

THE DUNCIAD: BOOK IV

ALEXANDER POPE

Table of Contents

<u>THE DUNCIAD: BOOK IV</u>	1
<u>ALEXANDER POPE</u>	1

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Yet, yet a moment, one dim ray of light
Indulge, dread Chaos, and eternal Night!
Of darkness visible so much be lent,
As half to show, half veil, the deep intent.
Ye pow'rs! whose mysteries restor'd I sing,
To whom time bears me on his rapid wing,
Suspend a while your force inertly strong,
Then take at once the poet and the song.

Now flam'd the Dog Star's unpropitious ray,
Smote ev'ry brain, and wither'd every bay;
Sick was the sun, the owl forsook his bow'r.
The moon-struck prophet felt the madding hour:
Then rose the seed of Chaos, and of Night,
To blot out order, and extinguish light,
Of dull and venal a new world to mould,
And bring Saturnian days of lead and gold.

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 laureate son reclines.

Beneath her footstool, Science groans in chains,
And Wit dreads exile, penalties, and pains.
There foam'd rebellious Logic, gagg'd and bound,
There, stripp'd, fair Rhet'ric languish'd on the ground;
His blunted arms by Sophistry are borne,
And shameless Billingsgate her robes adorn.
Morality, by her false guardians drawn,
Chicane in furs, and Casuistry in lawn,
Gasps, as they straighten at each end the cord,
And dies, when Dulness gives her page the word.
Mad Mathesis alone was unconfin'd,
Too mad for mere material chains to bind,
Now to pure space lifts her ecstatic stare,
Now running round the circle finds it square.
But held in tenfold bonds the Muses lie,
Watch'd both by Envy's and by Flatt'ry's eye:
There to her heart sad Tragedy address'd
The dagger wont to pierce the tyrant's breast;

THE DUNCIAD: BOOK IV

But sober History restrain'd her rage,
And promised vengeance on a barb'rous age.
There sunk Thalia, nerveless, cold, and dead,
Had not her sister Satire held her head:
Nor couldst thou, Chesterfield! a tear refuse,
Thou weptst, and with thee wept each gentle Muse.

When lo! a harlot form soft sliding by,
With mincing step, small voice, and languid eye;
Foreign her air, her robe's discordant pride
In patchwork flutt'ring, and her head aside:
By singing peers upheld on either hand,
She tripp'd and laugh'd, too pretty much to stand;
Cast on the prostrate Nine a scornful look,
Then thus in quaint recitativo spoke.

"O Cara! Cara! silence all that train:
Joy to great Chaos! let Division reign:
Chromatic tortures soon shall drive them hence,
Break all their nerves, and fritter all their sense:
One trill shall harmonize joy, grief, and rage,
Wake the dull Church, and lull the ranting Stage;
To the same notes thy sons shall hum, or snore,
And all thy yawn rage,
Wake the dull Church, and lull the ranting Stage;
To the same notes thy sons shall hum, or snore,
And all thy yawning daughters cry, encore .
Another Phoebus, thy own Phoebus, reigns,
Joys in my jigs, and dances in my chains.
But soon, ah soon, Rebellion will commence,
If Music meanly borrows aid from Sense.
Strong in new arms, lo! Giant Handel stands,
Like bold Briarerus, with a hundred hands;
To stir, to rouse, to shake the soul he comes,
And Jove's own thunders follow Mars's drums.
Arrest him, Empress, or you sleep no more—"
She heard, and drove him to th' Hibernian shore.

And now had Fame's posterior trumpet blown,
And all the nations summoned to the throne.
The young, the old, who feel her inward sway,
One instinct seizes, and transports away.
None need a guide, by sure attraction led,
And strong impulsive gravity of head:
None want a place, for all their centre found
Hung to the Goddess, and coher'd around.
Not closer, orb in orb, conglob'd are seen
The buzzing bees about their dusky Queen.

The gath'ring number, as it moves along,
Involves a vast involuntary throng,

THE DUNCIAD: BOOK IV

Who gently drawn, and struggling less and less,
Roll in her Vortex, and her pow'r confess.
Not those alone who passive own her laws,
But who, weak rebels, more advance her cause.
Whate'er of dunce in college or in town
Sneers at another, in toupee or gown;
Whate'er of mongrel no one class admits,
A wit with dunces, and a dunce with wits.

