

**A Savage Spy:
The Role of Richard Savage in Composing
Pope's *Dunciad***

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Abstract

Murderer, bastard, spy: Richard Savage was no stranger to scandal and controversy. And yet, for a man who lived such a varied life, little is known for certain about him. There are rumors, suggestions, and accusations, but little that can be said without debates and arguments. It certainly does not help that Savage is often marginalized in eighteenth-century scholarship as scholars seek to discover and analyze all they can about his more famous, and more upstanding, contemporaries. While Savage's relationship with Johnson is well known and discussed frequently, all that is known of his relationship with Pope is that he contributed information to Pope's *Dunciad Variorum* (1729) and that Pope later contributed large sums to Savage's support. Pope was the driving force behind Savage's retirement to Wales, possibly alluded to in Johnson's *London* (1738), as well as the chief financial contributor to this retirement plan. No serious effort has been made to connect these two important episodes in Savage's life, perhaps because no serious effort has been made to establish the extent of his involvement with the *Dunciad*. It may have been this connection with Pope that drew Johnson to Savage in the first place.

The intent of this thesis is to clarify the nature of Savage's collaborations with Pope and the extent of his contributions to the *Dunciad Variorum* of 1729. The *Dunciad* seeks to make fun not only of Pope's critics, but of writers who write for bread, the "hack writers" of Grub Street. It was here that Pope would most likely turn to Savage for information; Savage was much better acquainted with those writers than was Pope. But Savage may have done more than simply supply Pope with gossip, and I will consider the possibility that he had a more active role in the publication of the *Dunciad Variorum*.

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A Savage Spy: The Role of Richard Savage in the Composition of Pope's *Dunciad*

Murderer, bastard, spy: Richard Savage was no stranger to scandal and controversy. And yet, for a man who lived such a varied life, little is known for certain about him. There are rumors, suggestions, and accusations, but little that can be said without debates and arguments. It certainly does not help that Savage is often marginalized in eighteenth-century scholarship as scholars seek to discover and analyze all they can about his more famous, and more upstanding, contemporaries. While Savage's relationship with Johnson is well known and discussed frequently, all that is known of his relationship with Pope is that he contributed information to Pope's *Dunciad Variorum* (1729) and that Pope later contributed large sums to Savage's support. Pope was the driving force behind Savage's retirement to Wales, possibly alluded to in Johnson's *London* (1738), as well as the chief financial contributor to this retirement plan. No serious effort has been made to connect these two important episodes in Savage's life, perhaps because no serious effort has been made to establish the extent of his involvement with the *Dunciad*. It may have been this connection with Pope that drew Johnson to Savage in the first place.

When biographers do discuss Savage's involvement with the *Dunciad*, it is with but superficial acknowledgement. For example, Richard Holmes, author of *Dr. Johnson and Mr. Savage*, is confident that Savage assisted Pope with the *Dunciad*: "Savage was known to be one of Pope's chief sources for the literary libels and scandals which gemmed the darkness of this epic of Grub Street" (135). Yet Holmes and many other biographers offer no evidence to explain why they think Savage worked on the *Dunciad* with Pope. Is this neglect due to the testimony of the contemporary sources and the

dunces themselves? Is it because the notorious Richard Savage was simply a logical candidate for such sneaky work, and the two of them were close at this time? Are there clues within the text that suggest this connection? The biographers often do not say why they make this connection. This study will explain why and how Savage contributed to the *Dunciad*.

I find it very intriguing that this obscure literary figure was on close terms with the likes of Johnson and Pope. He was most definitely a contributing factor to Johnson's early success; the *Life of Savage* (1744) was a major milestone in the history of biography. It is also apparent that Savage was very close to Pope; his friendship with Pope was more intimate than his relationship with Johnson. How did a writer so close to two such famous poets become so obscure? While many graduate students know of the great Dr. Johnson, few know the story of his shadowy friend, Richard Savage. Regardless of his own neglected merits as a poet, Savage has contributed to literature through his friendships with Johnson and Pope. His fascinating life and his role behind the scenes of so much literature make him a fellow worthy of study.

Methodology & Review of the Literature

In working to explore these connections between Savage's and Pope's works, I read through the biographies of both Savage and Pope, as well as those of many others of the featured players in the *Dunciad* (Aaron Hill, Colley Cibber, and Eliza Haywood, among others) in order to gain some insights into the relationships between those involved, establish a basic timeline of what was published when, and learn who met whom when. For Savage's life, I primarily relied on Clarence Tracy's edition of Johnson's *Life of Savage*. The most important sources for Savage's role in the

composition of the *Dunciad* were the *Dunciad* itself (the Twickenham edition of Pope's works) and Savage's own works: *An Author to be Lett*, *Authors of the Town* and *A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose Which have been publish'd on Occasion of the Dunciad* (which will hereafter be referred to as *A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose*). These works substantiate the claim that Pope received from Savage much of his information and the gossip included in the *Dunciad*. In addition, the appearance of the dunces in Savage's own works, some published shortly before the creation of the *Dunciad*, shows that Savage was not just Pope's paid informant. He had his own problems and grievances against the hack writers of Grub Street, and thus could have had a more active role in helping Pope with his work. Also essential to this study was researching what those who knew Savage and Pope believed about Savage's role in composing the *Dunciad*. Did the dunces believe Savage had a role in their humiliation? To find out, I read pamphlets and newspapers from contemporary sources, as well as Theophilus Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*, and used J.V. Guerinot's *Pamphlet attacks on Alexander Pope* to find other contemporary sources that support this claim.

The intent of this thesis is to clarify the nature of Savage's collaborations with Pope and the extent of his contributions to the *Dunciad Variorum* of 1729. The *Dunciad* seeks to make fun not only of Pope's critics, but of writers who write for bread, the "hack writers" of Grub Street. It was here that Pope would most likely turn to Savage for information; Savage was much better acquainted with those writers than was Pope. But Savage may have done more than simply supply Pope with gossip, and I will consider the possibility that he had a more active role in the publication of the *Dunciad Variorum*.

In biographies of Pope, such as the standard biography by Maynard Mack, very

little is mentioned about Richard Savage, if he is mentioned at all. While we may not know his exact role in writing the *Dunciad*, we do know that Pope and Savage were friends and that Pope played a significant role in Savage's life. For example, it is known that Pope arranged for Savage's retirement to Wales. He wrote letters to gain support and funding for Savage, and paid some of the money himself. With regard to the *Dunciad*, no fewer than five sources connect Savage to the *Dunciad*. Why, then, is Savage largely omitted from the standard accounts of Pope's life? One possibility is that Savage is not as well remembered as so many other contemporaries, and biographers may simply overlook him in their eagerness to discuss Pope's connections to Johnson, Dyer, Hill, etc. Johnson himself seldom mentions Pope's name in his biography of Savage.

Even Maynard Mack's extensive biography of Pope does little to clarify the mystery. He quotes and uses the information from *A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose* (1732), and mentions that Savage may have passed along gossip for Pope to use in the *Dunciad*-- and that is the end of Savage's role in Mack's biography. Reginald Berry's *A Pope Chronology*, which lists in detail many of the events of Pope's life and those of his contemporaries, does not even note the death of Savage in the entries for 1743. The deaths and publications of many of Pope's contemporaries, friends, and foes are chronicled here, but not the passing of Pope's friend Savage. Neither is Savage's retirement to Wales, for which Pope personally raised funds and to which he contributed considerably out of his own pocket. The chronology lists letters written, visits paid, works published, even the publication of Johnson's poem *London*: but nothing for Richard Savage. Why?

Worth mentioning is the infrequency with which Pope's name is mentioned in

Johnson's *Life of Savage*. Though Johnson does say of Pope that Savage "found Mr. Pope a steady and unalienable Friend almost to the End of his Life" and though we certainly know that Pope provided support to Savage, Pope's name is seldom mentioned in Johnson's text. Clarence Tracy provides a possible explanation: Pope did not want his name to be connected with Richard Savage:

When writing about Savage's involvement in the *Dunciad*, or about Pope's raising a fund for Savage's support, or about their quarrel, Johnson side-stepped it. Pressure must have been brought to bear by Pope, who was embarrassed over his connection with Savage, either on Johnson or his printer to mention him as little as possible. (Tracy *Life of Savage* xxix)

Yet Pope did not seem to be embarrassed by his wayward friend when he wrote to friends to raise the money for Savage's retirement annuity, and he did not necessarily hide their friendship during its course: their companionship seems to be well-known. One wonders, therefore, if perhaps Pope was concerned about what would come out in the biography: did he have something to hide, perhaps about the composition of the *Dunciad*? It seems that Savage was quite candid to his young friend Johnson, and perhaps Pope was concerned about what would be revealed in the biography. However, since there is little evidence that Pope knew Johnson, at least on a personal level, it is unlikely that he had any influence on Johnson's *Life of Savage*. Perhaps Johnson did not discuss the *Dunciad* in depth in his biography of Savage in the hopes of protecting his friend's reputation; Savage's role as informant did not make him popular among his contemporaries.

In addition, Savage's name was further besmirched by his perceived role in the *Dunciad*. In the pamphlet attacks, he is portrayed as a slinking, sniveling, sneaky spy, even lower in the opinion of the dunces than Pope, because Savage is his sidekick, his lackey, without any literary talent of his own. The dunces marginalize Savage, and it

appears that the later biographers may have followed suit, either consciously or not.

The second edition of Savage's biography was published in 1748, after Pope's death. It seems that Johnson did have some further notes and material about Savage's relationship with Pope, but ultimately decided not to include the information, perhaps out of respect for Pope's wishes: "Johnson's continued silence about it is hard to account for on any grounds other than his feeling bound by promise or by his respect for Pope's known wishes" (Tracy *Life of Savage* xxx). Regardless, the exclusion of any discussion of Savage's contributions to the *Dunciad Variorum* from Johnson's biography of their mutual friend has been damaging to the scholarship and research of many aspects of Savage's life and connections with Pope. Johnson's dismissal of much of their relationship, especially the composition of the *Dunciad*, does little to illuminate the mystery surrounding Savage.

As with so much of the mystery surrounding Richard Savage's life, his involvement with the *Dunciad* is not an issue that can be settled with any certainty. Until someone uncovers a currently undiscovered manuscript that has some unknown piece of the puzzle, we can only make the best assumptions. However, by comparing the similarities in the texts and the testimonies of their contemporaries, we can make a strong case for Richard Savage's involvement in the composition of Pope's *Dunciad*.

A Brief History of Richard Savage

Before we unfold this case, perhaps it would be useful to introduce those who play a role in it. As one of my main points is that these relationships were kept in the dark, certainly it is essential to consider Savage in relation to others. Like his role in the *Dunciad*, few things about Savage's life can be said with absolute certainty, including his

birth. Supposedly, Savage was the product of Lady Anne Macclesfield's affair with the Earl of Rivers, Richard Savage. What is known is that the product of the liaison was called Richard Smith and was placed with a nurse. What is uncertain is what became of this child and whether he grew up to be the poet we know as Richard Savage. Savage consistently maintained that this was his true identity: an unfortunate, cast-aside bastard denied his true place in society. Anne Macclesfield maintained that her child had died.

