

“GREAT ANARCH'S ANCIENT REIGN RESTOR'D:”
MENIPPEAN SATIRE AND THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE
IN THE BRITISH ENLIGHTENMENT

by

MATTHEW WILLIAMS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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Abstract

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Matthew Williams

Adviser: Professor David H. Richter

At the heart of critical controversies over Menippean satire and the application of the label to the major satires of the early eighteenth century, especially those of Jonathan Swift, is the radical disjunction between claims of its subversive tendencies and the deeply entrenched conservatism of its producers. This paradox is resolved when it is recognized that although Menippean satire takes a deeply skeptical, even nihilistic, attitude toward knowledge, its epistemological uncertainty ultimately makes necessary custom and tradition. These satires challenge the emerging ideologies of market capitalism, bourgeois aesthetics, secularism, and materialist science—the modernity disparagingly portrayed in *A Tale of a Tub* as universal madness. Yet at the same time, these satires push in extreme directions, undermining a great deal of received knowledge, and challenging, as do other discourses of the period, superstition, scholasticism, dogmatism, and zealotry. As such, they are not merely reactionary texts, but are also instrumental in the intellectual developments of

the broader Enlightenment.

Chapter one defines Menippean satire as an ironic, fictional elaboration of systems of thought within a parodic, mixed-genre form that questions systems of knowledge by drawing attention to the discursive nature of ideas. Chapter two reorients discussions of Menippean satire toward the epistemological crisis that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is its immediate context. I associate many of the rhetorical strategies of Menippean satire with Pyrrhonism, a radical skepticism that, although destructive of dogmatic and received knowledge, finally makes necessary some form of faith, even if only in habit and common life. Chapter three deviates from other recent monographs on Menippean satire by situating the form within the class antagonisms of the period, insisting that Menippean satire must be historicized. Chapter four argues that *Gulliver's Travels* and *Blazing World*, both fantastic, parodic discovery narratives, delimit a geography of knowledge by which the true and the false, the human and the monstrous, may be mapped out. Chapter five charts a new route from scandal fiction to the novel, arguing that Delarivier Manley's self-proclaimed Varronian satire is a central and transitional text in the development of novelistic fiction out of Menippean satire.

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INTRODUCTION

In his history of the Enlightenment, Peter Gay writes, “There were many philosophes, but there was only one Enlightenment.” Gay insists that “from Edinburgh to Naples, Paris to Berlin, Boston to Philadelphia,” the various voices shaping a new secularism, challenging traditional religious and cultural values, and laying the foundation for the political revolution that would overthrow the old world order, although “discordant,” achieved a “general harmony.” Gay defines the Enlightenment as a “vastly ambitious program,” a collective effort to achieve “above all, freedom in its many forms—freedom from arbitrary power, freedom of speech, freedom of trade, freedom to realize one’s talents, freedom of aesthetic response, freedom, in a word, of moral man to make his own way in the world.”¹ A cornerstone of such freedom is intellectual resistance to dogmatism, to inherited beliefs, to superstition, and—especially in Gay’s conception of a modern paganism—to religion.

The view of a single Enlightenment has been challenged in recent years on a number of grounds. First, the Enlightenment is far from monolithic: rejections of scholasticism and biblical revelation, endorsements of republicanism, and attitudes toward science are complex and various in the period, sometimes ambiguous, and frequently inconsistent even within the *oeuvres* of individual philosophes. The intellectual developments in Catholic France differ wildly from those of Anglican

¹ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (1966; New York: Norton, 1995) 3.

