



PROJECT MUSE®

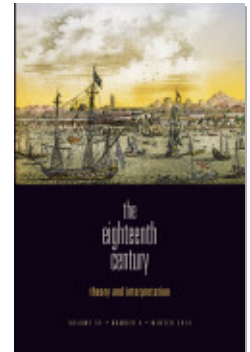
---

## Stories of Everything: Epics, Encyclopedias, and Concepts of “Complete” Knowledge

Seth Rudy

The Eighteenth Century, Volume 55, Number 4, Winter 2014, pp. 411-430  
(Article)

Published by University of Pennsylvania Press  
DOI: [10.1353/ecy.2014.0034](https://doi.org/10.1353/ecy.2014.0034)



➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ecy/summary/v055/55.4.rudy.html>

# Stories of Everything: Epics, Encyclopedias, and Concepts of “Complete” Knowledge

*Seth Rudy*  
Rhodes College

Epic poetry has long enjoyed a critical association with various manifestations of encyclopedic learning. The reputation of Homer and Virgil’s comprehensive knowledge in antiquity and the Middle Ages—a reputation neither always unchallenged nor entirely defeated, even as late as the early eighteenth century—helped make epic an enduring signifier of great magnitude and longevity, if no longer one of truly universal scope. Now, at a moment when Google seeks “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful,” and when digital technologies have brought with them new modes and forms of knowledge production and transmission, scholars have again begun to look to epic as the ancestor of an emerging genre that similarly has the potential to redefine the standards, value, and possibilities of complete knowledge. Database, as Ed Folsom writes in “Database as Genre: the Epic Transformation of the Archive,” is gaining recognition as “the genre of the twenty-first century,” but in truth it “has been with us all along, in the guises of those literary works we have always had trouble assigning to a genre,” and as Wai Chee Dimock claims, in the phenomenological life of epic.<sup>1</sup> The ancient commonplaces praising Homer and Virgil’s more-than-human capacities connect epic and its history to everything from the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid* to Francis Bacon’s *Great Instauration* (1620), and from the encyclopedias of the Enlightenment to the reputation of Google’s PageRank as an “all-knowing” algorithm.<sup>2</sup> The genre has for centuries been a part of the discourse of the many projects, texts, and technologies that aspire to or indeed do surpass the limitations of a single mortal mind.

In 1710, the author and biographer Richard Ward summarized his thoughts on those limitations with a phrase he claimed to have borrowed from antiquity. “When a Man shall be join’d to *Intellect*, or *Understanding*,” he wrote, “by a sort of Complete Knowledge of all things, then a God (or, as I would interpret it, an extraordinary Heroe) may be said to sojourn in a Human Body.”<sup>3</sup> Ward’s assess-

ment implies that such a joining is improbable if not impossible—that neither the single human memory nor the single human lifespan is suited to achieving a perfect understanding of the universe in all its complexity. The future tense and ancient pedigree of the remark cast the pursuit of complete knowledge as part of a venerable and ongoing tradition of frustrated ambition; by the early eighteenth century, it seemed, humanity had already sought it for millennia and either altogether failed to achieve it or simply lost what it once supposedly knew.

The concept of completeness comprises a set of opposing values. On the one hand, completeness indicates comprehensiveness: a full account of every part of knowledge or every article relevant to a given subject or subjects of inquiry. On the other hand, it also implies cohesion: the connection of all those parts or articles together into a unified whole without defect. As numerous readers and writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries observed, however, the more comprehensive a record of knowledge became, the more difficult it became for that record to reflect that knowledge cohesively. As the amount and kinds of information in and about the world both changed and proliferated, these two aspects of completeness tended more and more towards mutual exclusivity. Simply put, too much information eventually presented as much an obstacle to understanding as too little.

The phenomenon was not born with the Enlightenment. Many of the early eighteenth-century incarnations of what we now know as encyclopedias—the genre still perhaps most closely associated with “complete” knowledge projects—had clear connections to everything from ancient *enchiridia* and Early Modern guidebooks to the single- or multi-subject scientific dictionaries of the seventeenth century. All of these genres emerged in part and over time as a response to what Ann Blair has called “the experience of overload.”<sup>4</sup> This experience, Blair notes, “was not new or unique to Renaissance Europe,” and neither were many of the tools and techniques deployed to counter it.<sup>5</sup> Massive individual reference works as well as educational programs and largely unfinished plans for ideal libraries or complete bibliographical catalogues had for centuries attempted to capture and make readily available the most necessary, the best, or genuinely comprehensive knowledge.<sup>6</sup> The new encyclopedias, however, appeared at a time when what constituted knowledge about the arts and sciences had significantly changed, but when many of the literary, political, and social elite (or elitist) associated themselves and Great Britain with the cultural and literary values of antiquity.

As Ward’s comment suggests, divine knowledge to many still represented the only solution to the paradox of completeness. At the same time, however, many authors and editors of the period sought to establish or reconstitute the value of their texts and the genres in which they participated as durable mechanisms of literary organization and as effective mediators of complete knowledge as they defined it. They often saw their work in heroic terms. The frontispiece

of Bacon's *The Great Instauration*, for example, famously depicts a ship passing between the Pillars of Hercules; John Milton, whose genius readers would later compare to that of Bacon and Newton, wrote his epic while "with dangers compass'd round."<sup>7</sup> Alexander Pope enlisted as an author-soldier in the Battle of the Ancients and Moderns; Chambers shortly thereafter situated his very Modern *Cyclopædia* as a successor to the *Odyssey*, *Iliad*, and *Aeneid*. While these writers frequently disagreed with one another, both implicitly and explicitly, about the proper pathway to complete knowledge, the best way to represent that knowledge, and even what completeness itself entailed, they are all connected by their involvement in the modeling and mediation of that concept—the realization of which we have searched for, if one takes Milton for a guide, since Creation, and which has continued to elude us since the Fall.<sup>8</sup> Each of their texts participated in the organization and hierarchization of the literary past and present, and each had a specific relationship to the future defined in part by its ability to continue to do that work. As this article will show, these authors' and editors' pursuit of completeness furthered a process of generic differentiation that resulted in the separation of encyclopedias from epic poems, literature from Literature, and the sciences from the humanities.