If Savage were merely fantasizing about a gentle birth, there were many who shared in his delusions. Samuel Johnson certainly accepted his friend's story as fact. Aaron Hill claimed to have seen papers which convinced him of the truth of the sad tale, but they were never produced (Brewster 181-182). Nonetheless, Hill used his publication, *The Plain Dealer*, to make Savage's woeful story public.

Savage's mysterious birth permanently affected his life and writing. Though he seldom had the means, he worked to maintain the appearance of a gentleman. Deprived of his rightful title and position, he seemed to feel as if the world owed him something. He was lax and fickle in his friendships and careless about repaying loans. Perhaps this is what lies at the heart of his hatred of the dunces. They were writers who worked for a living, something he despised as a would-be gentleman. He hated the fact that he was forced to earn his living in this way, and took revenge for his situation by attacking those who embraced it.

And yet, for a man reported to have been a bad friend, Savage seemed to have had a lot of friends himself. Johnson certainly wrote fondly of Savage in his biography. It is Savage's status as a social man that allowed him to obtain information and gossip to pass along to Pope for the *Dunciad*. Aaron Hill worked to promote Savage's interests and was

a faithful friend to the less fortunate Savage. He and the other contributors to Savage's *Miscellanies* intended the volume to help Savage gain income and reputation. Although Savage was an inconsistent and sometimes fickle friend, there had to have been something within Savage that recommended him to his friends and contemporaries.

The Hillarian circle proved to be very important in Savage's life. Hill formed the group as an amusing and intellectual diversion:

It was in 1720 that Hill began to invest nearly all his emotional and intellectual energies into the circle of young male and female writers he began to gather round him, a literary coterie dubbed the "Hillarian Circle" after the name bestowed on him by one of his fervent admirers, the novelist and dramatist Eliza Haywood. (Gerrard 61-62)

Savage was one of the earliest members of the circle; along with Haywood and Martha Fowke, they made up the closest and earliest members of the group. Here he developed close friendships with other authors, some of whom later appeared in the *Dunciad*. It was through this network that Savage became an admirer of Eliza Haywood, who was later satirized in the *Dunciad*. Since Haywood appears not only in the *Dunciad*, but also in Savage's satires *An Author to be Lett* (1729) and *Authors of the Town*, (1725) perhaps it would be useful to give a brief history of her. Christine Gerrard writes of her:

The facts about Haywood's birth and background are still in some doubt, but by April 1717, when she appeared at Lincoln's Inn Fields in Bank's *The Unhappy Favourite*, she had changed her name to 'Mrs. Haywood.' Failing to find the stage career she had hoped for, Haywood turned to professional writing. In 1719 she was just embarking on a phenomenal decade of novel writing, an output so intensive that she published at least twenty titles between 1719 and 1724, and another thirty-three between 1725 and 1730. (67-68)

In addition to being a close network of friends, the eclectic circle of writers shared certain opinions, values, and purposes. Christine Gerrard summarizes the group's aspirations:

The Hillarian circle primarily provided a meeting point for literary friendships, support, discussion, and the incessant circulation of poetic manuscripts. [...] The Hillarian circle shared the 'polite' concern with the interrogation and reordering of conceptions of gentility. [...] The Hill circle also sought to create a public space for a civilized relationship between men and women untainted by outmoded rituals of female coquetry and male pursuit. (76)

But the close friendship and work of the circle was not to last. For one thing, the close friendly relationships between the men and the women of the group became more than friendly, and then cooled. For another, Haywood and Fowke developed a rivalry over the attentions of Hill and Savage:

Haywood had evidently idolized Hill and enjoyed a close relationship with Savage. Both writers had admired her work and held her in high esteem. But once the publicity-seeking Martha Fowke arrived on the scene, the attention which Hill and Savage had once lavished on Haywood was all absorbed by Fowke's instant, and in her eyes, ill-deserved celebrity. (Gerrard 88)

The rivalry and jealousy led to attacks on the printed page. Haywood's *Memoirs of a Certain Island Adjacent to the Kingdom of Utopia* attacks Fowke as a flirtatious woman of questionable morals. However, what is more interesting is the inclusion of Savage in this satire. "The History of Masonia, Count Marville, and Count Riverius" is a story of Savage's life; it does not take a key to know that Count Riverius symbolizes the poet who is so proud of being the son of the late Earl Rivers. The poem satirizes

Riverius as a weak but essentially good-natured young poet led astray by Fowke's machinations into pimping and scandal-mongering on her behalf. Haywood's attempt here to expose what she believed to be Fowke's real character traits, and to show how she succeeded in maliciously alienating Haywood's former friends from her, resounds with almost a note of desperation. (Gerrard 94)

Though the satire is mostly aimed towards her rival Fowke, this satire could be what earned Haywood her place in Savage's satires and the *Dunciad*. Savage was a fickle man

in the best of friendships, quick to turn on a friend for any perceived slight; he was not a forgiving man. Gerrard writes of the situation, “Although Haywood’s poem ends by praising Savage’s poetic talents and essential good nature, he was not ready to forgive a satirical attack which compared him to Thersites and Pandarus and accused him (not without cause) of ambition and ingratitude” (94). Savage got his revenge later when he not only satirized Haywood in *Authors of the Town*, but also modeled the title of his second satire *An Author to be Lett* after her own piece *A Wife to be Lett* (Saxton & Bocchicchio 6). Though many people are ridiculed in this latter work, Haywood is insulted in its very title. Though the group went on to write Savage’s *Miscellanies* together after Haywood’s attacks, the contentions within the group soon led to the end of this literary coterie.

Despite the dissolving of the Hillarian circle, Savage still enjoyed many friendships. However, in November of 1727, Savage found himself in such trouble that even his friends almost failed to get him out of it. Johnson describes the situation:

On the 20th of November 1727, Mr. *Savage* came from Richmond, where he then lodged that he might pursue his Studies with less Interruption, with an Intent to discharge another Lodging which he had in *Westminster*, and accidentally meeting two Gentleman his Acquaintance, whose Names were *Merchant* and *Gregory*, he went in with them to a neighbouring Coffee-house, and sat drinking till it was late, it being in no Time of Mr. *Savage*’s Life any Part of his Character to be the first of the Company that desired to separate. He would willingly have gone to Bed in the same House, but there was not Room for the whole Company, and therefore they agreed to ramble about the Streets, and divert themselves with such Amusements as should offer themselves till Morning.

In their Walk they happened unluckily to discover Light in *Robinson*’s Coffee-house, near the *Charing-Cross*, and therefore went in. *Merchant* with some Rudeness, demanded a Room, and was told that there was a good Fire in the next Parlour, which the Company were about to leave, being then paying their Reckoning. *Merchant* not satisfied with this Answer, rushed into the Room, and was followed by his Companions. He

then petulantly placed himself between the company and the Fire, and soon after kicked down the Table. This produced a Quarrel, Swords were drawn on both Sides, and one Mr. *James Sinclair* was killed. *Savage* having wounded likewise a Maid that held him, forced his way with *Merchant* out of the House; but being intimidated and confused, without Resolution either to fly or stay, they were taken in a back Court by one of the Company and some Soldiers, whom he had called to his Assistance. (30-31)

After the trial, Savage was sentenced to death, and that might have been the end of his story, but Savage received the king's pardon through the help of the Countess of Hertford, who told the queen of Savage's unfortunate life and hardships, of the cruelty of his mother, and her belief that the severity of the punishment was not warranted for a man who had no previous incidents (Johnson 38). It appears that it was Savage's claim that the Countess of Hertford gained his pardon, and this is what Johnson says on his salvation:

His Merit and his Calamities happened to reach the Ear of the Countess of *Hertford*, who engaged in his Support with all the Tenderness that is excited by Pity, and all the Zeal which is kindled by Generosity, and demanding an Audience of the Queen, laid before her the whole Series of his Mother's Cruelty, exposed the Improbability of an Accusation by which he was charged with an Intent to commit a Murder, that could produce no Advantage, and so convinced her how little his former Conduct could deserve to be mentioned as a Reason for extraordinary Severity. (38)

What Johnson does not mention, however, is how the Countess happened to hear about Savage and his pitiful history. For that, Savage had his faithful friend Aaron Hill to thank, who wrote to Savage's uncle Lord Tyrconell, and it is because of their efforts that the Countess was moved to speak for Savage (Holmes 127).

What could have been the end of his life turned out to be an important turning point. With the notoriety the trial brought him, Savage found himself finally getting the attention and recognition he craved and felt he deserved. He wrote two of his more

famous works at this time: *The Bastard* in 1728 and *The Wanderer* in 1729. And, shortly after his pardon, Savage found himself working with Pope on the *Dunciad*. However, before this, Savage began to wage his own war with the dunces, beginning with his own satire, *Authors of the Town*.

Authors of the Town

Published in 1725, *Authors of the Town* appeared before Pope's friendship with Savage began. This poem appeared before *An Author to be Lett*, before either version of the *Dunciad*, and even before *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*. This poem, written by Savage, makes the first strike at the dunces. It is, in a way, Savage and not Pope who began the war of the dunces. The poem is "inscribed to the author of *The Universal Passion*," Savage's friend Edward Young, and begins by saying that for every art or craft, there are people who give that craft a wrong name: "Wit we debase, if Ribaldry we praise,/And Satire fades, when Slander wears the Bays" (*Authors of the Town* 15-16). The art of wit and satire is less appreciated when lesser artists use slander in their work.

Though fewer names are mentioned in this work than in *An Author to be Lett* or the *Dunciad*, Savage does name a few writers, some outright, and others by reference: John Dennis, Edmund Curll, Eliza Haywood, John Gay, and Savage's own friend, Aaron Hill. Of Eliza Haywood, Savage writes:

A castoff Dame, who of Intrigues can judge,
Writes Scandal in Romance—A Printer's Drudge!
Flush'd with Success, for Stage-Renown she pants,
And melts, and swells, and pens luxurious Rants.
(*Authors of the Town* 157-160)

Clio, mentioned several lines down, is a reference to fellow Hillarian circle member Martha Fowkes Sansom. Aaron Hill's lines are no more charitable: "Aaron writes Trash--

He ne'er colloques the Town/How Grand the Verse which *My Lord's Feats* declares!" (198-199). Though Hill had been a good friend and supporter of Savage, Savage has no qualms about including him in his satire, even going so far as to use his name. Pope's friend John Gay plays a large role in this satire, in that "Johnny" has many lines devoted to his ridicule. Among them: "JOHNNY no more reflects a shining Page,/From that bright Genius, that has charm'd the Age!" (203-204).

Perhaps his reluctance and reservation in this poem come from working alone. Once Savage gains Pope as an ally, he becomes bolder in his writing and uses more names and less inference. Through Savage, Pope gains a spy and information, but through Pope, Savage gains a greater force to use against his enemies. His later satire, *An Author to be Lett*, appears shortly after the *Dunciad Variorum* and his friendship with Pope; here Savage mentions many more writers by name.

