



# The triumph of Augustan poetics

*English literary culture from  
Butler to Johnson*

BLANFORD PARKER

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## Introduction

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The European Baroque culture, along with the Humanistic tradition which preceded it, were Christian in all important aspects, with Christianity marking the limits of both aesthetics. Any application of the term "classical" to Renaissance writing must be qualified, because though it passed through the phases of Ovidian, Ciceronian, Platonic, and Virgilian fashion, those fashions were themselves shaped in a manner always syncretic and ambiguous. Petrarch's Cicero was an Augustinian Cicero, Ficino's Plato was both Scholastic and biblical, Pico's Virgil was a figure of esoteric Christian *preparatio*, and Chapman's Homer was an allegorical theologian. Even the most modern sensibilities reflected this dependency on Christian doctrine. As the Pyrrhonic elements of Erasmus and Montaigne came in the end to a kind of anti-Scholastic fideism thinly masking a Pauline topos, so Galileo's science leaned on the theology of the thirteenth century,

The Baroque, the last phase of the Renaissance in Europe, received four great traditions of Christian theology, and each had its own form of art. The *mystical* rhetoric of spiritual consummation, with the obliteration of the natural and the evaporation of self, produced the peculiar lyric of the Spanish mystics, an erotic allegory. The *logist* art produced spiritual acrostic, morphological verse, and paradox across Europe and in Britain, in which the biblical text forms an autonomous and all-explaining language with Christ, the Logos, as the underlying principle of grammar. The *fideist* rhetoric of the "good race," in which the salvific *telos* marks the limit of allegorical romance, had been common in Europe since Augustine but flourished especially in the Reformation under the authority of Luther. And finally the *analogical* art, in which the spiritual finds its analogy in the physical creation, was the last and most powerful of the aesthetic experiments of the Renaissance. In its first rumblings, it was measured and sublime, as in the erotic cosmologies of Dante and Petrarch, and by the seventeenth century it encompassed in its explosive extravagance all the central language cultures of Europe under the banners of Marino, Molina, Gongora, Ronsard, and Donne. Here the implications of the Scholastic *analogia entis* were dramatized, and the iconic repertoire of the late Middle Ages embellished and expanded.



All of these modes of poetry were present in the seventeenth century, with the analogical mode dominating European and English lyric and drama until mid-century. But in only one generation, sometimes only a few years, these four modes of Christian poesis began to wither and fade. This decay happened both on the Continent and in Britain, but it happened most dramatically and absolutely in Britain. Vaughan, Crashaw, Cowley, and Traherne, to name only a few, were writing in the old metaphysical way in the decade preceding the Restoration, but how few poems of the Baroque canon were written after? And what caused a reversal of taste so complete?

In contrasting the poetic of Ignatius Loyola to that of later "classical critics," Roland Barthes argues:

Classical ideology practices in the cultural order the same ecology as Bourgeois democracy does in the political order: a separation and a balance of powers, a broad but closely watched territory is conceded to literature, on condition that the territory be isolated, hierarchically, from other domains; thus it is that literature, whose function is a worldly one, is not compatible with spirituality; one is detour, ornament, veil, the other is immediation, nudity: this is why one cannot be both a saint and a writer.<sup>1</sup>

If we may replace "classical" with neoclassical, and this is what Barthes always seems to mean by the "horizon of the classical," we may from these words begin our search for solutions. The French neoclassical and the British Augustan take as their starting point the excess, the abuse, of figuration in the Baroque. The new poetry would depart from all four of the previous models and would self-consciously set itself against them. The English Civil War would circumscribe both the crest and the nadir of the metaphysical writing era. The *Raison* of Boileau, or judgment of Dryden, were created expressly to curb the excesses of the poetry of the earlier seventeenth century. The Augustan culture could not abide the hubris of an analogical age – its claim to mediated knowledge of the transcendent by means of metaphor. Boileau, Butler, Rochester, Dryden, Swift, and their contemporaries would mock the "acrostic land" of the logist; the maddened, inward "aeolist" imagination of the fideist; the self-lacerating obsessions of the mystic; and most of all the empty conceits of the analogists.