### I. GENERIC CONVENTION: EPICS AS ENCYCLOPEDIAS

Any poet who aspired to write an epic poem in the late seventeenth century contemplated a potentially heroic task. By 1667, the question of how much and what kinds of knowledge the classical epics truly comprehended had not been definitively answered—despite its having been asked and argued about since antiquity. As early as the sixth century BCE, Theagenes of Rhegium, often credited as Homer's first allegorizing exegete, defended Homer from contemporary detractors by finding in the poems' depictions of the Greek pantheon a veiled treatment of natural and moral phenomena: Apollo and Poseidon, for example, stood respectively for fire and water, Athena and Ares for wisdom and folly.<sup>9</sup> Allegory similarly informed the interpretations of Anaxagoras of Clazomenae and his pupil, Metrodorus of Lampascus, two other readers of the sophistic period. Whereas Anaxagoras seems to have performed a relatively cautious form of moral allegoresis on the texts, his student devised a more radical interpretation that identified the gods and heroes of the *Iliad* as different parts of the universe and human body—possibly in order to justify the poem to his master's model of the macrocosm and microcosm.<sup>10</sup> Conventional wisdom has also marked the Stoics as allegorists, for they too found in Homer's descriptions of certain episodes "a correct understanding of the world—its physical structure and processes, its god(s), its basic causes and purposes."<sup>11</sup> To these readers, amongst others, Homer deliberately crafted his epics as vehicles for the encyclopedic knowledge he apparently possessed.

This view did not go unchallenged. Critics accused the Stoics of "willful

misreading and distortion"; Plato "adopted an adversarial position with regard to the 'Homeric encyclopedia,' and the Ionian philosophical tradition before him had been actively hostile."<sup>12</sup> The astronomer, geographer, and mathematician Eratosthenes denigrated the epics as entirely frivolous entertainments, and though Strabo later argued that Homer truly had founded the science of geography and provided much demonstrably accurate information about what had been the known world, he also conceded that a man who attempts "to ascribe all knowledge to Homer" might be one "whose enthusiasm has gone too far."<sup>13</sup> Despite their doubts and derision, however, the belief that Homer's poems contained the complete learning of their time continued to find purchase. The pagan Neoplatonists of the third century, for instance, looked to the epics as texts of wide-ranging authority. Pseudo-Plutarch's extensive essay on Homer's life and verse described him as both a gifted philosopher and as the master of a broad spectrum of practical *technai*; the text painted an enduring portrait of the poet as the father of all of the arts and sciences as well as every subsequent literary genre.<sup>14</sup>

That essay remained "the favourite ancient text on Homer in the Renaissance," and though notable humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries like Michel de Montaigne and Julius Caesar Scaliger often turned a skeptical eye towards the allegories and syncretism upon which Homer's supposedly universal knowledge depended, the concept of such knowledge nonetheless remained closely associated with epic composition both during and long after their lifetimes.<sup>15</sup> Politian's description of Homer's poems as compendia that contained the seeds of all learning drew much from the image drawn by pseudo-Plutarch; allegoresis, validated by international consensus, continued to "reveal" the abundance of natural, theological, and moral truths in Homer's poems to students; and even Bacon found some merit in the allegorical tradition that located in the Homeric myths "remnants of a lost Greek cosmology far more profound than those of Plato and Aristotle."<sup>16</sup> The fact that Bacon, in *The Advancement of Learning*, specifically mentions and dismisses as hyperbole the idea that "if all sciences were lost, they might be found in Virgil" furthermore implies the extent to which that poet's reputation as another master of all human knowledge—a commonplace in the Middle Ages—still retained some measure of currency in the early seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup> Though Bacon did not allow Virgil to have actually possessed such knowledge, he did view his major poems "as collections of accurate 'observations' about the natural world, and as sources for certain scientific ideas."<sup>18</sup>

Modernity, then, inherited an epic tradition steeped in a complex and still unsettled debate about the relationship of the genre to the production, containment, and transmission of knowledge. If Milton "would have considered it the duty of a writer of epic to embrace *all* the learning of his day," as Karen Edwards suggests, then any sense in which he might have done so would not necessarily have been uniformly understood. Despite the highly conventional

praise *Paradise Lost* received as “the story of everything”—a book in which “every Thing that is great in the whole Circle of Being, whether within the Verge of Nature, or out of it, has a proper Part assigned it”—the poem actually marks the ancient substance of that praise as impracticable in an age of modern knowledge production and opposed to Milton’s understanding of the teleology of human learning in its postlapsarian state.<sup>19</sup> The world that lay all before Adam and Eve at the end of the poem and the new work of knowing that they would have to do are external to Eden and the possibility of complete knowledge as it had there existed. So too, Milton suggests, are they beyond the bounds of a literary genre that like Eden had once been a place wherein the mortal most closely approached the divine.

Rather than offer a complete body of modern knowledge, Milton directs his readers’ attention beyond the boundaries of the epic narrative and towards their own part in the heroic work of knowing that remained to be done in the world. Human learning does not stop at the end of *Paradise Lost* but begins anew under drastically altered conditions—conditions that continued to inhere in the seventeenth century but which had been joined with new standards and modes of knowledge production. Recent scholarship has provided insight into the influence of Baconianism on Milton’s thought and the place of the new natural philosophy in his Eden.<sup>20</sup> Before the fall, Adam’s study of God and the natural world takes place in concert under the direction of Raphael, whom Milton describes “in terms that associate the archangel with the emerging sciences.”<sup>21</sup> This association lends those sciences the esteem of divine authorization and adds them to the many other parts of human learning that had a recognizable if idealized presence in the garden as components of a complete body of knowledge.

The sciences retain their importance in the aftermath, but whereas in Eden Adam could fruitfully pursue and comprehend that value via direct individual effort, the fall necessitated the transformation of his singular endeavor into the kind of long-term collective undertaking described by Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning*. A corollary epistemological change attends the ontological change wrought by disobedience. With Adam and Eve’s removal from Eden comes the loss of Raphael as guide and the ability to know the world as they once had.<sup>22</sup> Some degree of the knowledge and quality of comprehension they possessed, however, remain discoverable or retrievable in the world beyond the walls. Michael explains: “in valley and in plain / God is as here and will be found alike / Present, and of his presence many a sign / Still following thee, still compassing thee round.”<sup>23</sup> The phrase “compassing thee round” figures the physical universe as a kind of encyclopedic compendium: a Book of Nature that comprehended a “round of education” in itself and the study of which would lead, or lead back, to knowledge of God.<sup>24</sup>

Understanding those many signs absent the prelapsarian state of human perfection requires the descendants of Adam and Eve to take a more compre-

hensive approach to knowledge production.<sup>25</sup> Disobedience makes distinction rather than unity the principal mode of human comprehension. Satan speaks of the power given him by the tree, the “Mother of Science,” to “discern things in their causes,” and though he never actually eats of the fruit, in this much at least the devil speaks true: the tree does bestow the power to discern.<sup>26</sup> The first knowledge of humanity’s postlapsarian experience comes from understanding difference; Adam and Eve learn to know good and evil.<sup>27</sup> Their new power to discern—from the Latin *discernere*, literally “to separate”—divides one branch of knowledge into two and makes fragmentation the new basis of human epistemology.<sup>28</sup> Discovering truth in the postlapsarian world, as Kathleen Swaim writes, “requires human beings to collect as many as possible fragments towards a total structure. Once fragments have been collected, they must be remembered, or re-collected, as the standard against which future options are measured and to which true additions may be made.” This “shift from space to time and from established unity to progressive transcendence of divisions,” Swaim continues, “is precisely the difference between the prelapsarian and the postlapsarian.”<sup>29</sup>