An Author to be Lett

An Author to be Lett, penned under the name Iscariot Hackney, paints no flattering picture of the dunces and hack writers.¹ The character Iscariot Hackney relates his life and literary escapades, but he is not an admirable writer. On describing his childhood: "I was fond of tearing away the Legs and Wings of Flies, of picking out the Eyes of some little Bird, or laming some favourite Lap-Dog, merely by way of Amusement. This was only a Sign, that one time or other I should have Ill-nature enough for a *great Wit*" (*An Author to be Lett* 2). Savage uses Hackney's tale to illustrate all the things he feels are wrong with the hack writers, accusing them of writing libel, of passing off their own writings as the works of writers such as Swift and Pope, and of other

nefarious uses of literary talents.

As he tells his tale, Hackney associates himself with other writers, many of whom are also mentioned in the *Dunciad*. He says that “I am very deeply read in all Pieces of Scandal, Obscenity, and Profaness, particularly in the Writings of Mrs. *Haywood*, *Henley*, *W—lst--d*, *Morley*, *Br—v—l*, *Foxton*, *Cooke*, *D’Foe*, *Norton*, *Woolston*, *Dennis*, and the author of *Rival Modes*” (*An Author to be Lett* 4). These are authors who are mentioned not only in Savage’s own *Authors of the Town*, but also in Pope’s *Dunciad*. Another connection between Savage and Pope’s attacks: Iscariot Hackney calls his fellow hack writers the “Knights of Bathos,” which echoes the name of Pope’s first attack against the dunces: *Peri Bathous*, or *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*.

Savage paints Hackney’s career as one full of shortcuts, lies, and trickery, all the while associating his character’s misdeeds with those of other writers. Hackney tells us: “I learned from *Curll* to clap a new Title-Page to the Sale of every half Hundred; so that when my Bookseller has sold Two Hundred and Fifty Copies, my Book generally enters into the *Sixth Edition*” (11). In addition to insulting Edmund Curll, these lines characterize the dunces not only as people who write for money, but as manipulative, opportunist writers who know all the tricks to promote themselves and their writing in an ongoing search for money.

Though Hackney is supposed to represent all that is wrong with writers, he is not totally unlike Savage. Savage was not above manipulation and trickery to achieve his ends, and since he is accused of serving as spy for Pope and turning on many of his old friends, the comparison is not incorrect. Johnson writes of this work:

¹Though *An Author to be Lett* is published under the name Iscariot Hackney, there does not seem to be any doubt that Savage wrote the poem. Savage himself claims authorship in his letter of dedication in *A*

In the Introduction are related many secret Histories of the petty Writers of that Time, but sometimes mixed with ungenerous Reflections on their Birth, their Circumstances, or those of their Relations; nor can it be denied, that some Passages are such as *Iscariot Hackney* might himself have produced. (*Life of Savage* 45)

It is somewhat ironic that what Savage satirized in others are some of the traits he himself possessed. Yet, when we consider the possibility that he hated the Grub Street writers because they embraced what he ran from, this phenomenon seems more likely.

An Author to be Lett has some connections to Pope's work, not only in the basic information, but also in the words and phrases used. For example, Savage writes:

When this Lady [Haywood], or these Gentlemen are ask'd why they abuse such and such Persons, their Answer is, they are obliged to write for want of Money, and to abuse for want of other Subjects. Is want of Money an Excuse for picking a Pocket? Or what is worse, taking away a Man's good Name? Is the Poverty of *Moore's* Genius an Excuse for filching *Pope's* Lines? And appears not the Theft in his Comedy as plain, as if a Cinder-Wench shou'd steal a Gold Watch, and afterwards wear it? If this Play was brought forth, because his Circumstances were reduced, was he to retrieve 'em by committing poetical Felonies, and afterwards being the first to cry out Thief? Deserves he not a whipping for such petty Larceny? By a whipping be it known I only mean the poetical, wholesome Lash of Satire. (Publisher's Preface)

Compare this to an epigram attributed to Pope on the same individual, Jeremy Moore:

A gold watch found on Cinder Whore
Or a good verse on J---my M---e
Proves but that either shou'd conceal
Not that they're rich, but that they steal.² (*Twickenham* VI 326).

Both selections accuse Jeremy Moore of plagiarism and a lack of creativity. More important, however, are the metaphors used. Both lines use the analogy of a "cinder-wench" (her stealing a gold watch proves not that she is rich, but rather that she is a thief) to Moore (his stealing lines proves not that he is a creative genius, but that he is a

Collection of Pieces and Verse Published on Occasion of the Dunciad.

plagiarist). This parallel phrasing provides a strong connection between Savage's *An Author to be Lett* and Pope's *Dunciad*. There are several more textual connections between Savage's satire and the variorum notes, which will be discussed later in conjunction with their corresponding lines in the *Dunciad Variorum*, for easier comparison.

The Evolution of the Dunciad

The Dunciad is almost a character unto itself. It certainly has a history of its own, growing and developing into a different document with each printing. In our discussion of the *Dunciad* for the purposes of this paper, Pope may seem to be the aggressor in these attacks. However, he certainly did not lash out unprovoked. He had remained relatively silent for years while his critics and enemies attacked his writing, his appearance, and even his sexuality. J.V. Guerinet's *Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope* is a thick volume of a bibliography detailing the many and varied printed attacks against Pope, a large number of which came long before the *Dunciad*.

Though this plan of revenge may have been in the works for a while, Theobald's criticism of Pope's Shakespeare in *Shakespeare Restored* brought about the end of Pope's patience, earning him the dubious honor of king of the dunces. Maynard Mack summarizes the incidents in his biography of Pope:

Pope's failure was to catch a serious printing fault that had crept into his copy text, one he would have caught if his collations had been as thorough as his title page and preface claim. Theobald was quite right to censure him. But this is not Theobald's main point. His main point, here and everywhere, is to imply that Pope's list of editions used at the end of Volume 6 is a hoax and that no collations were made at all. This was false, and Theobald knew it. (433)

² See note on page 329-330 of *Twickenham VI Minor Poems* for an explanation of why editors Norman Ault and John Butt attribute this epigram to Pope.

Pope had been attacked from many quarters for a long time, but Theobald's critique of his Shakespeare was apparently too much to bear; he began his retaliation for all the wrongs done to him, even those that were years old.

The first incarnation of the *Dunciad* is *Peri Bathous: The Art of Sinking in Poetry*, which appeared in the third and last volume of Swift and Pope's *Miscellanies* in March 1728. The poem is a trial run of what will later be a longer, more developed attack in the *Dunciad*. The *Dunciad, a Heroick Poem* found its way to bookstores in 1728. From the beginning, Pope was happy to share with others the credit, and the ensuing attacks. He had always maintained that he had worked on the *Dunciad* with someone else, and when the *Dunciad Variorum* (1729) appeared, he insisted someone else wrote the notes. The *Variorum* sought to fill in the blanks and give the names of the dunces, in case the original *Dunciad* left readers with any doubts about who the dunces and their related crimes were.

Though the *Dunciad* sold many copies and certainly created a sensation, the poem's results may not have been what Pope wanted. Maynard Mack writes in his biography of Pope that "Publishing the *Dunciad* was in many ways the greatest folly of Pope's life" (472). It sparked the war of the dunces, a plethora of pamphlet attacks against Pope. If the poem was Pope's retribution for all the attacks he had suffered, it certainly did not stop them. Quite the opposite: the attacks against Pope increased after the *Dunciad*. If Pope came to regret the animosity provoked by the *Dunciad*, this might explain his reluctance to discuss its composition, including collaboration with Richard Savage. However, Pope was to continue to work with the *Dunciad*; his continuing work is especially evident in *The New Dunciad* in 1742. *The Dunciad* was really a living

document, constantly being edited and changed, even after Pope's death, and the *Dunciad* gave birth to many other documents in the form of pamphlets and journal contributions.

Savage's retirement and his friendship with Johnson

Perhaps it was because of the *Dunciad* that Pope supported Savage's retirement to Wales. After his assistance in supplying the gossip and information and his possible collaboration in its composition, Savage may have felt this support was his payment.

Also interesting is this line by the penname Iscariot Hackney in Savage's *An Author to be Lett*: "Thus, tho' I had but a hundred a Year, and for no more than two, or three Years Service, I cou'd retire to *Swisserland*, or *Wales*, with about Fifteen Hundred Pounds in my Pocket, and an Annuity of fifty Pounds, *per Annum* for Life" (10). Here, Savage mentions, through Hackney, how nice it would be to retire to Wales and even mentions the amount of the pension he believes he deserves. Perhaps Savage himself suggested this as his payment for his work on the *Dunciad*, though the actual subscription which was given to him later was much less. In the rest of the poem, Savage used Hackney's biography to make fun of those who made their living by writing, using Hackney's self-ascribed and unbecoming traits to describe the hack writers and dunces; the suggestion of retirement does not mesh with the rest of the satire. Perhaps this section was Savage's invoice to Pope for his work on the *Dunciad*.

Shortly before his retirement, however, Savage met another man who was to leave an impressive mark on eighteenth-century literature: the young Samuel Johnson. Much as with the origins of Pope and Savage's relationship, there is no set date for when Johnson and Savage first met. The facts surrounding the beginning of the strange friendship between Savage and Johnson are as ambiguous as many of the rest of events in Savage's

sketchy life. The two met at night, walking the streets of London and talking. There is not, however, an established date for when their midnight strolls began. Part of the reason that the date is so difficult to pin down is that no one ever saw the two of them together. The friendship that has sparked so much debate and speculation was never witnessed firsthand by any of their contemporaries.

Without any accounts to document the timeline of their friendship, it is difficult to say with certainty when the two first met. However, Johnson published the lines *Ad Ricardum Savage* in the April 1738 edition of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, so it would be logical that they had met by this time. Holmes translates these lines as “To Richard Savage, Bearer of Arms, Lover of Mankind. Devotion to your Fellow Man burns brightly in your Breast;/ O! that Fellow Man may cherish and protest Thee in return” (177). It is difficult to contemplate the staunch moralist Samuel Johnson writing such a tribute to the nefarious man charged with murder and accused of being Pope's spy, though it is arguable that Johnson always had a blind spot when it came to Savage's shortcomings. Or, perhaps, he knew all too well the darker side of his friend, and hoped to paint a more flattering picture of his good points. Johnson's *Life of Savage* certainly tells the good and the bad, but tries to redeem Savage where possible. In his poem *London*, Johnson paints Savage as the narrator Thales, who leaves corrupt London for morally pure Wales. Since Savage himself was about to leave London for retirement, perhaps Johnson wanted to portray his friend in a more positive light, giving his retreat a more respectable purpose than the action of a man running from his debts on the funds of others.