Roland Barthes, *Sade/Fourier/Loyola* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 39–40. It is interesting to note that just such a bicameralism of the imagination was inscribed in the very language of *An Essay on Man*. The House of Commons would be the motive force of the soul and the House of Lords a body for advice and consent. "Most strength the moving principle requires: / Active its task, it prompts, impels, inspires. / Sedate and quiet the comparing lies, / Form'd but to check, delib'rate and advise" (Pope, *An Essay on Man*, II, 67–70). These correspond to the wit and judgment of the *Essay on Criticism*. There must always, in enlightened theory, be a limiting instrument to control and domesticate the "figure-making power."

Likewise, the Augustan would become classical in a new way. Its classicism would eschew syncretism and allegory and invent a novel literalism, a sober simplicity of representation. The cult of Horace was to become the first "Classicism" of Europe to oppose itself to the Baroque and to the Christian synthesis that had created all earlier "Classicism."

In short, the empirical poetics invented in England in the seventeenth century brought on an irruption of consciousness which has until now never been completely described. It was construed at first by its Whiggish apologists, Locke, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Addison, and more recently by their Victorian descendants, Macaulay, Lecky, and Stephen, as a reasonable and inevitable evolution. "The inevitable cooling of the imagination after the Restoration and the rational politics which is its twin"<sup>2</sup> was the saving instrument of the peace of the Augustans. The earlier age of superstitious energy, of, in Locke's words, "chimeras of conceit," had to be diffused by a program of moderation. "Quieting the cannon's mouth" was, for Bishop Sancroft in 1669, attended by "a like calming of those conceitful bigotries and ferocious fancies of the last age";<sup>3</sup> and Burnet, the greatest latitudinarian prelate of the time, found his country caught between "superstition and enthusiasm,"<sup>4</sup> attempting to construct a middle upon which to survive.

The balancing of Scholastic and Protestant elements which marked the Hookerian formula of the 1590s became instead a demolishing of traditions, an emptying of content, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Laudian. The *via media* of this latter culture was not a mean but a double expunging – an attempt at erasure. This Augustan project had great significance in the realm of politics – the building of a contractarian society, a modern constitutional monarchy, and its more democratic successor. The political evolution is by now proverbial, but the result for poetry, the precipitous transformation of imagination after 1660, is, perhaps, not so well understood. In fact the imaginative transformation is in part the ground for the political changes, and these two colossi of politics and art were built upon a change of theology of equally momentous proportions. The spirit of the age of Locke and Shaftesbury, and the succeeding one of Pope and Walpole, was not the inevitable result of the *Zeitgeist* of that century – an unconscious growth of empiricism and latitude – but in part a neatly crafted program founded upon the useful art of forgetting for the maintenance of public order. Among the feared residue of the Civil War culture was the very practice of Baroque art: conceitful, passionate, sacramental, iconic, communal, and traditional. This art, the product of centuries, had been so

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Firth, *Commentary on Macaulay's History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 119.

<sup>3</sup> William Sancroft, *Familiar Letters* (London: Cooper, 1757), 42.

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Time* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1883), 526.



nearly expunged that its recent apologists – Donne, Cowley, and Benlowes (to name a few) – were themselves either openly censured as in Roscommon, Pope, and Swift, or rewritten, as in Pope's *Satires of Dr. Donne*, or, more importantly, lampooned with ferocious energy. If we look at Spingarn's classic collection of seventeenth-century critical essays we find Davenant, Rimer, Roscommon, Hobbes, Cowley, Dryden, and Pepys – the whole line of forward-looking empirico-classicists – and aside from Dennis (the whipping-boy of Pope and Swift), none of the numerous apologists for the still flourishing religious school. The genius of the age was in obscuring or lashing all opposition, not in the spirit of drawing-room complacency, but in the active construction of the "myth of judgment."<sup>5</sup> In the words of a pre-eminent Edwardian critic:

The scholastic philosophy had of course been challenged generations before. Bacon, Descartes, and Hobbes, however, in the preceding century, had still treated it as the incubus upon intellectual progress, and it was not yet exorcised from the universities. It had, however, passed from the sphere of living thought . . . In the time of Laud, the bishops in alliance with the Crown endeavored to enforce the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts upon the nation at large and to suppress all non-conformity by law. Every subject of the King was also amenable to church discipline. By the Revolution, any attempt to enforce such discipline had become hopeless. The existence of non-conformist churches has to be recognised as a fact, though perhaps an unpleasant fact. The Dissenters can be worried by disqualifications of various kinds, but the claim of toleration, of Protestant sects at least, is admitted.<sup>6</sup>