England, the skepticism of Edinburgh’s philosophers could not be more different from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712 – 88) Geneva writings, and the politics of the intellectuals around Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707-51) diverge from those around Frederick the Great (1712-86; reigned as King Frederick II of Prussia, 1740-86). Second, resistance to the main “program” of the Enlightenment has been located in a variety of counter-movements in the period, and even in the works of the principal architects. Similarly, a number of historians have objected to the very idea of the Enlightenment *as* a program. Finally, what the Enlightenment is—whether it is defined by the emergence of secularism, science, republican government, individualism, or credit economies, whether it leads ultimately to human rights or fascism, whether it challenges tyranny or puts into place more entrenched forms of modern control and technologies of power,² or all of these—will likely remain active areas of debate. So too will questions over the role that literature played in these developments—especially two literary modes—satire and the novel—that are associated with this period. The former had been a major form in antiquity, and, along with other classical forms, became quite popular—it could even be argued, that it became the primary literary mode—in the first few decades of the eighteenth century. The latter, the novel, is said to have “risen” in this period and by the end of the eighteenth-century was a major form of entertainment. Also as a literary form of

² See Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1998) who argue that Enlightenment is finally the “wholesale deception of the masses” (42). Control is enacted through an ideology whose “very vagueness, its almost scientific aversion from committing itself to anything which cannot be verified, acts as an instrument of domination” and through a culture industry that “tends to make itself the embodiment of authoritative pronouncements, and thus the irrefutable prophet of the prevailing order” (147). The demythologizing efforts of Enlightenment become the very source of the power of bourgeois domination. See also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (1977; New York: Vintage, 1995).

the middle classes, the novel can be seen as part of the prolonged bourgeois revolution that defined this period.³ What role did these two literary forms play in the intellectual and political developments of the period? Do they reflect the changes referred to as the Enlightenment? Were they instrumental in the advance of this “program,” or resistant to it? These are questions that this dissertation seeks, in part, to address.

The standard view of eighteenth-century English satire is that it was the product of reactionaries of a Tory stamp, and that its producers, such as Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745) and Alexander Pope (1688 – 1744), were resistant to modernity and staunchly defended the declining pre-modern world-view. Paul Fussell, for example, defines the satirists as “humanists” aligned for direct battle with the forces of commercialism and progress, and situates them in a line of eighteenth-century conservatives, running through Edmund Burke (1729 – 1797):

Swift’s quarrel with conventicle and Grub Street, his satiric attack on innovators in the allied worlds of devotion and discourse, is re-enacted eighty-six years later in Burke’s assaults on Dr. Richard Price’s tabernacle sedition and on the National Assembly’s mechanical clichés about the Rights of Man. Both Swift’s and Burke’s battles are against the same enemy, a simple-minded Puritan utopianism which had seized the arguments of the seventeenth-century party of the Moderns

³ For histories of the eighteenth century that read the period between the English Civil Wars and the French Revolution as a gradual process of bourgeois revolution, developed through a sequence of compromises and succession crises, and marked by an increasingly powerful parliament and diminished monarchy, see Christopher Hill, “A Bourgeois Revolution?” ed. J. G. A. Pocock, *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) and J. H. Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability in England, 1675-1725* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

and applied them, with a superficially persuasive admixture of the new sentimentalism, to the same old reality, a reality as complex and unmanageable as ever.⁴

This view has a lot to offer any reader of eighteenth-century satire: the satirists are in fact opposed to mechanism, innovation, individualism, secularism, and thus actively seek to rein in key aspects of emergent modernity. But modernity itself was coming into being within the context of rejection—whether we mean the skeptical foundations of Descartes’ belief in clear and distinct ideas, Locke’s rejection of *a priori* knowledge, Hobbes’s abandonment of spirit for an entirely materialist conception of world, Spinoza’s challenge to religion, or later, the French Revolution’s violent rejection of monarchal and aristocratic rule. It was a polemical society in which one intellectual position was staked out by vociferously rejecting another. Satire also violently rejects through mockery and lampoon, or ironically adopts postures to show the need for their expulsion. The satirists, however, share certain key values with the moderns they are supposedly rejecting: a hatred of superstition, a belief in commonsense and a profound belief that false knowledge was dangerous and supportive of tyranny.