Milton’s Protestantism made the process of gathering fragments of Christian truth a matter of scriptural exegesis performed by the individual who must struggle to comprehend their unity. This vision of the fall establishes a course by which the advancement of human knowledge proceeds back to unity not despite division but *through* it. That process aligns Milton’s religious methodology with that of the natural philosophers who likewise sought to undo the damage of the fall by collecting fragments of knowledge. Bacon had made fragmentary genres such as the essay and aphorism the new basis of knowledge production and progress; in *The Great Instauration*, he specifically declared “compleat” bodies of learning and premature reductions of fragments into supposedly unified systems counterproductive to the search for truth.<sup>30</sup> Nearly half a century later, the Royal Society adopted a similar policy:

The Society has reduc’d its principal observations, into one common stock; and laid them up in publique Registers, to be nakedly transmitted to the next Generation of Men; and so from them, to their Successors. And as their purpose was, to heap up a mixt Mass of Experiments, without digesting them into any perfect model: so to this end, they confin’d themselves to no order of subjects; and whatever they have recorded, they have done it, not as compleat Schemes of opinions, but as bare unfinish’d Histories.<sup>31</sup>

Sprat’s *The History of the Royal Society* (1667) appeared in the same year as the first edition of *Paradise Lost*, and with respect to the methods of mediating completeness they describe or perform, the positions defined by each neatly divide the concept along what they helped to define as the boundaries separating the sciences from the humanities and literature from Literature. Even the greater

magnitude of the epic could not contain the whole circle of the arts and sciences as they appeared to readers in the latter half of the seventeenth century, and to those who had redefined the terms of understanding and advancing them any attempt to do so was either bound to fail or likely to be superseded. *Paradise Lost* could not offer the comprehensive knowledge valued by the practitioners of the new science while attempting to represent how such knowledge might ultimately cohere, and the unfinished histories and essays of the Royal Society could not provide the coherence of epic while remaining open to the process of correction and expansion. When read against the critical history of the epic and within the context of contemporary knowledge production, *Paradise Lost* suggests that the mediation of complete knowledge as a function of literary representation finally demanded a division of labor in which the modern epicist prioritized the presentation of a limited unity and left the production and collection of different kinds of knowledge to other writers and genres unburdened by the other conventions of epic composition and completeness.

To embrace the learning of his day meant to embrace the incompleteness of that learning and the limitations of a single human mind. Raphael's conversation with Adam specifically addresses those limits and dramatizes the challenges of epic encyclopedism in its modern context: the same speech in which the angel necessarily avoids giving a definitive answer to the still-unsettled question of heliocentrism discourages Adam from seeking knowledge above his station and twice emphasizes the pursuit of the more immediately "useful."<sup>32</sup> *Paradise Lost*, rather than attempting to comprehend all knowledge—knowledge that had changed and would continue to change for generations—signals a critical reassessment of epic completeness and the nature of the work the genre could perform in the context of contemporary knowledge production. The text remains a kind of fragment: complete as a poem, perhaps, but still just one part of a larger body of knowledge its author could conceive of but not comprehend in its entirety. *Paradise Lost* embraces the conditional necessity of division and the concordant impossibility of one author reconciling within one text the conceptual paradox of completeness. The poem demonstrates that in an age of Enlightenment, "epic" could not signify "encyclopedic" in the sense of containing truly universal knowledge.

In short, no book of human knowledge about the world could be the last or the only book one would ever need—regardless of what one believed about Homer and Virgil. In addition to the ongoing enterprise of institutions like the Royal Society, with its essays and unfinished histories, the broader print market of the period was awash in dozens of "complete" guidebooks, treatises, enciridia, and scientific dictionaries that devoted hundreds and sometimes thousands of pages to every segment of the circle of arts and sciences. Their numbers continued to grow throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and with every new edition, supplement, or competing advertisement came the suggestion that humanity had made some progress towards an



even “more complete” record of the relevant information. That phrase, ubiquitous in the title pages, dedications, and prefaces of such texts, indicates the compromise that the limitations of time and intellect generally compelled writers and readers to make—a compromise that treats completeness as a continuum rather than a binary and carries the implicit promise of continued growth, comprehensibility, or usefulness.

The Augustan poets writing in Milton’s wake famously did not attempt to keep pace with the rapidly expanding horizons of literary knowledge production by composing epics of their own.<sup>33</sup> To encourage epic generativity with original contributions might have authorized legions of Blackmores unknown to publish additional unwelcome variations that would only further diminish the high status of a genre already under threat by modernity.<sup>34</sup> Instead, the Augustans largely suspended epic production altogether. Despite Pope’s having thoroughly infused his translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with his very eighteenth-century English sensibilities, they did not technically add to the total number of epics considered by his contemporaries to constitute an already “complete” generic body.<sup>35</sup> They functioned instead as updated versions of the classics that theoretically maintained their purchase on modernity while providing Pope with a means to attach his own fortunes to works of proven durability.<sup>36</sup>

Pope’s translations, then, rather than problematically expanding a canon to which his cultural and literary conservatism would scarcely suffer additions, folded the classics into a larger program of literary mediation that attempted to carry on the work of the epic without it. Though poems could not contain the complete knowledge of their time in the comprehensive sense championed by the Moderns—the apparatus of Pope’s *Dunciad Variorum* clearly demonstrates the inelegance and futility of such projects—they could be used to define both what kinds of knowledge should count in the future and how that knowledge should be understood.<sup>37</sup> If in *Paradise Lost* humanity emerged from the garden dependent on their powers of discernment to know good from evil, then under the Augustan conservatorship of taste and judgment, discernment became the critical faculty by which the fragments of knowledge worth keeping would be separated from those better left to what Harold Weber has described as the “‘garbage heap’ of memory.”<sup>38</sup> Improving, advancing, and demonstrating the powers of discrimination that would define and delimit knowledge of permanent value rather than completely comprehend knowledge in its temporally unstable entirety became in Pope’s poetry the new prestigious work of authorship.

The idea that one good epic could replace or render entire libraries unnecessary remained a trope of literary criticism and epic paratexts, and among the highest compliments one could pay a poet whether living or dead was still a remark upon that poet’s comprehensive capacities. At the same time, however, the scope of Homer and Virgil’s knowledge was increasingly understood to be relatively narrow in comparison to that collectively possessed by modernity.