These words of Leslie Stephen are not entirely true. The reform of Laud was violent, rash, and unsuccessful. He had underestimated the Calvinist and Independent elements within his own church and the willingness of the gentry to come to the aid of dissenting groups. He misunderstood the deep habit of iconoclasm that had grown up in England since the time of Jewell (and perhaps even so far back as Wycliffe). Neither the Hookerian compromise, with its residual Scholasticism, nor Laud's liturgical discipline were in the spirit of the age. Laud was always associated in the popular mind with creeping Catholicism, and such an imputation carried with it the full weight of public censure. In fact, the propaganda of Sheldon's church in the 1660s was far more subtle and effective than Laud's or perhaps any earlier church hierarchy's had been. It manipulated anti-Catholic feelings with great finesse. It brought the country clergy and dissenting bishops into line by the most thorough and thoughtful coercion – the distribution of older church lands and fees, the threatening of

<sup>5</sup> I elaborate the significance of the new concept of "judgment" superadded to the pre-existing faculties of wit, invention, and fancy, in chapter 2.

<sup>6</sup> Leslie Stephen, *Selected Writings in British Intellectual History*, ed. John Clive (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 126.

benefices, and the meticulous control of parliamentary votes among sitting clergy.<sup>7</sup> From the time that the Bishops and the King's ministers tricked and deceived Baxter and his associates at the Savoy Conference of 1662,<sup>8</sup> the Presbyterian and dissenting interests were systematically excluded from the new national compromise. By the time such a party regained its feet, as in the era of Wesley or Whitefield, it had been hopelessly marginalized. Bishop Gibson treated Wesley like a child; Bishop Butler treated him like a madman. During the earlier phase the Anglican Church played a game of cat and mouse with Charles II and his successors and succeeded in preventing the Stuarts from granting any broad or enforceable Act of Toleration.<sup>9</sup> This was not done primarily because of fear of the king's Catholicism, though that fear was sometimes real, but as the means of diffusing Protestant dissent. The Church's control of publications after the Restoration was more successful even than Cromwell's had been, though there remained an enormous appetite for works of the most extreme dissent. We know that no works of the broad and middle Anglican culture came close to the popularity of Bunyan, and we should recall that nearly all the best-sellers of that age were of a similar cast.<sup>10</sup> Johnson was correct to say that the great popularity of Tillotson was basically a show of conformity and good taste, and if very few had read through those volumes of the bishop's tedious and commonplace moralism, few also had read the elegant and exacting tomes of Jeremy Taylor. The modern High-Churchman who reads Donne, Andrewes, Hooker, and Taylor is participating in nineteenth-century nostalgia.

The theater, late Cavalier poetry, lampoon, and, at a later phase, periodicals were the real taste of the broad church public, and this taste, though often denounced by the Anglican hierarchy, was of great value in the cause of diffusing the appetite for works of religious dissent. Not until the 1740s did the broader Protestant reading culture reemerge, and it is important to remember that Young's *Night Thoughts* and Richardson's *Clarissa* helped to rejuvenate the severe moralism and fideist allegory which had been so popular in the early years of the Restored government. If Scholasticism had passed "from the sphere of living thought," it was in part because the publication of Catholic (and some Protestant-Scholastic) books was often illegal. In fact both Francis de Sales and Thomas à Kempis remained popular after 1660, though sometimes in altered or even

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England 1688-1791* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Norman Sykes, *Aspects of Religion in the Restoration Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 4-5, 69.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Hutton, *Charles the Second, King of England, Scotland and Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 296-298.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. John Sommerville, *Popular Religion in Restoration England* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1977), chs. 2 and 3.