Throughout this paper, Swift will be my representative Menippean satirist, although substantial space will be devoted to Margaret Cavendish, Alexander Pope, Delarivier Manley, Henry Fielding, and Laurence Sterne. Of course, I am only too aware of the sheer volume of work that has been done on Swift, and it is with a great deal of humility that I add my voice. Every scholar of the period is likely to have an

⁴ Paul Fussell, *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965) 25.

opinion on this author, and that opinion is likely to be quite strong. At the same time, every scholar of the period must address this author, as so much of what we find significant in the period passes through his work. Swift's satires register most of the major intellectual debates of his time, are instrumental in defining the parameters of these debates, and reveal, despite their polemical force and their (rhetorical) anger toward particular positions, the final irresolvable tensions at the heart of his culture. It is crucial, therefore, that Swift and the other satirists be situated within the intellectual and political crises of their times.

Swift's work exposes contradictions and produces them, but his works also reflect them mimetically, as aspects of his lived cultural experience. Warren Montag reads the "irreducible" contradictions and "internal divergences" of Swift's narrative satires as arising from the contradictions of his age. They are "historically determined, and as such imposed on Swift as the inescapable condition of his writing."⁵ In part, these historical conditions entail a growing recognition that traditional explanations and compromises are no longer sufficient, an acknowledgement that progress of some sort is occurring ineluctably, despite resistance to it. Montag writes,

Swift, like all high Anglicans, came finally to recognize that the state necessary to empower the Church once again and restore to it its just and proper functions was an impossibility. The refusal of certain of his colleagues to accept the historical impasse that the Church faced led them to the utter futility of Jacobitism (without the slightest

⁵ Warren Montag, *The Unthinkable Swift: The Spontaneous Philosophy of a Church of England Man* (New York: Verso, 1994).

guarantee that the Catholic Pretender would not simply repeat his father's attempt to restore the Roman Church to England). In contrast, Swift seems to flee into the imaginary solution: a vision of Church and State, an ideal that could not be described in expository form but only figured negatively in literary satire. From now on, in the ideological realm, it was less and less possible to state the Anglican philosophy; instead one had to learn how to be an Anglican *in* philosophy, to occupy positions that, no matter how foreign to traditional Anglican thought, objectively favored the interests of the Church, if only by weakening its enemies.⁶

The Anglican Church needed to be distinguished from “Papist superstition” on the one hand, and dissenting Protestant “enthusiasm” on the other. Anglicanism, never positively defined in Swift's satires, was instead distinguished from these two extreme positions. Anglican doctrine was whatever remained once the two were demolished satirically. Philosophers, divines and satirists of the seventeenth century all played a role in rhetorically defining these two poles. The caricatures developed in Abraham Cowley's “The Puritan and the Papist” (1643) and Samuel Butler's “Hudibras” (1663, 1664, 1667) as well as the religious polemics of Joseph Glanvill (1636 – 80), Henry More (1614 – 87), and even Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) all find their way into the rhetoric and stock satirical tropes of *A Tale of a Tub*. But Swift opens up the contradictions in his society, exposes them as contradictions, and dramatizes the instability of the uncomfortable compromise that Anglicanism

⁶ Montag 41.

represents (a Martin who has already adopted Peter's absurd embellishments of his father's will, and has already shredded his original garment with his brother Jack). Swift does not seek compromise, but rather aims to expose the failure of conflicting views to explain or govern reality. The Anglican Church, however strongly he clings to it—and evidence suggests that he maintained his faith deeply and accepted the Church unequivocally⁷—can at best be defined by what it is not.