Nor absent they, no members of her state,
Who pay her homage in her sons, the Great;
Who false to Phoebus bow the knee to Baal;
Or, impious, preach his Word without a call.
Patrons, who sneak from living worth to dead,
Withhold the pension, and set up the head;
Or vest dull Flattery in the sacred gown;
Or give from fool to fool the laurel crown.
And (last and worst) with all the cant of wit,
Without the soul, the Muse's hypocrite.

There march'd the bard and blockhead, side by side,
Who rhym'd for hire, and patroniz'd for pride.
Narcissus, prais'd with all a Parson's pow'r,
Look'd a white lily sunk beneath a show'r.
There mov'd Montalto with superior air;
His stretch'd-out arm display'd a volume fair;
Courtiers and Patriots in two ranks divide,
Through both he pass'd, and bow'd from side to side:
But as in graceful act, with awful eye
Compos'd he stood, bold Benson thrust him by:
On two unequal crutches propp'd he came,
Milton's on this, on that one Johnston's name.
The decent knight retir'd with sober rage,
Withdrew his hand, and closed the pompous page.
But (happy for him as the times went then)
Appear'd Apollo's mayor and aldermen,
On whom three hundred gold-capp'd youths await,
To lug the pond'rous volume off in state.

When Dulness, smiling—"Thus revive the Wits!
But murder first, and mince them all to bits;
As erst Medea (cruel, so to save!)
A new edition of old Aeson gave;
Let standard authors, thus, like trophies born,
Appear more glorious as more hack'd and torn,
And you, my Critics! in the chequer'd shade,
Admire new light through holes yourselves have made.

"Leave not a foot of verse, a foot of stone,
A page, a grave, that they can call their own;
But spread, my sons, your glory thin or thick,

THE DUNCIAD: BOOK IV

On passive paper, or on solid brick.
So by each bard an Alderman shall sit,
A heavy lord shall hang at ev'ry wit,
And while on Fame's triumphal Car they ride,
Some Slave of mine be pinion'd to their side."

Now crowds on crowds around the Goddess press,
Each eager to present their first address.
Dunce scorning dunce beholds the next advance,
But fop shows fop superior complaisance,
When lo! a spector rose, whose index hand
Held forth the virtue of the dreadful wand;
His beaver'd brow a birchen garland wears,
Dropping with infant's blood, and mother's tears.
O'er every vein a shud'ring horror runs;
Eton and Winton shake through all their sons.
All flesh is humbl'd, Westminster's bold race
Shrink, and confess the Genius of the place:
The pale boy senator yet tingling stands,
And holds his breeches close with both his hands.

Then thus. "Since man from beast by words is known,
Words are man's province, words we teach alone.
When reason doubtful, like the Samian letter,
Points him two ways, the narrower is the better.
Plac'd at the door of learning, youth to guide,
We never suffer it to stand too wide.
To ask, to guess, to know, as they commence,
As fancy opens the quick springs of sense,
We ply the memory, we load the brain,
Bind rebel Wit, and double chain on chain,
Confine the thought, to exercise the breath;
And keep them in the pale of words till death.
Whate'er the talents, or howe'er design'd,
We hang one jingling padlock on the mind:
A Poet the first day, he dips his quill;
And what the last? A very Poet still.
Pity! the charm works only in our wall,
Lost, lost too soon in yonder house or hall.
There truant Wyndham every Muse gave o'er,
There Talbot sunk, and was a wit no more!
How sweet an Ovid, Murray was our boast!
How many Martials were in Pult'ney lost!
Else sure some bard, to our eternal praise,
In twice ten thousand rhyming nights and days,
Had reach'd the work, and All that mortal can;
And South beheld that Masterpiece of Man."

"Oh," cried the Goddess, "for some pedant Reign!
Some gentle James, to bless the land again;
To stick the Doctor's chair into the throne,

Give law to words, or war with words alone,
 Senates and courts with Greek and Latin rule,
 And turn the council to a grammar school!
 For sure, if Dulness sees a grateful day,
 'Tis in the shade of arbitrary sway.
 O! if my sons may learn one earthly thing,
 Teach but that one, sufficient for a king;
 That which my priests, and mine alone, maintain,
 Which as it dies, or lives, we fall, or reign:
 May you, may Cam and Isis, preach it long!
 'The Right Divine of Kings to govern wrong!'

