignant muse. In fact her body does exemplify the grotesque principle of the merging of the body with other bodies, only in this case the other bodies happen to be those of a lesser form of life in the chain of being: lice. These creatures infest her in such a way that they flout the Bakhtinian democratic ideal of the grotesque body as a leveller of forms of being because they enter her skin and feed upon her whilst she gains no benefit from them at all: she is merely the object to their subject rather than the collective subjectivity envisaged by Bakhtin. Swift states later on in the passage that she is 'a Presbyterian of the most rank and virulent kind', reminding one of her status as a witch or religious deviant spreading disease and ill vapours throughout the land, not unlike his vaporous muse.

In this story, Scotland the evil is contrasted with Ireland the good, the virtuous 'injured lady' of the title. This too is a device adopted by Swift in *Sir W- T-'s late Illness*, a device which would later be refined as a contrast, not between two individuals, but within one woman in terms of the way other people (men) perceive her. Swift's grotesque anti-muse is unfavourably compared to a model of virtue, Lady Temple, or the 'Mild Dorothea, peaceful, wise, and great' (41). Dorothea is one of Swift's early classical ideal women who are usually praised without reservations of any kind in the manner of the Petrarchan goddesses he was to be so critical of later in his poetry. Following the panegyric style of his early Pindarics, Swift pedestalises Lady Temple beyond the reach of the humble poet:

Mild Dorothea, whom we both have long
Not dar'd to injure with our lowly song (42).

The economic considerations so pertinent to the flattery of the Renaissance poet clearly do not escape the young Swift in these lines, but they are more than mere appeasement of his employer's wife. As he develops his portrait of Lady Temple he also develops his concept of the ideal and, by contrast, imperfect woman:

Sprung from a better world, and chosen then
The best companion for the best of men:
As some fair pile, yet spar'd by zeal and rage,
Lives pious witness of a better age;
So men may see what once was womankind,
In the fair shrine of Dorothea's mind (45).

As a corollary of Swift's attraction to the idea of a classical/Christian Golden Age or Eden, he finds that women in the present are no longer of the same uncorrupted, pure mould of the goddesses of old, women 'sprung from a better world'. The repetition of 'better' in the following lines stresses Swift's conviction that the present age is degenerate and impious. Only the perfect Dorothea is an example of days gone by, an anachronism to be worshipped in 'the fair shrine' of her 'mind' rather than a body that will tend to decay and betray. The architectural metaphor reinforces this point as it shows the solid, permanent nature of the masculinised mind, whilst simultaneously indicating the fragile moral sense of the rest of Dorothea's sex. It is an accident that has 'spar'd' her from 'zeal and rage' rather than any quality inherent in the race of women.

There is a further complexity to this imagery of the classical female in that Dorothea blends in with the similarly named Dorinda, or Martha, Lady Giffard, Temple's sister, whose husband had died within a fortnight of their marriage in 1662. The passage describing Dorinda as the type of grief follows on directly from the Dorothea passage, and the two women are combined into one seeming ideal female exemplar. Swift uses imagery virtually identical to that of Pope, who praises Patty Blount as a 'mild' moon, an unthreatening, obedient form of femininity in contrast to the aggressive suns he evokes elsewhere in his poetry. Dorothea is also 'mild', and Dorinda too becomes a bright and pure moon goddess, a Diana whose light is hidden by her grief:

Grief from Dorinda's face does ne'er depart
 Further than its own palace in her heart:
 Ah, since our fears are fled, this insolent expel,
 At least confine the tyrant to his cell.
 And if so black the cloud, that heaven's bright queen
 Shrouds her still beams; how should the stars be seen? (53).

When Dorinda weeps, she causes every other face to look mournful like the stars eclipsed by the cloud of her mourning, the very opposite of the bright sun Belinda lighting up faces on the Thames. Her 'still beams' draw attention to Dorinda's passive femininity, mild demeanour and stable placing within a masculine economy.

The Goddess Criticism

One Swiftian female who most certainly does not remain within the control of a masculine economy is the Goddess Criticism who appears in Swift's short prose piece in defence of Temple, *The*

Battle of the Books.¹⁹ Written in the 1690s, this is one of Swift's earliest prose works, and it contains an image of the feminine which is drawn from the earlier tradition of the female grotesque and which in itself influenced Swift's later poetic imagery and younger writers like Pope. Susan Gubar in particular has pointed out the significance of the Goddess Criticism in relation to a line of female monsters ranging from the Gorgon to Spenser's Errour and Milton's Sin, culminating in the prominent position of the image of the female monster in Augustan satire.²⁰ In my terms the Goddess fits into the Bakhtinian category of the grotesque in a negative manner as she becomes the focus for all that is corrupt in modernity for Swift. Ronald Paulson calls her 'a final catchall image of the inharmonious body'.²¹

On the side of classical antiquity stands Temple, the embodiment of reason and masculinity: 'This Temple, having been educated and long conversed among the Ancients was, of all the Moderns, their greatest favourite, and became their greatest champion' (p. 147). Contrasted with such a stable masculine economy is the Goddess Criticism, 'a malignant deity', a 'malignant' modern muse like the one Swift had rejected earlier in his poetry (p. 153). Criticism holds her court 'on the top of a snowy mountain in Nova Zembla' where Momus, the representative of the Moderns, goes to find her, in an episode based on the encounter of Juno with Allecto in book Seven of the *Aeneid*. She lurks in her 'den' like Spenser's Errour, and forms an unholy Trinity with 'her father and husband', Ignorance, and Pride her mother (p. 153). As Gubar points out, this parallels Satan's triad of Sin and Death, where Sin is placed at the right hand of her divine father, Satan.²² Criticism follows Sin in the rejection of divine law, both theological and sexual. It also comes as no surprise to find that one of Milton's precursor goddesses for Sin, not mentioned by Gubar, is Hecate, whose hell-hounds are like those that Circe, with Hecate's help, inflicted on the lower parts of the nymph Scylla:

Nor uglier follow the Night-hag, when called
In secret, riding through the air she comes
Lured with the smell of infant blood, to dance
With Lapland witches, while the labouring moon
Eclipses at their charms (II, 662).

¹⁹Swift *PW*, I, 136-65.

²⁰'The Female Monster in Augustan Satire', *Signs*, 21 (1977), 380-94.

²¹*Theme and Structure in Swift's 'Tale of a Tub'* (New Haven, 1960), p. 216.

²²Gubar, p. 391.

As Alastair Fowler notes: 'Milton may allude here to the hellish yeth hounds which according to popular superstition followed the queen of darkness across the sky in pursuit of the souls of the damned'.²³ Although Fowler also points out that 'in allowing witches power over the moon, Milton leaves the main direction of the best contemporary thought, and follows superstition, for the sake of another poetic "iteration of physical and moral disorder"', it is no surprise that Milton, and Swift and Pope after him, should connect the moon, femininity and disorder. Hecate, after all, is the dark aspect of the triform moon goddess.

The female sexuality of this textual disorder is emphasised by the stress on standard feminine stereotypes in the passage. Ignorance, her father and husband, is pushed into the background, whereas Pride dresses Criticism up 'in the scraps of paper herself had torn', parodying the fussing mother hovering around her daughter. 'Opinion her sister' expands the theme of female vanity, exemplifying the behaviour of the coquette in a prototype of Belinda: 'light of foot, hoodwinked, and headstrong, yet giddy and perpetually turning' (p. 153). Female instability is combined with misguided force of will and self-love, that cardinal sin in a woman. Significantly, among Criticism's children one finds Dulness, a child later to mature under the mythic imagination of Pope. The remaining children combine other objectionable female characteristics such as Noise, Impudence, Vanity, Positiveness, Pedantry, and Ill-Manners.

Hence our introduction to Criticism impresses upon the reader the transgressive nature of female community, a community we have already seen Swift opposed in all its forms, however innocuous.

From this community we move to the specificity of her grotesque body:

The goddess herself had claws like a cat; her head, and ears, and voice, resembled those of an ass; her teeth fallen out before, her eyes turned inward as if she looked only upon herself; her diet was the overflowing of her own gall; her spleen was so large as to stand prominent like a dug of the first rate, nor wanted excrescencies in form of teats, at which a crew of ugly monsters were greedily sucking; and what is wonderful to conceive, the bulk of spleen increased faster than the sucking could diminish it (p. 154).

The resonance of the image of the ass in relation to the cult of Cybele we have already seen; the cat is an animal traditionally associated with the feminine, whilst the claws draw attention to the destructive capacity of Criticism as well as recalling another hybrid female figure from Egyptian antiquity: the Sphinx. Her grotesque feminine body is defined by flows which transgress its

²³Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Alastair Fowler (Harlow, 1971), p. 121.

boundaries as the focus concentrates specifically on the orifices that are the source of these flows in the terms of Bakhtin's definition. Like Bakhtin's terracotta hags, the attention is drawn to the uncontrolled intensive femininity of the grotesque through its excessive procreative capacity. Criticism is defined by her gender and her ability to reproduce: she is grotesque partly because she is a mother unrestricted by the patriarchal family. Lynne Friedl has explained that the figure of the good mother represents the disruptive aspects of female sexuality under control: the 'symbolism invested in the body of the mother is that of nature as harmonious, benevolent and well-ordered', like one of Pope's landscaped gardens.²⁴ Just as Dulness is a nursing mother, so Criticism gives suck to the critical hacks that she spawns. When the Goddess sees her ranks of Moderns in the library, 'here the tender cares of a mother began to fill her thoughts and move in her breast' (p. 155). Wotton especially solicits her maternal care: 'he was the darling of his mother above all her children', the product of her illicit relationship with 'an unknown father of mortal race', carrying the usual implication of promiscuity associated with these powerful grotesque goddesses. The theme of maternal love is especially prominent if one takes into account Swift's use of the background tale in which Juno summons the grotesque goddess Allecto to send Queen Amata into a Bacchic frenzy in order to prevent the marriage of her daughter Lavinia to Turnus.

This underlying myth is important in that it conflates the issues of grotesque maternity and the grotesquerie of an independent feminine economy, specifically an economy which is able to reproduce itself without reference to masculine authority. At a base level this is apparent in the way that Criticism's own body feeds itself from its offspring without any external food source, any external creator: 'her diet was the overflowing of her own gall' (p. 154). Likewise, her eyes turn inwards as a symbol of her self-sufficiency and lack of regard for the pronouncements of the Ancients. As Susan Gubar puts it: 'Since all the creations of the mother are excretions, since all the excretions of the mother are her food and her weapon, each mother forms with her brood a self-enclosed system - cannibalistic and solipsistic' (p. 391). The Modern Spider in *The Battle of the Books* reflects this characteristic of the goddess, having 'an overweening pride, which feeding and engendering on itself,

²⁴"Passing Women": A study of gender boundaries in the eighteenth century', in *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*, edited by Roy Porter and G. S. Rousseau (Manchester, 1987), pp. 234-60 (p. 236).

turns all into excrement and venom' (p. 150). Gubar also connects the splenetic production of Criticism's dugs with the similarly solipsistic Goddess of Spleen in *The Rape of the Lock*; as we remember, the spleen was a specifically a disease of the weaker sex, a manifestation of their potential for causing physical and psychological disorder. This is especially the case if they are allowed a certain amount of independent power, as upper-class ladies were to an extent.

The underlying Virgilian narrative underscores this point as one finds a chain of chaotic behaviour transmitted from one powerful female to another, particularly the grotesque Allecto who is very much in the tradition of the female monster. Apart from being 'steeped in Gorgonian venom' (341) she resembles Envy, Hecate, and many other of those monstrous goddesses who are called by others from the underworld to bring disorder and war.²⁵ Like them she has the usual poisonous snakes substituting for hair and suitably dark features. Allecto prompts the theme of castration as she threatens the hero Turnus and whips up the women of Latium into an orgiastic frenzy reminiscent of the dismemberment of Orpheus by female votaries of Bacchus. This Orphic dismemberment is exactly what is threatened by Allecto's literary and mythic ancestor, the Goddess Criticism, as the institution of criticism attempts to sap the virility of the neo-classical authors by transferring their ancient patriarchal authority into the hands of the undeserving Moderns with their corrupt and feminised low culture. To be submitted to the act of criticism is to be violated: the 'clean and proper body' of one's text becomes grotesque, porous, cancerous, riddled with footnotes that decentre textual authority away from the intentions of the author and towards external sources like Wotton, the favourite of the Goddess Criticism. Through the characters of Martinus Scriblerus and the hack of *A Tale of A Tub* Pope and Swift launched pre-emptive strikes against such heretical interpretations; these mock Moderns with their sprawling networks of notes and appendices became pawns in the struggle for textual power and authority. Not that the Scriblerians succeeded in putting a stop to interpretation with their ironic master signifiers: if anything they merely encouraged the proliferation of endless debate, endless Keys and Refutations that continued the dissemination of authorial potency, sucked into Criticism's receptive and all-devouring depths. Criticism's feminised community castrates the male Augustan writer; her body, although in some ways parasitic, is also solipsistic, requiring no

²⁵Virgil, *Aeneid*, translated by H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols (London, 1969), volume II, VII. 323-29, (p. 26); further page and line references will be in the main text.

outside (masculine) assistance in its cycle of production of waste, and the recycling of this waste through its reconsumption: a self-sustaining, inward looking and closed feminine economy.

Like Allecto, Criticism is grotesquely multiple, not only in her ability to give birth to 'ugly monsters, but also as a deceitful shape changer. Allecto's encounter with the unfortunate Turnus parallels Criticism's appearance to Wotton:

But first according to the good old custom of deities she cast about to change her shape, for fear the divinity of her countenance might dazzle his mortal sight and overcharge the rest of his senses. She therefore gathered up her person into an octavo compass: her body grew white and arid, and split in pieces with dryness; the thick turned into pasteboard, and the thin into paper, upon which her parents and children artfully strewed a black juice, or decoction of gall and soot, in form of letters; her head, and voice, and spleen, kept their primitive form, and that which before was a cover of skin did still continue so. In which guise she marched on towards the Moderns, undistinguishable from the divine Bentley, Wotton's dearest friend (p. 155).

Nowhere is the conjunction of text and body made more clearly than in the person of the Goddess Criticism. She literally becomes a grotesque text, absorbing the inky excretions of those who have excreted her and those she has herself excreted. In a further transformation she becomes a feminised male grotesque, 'the divine Bentley', who is of course analogous to Wotton himself in a replicating chain of grotesquerie (p. 155).

Prophetically, Wotton is attended by the Goddess Dulness who later displays the same grotesque capacity to metamorphose as her mother and Allecto, changing first into a cloud and then forming the cloud into a mock-heroic image of Horace. The metaphor of the fog of Dulness would be developed to a much greater extent by Pope in the persons of the Goddess of Spleen and Dulness herself in the *Dunciad*.

The clash of values embodied in the person of Criticism is made particularly clear when she encounters Swift's masculine muse, Apollo, through Wotton's cowardly attempt to destroy Swift's other father figure and muse: Temple. Temple in fact is closely linked to Apollo in a line of supportive patriarchs. Wotton is evidently terrified of Temple as the heroic defender of classical values:

'O that I could kill this destroyer of our army, what renown should I purchase among the chiefs! But to issue out against him, man for man, shield against shield, and lance against lance, what Modern of us dare? For he fights like a god, and Pallas or Apollo are ever at his elbow. But, O mother, if what Fame reports be true, that I am the son of so great a goddess, grant me to hit Temple with this lance that the stroke may send him to hell, and that I may return in safety and triumph, laden with his spoils' (p. 163).

Wotton, on the other hand, overtly invokes a matriarchal authority; one that is at once cowardly, unheroic and disruptive. At this point Temple has his back turned to Wotton as he drinks from a

fountain 'where he had withdrawn to rest himself from the toils of war' (p. 163). As Wotton flings the lance, his feminine muse does assist him, 'the goddess, his mother, at the same time adding strength to his arm'. The somewhat redundant repetition of 'goddess' and 'mother' serves to stress the feminine assistance given to Wotton, in contrast with the masculinity of Temple and his patron Apollo. As it happens, the lance does strike Temple, but he does not even notice the impact as it falls harmlessly to the ground. Wotton nearly escapes unnoticed and unpunished, were it not for Apollo, 'enraged that a javelin flung by the assistance of so foul a goddess should pollute his fountain' (p. 163). Yet again the sense of feminine (literary) power is equated with matter out of place, with a pollution of the unsullied classical body, here represented by the purity of the fountain.

Apollo has already prevented Wotton's partner in arms, Bentley, from drinking the clear water of Helicon, his fountain, substituting excremental mud in a continuation of the pollution theme. Bentley has been connected with this theme from his introduction at the beginning of this section of the *Battle*, where we are told he carries a flail in his right hand and 'a vessel full of ordure in his left' (p. 160). Bentley, like Wotton, is a male grotesque. At the very start of the *Battle* Bentley is taken as an archetypal Modern: 'they have in speculation a wonderful agility, and conceive nothing too high for them to mount; but in reducing to practice, to discover a mighty pressure about their posteriors and their heels' (p. 145). As in Pope's *Art of Sinking*, the Moderns follow the degradatory downward movement of the grotesque. Bentley, like Wotton, is an inverted person.

Bentley and Wotton are linked as male grotesques in other ways though; the most obvious one being the running insinuations of their homosexual relationship. There are repeated references to 'this lovely, loving pair of friends' (p. 161); Wotton goes into battle with 'his lover Bentley' (p. 164) and Bentley seeks 'his darling Wotton' (p. 162). Swift makes them feminised followers of their Goddess Criticism, achieving roughly the same effect that Pope seeks in his representations of Cibber and Hervey. In the final act of the poem Bentley and Wotton are symbolically skewered together on Boyle's lance, indicating both the complicity of their attacks on Temple and their sexual union.

Although Wotton is the Goddess's favourite, Bentley is nevertheless given the distinction of being 'in person the most deformed of the Moderns'. He is the most grotesque in body, as befits the spiteful keeper of the library at St James's Palace. He is 'tall, but without shape or comeliness; large, but without strength or proportion. His armour was patched up of a thousand incoherent pieces.' Like

Pope's Opera, Bentley's texts are patchworks of bastardised quotations, fragmented and discontinuous. His body is similarly lacking in classical 'proportion' and 'shape' (p. 160). A recurring shape that Bentley's body does assume is that of the ass, the carnivalesque animal constantly linked with all the Moderns. During Bentley's abortive attempt to dispatch Phalaris and Aesop, Aesop dreams 'that as he and the Ancient chiefs were lying on the ground, a wild ass broke loose, ran about, trampling and kicking and dunging in their faces' (p. 162). Here the pollution theme is linked with the ass imagery, Bentley becoming the ass on which the Magna Mater rides, at least in a critical sense.