Swift's writings, finally, exhibit a skepticism that is both their condition and their effect. As Montag puts it, "Swift's satire, as his most acute critic, William Wotton noted, properly speaking has no norm. Swift inhabits the philosophies of his time to set them against themselves, to force them to the conclusions that their arguments pointed to but which they for the most part refused to, or could not, admit."⁸ Swift develops intellectual positions to their "logical" conclusions. By *reductio ad absurdum* Swift's satires insist that empirical philosophy carries us to totalizing materialism; religious inspiration leads to madness; the implementation of projects of improvement leaves the land barren; a search after human nature reveals the most vile, beastly and irrational creature. The powerfully destructive force of this reasoning arises from Swift's simplification of intellectual positions, his ability to reduce them to a metaphorical shorthand: enthusiasm, madness, and empty rhetoric, for example, all become wind, specifically of the flatulent kind. Furthermore, Swift's satire works by eliding differences. In Swift's satires, enthusiasm and delusion, puritans and papists are frighteningly alike. The collapsing of difference is a trick

⁷ See for example, Louis Landa, *Swift and the Church of Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954).

⁸ Montag 84.

employed by satirists of any age, and is a prominent technique of religious controversialist satires of the seventeenth century. In Cowley's "The Puritan and the Papist," the two sides engaged in chaotic and violent fighting merge, and very little difference can be found between them. Their most deeply shared similarity is their threat to order:

So two rude *Waves*, by Storms together thrown,
 Roar at each other, Fight, and then grow *One*.
Religion is a *Circle*; men contend,
 And Run the Round in dispute without end.
 Now in a *Circle* who go contrary,
 Must, at the last, *meet* of necessity.
 The *Roman Cath'lique* to advance the *Cause*
 Allows a *Lye*, and calls it *Pia Fraus*.
 The Puritan approves, and does the same,
 Dislikes nought in it but the *Latin name*.⁹

Polemical reasoning relies on difference to function, but Cowley and Swift both undermine the ability of either side to clearly distinguish itself. Ostensibly, the intention is to carve out a middle ground, but the middle, too much like its enemies on either side to escape unscathed, is undermined along with the two extremes attacked in its defense. In the end all positions seem to bring readers back to the same image of a mad, deluded and fallen world. It is this nihilism, and this alone, that finally remains in Swift's satires as an encouragement to return to the traditional, accepted

⁹ Abraham Cowley, "The Puritan and the Papist," ed. Alexander Grosart, *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Abraham Cowley* (New York: AMS Press, 1967) cxxiv.

Church.

This dissertation argues that eighteenth-century satire was central in challenging received traditions, and consequently, in furthering the activities of the enlightenment and the bourgeois revolution, even as it challenged many of the central tenets of these revolutions. The radical and skeptical intelligence of the satirists was content to accept no system without thorough analysis or without ridiculing everything in it that was absurd. Swift was a traditionalist in religion, but not so traditional in his politics. Readers often assume that Swift's satires are simple endorsements of his traditionalist beliefs, but when normative beliefs are even expressed, insofar as they can even be extracted from the satire, support for them in the text is frequently quite equivocal. Swift is too forceful in his rejections to allow an easy falling back upon beliefs. In challenging the foundations of belief—for example, by pointing out the fallibility of reason itself—Swift calls so much into question that no belief escapes the challenge. The force of Swift's satire is just as destructive of his own opinions as those he argues against. Swift as a satirist is even more radical and extreme in his rejections than many of the moderns he attacks. His nihilistic critique of political, religious, and aesthetic values had the same ultimate result as that of the progressive philosophers: it led to a total reevaluation of the intellectual foundations of society, the first principles structuring systems of belief.

Developments in England in the seventeenth century, especially in the arguments of empiricists and skeptics, laid the groundwork for later challenges to religion and traditional aristocratic ideology. These changes, occurring first in materialist discourses such as Francis Bacon's natural philosophy and Thomas