Though he did not fund all of Savage's retirement himself, Pope was certainly the instigator of the proposition, putting up some of the money and campaigning for others to

do the same. On May 18, 1739 Pope wrote to Ralph Allen to gain another supporter for Savage:

One of them is what I intend to make you partake in, the Sending a Man to be Saved, both in this World & the next (I hope.) He is to cost me ten pound a year, as long as he thinks fit to live regularly, & if you will let him cost you as much, we shall want few further Aids, & I believe you don't care how long our Benevolence may last, tho I think it can't many years. (Pope *Correspondence* IV 180).

Though it is difficult to know his true motivations, Pope tells Allen that he is sending Savage to the country for his own good, for his own salvation. Considering Savage's lifestyle, his spending habits, and his rapidly increasing debt, his presence in London was a problem that indeed needed to be addressed. On the other hand, one wonders if there was a personal motive for Pope to get Savage away from London. What details about the *Dunciad* could Savage have revealed? What reasons could Pope have had to get Savage away from London and many of the dunces?

If this plan to keep Savage and any secrets out of London was the secret motivation behind Pope's generosity, then it was not a successful one. From the start he did not follow the plan. Savage was supposed to go immediately to Swansea, but instead took his time getting there, spending most of the money given him for the month and requesting more from his already generous contributors. It seems that for these extra expenses, Pope took sole responsibility, but after a while, his patience must have worn thin, because Savage, desperate for money, appealed to Allen directly. When Pope heard of this, he was furious. Understandably so, he had encouraged Allen to invest in Savage's future, convincing him they were saving a good man from himself; to be constantly badgered for more funding was embarrassing for Pope. In December 1741, Pope wrote to Allen addressing this issue:

I am vex'd at this wrongheaded Fool, for troubling you, I hope you'll discourage such correspondence. Pray send the Postmaster an order to pay him 5 ll upon the inclosed Receipt, I write the oppose side on purpose for you to send him inclosed only in a Cover to Sav. (*Correspondence IV 431*)

Even though he was at this point extremely angry with Savage, Pope still sent him the money. Whether he did this out of friendship or concern, or as a bribe to keep information secret, it is difficult to say. Regardless, the money was not enough, and soon Pope was writing to Allen again. On September 13, 1742, he wrote:

I would not have written to you yet, expecting in ten days or thereabouts to be able to fix the time of our meeting, but Savage plagues me with his Misunderstandings, & Miseries together (or I should not take so much regard to the former) and I must send him an answer. You see it inclosed & I beg you to add and put into it, an order for give guineas to be paid him by the Postmaster at Bristol. (*Pope Correspondence IV 417*)

Pope went on to tell Allen that Savage is determined to get back to London, feeling himself mistreated and banished. Pope ended by saying that he could not and would not do anything more for Savage. In the following letters, Pope addressed some of Savage's accusations and complaints. This self-destructive behavior and accusations, in addition to the constant petitions for more money, led an exasperated Pope to write this rare letter to Savage in April 1742:

Sir, I must be sincere with you, as our correspondence is now likely to be closed. Your language is really too high, and what I am not used to from my superiors; much too extraordinary for me, at least sufficiently so, to make me obey your commands, and never more presume to advise or meddle in your affairs, but leave your own conduct entirely to your own judgment. It is with concern I find so much misconstruction joined with so much resentment, in your nature. You still injure some, whom you had known for many years as friends, and for whose intention I could take upon me to answer; but I have no weight with you, and cannot tell how soon (if you have not already) you may misconstrue all I can say or do; and as I see in that case how unforgiving you are, I desire to prevent this in time. You cannot think yet, I have injured you, or been your enemy: and I am determined to keep out of your suspicion, by not being officious any

longer, or obtruding into any of your concerns further than to wish you heartily success in them all, and will never pretend to serve you, but when both you and I shall agree that I should. (*Correspondence* IV 392-392)

Though Pope was very angry with Savage in this letter, we can also see his concern for him as well. Pope could have certainly abandoned Savage to his own fate. Though both of their reputations suffered during the *Dunciad* aftermath, Savage was the one in trouble. Perhaps he felt guilty for the part he played in Savage's plight, but truly Pope was a faithful and loyal friend. Regardless of whatever personal motivation he had to support Savage and get him out of London, he went above and beyond supporting his friend. Another interesting thing to note about the preceding letter is that Pope wrote to Savage that he still injured some, whom he had called his friends. Here Pope too accused Savage of betraying his friends, something the dunces accused him of as well. And yet, though Pope recognized that Savage is not a true friend, he continued to be one towards him.

Though this letter seems to be the end of their correspondence, it was not. Pope had not washed his hands of his wayward friend quite yet. He wrote to Savage again September 15, 1742:

I am sorry to say there are in your letter so many misunderstandings, that I am weary of repeating what you seem determined not to take rightly. I once more tell you, that neither I, nor any one who contributed at first to assist you in your retirements, ever desired you should stay out of London, for any other reason than your debts prevented your staying in it. (Pope *Correspondence* 417-418)

Savage had apparently accused Pope of funding his retirement in order to keep him out of London and in the country. Much as Savage accused loyal Hill of working against him, Savage, when down on his luck, turned on his benefactors. Though Savage was often paranoid and certainly self-seeking, one wonders if there was something behind these accusations. Did Savage think Pope wanted him out of London because of something

involving the *Dunciad*? Or, more importantly, did he construct this theory because of his own internal demons or because of something Pope had said? Regardless, the deterioration of their friendship marked the end for Savage. Savage did return to London, but not to any benefit to himself. He was soon arrested and thrown into prison for his debts, where he died July 1743 and was buried “in the Church-yard of St Peter, at the Expense of the Keeper,” alone and finally out of friends (Johnson *Life of Savage* 135).

He was not what one could call an admirable man, and his various friends over his life would mostly likely not call him a true friend. And yet, there was always something compelling about Richard Savage. Perhaps it was the mystery surrounding his birth, his rakish attitude, or simply his talent for surviving in a world not really made for him. Young Johnson was certainly attracted to the mysterious, nefarious Savage. Though he discusses Savage’s many shortcomings in his biography, Johnson also works to put his friend in a positive light as well. He writes of him:

He lodged as much by Accident as he dined, and passed the Night sometimes in mean Houses, which are set open at Night to any casual Wanderers; sometimes in Cellars, among the Riot and Filth of the meanest and most profligate of the Rabble; and sometimes, when he had no Money to support even the Expences of these Receptacles, walked about the Streets till he was weary, and lay down in the Summer upon a Bulk, or in the Winter, with his Associates in Poverty, among the Ashes of a Glass-house.

In this Manner were passed the Days, and those Nights, which Nature had enabled him to have employed in elevated Speculations, useful Studies, or pleasing Conversation. On a Bulk, in a Cellar, or in a Glass-house, among Thieves and Beggars, was to be found the Author of the *Wanderer*, a Man of exalted Sentiments, extensive Views, and curious Observations; the Man whose Remarks on Life might have assisted the Statesman, whose Ideas of Virtue might have enlightened the Moralist, whose eloquence might have influenced Senates, and whose Delicacy might have polished Courts. (Johnson *Life of Savage* 97)

Though Savage was a wandering spendthrift, Johnson saw an enlightened and intelligent

individual, who had grand ideas and something to say. Johnson listened, and so did Pope, to the information Savage had to tell.

The Case

Why would the lover of virtue and young Johnson's close friend be such an obvious choice for a spy? Some of the writers satirized in Pope's *Dunciad* were Savage's friends; Aaron Hill was an important figure in bringing Savage's supposedly woeful history to the public's attention. However, Savage was a man who felt he was owed something and was never a faithful friend. Even Samuel Johnson acknowledged this quality in his friend:

He was accused likewise of living in an Appearance of Friendship with some whom he satirised, and of making use of the Confidence which he gained by a seeming Kindness to discover Failings and expose them; it must be confessed, that Mr. *Savage's* Esteem was no very certain Possession, and that he would lampoon at one Time those whom he had praised at another. (Johnson *Life of Savage* 45)

Not only does Johnson mention Savage's inconsistent behavior towards his friends, but he also mentions that today's friend could be the victim of tomorrow's satire, which is exactly what happened in the case of many of the dunces. Aaron Hill and Eliza Haywood especially were among Savage's closest companions before finding themselves satirized not only in the *Dunciad*, but in Savage's own poetry. Dorothy Brewster writes, "His esteem was no very certain possession [...] And Hill did not escape"(184). And Christine Gerrard says a paranoid Savage would turn on the faithful Hill, accusing Hill of working against him (64). It should be of no surprise to learn that Savage had a hand in the *Dunciad*, which pokes fun at his faithful friend Hill.

Eliza Haywood was another victim of his fickle favor. Though Savage was reported to be the father of her first child, he viciously satirized her in his poem *An*

Author to be Lett; the title itself is a pun on the title of her play, *A Wife to be Lett*.

Savage's relationship with Eliza Haywood may have earned her a role in the *Dunciad*.

Though it is true that Pope was not fond of women writers, any female writer would have served his purpose for the *Dunciad*. Perhaps her inclusion in the *Dunciad* was done as a favor to Savage. If this theory is indeed true, then it attributes to Savage some influence regarding what information went into the *Dunciad*.

Savage's biographer Clarence Tracy believes that Savage also provided Pope with stories about Grub Street life. Responding to numerous accusations (including Thomas Cooke's *Battle of the Poets* (1729), and the word of an anonymous contributor to Hill's biography in Cibber's *Lives* (1753)), stating Savage was Pope's spy, Tracy writes that "it is difficult to say anything against a tradition so firmly established as this" (*The Artificial Bastard* 106). It appears evident that Savage did pass along information to Pope about the dunces, as suggested by Johnson. Tracy goes on to say that it is natural for Savage to be the bringer of stories and gossip for Pope. He was more social than Pope, and mingled with far more of the literary circle; "[n]aturally Pope learned a great deal from him and naturally much of it later found its way into the *Dunciad*" (Tracy 106).

Savage loved gossip and scandal and, according to Holmes, passed on to Pope much of the information he heard. Moreover, Holmes states that Savage was instrumental in the production of the notes for the *Dunciad Variorum*. Holmes writes of *An Author to be Lett* that "Much of it was the kind of material that Savage was now freely passing on to Pope for his *Variorum* edition of the *Dunciad*, to appear in the mini-biographies and scandals of the footnotes" (156). In this inquiry, I hope to establish a firmer connection than this.

Was Savage simply Pope's spy and gossipmonger, or did Savage have a larger and more important role in the composition of the *Dunciad*? Clarence Tracy seems to think so: "But few scholars have realized that Savage carried on his own war with the dunces, and that, in the beginning at least, he had his own reasons for doing so. He may have been Pope's jackal in the eyes of the dunces, but in his own eyes and in Pope's he was an ally and a collaborator" (108). Savage wrote his own satire against the dunces before Pope had written the *Dunciad*; *Authors of the Town* appeared in 1725, and *An Author to be Lett* appeared almost simultaneously with the *Dunciad Variorum*.