Swift connects the issue of gender with the ass image in a more obvious way in the episode where Boyle pursues Wotton. Boyle is compared in epic fashion to 'a young lion' who wishes to encounter worthy opposition in his adventures: 'if chance a wild ass, with brayings importune, affronts his ear, the generous beast, though loathing to distain his claws with blood so vile, yet much provoked at the offensive noise which Echo, foolish nymph, like her ill-judging sex, repeats much louder and with more delight than Philomela's song, he vindicates the honour of the forest, and hunts the noisy long-eared animal' (pp. 163-64). Again the categories of classical and grotesque, Ancient and Modern are defined according to the categories of gender. The ultra-masculine Boyle hunts down the effeminate Wotton; the mention of Philomela immediately casts their relationship in terms of a rape scenario, with man the hunter and subject chasing woman the hunted object. Again there is the implication that the feminine pollutes the masculine, a common theme in Swift's work, as 'vile' Wotton's ass-like blood threatens to stain Boyle's claws, his instrument of penetration. Stressing Wotton's link with the feminine, Swift invokes Echo, the loquacious nymph condemned by Juno to repeat what others say, and reinforces the nonsensical braying of the ass-Wotton with her enthusiastic support. It was common enough for Swift and others to compare the speech of a woman to mere sound signifying nothing, and this imagistic link is no exception: Echo is a 'foolish nymph', but she is not unique. Swift's next statement sweepingly condemns the whole female race to duncedom as they are 'her ill-judging sex'; he equates women and fools as his friend Pope was to do later with more notoriety in his *Epistle to a Lady*. The entire female sex is inherently monstrous, inherently grotesque, and that is why the Goddess Criticism must rule over the lesser, though essential, male grotesques.

CHAPTER NINE

THE DEVELOPING GROTESQUE

The Middle Period - Moon Goddesses and Earthly Grotesques

In 1719 Swift wrote a number of satirical 'Progress' poems, the most notable of which (in my terms) is *The Progress of Beauty*.¹ This poem can be seen as a precursor of the 'scatological' group written after Stella's death, a set of poems often seen as an aberration in Swift's oeuvre despite clear evidence that he had always been concerned with the imagery of the grotesque, and especially the female grotesque. A link between this poem and the later ones is that of the 'moral', if so clear a message can be extracted from such emotionally unstable, not 'mad', poems. Richard Rodino has pointed out that many of the other poems of this middle period of Swift's poetry, roughly 1719-1730, are morality tales concerning women, love and marriage, describing situations that are followed to their disastrous or unhappy conclusions in such a way that no explicit moralising is necessary.² The moral of many of these pieces is often misogynist, if only by examining the perils of marriage from a male perspective and therefore connecting women with its resulting problems and chaos.

In *Phyllis, or, The Progress of Love* (1719) the hypocritical prude who insists on eloping with the butler is led to prostitution and venereal disease, whilst in *The Progress of Marriage* (1721-22) the poet hopes for 'a rooted Pox' (163) to disfigure the young heroine who makes her husband's life hell.³ This form of physical defect wished upon a transgressive woman by Swift is just as crudely matched by the harsh punishment suggested for 'Virago Nell', Will's wife, by his friend Dick in *A quiet Life, and a good Name* (1719).⁴ Will's 'False Patience' with his wife results in a skimmington ride, a carnivalesque activity in which the community acts out the 'crime' of the woman usurping the man's place. In some towns a beaten man could be 'paraded through the streets backwards on an ass by noisy

¹Swift *Poems*, I, 225-229.

²'Blasphemy or Blessing? Swift's scatological poems', in *Essential Articles for the study of Jonathan Swift's Poetry*, edited by David Vieth (Hamden, Connecticut, 1984), 255-75 (p. 259).

³Swift *Poems*, I, 221-25, 289-95

⁴Swift *Poems*, I, 219-21.

revellers', whilst in others effigies of the couple were displayed: some communities even re-enacted the monstrous beatings on floats.⁵

In Swift's poem it is the 'Prentices' who 'act his Patience, and her chiding' (53-54), although in a wider sense the entire poem is like the skimmington as Swift's satire rehearses what it condemns. The skimmington ride highlights the overstepping of social boundaries and, like the end of a traditional carnival, acts as a corrective to the inversion of social roles as the community 'encourages' the couple to resume their proper places in the gender hierarchy. The symbolic corrective of the skimmington is reinforced by the violent correctives proposed by Dick in the poem: at one point he says that Will should 'Slit her Tongue' (12); at another, 'why don't you break her Limbs' (28); or perhaps worst of all, 'ship her to Jamaica' (31). As happens so often in Swift, the feelings and opinions of the narrator or seemingly judicial persona in his poetry are difficult to separate from his known views, especially with regard to his pronouncements on women. His *Letter to a Young Lady on her Marriage* (1723) attacks those female wits, Swift's typical grotesques, who 'run a Man down'; they should be treated, he says, like 'insolent Rascals, disguised in Female Habits, who ought to be stripped, and kicked down Stairs'.⁶ Swift's desire to expose the grotesque reality behind the classical facade of feminine mythology is something we will see more of, but for the moment one can note the emotional force behind his statement, overriding the requirement for propriety in what is, after all, a letter to a lady about to be married. The entire content of the letter turns out to be a sustained barrage against the evils of female society: Swift's advice to the lady is to allow her husband to choose her companions for her and to avoid the mistake of falling under feminine influence and authority.

The violence, or threat of it, perpetrated by the poet to the female body in *The Progress of Beauty* is another stage along from the rather slapstick cruelty of the other poems written around this time. Instead of wishing the pox upon an offending woman, Swift examines one who already has it. Or rather two, for the poem actually opens with Diana, the Goddess of the Night, who runs parallel with the earthly female Celia in her affliction. Diana serves on one level as an exemplar of the whole female race, presiding as she does over the monthly reproductive cycle so reviled by male writers.

⁵ See Natalie Zemon Davies, 'Women on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe', in *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, edited by Barbara Babcock (London, 1978), pp. 147-189 (p. 168).

⁶ *Swift PW*, IX, 85-94 (p. 93).

Diana is characterised immediately by a grotesque body, a fluid form that refuses to remain within its own environs with its 'Vapors and Steams' that 'her Looks disgrace' (2). The mention of 'Vapours' reminds us of that specifically female malady so highlighted by Pope in *The Rape of the Lock* in which he suggests both physical and mental feminine instability. In one sense, Diana's very essence is instability of course, as she is always changing in the night sky. In another way she is the epitome of permanence because she always returns as the end of the poem makes clear when the poet asks for 'new nymphs with each new moon' (120). The main point in this poem, however, is that Diana's grotesque decay is reflected in the bodies of her earthly tribe. Like Pope's dark Isis, Diana is antithetical to the classical body. Christine Rees notes that 'the link between the moon and female sexuality is the dark reverse of the bright chastity image, a source of fear and possible repulsion'.⁷ Diana's transgressive flows are matched by the symbolic 'matter out of place' of the remnants of her cosmetics:

A frouzy dirty colour'd red
Sits on her cloudy wrinkled Face (3).

As Diana rises in the night sky she puts on 'Her artificiall Face' and 'Her Spots are gone, her Visage clears' (6, 8).

It transpires that the parallels between Diana and Celia do indeed 'exactly run' (10), with the proviso that whereas Diana is lightly sketched, Celia is fully drawn in all her grotesquerie. She too is fluid: 'Rivulets of Sweat' pour down her face as 'The Paint by Perspiration cracks' like 'the Tracks' of the rivers in the moon, and 'at her Chin the Confluents met' (37-40). As Rogers points out, this passage is reminiscent of the *Description of a City Shower*, and with good reason, for Celia as a grotesque is very much a city creature, as we shall see.⁸ Like Diana, Celia consists of 'A mingled Mass of Dirt and Sweat' (20) and a number of viscous grotesque substances not entirely identifiable as either solid matter or fluid matter with her 'Crackt Lips, foul Teeth, and gummy Eyes' (15). Celia's body works in a similar way to that of the Goddess Criticism in that it is constantly outgrowing itself, constantly seeping into the world around it, threatening to contaminate it, or more precisely man, with her pox. Diana and Celia find 'that Mercury's her Foe' (96), Mercury being the cure for venereal

⁷ 'Gay, Swift, and the Nymphs of Drury Lane', in *Essential Articles for the study of Jonathan Swift's Poetry*, edited by David Vieth, pp. 235-54 (p. 251).

⁸ *Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems* (London, 1983), p. 688.

diseases at the time. Paradoxically Mercury increases the grotesque effects of the pox: as Diana wanes, 'Each Night a Bit drops off her Face' (87) whilst 'rotting Celia strols the Street/ When sober Folks are all a-bed' (104). Unlike Criticism's self-renewing fecundity, Celia is bereft of such natural reproductive powers. Bakhtin's grotesque body shares with Criticism this infinite renewal, a positive feminine force that is able to overcome temporal decay, the decay that the moon symbolises here and elsewhere. For Celia, a town nymph or prostitute who has no need of her biological reproductive capabilities, time is an enemy.

Celia's whole body is set against the ethos of the timeless and transcendent classical body. If Celia's rotting body is characterised by grotesque fragmentation, she attempts to restore it to the completion of the classical body. When she has had a chance to use her arts, she embodies the harmonious aesthetic of proportion, order and wholeness with the 'Three Colours' of her makeup 'So gracefull in their proper place' (21-22). Celia 'went entire to bed,/ All her Complexions safe and sound' (29-30): she is reassuringly 'entire', complete, with everything in its 'proper place'. Celia becomes one of many of Swift's false classical nymphs and goddesses who, in the tradition outlined by Gubar, are exposed by the keen (or sometimes deluded) male gaze as hideous monsters beneath. In this poem there is no shock of exposure: we know from the beginning that Diana and Celia reek of sweat and decay. Nevertheless Swift returns to the contrast of the 'very fine' and the 'very filthy' as he provides us with a model of the classical ideal which is then deconstructed, so to speak, into a grotesque body without redeeming features.⁹ Thus the balance of Celia's carefully applied cosmetics is destroyed when she rises as the black and the red 'Though still in Sight, had chang'd their Ground' (31-32). What results is an indiscriminate confluence of materials as the black and the red 'mingle[s] in her muddy Cheeks' (46). Celia undergoes the transition from the pleasing, 'gracefull' appearance of the total classical body to the horrific and disgraceful reality of a grotesque female body characterised by lack: when the ordered colours are removed 'to a diff'rent Light/ They form a frightfull hideous Face' (23-24). Like Spenser's Duessa, or Coleridge's Christabel, Celia's seeming completion is merely an unstable facade, like that of the full moon. Her true nature lies beneath and behind as it waits to

⁹See *A Letter to a Young Lady on her Marriage*, *Swift PW*, IX, 87.

entrap the unwary male; in Celia's case she carries the threat of transmitting her venereal disease to her clients as she strolls the streets at midnight.

As in so many other ways, Swift follows Burton in his conception of the aesthetic of the female body. Burton himself follows the classical precedent. Angus Ross reminds us that both Burton and Swift follow in the anti-feminist tradition of St Paul and the Church Fathers although both struggle to free themselves from it in certain ways.¹⁰ Burton follows classical tradition in telling men to look closely at women in order to expose their deformities, thus providing a remedy for love. Like Swift he was a confirmed bachelor, and like Swift he invokes the 'true rules of symmetry and proportion' in his anatomy of women, referring in particular to Durer, and Lomazzo who wrote the first part of his *Treatise on Painting* on proportion. As we have seen, much the greater part of Burton's writing on women is concerned with their imperfections as he launches an assault upon them through the concept of heroic love, or rather the lack of it.

For Swift and Burton, the classical ideal exists in stark opposition to the grotesque reality. As Christine Rees points out many eighteenth-century poets, including Anne Finch, followed the example of Juvenal in his sixth *Satire* and connected the theme of ideal women with 'primitivist ideals of paradise or a golden age'.¹¹ There was a lament for the decline of 'pure womanhood' and a consequent contrast of an ideal pastoral/classical past with a grotesque present, a present that Swift is particularly concerned to reveal in all its horror. We have already seen Swift's general desire for an ideal age where classical order would be instituted; his attitude towards women is at least partly an extension of this ideal. As Rees observes, Swift's town nymphs are the profane counterparts of the truly pure country nymphs of classicism. The unsullied bodies of the country nymphs are unfavourably contrasted with those of the degenerate and immoral town ladies. For Swift, as for many Christian Humanist writers, the city is the symbol of worldly evil, a grotesque place which always threatens to mimic the deluge and dissolve into sheer flows of filth and degraded humanity as it does at the end of *A Description of a City Shower* (1710). Following the logic that women are defined as flow in opposition to masculine solidity, one is led to the conclusion that the city too is feminine.

¹⁰'The Anatomy of Melancholy and Swift', in *Swift and his Contexts*, edited by John Fischer, Real and Woolley (New York, 1989), pp. 133-58 (p. 150).

¹¹'Gay, Swift, and the Nymphs of Drury Lane', p. 238

At this point we return to a central motivating factor in the expression of the Augustan female grotesque by male writers and poets. The city nymph is offensive to the male poet because she flouts the creative prerogative of masculine authority, from God through to the patriarchal poet who acts in God's place. By her use of cosmetics Celia, like Diana, puts on an 'artificiall Face', an unnatural face that overrides Nature through false feminine Art. Celia creates herself:

She knows her Early self no more,
But fill'd with Admiration, stands,
As Other Painters oft adore
The Workmanship of their own Hands (49).

Here a woman usurps the male role of poet, maker and creator as she steps out of her passive domain of Muse to the masculine gaze. As Rees explains, when a nymph goes to town 'she then creates a new image with paint and mannerisms instead of being content that the poet should do it for her with words' (p. 237). Celia echoes Satan viewing his own work with very conscious satisfaction and control, a reference later used by Pope with regard to the Goddess Dullness as she gazes upon her wild creation. The moral significance is clear: self-determination and self-creation are evil, especially so in a woman. As we saw with *In pity to the empty'ng Town* the town nymph parodies Nature with her black Arts rather than reflecting the divinely sanctioned order of Nature, both physical and social.

This feminine activity of conscious creation and delight in that creation would be especially offensive to Swift as it also directly parodies his own role as a creator, not just as a poet, but also in real life. As Thomas Gilmore Jr observes in the context of Swift's relation to Stella, Swift himself was not a Narcissus figure but a Pygmalion.¹² It has commonly been noted that Swift's personal relations with the three main women in his life, Stella, Vanessa, and Lady Acheson, all operated on the model of that most ideal of sculptors. Swift tried to mould these women into forms corresponding to his classical ideal of womanhood.

As Felicity Nussbaum points out in relation to Swift's satires on women, his despicable women forecast the end of man's time.¹³ In *An Answer to a late Scandalous Poem* (1732) Swift replies to Sheridan's comparison of a cloud to a woman.¹⁴ It transpires that the clouds are offended by such a

¹²Freud, Swift, and Narcissism: a psychological reading of *Strephon and Chloe*, in *Contemporary Studies of Swift's Poetry*, edited by John Fischer and Donald C. Mell, Jr (London, 1981), pp. 159-168 (p. 165).

¹³*The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women 1660-1750* (Kentucky, 1984), p. 102.

¹⁴*Swift Poems*, II, 616-22.

simile as their thunder is not 'As grating, or as loud as theirs' (6) and so on. The ethereal 'Claps' (22) of the clouds are nothing compared to the venereal 'claps' that women give to men. In contrast to women, clouds 'leave the body sweet and sound' (27): the masculine body, that is. Women assist in the death and destruction of men, giving 'buboes, ulcers, blotches' (25), causing ruptures in the smooth unbroken surface of the male 'clean and proper' classical body. Woman is 'a curst inflamer' (35), taught by Dame Nature to 'kindle strife' (37). In a later version of the poem Swift openly states that 'Woman was by Fate design'd/ To pour down Curses on Mankind' (29-30).¹⁵ Swift is clearly obsessed with the possibility of infection from this dangerous race, and the poetic vehicle for this obsession is venereal disease, a disease which has very obvious physical upon the surface of the body.

This would explain to a large extent Swift's interest in bodily magnification and diminution in *Gulliver's Travels* as either perspective allows the person who remains small, whether it be the Lilliputians or Gulliver in Brobdingnag, to gaze, simultaneously fascinated and repelled, at the magnified and therefore discontinuous surface of the body, and especially the grotesque female body.¹⁶ At one point in the court of Brobdingnag Gulliver is used as a dildo by the maids, a useful metaphor for the engulfing and destructive orifices of the female body which swallows up man in its frightening openness. These maids of honour do not respect the closed male body, using him 'like a creature who had no sort of consequence'. Their 'naked bodies' fill him with 'horror and disgust', the chief cause of this being their 'coarse and uneven' skin. Similarly their bodily activities are enlarged to gargantuan proportions as they unashamedly 'discharge what they had drunk, to the quantity of at least two hogsheads, in a vessel that held above three tuns'. This of course is exactly the kind of behaviour that defines Bakhtin's literary grotesque, with its economy of excess and unlimited expenditure. The ladies perturb in another way because 'a very offensive smell came from their skins'. Not only does female skin betray the body by its orifices, its openness, but also by the odours that erupt from the body. Things that should be kept inside the body come out of it to the 'horror and disgust' of the male spectator. Gulliver of course stands very much in the voyeuristic position of Strephon and Cassinus in the scatological poems. Strephon is briefly introduced in this role for the first time in *The Progress of Beauty*: 'Poor Strephon, how would he blaspheme!' (26). Gulliver, as a

¹⁵Swift *Poems*, II, 623-28.