Even some of those who held the classics in the highest regard had begun to retreat from territories they deemed impossible to hold. In his *An Essay on Poetry* (1682), John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave (afterwards the first Duke of Buckingham and Normanby, a patron of John Dryden, and a friend of Pope), places Homer and Virgil at the very top of Parnassus. To read Homer once, he writes, renders all other things dull; “yet *often* on him look / And you will hardly need another book.”<sup>39</sup> Such sentiments, as just suggested, were fairly typical. Mulgrave then adds what had become an equally conventional moderator: Homer “describ’d the Seeds, and in what order sown, / That have to such a vast proportion grown.” The couplet credits Homer as the father of the arts and sciences while acknowledging that he wrote in a time of only nascent learning; the field had since expanded far beyond what his poems actually contained.

The seed metaphor recalls both Politian’s description of Homer as containing the “*semina*” of all disciplines and the pseudo-Plutarchan concept of the Homeric encyclopedia from which Politian borrowed. Bacon too had found the metaphor useful in the context of his program for an advancement of learning. As Gerard Passannante argues, Bacon’s assessment of Homer’s apparent immortality relied upon a materialist sense of an always-unfixed Homeric corpus continually flowering through the perpetual scattering and recombination of its parts by others.<sup>40</sup> Instead of valorizing the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as a stable and divinely inspired body of universal knowledge, as others had, Bacon numbered the poems among those books that continued to “cast their seeds in the minds of others, provoking and causing infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages.”<sup>41</sup> This understanding made the greatest part of Homer’s contribution to knowledge production the inspiration of a collective and ongoing effort rather than an already complete and individual achievement. Mulgrave’s recognition of vast growth participates in that understanding, and his essay concludes with a series of rhetorical questions that clearly express doubt in the ability of modern poets to achieve in their times what some still believed that Homer had in his:

The way is shewn, but who has strength to go?  
 Who can all the *Sciences* exactly know?  
 Whose *Fancy* flies beyond weak *Reason’s* Sight,  
 And yet has *Judgment* to direct it *right*?  
 Whose *just* Discernment, *Virgil like*, is such,  
 Never to say too little, or too much?  
 Let such a man begin without delay,  
 But he must do much more than I can say,  
 Must above *Cowley*, nay and *Milton* too prevail,  
 Succeed where great *Torquato*, and our greater *Spencer* fail.<sup>42</sup>

Mulgrave can only gesture towards the scope of a modern epic undertaking; the job itself had gotten so large that even the job description defies concise

articulation. The essay places its final focus on the greater work of the epic poet and it literally ends in failure.

It also raises the question of precisely what kind of needs could be answered so completely by reading Homer that almost all other books would be rendered superfluous. The space between the supposedly universal utility of the classical epics and the necessarily limited learning they contained implies a decoupling of epic and archival values linked by Mulgrave to the likewise interrelated phenomena of progressive knowledge and expanding volume. This decoupling was in turn part of a larger process of differentiation that over the course of the eighteenth century effected the division of what we now think of as the sciences and humanities. As Trevor Ross observes, "several defenders of the Moderns, like Wotton, believed that nature and knowledge were the purview of science, whereas literary works trafficked in mere opinion and were therefore redundant to an understanding of the truth." In order to preserve the cultural value of poetry, Ross continues, "it had to be autonomized as a superior form of knowledge."<sup>43</sup>

The Ancients' defense of the Homeric epic required a reconsideration of the nature of Homer's learning not only with respect to the issues of taste, decorum, and morality at the center of the *querelle d'Homère*, but also with regard to modern knowledge production and the intractable problems of information management that genres like the new universal dictionaries of arts and sciences emerged to answer. Despite their disagreements, Pope and Anne Dacier both had to acknowledge the apparent limits of Homer's breadth of knowledge as reflected in his poems. Dacier, for her part, considered the epic a *corps de doctrine* in all fields but natural philosophy and devoted the bulk of her critical attention to elucidating the complete perfection of Homer's poetic "beauties."<sup>44</sup> Pope, in contrast, specifically resituated Homer's oft-alleged mastery of the arts and sciences within a specialized literary discourse that prioritized original genius and individual achievement over regular method and collaborative enterprise. "His comprehensive Knowledge," Pope writes in the essay on Homer attached to his translation of the *Iliad*, "shews that his Soul was not form'd like a narrow Chanel for a single Stream, but as an Expanse which might receive an Ocean into its Bosom."<sup>45</sup> Homer, as any self-respecting epicist must, took in "the whole Circle of Arts, and the whole Compass of Nature; all the inward Passion and Affections of Mankind to supply his characters, and all the outward Forms and Images of Things for his Descriptions."<sup>46</sup>

By themselves, these claims do not distinguish Pope's commentary from those of other and older celebrants of epic poets and epic magnitude. Later in the essay, however, Pope qualifies his earlier statements in a passage that significantly changes the tenor of his otherwise tropic assessment of Homer's comprehensive capacities:

But however that we may not mistake the Elogies of those Ancients who call him the Father of Arts and Sciences, and be surpriz'd to find so little of them (as they are now in Perfection) in his Works; we should know that this Character is not to

be understood at large, as if he had included the full and regular Systems of every thing: He is to be consider'd professedly *only in Quality of a Poet*; this was his Business, to which, as whatever he knew was to be subservient, so he has not fail'd to introduce those Strokes of Knowledge from the whole Circle of Arts and Sciences, which the Subject demanded either for Necessity or Ornament.<sup>47</sup>

Pope would hardly have needed to clarify that which had already been established by common consent. Set against his previous claims, then, these lines must function either as a limited concession to those who dismissed the completeness of Homer's knowledge or as a suggestion to those readers who still looked to Homer for absolutely everything that for some things they had better look elsewhere.

Though the passage clearly demonstrates an attempt by Pope to promote the autonomy of poetry as a superior form of knowledge, his appeal to readers to make a qualitative distinction between the Poet and other, unnamed kinds of knowledge-producers contains language that links it to the burdens of quantity. We find "little" of the arts and sciences in Homer's poems; they do not include "full" systems of "every thing"; he drew from the whole circle only those "strokes" of knowledge that served or supplemented the greater inventive power of his poetic imagination. Whatever the actual depth and breadth of Homer's knowledge of the arts and sciences, the poetry took precedence. The "quality of a poet" to which Pope restricted his readers' consideration of Homer, then, did not entail the obligation to contain in one's poems the complete circle of arts and sciences in what some other discourse of knowledge production might define as a comprehensive sense.<sup>48</sup>

This retroactive limitation of the extent to which Homer's epics established and advanced a generic program of encyclopedic representation set out a narrower scope for poetry that effectively relieved all poets—including Pope—of what had become far too great an expectation, whatever its historical accuracy or embellishment. Rather than continuing to defend the indefensible or attempt the unachievable, Pope changed the terms of the debate and declared a victory. The "complete" knowledge contained by even those poems of the greatest possible magnitude was in his opinion not of a kind with that sought by the unfinished histories of the Royal Society and the ongoing collections of the universal dictionaries, even though the authors and editors of the latter continued to associate Homer's epics with precisely the kind of copious, commodious, comprehensive, and in other ways concise but complete records of knowledge that they now took it upon themselves to provide.