The Authors of the Town predates not only the *Dunciad*, but also Savage's close relationship with Pope. Tracy suggests that it is this work that attracted Pope to Savage, since he attacked many of Pope's enemies in this anonymous poem (105). Since Savage produced this poem before his friendship with Pope, it provides evidence that Savage attacked the dunces and provided gossip not merely as Pope's subordinate, but also as part of his own literary agenda. While it is true that many of the dunces in the *Dunciad* and Savage's works overlap, the two lists of literary enemies are not identical. Savage wrote very little against his friend John Dennis, whose severe anger towards Pope led him to write *The True Character of Mr. Pope*, as well as *Remarks upon several passages in the preliminaries to the Dunciad*. Tracy writes, "Consequently, so far as Dennis goes, Savage appears to have been remarkably restrained, and not to have allowed Pope's feud to beguile him into any act of real treachery" (113). Though Savage accepted friendship and money from Pope, he plainly valued his independence, as the Wales episode indicates. Moreover, Savage had criticized Pope's good friend John Gay in *Authors of the Town* (Tracy 113-114).

What is the significance of this? What does it matter that Savage had his own personal reasons for attacking the dunces? As a subordinate for Pope, Savage is merely the fountain of information, a spy. He acts as the agent of the true, active writer, Pope. This is a much more passive role for Savage to play in the composition of the *Dunciad*. However, with his own agenda, Savage is better described as a collaborator in the project. He has more of a stake in its publication and success. Though not on the same level as Pope, he becomes more of an ally (Tracy 114).

Savage was certainly active in the promotion of the *Dunciad*. He provided Pope with information, he wrote *A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose which have been published on Occasion of the Dunciad*, and he may have made another contribution, for, as Tracy says, “one might suggest that it was Savage who arranged in 1729 through Lord Tyrconnel to have the first edition of *The Dunciad* formally presented to the king and queen by no less than a person than Sir Robert Walpole. It is unlikely that Sir Robert would have acted on Pope’s request” (109). If true, this act would seem to be beyond the scope of a mere gossipmonger and spy; this shows a greater interest in the success and fame of the *Dunciad*. The larger the number of people who read the *Dunciad*, and the more important these people were, the greater the revenge against the dunces. Savage had his own reasons for satirizing the Grub Street writers. Tracy concludes: “Savage, then, was not Pope’s cat’s-paw, but his ally. Moreover, he had his own reasons for attacking the dunces. Though it is impossible to fill in the complete history of Savage’s literary quarrels, [...] it is possible in some cases to show that he took up arms on his own account” (111).

One can see how Savage would have a distaste for many of the Grub Street

writers. He himself always worked to appear the gentleman, and although he did not have the official title and fortune befitting a gentleman, he believed it was his birthright, denied him by his estranged and cold mother. It is easy to guess at the motivation Savage would have for satirizing Eliza Haywood, a former love interest turned sour. With motivation all his own, Savage would have a greater interest in actually assisting in the composition of the *Dunciad*, and not simply be content to be the gatherer of information.

It was not unusual for Pope to work with other writers. He worked with his good friend Swift to produce their *Miscellanies*, which were published shortly before the *Dunciad*. Together, they wrote *Peri Bathous* or *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*, a precursor to the *Dunciad*. Not only did Pope occasionally collaborate with other writers on various projects, he also collaborated with Swift on the writing of the *Dunciad*. Swift was very involved in the creation of the *Dunciad*. Vander Muelen's *History and Fascimile of the Dunciad* addresses Swift's contributions to the poem, saying that Swift "does seem to have contributed directly to later editions of the poem, and he may have done so for the first version as well" (11). In the later versions of the *Dunciad*, Pope encouraged William Warburton to be his collaborator, which he accepted. While we are unsure about Savage's exact contributions to *The Dunciad*, Warburton's additions are well-known:

To the edition of 1743 he contributed the jocose "Ricardus Aristarchus Of the Hero of the Poem," an "Advertisement to the Reader" which had probably been drafted by Pope, and additional notes in his heavy-handed style to all four books. (*Twickenham V xxxvii*)

Like Pope, Savage is known to have collaborated with other writers. Together with the Hillarian circle, Savage produced *Miscellanies*, a book compiled of writings done by himself, Aaron Hill, John Dyer, Eliza Haywood, Martha Fowke, and a few others. The group was very intimate for a time, and they devote much of the volume to

praising each other. According to Christine Gerrard in *Aaron Hill: The Muse's Projector*, Savage's *Miscellanies* was created not only in order for Savage to assert his claim as a gentleman and to create some income for him, but also to celebrate the close relationships of the contributing writers' (96).

Dorothy Brewster also explores collaboration between Hill and Savage. Aaron Hill dedicated several issues of *The Plain Dealer* to the promotion of Savage's interests. In number twenty-eight of *The Plain Dealer*, the world is acquainted with Savage's sad tale of his birth by an anonymous letter written by "Amintas." Here, Savage and Hill made known his supposed betrayal by his titled mother and his being deprived of his rightful heritage. The publication of this story illustrates Hill's belief in Savage's story about his estranged and heartless mother. Brewster writes "The story, whether written by Hill, or Savage, of Amintas, is indeed touchingly told" (180). While it is not certain whether Hill or Savage wrote the letter, it is certain that the two worked closely together to publish in the magazine Savage's woeful beginnings.

In addition, Pope and Savage worked together after the *Dunciad*. In this letter from Pope to Savage, he passes along information to Savage to use in a biography of John Gay, on which Savage was supposedly working, though it never appeared. On October 17, 1736, he writes to Savage:

I answer yours by the first Post, since I find they are in so much Hast about Mr. Gay's Life. It is not possible for me to do his Memory the Justice I wish in so much Hurry. Therefore I would by no means have my Name made use of, where I cannot have the Account such as it ought. I only recommend to your Friendship, that nothing be said of any particular obligations that worthy and ingenious man had to me, further than a sincere Esteem & the Natural Effe[ct] of it. (*Correspondence* IV 37).

In this situation, it is Pope passing information along to Savage, not vice versa. But their

work was not limited to this scenario. The information in *A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose* either came from someone who worked on the *Dunciad* project, or was given the information by someone who was.

Contemporary Sources

If we as scholars today are uncertain about Savage's involvement in writing the *Dunciad*, his contemporaries had no such doubts. In many of the pamphlet attacks against Pope and the plethora of responses that made up the war of the dunces, the dunces accused Savage again and again of being Pope's spy. When it came to their humiliation, the dunces felt confident they knew where to point the accusatory finger.

As his personal friend and biographer, Johnson is usually consulted for information about Savage's life. However, he does not linger over Savage's role in the *Dunciad*. He says only:

The Publication of this Piece at this Time raised Mr. *Savage* a great Number of Enemies among those that were attacked by Mr. *Pope*, with whom he was considered as a Kind of Confederate, and whom he was suspected of supplying with private Intelligence and secret Incidents: So that the Ignominy of an Informer was added to the Terror of a Satirist. (*Life of Savage* 50)

Here Johnson says that the dunces accused Savage of being a spy, reporting information to Pope to be used in the humiliating satire. Also important to note is the word "confederate," which denotes more of a partnership. This is, however, sparse information from someone who not only is chronicling Savage's life, but also was close friends with him. Surely he knew more about Savage's involvement in the *Dunciad*?

Almost all of the contemporary sources, including the dunces, accuse Savage as their betrayer. J. V. Guerinot cites the following pamphlets as mentioning Savage as Pope's spy for the *Dunciad*: Thomas Cooke's *Battle of the Poets*, John Henley's *Why*

How Now, Gossip Pope?, Sawney and Colley's *A poetical Dialogue*. All accused Savage of being a spy for Pope, and there is a noticeable lack of mention of anyone else serving as Pope's spy.

Thomas Cooke's attacks against Pope and Savage are rather obvious and harsh. *The Battel of the Poets* (1729) is a poem written, according to Cooke, to show that Pope truly has no talent, and has just been a lucky writer. The poem appeared in a larger work entitled *Tales, Epistles, Odes, Fables, &c* (1729). Cook writes in the preface:

I was induced to the writing this by a Reflection on the Conduct of a Person, who, with but a small Share of Learning and moderate natural Endowment, has, by concurring and uncommet Accidents, acquired as great a Reputation as the most learned with an exalted Genius could ever hope. We may reasonably imagine that such an Extravagance of good Fortune, ill bestowed, will always end in the Favourite discovering his own Folly and vain Insolence. Such is the present Case of the Author of the *Dunciad* who, possessed of what poets most pursue, and what his most lavish Hopes could indulge Him in, has at last convinced the thinking Part of his Admirers that he has no Title to the Praise which he has had. (*Tales, Epistles, Odes, Fables &c.* 107-108)

Savage receives his own attention in the preface, where Cooke writes:

If I have accused any of Immoralitys they are such as appear in their Writings; and what I have sayed in the Character of the Spy, in the second Canto, is no more than is justifiable in the Battel of the Poets, since all that is sayed, to my Knowledge, is suitable to the Person. (110-111)

If his readers feel he is being harsh, Cooke says, they should realize that he is only reporting the person's own true actions. The poem is in two cantos, which tell the story of writing and poetry as if it were a battlefield. In the Second Canto of *The Battle of the Poets*, he accuses Savage as being a spy for Pope:

His Work perform'd, the Critic took his Way,
Slow pacing, homeward, and uprose the Day.
As on he went he saw approaching nigh
The Form of one that seem'd, and was, a Spy,

Thick stuff'd his Pockets and his Sides with Rhyme,
And mutt'ring as he walk'd one endless Chime;
As on he wander'd, like a Wretch possess'd,
The Critic seiz'd him, and unman'd his Breast;
Trembling he stood, his Guilt creating Fear;
His Crimes were many, and his Judge severe. (140-141)

After capturing this spy, the Critic (Dennis) promises to spare his life if he will say who he is and what his crimes are. The poem continues:

Proceed. Encourag'd thus the Wretch began,
Louder his Voice, and almost like a Man.

Savage my Name, unblest'd my natal Morn,
Who to the Ills of Poetry was born.
From Pope deputed, from my Heart's Ally,
To yonder Camp I tend a dauntless Spy.
Thro great and many Dangers safe I go,
My only Guard my Falsehood to the Foe;
Before a Friend profess'd they know no Fear,
But trust their Secrets to a faithless Ear;
I watch their Motions, and each Word they say,
And all, and more than all, I know, betray:
In kind Return he cheers my Soul with Praise,
And mends, where such he finds, my feeble Lays. (142-143)

Savage is here called a wretch, “almost a man,” and other images that demean Savage and paint him as a sniveling, sneaky coward of a figure. Pressed by Dennis, Savage admits to the crimes of being a spy, saying “Before a Friend profess'd they know no Fear,/But trust their Secrets to a faithless Ear;/I watch their Motions, and each Word they say,/ And all, and more than all, I know, betray” (142-143). According to Cooke, Savage’s friends trust their secrets and lives to the man they have believed to be their friend, and then he repeats all the gossip to Pope. Indeed, Cooke implies that Savage adds to the gossip with his own creations, saying that he betrayed not only all he knows, but more than all.