¹⁶*Gulliver's Travels*, in *Swift PW*, XI, 118-19; further references will be in the main text.

less emotionally involved voyeur, does not blaspheme to Strephon's degree, but he still feels the disgust no doubt experienced by Swift. The Strephon of *The Lady's Dressing Room* repeats this tendency to horrified voyeurism through magnification:

The Virtues we must not let pass,
Of Celia's magnifying Glass.
When frighted Strephon cast his Eye on't
It shew'd the Visage of a Gyant.
A Glass that can to Sight disclose,
The smallest Worm in Celia's Nose (59).¹⁷

Gulliver's reaction to the breast, the very sign and symbol of maternity, femininity and therefore of birth and its consequence, death, is similarly horrified. On a coach journey through Lorbrulgrud he sees a crowd of beggars, 'the most horrible spectacles that ever an European eye beheld' (p. 112, Ch. 4). The first sight he comments on is 'a woman with a cancer in her breast, swelled to a monstrous size, full of holes, in two or three of which I could have easily crept, and covered my whole body'. The monstrous lice also fascinate and repel him as they too are dwellers on and in the human skin, relying for their very existence on their ability to puncture its surface and suck out the life-giving contents. The breast is particularly fascinating because it emphasises its conjunction with the outside world, with other bodies: its function is to transgress the discrete limits of the body in the transfer of beneficial fluid from mother to child. Swift continually views such a function with disgust as one sees earlier in the Brobdingnag episode when a nurse gives suck to a restless child:

I must confess that no object ever disgusted me so much as the sight of her monstrous breast, which I cannot tell what to compare with, so as to give the curious reader an idea of its bulk, shape, and colour. It stood prominent six foot, and could not be less than sixteen in circumference. The nipple was about half the bigness of my head, and the hue both of that and the dug so varified with spots, pimples, and freckles, that nothing could appear more nauseous: for I had a near sight of her, she sitting down the more conveniently to give suck, and I standing on the table. This made me reflect upon the fair skins of our English ladies, who appear so beautiful to us, only because they are of our own size, and their defects not to be seen, but through a magnifying glass, where we find by experiment, that the smoothest and whitest skins look rough, coarse, and ill coloured (pp. 91-92).

This passage opens out the issue of the grotesque nature of the female body, and not just the particular bodies of prostitutes and other peculiarly deviant women, but *all* women. All women have at least the outward characteristics of their reproductive capacity, the most obvious being the breasts, which is why Gulliver, and though him, Swift, returns compulsively to this part of the female body.

¹⁷Swift *Poems*, II, 524-30.

All women attempt to appear as classical bodies to the male gaze with their 'fair skins' that 'appear so beautiful to us', smooth and white like Bakhtin's Renaissance statuary. However Gulliver, with his scientific knowledge, knows different, and through the synecdochic imagistic stimulus of the grotesque breast he is led to a consideration of the general grotesque nature of women's bodies. In his naive, non-judgmental stance, Gulliver does not make any overt comment on the deliberate quest of women to disguise the true reality of their bodies through cosmetics, although his reference to their whiteness may glance at this. He, like the narrator in the scatological poems, attempts to maintain an ingenuous position, off-loading the need for discrimination and condemnation onto the reader or another character. The overall effect remains the degradation of the ideal classical female body as the grotesque reality of chaotic, undifferentiated nature is revealed.

It is this drive to the exposure and degradation of the Sex that manifests itself in *The Progress of Beauty*. Yet the excremental nature of Celia as a grotesque is so far implicit. She, and her dark goddess Diana, have many of the elements of the later grotesques in that her grotesque interior is brought to light and her body is clearly identified as a transgressive process, as matter out of place. The full horror of the female reality, however, is to be brought to light by the following set of poems, possibly the most popular in Swift's lifetime.

Scatological Grotesques

The first of this group is the notorious *The Lady's Dressing Room* (1730) in which we find a nymph called Celia and a swain called Strephon. If they are not exactly the same characters that were introduced to us in *The Progress of Beauty* they are nevertheless in a similar situation: Strephon does 'blaspheme' when he discovers the female mysteries, and Celia is similarly filthy in this episode. There is an ambiguity in this poem, however, concerning Celia's status as a town nymph. Neither Rogers nor Williams mention the possibility that Celia might be a prostitute in their editions of the poems; nor do many other critics of the poem. Richard Rodino does though, pointing out that the word 'Mutton' (99) was a slang term for a prostitute.¹⁸ Yet Celia is not so obviously identified as a

¹⁸'Blasphemy or Blessing? Swift's scatological poems', (p. 262).

prostitute as in *The Progress of Beauty* or *A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed* where the other Celia and Corinna walk the streets at night and clearly suffer from the effects of venereal disease and its 'cure', Mercury. The issue here is not a minor one: does Swift consider only prostitutes as grotesque females, or all women in society? I have already argued that under the auspices of the dark Diana Swift identifies all women involved in the processes of sexuality, or at least those processes marking out a specifically feminine sexuality, as grotesque. All women who interact sexually with men, or at least enter into the courtship process, are to some extent 'ladies of the night' in Swift's estimation. Pope suggests a similar conclusion in a more coded way in *The Rape of the Lock*, another poem that goes behind the scenes into the mysteries of feminine self creation. Felicity Nussbaum indicates Juvenal's 'Satire VI' as a source for subsequent dressing room scenes.¹⁹ Here Juvenal shows the self worship of the dressing ritual as an adulterous Roman wife prepares to meet her lover at the shrine of Isis in her role as goddess of fertility, again a link to the archaic feminine role in reproduction. The Roman lady is not a prostitute in terms of social status, yet from Swift's and Juvenal's moral perspective she might as well be. Both she and Celia are creatures of the night, connected with the disturbing cycles of the moon that presides over female sexuality.

Christine Rees sheds more light upon Celia's ambiguity when she observes that the town nymph is a mobile, ill-defined and, I would say, grotesquely double figure. The city nymph, through her cosmetic disguise, moves freely from the dirty streets to the theatre or masquerade. Roles can overlap: the 'drabs of quality' and the 'nymphs of Drury Lane' are 'sisters under the (painted) skin'. Thus in *The Beggar's Opera* 'it is an open question whether fine ladies imitate whores or vice versa'; the 'whore's masquerade hints at a sinister imitation of the society masquerade'.²⁰ This connects well with Terry Castle's excellent study of the masquerade and its carnivalesque nature in this period, but for the moment it suffices to underline the difficulty in telling the difference between supposedly ideal women and those who are the dregs of society. One is again reminded of Swift's comment to the young lady that 'the satirical Part of Mankind must needs believe, that it is not impossible, to be very fine and very filthy together'.²¹ Celia herself embodies this difficulty:

¹⁹*The Brink of All We Hate*, p. 104.

²⁰Gay, Swift, and the Nymphs of Drury Lane', (pp. 238, 244).

²¹*A Letter to a Young Lady on her Marriage*, Swift PW, IX, 85.

The Goddess from her Chamber issues,
Array'd in Lace, Brocades and Tissues (3).

Disguised under all her finery Celia appears to be possessed of a classical body, yet underneath, as Strephon discovers, she explodes into grotesque fluidity: he 'swears how damnably the Men lie,/ In calling Celia sweet and cleanly' (17-18) when he discovers beneath the seemingly hygienic classical surface all manner of obscure substances, including the piss of her dead dog Tripsy, surely a relative of Belinda's lap dog Shock. Ironically all these indeterminate substances are dedicated towards preserving the appearance of a classical body. Recalling the self-enclosed economy of the Goddess Criticism in which she consumes her own excrementitious offspring, it is hard to discriminate between what Celia puts on or into her body and what she takes out of it. What is the difference between

A Paste of Composition rare,
Sweat, Dandriff, Powder, Lead and Hair (23),

and

The Bason takes whatever comes
The Scrapings of her Teeth and Gums,
A nasty Compound of all Hues,
For here she spits, and here she spues (39).

Like Criticism, Celia is a grotesque recycler of bodily material: excrement is returned to its origin as Celia promotes a self-perpetuating feminine economy. This independent physical economy is ironically related to the way that prostitutes were perceived as economic beings in this period; Jae Num Lee refers to Thomas Fuller's character of 'The Harlot' in *The Profane State* (1642) where he points out that the Harlot is both merchant and merchandise, both seller and commodity, giving herself for profit, yet receiving pleasure into the bargain, although she is a moral loser also.²² Even the economic character of the whore is grotesquely double and self-regulating despite the fact, generally ignored by male commentators of the time, that men actually supply the demand for such a commodity thus allowing such putative 'independence' for the prostitute. What they frequently did mention was the possibility of infection from a whore. Lee usefully quotes Francis Lenton who claimed that 'an Old Bawd is a menstruous beast, engendered of divers most filthy excrements, by the

²²Swift and *Scatological Satire* (Albuquerque, 1971), p. 34.

stench of whose breath the Ayre is so infected, that her presence is an inevitable contagion'.²³ Again the basic fear is that the classical integrity of the masculine body will be disrupted by the chaotic and excremental nature of the feminine. The female body disseminates masculine energy: physical and mental, sexual and semiotic.

Hence, as Carol Flynn observes, referring to the lines

Should I the Queen of Love refuse
Because she rose from stinking Ooze? (131),

Swift alludes to a myth of dismemberment: 'the narrator grounds Celia's being in a stinking ooze which is not just offensive, but generative at the expense of masculine sexuality. One of the variations of the myth of Venus' birth depends upon the emasculation of Uranus. In punishment for his rebellion against the gods, Uranus' testicles were ripped from his body and tossed into the sea. Venus rose out of the ooze and froth generated from his mutilation'.²⁴ Swift fears such an Orphic fate in the same way that Pope fears it at the end of *The Dunciad* when the Goddess Dulness proliferates her powers at the expense of the male classical poet, ultimately overwhelming him.

Indeed Susan Gubar has raised the issue of where the mentally castrated character Strephon stands in relation to the seemingly distanced poet Swift. Strephon is one of Swift's male grotesques in at least one sense, ironically because he labours under the delusion that all women have classical bodies, and his outrageous response to his discovery is to revert to a shocked repetition compulsion:

Repeating in his amorous Fits,
Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shits! (117).

Strephon has usurped the stereotypically feminine characteristic of over curiosity like his precursor Epimetheus who opened Pandora's box and released 'A sudden universal Crew/ Of humane Evils' (85-86). In a further mythic situation, Strephon occupies the position of the voyeuristic Actaeon, who saw Diana naked in the forest and was consequently changed into a stag. As Brenda Bean puts it, this myth is an 'apt paradigm for representations of transgressive masculine vision', a male observer entering into a private feminine space.²⁵ But this relation is complex: John Barrell notes that Pandora

²³Lee takes this from *The Holy State and the Profane State*, edited by M. G. Walten (New York, 1938), II, 357.

²⁴*The Body in Swift and Defoe* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 92.

²⁵'Sight and Self-Disclosure: Richardson's Revision of Swift's *The Lady's Dressing Room*', *Eighteenth Century Life*, 14 (1990), 1-23 (p. 1).

was seen as the heathen Eve, the first woman who is commonly blamed for releasing evil upon the world.²⁶ Pandora was Jupiter's punishment to men for accepting Prometheus's gift of fire. One of Swift's closest models for his dressing room scenes is Richard Ames's antifeminist *Folly of Love* (1691), in which he makes Eve's pregnancy precede the Fall, causing her to eat the apple due to a craving. Eve resembles the apple, according to Ames, because, like Sodom's apples, it looks good on the outside, but is rotten inside. For Ames, the imagination of men will always be able to ignore the flaws of women, so his ultimate solution is a womanless Utopia, an unfallen Eden.²⁷ Eve and Pandora are the archetypes of disruptive feminine curiosity. Likewise in the Actaeon myth, Bean cites a variety of explanations for his transformation, ranging from Diana's naked rage caused by his voyeurism to her spitefulness in her need to deceive people about her mythic virginity (pp. 2-3). Or the myth can be seen as a warning against curiosity: Actaeon is torn apart by his own dogs just as he is consumed by his own curiosity. Actaeon therefore 'falls', in this reading of the myth, into the role of the transgressive female, like an Eve or a Pandora.

Yet Swift's main model for the Actaeon myth is Ovid, who, uniquely in the history of the myth, stresses Actaeon's victimised innocence. In this version Actaeon is not a grotesque figure, but one lured unawares to his doom by his glimpse into the feminine mysteries. As Bean puts it: 'Actaeon's fatal and (perhaps) involuntary vision is of the mystery of "the feminine" as it is constituted by the poet or author' (p. 3). The vision of Diana is a vision of the triform moon goddess whose three phases, increasing, full, and waning, correspond to the three goddesses, Luna/Moon, Earth/Diana, and Hecate/Hell, which in turn correspond to the three stages of a woman's life: virgin, mother, and crone. Strephon comes to see "'Those Secrets of the hoary deep'" (98), but in this role he is not Milton's Satan passing out of the adamantine gates of hell, gazing upon the eternal anarchy of chaos, but the opposite; an unwilling victim lured by destructive feminine sexuality. Alexander Ross ends his commentary on the Actaeon myth in his *Mystagogus Poeticus* (1648) by saying that if Diana's nakedness seen unaware brought a man to his doom, how much more blameable are prostitutes who use their sexual powers deliberately.²⁸ Swift of course is saying that prostitutes and town ladies alike

²⁶*The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (London, 1992), p. 148.

²⁷For more details see Felicity Nussbaum's *The Brink of All We Hate*, pp. 108-109.

²⁸See Bean, p. 6.

use their cosmetic powers to draw men into the horrific vision of their sexuality. Even if Strephon is not Satan, Celia is still Milton's Sin, as Sin's chaotic body, grotesquely torn between birth and death, constantly producing and being devoured by hell hounds, mirrors the disorder of Chaos itself. Satan voyages

Into this wild abyss,
The womb of nature and perhaps her grave,
Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,
But all these in their pregnant causes mixed
Confusedly, and which thus must ever fight (II, 910).²⁹

Chaos is evidently a feminine environment, a grotesque space of constant process, becoming and uncontrolled generation. What Strephon sees is this feminine mystery, the true physical chaos that is brought to light when he looks in Celia's forbidden 'Cabinet' (78).

In some ways Swift seeks to blame Strephon for this and to turn him into a deluded male grotesque who has been overwhelmed by feminine curiosity like Eve and Pandora. The poet seemingly distances himself from Strephon throughout the poem, finishing with the notorious final passage where he pities Strephon for his blindness 'To all the Charms of Female Kind' (129-30). If only Strephon 'would but stop his Nose' (136) then he would learn to think like the poet,

And bless his ravisht Sight to see
Such Order from Confusion sprung,
Such gaudy Tulips rais'd from Dung (142).

Susan Gubar's excellent analysis of this passage points out that the interplay between blindness and insight here draws the poet closer to Strephon than he will admit.³⁰ Although Strephon is 'blind' to the charms of women, this blindness is an insight into reality, whereas the poet, by accepting the Queen of Love, is actually refusing Strephon's insight for blindness. Swift's sight is 'ravisht' by the Queen of Love who seems to rape his consciousness rather than elevating it: this also is a form of blindness. Indeed Swift's own poem has impiously blasphemed against Celia's various potions just as he now accuses Strephon of doing. The crucial question of the poem is terms of the relationship of Swift and Strephon is this:

Should I the Queen of Love refuse,
Because she rose from stinking Ooze? (131)

²⁹John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Alastair Fowler, (Harlow, Longman, 1984), p. 132.

³⁰'The Female Monster in Augustan Satire', p. 387.

Clearly the way this question is framed makes it fraught with ambiguity. On one level Swift is giving us a rhetorical question: no, he should not refuse because then he would be as 'blind' as Strephon: in some sense the grotesque can nourish apparently classical beauty. On a further level the disgust in the tone of 'stinking Ooze' invites an affirmative response. As Gubar puts it: 'perhaps the queen (who is after all a Queen of Ooze) *should* be refused, since even her carefully crafted appearance is gaudy and smelly'. Christine Rees also makes the point that the 'gaudy Tulips rais'd from Dung' are distinctly uncomplimentary to Celia in that poets after the 1630s commonly associated them with a certain vulgar type of beauty that flaunted itself in the eye of the beholder.³¹ The cultivation of tulips had been regarded as a triumph of Art over Nature, giving them a moral ambivalence. Consequently James Shirley had exiled women and tulips from his lovelorn garden, and Pope had compared women to 'variegated tulips'.

Stepping outside the poem to examine it in the context of Swift's own behaviour and opinions settles the issue. On any reading of his life he is obsessed with bodily regimentation and particularly bodily hygiene. Carol Flynn finds that Swift's answer to the problems of sexuality and the body is denial, chastising his body to contain his own unruly desire: 'Swift has been described as Rabelais in a dry place; he is also Rabelais hungry, or rather, Rabelais dieting desire. While Panurge can describe with delight the hungry, retentive wombs his utopian women possess as signs of their wonderful fecundity, Swift shrinks from such a vision'.³² This sounds Bakhtinian, although Flynn makes no reference to him here. This is the classical Swift, the Swift whose desire is to close down desire, to shut off the body from the contamination of other bodies, other sources of infection. In Swift's *Modest Defence of a Late Poem*, that is, *The Lady's Dressing Room*, he states ironically that 'Cleanliness hath, in all polite Ages and Nations, been esteemed the chief corporeal Perfection in Women, as it is well known to those who are conversant with the antient Poets'.³³ But is this ironic? Any examination of his more serious statements would say not. One of his resolutions for *When I come to be old* (1699) is the somewhat mysterious desire 'Not to neglect decency, or cleanliness, for fear of falling into nastiness'.³⁴ What exactly might 'nastiness' be?

³¹*Essential Articles*, pp. 249-50.

³²*The Body in Swift and Defoe*, p. 96.

³³*Swift PW*, V, 337-40 (p. 338).

³⁴*Swift PW*, I, xxxvii.

One of its meanings might as well be marriage, and 'cleanliness' defined as the avoidance of marriage and procreation. In his letter to the young bride he totally ignores the issue of motherhood and concentrates instead on her intellectual development which is to be achieved largely through the avoidance of other women. The procreative ability of women frightens Swift: he tells Vanessa that all other women are 'bestes en jupes', beasts in skirts who threaten to degrade him grotesquely through the devouring sexuality concealed beneath the trappings of a classical surface.³⁵ Likewise the products of the procreative process repel him, reminding him of his own expendability. Another of his resolutions for when he comes to be old is 'Not to be fond of children, or let them come near me hardly'. He does not say that he will not be *over* fond of children, merely that he will not be fond of them at all. The second part of the resolution carries an obvious and forceful *physical* revulsion with it: children are almost like women, carriers of distasteful or dangerous unmanly qualities. Children, like women, as Pope implies in *The Rape of the Lock*, are pre-formed, undeveloped, incomplete in body and mind. Children must therefore be kept away from the territory of the patriarchal body lest they deterritorialize it, delimit its boundaries. Women must also be controlled and distanced, seen by the male gaze but not heard. Hence Swift avoids marriage like the plague, for marriage carries a threat to the integrity of his classical body, the possibility of a rupture in its cleansed and 'decent' surface. Sexuality, like a virus, will make him ill. The avoidance of Celia's horrible bodily smells is important here, her 'sour unsavoury Streams' (28) and 'stinking Toes' (52), because it was thought that the plague could be carried through odours in the air. Swift emphasises the fact that Celia is an infectious creature: if she does not have venereal disease, she is at least a woman, with all the dangers to the male body that this entails.