Hobbes's materialist political philosophy were eventually registered in the literary tradition as literalist realism and in politics as the triumph of the middle class as a ruling body. Swift and company are often situated within an ideological division that is traced to the split between Whigs and Tories after the Exclusion Crisis of the 1680s. They found themselves choosing sides in an increasingly partisan world. Isaac Kramnick characterizes the division this way: "Some accepted the new order, to some extent sponsoring it, even while basing their political power upon it. Walpole and his establishment Whigs wholeheartedly endorsed the new age and Defoe sang its praises. Another group, typified by Bolingbroke, rejected the new England and lamented the demise of what they considered to have been the traditional political and social structure firmly entrenched since the days of the Tudors."¹⁰ The period was shaped by a conflict between an older aristocratic ideology and an emergent bourgeois one, between medieval theories of order such as the Great Chain of Being and the correspondence of macrocosm to microcosm and modern empirical theories of nature. The Walpole administration became more powerful than the king, and empiricism replaced revelation as the major mode of understanding. Developments in literature occurred within this emerging structure, as new forms like the novel came into being. In each of these cases, Kramnick argues, the Scriblerian satirists defended the older values against the new. These disputes, playing out as arguments over taste, pitted literary men such as Daniel Defoe (1660 – 1731) and Swift against each other and Alexander Pope against John Dennis (1657 – 1734), Richard Blackmore (1654 – 1729), Joseph Addison (1672 – 1719), Colley Cibber (1671 –

¹⁰ Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1968) 5.

1757), and just about everyone else.

In addition to the view of Swift as a reactionary, another reading of Swift's politics as a moderate negotiation between extremes has also persisted and has been presented in numerous anthologies of his work and of the period. For example, the editors of one anthology declare,

Essentially Swift was a moderate in his politics, and he sought to mediate between the extreme factions of both parties. He adhered to the Revolutionary Settlement and subscribed to the doctrine of Parliamentary authority in determining the succession of the monarchy, in contrast to the doctrine of the divine right of kings. On the other hand, as a High-Churchman, he believed in the right of the state to require adherence to the established religion as a condition for holding office, and thus he was an inveterate opponent of occasional conformity, a practice that opened the door to Dissenters. Since the Whigs seemed to be the general protectors of the (Protestant) succession at the same time that they sought to broaden the base of their power by admitting the dissenting element, and since the Tories seemed to be the protectors of the Church of England at the same time many of them were at least ideologically committed to the succession of the Stuart line, even though it took a Catholic turn with James, Swift was not unperplexed in his allegiance.¹¹

As this formulation makes clear, neither the Whig nor the Tory party could be

¹¹ Geoffrey Tillotson, Paul Fussell, Jr. and Marshall Waingrow, ed., *Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (New York: Harcourt, 1969): 356.

thoroughly embraced by a supporter of the traditional Anglican Church. Yet moderate positions were increasingly scarce as party divisions hardened. Although a moderate middle position may have been the one Swift sought to defend, it often was won by immoderate means, and was claimed through a sequence of violent rejections rather than easy affirmations.

For Swift the resolution to doubt and rejection is the same as that of a radical skeptic—custom must be one's guide.¹² Swift's satire is more progressive than this even, in that he acknowledges the constructed nature of custom. Customs change over time, and they change because their supports are unstable and open to skeptical doubt. Change is possible in the realm of social organization and even intellectual habits. Thus, the Houynhnms of *Gulliver's Travels*, who are a strong rebuke to human pride and serve as an ironic reminder of what humanity desires to be but never could be, represent a utopian model of pure rationality devoid of the superstition, prejudice and discord that define human politics and philosophy. The Houynhnms, in other words, are a uniquely Swiftian vision of a kind of Enlightenment. Swift believes deeply in the fallen nature of humanity and the limitations of reason, but he holds out hope that through a sustained, unwavering, and unblinking critique, superstition, prejudice and delusion may be challenged at their roots in language and patterns of thought themselves. By such critique, the world—in particular, social customs and habits of thought—may be transformed.