Thus interrupting, with a scornful Smile,

Enough thy Folly speaks, enough thy Guile,
To him the Sage with awful Voice rejoin'd.
What Mercy, Traytor, can you hope to find?
To Thee the Promise of thy Life I gave,
A false, a fawning, and a witless, Slave;
But now thy Soul appears so mean, so black,
That Justice bids Me call that Promise back.
He paus'd a while, then spoke. Thy Life I give;
Thy greatest Torment, Wretch, must be to live.
Thro the prismatick Glass deceiv'd you see,
Believing all Things, as they seem, to be;
But sad Experience late shall ope thine Eyes,
And shew Thee those who flatter most despise. (143-144)

After hearing this story, Dennis says that Savage is so wretched, he regrets making the promise to let Savage live. He does not give Savage much hope of regaining his position in society, asking, what mercy could he possibly hope to gain after such crimes. The picture he paints for Savage's future is not a happy one, and unfortunately, it is to some extent very true. Though Savage's reputation was never pristine, he still had numerous friends and acquaintances. This all changed after his work with Pope; Savage never regained his popularity after the *Dunciad*.

Cooke was not the only one to speak harshly of Savage. In the *Hyp Doctor*, April 29, 1735, John Henley speaks of Savage's role in the *Dunciad* with particular vehemence:

Richard Savage, Esq; was the *Jack-all of that Ass in a Lyon's Skin*, he was his *Provider*: Like *Montmaur*, the *Parasite of Paris*, he rambled about to gather up *Scraps of Scandal*, as a *Price* for his *Twickenham Ordinary*; no *Purchase* no *Pay*; no *Tittle-tattle*, no *Dinner*: Hence arose those *Utopian Tales of Persons, Characters and Things*, that rais'd, by the *clean Hands* of his *Heliconian Scavenger*, the *Dungil of the Dunciad*. (*Twickenham V.* xxvi)

In this particularly strong attack against Savage, Henley accuses Savage of gathering gossip and reporting it to Pope for gain: no tittle-tattle, no dinner. Considering the

possibility that Pope funded Savage's retirement to Wales, perhaps this accusation is not far from the truth. Yet Henley's words against Savage are exceedingly harsh. It is particularly ironic that Savage is accused of spying and tattling on his friends for material gain, when Savage's disdain for the dunces stems from their writing for their bread.

Yet Henley's attacks on Savage and Pope's relationship did not end there. The March 3, 1743 of *London Daily Post* features John Henley's "Why How now, Gossip Pope?" in which Henley addresses Pope, saying Savage:

was entertain'd by you to give you Tittle-tattle for Bread, of myself and others; fit Company, for you and your Associates are *all half-hanged*, and only want a *Burlesque-Psalm*, like that written *by yourself*, for a *Peroration*. (*Pamphlet attacks on Alexander Pope* 315)

Here Henley echoes his earlier argument, saying Savage is "working" for Pope by providing gossip and scandal for the *Dunciad*. He also makes a reference to Savage's murder conviction, saying that Savage, Pope, and their friends are "half-hanged," an allusion to Savage's close call to the hangman's noose after his murder conviction. Henley's attacks on Savage are similar to Cooke's in that both painted Savage as a desperate wretch, a pathetic figure of a man, a lackey debasing himself and ruining his friendships in order to appease his benefactor, Pope. Could this be an accurate depiction, i.e., Savage as a more passive informant, or is this merely a dramatization from Savage's enemies, with Savage in reality being a more active partner in the *Dunciad*'s composition?

Pamphlets are not the only forms of literature that make the connection between Savage and the *Dunciad*. Theophilus Cibber in *Lives of the Poets* makes the following statement:

Savage was of great use to Mr. Pope, in helping him to little stories, and

idle tales, of many persons whose names, lives, and writings, had been long since forgot, had not Mr. Pope mentioned them in his *Dunciad*:--- This office was too mean for any one but inconsistent Savage: Who, with a great deal of absurd pride, could submit to servile offices; and for the vanity of being thought Mr. Pope's intimate, made no scruple of frequently sacrificing a regard to sincerity or truth. He had certainly, at one time, considerable influence over that great poet: but an assuming arrogance at last tired out Mr. Pope's patience. (V. 266n)

Who else but Savage would have been willing to be a spy and informant on his own friends? Though the statement is uncharitable, Cibber is correct: Savage was no consistent friend, as Johnson himself admits in writing Savage's biography. Yet there appears to be more than mere circumstantial evidence and of a personality flaw at work in this accusation. If, as Cibber suggests, Savage had an influence over Pope, that fact certainly suggests a relationship between the two. In addition, if Savage had any sort of perceived "influence" over "the great poet," it would seem that Savage was not merely an underling performing "servile offices," as Cibber puts it. A butler, for example, seldom has influence over the master of the house.

Though there are considerable instances that link Savage and Pope, they all paint Savage as the subservient spy, the gossipmonger, the sneaky reporter of scandal. None of these contemporary sources suggests Savage was much more than a lackey, and a pathetic one at that. Could this negative portrayal be due simply to bad feelings towards their betrayer, or is this minimal function as far as Savage's role in the *Dunciad* goes?

The Dunciad ruined Savage's reputation. Though certainly he had made some questionable choices in his life before, and had been in jail for murder, Savage had always found himself surrounded by supporting and forgiving friends. When he was in prison for murdering Sinclair, his friends launched an enthusiastic campaign to free him. Yet later, when Savage was put in prison for debt, he was abandoned and died alone,

buried at the expense of strangers. What occurred in between the two events to change his relationships? *The Dunciad*: Savage's participation in the *Dunciad* and his perceived role as spy for Pope ended the camaraderie between Savage and his former associates.

Obviously, Savage's role in the *Dunciad* was significant enough to change the feelings of his friends towards him, feelings that were unaffected by his conviction for murder.

Perhaps that is what made his perceived betrayal so much more poignant: they, his friends, had stood by him through all his past transgressions and troubles, only to later find themselves satirized in a work in which he had a role. Perhaps, by reducing his role to that of mere informant instead of collaborator and composer of the notes, the dunces were not only attacking their former friend, but also trying to minimize his betrayal to them and to minimize Savage himself as someone not worth notice.

Cooke himself wrote that Savage's true crime came during the *Dunciad*. In *The Battle of the Poets*, Dennis says to Savage:

Thy Friends were many when thy Faults were less,
Whom not thy Merit gain'd, but thy Distress;
While those you teaz'd all harmless with your Rhyme,
And scribbling Nonsense was your greatest Crime,
Pity and Scorn they cherish'd but conceal'd;
Now Scorn and Hate prevail, and those reveal'd:
Such is of Spys like Thee the certain Fate,
Whether the Spys of Verse, or Spys of State. (Cooke 144)

Cooke even says that Savage's own satires caused little anger. Before, people excused Savage's bad behavior because of his distress. Yet later, after his role in the *Dunciad* and, in his friends' minds, his betrayal, his friends were less forgiving, and then scorn and hatred prevailed. Though Cooke also says that "Pity and scorn they cherished but conceal'd;" perhaps also before the *Dunciad*, Savage was not any less liked, but not taken seriously. This upstart rake who claimed high birth had been a joke before, and perhaps

the dunces could not stand that he was a part of their humiliation. And as well, perhaps this pity and scorn was not so well concealed. Perhaps Savage was well aware of it, and was eager to show his power and influence.

Aaron Hill was one who has rather surprised to find his name in the *Dunciad*; not only was he in general a respected and popular author, but Savage was his friend. Confused about his inclusion in the satire, he wrote to Pope to ask why he found himself in the *Dunciad*. Pope claimed not to realize people were reading Hill into his satire, and that the connection was not intended. In a letter from Pope to Hill on February 5, 1730, Pope wrote that “That the Letters *A.H.* were apply’d to you in the Papers, I did not know (for I seldom read them); I heard it only from Mr. *Savage*, as from yourself, and sent my Assurances to the contrary” (Pope *Correspondence* 170). Here we can see Savage acting as an informant for Pope; Pope at least claimed not to have read the papers and to have received his information only from Savage.

The Dunciad

The Dunciad, as we have discussed before, was not really one document, but many. The first version was written in 1728, and it continued to evolve for many years, culminating in Pope’s *The Dunciad, In Four Volumes* published in 1743, coincidentally the year of Savage’s death. However, it is the *Dunciad Variorum* that we are concerned with; it is in the notes in the variorum edition that our interest mostly lies: did Savage author at least some of these notes?

One of the first textual clues to the possible author (or, as we will find, possible authors) of the *Dunciad* notes is one of the first pages: the *Advertisement to the Dunciad*, which reads:

The Commentary which attends the Poem, was sent me from several hands, and consequently must be unequally written; yet will it have one advantage over most commentaries, that it is not made upon conjectures, or a remote distance of time: and the reader cannot but derive one pleasure from the very Obscurity of the persons it treats of, that it partakes of the nature of a *Secret*, which most people love to be let into, tho' the Men or the Things be ever so inconsiderable or trivial.

Of the *Persons* it was judg'd proper to give some account: for since it is only in this monument that they must expect to survive, (and here survive they will, as long as the English tongue shall remain such as it was in the reigns of Queen *Anne* and King *George*) it seem'd but humanity to bestow a word or two upon each, just to tell what he was, what he wit, when he liv'd, or when he dy'd. (*Twickenham V.* 8-9)

Notice that the advertisement discusses the composition of the notes and states that they are written by several hands, none of which Pope claims as his. Who were the several hands? Certainly if there were several people writing the notes for the *Dunciad*, one of them would be Savage. And though this letter to the publisher supports the theory that Savage helped write the *Dunciad Variorum* notes, it does raise the question: who else could have had a hand in composing the variorum notes?

The *Letter to the Publisher* suggests one possibility: William Cleland. Who is Cleland? *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* writes of him that:

Cleland is known chiefly from his connection with Pope. Pope presented a portrait of himself by Jervas, and a copy of his Homer, to Cleland, with the inscription, 'Mr. Cleland, who reads all other books, will please read this from his affectionate friend, A. Pope' (Carruthers, 260). A letter, obviously written by Pope, but signed William Cleland (dated 22 December 1728 from St James's), was prefixed to the enlarged edition of *The Dunciad*. Pope may also have made use of Cleland to write a letter to Gay in contradiction of the report that 'Timon' was intended for James Brydges, duke of Chandos.

A note by Pope on the *Dunciad* letter is the chief authority for the facts of Cleland's life; some writers at the time of its first publication, including the critic John Dennis, even denied his existence. There is no doubt of the facts mentioned, but other statements about Cleland are contradictory. He has been described as the son of Colonel W. Cleland, which is impossible,

as Colonel Cleland was born about 1661. He is also said to have been the prototype of Steele's Will Honeycomb, which is improbable from a consideration of dates. Neither can he be identified with a Colonel Cleland with whom Swift dined on 31 March 1713. He and Mrs Cleland are mentioned in Swift's correspondence by Mrs Kelly and Mrs Barber as known to Swift. (*DNB* par.2-3)

Note that this source, like many others, assumes Pope wrote this letter and used Cleland's name as the signature. What is this letter, and what does it say? The letter further certainly adds some confusion to the mix. Signed by William Cleland, the letter reads like the cover letter to some notes Cleland has supposedly contributed to the

Dunciad:

It is with pleasure I hear that you have procured a correct Edition of the DUNCIAD, which the many surreptitious ones have rendered so necessary; and it is yet with more, that I am informed it will be attended with a COMMENTARY: a work so necessary; that I cannot think the Author himself would have omitted it, had he approv'd of the first appearance of this Poem.