It has been widely noted that in Swift's urge to eradicate sexuality he converts the sexual to the excremental. Penelope Wilson shows that, for Swift, the reproductive process generates matter that exceeds the margins of the body, dangerous and disturbing matter out of place. Consequently, the sexual comes to be equated to bodily waste, as one finds in the 'Queen of Ooze' lines which refer back

³⁵*The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, edited by Harold Williams, 5 vols (Oxford, 1963), abbreviated to *Swift Corr*, II, 326.

to Etherege. The crucial difference here is that in Etherege the allusion is explicitly vaginal, whereas in Swift it becomes singularly excremental.³⁶ As Susan Gubar states:

In *The Lady's Dressing Room*, Celia's stinking chamber pot is the quintessence of the room and the woman; it is reminiscent of the Whore of Babylon's golden cup - 'full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications' (Rev. 17:4). What Erikson calls 'female inner space' is disgusting, dirty, and contaminating. For Swift, the anal orifice is a metaphor for all female apertures; excrement is then the final distillation of Celia's other remains.³⁷

The problem is that 'female inner space' insists on communicating grotesquely with male outer space. Female effluent contaminates the purity of the male classical body, particularly that of the disgusted poet whose pretended narrative distance from Strephon draws attention to a deeper bond.

Swift is complicitous with Strephon. His much vaunted ironic detachment ('Why Strephon will you tell the rest?' (69)) is a sham, although a clever one. As Peter Schakel puts it: 'Swift himself is in some degree offended by what he satirises his characters for being offended by'.³⁸ This is true: Strephon's repetition compulsion is matched by Swift as he is drawn repeatedly to state the facts of bodily process, particularly the revolting processes of the female body as we see in this set of poems. In the next, and most direct of the scatological group, Strephon is gone, and we are left with unmediated disgust.

The Prosthetic Grotesque: *A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed*

Irvin Ehrenpreis refers to this set of poems, dating from *The Progress of Beauty*, as the 'comedy of sexual prosthesis',³⁹ and *A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed* (1731) is the most extreme expression of the prosthetic theme.⁴⁰ Swift follows in the tradition of Juvenal, Ovid, Burton and Gould in offering a contemporary 'remedy' for love by exposing the problematic mysteries of the female body in all its incompleteness. The theme of *A Beautiful Young Nymph* is that all women are essentially and radically fragmented under the veneer of their self-created classical bodies, in contrast to Margaret Doody's optimistic opinion that Swift is displaying women with a refreshing realism.⁴¹ There is realism in the poem in that it shows with reasonable accuracy the effects of venereal disease

³⁶'Feminism and the Augustans: some reading and problems', *Critical Quarterly*, 28 (1986), 80-92 (p. 87).

³⁷'The Female Monster', p. 386.

³⁸*The Poetry of Jonathan Swift* (London, 1978), p. 119.

³⁹Ehrenpreis, III, 103.

⁴⁰*Swift Poems*, II, 580-583.

⁴¹'Swift among the Women', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 18 (1988), 62-92.

on a prostitute, and the possible fates that await her as she slides even further down the social scale. As Real and Vienken explain, Corinna is a low class prostitute who exemplifies the problems of rampant prostitution and the alarming spread of venereal disease in the London of the late 1720s and 1730s.⁴² This is read as a warning against the evils of prostitution, citing Swift's loathing of such women: 'The Streets of London are full of Common Whores, publickly tolerated in their Wickedness'.⁴³ They conclude that Swift is not antifeminist, as Corinna is 'clearly a very particular type of woman' and 'could hardly have been representative of the female sex' (p. 245). This, however, is to ignore the other poems of this type in which it is by no means clear whether the 'heroine' is a prostitute, as we have seen in the case of *The Lady's Dressing Room*. It is also to ignore the literary background of the present poem. James Means cites Robert Gould's *A Satyre against Wooing, with a view of the Ill Consequences that attend it* (1698) as a source text for *A Beautiful Young Nymph*, and quotes Gould's categorical statement from his notorious *Love Given O'er* (1683) 'that, if they durst, all women would be whores'.⁴⁴ There is evidence that Pope had also used Gould as a source with his thought in his *Epistle To a Lady* that every woman is at heart a 'Rake'. However, even if Swift and Pope had never read Gould, the sentiment he expresses was widely held: as Paul Gabriel-Bouc  puts it: the 'archetypal conception of woman as a sexually insatiable creature when her desire is aroused'.⁴⁵ As I noted at the beginning of my analysis of *The Lady's Dressing Room*, Swift regards all women as possible rakes, possible whores: it is merely a matter of whether their classical, virginal and premarital state can be adequately defended either by a presiding father figure such as Swift himself, or contained within wedlock.

Corinna is the potential of a female rake realised: her body pays the price for her lack of self control and for her lack of a patriarchal figure to control it. She is punished for relying on her blasphemous powers of self creation with a body that falls apart and exposes her true grotesque nature: she is 'A dreadful Sight!' (57) in more than one sense, for she inspires dread in Swift, the poet

⁴²"Those odious common whores of which this town is full": Swift's *A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed*, *Arbeiten Aus Anglistick*, 6 (1981), 241-59.

⁴³See p. 251, originally in Swift's abstract of *Mr Collin's Discourse of Free Thinking* (1713).

⁴⁴'An Un-Dress Rehearsal for Swift's *A Beautiful Young Nymph*', *Notes and Queries*, 32 (1985), 191-92.

⁴⁵'Some sexual beliefs and myths in eighteenth-century Britain', in *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, edited by Bouc , (Manchester, 1982), 28-46 (p. 41).

himself unmediated by Strephon or some other distancing vehicle. His 'bashful Muse' (71) will not describe Corinna's 'Arts' (67) that gather her 'scatter'd Parts' (68) because this is a female creativity and one from which he is excluded. But this control over her sexual being can at least be revealed as transgressive through the response of the male poet as he warns other men of the black arts that await them in the incomplete bodies of grotesque women. The poet freely and finally expresses his disgust at the 'female inner space' which has now affronted his own territory:

Corinna in the Morning dizen'd,
Who sees, will spew; who smells, be poison'd (73).

Real and Vienken rightly point out that there is no sympathy for Corinna in the poem, but then claim that the poem ends in 'aphasia', because 'there is no more to be said' (pp. 251, 250). They base this conclusion on the premise that Corinna's day is a cycle of bodily construction and consequent deconstruction, yet it is clear that the poem certainly does not end in aphasia: what Swift thinks comes through loud and clear, much as one might try to ignore it.

'Your Goddess Grown a Filthy Mate'

Strephon and Chloe (1731) follows *A Beautiful Young Nymph* and precedes *Cassinus and Peter* in the quarto pamphlet taking its title from the first poem in it and published by J. Roberts in London in December 1734.⁴⁶ Swift shifts the environment of his grotesque goddess, in this case Chloe, away from the sordid realities of lonely prostitution to the sordid realities of the marriage bed. The status of the female is that of a lady, but she shares the same qualities as the whore. Strephon finds his 'Goddess grown a filthy Mate' (244) as the poet roundly informs him and us. As the compression in this phrase suggests, this poem concentrates even more intensively on the discrepancy between the classical feminine exterior and the grotesque feminine interior: one might expect a prostitute suffering from the effects of venereal disease to be physically disgusting, but not a 'fine' lady of good family and reputation. Not having the physical effects endured by Corinna to call upon, Swift focuses instead on 'Decency', physical hygiene and regimentation. Chloe seems the very embodiment of the classical ideal:

Such Cleanliness from Head to Heel:
No Humours gross, or frowzy Steams,
No noisom Whiffs, or sweaty Streams,

⁴⁶*Strephon and Chloe*, *Swift Poems*, II, 584-93.

Before, behind, above, below,
 Could from her taintless Body flow (10).

Celia's body seems to contain all its grotesque flows within itself, as Swift so negatively states: her physical purity is that of the 'clean and proper' classical body. Strephon views her as 'unsusceptible of Stain', thinking particularly of 'her fragrant skin' (96-97), that barrier between the body and the outside world, the effective container of the grotesque female interior.

What Strephon believes is of course a delusion waiting to be revealed, but revelation comes in the marriage bed, not the lady's dressing room. His Petrarchan expectations of the female body are thoroughly satirised in the build up to the marriage night. As Gubar points out, Chloe is described as 'a Basis unsecure' (300) for marriage as she is attacked for deceitful modesty before marriage and for not maintaining it afterwards. She is like Lucifera's House of Pride in the *Fairie Queene* with its golden exterior and foundations of sand, and Duessa with her deformed and witch-like nether parts. The shameful ugliness of Chloe and Duessa is associated with their hidden genitals, and it is probable that Swift is using Spenser's biblical reference to the daughters of Zion whose 'secret parts' are exposed by the Lord who removes all the devices with which they construct an alluring bodily facade.⁴⁷

Chloe is therefore condemned morally and physically. Her inability to control her body is a sign of moral and intellectual weakness. In contrast to Chloe's ironic violation of the margins of her *own* body on the night of her defloration through her 'fuming Rill' (175), Swift offers his own, masculine model of the true classical body, 'the Sage of Samos' (125), or Pythagoras, who forbade his disciples beans. This sage, as Carol Flynn explains, is 'infamous for his personal and philosophical attempts to purify the body. Such notorious asceticism would appear to sit well with Swift, and finds its way into the clean, bracing regimen of the Houyhnhnms, whose nature is so very easily satisfied'.⁴⁸ Clearly one is supposed to laugh at Pythagoras and certain of the Houyhnhnms' traits, but the serious underlying regulatory principle remains. The purification of the body sought by Swift does not materialise in Chloe's case, as his comparison of her skin with that of a chamber pot condenses the issues of the apparent classical surface of her body with the grotesque interior that is at once contained within it and yet will have to pass out of it:

⁴⁷'The Female Monster in Augustan Satire', p. 384.

⁴⁸*The Body in Swift and Defoe*, p. 90.

Fair Utensil, as smooth and white
As Chloe's skin, almost as bright (173).

Chloe then, is not much different in this sense from the other women of these poems. Strephon and the poet, however, are another matter. Strephon himself becomes a grotesque through his immersion into the 'infantile polymorphous perversity', as Gilmore calls it, of the post-'rill' marriage bed.⁴⁹ Critics like Richard Rodino have cited the male grotesques of Strephon and Cassinus (who will be seen later) as evidence that Swift sees both the sexes in the same way, giving 'equal weight to the contributing failures of both men and women', and thus exonerating Swift of the charge of misogyny in all the scatological group.⁵⁰

This is clearly not the case. Throughout the poem the burden to conceal bodily functions obviously falls on Chloe, not Strephon:

Since Husbands get behind the Scene,
The Wife should study to be clean;
Nor give the smallest Room to guess
The Time when Wants of Nature press (137).

It is Chloe's grotesque body that the attention of the poet focuses on, not Strephon's: his urinary 'Rouzer' (192) is merely a response to her actions, and possibly an aggressive act motivated by his, or Swift's, desire to punish her for her distinctly mortal behaviour in transgressing her supposedly classical body. As Schakel notes, there is an allusion at this point to *Paradise Lost*, where the woman 'falls' first and consequently the man, 'Inspir'd with Courage from his Bride' (189), follows her example.⁵¹ It is Chloe who leads Strephon astray with her untrustworthy nature: it is she who degrades his idealism, an idealism shared emotionally by the poet although he is too cynical to subscribe to it at an intellectual level. But Chloe's faults are inseparable from her body, as Gubar says of Celia in *Cassinus and Peter*.⁵² The male grotesque can be corrected by following Swift's remedies for love, and learning about the mysteries of his goddess, but Chloe can never escape her own body. Despite Swift's injunctions to the contrary, decency can not *always* be maintained in the marital bed, hence his constant avoidance and condemnation of that institution, and the creatures who trap men into such a state of defilement. This may largely explain the apparent non sequitur of the attack on

⁴⁹'Freud, Swift, and Narcissism', *Contemporary Studies*, p. 159.

⁵⁰'Blasphemy or Blessing?', *Essential Articles*, p. 270.

⁵¹*The Poetry of Jonathan Swift*, p. 116.

⁵²'The Female Monster', p. 382.

female wits in lines 267-82, very near the end of the poem. Just before this passage Swift has repeated his statement that women should be 'decent', citing 'AUTHORITIES both old and recent' (251), going on to say that women 'unjustly' complain of the loss of their power shortly after the honeymoon because 'They take Possession of the Crown,/ And then throw all their Weapons down' (261-62). These 'Weapons' are decorum and decency in personal hygiene, not their methods of passing 'for Wits before a Rake' (268). It appears that Swift, being on the subject of the female 'Arts' for impressing men in the physical sense, can not pass up the opportunity to attack their intellectual pretensions simultaneously. Their 'search' for Wit is 'fruitless' (269), leading only to blasphemy (272) and insult (273-74). At the end of this section Swift actually concludes by conflating the intellectual and physical shortcomings of women in a truly carnivalesque inversion:

You'd think she utter'd from behind,
Or at her Mouth was breaking Wind (281).

This apparently digressive passage actually confirms the general logic of the feminine intellect being profoundly linked to her unreliable and disgusting body. If a healthy mind leads to a healthy body, then an unhealthy body will have its effect upon the mind. The word of a woman is no more than the flatulent and involuntary expulsion of the body.

Untutored though Strephon is, his 'fault' is not of the same order of that of Chloe and women in general: it is not he who is pictured on the toilet in all the grotesque 'Distortions, Groanings, Strainings, Heavings' (241) that accompany the defecatory act. It is not Chloe who should have licked Strephon's 'leavings' (242) rather than be deluded. Yet in this passage the status of the poet himself is brought into question. Here Swift lays claim to classical completion of attitude: if Strephon had 'spy'd her on the Privy' (248) then 'Your Heart had been as whole as mine' (250). At one level Swift is arguing that *he* is not fragmented, not grotesque, yet at another level this conflicts with his previous advice to Chloe to hide her toiletry habits. Strephon should seek to discover the truth of the female body, and Chloe should seek to hide it. This paradox does not make for wholeness or conjugal bliss. Strephon, in fact, exposes Swift's own unhappiness at the fact of sexuality and the excrementality that it becomes. Once Strephon has 'fallen' with his wife, he shows no sign at all of unhappiness at the situation, unlike Adam cast out of Eden. Instead it is the poet who exhibits all the signs of disgust that Strephon should be feeling, and it is he who proposes the solutions to a dilemma that Strephon does

not seem to realise exists. Indeed their relationship is characterised by an odd kind of equality: freed 'from all Constraint' (205), or the customary decorum proposed by Swift,

Now Strephon daily entertains
His Chloe in the homeliest Strains;
And, Chloe more experienc'd grown,
With Int'rest pays him back his own (211).

Strephon's revelation that Chloe is far from being a goddess results in a happy, though pre-social state, almost, one might say, like an Eden before the Fall. Like pigs in muck, Strephon and Chloe 'Find great Society in Stinking' (210). In a state of grotesque anarchy that Bakhtin would have been proud of, they exchange bodily excretions with thoughtless gusto.

This prompts a long Swiftian rant promoting decency until the much criticised end of the poem. Many critics, including Schakel, Rodino and Gubar, have commented on the didacticism of the final passage, totally unqualified by the usual Swiftian ironies. In this section Swift advocates his own (unworkable) model for marriage:

On Sense and Wit your Passion found,
By Decency cemented round;
Let Prudence with Good Nature strive,
To keep Esteem and Love alive.
Then Come old Age whene'er it will,
Your Friendship shall continue still:
And thus a mutual gentle Fire,
Shall never but with Life expire (307).

As Gubar points out, decency, in the way Swift conceives it, is not possible in the marriage bed. In a rare statement actually carrying positive truth value he advocates 'friendship between the sexes, the only kind of relationship Swift himself could tolerate with women'.⁵³ I would add that the views expressed are almost exactly the same as Pope's ideals for the relationship between the sexes. Swift, in what Gubar calls 'a startling lack of realism', outlines his classical utopia; a plan that occasionally worked in his personal life, but could never work in the marital situation. He may, consciously or unconsciously, have realised this fact, given that he spent the greater part of his life involved in intrigues specifically designed to avoid marriage, as did Pope, another bachelor concerned to keep the women at a safe distance. For Swift and Pope, marriage, however idealised, could only lead to the grotesque body.

⁵³The Female Monster, p. 385.

Cassinus and Peter

In *Cassinus and Peter* (1731) the emphasis falls back on the male protagonist, not the poet.⁵⁴ Most of the poem is a dialogue between two Cambridge undergraduate friends and budding romantic poets. Cassinus, like the Strephon of *The Lady's Dressing Room*, loses his wits when he discovers 'The blackest of all Female Deeds' (106): the fact that 'Caelia, Caelia, Caelia sh----' (118). The narrative of this poem is much more coy than the other scatological poems in that it builds up to a punch line that forces readers to supply the excremental conclusion for themselves, leaving Swift, as Pollak puts it, 'smelling like a rose'.⁵⁵ If the reader's nose is rubbed in the muck, so is Cassy's. His romantic idealisation of the opposite sex is in stark contrast with the double standard of his own excremental gentleman's bedroom. It is as if Swift had anticipated the anonymous reply to *The Lady's Dressing Room* entitled *The Gentleman's Study, in Answer to the Lady's Dressing Room* in which the gentleman is shown to be even more disgusting than the lady in his personal habits.⁵⁶ Indeed it is possible that Swift had seen this poem, published in 1732, before writing *Cassinus and Peter* which was published in 1734, although Williams dates its actual time of writing at 1731.

Swift does not go half as far as the anonymous *Gentleman's Study* though: one is given hints of Cassy's personal habits with the 'greasy Stocking round his Head' (12), his 'tawny Hyde' (16), the 'Rug' 'embrown'd with Dirt and Hair' (17-18), and the 'Jordan' 'Between his Legs, to spew or spit in' (21-22). The jordan especially recalls Celia's 'filthy bason' where she 'spits' and 'spews'. Cassy has been transformed into a toned down grotesque in parallel with Swift's female grotesques as the boundary between his inside and outside is blurred.