So how central was Britain in the emergence of enlightened modernity, and were the literary men and women of the day encouraging or stifling its growth? A

¹² See chapter 2 below.

little more than one hundred years ago, Leslie Stephen (1832 – 1904) argued for an instrumental British role in the development of a new world order. These developments he located in the modern literary “organ,”

made up of men of the world—“Wits” is their favourite self-designation, scholars and gentlemen, with rather more of the gentlemen than the scholars [...] They are conscious that in them is concentrated the enlightenment of the period. The class to which they belong is socially and politically dominant—the advance guard of national progress. It has finally cast off the incubus of a retrograde political system; it has placed the nation in a position of unprecedented importance in Europe; and it is setting an example of ordered liberty to the whole civilised world. It has forced the Church and the priesthood to abandon the old claim to spiritual supremacy. It has, in the intellectual sphere, crushed the old authority which embodied superstition, antiquated prejudice, and a sham system of professional knowledge, which was held up by a close corporation. It believes in reason—meaning the principles which are evident to the ordinary common-sense of men at its own level. It believes in what it calls the Religion of Nature—the plain demonstrable truths obvious to every intelligent person. With Locke for its spokesman, and Newton as a living proof of its scientific capacity, it holds that England is the favoured nation marked out as the land of liberty, philosophy,

common-sense, toleration, and intellectual excellence.¹³

Over the long term, Stephen's Whig reading of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been the prevailing one. The origins of secular modernism, individualism, and republicanism are located in the works of Francis Bacon (1651 – 1626), Isaac Newton (1643 – 1727), and John Locke (1632 – 1704). And not only are great changes located in this period, but the individuals involved are described as aware of their role in the march of progress. Yet every aspect of Stephen's history could and has been quarreled with—what about the Dutch Enlightenment; how is the rise of evangelism to be squared with the “abandonment” of old spirituality; can notions of “commonsense” be divorced from the underlying partisan conceptions of reality that define commonly held assumptions; how fully did the poets endorse the projects of Locke and Newton; in what social classes should the various aspects of this enlightenment be located; was it a gentleman's project as Stephen argues? At the same time, this sketch of the early British Enlightenment has become so widely accepted as to pass for a kind of commonsense itself. What is not so readily accepted, however, is Stephen's situation of Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope among his group of progressive, enlightenment figures, his failure to distinguish the philosophers from the “wits” who were their frequent antagonists, and his making of the (English) literary men the primary figures in the rise of modernity. But for Stephen, the process of enlightenment arises from among gentlemen, the social and cultural elite. The Scriblerians, rather than producing reactionary polemic, participate in the efforts to define commonsense, cultivate rationality, and challenge

¹³ Leslie Stephen, *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century, Ford Lectures, 1903* (New York: Putnam, 1907), 51.

scholasticism, superstition, and religion. They are powerful allies in the effort to turn the “civilized” world away from superstition and toward rational truths.

More recently, Jonathan Israel has challenged the notion of an Enlightenment centered either exclusively in the British empirical tradition or in the compressed decades of radical polemical agitation leading up to the Revolution in France. Instead he locates a radical Enlightenment in the 1650s and 1660s in the Dutch circle around Spinoza. According to Israel, the English strain of the Enlightenment represented by Locke and Newton constituted a “moderate mainstream.” Their moderate critique was more palatable and more easily adopted. Furthermore, the moderate nature of this enlightenment served in part as protection against more extreme forms of skepticism and cultural critique. The moderate mainstream “was the Enlightenment which aspired to conquer ignorance and superstition, establish toleration, and revolutionize ideas, education, and attitudes by means of philosophy but in such a way as to preserve and safeguard what were judged essential elements of the older structures, effecting a viable synthesis of old and new, and of reason and faith.”¹⁴ This position is a compromise between radical critique and conservative cultural preservation. Readers of the Tory satirists as moderate compromisers could easily situate them here in the moderate Enlightenment, despite the satirist’s professed distaste for many of the major figures of this movement.