emasculated editions. Scholasticism and its Neoplatonic cousin were, in fact, living elements in the writings of Norris and the Cambridge Platonists, of the unchurched nonjurors like Leslie and Sharpe, and even Edward Young, of whom it is reported that in his youth he had read Aquinas with great interest. It suited Leslie Stephen's own purpose (his own anti-metaphysical and agnostic bent) to imagine that the peace of the Augustans was smooth and natural – that it lacked the violence of earlier periods and that it had found an easy solution to the deep divisions in national opinion. It was the thesis of Arnold, and certainly championed by Lecky and Pattison, that the Hebraic element, that element of serious Calvinist theology and self-abnegating Protestantism, had remained an ineradicably bad element in the English national character to the end of the nineteenth century. The superstitious roots of this residual Protestant “bigotry” are a large part of the middle-class myth of George Eliot's fictional world, and are the subtext of Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* and Lecky's *Rise of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*. Any apology for the literature of the eighteenth century since that time has tended to see the rise of empirical, rational thought as the keynote of the period, and the existence of Bunyan, Law, Wesley, Hervey, and Young as anomalous. Where Dissenters or protesting Anglicans have been treated seriously (leaving aside for the moment the important work of Donald Davie), they have been seen as connected to a laboring party or class. The thesis of the rising working class and the “poor man's ethic” of the Methodists has been of great importance, but it has also tended to obscure the deeper epistemological and theological issues of the Restoration culture.

Most studies of the Restoration and Hanoverian culture and literature have for a long time been rooted in apology. The admiration of common sense and empirical virtues has drawn many scholars to the period. Until recently those who have turned their attention away from Romanticism to explore the supposedly orderly confines of Augustan rhetoric have shown a remarkable degree of sympathy with the period's uncritical view of its own enlightened methods. It may have seemed inevitable that most critics of the period of spreading positivism, beginning in the age of Darwin and lasting till after World War II, would find their origins in the early eighteenth century. Those modern critics who have taken their cue from Locke, Burke, Johnson, and Adam Smith have preserved in their own work the myth of *judgment*, the narrative of the free and rational gentleman who is not the dupe of enthusiastic fancies or Romantic delusions. Locke, Burke, and Adam Smith are intimately connected to Romantic thinking itself. The capitalist individual of Smith is the forerunner and partner of the isolated Romantic of a later period. Hume's skepticism has a severe turn of solipsism and detachment from tradition which connects him to Rousseau and Byron. Burke's own nationalism, his sense of innate, primitive local

tradition, his opposition to rationalism, and his cult for the sublime are part of the preparation for mature Romanticism. Similarly, Pope may be said to be one of the first truly modern sensibilities. He wrote the first important explicitly autobiographical poem in English, he helped to invent the cult of "private passion," and, as I shall show, he did a great deal by his poetic practice to take the edge off of the Humanism he is so often said to represent.

The Augustan period of literature in England remains today our most unread and, perhaps, unknowable body of texts. Strachey and Woolf were quite wrong to think we moderns could go back to the orderly souls of Pope and Hogarth, Walpole, and Sterne for contrast and relief. Augustan literature was the first great victory over the culture of analogy, memorial authority, and traditional theology, and their classicism is no more backward-looking or authentic than that of Shelley or even Joyce. The modern heterocosm and improvisational ethic began with the Augustan and have not moved far beyond it.

One of the great unsolved problems of Augustan studies is the true place of classicism in the major authors of the period. I hope to show that the Neoclassical dogmas of the late seventeenth century are qualified by an empirical poetic foreign to the Aristotelian-Platonic theories which dominated late-Medieval and Baroque culture, and that the classical was a kind of screen which the Augustans could place between themselves and the conceitful writing culture of the Civil War era. It should be obvious to us that the Roman gentleman could have known nothing of the incipient empiricism of the eighteenth century, but it may be less obvious that Virgil and Horace are themselves involved in the metaphysical and spiritual ambiguities which are seen in late ancient writing. The eighteenth century imagined a great divide of consciousness between those imperial Roman authors and the thought of St. Paul and Plotinus, but in reality the *honnête homme* and the English gentleman are much farther from the milieu of the patronized poets of the first century. Serious readers should recognize, I think, that the great age of syncretic Classicism in Europe was over by the time of *Gulliver's Travels*, and that, whatever advances were made thereafter in textual or historical scholarship, there was a great and singular decline in the imaginative use of classical materials.