But not quite: there is none of the venom that Swift reserves for his women in this passage. As Richard Rodino observes, this is not a 'vexatious' poem in the sense that others in this group are; he sees this as a reward to the reader for putting up with the difficult experience of the earlier poems.⁵⁷ I do not believe this to be the case: the genial tone of the poem is preserved purely because Swift is focusing on his male character rather than the female. Cassy can be looked upon with indulgence as

⁵⁴*Swift Poems*, II, 593-97.

⁵⁵*The Poetics of Sexual Myth*, p. 168.

⁵⁶See Robert Halsband, 'The Lady's Dressing Room Explicated by a Contemporary', in *The Augustan Milieu: Essays Presented to Louis A. Landa*, edited by Henry Knight Miller, Eric Rothstein, G. S. Rousseau (Oxford, 1970), 225-31 (p. 226).

⁵⁷*Essential Articles*, edited by Vieth, p. 273.

this poem is more about male bonding than identifying feminine horrors that have already been revealed in this series of poems. Hence in the presentation of Cassy's study there is nothing like as much detail or physical specificity as in the female grotesques.

What there is, as Pollak notes in her reading, is the masturbatory suggestion of the jordan between his legs and the sexual frustration implicit in the 'half unsmoakt' 'antient Pipe' (23-24).⁵⁸ His male sexual fantasy has been spoiled by the soiled Caelia and he is suffering from a bad case of 'sexual nausea', as Pollak puts it. He has seen that Caelia is like himself, yet in his double standard neither he nor Swift are able to accept this fact. Pollak argues that Swift robs Cassy of his defensive fetish, his ideal of the female classical body, and thus the sight of Caelia's naked grotesque body brings on the threat of castration and his horrified visions of Freudian vengeful mothers punishing his/her infantile autoerotic play. Gubar too finds the motivation of the poem based on the fear of the other sex, and by extension, of Cassy's own body, although this is masked by his idealisation of Caelia.⁵⁹

Both critics focus on the crucial passage where Cassy imagines his death and descent to that grotesque topos the underworld, where he is confronted by female grotesques who are to punish him for his 'crime':

Vain empty World farewell. But hark,
The Loud Cerberian triple Bark.
And there - behold Alecto stand,
A Whip of Scorpions in her Hand.
Lo, Charon from his leaky Wherry,
Beck'ning to waft me o'er the Ferry.
I come, I come, - Medusa, see,
Her Serpents hiss direct at me.
Begone; unhand me, hellish Fry;
Avaunt - ye cannot say 'twas I (79).

According to Gubar's psychoanalytic reading, Cassy fears punishment for Caelia's crime because 'the purity of his passion is contaminated, betrayed by the carnality of its object. Anality is like a contagion; when the loved one is mortal, desire becomes a function of the body' (p. 167). Cassy's melodramatic and comic vision nevertheless masks a real male anxiety concerning both male and female bodies, although the threat of his own body is projected outwards on to that of the female grotesque, and, as Gubar notes, here we encounter 'one of the oldest female monsters', Medusa. Swift

⁵⁸*The Poetics of Sexual Myth*, pp. 166-67.

⁵⁹'The Female Monster', p. 382.

takes the opportunity 'to unmask the Medusa behind the Muse invoked at the start of the poem', just as he exposed his malignant Muse at the very start of his poetic career (p. 382). We have already encountered Alecto as a major source for the Goddess Criticism, one of Swift's earliest grotesques, and the references to *Macbeth* at the end remind one of that most notable of Shakespearean female monsters, Lady Macbeth, who attempts to relinquish her female role, in order to illegitimately masculinise herself.

All these female monsters threaten the male with castration, the recurring threat in the poetry of both Pope and Swift of an Orphic dismemberment. We remember that Cassy himself is a poet, however bad, as Arno Loffler has pointed out.⁶⁰ Yet again the identity between Swift and his male protagonist is established, however implausible it might seem initially. Medusa, with her phallic snakes, symbolic of her multiple appropriation of the authority and potency of the Phallus, and Alecto, with her modern descendant Criticism who similarly unmans literary authority, all represent the very real fears of the poet Swift who deflects such anxieties onto the comic persona of Cassy. Because Cassy is soiled and Swift is not, Caelia's contagious condition can not cross this hygienic literary barrier. The open disgust and fear of *A Beautiful Young Nymph* becomes Cassy's burden, not Swift's. As Felicity Nussbaum observes, Caelia slays Cassy with her unstable physical mortality, but the sacrifice of the bad poet saves the soul of the good one.⁶¹ In this way at least, Swift managed to preserve the integrity of his own classical body.

⁶⁰*Respublica Grubstreetaria, the Scribblers in Swift's Poetry', Proceedings of the First Munster Symposium on Jonathan Swift*, edited by Hermann Real and Heinz Vienken (Munich, 1985), 145-56 (p. 148).

⁶¹*The Brink of All We Hate*, p. 103.

CHAPTER TEN

SWIFT AND THE CLASSICAL BODY

The scatological poems revealed a Swift adopting a defensive psychic strategy against the grotesque women who threaten the integrity of the male classical body. This contrast between the classical body of the male and the grotesque body of the female is made more complex when one considers that Swift presented more than one type of woman in his writing, giving us a further interior opposition between the grotesque female and the classical female. To this end I will be examining the poetry inspired by the three women who could be said to be Swift's 'classical' women: Esther Johnson ('Stella'); Esther Vanhomrigh ('Vanessa'); and Lady Anne Acheson ('Daphne' or merely herself).

These three are united by common factors: they all followed the teacher-pupil relationship with Swift as he attempted to mould them, both physically and intellectually, into his feminine ideal. All were young when he first met them, and he tried to separate them all, with more or less success, from their parents, usually mothers, or guardians: in the case of Lady Acheson, her husband. Swift went on to institute himself as the patriarchal authority in place of the discarded guardians, regulating their company and movements in so far as he was able to do this. He played literary games with them, usually of an implicitly sexual nature, in which he always had the last word. Despite the sexual undercurrents present in his relationships with all of these women, he neither married nor came into sexual contact with any of them. This follows a more general pattern outlined by Carol Flynn in relation to Swift, Pope and Farquhar, in which these men treated their ideal women equivocally, endowing them with a sexuality that provokes two types of treatment: 'a rakish attempt on their virtue contradicted by an apparent inability to enjoy the called-up sexual attractions'.¹ Swift ultimately runs from the sexual implications of his actions either literally or poetically in all three cases.

These similarities mask a number of differences, however, not least of all the specific contextual matters of his own age when he met them, their financial and marital circumstances, their geographical location, and, perhaps most important of all, their personalities and subsequent

¹"A Softer Man": Pope's, Swift's, and Farquhar's Feminine Ideal', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 84 (1985), 51-62 (p. 52).

susceptibility to his Pygmalion like manipulation. In a very rough sliding scale, which not fortuitously corresponds to a linear historical chronology, Stella was the most malleable object of Swift's regulatory attention, whilst Lady Acheson was the least, and we shall see later the reasons for this when each one is examined individually.

Swift (and Pope) defined and manufactured his feminine ideal by transforming the female into 'a Softer Man', as Carol Flynn observes. Following a similar argument to Lynda Nead, Flynn shows that feminine qualities are seen to be inherently imperfect, if not downright evil, whereas (classical) masculine virtues are deemed the highest and best model. Consequently the strategy adopted by male writers is to eliminate any traces of feminine nature from women by performing a kind of mythic surgery in which any unpleasant non-masculine elements are removed (pp. 51, 55).

The 'solution' to the problem of femininity is not as easy as this though: the fundamental paradox of the female body still remains, intractable and mortal, obstinately interfering with the poet's attempts to idealise his purified muse, and this is what prevents Swift from arriving at the facile panegyric that he satirises in other poets. Swift constantly battles to keep his unruly feminine material under control, to retain his authority over a female object who insists on her own subjectivity, however much he might try to deny or alter that subjectivity.

Stella

Swift's project of purifying the female body had its greatest chance of success with Esther Johnson, his pupil from the age of eight. Born in 1681, fourteen years younger than Swift, he only began writing his *Journal to Stella* in 1710 and his poetry addressed to her ten years later when she was in her late thirties, well past the dangerous age when she could expect a proposal from him, either sexual or matrimonial. With Stella, Swift sets up a program and a thematics of femininity that was to be recycled with the other women he dealt with later on. His main literary instrument in the institution of the classical body was his poetry, particularly the birthday poems he habitually wrote in the years leading up to her death in 1728. Less about birth than death, these poems attempt, unsuccessfully, to purge Stella of her links with the body and sexuality in particular. Both Ronald Paulson and Peter Schakel have noted Swift's Platonism in these poems. Indeed the very first birthday

poem, *On Stella's Birth-day* (1719) stamps this theme at the centre of the poem, short though it is.²

Swift splits Stella into two nymphs at this point, doubling her size and age (inaccurately) from the time when she was presumably more of a sexual threat than at the time of writing, 'The brightest Virgin of the Green' (6). In other words, he divides Stella into (past) grotesque and (present) classical.

According to Swift, the flesh does not matter to him:

So little is thy Form declin'd
Made up so largely in thy Mind (7).

True 'Form' and identity is internal and spiritual, not external and physical. This point is made again in *Stella's Birth-day* (1721) in which Swift rearranges the hackneyed beloved as angel metaphor; Stella, the barmaid at the Angel Inn has a face like the sign, 'An Angel's Face, a little crack't' (16).³ Rather than being an angel in the house, Stella is an angel in the inn and, appropriately for the bearer of spirituality, it is not her body that counts:

This drew us in at first to find
In such a Form an Angel's Mind (17).

Ronald Paulson finds such an attitude similar to that of Pausonius in Plato's *Symposium*: 'Evil is the vulgar lover who loves the body rather than the soul, inasmuch as he is not even stable, because he loves a thing which is itself unstable ... whereas the love of the noble disposition is life-long, for it becomes one with the everlasting'.⁴

Consequently Stella is repeatedly praised for her rejection of the body and sexuality in particular. In *To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness* (1720), Swift tells her that 'All Passions must be laid aside' (35) in pursuit of that manly quality 'Honour'.⁵ She must

Drive all Objections from your Mind,
Else you relapse to Human Kind (43).

John Fischer finds these lines 'atypical' in Swift's work, seeing them as an accidental aberration to be ignored; however, I find them entirely typical and central to his whole mode of thought.⁶ By 'Human Kind', Swift means not merely the political vices, but also 'Lust' (45), human sexuality. The

²*Swift Poems*, II, 720-22.

³*Swift Poems*, II, 734-36.

⁴'Swift, Stella and Permanence', *English Literary History*, 27 (1960), 298-314 (p. 308); and *The Dialogues of Plato*, translated by B. Jowett (New York, 1937), I, 311.

⁵*Swift Poems*, II, 722-27.

⁶*On Swift's Poetry*, p. 126.

point is made more clearly and more startlingly in his last poem to Stella in which he confirms her angelic and Platonic classical status with his echo of Pope as he praises her 'true Contempt for Things below' (68).⁷ In this almost desperate and moving poem about Stella's impending death and her implicit resentment of his failure to marry her, Swift can not help calling up that thorny subject of their lack of sexual relations, clearly using it as a means of marking out her virginal body and mind as classical and ideal, even if she is superficially wrinkled and infirm. Stella has risen above a contaminating sexuality, beyond the mass of 'Human Kind'. She corresponds to his transcendent ideal based on the negation of the body: thus it does not matter what state her body is in, as long as it remains unmolested by that sign of birth and mortality: human sexuality.

In these poems Swift desexualises Stella further by transforming her into a 'softer Man', drawing her into a masculine economy, a return to the Same that recuperates her feminine otherness so that she is no longer threateningly grotesque, but classical, under control. In *To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness* (1720) Pallas, as in *Cadenus and Vanessa* (1713), gives masculine qualities to a woman. In this case, Stella already has more 'Wit' 'than for her Sex was fit' (1-2); to counterbalance this, Pallas 'Fixt Honour in her Infant Mind' (6). Pallas is herself a softer god, as it were: a goddess who possesses the masculine attribute of wisdom and is able to confer further manly abilities upon others such as Stella and Vanessa. Minerva is a paradoxical example of a powerful female who employs her force for the maintenance of patriarchy. John Barrell, discussing Pallas/Minerva in a wider context, cites Freud's opinion of her as the goddess who 'repels all sexual desires'; an apt sponsor for Swift indeed. Pallas stands in contrast to Venus in Swift's mythology, as Venus is the Venerean goddess who promotes sexuality. Barrell has also noted in some detail the mistrust of the unstable and untrustworthy images of Venus in this period: she could seem a Venus Caelestis or 'heavenly' Venus, or in reality stir up the lust befitting Venus Pandemos, the 'earthly' Venus who was fond of sensual pleasures.⁸ Pallas, as a surrogate for masculinity and hence for Swift, discourages human sexuality by implanting a specific definition of 'Honour' in Stella's mind that distinctly rules out 'Lust' (45). Stella is possessed of manly 'Courage' (66) and rejects the usual feminine arts of 'affected Fears' (70). She has a 'Fund of Wit and Sense' (80), those Augustan virtues from which women were normally

⁷*Stella's Birth-day* (1727), *Swift Poems*, II, 763-66.

⁸*The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (London, 1992), pp. 159, 66, 75.

excluded, and Swift applies the Apollonian sun metaphor to her in way opposite to Pope's depiction of Belinda: her 'Wit and Sense',

Which though her Modesty would shroud,
Breaks like the Sun behind a Cloud,
While Gracefulness its Art conceals,
And yet through ev'ry Motion steals (81).

In *The Rape of the Lock*, Belinda is compared to the sun in an unfavourable manner because she is usurping male power through her refusal to shine on one of her suitors in particular, whereas here Swift approves of her masculine qualities, donated as they have been by himself and through the poetic auspices of his substitute Pallas. The moon would be an inappropriate image here as female sexuality is not in question: Apollo, god of the sun and Swift's own god of poetry signifies the order of classical masculinity and the control of sexuality. Pallas is his parallel goddess. Unlike Pope, Swift is not encouraging anyone into marriage, least of all Stella.

This passage is followed by Swift's myth of Stella's creation. Not only has Pallas donated honour, but also Prometheus has 'mistook' Stella's 'Kind' (86) and stolen 'The Fire that forms a manly Soul' and 'molded it with Female Clay' (88-90); consequently,

To that you owe the nobler Flame.
To this the beauty of your Frame (91).

As Swift constantly draws attention to the fact that Stella is no longer beautiful in these poems one can discard the final line as mere lip-service. What is important for him is that although Stella cannot shed the physical attributes of femininity totally, her interior is nevertheless purified by the eradication of her womanly soul and its replacement by a 'manly' and more noble one. Similarly in *To Stella, Written on the Day of her Birth, but not on the Subject, when I was sick in bed* (1724), Swift asks where else apart from Stella 'can we find/ So soft, and yet so firm a mind?' (19-20).⁹ Stella's softness refers to her nurturing role, a role to which we will return, and the firmness to her more masculine stoicism, her rejection of female infirmity. She is not subject to the vapours and hysteria that mark the rest of her sex as she endures the pains of her life (and Swift's) uncomplainingly.

With her gender neutralised, at least for the time being, Stella becomes an Apollonian bringer of order at the beginning of the complex *To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems* (1720).¹⁰

⁹Swift *Poems*, II, 754-55.

¹⁰Swift *Poems*, II, 727-32.

Stella is compared to the workmen who raise 'a lofty Pile' but are never praised (1-2). Swift, on the other hand, is like Inigo Jones; as the architect, he receives all the glory. To remedy this situation,

Swift draws attention to Stella's role:

So if this Pile of scatter'd Rhymes
Should be approv'd in After-times,
If it both pleases and endures,
The Merit and the Praise are yours (5).

Here it is Swift who disseminates meaning. The world is turned upside down as it is he who becomes like his grotesque women and she who takes on the male role of bringing his verses back under classical control. This role reversal also occurs in *To Stella ... when I was sick in bed* when he 'indecently' breaks out in 'brutish passions' (10-11) and in *To Stella, Visiting me* when he lies in womanish infirmity on his couch, 'Lamenting in unmanly Strains' (97-99).

Swift is able to tolerate these unmanly reversals of power in which he becomes the grotesque to be controlled by the classical Stella because he is always in ultimate control of his poetry, if not of his life as we shall see, and because Stella assumes the role of the desexualised and unthreatening figure of the mother, sister and nurse all rolled into one. In this role she is safe, stripped of her sexual nature and subjugated to Swift's fantasy of a protective femininity. In this way he can relive the (over) protectiveness of his nurse who kidnapped him to Whitehaven, virtually the only episode in his childhood that he speaks of without bitterness and frustration. Ehrenpreis points out that Swift seems to have a great affection for Whitehaven: in the 1740s when he heard that a merchant from that location was in Dublin he promptly invited him and his family to the Deanery and 'paid them many civilities while they stayed'.¹¹ This is in stark contrast to the absent figures of his mother and sister during his childhood: no sooner had he been brought back to Ireland from Whitehaven and sent to school than his mother and sister returned to Leicester, her birthplace. Although such a pattern of separation from one's parents was not uncommon in the middle and upper classes, it is nevertheless possible that Swift felt her absence and that Stella compensated for this lack in the role of a 'motherly wife'.¹² When his mother died, Swift said 'I have now lost my barrier between me and death'; through

¹¹*Ehrenpreis*, I, 30-31.

¹²*Ehrenpreis*, III, 100.

Stella he rebuilt the barrier. Unlike the grotesque women who forecast the end of man's time and lead to his death, Stella becomes a sign of spiritual constancy as well as caring for the ailing body.

Stella abases her sexuality and feminine body in the service of Swift's emotional and physical needs, visiting and tending him in his sickness, collating and copying his poetry when he is well. She is his muse and amanuensis in one. In *To Stella ... when I was sick in bed* she tends him 'like an humble slave' (9), her 'soft speech' and 'tears' soothing her childlike (im)patient. She seems to feel only his pains rather than her own. Thus her mind is 'firm' because she is able to endure such difficulties stoically, yet 'soft' (20) because this is an allowable, desexualised femininity that provides an environment where Swift can abdicate his own responsibility to be manly and rational. Whilst Swift is a 'brute' (32) who gives her 'base returns' (29) she must 'still be kind' (30), like a patient mother/nurse indulging a temperamental child. He of course promises, when he is out of pain, 'to be good again' (34).