The moderate Enlightenment should be distinguished, Israel argues, from a more radical one, which

whether on an aesthetic or deistic basis, rejected all compromise with

¹⁴ Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 11.

the past and sought to sweep away existing structures entirely, rejecting the Creation as traditionally understood in Judeo-Christian civilization, and the intervention of a providential God in human affairs, denying the possibility of miracles, and reward and punishment in the afterlife, scorning all forms of ecclesiastical authority, and refusing to accept that there is any God-ordained social hierarchy, concentration of privilege or land-ownership in noble lands, or religious sanction for monarchy.¹⁵

How historians and literary scholars understand the Enlightenment depends to a great extent on what they mean by phrases such as “sweeping away,” “rejecting,” and “denying,” all of which are used to describe the approach of Enlightenment figures toward their received culture. These terms are of course not bound by this period, nor are they limited to developments in philosophy. In particular, satire is a mode whose primary purpose is rejection. But does satire, like the moderate Enlightenment, perform a subtle operation, removing abuses of reason and learning, but still compromising with traditional culture? Or does it perform a more urgent jettisoning of the rubbish that would sink the ship of state, or an *ense rescindendum*, the cutting out of a part of the body to save the whole? In his preface to *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), John Dryden (1631 – 1700) argues that although more extreme measures are frequently required, his satire uses more temperate means.

The true end of Satyre is the amendment of Vices by correction. And he who writes Honestly is no more an Enemy to the Offendour than the

¹⁵ Israel 11-12.

*Physician to the Patient when he prescribes harsh Remedies to an inveterate disease, for those are only in order to prevent the Chyrurgeon's work of an Ense rescindendum, which I wish not to my very Enemies. To conclude all, If the Body Politique have any Analogy to the Natural, in my weak judgment, an Act of Oblivion were as necessary in a Hot, Distemper'd state as an Opiate would be in a Raging Fever.*¹⁶

Dryden's temperament is deliberately Horatian here, as he urges patience and mercy. He insists that his methods are gentle, though he reserves the right to employ more radical measures. It is customary for the satirist to claim that he is reserving the greatest portion of his powers and that the further damage he could inflict should be feared. The medical analogy implies a moral purpose, an effort to cure the world of some ill. Most importantly, the pain of satire is for the reader's own good. But a great deal of eighteenth-century satire is engaged with philosophy and politics as much as with morality, and thus can be read as philosophical satire, and not the least among this group is Dryden's own *Absalom and Achitophel*. Not only does his poem challenge the supporters of James Scott, 1st Duke of Monmouth (1649 – 1685) as fickle, disloyal and blinded by false idols, but Dryden attacks their rhetoric—the language of republicanism—particularly as articulated by Anthony Ashley Cooper, 1st Earl of Shaftesbury (1621 – 1683) through his portrait of Achitophel. Satire of this nature attacks intellectual positions; its primary concern is with mocking the linguistic and rhetorical forms that ideas take. In this sense, an *ense rescindendum*

¹⁶ John Dryden, *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H. T. Swedenberg, Jr. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1972) ii. 5.

may be the necessary destruction of entire fields of discourse, entire approaches to philosophy or politics, simply to root out a single misguided position.

Dryden's poem is also a useful way in to an understanding of the prose satires of the first half of the eighteenth century. Dryden called his narrative poem a Varronian satire in his *Discourse on the Original and Progress of Satire* (1692). In so doing, he employed a label that, although not identical with Menippean satire, is often used to describe the same group of texts united under that name.¹⁷ One of the features of both forms is generic variety, including the mixture of prose and verse. Dryden's poem utilizes low as well as majestic, heroic diction, biblical typology and allegory (loosely enough to allow the current historical events to remain prominent without being forced to conform to the circumstances of the biblical analogues), satirical character sketches, literary allusion and philosophical argument. This variety has led critics to place *Absalom and Achitophel* within such diverse genres as epic, mock epic, allegory, satire, Jonsonian masque, political pamphlet, drama, chronology, folklore, and formal verse satire. Ian Jack calls it a "historical poem."¹⁸ Earl Miner calls it partisan history.¹⁹ W. K. Thomas labels it a Varronian satire in the structure of a classical oration, pointing to passages of the poem that conform to the formal components of an oration: exordium, narration, proposition and partition, confirmation (with digression) and peroration. It is "a satiric poem, heroic in manner,

¹⁷ See chapter 1, pages 52-55 and chapter 5 (234-36) for a discussion of the distinction between Varronian and Menippean satire.