## II. GENERIC SUCCESSION: ENCYCLOPEDIAS AS EPICS

In 1729, the same year in which Pope's *Dunciad Variorum* appeared, an anonymous contributor to the *Tribune* alleged that an Irish country gentleman by the name of Richard Marygold, Esq., of Kerry, felt so strongly about the compre-

hensive capacity of Homer's mind that "he would go near to renounce the Society of any Man, who should deny *Homer* to have been Master of the whole *Cyclopaedia* of Arts and Sciences."<sup>49</sup> Marygold (or his erstwhile biographer) may not have had Ephraim Chambers's work specifically in mind when he made (or almost made) this proclamation, but contemporary readers could not have overlooked the connection between Homer's poems and the new encyclopedias. Though the word "encyclopedia" had graced the covers of compendia since the sixteenth century, Chambers's proposal had begun to appropriate the shortened version of the term in 1726, and the *Cyclopædia* itself had enjoyed a successful debut only the year before the *Tribune's* brief run at the end of the decade.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, few texts published after 1728 used the term to refer to anything other than *the Cyclopædia*.<sup>51</sup>

To some extent, its very title thus presented the "universal dictionary of arts and sciences" as both a step towards Bacon's unrealized comprehensive compendium and a potential eighteenth-century successor to the epics of Homer and Virgil. The encyclopedists took over from the classical poets the kind of work that those like Mr. Marygold maintained had been completed in antiquity but which had been rendered more obviously *incomplete* by the advances in knowledge production that followed. As historical records and literary accomplishments, then, the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid* were, like *Paradise Lost*, perhaps complete insofar as they were "perfect" and finished poems; however, only as such could they continue to hold their high literary value.

The encyclopedias of the eighteenth century were therefore in a position to co-opt a conventional generic function of the epics and execute it via new generic features better aligned with modern standards of knowledge production. The anonymous compilers of *A New and Complete Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1763–64), following Aristotle, claimed that "the sovereign perfection of an epic poem . . . consists in the just proportion and perfect connection of all the parts."<sup>52</sup> Encyclopedists throughout the eighteenth century consistently spoke of the successes or failures of their own and their competitors' works in precisely these terms. They struggled to contain the right amount of information in each entry and insisted that the plans upon which they constructed their encyclopedias effectively reflected the connection of all the seemingly disparate parts of knowledge that when rightly understood constituted a system of the world. The encyclopedias in this way offered themselves as epics freed from poetry and plot. Poetry and plot, of course, went on to have long lives in other genres, and though authors in some of these—notably, but not exclusively, the novel—for some time aspired to capture varying degrees of comprehensiveness, their efforts ultimately resulted only in intractable problems and the permanent separation of genuinely encyclopedic knowledge from narrative forms of writing. The state of knowledge production in the eighteenth century assured that the complete set of epic features as most generously understood at the time would not again appear in a single work or genre.

The relationships between several major Augustan authors and their Ancient models had more to them than veneration and imitation. To Pope, Britain was not yet but might one day be better than Virgil's Rome; the classics were perfect in Greek and Latin, but might be made even more so when rendered in English couplets reflective of English values. Chambers seemed to think that a new and improved Augustan age would more likely result from reactivating Ancient aspirations as well as artifacts. Such a philosophy left plenty of room for modernity and the destabilization of traditional generic hierarchies that came with it. Neither Chambers nor any other editor of an eighteenth-century encyclopedia explicitly declared himself the Homer or Virgil of his day, but the plans for and prefaces to their works make clear that several had precisely such pretensions.

To Chambers, the title of "Augustan" might more properly have belonged to the Moderns—or at least, to Modern works like the *Cyclopædia*, which while including Ancient knowledge as part of a whole "course of learning" still remained dedicated to recording its latest developments. In the dedication of his work to the king, Chambers writes that the time when Rome would envy England's Augustan age finally seemed to be at hand. As Greece was under Alexander and Rome under Caesar Augustus, he insists, so would Britain be under the newly crowned George Augustus; but "even this," he continues, "were to under-rate our Hopes."<sup>53</sup> If the reign of Augustus established new foundations for a stronger Roman Empire than the Emperor himself would live to see, then that of George II would do as much and more for Britain. The first *Cyclopædia*, like the *Aeneid* before it, would mark a starting point for the new age: the initial edition circumscribed the current boundaries of the "Republic of Learning." Later editions would record its continuing expansion.

The forward-looking stance adopted by Chambers and the encyclopedists that followed him constitutes a critical counterpoint to the contemporary neo-classical perspective on literary achievement. A new Augustan period would begin with a work not only destined but also *designed* to be surpassed; an age does not begin at its height, and an enlightened (or Enlightenment) Virgil would welcome the coming of his betters. The epic poem might therefore once have been the pinnacle of the Virgilian triad, and Homer, as Chambers writes, might still have been the best poet in world, but in his opinion the *Cyclopædia* would eventually become "the best Book in the Universe."<sup>54</sup> Chambers did not qualify the remark with generic distinctions. The *Cyclopædia* would not merely be the best book of its kind, but the best of *all* kinds and for all times.

Other encyclopedists would make the same or similar claims about their own texts. Chambers, as well as Jean le Rond D'Alembert and Denis Diderot (who took the *Cyclopædia* as the starting point for what eventually became the *Encyclopédie*), followed Bacon in debunking some of the accolades attached to the classical epics and went on to appropriate others. Chambers names Homer five times in his preface, and his discourse on the place of poetry in the system

of arts and sciences runs throughout the first sixteen of its thirty pages. The most purely inspired and nearest to Heaven, poetry cooperated so closely with Nature that people mistakenly deemed poets the inventors of all subordinate arts, and they thought Homer—in whose works all Nature could supposedly be found—the inventor of poetry. “Thus it is,” Chambers explains, that “Homer is often complimented with being the Father of all Arts.” He continues:

This has, indeed, an Appearance of Truth; but 'tis only an Appearance: For *Homer* . . . has no other Title to the Invention of other Arts than what he derives either from a greater Share of the Spirit whereby they are produc'd, than other people; or from his having communicated that Spirit, by the force of his Poems, thro' other People, where it has generated, and brought forth other Arts.<sup>55</sup>

Chambers's assessment of Homer's actual contribution unsurprisingly bears a greater resemblance to that of Bacon rather than Pope: the classical epics, when “disseminated” amongst the populace, inspired people to build upon their foundations and bring to maturity the “seeds and principles” of the arts and inventions those epics described.<sup>56</sup> A greater share of spirit may have enabled Homer to invent poetry (a supposition Chambers grants only grudgingly), but actual progress in the arts belonged and would continue to belong to those his poems inspired to go further.