Prompt at the call, around the Goddess roll
 Broad hats, and hoods, and caps, a sable shoal:
 Thick and more thick the black blockade extends,
 A hundred head of Aristotle's friends.
 Nor wert thou, Isis! wanting to the day,
 Though Christ Church long kept prudishly away.
 Each staunch polemic, stubborn as a rock,
 Each fierce logician, still expelling Locke,
 Came whip and spur, and dash'd through thin and thick
 On German Crousaz, and Dutch Burgersdyck.
 As many quit the streams that murm'ring fall
 To lull the sons of Marg'ret and Clare Hall,
 Where Bentley late tempestuous wont to sport
 In troubled waters, but now sleeps in Port.
 Before them march'd that awful Aristarch;
 Plow'd was his front with many a deep remark:
 His hat, which never vail'd to human pride,
 Walker with rev'rence took, and laid aside.
 Low bowed the rest: He, kingly, did but nod;
 So upright Quakers please both man and God.
 "Mistress! dismiss that rabble from your throne:
 Avaunt—is Aristarchus yet unknown?
 Thy mighty scholiast, whose unwearied pains
 Made Horace dull, and humbl'd Milton's strains.
 Turn what they will to verse, their toil is vain,
 Critics like me shall make it prose again.
 Roman and Greek grammarians! know your better:
 Author of something yet more great than letter;
 While tow'ring o'er your alphabet, like Saul,
 Stands our Digamma, and o'ertops them all.
 'Tis true, on words is still our whole debate,
 Disputes of Me or Te, of aut or
 at, To sound or sink in cano, O or A,
 Or give up Cicero to C or K.
 Let Freind affect to speak as Terence spoke,
 And Alsop never but like Horace joke:
 For me, what Virgil, Pliny may deny,
 Manilius or Solinus shall supply:
 For Attic Phrase in Plato let them seek,

I poach in Suidas for unlicens'd Greek.
 In ancient sense if any needs will deal,
 Be sure I give them fragments, not a meal;
 What Gellius or Stobaeus hash'd before,
 Or chew'd by blind old Scholiasts o'er and o'er.
 The critic eye, that microscope of wit,
 Sees hairs and pores, examines bit by bit:
 How parts relate to parts, or they to whole,
 The body's harmony, the beaming soul,
 Are things which Kuster, Burman, Wasse shall see,
 When man's whole frame is obvious to a Flea .

"Ah, think not, Mistress! more true dulness lies
 In Folly's cap, than Wisdom's grave disguise.
 Like buoys, that never sink into the flood,
 On learning's surface we but lie and nod.
 Thine is the genuine head of many a house,
 And much Divinity without a Nous.
 Nor could a Barrow work on every block,
 Nor has one Atterbury spoil'd the flock.
 See! still thy own, the heavy canon roll,
 And metaphysic smokes involve the pole.
 For thee we dim the eyes, and stuff the head
 With all such reading as was never read:
 For thee explain a thing till all men doubt it,
 And write about it, Goddess, and about it:
 So spins the silkworm small its slender store,
 And labours till it clouds itself all o'er.

"What though we let some better sort of fool
 Thrud ev'ry science, run through ev'ry school?
 Never by tumbler through the hoops was shown
 Such skill in passing all, and touching none.
 He may indeed (if sober all this time)
 Plague with dispute, or persecute with rhyme.
 We only furnish what he cannot use,
 Or wed to what he must divorce, a Muse:
 Full in the midst of Euclid dip at once,
 And petrify a Genius to a Dunce:
 Or set on metaphysic ground to prance,
 Show all his paces, not a step advance.
 With the same cement ever sure to bind,
 We bring to one dead level ev'ry mind.
 Then take him to develop, if you can,
 And hew the block off, and get out the man.
 But wherefore waste I words? I see advance
 Whore, pupil, and lac'd governor from France.
 Walker! our hat"—nor more he deign'd to say,
 But, stern as Ajax' spectre, strode away.

...

THE DUNCIAD: BOOK IV

"O! would the sons of men once think their eyes
And reason given them but to study flies !
See Nature in some partial narrow shape,
And let the Author of the Whole escape:
Learn but to trifle; or, who most observe,
To wonder at their Maker, not to serve."