Speaking of the differences between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century preachers, Leslie Stephen speaks the language of Augustan apology:

the persecution is political rather than ecclesiastical. The intellectual change is parallel. The great divines of the seventeenth century speak as members of a learned corporation, condescending to instruct the laity. The hearers are supposed to listen to the voice (as Donne puts it) as from "angels in the clouds." They are

experts, steeped in a special science, above the comprehension of the vulgar. They have been trained in the schools of theology, and have been thoroughly drilled in the art of "syllogising." They are walking libraries with the ancient fathers at their finger-ends; they have studied Aquinas and Duns Scotus, and have shown their technical knowledge in controversies with the great Jesuits, Suarez and Bellarmine. They speak frankly, if not ostentatiously, as men of learning, and their sermons are overweighted with quotations, showing familiarity with the classics, and with the whole range of theological literature. Obviously the hearers are to be passive recipients, not judges of the doctrine. But by the end of the century, Tillotson has become the typical divine, whose authority was to be as marked in theology as that of Locke in philosophy. He addresses his hearers on a level with their capabilities, and assures that they are not "passive buckets to be pumped in to," but reasonable men who have the right to be critics as well as disciples.<sup>11</sup>

Tillotson's plain style, coming down to us in the contemporary flood of anti-dogmatic and anti-Baroque reactions which includes Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*, Glanvil's *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, and Locke's *Essay*, was not merely an evangelical and democratic gesture to his congregation. He did not only condescend to his audience's level, but he helped to create the audience for a style which, in Pepys' *Diary* and Baxter's *Reliquiae*, would be described as uninspired and mechanical. The unconscious and conscious clearing away of the residue of the metaphysical style in every genre was a mode of public control – of narrowing the public taste for a dangerous past. This clearing away is central to Sprat's argument that science is the best gift of providence to a peaceful nation. Such a gift must embrace the literal and unexceptional, and in Sprat's words "save us from the empty lure of words." Nor is Stephen correct in thinking that Donne was removed from his parishioners by a barrier of learned grandiloquence. Walton claimed that Donne was one of the best shows in town; his reputation as a preacher far exceeded that of Tillotson among his own contemporaries, and we know from Shakespeare's tragedies that the Jacobean audience of all classes had a genius for getting what it wanted and needed out of the most entangled materials. Donne's sermons are Scholastic and casuistical, but they also tap into that nerve of Protestant personal meditation and drama which sets them apart from Andrewes or Laud. The sermons of Donne's period are varied marvelously from the orotund and impenetrable to the straightforward. Though there was a lively debate over the "theory" of the sermon in the seventeenth century, no literature remains indicating any rigorous public program for the measuring and teaching of proper Anglican pulpit style in the period. Such a program is quite obvious in the later period. That there was still communication between the Roman Catholic and English clergy, and that it was carried on with the highest seriousness, shows the earlier age's advantage. A distrust of reasoned

<sup>11</sup> Stephen, *Selected Writings*, 125.

doctrine was not the glory but the folly of the eighteenth-century church. Swift and Sterne were great wits, but poor preachers. That the churchgoers of the Restoration were independent spirits who thought for themselves, and not "buckets to be pumped in to," is a typical piece of modern cant, and the fear of rational instruction and dialectical argument as an imposition upon freedom was an idea invented by the Augustans. Stephen fears figurative and theological language as Tillotson and Hoadly did before him. Such a fear of the figurative is deeply rooted in modern thought.

On the other hand, it was a peculiar accident of modern criticism that T. S. Eliot and a few of his contemporaries reclaimed for the larger English canon the poems of the metaphysical school. It was natural for Coleridge and Eliot (and Grierson) to take a personal interest in resuscitating the long-buried body of Baroque English lyric. Their own spiritual notions and their extreme reactions to positivist thinking may have driven them back to the seventeenth century for solace. The crucial moment of distortion in eighteenth-century studies came when Leavis in his *Revaluation* and Brooks in *The Well-Wrought Urn* (to name two obvious examples) began to see the same virtues of figural compression and even conceit in Pope and Gray that Eliot had discovered in Donne. At the time when Empsonian ambiguities had become the greatest differentia of good poetry, they suddenly appeared as a central element in Augustan writing. This was, perhaps, no more than the folly of professionalism which corrupts each generation of scholars in one way or another, but it had resounding significance. Since that time a continual attempt to conflate and blur the lines between metaphysical and Popeian wit has helped us to forget the serious breach in tradition that is implied by the theory and practice of the Augustans. One of the subjects of this study is the centrality for the Augustans of the newly discovered "literal," and how a poetics of contiguity and accretion is qualitatively different from a poetics of analogy and conceit.