Chambers suggests the same might one day be said of the *Cyclopædia*. His delimitation of Homer's accomplishments again positions the encyclopedias as their natural successors. As had been the case with the epics, the principal accomplishment of the *Cyclopædia* and all other universal dictionaries would be the force by which they would communicate and advance existing knowledge. As compendia of both theoretical and practical knowledge, the books had to be both usable and useful; they transmitted knowledge in part for the sake of simply educating readers, but also with the hope and expectation that those readers might generate more knowledge by applying what they had learned. Chambers, for instance, believed that his work “would contribute more to the propagating of useful Knowledge thro' the Body of a People than any, I had almost said all, the Books extant.”<sup>57</sup> William Smellie, the compiler of the first *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1768–71), similarly wrote in his preface that “to diffuse the knowledge of Science is the professed design of the following work.”<sup>58</sup> Both prefaces posit the dissemination of useful scientific knowledge as an end in and of itself. Homer cast the first seeds over the world; others cultivated them and brought forth new arts and knowledge of the sciences. The encyclopedias then harvested the new knowledge and carried on what Homer started.

The crucial difference, of course, is that what Homer only began the encyclopedias could theoretically finish. The encyclopedia scatters knowledge in the same generative sense Bacon adapted from Lucretius and applied to Homer, but it also re-collects the products of its own dissemination in an (ideally) end-

less cycle of generic self-reproduction.<sup>59</sup> As James Creech writes, “an encyclopedia must fix the totality of knowledge in one moment, like an image of the national mind that will itself become a stable measure by which future progress can be gauged.”<sup>60</sup> Given a long enough life and deep enough pockets, an eighteenth-century encyclopedia enthusiast—if such a creature existed—could chart the course of Lockean metaphysics or Newtonian science in the world of knowledge by following the relevant entries through the genre from the *Lexicon Technicum* to the *Britannica*. The treatment of such subjects in the latter would indicate to what extent the former had in its own time been “permanent” and therefore complete.

Permanent comprehensiveness of the kind supposedly offered by the epics could only be achieved on an ongoing basis; the stories of everything told by encyclopedias unfold diachronically and only long after the fact of each edition, supplement, or title. The new encyclopedias, though perhaps immediately epic in scope, therefore necessarily began in less rather than more complete states. As D’Alembert observes, “the ultimate Perfection of an Encyclopedia is the Work of Ages.”<sup>61</sup> Every advance in the arts or sciences gave (and continues to give) the genre a reason to exist and the opportunity to adapt. “May posterity add their Discoveries to those we have registered,” D’Alembert continues. “And may the History of the human Mind, and its Productions, be continued from Age to Age, down to the most distant Period of time! May the Encyclopaedia remain a Sanctuary, to preserve human Knowledge from the Ravages and Revolutions of distant Ages!”<sup>62</sup> The encyclopedia, both individually and generically, could respond to changes and thus usurped one more function formerly given to the now ossified epics. “The most glorious moment for a work of this sort,” writes Diderot, “would be that which might come immediately in the wake of some catastrophe so great as to suspend the progress of science, interrupt the labors of craftsmen, and plunge a portion of our hemisphere into darkness once again.”<sup>63</sup> Whereas according to the old conceit people could supposedly look to Virgil to restore all the sciences should they be lost, they might now look to the latest encyclopedia instead.

While by the end of the seventeenth century the topmost genre in a still largely undifferentiated hierarchy of literature had already begun to outlive its usefulness, its decline in the early eighteenth century created the need and opportunity for the redefinition and revaluation of specialized forms of completeness distinct from those sought by the encyclopedists. The Augustans’ attempts to defend the high status of the poet ironically contributed to the further division of imaginative from factual writing and the poet’s eventual reemergence as monarch of a separate (but perhaps but no less vast) part of the world. The elevation of other poetic genres (and the reconstitution of epic itself) that took place in the wake of the Augustans’ ossification of classical epic and concurrent attempts to extend the functionality of verse in the face of encroaching non-poetic genres, changing standards of knowledge, and increases in the



volume of writing would continue throughout the eighteenth century: by the 1750s, the “complete” knowledge of the epic poet existed entirely within the bounds of artistic or imaginative enterprise and without the broadening circle of arts and sciences as defined and represented by the universal dictionaries; by the 1790s, the standards of poetic achievement had become such that genres of lesser breadth and greater “depth” comfortably occupied its heights. The high status of poetry after epic depended in part on the valuation and pursuit of a completeness defined by the essential rather than the comprehensive—an order of completeness that embraced the limitations of human learning and understanding and made the human experience a window to a world of ideas and experience too immense for any written work to comprehend in its entirety.

### NOTES

1. Ed Folsom, “Database as Genre: the Epic Transformation of the Archive,” *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (October 2007): 1571–79, 1577. See also Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton, 2006), esp. 73–106.

2. The efficacy and accuracy of the PageRank algorithm are of course embellished, but its “omniscience” has become a feature of popular treatments and descriptions of Google’s technology and success in search as well as of algorithms more generally. See, for example, John Battelle, *The Search: How Google and Its Rivals Rewrote the Rules of Business and Transformed Our Culture* (New York, 2005).

3. Richard Ward, *The Life of the Learned and Pious Dr. Henry More, Late Fellow of Christ’s College in Cambridge. To Which Are Annex’d Divers of His Useful and Excellent Letters* (London, 1710), 224. Ward does not cite the specific source of the quotation.

4. Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven, 2010), 11.

5. Blair, 33.

6. See Blair, “Note-Taking as Information Management,” and “Reference Genres and Their Finding Devices,” in *Too Much to Know*, 102–74, 175–236; and Roger Chartier, “Libraries without Walls,” in *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, 1994), 61–88.

7. John Milton, *Paradise Lost* [1667], ed. David Scott Kastan (Indianapolis, 2005), 7.27. Hereafter cited parenthetically by book and line number. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from *Paradise Lost* are from this edition.

