Sammanfattning av avhandling pro gradu

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Arbetets titel: Ambiguities of Address: Towards a Communicational Reading of Alexander Pope’s *The Dunciad*
Handledare: Roger D. Sell

**Sammanfattning:**

It was the aim of this thesis to discuss the modes of address Alexander Pope adopts in his satirical poem *The Dunciad*. The poem was analysed within a theory of literature as communication as put forward by Roger D. Sell. The focus was on how and in what manner Pope addresses his audience. In the analysis, the concept of politeness proved significant. The importance of politeness stemmed from the fact that it was considered a respected civilized ideal in the Augustan era, and it is the main tool Pope uses to shape his mode of address.

The analysis concentrated on four salient passages, one from each of the poem’s four books. A full chapter was dedicated to each passage. It was deemed beyond the scope of this master’s thesis to provide a comprehensive analysis of the entire poem.

The analysis showed that Pope’s mode of address is characterised by different kinds of ambiguities. Pope uses politeness to make qualitative distinctions in his audience but he does not restrict his address to one kind of reader. He addresses both friend and foe. The ambiguity of address was demonstrated in the way Pope tried to please his readers. The address is characterised by a dichotomy between the scatologically puerile and the sophisticatedly educated.

Pope’s ambiguity of address was also found in the level of seriousness he attaches to different elements in the poem. The address often veers between the highly serious and the insignificant; Dulness can at one and the same time be presented as the most dangerous and the most trivial social phenomenon. With regards to the important Augustan concept of reason, the dichotomy lies in the distinction between two kinds of reasoning. Pope expresses a view that does not see reason as an infallible ideal, but as a tool that can be applied or misapplied.

The ambiguities of address that are found in *The Dunciad* give the impression that Pope chose to ignore the ideals of decorum and restraint that characterised the Augustan age. It seems that Pope saw a distinct discrepancy between the ideals of his time and the challenges of everyday existence.

**Nyckelord:** Alexander Pope, Eighteenth Century, Augustan Poetry, *The Dunciad*, Literature as Communication, Politeness

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