A book of the kind I have conceived must go beyond a review of the problems of the Augustan canon. It must memorialize the remnants of the embattled Baroque culture, and must attempt to describe the survival of analogical thinking and writing throughout the Restoration and eighteenth century. For this reason I have included when possible a summary treatment of authors like Benlowes and Blackmore, and have tried to show the significance of Augustan hostility to their works without falling back on the uncritical acceptance of Augustan valuations. Pat Rogers claims that when he returned to read "the dunces" he found their works even more trivial and hackneyed than had been suggested by Pope.<sup>12</sup> This has not been my experience. Blackmore's *Creation* is an interesting if unwieldy

<sup>12</sup> Pat Rogers, *Grub Street: Studies in a Subculture* (London: Methuen, 1972), 101.

continuation of the European tradition of cosmological poems, and its unlikeness to Pope's theodicy is of great importance. Likewise, I have dedicated chapters 6 and 7 to the Protestant reaction to Augustanism. The tensions created by the invention of a new literalism were enormous, and Protestant writers from Watts to Johnson began to turn away from an empirical poetic in order to escape the amorphous naturalism of poems like *The Seasons*. This fideist reaction cannot be understood as an anomaly within Augustanism, but as an inevitable return to one of the ancient possibilities of Christian mimesis. Once nature had been stripped of its analogical and specular qualities it could no longer be used for Christian meditation, but it is instructive that the first important reaction against the new limitations of Augustan writing came from within. Prior and Young in their long meditative poems, the *Solomon* and the *Night Thoughts*, in part repudiated their own earlier Augustan rhetoric and turned to the world-weary and privative theology that we associate with Luther and Pascal. It was essential, therefore, in this study to trace the origins and growth of the Augustan and some important reactions to it.

Since I have claimed that Augustanism was an erasure – a new beginning, neither Medieval, nor classical – it seemed incumbent upon me to describe at least briefly the kinds of mimeses that it replaced and its relation to those kinds. For this reason, in chapter 5 I have presented a schematic of four traditional paradigms of medieval and Baroque writing, each theological. In my early researches for this book I had contemplated a study of English religious writing from 1660 to the middle of the eighteenth century. But I came to realize that such a specialized study would be misleading. Religious poetry was not a compartment of literature before the Restoration. Religious analogies and images were the *sine qua non* of all verse written from the Carolingian period to the earlier seventeenth century in the European literatures. The Petrarchan and even Gongorist modes were built from the same basic repertoire of images and had the same conscious or unconscious theory of language that we find in hymns and religious meditation. There was no really secular poetry in the late-medieval culture, though there was a good deal of blasphemy, naturalism, and eroticism. Villon's poetry, for example, is derived from the same analogical conception of nature and autobiography that we see in the Franciscan hymns. I have gone so far as to place even Rabelais, in whose easy chair so much of Augustan literature is thought to sit, rather in the context of the analogical habits of the sixteenth century than the ferocious satirical literalism of Swift or Sterne.

With the late seventeenth century a new mimetic possibility enters the scene. This novel art is no longer circumscribed by the old binarisms of spiritual analogy against iconoclasm, or fideist against visionary poetics, but issues from a thorough critique of all pre-existing modes of Baroque



art. In this sense Augustanism can be viewed as a challenge to the possibility of Christian and even classical "essentialist" theories of poetry. That this challenge was often unconscious, and often the work of poets ostensibly pious, makes the case even more complex.

I have chosen Samuel Butler to represent this new possibility in English. I begin with Butler (in chapter 1) because he helped to invent the satiric and popular path of the Augustan, which Dryden, Swift, Pope, Gay, and Sterne found irresistible. By a detailed treatment of *Hudibras* I hope to show the importance of the "low" element in all Augustan poetry, and dislodge the notion of unshakable canons of classical taste. The surface of Augustan literature was often hideously deformed, and I wish to argue that such realism is a necessary part of the reformulation of letters after the Restoration. In chapter 3 I analyze Pope's poetry to show that the high and low, the neoclassical and the Hudibrastic, are never far apart in this period, both serving an underlying "literalism" which was the particular discovery of Butler's era.