Such Notes as have occur'd to me I herewith send you; you will oblige me by inserting them amongst those which are, or will be, transmitted to you by others: since not only the Author's friends, but even strangers, appear engag'd by humanity, to some care of an orphan of so much genius and spirit, which its parent seems to have abandoned from the very beginning, and suffered to step into the world naked, unguarded, and unattended.

It was upon reading some of the abusive papers lately publish'd, that my great regard to a person whose friendship I shall ever esteem as one of the chief honours of my life, and a much greater respect to Truth than to him or any man living, engag'd me in Enquiries, of which the inclos'd Notes are the fruit. (*Twickenham* V 11-12)

Could it actually have been William Cleland and not Richard Savage who prepared the notes to the *Dunciad*? Or could they have both written the notes? Perhaps he had a hand in them, but if so, why do the dunces not accuse Cleland as well? Savage is certainly the one whose name is connected with the *Dunciad*. *The Dunciad* is a unique document in

that those responsible take so little responsibility, which is what has made mine an interesting and challenging study. Though it is known that Pope wrote the poem, he attempted to distance himself from the authorship of it. Perhaps the letter to the publisher, signed by Cleland, is yet another attempt to mask who was behind this shocking document. In fact, because Cleland is claiming authorship to some of the notes, perhaps he was more distanced from the composition of the variorum edition. None of those who we know were closely involved will lay any claim to this work; why does Cleland? Though he may have written some of the notes or been a participant in the composition of the *Dunciad* in some small way, he does not appear to have been a major player in the writing of the satire. And judging by Cleland's absence in the accusatory literature that pours forth after the publication of the *Dunciad*, the dunces concur.

The nature of the *Dunciad* notes makes the task of discovering their authorship especially difficult to achieve. In addition to notes about the dunces, the variorum also includes excerpts from their writings. The notes mention things that have been said about each text in the ensuing pamphlet war that began after the publication of the first *Dunciad*. For example, on the very first page, the author of the notes quotes Theobald as he makes fun of the spelling of the *Dunciad*, saying it should be spelled *Dunceiad*, and including several references to his own *Shakespeare Restored*, which is the document which so incensed Pope. The *Dunciad Variorum* even includes an "Index of the Authors of the Notes." They include: Winstanley, Giles Jacob, Curl, Gildon, Theobald, Dennis, Mist, Smedley, Oldmixon, Ralph, Welsted, and "*The learned* Martinus Scriblerus, and others, *passim*" (84). Notice that with the exception of Martinus Scriblerus, the rest of the authors of the notes are the dunces themselves. Our concern is who, exactly, is

encompassed by “Martinus Scriblerus, and others, *passim*.”

The notes in the variorum fall under several categories. One category is made up of the comments of the dunces themselves. It is yet another level of satire and ridicule: the dunces’ own words about the lines of poem are included, mocked. Another category of notes contains Scriblerus’s responses to the excerpts from the dunces. A third category is simply explanatory remarks on the dunces and those included in the poem, authored by Scriblerus again. And finally, there is a small number of notes on the Imitations used in the poem under the “Remarks” section. Again, it is the true identity, or identities, of Scriblerus with which we are concerned. However, regardless of who is behind those notes, the variorum notes do indeed come from several hands as the advertisement claimed: those of the dunces and those of Scriblerus.

The notes themselves have traces of Savage’s voice in them. This following note concerns Jeremy Moore, whom Savage satirized in his own works. In this note, Savage is mentioned:

This young Gentleman’s whole misfortune was too inordinate a passion to be thought a Wit. Here is a very strong instance, attested by Mr. *Savage* son of the late Earl *Rivers*; who having shown some verses of his in manuscript to Mr. *Moore*, wherein Mr. *Pope* was call’d *first of the tuneful train*, Mr. *Moore* the next morning sent to Mr. *Savage* to desire him to give those verses another turn, to wit, “That *Pope* might not be the *first*, because *Moore* had left him unrival’d in turning his style to Comedy.” This was during the rehearsal of the *Rival Modes*, his first and only work; the Town condemn’d it in the action, but he printed it in 1726-7 with this modest Motto,

Hic caestus, artemque repono (Twickenham V 102)

What is interesting here is that Savage’s name is followed by “son of the late Earl Rivers.” Few of the others mentioned in the notes have that little piece of background information added; introductions were simply not needed. For one, the *Dunciad* was a

work for those within the writing profession. Pope wrote it to humiliate and expose other writers; most everyone in the text knew everyone else. And secondly, the *Dunciad* appeared very shortly after Savage's trial. It is unlikely that readers would not know that he claimed to be the son of the late Earl Rivers, especially not after his recent murder trial and conviction. It is, in fact, the type of insertion that Savage would have insisted upon or added himself. Also important to note is that the anecdote was "attested by Savage"; here is proof that in this case, at least, Savage supplied information for the note.

The appendices of the *Dunciad Variorum* list a bibliography of attacks against Pope, both before and after the first *Dunciad* was published. This type of information is very similar to that in Savage's *A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose*. Could Savage have built upon this information as he edited his own work? Was the appendix simply a prototype for his later project? Did he compile the appendices himself in preparation for *A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose*? Though these questions are hard to answer and almost impossible to prove, it seems that the similarities between the appendices to the *Dunciad Variorum* and the later published *Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose* suggest another connection between Savage and the variorum notes.

Though this is all useful and important information to our case, some of the strongest evidence comes from the similarity between the information in the *Dunciad Variorum* notes and Savage's own satires. The original *Dunciad* accuses the Grub Street writers of being dull, but it is in the variorum notes that the more personally damaging gossip and stories are communicated. It is because of the information divulged in the variorum notes that the dunces accused Savage of being Pope's spy. For example, in the *Dunciad*, the variorum expands on a discussion of Thomas Cooke with:

The man here specify'd was the son of a *Muggletonian*, who kept Publick-house at *Braintree* in *Essex*. He writ a thing call'd *The Battle of Poets*, of which *Philips* and *Welsted* were the heroes, and wherein our author was attack'd in his moral character, in relation to his *Homer* and *Shakespear*: He writ moreover a Farce of *Penelope*, in the preface of which also he was squinted at (112)

Compare this with the following lines from *An Author to be Lett*:

Mr. Thomas Cooke, the Translator of *Hesiod*, is the Son of a *Muggletonian-Teacher*, who kept a little obscure Alehouse at *Braintree* in *Essex*. Tho' this Author has no more Genius for Poetry than a Snail, nay less than Mr. *Ambrose Phillips*, or Mr. *Welsted*; and though he would consequently have wanted Spirit enough for his Father's Tapster; yet his Enemies confess him not without Merit. (Publisher's Preface)

The two selections are remarkably similar not only in information, but also in style.

Perhaps Savage not only provided the information for this note, but also wrote it himself.

It is difficult to simply read a note and know whether Savage was the author, but when one has a similar passage with which to compare it, the similarities are more easily discovered.

The notes are not the only place that have connections to Savage's work, however. In one example, the information from Savage appears not in the notes, but in the text itself. Consider this gossip about Norton Defoe from the *Dunciad*:

Norton, from Daniel and Ostroea sprung,
Blest with his father's front, and mother's tongue
Hung silent down his never-blushing head;
And all was hush'd as Folly's self lay dead
(ii. 385-388)

This is very similar to a passage from *An Author to be Lett*:

Had it not been an honest and more decent Livelyhood for Mr. *N-rt-n* (*Daniel's* Son of Love, by a Lady, who vended Oysters) to have dealt in a *Fish-Market*, than to be dealing out the Dialects of *Billingsgate* and Detraction in the *Flying Post*? (Publishers Preface).

There does not seem to be much evidence that this particular claim about Norton Defoe's

parentage is true. Perhaps this is an example of what Cooke meant when he accused Savage of divulging not only all he knew about his friends, but “more than all” as well. In addition to retelling their secrets to Pope, perhaps Savage also created some rumors as well. However, in order to be completely fair to Savage, we must admit the possibility that he could have simply repeated a rumor he had heard that happened to be untrue. Though this may seem to be a very slight distinction, it is a hair less malicious to repeat something one believes may or may not be true than to create the falsehood oneself.

What is ironic is that in both this example and the preceding Thomas Cooke excerpts, the author (authors?) discuss the parentage of the dunces. Thomas Cooke is said to be the son of a Muggletonian teacher, and Norton Defoe is divulged to be the illegitimate love child of Daniel Defoe and a woman who sold oysters. It is the sort of information which would interest Savage, who was obsessed with birth and rank. James Sutherland writes in the Introduction to *An Author to be Lett*, “There is good reason to believe, for example, that Benjamin Norton Defoe was just as legitimate as Defoe’s other children, and that the story of the oyster wench was therefore an irresponsible libel” (iii). Could Savage have created the story out of jealousy for well-connected writers? Certainly, it is the type of rumor that, once heard, would be remembered by Savage, since he himself was so obsessed with his origins.

And finally, information about an upcoming satire from Welsted makes two appearances. In the *Dunciad*:

Leonard Welsted, author of the *Triumvirate*, or a Letter in verse from *Palaemon* to *Celia* at *Bath*, which was meant for a Satire on Mr. *P.* and some of his friends about the year 1718. The strength of the metaphors in this passage is to express the great scurrility and fury of this writer, which may be seen, One day, in a Piece of his, call’d (as I think) *Labeo*. He writ other things which we cannot remember. *Smedley* in his *Metam. of Scrib.*

mentions one, the *Hymn of a Gentleman to the Creator. L. W.* characteris'd in the treatise [...] or the Art of Sinking as a *Didapper*, and after as an *Eel* is said to be this person, by DENNIS. *Daily Journal* of May 11, 1728. He is mentioned again in book 3. (*Twickenham V 138*)

And in *An Author to be Lett*:

I Have well perused the Writings of *Luke Millbourn, Shadwell, Settle, Blackmore*, and many other of our Stamp, notable for salt Wit upon *Dryden*. From these I have extracted curious Hints to assist Welsted in his new Satire against Pope, which was once (he told me) to have been christen'd *Labeo*. 'Tis yet an Embrio, and there are divers Opinions about the Birth of it (5-6).

Both of these notes mention an unpublished satire by Welsted. This is the type of information that Savage could have picked up and passed along to Pope, the gossip of the literary world: who was writing what about whom.