"Be that my task" (replies a gloomy clerk,
Sworn foe to Myst'ry, yet divinely dark;
Whose pious hope aspires to see the day
When Moral Evidence shall quite decay,
And damns implicit faith, and holy lies,
Prompt to impose, and fond to dogmatize:)
"Let others creep by timid steps, and slow,
On plain experience lay foundations low,
By common sense to common knowledge bred,
And last, to Nature's Cause through Nature led.
All-seeing in thy mists, we want no guide,
Mother of Arrogance, and Source of Pride!
We nobly take the high Priori Road,
And reason downward, till we doubt of God:
Make Nature still encroach upon his plan;
And shove him off as far as e'er we can:
Thrust some Mechanic Cause into his place;
Or bind in matter, or diffuse in space.
Or, at one bound o'erleaping all his laws,
Make God man's image, man the final Cause,
Find virtue local, all relation scorn
See all in self , and but for self be born:
Of naught so certain as our reason still,
Of naught so doubtful as of soul and will .
Oh hide the God still more! and make us see
Such as Lucretius drew, a god like thee:
Wrapp'd up in self, a god without a thought,
Regardless of our merit or default.
Or that bright image to our fancy draw,
Which Theocles in raptur'd vision saw,
While through poetic scenes the Genius roves,
Or wanders wild in academic groves;
That Nature our society adores,
Where Tindal dictates, and Silenus snores."

Rous'd at his name up rose the bousy Sire,
And shook from out his pipe the seeds of fire;
Then snapp'd his box, and strok'd his belly down:
Rosy and rev'rend, though without a gown.
Bland and familiar to the throne he came,
Led up the youth, and call'd the Goddess Dame .
Then thus, "From priestcraft happily set free,
Lo! ev'ry finished Son returns to thee:

THE DUNCIAD: BOOK IV

First slave to words, then vassal to a name,
Then dupe to party; child and man the same;
Bounded by Nature, narrow'd still by art,
A trifling head, and a contracted heart.
Thus bred, thus taught, how many have I seen,
Smiling on all, and smil'd on by a queen.
Marked out for honours, honour'd for their birth,
To thee the most rebellious things on earth:
Now to thy gentle shadow all are shrunk,
All melted down, in pension, or in punk!
So K{-}{-}{-} so B{-}{-}{-} sneak'd into the grave,
A monarch's half, and half a harlot's slave.
Poor W{-}{-}{-} nipp'd in Folly's broadest bloom,
Who praises now? his chaplain on his tomb.
Then take them all, oh take them to thy breast!
Thy Magus , Goddess! shall perform the rest."

With that, a Wizard old his Cup extends;
Which whoso tastes, forgets his former friends,
Sire, ancestors, himself. One casts his eyes
Up to a Star , and like Endymion dies:
A Feather , shooting from another's head,
Extracts his brain, and principle is fled,
Lost is his God, his country, ev'rything;
And nothing left but homage to a king!
The vulgar herd turn off to roll with hogs,
To run with horses, or to hunt with dogs;
But, sad example! never to escape
Their infamy, still keep the human shape.
But she, good Goddess, sent to ev'ry child
Firm impudence, or stupefaction mild;
And straight succeeded, leaving shame no room,
Cibberian forehead, or Cimmerian gloom.

Kind self-conceit to some her glass applies,
Which no one looks in with another's eyes:
But as the flatt'rer or dependant paint,
Beholds himself a patriot, chief, or saint.

On others Int'rest her gay liv'ry flings,
Int'rest that waves on party-colour'd wings:
Turn'd to the sun, she casts a thousand dyes,
And, as she turns, the colours fall or rise.

Others the siren sisters warble round,
And empty heads console with empty sound.
No more, Alas! the voice of Fame they hear,
The balm of Dulness trickling in their ear.
Great C{-}{-}{-}, H{-}{-}{-}, P{-}{-}{-}, R{-}{-}{-}, K{-}{-}{-},
Why all your toils? your Sons have learn'd to sing.
How quick ambition hastes to ridicule!

THE DUNCIAD: BOOK IV

The sire is made a peer, the son a fool.