'Turbulence of Blood'

This is not the whole story, however. Swift's poems to Stella attempt to idealise her into a desireless classical body whose whole existence is devoted towards his well being with no thought of herself, but they do not always succeed. Sometimes Stella would step out of her allotted role of licensed masculine passivity into an altogether more threatening and aggressive position. This struggle is reflected in *To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems* where he initially praises Stella as a bringer of order, tells her roundly that he does not love her sexually ('I ne'er admitted Love a Guest', 14) and that he will not praise her beauty because only spiritual virtue is important (79-80). Having mortified the flesh, he goes on 'to mortify your Pride' and 'expose your weaker Side' (85-86). The 'weaker side' is of course her feminine, grotesque side that usurps the truly masculine authority of the poet in her textual emendations: the final lines put her in a typical double-bind:

Say, Stella, when you copy next,
Will you keep strictly to the Text?
Dare you let these Reproaches stand,
And to your Failing set your Hand?
Or if these Lines your Anger fire,
Shall they in baser Flames expire?
Whene'er they burn, if burn they must,
They'll prove my Accusation just (137).

When Stella does not 'keep strictly to the text' of Swift's will, she meets with 'Reproaches' that can only be justified, as the final couplet makes clear. If she symbolically rejects his opinion by ignoring or burning his criticisms she is merely confirming how right he is. When Stella succumbs to her 'Turbulence of Blood' (127) she returns to the grotesque and the feminine. Blood is of the body, and it is to the body that she reverts. Swift mentions the word 'Passion' four times in the poem to indicate Stella's sliding back down to 'human kind' and 'things below' (97, 113, 117, 135). When Swift tries to show her 'where your Error lies' (90) she loses her masculine qualities and gives way to unreason:

Conviction does but more incense;
Perverseness is your whole Defence:
Truth, Judgment, Wit, give Place to Spite,
Regardless both of Wrong and Right.
Your Virtues, all suspended, wait
Till Time hath open'd Reason's Gate (91).

The noble attributes of 'Truth, Judgment, Wit' are replaced by the feminine tendency to invert Augustan Reason: Stella will do the opposite of what Swift asserts is 'Right' as she descends into those specifically female vices of 'Perverseness' and 'Spite'. Stella turns into Belinda as she becomes increasingly susceptible to 'Peevishness and Spleen' (136), that particularly deviant feminine disease for those of a weaker disposition. If Stella is elsewhere a beneficial female Apollo, here the sun metaphor is ambiguously fraught with the possibility that she might overstep the limits set for her by Swift:

One Passion, with a diff'rent Turn,
Makes Wit inflame, or Anger burn;
So the Sun's Heat, with different Powers,
Ripens the Grape, the Liquor sours (117).

Hedging his bets, Swift tells Stella that he brings 'To publick Light your only Fau't' (102), but this singular fault exposes the potential of the grotesque behind the classical, the inherent ambiguity in any woman, even the most ideal and the most subdued like Stella.

David Nokes observes that Swift had a difficult situation to handle in his real, non-poetic world regarding his guilty trysts with Vanessa.¹³ The birthday poem of 1721 reads like a fictionalising of the real situation as he attempts to convince Stella that her jealousy of a younger and more glamorous

¹³*Jonathan Swift*, p. 255.

rival is unfounded. This is not very convincing as Vanessa is not really comparable with Doll or Chloe, the rival barmaids of Stella with her cracked angel face. However, Stella's penitential poem to Swift on his birthday later that year reveals her to have been placated at least for the present. *To Dr. Swift on his birth-day* addresses Swift as 'My early and my only guide' (2) and refers to herself as 'Your pupil and your humble friend' (4), setting the repentant and submissive tone for the rest of the poem.¹⁴ She goes on to describe how Swift controlled her life and her sexuality in particular from her early childhood:

When men began to call me fair,
You interpos'd your timely care;
You early taught me to despise
The ogling of a coxcomb's eyes;
Shew'd where my judgement was misplac'd;
Refin'd my fancy and my taste (9).

The following passage parrots Swift's scorn for a decayed beauty who has 'no endowments but a face' (26) and continues to present the common fate of women as 'A maid forlorn, or a hated wife' (28). One can not help noting that she may be protesting too much, as she must have expected to marry Swift, having moved from Moor Park to Ireland in such a way that all around her thought she was certain to be married very shortly.¹⁵ She herself is more or less 'a maid forlorn', protesting that 'The sight of Chloe at fifteen/ Coquetting, gives not me the spleen' (43-44); again one thinks of the youthful Vanessa here, and Stella's other poem entitled *Jealousy* in which she complains of 'This Tyrant that imbitters all my Hours' (2).¹⁶ *To Dr. Swift* ends with a wistful vision of a world in which she is allowed some control over the object of desire, inverting Swift's authority in her own carnivalesque utopia:

Oh! turn your precepts into laws,
Redeem the women's ruin'd cause,
Retrieve lost empire to our sex,
That men may bow their rebel necks (49).

Stella becomes surprisingly Amazonian in a poem expressly designed to show her utter submission to patriarchal authority. Of course the tradition of showing idealised female figures in a triumph is not totally surprising but Stella's use of such an image is unexpected in the context of her

¹⁴*Swift Poems*, II, 737-38.

¹⁵See John Fischer, *On Swift's Poetry*, p. 125.

¹⁶*Swift Poems*, II, 738-39.

usual passivity. Would there be something in the empire of Dulness that would have appealed to her? Would she have liked to have changed places with the glamorous Chloe/Vanessa? I think so.

Swift's final poem to Stella further reveals a woman who is resistant to his attempts to mold her to his ideal classical vision. Even here Swift seems to be combating her 'Turbulence of Blood', treating her, as Fischer says, as a potentially hostile communicant.¹⁷ Swift desperately pleads with Stella as he tries to persuade her that her life has not been wasted, that she is not 'a maid forlorn':

Say, Stella, feel you no Content,
Reflecting on a Life well Spent? (35).

Clearly Stella does not feel the content that the guilty Swift hopes she will. The poem is more comprehensible if one remembers the fact that the manuscript of *Cadenus and Vanessa* was now circulating freely: if Stella had not been certain of Swift's furtive relationship with Esther Vanhomrigh before, she most certainly was now, and this seems to have infused her last months or years with a bitterness that she vented on Swift, her creator:

O then, whatever Heav'n intends,
Take Pity on your pitying Friends;
Nor let your Ills affect your Mind,
To fancy they can be unkind.
Me, surely me, you ought to spare,
Who gladly would your Suff'rings share (79).

The penultimate line especially sounds like a plea for forgiveness rather than a consolatory gesture. In the last rites it is the priest who is supposed to forgive the dying sinner, not the other way round. This poem is moving, not merely because of the usual critical reason of Swift's love for Stella, but also due to Stella's implicit grief at a life of frustration and betrayal.

Priest to Beast

Whereas his poetry attempts to construct and constrain a classical Stella, Swift's *Journal to Stella* calls up the potential sexuality of Stella and her virginal friend Rebecca Dingley, collectively known as MD (My Dears), transforming them through his language games into grotesque sluts.¹⁸ As Carol Flynn explicates so well in *The Body in Swift and Defoe*, Swift sublimates grotesque sexuality into the safe arena of the paper he writes on. Whilst he is in England with Vanessa, he writes

¹⁷*On Swift's Poetry*, p. 146.

¹⁸*The Journal to Stella*, edited by Harold Williams, 2 vols (Oxford, 1948), abbreviated to *Journal*: page and volume references will be in the main text.

flirtatiously to Stella, separated by the barriers of geographical distance and the prophylactic Dingley who shares and defuses the experience of reading Swift's naughty insinuations. In this way he can call up sexuality without there being any danger of physical befoulment of his singularly verbal promptings.

In the *Journal* Swift turns himself into a grotesque, a teasing Dean who suddenly reveals his hidden lower urges: 'Did you ever read the Scripture? It is only changing the word *Priest* to *Beast*' (I, p. 154). The ascetic dean becomes another kind of animal altogether, as he informs Stella: 'I am writing in my bed like a tyger' (I, p. 99). Carol Flynn wonders whether he is 'writhing' as much as 'writing' in bed.¹⁹ Significantly, the tiger is the symbol of Dionysian (sexual) energy, Dionysus having brought back the tiger from the East according to legend. Swift takes on the mantle of this anti-Apollonian beast in a carnivalesque reversal of his own. He tells Stella that he is bewitched to write so much at night, mimicking her exhortations for his literary and implicitly sexual attentions: 'Pray, pray, Presto, write a little more. Ah! you're a wheedling slut, you be so' (I, p. 154). The beastly priest responds to the invitation he has imagined in a suitably onanistic fashion: 'I'll come again to-night in a fine clean sheet of paper'. If Swift must be his transgressive alter ego Presto, then Stella too becomes a sexual grotesque, a 'wheedling slut' who is complicit in his linguistic fantasy. Flynn comments that 'slut' has connotations of 'a woman of dirty or slovenly habits, a kitchen or nurse maid, a drudge or troublesome, awkward creature'.²⁰ She can also be a common prostitute, loose in habits, loose in morals, just like the women Swift writes about in his scatological poetry.

Not entirely though: if Stella is transmuted into a slut, if she becomes feminine matter out of place, loose dirt and physical uncleanness, she is a slut who poses no direct threat to Swift's physical male classical integrity. He tells MD, 'Let us rise. Morrow sirrahs. I will rise, spite of your little teeth; good morrow. - At night. Oh, faith you are little dear saucy boxes' (I, pp. 247-48). Swift need not fear the castrating vagina dentata of the 'little teeth' belonging to his 'saucy boxes': he will 'rise' despite them because he controls his sexual/textual games. There is no danger of a physical fulfilment of such provocation due to the obstacles he has put in place: 'Faith, if I was near you, I would whip your ---- to some tune, for your grave saucy answer about the dean and Jonsonibus' (I, p. 124).

¹⁹*The Body in Swift and Defoe*, p. 123.

²⁰*The Body in Swift and Defoe*, p. 113.

'Jonsonibus' was a play on Stella's surname. Swift can only whip verbally, for he is not 'near' Stella at all. Stella, as a grotesque in the *Journal*, is very much a controlled grotesque, not actually having a subjective say in the matter at all. Stella's voice is interpolated by the tigerish priest: her actual desires are neutralised by the absence of her genuine response in his masturbatory fantasy. If she is a slut, it is Swift who rakes up the dirt and tousles the bed sheets. He is happy to relinquish control to his 'nauti' nurse because she is not able to take advantage of it: 'why don't you go down to Clougher you nautinautinautidear-girls; I dare not say nauti without dear: O faith you govern me' (I, p. 124). Of course she does not 'govern' him, and it is precisely this that allows him to tell her that she does.

If there is any further danger from his 'nauti' sluts, he is able to neutralise it by resorting to the tactic he employs in the poetry: 'MD you must know, are not women' (I, p. 90). Swift's racy jests and proposals are merely among the boys, man's talk, for he has worked hard to turn Stella into 'a manly soul'. If they were women, they might take his dashes and smudges the wrong way, seeing the sexual amongst the merely playful. Besides, Swift does not approve of ladies appropriating such masculine command of language and sexuality: 'I had a letter from Mrs Long, that has quite turned my stomach against her: no less than two nasty jests in it with dashes to suppose them. She is corrupted in that country town [King's Lynn] with vile conversation' (I, pp. 118-19). Like the sight of a lady lying-in after childbirth, Anne Long's sexual references turn his stomach: female sexuality disgusts him. Luckily his correspondents are not really women, removed as they are from the contamination of the rest of their sex in Swift's cleansed environment, so his own dashes are legitimated.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

VANESSA AND DAPHNE

Vanessa

Swift's relationship with the less submissive 'Vanessa', as he named his second Esther (Vanhomrigh), was much more fraught. Seven years younger than Stella, and twenty-one younger than Swift, Vanessa found it harder to subdue her physical desires. Like Stella, Vanessa's father had died when she was younger, leaving her in the care of her mother. Swift met her in 1708 in London, and she later followed Swift over to Ireland, as Stella had done before her. Ehrenpreis believes that Swift supplied the missing father in the cases of both Stella and Vanessa, although more so in the younger Vanessa, in an attempt to remedy the lack he himself felt of his own absent father.¹ As with Stella, Swift retreated from any thought of physical or matrimonial contact, content to play his language games in the sluttery.

Swift's response to the difficult situation he found himself in is *Cadenus and Vanessa* (1713), a poem circulated in manuscript by Vanessa long before it was published after her death in 1723. There is some dispute as to whether it was intended for publication.² Schakel thinks so, Williams thinks not: I am inclined to agree Williams for the obvious reason that Stella would be bound to read it, not to mention the general opprobrium that would be visited on both Vanessa's reputation and Swift's own character, as he makes quite clear in the poem itself (640-55).³ *Cadenus and Vanessa* was written, as Flynn puts it, to 'explain or explain away' Swift's knotty relationship with Vanessa: a relationship in which he insisted on calling up the prospect of sexuality without actually fulfilling such promises of carnal gratification.⁴

In many ways the poem follows the same strategy as the poems to Stella. Initially, Vanessa is made into one of Swift's classical bodies. Her Platonic constitution is contrasted with the degeneracies of grotesque modern women who are only attracted to grotesque modern men:

¹Ehrenpreis, II, 313.

²Swift *Poems*, II, 683-714.

³Peter Schakel, *The Poetry of Jonathan Swift*, p. 82; *Swift Poems*, II, 684.

⁴*The Body in Swift and Defoe*, p. 119.

modern Love is no such Thing
 As what those antient Poets sing;
 A Fire celestial, chaste, refin'd,
 Conceiv'd and kindled in the Mind ...
 But Women now feel no such Fire,
 And only know the gross Desire;
 Their passions move in lower Spheres,
 Where-e'er Caprice or Folly steers.
 A Dog, a Parrot, or an Ape,
 Or some worse Brute in Human Shape (27-30, 35-40).

This is the complaint of the men in the court of Venus as the battle of the sexes attempts to establish the reason modern love is grown so corrupt. Vanessa is to be the solution to these problems: created as an ideal woman, if no man will have her, the men themselves are guilty of corruption. She is created very much in Swift's ideal image. Truly Platonic, she is a throwback to ancient and better times, the Golden Age of love when all love was spiritual, unconcerned with 'lower Spheres'. She is given all the Swiftian virtues: Venus sprinkles Vanessa with a magical scent,

From whence the tender Skin assumes
 A Sweetness above all Perfumes;
 From whence a Cleanliness remains,
 Incapable of outward Stains;
 From whence that Decency of Mind,
 So lovely in the Female Kind,
 Where not one careless Thought intrudes,
 Less modest than the speech of Prudes (160).

The order that the supposedly Platonic Swift deals with his subject here is significant: it is the body that is dealt with first, then the mind; the physical, then the spiritual. As with the scatological grotesques, it is the skin, the boundary between the body and the world, that is the focus of attention. In this case, the skin is not a stinking mass of grime and grease, infecting all who approach, but a sweet smelling disinfectant that reassures the anxious male concerned to preserve his own integrity. Indeed these lines fulfil the advice that Swift gives to ladies in the scatological poems and in his *Verses to Vanessa* in which he tells her that the way to keep a man is 'First, to adorn your person well,/ In utmost Cleanlyness to excell' (3-4).⁵ Here too the priority is explicitly stated: before the mind is improved the flows that signify feminine sexuality must be dried up, orifices plugged and cleansed. Consequently Vanessa is purely classical and classically pure: her cleanliness signifies a body under (Swift's) control, a surface without stain like that of Theweleit's 'white nurse'. It is as if Swift needs to neutralise the unruly female body before he can start to deal with the mind.

⁵*Swift Poems*, II, 732-33.

Only Vanessa escapes the malaise of modern female corruption as her sealed classical body and mind is contrasted with 'The Current of a Female Mind' that 'whirling round' sucks in all the foolishness of the beau monde (51-66). All the other women in the poem correspond to the stock representations of society women that we find in poems like *The Furniture of a Woman's Mind* (1727) and *The Journal of a Modern Lady* (1729) where they all waste time playing cards till the small hours and squandering the hard earned money of their husbands: these women too are grotesque as they sap the financial life-blood of their men.⁶ This would of course enrage Swift with his own retentive and stingy attitude towards money.

As with Stella, Vanessa is turned into a 'softer man' to make assurance doubly sure. Pallas, the 'Martial Maid' (250) and manly goddess, is tricked by the all too feminine Venus into believing that Vanessa is a boy, almost 'Apollo's Son' (193). Pallas and Apollo are never far apart in Swift's poetry, and it is appropriate, if Apollo is Swift's personal god, and Swift is transforming Vanessa into a boy, that Vanessa almost becomes Swift's own son. Later on in the poem Cadenus does cast their relationship in terms of 'Father, and the Nymph his Child' (549): not 'daughter', but 'child' as Swift seeks the eradication of her sexual reality. As a consequence of Venus's cunning, Pallas endows Vanessa with suitably masculine attributes:

Then sows within her tender Mind
Seeds long unknown to Womankind,
For manly bosoms chiefly fit,
The Seeds of Knowledge, Judgement, Wit.
Her Soul was suddenly endu'd
With Justice, Truth and Fortitude;
With Honour, which no breath can Stain,
Which Malice must attack in vain (202).

Stella's special present of manly 'Honour' from the dean is now transferred to Vanessa's bosom along with the similarly masculine qualities of 'Knowledge, Judgement, Wit'; that power of discrimination normally lacking in women. Cadenus confirms Pallas's actions by viewing Vanessa in the same light:

That innocent Delight he took
To see the Virgin mind her Book,
Was but the Master's secret Joy
In School to hear the finest Boy (550).

⁶*Swift Poems*, II, 415-18, 443-53.

Cadenus has been chosen by Pallas 'for her Coadjutor' (464), presumably in relation to her non-interventionist revenge on Venus. Cadenus sides with Pallas in a more profound manner though, in that they both share the desire to transform unclean ladies into manly souls, ridding women of the burden of their bodies. Later in the poem Vanessa observes that she is as much a creation of Cadenus as of Pallas: 'What he had planted now was grown;/ His Virtues she might call her own' (680-81). Vanessa is also given the trappings of classical learning that further distinguish her from other women who were largely excluded from the study of hallowed classic ground: 'She named the antient Heroes round,/ Explain'd for what they were renown'd' (351-52), but meets with scorn for her efforts. Similarly Pallas's conflict with Venus is cast in terms of the incompatibility of 'earthly Love' and 'Heav'nly Wisdom' (294-95) which Pallas informs Venus can never be yoked together. This clash polarises into gender categories as well, with masculine Wisdom and feminine earthly Love. The two goddesses reflect this: Pallas being the manly warrior goddess and Venus the capricious Queen of Love and Ooze. Venus is far from being a neutral or reliable judge in the matter of love: she has tantrums, cheats, lies and ultimately rides off in a huff leaving everything to Cupid. Pallas retains a dignity that Venus notably lacks at all points. In fact Venus reminds one of the stereotypical coquette that Swift describes Vanessa encountering in the fashionable world. Perhaps most crucially, Venus embodies physical love whereas Pallas symbolises the Platonic in Swift's scheme of things.