8. Joanna Stalnaker argues that “during the late Enlightenment it became necessary to think about description in terms of competing truth claims that would eventually resolve themselves in our modern distinction between literature and science” (*The Unfinished Enlightenment: Description in the Age of the Encyclopedia* [Ithaca, 2010], 6).

9. Gerard Naddaf, “Allegory and the Origins of Philosophy,” in *Logos and Mythos: Philosophical Essays in Greek Literature*, ed. William Wians (Albany, 2009), 99–133, 108. All of Theagenes’s original writings are lost; the examples of his method come from a scholium to Venetus B manuscript attributed to the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry.

10. N. J. Richardson, “Aristotle’s Reading of Homer and Its Background,” in *Homer’s Ancient Readers: The Hermeneutics of Greek Epic’s Earliest Exegetes*, ed. Robert Lamberton and John J. Keany (Princeton, 1992), 30–40, 33; Naddaf, 117.

11. A. A. Long, “Stoic Readings of Homer,” in *Homer’s Ancient Readers*, 41–66, 42. Long contests the “received opinion” of the Stoics as allegorists and argues in favor of the greater importance of etymology to their interpretations: “etymology . . . enables the Stoic philosopher to recover the beliefs about the world held by those who first gave the gods

their present names" (54). In either case, the poems contain (or were believed to contain) more knowledge than their narratives superficially suggest.

12. Robert Lamberton, introduction to *Homer's Ancient Readers*, vii–xxv, xvi. Lamberton notes the Pythagoreans as a possible exception.

13. Strabo, *Geographica*, Book 1, Chapter 2, Paragraph 3, quoted in Richard Hunter, *Plato and the Traditions of Ancient Literature: The Silent Stream* (New York, 2012), 101.

14. Robin Sowerby, "Early Humanist Failure with Homer (II)," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 165–94, 171.

15. Sowerby identifies the essay as a Renaissance favorite; it was often appended to both manuscript and printed editions of the poems (171). Julius Scaliger reacted negatively to the allegories of his former teacher, Jean Dorat, writing that "the man's begun to debase himself and amuse himself by finding the whole Bible in Homer" (*Scaligerana*, ed. P. Desmaizeaux [Amsterdam, 1740], 20, quoted in Anthony Grafton, "Renaissance Readers of Homer's Ancient Readers," in *Homer's Ancient Readers*, 149–72, 150). Michel de Montaigne too questioned the legitimacy of the Homeric encyclopedia: "is it possible that Homer wanted to say everything he has been made to say, and that he used as many and as varied figures as the theologians, legislators, captains, philosophers, every sort of people who treat sciences . . . attribute to him, and cite from him: general master of all offices, works, and artisans, general counselor for all enterprises?" (*Apology for Raymond Sebond*, trans. Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene [Indianapolis, 2003], 147).

16. Grafton, 153–57.

17. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, in *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford and New York, 2002), 120–299, 161.

18. Robert Schuler, "Bacon's Science and Virgil's Poetry," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 82, no. 2 (1992): 42–53, 47. "Bacon," Schuler notes, "to an extent at least, participates in the ancient tradition of reading Virgil as one of the learned poets whose works are compendia of all kinds of knowledge" (43). That is not to say, however, "that he naively attributes to him the kind of universal knowledge (including magic and prophecy) . . . still being claimed for Homer, Ovid, and Virgil by some Renaissance syncretists and allegorists" (47).

19. Samuel Barrow described *Paradise Lost* as "the story of everything" in a poem printed with the 1674 edition (originally in Latin; the English quotation is from the translation included with Kastan's edition) (2–3). The latter quotation belongs to Joseph Addison, *Notes Upon the Twelve Books of Paradise Lost. Collected from the Spectator* (London, 1719), 7.

20. See, for example, Karen Edwards, *Milton and the Natural World: Science and Poetry in Paradise Lost*; Angelica Duran, *The Age of Milton and the Scientific Revolution* (Pittsburgh, 2007); and Joanna Picciotto, "Reforming the Garden: The Experimentalist Eden and *Paradise Lost*," *ELH* 72, no. 1 (2005): 23–78.

21. Duran, 96–97.

22. Kathleen Crowther, *Adam and Eve in the Protestant Reformation* (New York and Cambridge, 2010), 97.

23. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 11.349–52.

24. How and what it meant to "read" that book were likewise subject to interpretation. See Crowther, "The Book of Nature," in *Adam and Eve in the Protestant Reformation*, 184–225. "Encyclopedia" had referred to the "round of education" since the time of Quintilian.

25. To seventeenth-century audiences, Picciotto observes, Adam and Eve signified not only the perfect prelapsarian originals of humanity but also the imperfect collective that followed them. "To restore Adam," she continues, "was to reconsolidate humanity as the single subject it once was: redescribed as an intellectual goal, the restoration of Adam defines knowledge production as a collective investment of human energy in a necessarily imperfect activity" (32). The twofold signification of Adam and Eve as representatives of

humanity further contributes to the partially finished and partially incomplete nature of Milton's epic: as individuals, Adam and Eve see their plot to its end within the poem; as the representatives of all humanity, their plot continues without it.

26. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 9.681–82. Satan speaks in the language of division from the very outset: discernment, disdain, and dislike appear in his actions and thoughts upon his arrival in Hell and in his first speech (1.78, 1.98, 1.102). The prefix “dis-,” which occurs frequently in his rhetoric throughout the poem, reflects the devils' own state of separation from God and adumbrates the division he will visit upon Eve and Adam. See Neil Forsyth, “Of Man's First Dis,” in *Milton in Italy: Contexts, Images, Contradictions*, ed. Mario A. Di Cesare (Binghamton, 1991), 345–69.

27. “It was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil from the event; for since Adam tasted it, we not only know evil, but we know good only by means of evil” (Milton, “The Christian Doctrine,” in *The Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Hughes (1957; reprint Indianapolis, 2003), 900–1020, 993).

28. *Oxford English Dictionary Online* s.v. “discern, v.”

29. Kathleen Swaim, *Before and after the Fall: Contrasting Modes in Paradise Lost* (Amherst, 1986), 23.

30. Bacon, *Novum Organum*, ed. and trans. Peter Urbach and John Gibson (Chicago and La Salle, 1994), 9.

31. Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal-Society of London* (London, 1667), 115.

32. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 8.192, 8.200.

33. John Dryden had contemplated a poem on Arthur and the Black Prince but never undertook it, and Alexander Pope destroyed all but a few fragments of his adolescent effort on Alexander. At the end of his life, he thought of Brutus for a subject, but he did not live long enough put the thought into verse. See, for example, Walter Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970); Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York, 1973); Alistair Fowler, “The Life and Death of Literary Forms,” *New Literary History* 2 (1971): 199–216; and Dustin Griffin, “Milton and the Decline of Epic in the Eighteenth Century,” *New Literary History* (1982): 143–54.