On some, a Priest succinct in amice white
Attends; all flesh is nothing in his sight!
Beeves, at his touch, at once to jelly turn,
And the huge boar is shrunk into an urn:
The board with specious miracles he loads,
Turns hares to larks, and pigeons into toads.
Another (for in all what one can shine?)
Explains the [lang f]seve[lang e] and [lang f]verdeur[lang e] of the vine.
What cannot copious sacrifice atone?
Thy truffles, Perigord! thy hams, Bayonne!
With French libation, and Italian strain,
Wash Bladen white, and expiate Hays's stain.
Knight lifts the head, for what are crowds undone.
To three essential partridges in one?
Gone ev'ry blush, and silent all reproach,
Contending princes mount them in their coach.

Next, bidding all draw near on bended knees,
The Queen confers her Titles and Degrees .
Her children first of more distinguish'd sort,
Who study Shakespeare at the Inns of Court,
Impale a glowworm, or vertu profess,
Shine in the dignity of F.R.S.
Some, deep Freemasons, join the silent race
Worthy to fill Pythagoras's place:
Some botanists, or florists at the least,
Or issue members of an annual feast.
Nor pass'd the meanest unregarded, one
Rose a Gregorian, one a Gormogon.
The last, not least in honour or applause,
Isis and Cam made Doctors of her Laws.

Then, blessing all, "Go, Children of my care!
To practice now from theory repair.
All my commands are easy, short, and full:
My sons! be proud, be selfish, and be dull.
Guard my prerogative, assert my throne:
This nod confirms each privilege your own.
The cap and switch be sacred to his Grace;
With staff and pumps the Marquis lead the race;
From stage to stage the licens'd Earl may run,
Pair'd with his fellow charioteer the sun;
The learned Baron butterflies design,
Or draw to silk Arachne's subtle line;
The Judge to dance his brother Sergeant call;
The Senator at cricket urge the ball;
The Bishop stow (pontific luxury!)
An hundred souls of turkeys in a pie;
The sturdy Squire to Gallic masters stoop,

And drown his lands and manors in a soupe .
 Others import yet nobler arts from France,
 Teach kings to fiddle, and make senates dance.
 Perhaps more high some daring son may soar,
 Proud to my list to add one monarch more;
 And nobly conscious, princes are but things
 Born for first ministers, as slaves for kings,
 Tyrant supreme! shall three Estates command,
 And MAKE ONE MIGHTY DUNCIAD OF THE LAND!

More she had spoke, but yawn'd—All Nature nods:
 What mortal can resist the yawn of gods?
 Churches and Chapels instantly it reach'd;
 (St. James's first, for leaden Gilbert preach'd)
 Then catch'd the schools; the Hall scarce kept awake;
 The Convocation gap'd, but could not speak:
 Lost was the nation's sense, nor could be found,
 While the long solemn unison went round:
 Wide, and more wide, it spread o'er all the realm;
 Even Palinurus nodded at the helm:
 The vapour mild o'er each committee crept;
 Unfinish'd treaties in each office slept;
 And chiefless armies doz'd out the campaign;
 And navies yawn'd for orders on the main.

O Muse! relate (for you can tell alone,
 Wits have short memories, and Dunces none),
 Relate, who first, who last resign'd to rest;
 Whose heads she partly, whose completely blest;
 What charms could faction, what ambition lull,
 The venal quiet, and entrance the dull;
 Till drown'd was sense, and shame, and right, and wrong—
 O sing, and hush the nations with thy song!

In vain, in vain—the all-composing hour
 Resistless falls: The Muse obeys the Pow'r.
 She comes! she comes! the sable throne behold
 Of Night primeval, and of Chaos old!
 Before her, Fancy's gilded clouds decay,
 And all its varying rainbows die away.
 Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
 The meteor drops, and in a flash expires.
 As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
 The sick'ning stars fade off th' ethereal plain;
 As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand oppress'd,
 Clos'd one by one to everlasting rest;
 Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,
 Art after Art goes out, and all is Night.
 See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
 Mountains of Casuistry heap'd o'er her head!
 Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,

THE DUNCIAD: BOOK IV

Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
And Metaphysic calls for aid on Sense !
See Mystery to Mathematics fly!
In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
And unawares Morality expires.
Nor public Flame, nor private , dares to shine;
Nor human Spark is left, nor Glimpse divine !
Lo! thy dread Empire, Chaos! is restor'd;
Light dies before thy uncreating word:
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And universal Darkness buries All.