One of the problems with these connections is that because *An Author to be Lett* was published after the *Dunciad Variorum*, one could say that Savage simply lifted the information from the notes that he found to be useful. But the publication of the *An Author to be Lett* so closely follows that of the variorum edition that this would be an unlikely possibility. From the Introduction to *An Author to be Lett*, by James Sutherland:

On April 10, 1729, in the column of *The Daily Post*, Lawton Gilliver announced the publication of *The Dunciad Veriorum*. Nine days later an announcement appeared in *The Flying-Post*; or, *The Weekly Medley*: 'This Day is publish'd, AN AUTHOR TO BE LETT.' Richard Savage's pamphlet is, in fact, a by-product of Pope's war with the dunces." (i)

In order for Savage to include the information from the notes, he would have had at least to read the notes in their pre-publishing stage. What is more likely, however, is that the information that appears in both the *Dunciad Variorum* and *An Author to be Lett* is information, or gossip, that originated from Savage. And though *An Author to be Lett* draws on the same ideas as in Pope's satire, and though Savage names some of the same

people, it is a different creature of a satire. In *An Author to be Lett*, Savage caricatured the typical Grub Street writer through Iscariot Hackney, an incompetent fellow writer. It is very different from Pope's *Dunciad*, with the Goddess of Dulness and its more classical undertones. And while Savage may have been and done many things, he did not steal material. Whatever information appeared in both satires, either originated from him or was used with Pope's knowledge, most likely the former. If Savage simply took the information from Pope, with or without approval, he would have been attacked for that misconduct, not as Pope's spy. However, he may have used the material and information from the *Dunciad Variorum* appendices in creating *A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose*.

A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose

A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose is the work of someone close to the *Dunciad* project. It is, in essence, a scrapbook of writings, letters, poems, and other clippings related to the *Dunciad*. Savage served as collector and editor, adding *An Author to be Lett* to the hodgepodge and writing the letter of dedication to the pieces. Savage discusses the history and purpose behind the *Dunciad* and how it came to be written. The preface is a dedication addressing the Early of Middlesex:

That elegant Taste in Poetry, which is hereditary to your Lordship, together with that particular Regard with which you honour the Author to whom these Papers relate, make me imagine this Collection may not be displeasing to you. And I may presume to say, the Pieces themselves are such as are not unworthy your Lordship's Patronage, my own Part in it excepted. I speak only of the *Author to be Lett*, having no Title to any other, not even the small ones out of the *Journals*. May I be permitted to declare (to the End I may seem not quite so unworthy of your Lordship's Favour, as some Writers of my Age and Circumstances) that I never was concern'd in *any Journals*. I ever thought the exorbitant Liberty, which most of those Papers take with their *Superiors*, unjustifiable in any Rank of Men; but detestable in such, who do it merely *for Hire*, and without

even the bad Excuse of *Passion* and *Resentment*. (1)

Here is another hint of that resentment towards those who write for money and Savage's desperate desire to be seen as a gentleman and a man of high birth. He claims a disdain for journals and writing for money: "I ever thought the exorbitant Liberty, which most of those Papers take with their Superiors, unjustifiable in any Rank of Men; but detestable in such, who do it merely for hire." Here is yet another dig at the dunces, attacking the practice of writing for money and not even for "passion and resentment." One must note the irony in that statement, since both Savage and Pope seem to write out of the extreme resentment they harbor for the dunces.

Richard Savage then discusses the *Dunciad* and the myriad of uproar and writings that followed, coining the term "war of the dunces." He also writes as someone close to the project, mentioning the difference between the covers:

Some false Editions of the Book having an Owl in their Frontispiece, the true one, to distinguish it, fixed in its stead an Ass laden with Authors. Then another surreptitious one being printed with the same Ass, the new Edition in *Octavo* returned for Distinction to the Owl again. Hence arose a great Contest of Booksellers against Booksellers, and Advertisements against Advertisements; some recommending the *Edition of the Owl*, and others the *Edition of the Ass*; by which Names they came to be distinguish'd, so the great Honour also of the Gentlemen of the *Dunciad*.

Savage's dedication speaks with an authority about the *Dunciad* and its publication that is not seen in the many other writings that came forth after the publication of the *Dunciad*. Though many authors wrote avenging satires and keys to the *Dunciad*, none really has the detailed knowledge about the project. Savage shows familiarity with the composition of the *Dunciad* and its publication in this dedication.

Several biographies of Pope have suggested that Pope is the true author of *A Collection of Pieces in Verse and Prose*, but few give any explanation as to why they

believe this. *The Portraits of Alexander Pope* by Wimsatt makes this dismissive statement: “In December 1731 or January 1732 Lawton Gilliver published in octavo *A College of Pieces in Verse and Prose, Which Have Been Published on Occasion of the Dunciad*. The Dedication in Savage’s name to Lord Middlesex has been traditionally attributed to Pope himself” (105). This is an unusual claim, since in most of the research I have read, the work is attributed to Richard Savage. Maynard Mack, however, also suggests this possibility: “It is possible that the description was actually written by Pope” (892n). The same biographers who minimize Pope’s relationship with Savage and the role they play in each other’s lives are also those who are quick to attribute this dedication to Pope, without much in the way of explanation.

Savage’s friend and biographer Johnson, however, also attributes the letter to Pope. According to Johnson:

The Author to be let was first published in a single Pamphlet, and afterwards inserted in a Collection of Pieces relating to the *Dunciad*, which were addressed by Mr. *Savage* to the Earl of *Middlesex*, in a Dedication, which he was prevailed upon to sign, though he did not write it, and in which there are some Positions, that the true Author would perhaps not have published under his own Name; and on which Mr. *Savage* afterwards reflected with no great Satisfaction. (46-8).

Johnson asserts that Savage put his name on the dedication because the true author, Pope, did not want his own name attached to the contents on the paper. One also wonders how Johnson received this information. The phrase “on which Mr. Savage afterwards reflected with no great Satisfaction” suggests that this information came from Savage himself.

One’s reflections are not often published, but told to close friends. Perhaps he related this information to Johnson on one of their nightly walks. Also important to note is Johnson’s use of the word “prevail”: this suggests that Savage did not particularly want his name on

the paper, but did so as a favor to its true author, or was even obliged to as payment, perhaps for a material favor from Pope. This fits in with Pope's previous attempts to foist some of the attention and blame from the *Dunciad* onto others. All of this, of course, does not necessarily validate the assumption that Pope actually wrote the letter, since Savage may or may not have been telling the truth. This is often the challenge when studying Savage's life: even when one has Savage's own elusive words, one must wonder how reliable a source he is. However, if we are to assume that Johnson's claim is true, then the two were collaborating on this project, and most likely on the *Dunciad* as well since the two are so closely related.

The possibility of Savage signing his name to Pope's letter would be especially interesting to our case. If Savage wrote for Pope here, what else could the two have worked on? What else could they have co-authored? Again, Pope says the notes of the *Dunciad Variorum* were written by "someone else." If Pope wrote this letter, however, it puts Savage back into a more passive role than that of collaborator. Still, if proven, it would be strong evidence that the two worked closely together, writing and composing not only the *Dunciad*, but other related documents.

Conclusion

The case for Savage's involvement in the *Dunciad* is strengthened by reviewing the evidence of the testimonies of Pope's and Savage's contemporaries and the dunces, the similar information and accusations between Savage's poetry and the *Dunciad*, and the similar metaphors and phrases between Savage's works and the *Dunciad*. It seems certain that Savage worked on the *Dunciad* with Pope in some capacity. Establishing to what extent Savage aided Pope in the composition of the *Dunciad*, however, is more

tricky.

Perhaps Savage was simply, as is most often suggested, an informant, passing along information. This is the story most often accepted; it is the perception expressed by many of the dunces. Savage was accused of being Pope's spy in many of the contemporary accounts written retaliating against Pope and the *Dunciad*.

Savage could have had a greater role, gathering information from the newspapers and writing some of the actual notes for the *Dunciad Variorum*. Assuming he was the resource for some of the gossip and rumors included in the *Dunciad*, it would be logical for him to be the author of at least some of the notes in collaboration with Pope. As we have seen, some of the information in the variorum notes appears almost simultaneously in Savage's *An Author to be Lett*. Was this his information to begin with, or did he simply "borrow" it from his friend Pope's work? It seems more likely that Savage had a hand in that information: he did not include all the gossip and information from the variorum notes.

Even within this possibility, there is a question of how much authority Savage had over the notes. Did Savage work alone, writing the notes from his own creation and the information he had on the dunces, or did he serve merely as a secretary, writing out what Pope wanted him to say? How much control and agency could Savage have had over the notes? James Sutherland writes in the *Twickenham Edition* of Pope's Works:

Some of the *Dunciad* notes, too, relate to matters which only the injured author himself would think worth recalling. There seems to be no escaping the conclusion, therefore, that when Pope decided to publish the *Dunciad* with Notes Variorum it was he himself (with Savage acting, perhaps, as a sort of secretary) who worked through his four volumes of Libels, Jacob's *Poetical Register*, Winstanley's *Lives of the Poets*, and other works of reference or abuse. The purely personal aspect of the *Dunciad* was Pope's own business; he could hardly expect his friends to manifest a very lively

concern over what Dennis had written or Phillips spoken against him a dozen or fifteen years ago. But it is just from such trivialities that the notes to the *Dunciad* are often constructed. (*Twickenham* V. xxvi-xxvii)

Perhaps Pope's feelings towards the dunces were, as the editors here suggest, too personal to trust to anyone else. However, Savage, as we have discussed previously, certainly had his own personal axes to grind. This could possibly be what led Pope to work with Savage on this topic: in Savage he had not only a spy and possible collaborator, but a confidant who understood his anger towards the dunces. There were many other writers with whom Pope could collaborate, but perhaps it was Savage alone who shared his need for revenge. Savage was no stranger to revenge; in addition to his anger towards the dunces, he exacted continuous revenge against his mother. His poetry was often filled with images of the harsh, cruel portrait he gave Lady Macclesfield, and *The Bastard* was especially written to this end. Savage understood anger and revenge, and he had his own resentment towards the dunces. As mentioned previously, Tracy suggests that *Authors of the Town* drew Pope to Savage. In its satirical lines, full of resentment, perhaps Pope saw a partner for his future work, one who would understand him, one who would not judge him.

Yet another possibility would involve Savage having a greater role in writing the *Dunciad*: perhaps contributing some verses or phrases. The inclusion of Eliza Haywood is one example of this. Savage, who includes Haywood in both of his satirical poems, had a much closer relationship with Haywood. Pope, as mentioned previously, had no personal vendetta against Haywood. The similarities between Savage's lines on Jeremy Moore and Pope's Epigram and the common use of the cinder-wench metaphor, provide another example of more than information being shared between the two writers.

It is the most logical conclusion, based on the evidence, that Savage worked with Pope on the *Dunciad Variorum*. Together, the illegitimate rake with a desire to be a gentleman and the deformed Catholic poet worked together in mutual friendship and understanding to exact revenge on those writers they held in contempt. Richard Savage, though not revered as a great writer in his own right, was an important contributor to the literature of the eighteenth century.

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