This incompatibility is important because the poem is a negotiation of these two principles: one held in reality by Vanessa and the other equally held in reality by Swift: she has physical urges, whilst he does not. In *To Love*, Esther Vanhomrigh gives us a sense of just how much pressure she was putting on Swift.⁷ In this interpretation of Swift's poem which calls for Venus to urge her father to 'strike Discretion to the Shades below' (36), she describes herself as

the poor Nymph, who feels her Vitals burn,
And from her Shepherd can find no Return (21).

She blames 'Discretion' for their plight, but the problem lies much deeper than this. Her heretical and angry response to *Cadenus and Vanessa* shows that she too suffered from 'Turbulence of Blood', and it is this feminine physical turbulence that Swift had to reconcile with his representation of Vanessa as a noble classical body that is not subject to female flows and disruptions. The masculine

⁷*Swift Poems*, II, 717-18.

reason she is given in the first part of the poem breaks down in the second when she comes under the influence of passion. Ellen Pollak sees Vanessa as an ideal who escapes all conventional categories, 'A Nymph so hard to be subdu'd, Who neither was Coquette nor Prude' (496-97).⁸ This is true up to a point, especially in her initial dealings with other society women. After she meets Cadenus, however, grotesque passion and 'things below' start to intrude into the classical ideal. Paradoxically, Vanessa seems to have been conquered by the very reason that was supposed to defend her, but it transpires that what Vanessa takes for reason is not the real thing:

Her Knowledge, with such Pains acquir'd,
By this new Passion grew inspir'd.
Thro' this she made all Objects pass,
Which gave a Tincture o'er the Mass:
As Rivers, tho' they bend and twine,
Still to the Sea their Course incline;
Or, as Philosophers, who find
Some fav'rite System to their Mind,
In ev'ry Point to make it fit,
Will force all Nature to submit (712).

Vanessa is clearly deluded and has strayed into an unknowing error, as the reference to biased philosophers makes clear. Earlier on in the poem Vanessa is seen to invert the reality of Cadenus's condition: she finds 'Imaginary Charms' (526) in his eyes that are almost blind from reading; while he is 'Declin'd in Health, advanc'd in Years' (529), she 'thinks him young' (531). She is sliding back down into the female condition: Cadenus is 'amaz'd to find/ Such Marks of a distracted Mind' (562-63). She 'minds no longer what he taught' (561), and this is more profoundly true than the mere fact of her love preventing her studying: she also strays from his teachings concerning the nobility of friendship as opposed to the horrors of sexual activity that she is now drawn towards.

Yet Swift has a difficulty. If Vanessa is so ideal, so much a softer man trained by his own ascetic lessons, how can she fall back into the mire of sexuality and delusion? In real life of course the situation is similar yet different. Similar in that Vanessa started to pursue him aggressively causing him to back off; as in the poem, 'Things took a Turn he never meant' (731). Different in that in the poem Swift is all innocence, totally surprised at Vanessa's passion, whereas in real life he had been playing naughty verbal games in the 'Sluttery', enticing Vanessa into thoughts of a physical relationship yet withdrawing from such an idea as soon as the reality of sexuality intruded. The poem

⁸*The Poetics Of Sexual Myth*, p. 132.

shows his awareness that he is in some way in the wrong, even if he is not able to admit it within a literary context. Yet simultaneously he is not able to admit that his female ideal is at fault. If he is to pacify Esther Vanhomrigh he needs to show that neither person is responsible for the tangled and duplicitous relationship he is running away from.

Swift uses a number of strategies to shift responsibility away from himself in his precarious balancing act. We have seen that he makes himself innocent of all provocation for Vanessa's advances; he implicitly reveals her carnivalesque logic that makes an old man young again. He also brings in Cupid as a *deus ex machina* who can absolve his ideal Vanessa from stain of original sin by leading her into the temptation of passion. Cupid uses Vanessa's love of learning to catch her where his other methods have failed: while Vanessa reads Cadenus's poetry Cupid pierces both her and her book with his dart (513-19). Cupid therefore provides the flaw in Vanessa's character whilst absolving both her and Cadenus of guilt: sexual love becomes an exterior force that intrudes unwanted on an otherwise peaceful human existence.

However Swift is not able to present himself in the poem without explaining his apparent unwillingness to back away from the relationship without any explanation. Cadenus offers Swift's own ideal of

Friendship in its greatest Height,
A constant, rational Delight,
On Virtue's Basis fix'd to last,
When Love's Allurements long are past (780).

For Cadenus, as for Swift, love 'Ne'er held Possession of his Breast', and it is too late for it to enter now (698-771). In any case, his 'Dignity and Age' (768) prevent Cadenus from becoming involved. Apart from the absent reason that Stella would not approve, this all has the ring of truth; Swift was repelled by physical contact with women, yet Vanessa ridicules the 'lofty Style' (796) he uses, claiming that he has taught her to 'despise' (797) talk of 'Devotion' and 'Goddesses' (788-90). In one of Swift's managed role reversals, he is the pupil and she the tutor as he has forfeited the 'Throne' (800) of wisdom. He must be taught by her to love although he 'is not apt to learn' (809), and the poem ends with teasing uncertainty as to her success in tempering 'Love and Books together' (825).

This is a complex finale. Although Cadenus's objections to love are ridiculed for their unreasonable nature, it is clear that from Swift's own perspective they are wholly adequate reasons

because he repeated them time and time again in other contexts, as did Pope. For Swift earthly love as represented by Venus is dangerous, although he knows that someone has to do it. He is aware that his Burtonian rejection of women is faintly ridiculous, hence his constant repetition of arguments asserting his position, and accordingly he makes Cadenus reflect this vulnerability to ridicule with his false pride and his throwaway comment on goddesses at the end of the passage on friendship. This comment gives Vanessa the pretext for rubbishing the rest of what he says, but it does not change the fact that Cadenus's argument is also that of Swift. We know from Esther Vanhomrigh's later poetic responses that Swift stuck to this argument because she met with no success. Ironically, in her *Ode to Wisdom* she invokes the aid of Pallas, asking Swift's goddess to 'heal my tortur'd mind' (18) as she cannot cause herself to be less passionate.⁹ If Stella is a 'maid forlorn' then Vanessa is 'a wretched maid/ By tender love deprest' (2-3).

Swift's attempt at damage limitation did not succeed: Vanessa did not lapse back into the classical ideal of rational friendship transcending the urges of the flesh, accepting Swift's various dubious excuses against a more public and sexual liaison. He is only able to preserve the semblance of her passionless classical body at the expense of undermining her in other, more covert ways, or calling in an outside force like Cupid. In a close reading of the poem one finds that she reverts to the influence of Venus and lustful feminine sexuality whilst Swift remains as pristine as ever in his rejection of the body. The specious paradox of reason leading her into love does not really work once her reason is shown to be unreasonable; ultimately her love must founder on the immovable rocks of Swift's adherence to the isolation of the classical body.

Swiftian Repetitions

Outside the poetry, confined to the private domain, Swift had no need to preserve the same level of classical integrity in the imaging of Esther Vanhomrigh. Indeed, in one sense, his relationship with her was based more on the grotesque and transgressive than the classical. As Ehrenpreis puts it: 'Hessy's violations of decorum alarmed and thrilled a man obsessed with discretion'.¹⁰ Her ardent declarations of love and incidents like her sudden and unwanted arrival in Wantage ('the Berkshire surprise') flattered him yet forced him into hasty retreats. Letters that contained awkward questions

⁹*Swift Poems*, II, 719-20.

¹⁰*Ehrenpreis*, II, 643.

were studiously ignored as he attempted to classicise and control the monster he had unleashed.¹¹ Swift occasionally had recourse to his usual tactic of advising manly self-constraint: 'Remember, I still enjoin you reading and exercise for the improvement of your mind and health of your body, and grow less romantic, and talk and act more like a man of this world'.¹² Vanessa's passion, being rather more dramatic than that of Stella, was not responsive to this kind of Swiftian remedy for love. Ehrenpreis becomes quite defensive on Swift's behalf when Vanessa becomes too ardent in the early 1720s, finding her 'self indulgent': for Ehrenpreis too this 'quasi-mistress' and 'peripheral pastime' needs to remain within her role of muse to the great man rather than asserting her personal subjectivity: she should be seen and not heard.¹³

As with Stella, Swift both encouraged and discouraged Vanessa's desires in his prose by transforming her into the grotesque but controlled slut that she could not be in the poetry. Swift achieved this control by calling up not the white nurse as in Stella's case, but the nursery, a place where the freedoms and yet the taboos of childhood could be asserted: 'Adieu till we meet over a Pott of Coffee, or an Orange and Sugar in the Sluttery, which I have so often found to be the most agreeable Chamber in the World'.¹⁴ Combining nursery and slut, Swift can play his teasing language games, revelling in the play of linguistic polymorphous perversity in this specific locus of mess and mingling of substances, yet he can prevent the implication of such games from being taken up and going too far, due to the adult prohibitions that fence the nursery.

In these games, the signified to be applied to the signifier 'coffee' is always ambiguous and unstable, like the 'slut' herself: 'I long to drink a dish of Coffee in the Sluttery, and hear you dun me for Secrets, and - drink your Coffee - Why don't you drink your Coffee' (I, pp. 308-309). Vanessa too enters into this ludic and erotic sliding of the signified: 'it is impossible to tell you how often I have wished you a cup of coffee and an orange at your Inn' (I, pp. 364-65). Swift ironically asserts Vanessa's individuality as he repeats the pattern, if not the code, he used with Stella: 'I drank no Coffee since I left you nor intend till I see you again, there is none worth drinking but yours, if my self may be the judge' (II, p. 393).

¹¹*Ehrenpreis*, II, 750.

¹²*Swift Corr*, II, 427.

¹³*Ehrenpreis*, III, 380; II, 661.

¹⁴*Swift Corr*, I, 276.

As Carol Flynn points out, Horace Walpole 'entirely accepted the word coffee as a code name for sexual intercourse'.¹⁵ However neither Flynn nor David Nokes believe that this is the case. Nokes considers the word to have a sexual reference in the sense that it was 'characterised by an awareness of sexuality by both parties, having 'a special sexually-charged sense of intimacy that originated at their first meeting at Dunstable when Vanessa spilt some coffee'.¹⁶ Swift replaces sexuality with textuality, teasing Vanessa with his dashes and blanks that both draw her in yet keep her at a distance, uncertain as to his true meaning. She becomes a slut at his behest, a naughty goddess who nevertheless must not be divested of her classicality altogether. As soon as she starts demanding anything more than Swift's verbal palliatives he has to put her back in her place, tell her to behave like a man. Thus after one of his cautionary letters Vanessa dramatically tells Swift, 'I could have born the rack much better than these killing, killing, words of yours' (II, p. 150). His words kill her in more ways than one as Swift manipulates her identity as she oscillates between classical and grotesque, manly goddess and girlish slut. For her there was to be no resolution of these games, dying as she did before her rival amidst rumours of a confrontational note dispatched by Vanessa to ask Stella whether she was married to Swift.¹⁷ True or not, such tales fittingly mark out the similarities and differences between Swift's warring muses, it being poetically fitting that the Vanessa 'born with violent passions which terminate all in one, that inexpressible passion I have for you', should (mythically) break the conspiracy of silence between the two women whom Swift himself had educated yet silenced.¹⁸

Lady Acheson

After the deaths of Stella and Vanessa, Swift carried his patriarchal activities over to Lady Anne Acheson, the young wife of Sir Arthur Acheson, a baronet residing at Market Hill near Armagh. Sir Arthur shared his political standpoint and a love of classical learning with Swift. From about 1728 on Swift was a regular visitor to Market Hill, and for the following two years was inspired to write what has come to be known as the Market Hill group of poems, the majority of which focus on Lady

¹⁵*The Body in Swift and Defoe*, p. 118.

¹⁶*Jonathan Swift*, p. 258.

¹⁷See David Nokes, *Jonathan Swift*, p. 264.

¹⁸*Swift Corr.*, II, 364.

Acheson. Like Stella and Vanessa, Swift took her education in hand in his usual manner, with no interference from Sir Arthur, who seems to have had little in common with his town loving wife. Even Swift seems to have tired of his company: he complains in *The Dean's Reasons For not Building at Drapier's Hill* (1730) that Sir Arthur is too 'rapt in speculations deep' (45) to be communicative, while Swift himself is too practical. The poem ends with a frustrated Swift giving up in his attempt 'To serve a friend against his will' (114). As Williams notes, Orrery later said that Lady Anne had separated from her husband, perhaps confirming the character of Sir Arthur as a remote and unsociable figure.¹⁹ This situation seems to have left Swift and Lady Acheson to their own devices, repeating the pattern of Swift supplanting the guardians of his young ladies so that he could be the more fully in control of his female objects.

Felicity Nussbaum has noted that Lady Acheson is the subject of satire rather than panegyric, in a departure from his (attempted) idealisations of Stella and Vanessa.²⁰ More resolutely feminine than either Stella or Vanessa, Lady Anne certainly gave Swift more to satirise from a patriarchal perspective. Nevertheless, he did attempt to classicise his pupil's body, encouraging her to adopt a regimen of diet and exercise that would at least partially erase the signs of femaleness from her frail body and make her 'so robustious like a Man' (48), as the 'heroine' of *The Furniture of a Woman's Mind* (1727) puts it.²¹ In *My Lady's Lamentation and Complaint against the Dean* (1728) Swift uses the persona of Lady Anne to detail just how proprietorial he could be.²² He begins by railing at her physical idleness as she is 'Haul'd up every hill' (50); moving on to her diet he tries to prevent her from eating 'trash without measure' (65). Dealing with her own body, 'He takes me to pieces' (70) as he demonstrates his poetic containment of her body. This particular passage employs a technique of erasing her female physicality that recurs throughout his poetry concerning Lady Anne: a method that emphasises her thinness:

From shoulder to flank
I'm lean and am lank;
My nose, long and thin,
Grows down to my chin;
My chin will not stay,

¹⁹*Swift Poems*, III, 902.

²⁰*The Brink of All We Hate*, p. 98.

²¹*Swift Poems*, II, 415-18.

²²*Swift Poems*, III, 851-58.

But meets it half way;
 My fingers, prolix,
 Are ten crooked sticks:
 He swears my el---bows
 Are two iron crows,
 Or sharp pointed rocks,
 And wear out my smocks;
 To scape them, Sir Arthur
 Is forced to lie farther,
 Or his sides they would gore
 Like the tusk of a boar (71).

Nora Crow Jaffe claims that Swift insisted on Lady Acheson's thinness because such names denied his attraction to her by denying her sexual identity.²³ In an uncanny resemblance with the anorexic of our own time, Swift classicises the female body by removing the curves of flesh such as the hips and the breasts that mark full female sexual maturity. Swift gives her the body of an anorexic so that he can deny her adulthood in a physical sense. In *Lady Acheson Weary of the Dean* (1728?) 'that insulting Tyrant Dean' (44) transforms her body into one that is 'skinny, boney, snip and lean' (42).²⁴ Inhabiting such a body cleanses Lady Acheson, and therefore Swift's own body, of sexual stain: the most significant lines in this passage are those where Sir Arthur is repelled by Lady Acheson's hardness and sharpness. The goring tusks of a boar are often used as images of sexual penetration, as the Venus and Adonis myth shows; here Lady Acheson has become masculine, threatening to penetrate her husband should he come near her. Swift's metamorphosis of Lady Anne forces him to keep his distance, to keep her back in the pre-adult, virginal state of the nursery. Whereas Stella's sexual threat is neutralised by doubling her size to that of a grazing cow in *A Receipt to Restore Stella's Youth* (1725), turning her into a kind of gigantic maternal presence full of nursing and bountiful flesh, and waiting till she is past the age of child-bearing, Lady Acheson's femininity is destroyed by moving her back in time physically to the point when she is unable to reproduce.²⁵ Like Vanessa she becomes a finer boy now her 'smocks' are worn out by the power of Swift's poetic recreation of her physical identity, her elbows becoming hard and phallic as 'sharp pointed rocks' and 'iron crows' rather than soft and yielding feminine flesh. As with Stella's transformation into a cow, Swift takes an odd route to the safety of the masculine, classicised body: both Lady Anne and Stella

²³'Swift and the "agreeable young lady, but extremely lean"', in *Contemporary Studies of Swift's Poetry*, edited by John Fischer and Donald Mell, pp. 149-158 (p. 157).

²⁴*Swift Poems*, III, 859-61.

²⁵*Swift Poems*, II, 758-60.

are given bodies that are almost grotesque at one level, the feminine level, but in the sense that they are taken out of femininity and into masculinity they have become classical.

Swift does not stop at the body though: he also encourages Lady Anne in the reading of suitably masculine material like 'Dull Bacon's Essays' rather than 'new plays' (147-48). Similarly her diction does not escape censure as she murders 'poor Milton' 'in an ill tone' (155-56). As with Stella and Vanessa bodily regulation must be accompanied by linguistic regulation to achieve a harmony of sexual and textual economies.

However, this is as successful as Swift can be with Lady Anne, an intractable subject who refused to subordinate herself to Swift in the same way as Stella and Vanessa. Swift once told Ford that 'She is an absolute Dublin rake, sits up late, loses her money, and goes to bed sick, and resolves like you never to mend'.²⁶ This is exactly the pattern followed by *The Journal of a Modern Lady* (1729) in which Swift launches a full scale attack on a female society where all women are seen to be the female equivalents of the male dunces in the *Dunciad*. The constant impression gained from a reading of Swift's poetry to Lady Acheson is that of a frustrated attempt to bring her into line with his ideals. Indeed his use of her voice in many of his poems to her could in part be motivated by a need to objectify her more fully by forcing her to condemn herself through her 'own' admission. Of course any conflict in the dialogues in these poems simultaneously confirms, not only Swift's correctness, but also her stubborn grotesque subjectivity as she refuses to conform to his systems of classical containment.