34. The first part of a long note to 2.268 of the *Dunciad Variorum* lists the number of books contained by each of Blackmore's “no less than six Epic poems” (a total of 58) and sneers at the existence of “many more” texts besides. Blackmore and his “indefatigable Muse,” according to Pope, threatened to devalue the currency of the genre (“The *Dunciad Variorum*,” in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt [New Haven, 1963], 2.268n). Valerie Rumbold points out that “as described by Blackmore in their titles, only *Prince Arthur*, *King Arthur*, *Eliza*, and *Alfred* qualify as epics” (*The Dunciad in Four Books*, ed. Rumbold [New York, 1999], 187).

35. In the *Dunciad in Four Books*, William Warburton (problematically writing as Bentley/Aristarchus) ponders whether “we may not be excused, if for the future we consider the Epics of Homer, Virgil, and Milton, together with this our poem, as a complete *Tetralogy*, in which the last worthily holdeth the place or station of the *satyric* piece?” (77–78). Aristarchus, of course, is not to be trusted, and the *Dunciad* does not really qualify as epic.

36. Pope's effort to maintain Homer's permanence ironically came at the cost of changing his poems in order to better align classical epic values with “the superior human values of [Pope's] own age and its preference for a culture united by the bonds of an at least tentatively rational society” (Howard Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* [New York and Cambridge, 1993], 303). As a result, several critics of the time pointed out, Pope's Homer contained at least as much of the former as the latter, if not more. Richard Bentley famously (and perhaps apocryphally) objected to Pope's calling it Homer at all. See Roger Lonsdale, ed., *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets* (New York and Cambridge, 2006), 4:314, 285n.

37. Harold Weber directly compares what he describes as the “archival impulses” of Chambers's *Cyclopædia* and Pope's *Dunciad Variorum* as well as their authors' apparent

attitudes towards the distillation of knowledge and the culture of collection out of which their works emerged (*Memory, Print, and Gender in England, 1653–1759* [New York, 2008], 120). That Pope does not actually mention Chambers, the *Cyclopædia*, or indeed any other encyclopedia produced in his lifetime in any version of the *Dunciad* suggests an effort on Pope's part to advance a strategy of generic differentiation and delimitation.

38. Weber, "The 'Garbage Heap' of Memory: At Play in Pope's Archives of Dulness," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, no. 1 (1999), 1–19.

39. John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, *An Essay on Poetry* (London, 1682), 20. Sheffield's verse essay remained in print as a standalone edition and in various collections until the 1730s.

40. Gerard Passannante, "Homer Atomized," in *The Lucretian Renaissance: Philology and the Afterlife of Tradition* (Chicago, 2011), 120–53, esp. 128–38.

41. Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, 14 vols. (London, 1857–74), 3:255–491, 318, quoted in Passannante, 131.

42. Sheffield, 21.

43. Trevor Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon: From the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century* (Montreal, 1998), 158.

44. See Douglas Patey, "Ancients and Moderns," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: the Eighteenth Century*, ed. H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (New York and Cambridge, 2005), 4:32–74, 54.

45. Pope, *The Iliad of Homer in The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. Maynard Mack (New Haven, 1967), 7.5.

46. Pope, 7.50.

47. Pope, 7.56 (emphasis added).

48. Hugh Blair did not list encyclopedic knowledge as a convention of epic; indeed, his definition opened the category to numerous lesser poems admittedly not as "regular and complete" as those of Homer and Virgil: "They are, undoubtedly, all Epic; that is, poetical recitals of great adventures; which is all that is meant by this denomination of Poetry." Supernatural machinery, Blair allows, makes it possible for the epic poet to comprehend the "whole circle of the universe," but the phrase "arts and sciences" does not occur in any part of his treatise on epic poetry or poems (*Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 3 vols. [Dublin, 1783], 3:220; 3:237).

49. "No. 2," in *The Tribune*, 2 vols. (Dublin, 1729), 2:7–16, 12. *The Tribune* ran to 21 numbers at the end of 1729. Its first issue questions whether the recent increase in authors had been more help or harm to humanity; it did not last long enough to become too much a part of the problem.

50. See Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (New York and Cambridge, 2001), 6. Robert Shackleton's list of texts with some variant of "encyclopedia" in their titles suggests that the earliest is a twelfth-century text by Alan of Lille. In this case, Shackleton notes, the Greek "κυκλοπαιδεία" in the title was most likely added by the editor. The first to call itself an encyclopedia is Paulus Scalichius de Lika's *Encyclopædia, seu orbis disciplinarum, tam sacrarum quam profanarum, epistemon* (1559). Chambers was the first to use the abridged "cyclopædia" as a title. See "The Encyclopaedic Spirit," in *Greene Centennial Studies: Essays Presented to Donald Greene*, ed. Paul J. Korshin and Robert R. Allen (Charlottesville, 1984), 377–90.

51. Based on full-text searches of *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* and *Eighteenth Century Journals*. By the early nineteenth centuries, the term referred more frequently to the genre rather than the specific literary property. The earliest use of "cyclopædia" in English occurs in Sir Henry Blount's *A voyage into the Levant*, published in 1636 ("Cyclopædia, -Pedia," in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [1989]).

52. "Epic, or Heroic Poem," in *A New and Complete Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, ed. by A Society of Gentlemen, 4 vols. (London, 1763–64), 2:1099.

53. Ephraim Chambers, "Dedication" in *Cyclopædia*, 2 vols. (London, 1728), n.p.
54. Chambers, "Preface," in *Cyclopædia*, 1:i-xxx, x; Chambers, "Some considerations offered to the publick, preparatory to a second edition of Cyclopædia or, an universal dictionary of arts and sciences" (London, 1735), 4.
55. Chambers, "Preface," x.
56. Chambers, "Preface," x.
57. Chambers, "Preface," ii.
58. William Smellie, "Preface," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1771), 1:v-vi, v.
59. "In *De rerum natura*, the scattering of fire is likened to the dissemination of knowledge, a casting of syllables of through deep atomic space and through the minds of men. Bacon's own use of the word '*spargere*' for 'cast' powerfully evokes this generative sense we find in Lucretius, and shifts us again from the language of humanistic despair and skepticism to a language of hope" (Passannante, 137).
60. James Creech, "'Chasing after Advances': Diderot's Article 'Encyclopedia,'" *Yale French Studies* 63 (1982): 183-97, 189.
61. Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *The Plan of the French Encyclopædia* (London, 1752), 137. This text was in fact the preface to the *Encyclopédie* translated into English.
62. D'Alembert, 130.
63. Denis Diderot, "The Encyclopædia," in *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works* (Indianapolis, 2001), 277-308, 290.