I have spoken briefly about the roots of our own apologies for the eighteenth century, and I hope to be forgiven for going back as far as Stephen for my examples. The defense of Augustan values and virtues has always been a tricky business in academic writing. I have heard one enthusiastic professor claim that eighteenth-century literature is for adults, Romantic for children. The trickiness is derived from the always relatively small and insular readership of both primary and secondary texts in the academic canon between Dryden and Johnson. The orderliness and abstraction which has so often been ascribed to the period, its solid common sense and its tough realism, are not likely to bring more readers to it. Yet it was in the intellectual interest of so many British and American critics since World War II to enhance and repeat those claims for the period. I have mentioned the attempt to draw Augustan poetry into the charmed sphere of witty ambiguity at the time of Leavis and Richards. But there is another kind of retrospective prestige that critics have attempted to recoup for the Augustans. We may call this the image of social and cosmic order. The monumental and invaluable works of critics like Mack, Price, and Battestin have attempted to shore up the edifice of Augustan literature on terms derived from it.<sup>13</sup> Battestin's *Providence of Wit* will always be a central study of Augustan writing, and perhaps no one can go farther in

<sup>13</sup> I have set out to show that a great appearance of order may be a disorder, and to address a number of studies on those grounds in my opening chapters. Among the many distinguished books on the order of Augustan rhetoric and cosmos I would mention particularly: Martin Battestin, *The Providence of Wit* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1981); Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); Martin Price, *To the Palace of Wisdom* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964); and Paul Fussell, *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

defending the ideas of Providential and social order which the period wished for itself. But such an order was after the time of Dryden only wishful thinking. The heterocosmic vision of Pope's *Essay on Man*, like that of Hobbes' *Leviathan* and Butler's *Hudibras* before it, derived its astonishing originality from being perilously suspended, "self-balanced" like Pope's earth, between two great figure-making ages, the Baroque and the Romantic. This is not to say that the period is the prelude to Romanticism and the strong poetry of Blake and Wordsworth, but it is certainly to deny that Pope and Swift are the repositories of older humanistic culture. The very essence of poems like *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Seasons* is their capacity to collapse a world of fruitful analogies into the space of the trivial and quotidian. Their allusions to Virgilian and Miltonic sources are a mask which hides the thoroughness of their originality. I hope to show that the replacing of metonymic – that is, spatial associative structures – for metaphoric and analogical ones is a symptom of the rupture between Renaissance and Augustan thought.

Nor is it easy to return to the historical narrative at its moment of irruption, now so long obscured. After the Civil War, the remnants of the poetic culture of the Catholic, the Laudian, the Nonconformist, the Scholastic Presbyterian, the Quaker, and the nonjuror, were systematically pilloried – first in that master Augustan text *Hudibras*, and then with tireless satire down to the 1740s. What at first was merely burlesque about outworn customs of thought became the very definition of pathology, and the Augustans in their manipulation of the rhetoric of madness seem to add credence to the Foucauldian formula of cultural exclusion by a kind of socio-clinical propaganda.

The success of this age of satire was so complete as to have largely blotted out the reputation of authors of other poetic genres. The major Augustans produced by negation a space for their own peculiar concept of the reasonable man. The observant reader of *A Tale of a Tub* or *The Dunciad* has the same contempt for the enthusiastic and miraculous that his later counterpart felt in reading Hume's essay "On Miracles." There has always been a too rigorous distinction between the prose and poetic genres of the period. Mandeville and Hume seem to me to be among the most able Augustan satirists. The first was capable of subtle imitations of Hudibrastic verse, the second memorializes Butler on the last page of his great history. Their philosophies, like those of Butler and Rochester, were systems of pointed exclusion, and like the great verse satirists their chief enemies were conceited and conceitful traditionalists and self-vaunting spiritualists. The Augustan philosophers' indebtedness to Butler, Dryden, and Pope could be easily traced. Bacon and Hobbes are only one corner of their intellectual inheritance. Authors like Butler, Locke, Swift, and Hume engineered a tremendous narrowing of the uses of reason and wit. The "Age of Reason"