The poem that most clearly illustrates Swift's frustration is *Daphne* (1730), although it is not one that makes use of her speaking persona, whilst the poet distances this frustration by referring to himself in the third person.²⁷ The opening couplet shows the conflict between grotesque vexation and classical acquiescence to Swift's will that operated in all his chosen women:

Daphne knows, with equal ease,
How to vex and how to please.

Daphne herself is a vexatious contradiction, a weak and unreasonable woman yet strong in her resistance to Swift's classical strategies:

Paradoxes weakly wielding,
Always conquer'd, never yielding.

²⁶*Swift Corr*, IV, 92.

²⁷*Swift Poems*, III, 906-907.

To Dispute, her chief delight,
 With not one opinion right:
 Thick her arguments she lays on,
 And with cavils combats reason (7).

She displays the same kind of inversionary and grotesque 'perverseness' (15) that he had earlier criticised in Stella. To be 'perverse' is of course to disagree with Swift. Ironically, when she is given the choice of two mirrors, one showing truth and the other error, she finds the one depicting Swift's (classical) truth grotesque, 'hideous, fierce, and frightful' (5); whilst she chooses the mirror of error that to Swift is grotesque, considering it 'flatt'ring and delightful' (6). Try as he might Swift is not able to reform her, and concludes the poem with a vow never to 'advise' (52) her again. Following the poem is one of Swift's lists, *Twelve Articles* that continue in the same vein as before, listing all Lady Anne's faults whilst vowing not to interfere with them:

You shall never hear me thunder,
 When you blunder on, and blunder (73).

This is a conscious echo of Tibbald in the *Dunciad* (1728) when he 'explain[s] a thing till all men doubt it,/ And write about it, Goddess, and about it' (l. 169-70). By failing to conform to the Swiftian ideal, Lady Acheson has reduced herself to the grotesque level of the first arch-dunce.

Like the dunces, and like Vanessa in her passion, Lady Anne forces everything to bend to her own logic in *An Epistle to a Lady, Who desired the Author to make Verses on Her, in the Heroick Stile* (1733):

You, like some acute Philosopher,
 Ev'ry Fault have drawn a Gloss over:
 Placing in the strongest Light,
 All your Virtues to my Sight (95).²⁸

In this poem the vanity and pride that allow such a blinkered and duncely view of the world are exposed with a certain amount of resentment:

Bred a Fondling, and an Heiress;
 Drest like any Lady May'ress;
 Cocker'd by the Servants round,
 Was too good to touch the ground:
 Thought the life of ev'ry Lady
 Should be one continu'd Play-Day:
 Balls, and Masquerades, and Shows,
 Visits, Plays, and Powder'd Beaux (35).

²⁸Swift *Poems*, II, 628-38.

Like one of Swift's scatological goddesses waiting to be exposed by his remedies for love, Lady Anne is 'too good to touch the ground'. Her world is the world of Pope's *Belinda*, a world of the *Masquerades and Balls* so hated by the Scriblerians. This is also very much a world of play in the present, a relaxation of responsibility and an escape from the classical strictures of bodily regimen that Swift held so dear. As Felicity Nussbaum shows, Lady Anne lives in the present and the future rather than the past: eternity is not to be found in unstable grotesque women.²⁹ In *To Janus on New Year's Day* (1729) Swift (as usual) laments the passing of 'glorious Ages' (16) whilst Lady Acheson totally rejects the past in favour of 'forward Eyes' (20).³⁰ She chooses to fight against time by giving herself a new face with 'New-Years Lace' (27), opting for 'Youth and Beauty still' (30). Here she sides with the likes of Celia struggling against the passing of time and decay of the flesh as opposed to the classical women like Stella who choose a Platonic stability. Swift also seems to resent Lady Anne's power to pursue such a leisured life: she has money and power, and does not need to take account of the instructions of a threadbare clergyman, as Swift often portrayed himself. Like Pope's *Belinda*, she is an example of a self-sufficient woman, escaping masculine economies: certainly her husband does not seem to have restricted her activities as a 'Dublin Rake'.

Swift responds to Lady Anne's feminine transgressions with both interest and disgust. In her reading of *Death and Daphne* (1730), Nora Crow Jaffe equates Death with Swift.³¹ Her key to this enigmatic poem identifies Daphne as Lady Anne, as Orrery had done before her, and Jaffe sees the poem as an insight into Swift's relationship with her. According to Jaffe, Swift realised what a grotesque figure he would cut courting a young lady, so he cast himself as Death, or an old Pluto abducting his niece, the child Proserpine signifying spring and renewal. Decked out as a beau, Death finds Daphne, a society lady who mistakes Death for Adonis, much as Vanessa mistook Cadenus for a great catch. She promptly imagines a feminised underworld:

She fancy'd, those Elysian Shades
The sweetest Place for Masquerades:
How pleasant on the Banks of Styx,
To troll it in a Coach and Six! (95)

²⁹*The Brink of All We Hate*, p. 98.

³⁰*Swift Poems*, III, 862-63.

³¹Swift and "the agreeable young lady, but extremely lean"; *Swift Poems*, III, 902-905.

The bachelor world of Death holds no fears for Daphne, who threatens to disrupt it totally with her vision of a belle's paradise. Her confidence in winning Death is misplaced however, as the strange ending of the poem reveals:

when by chance the meagre Shade
Upon thy Hand his Finger laid;
Thy Hand as dry and cold as Lead,
His matrimonial Spirit fled;
He felt about his Heart a Damp,
That quite extinguish't Cupid's Lamp:
Away the frighted Spectre scuds,
And leaves my Lady in the Suds (93).

Swift might cut a grotesque figure as Death, but the fascinating lure of the glamorous Lady Anne is shown to be, at the moment of truth, even more grotesque and frightening. To enter into a sexual relationship with her would be to bring death to Death: Swift's sexual ardour is extinguished by physical contact with female flesh, and what little 'matrimonial Spirit' he might have had is driven away. The reality of sexuality frightens him. As Jaffe puts it: 'Swift ran from the lady because he found her young, agreeable, and married. He probably feared to find her warm and moist' (p. 157). For Swift female warmth and moisture leads directly to the coldness and dryness of death: no 'haughty Nymph' (91) will trap him into surrendering the closure of his classical body. Like his poetic sponsor Apollo, he will lose the nymph Daphne but be rewarded by the laurel as she converts his fears and desires into this poem.

Swift runs away then, from the spectre of sexuality that he himself has summoned. Yet this is not his only response to the grotesque female nature of Lady Acheson. He also manifests an aggressive urge to seek revenge for her resistance to his plans for the formation of her classical body. In *The Revolution at Market-Hill* (1730) Swift imagines a rebellion against Sir Arthur and Lady Anne by himself and Henry Leslie.³² He plots to subdue Lady Anne by luring her with 'embroider'd high Heel Shoes' (63) that are so tight she will not be able to move. In carnivalesque fashion he decides to make the former master and mistress servants, with Lady Anne waiting on her maid. Because it is inappropriate for the new maid to be taller than her mistress,

To mortify the Creature more,
We'll take her Heels five Inches lower (103).

³²Swift *Poems*, III, 882-86.

Swift symbolically castrates the symbol of Lady Anne's feminine power, reducing her to servility both in terms of social standing and her gender. In this situation she can no longer ignore the instructions of the once inferior Dean: she can be put in her true place.

This rather jocular, though revealing episode, is further illuminated by Swift's use of scatology in *My Lady's Lamentation and Complaint against the Dean* (1728) and *A Panegyric on the Dean in the Person of a Lady in the North* (1730). Of Swift's three 'classical' women, only Lady Acheson has scatological matter present in poetry directly referring to her. In *My Lady's Lamentation*, written relatively early on in their acquaintance, Lady Anne complains of Swift's efforts in improving the estate by building grottos, seats, and bowers. Instead of being used for their intended purposes something rather untoward occurs:

The girls of the village
Come flocking for pillage,
Pull down the fine briars,
And thorns, to make fires;
But yet are so kind
To leave something behind:
No more need be said on't,
I smell when I tread on't (195).

What Swift constructs is defiled, yet it is Lady Acheson who ends up as the recipient. This 'haughty Nymph' who is 'too good to touch the ground' is brought back down to earth in typically Swiftian fashion. Swift rubs her nose in it whilst remaining clean and at a safe distance himself. There is a transgressive delight in making Lady Acheson speak bawdy, forcing her character to articulate an excremental vision that she says she will not mention. In a carnivalesque gesture he brings this goddess down to her true level by degrading her linguistically and physically. This is not a regenerative use of excrement, however; rather, it reflects Swift's aggression towards the lady who would not conform to his model of education and to his own will. His own inferiority causes him to make her even more inferior.

A Panegyric on the Dean (1730), written on better acquaintance with Lady Anne, pushes the immersion of her persona in scatology much further. Again she is made to speak bawdy, not merely in reference to the long passage dealing with the past and present ages of excrement that takes up nearly half the poem, but also in the masturbatory butter making section that precedes it.³³ Bemoaning the

³³See Ellen Pollak's *Poetics of Sexual Myth*, p. 166, on Swift and onanism.

passing of a typically Swiftian Golden Age of excrement in which everyone did their business unashamedly in the open air under the auspices of the Goddess Cloacina, the purifying goddess, Swift forces Lady Anne to describe the modern state of affairs where Gluttony, 'This bloated Harpy sprung from Hell' (269) takes over with her allegorical cohort including such Swiftian villains as Sloth, Ease and Wealth. The classical past where mankind lived in a state of nature is displaced by a fall into a corrupted and grotesque present in which a distinction *is* made 'between the Scepter and the Spade' (290). Here Swift divides society between two goddesses, one classical and dedicated to the purification of the body; the other grotesque and committed to the pollution of the body. Clearly this is on the surface a comic vision, but there is an underlying concern with the issues of the purity of the past and the degenerate pollution of the present.

Nor should it be forgotten that it is Lady Anne, not Swift, who speaks these words. although to all intents and purposes Swift has abandoned the pretence that the Saturnian age he dreams up is anything other than his own conception. She does blend back into the poem towards the end though, when she tells us that the practice of defecating in the open air persists 'Among our harmless Northern Swains' (299). At this point Swift exactly repeats what he did to Lady Anne two years earlier:

Hither by luckless Error led,
The crude Consistence oft I tread.
Here, when my Shoes are out of case,
Unweeting gild the tarnish'd Lace:
Here, by the sacred Bramble ting'd,
My Petticoat is doubly fring'd (309).

Again the symbols of femininity, the 'Lace' and the 'Petticoat', are smeared with excrement in the manner of the scatological grotesques as Lady Acheson is subjected to peculiarly Swiftian degradation. Fittingly, the poem closes with her being put back in her place by Phoebus Apollo, Swift's poetic god who also represents order and masculinity. What better way to close the poem than by finding a poetic solution to Lady Anne's unruly behaviour? Phoebus tells her to

Be humbly minded; know your Post;
Sweeten your Tea, and watch your Toast.
Thee best befits a lowly Style ...
Take down thy proudly swelling Sails,
And rub thy Teeth, and pair thy Nails.
At nicely carving show thy Wit;
But ne'er presume to eat a Bit (327-29; 333-36).

Converting her into a 'rural Dame' (342) Swift gives her an ideal of country living in which the wife applies herself to wholesome domestic duties without a thought of 'Subjects too sublime' (320). Here Lady Anne's imagined role as a poet is code for another form of feminine transgression: her refusal to bend to Swift's ideal for her life. By forcing her to relinquish her poetry he symbolically compels her to change her mode of life. She is transformed into the faultless 'white wife' very like two of Swift's early ideal pastoral women. In *To Mrs Biddy Floyd* (1708) Jove creates the perfect lady who has been 'cleans'd from ev'ry spurious Grain/ Of Nice, Coquet, Affected, Pert, and Vain' (9-10), the very antitype of Lady Anne.³⁴ Carol Flynn notes that in *The First of April* (1723?), 'almost entirely free from the usually self-protective ironic structures, Swift gives vent to his most basic yearnings for domesticity, for his place in the nursery where he can be cared for by a self-sacrificing creature who will become the angel in the house'.³⁵ Apollo sends the muses to the household of Elizabeth Cope, the wife of Swift's friend Robert, in order to make April fools of them. Expecting to find a scene of chaos and a 'flaunting Dame/ Regardless of her House and Fame' (25-26), they discover instead the very type of domestic harmony. As with Swift's other classical women, the husband is absent, leaving the lady to run the household. She washes her obedient children with cold water, an ascetic practice of which Swift undoubtedly approved. Unlike Lady Anne in her grotesque role, no time is wasted by Mrs Cope: 'scarce a Day, can spare a Minute/ From Husband, Children, Wheel, or Spinnet' (41-42); the muses themselves are not able to do better. She excels in the homely duties to which Lady Anne is encouraged to return.

If Swift could not generate order and conformity in the lives of his unruly women, at least he could manufacture poetic mythologies where the difficulties they presented could be handled and ultimately neutralised. Lady Acheson is an extreme example of his attempts to reconcile the reality of the disruptive female with his classical ideal. Though she was never likely to bow to his will in real life she could be manipulated and contained in his poetry, no matter how great the disparity between the gender difference in reality and the poetic end product.

³⁴*Swift Poems*, I, 117-18.

³⁵*Swift Poems*, I, 320-22; *The Body in Swift and Defoe*, p. 107.

AFTERWORD

Ev'ry Being loves its Like

There is a corollary to the aversion of writers like Pope and Swift to the sexuality of women, as Carol Flynn makes clear. Such an aversion, she says, would make 'strictly heterosexual behaviour at best difficult'.¹ Not that they themselves would recognise the possibility of this preference: to them manly friendship is a way of elevating the male body above the dissolution of the female body. Flynn refers to George Rousseau's argument that the letters of Pope and Swift 'reveal the warmest language of the heart and a vocabulary and rhetoric so emotionally charged and romantically loaded that most readers and scholars have overlooked it in sheer bewilderment'.² Pope tells Swift that 'I may say you have used me more cruelly than you have done any other man; you have made it more impossible for me to live at ease without you', and confesses that Swift's 'kind letter ... affected me so much, that it made me like a girl', whilst Swift states that Pope 'taught me to dream'.³

This manly friendship teeters on the brink of something else, threatening to make men like girls. This, after all, is the logic conclusion of the patriarchal classical economy with its return to the Same, its recuperation of its own elements. At the end of *Cadenus and Vanessa* Venus threatens to give equal amounts of foolishness to both the sexes 'Since ev'ry Being love its Like' (879). Earlier on in the same poem Vanessa tells Cadenus that just as she loves herself through her reasonable tutor, so he must 'adore such God-like Men' (695) as the Ancients if they were living in the present with all their 'Learning, Wit, and Wisdom' (691). The kind of manly love Vanessa offers Cadenus is made equivalent to Swift's manly love of the Ancients, although the word 'adore' has connotations more related to passion than reason, just as Vanessa's love is ultimately shown to be unreasonable.

Swift's attempts to convert his ardent lady pupils into men reflect this passion for a narcissistic masculine economy that will reflect his own image back at him, since he is most truly passionate

¹"A Softer Man": Pope's, Swift's, and Farquhar's Feminine Ideal', p. 61.

²'Threshold and Explanation: The Social Anthropologist and Critic of Eighteenth-Century Literature', *The Eighteenth Century*, 22 (1981), 127-52 (p. 140).

³*Pope Corr*, II, 387; II, 447; II, 393.

about that which is like himself. Things were not that easy for him, however, and the women he encounters are more or less stubborn in their insistence on their own subjectivity, their own grotesque female flesh and passionate natures that threaten to swamp the dry asceticism recommended by Swift. He, like Pope, is attracted to the grotesque, transgressive world of the feminine with all its trivia, its unreason, its vaporous bodies that insist on their being in process, yet he must back away from this world and try to bring it back under the control of the classical patriarchal order. Meanwhile his correspondence with Pope goes beyond the passion that he sought so much to contain in his correspondence with the ladies. It is perhaps the greatest of Swiftian ironies that while he was trying to turn his triumfeminate into softer men he was simultaneously engaged in womanish love letters with that (self confessedly) most virile of satirists, Alexander Pope.

This is what I have sought to do in relation to Pope and Swift, contrasting their different religious outlooks, geographical locations, personal relationships, differing responses to female (and male) sexuality and their different poetic techniques and mythologies, although initially I show that the neo-classical age casts the grotesque as the Other of the classical. Writers like Pope and Swift prefer the masculine, epic, classical body over and against the grotesque which is usually expressed as feminine, although the grotesque is also a sign of a number of reviled Others such as the modern book trade embodied in the filth of Grub Street, the decline of true government and morality, the situation of Ireland and so on.

Beyond this general similarity the first section shows Pope emerging as a man intimately involved with the artistic (non-)representation of his crippled physical form and its consequent effect upon the way in which he and others perceived his masculine identity. Making the best of a bad job, he exploits the Christian Humanist condemnation of the grotesque flesh paradoxically to enhance his status as the true classical masculine body. The material manifestation of this 'body' is in the textual 'body' of his poetry, however: this is the 'better' 'thing' that he can show the ladies and be guaranteed of their admiration; this is the true sign of his greater virility.

Yet such a body is not constructed in a social vacuum: Pope's self-fashioning is influenced by other 'bodies' that he identifies as classical, grotesque, or both, in differing intensities and orders. His perspective on capitalism shifts drastically from the classical harmony of *Windsor Forest* at the start of his career to the grotesque fluxes of Dulness as his previous vision of the future is transformed into a nightmarish present controlled not by the classical Stuart Anne, but the transgressive Hanoverian Caroline who holds sway even over her husband. Nothing is grotesque or classical in itself therefore: it depends on the perspective of the person who constructs it. Pope's poetic progress is marked by an increasing use of the grotesque, and especially the female grotesque, employing it in a negative manner to stigmatise what he saw as regressive realities in government, economics and morality. He retreated into the hygienic classical environs of his Palladian villa in Twickenham where he might be protected from the hostility he faced outside: perhaps he feared in real life the Orphic fate of the poet he depicts in the *Dunciad*. Life and Art intersect as Pope's heroic defence of his personal position is also cast as a heroic defence of classical values.

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This bibliography is divided into two main sections: Primary Texts and Secondary Criticism. Although I could have deemed Bakhtin's work to be 'Primary' I thought it more convenient to include him in the second section. All the works I have included here have more or less directly influenced this thesis. As in the rest of this work, I have followed the guidelines of the *MHRA Style Book* (Third Edition, 1981).

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