¹⁸ Ian Jack, *Augustan Satire: Intention and Idiom in English Poetry, 1660-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952) 53, 71.

¹⁹ Earl Miner, *Dryden's Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1962) 141.

polemical in intent and argumentative in method.”²⁰ The variety of the form is itself instrumental in the force of its argument. It allows for flexibility of intellectual posture and of attack. As A. E. Wallace Maurer puts it, the work “impels reflection without letup exponentially with every line and segment. The mind of the reader is comprehensively activated by Dryden through disciplined *ad libitum* application of the instrumental machinery of epic, allegory, drama, pamphlet, satire, oration, narrative, painting, character, typology and heroic couplet.”²¹ Maurer’s notion of “comprehensive activation” is a crucial aspect of the definition of Menippean satire I will develop in later chapters: entire fields of discourse, intellectual traditions, and even the broader intellectual world itself, are put into motion by hybrid, narrative philosophical satires of this type. As Maurer points out, however, Dryden’s deployment of these modes, although free, is not whimsical, and is, above all, “disciplined.” The failure of the text to adopt a single generic shape is a component of its deliberate design. The fickleness of the mob, the Machiavellian philosophy of Achitophel/Shaftebury and the dangerous ambition of Absalom/Monmouth are satirized each in turn and through methods appropriate to them. The whole poem works toward an acceptance of David/Charles II as a divinely sanctioned king and merciful dispenser of the law. Dryden’s poem finally presents a clear counterpoint to the attitudes that it rejects. In this sense it differs from more radical types of rejection in the seventeenth century including skepticism. It also differs from Swift in clearly

²⁰ W. K. Thomas, *The Crafting of “Absalom and Achitophel:” Dryden’s “Pen for a Party”* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1978) 170.

²¹ A. E. Wallace Maurer, “The Form of Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel*, Once More,” ed. James A. Winn, *Critical Essays on John Dryden* (London: Prentice Hall, 1997) 129.

articulating its final political position in the King's closing speech.

Jonathan Israel's schema in which both moderate and radical figures reject aspects of their intellectual inheritance and compromise to varying degrees with that inheritance, still insists upon a forward progress by which a new world does in fact come into being to replace the one that has been rejected. How positions are rejected in this period is complicated, though, and no rejection is ever, or could ever be, total. Dryden's rejection is selective, and ultimately unapologetically conservative. However, the form he employs, satire, is not always so certain of the norms it finally endorses. Not all satires of the period deliberately take a side in an ongoing contemporary political dispute, though a number of them, Swift's *The Conduct of the Allies* (1711) included, do. In fact, the rejections of the Menippean satires of the period, as I will argue below, are frequently total. Unlike Dryden, Swift and Pope seem to find the application of an *ense rescindendum* imperative.

Michael McKeon's intellectual history of the period, like Israel's, relies on a distinction between moderate and more radical rejections, which he defines as "naïve empiricism" and "extreme skepticism" and which unfold within a dialectical relationship.²² The first challenge to religion and scholasticism, and in particular, to "romance idealism" comes in the form of empiricism, "an optimistic faith in the power of empirical method to discover natural essences."²³ This first critique, however, is undone by the radicalization of the empirical project itself, by the emergence of an extreme skepticism that challenges empiricism, but that also

²² McKeon, Michael. *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 47-52.

²³ McKeon 68.

continues the initial challenge to romance idealism. A similar dialectical pattern emerges in the challenge to “aristocratic ideology” which is first challenged by a “progressive ideology” that is then in turn “countercritiqued” by a “conservative ideology.” These dialectical challenges and reversals develop parallel with one another, but find their correspondences in one another: “The formal posture of naïve empiricism tends to accompany a substantive stance of progressive ideology, and extreme skepticism is reflected in an analogous, conservative ideology.”²⁴ In both cases, by the time we reach the third stage, the process of critique has gone so far that it has come back upon original ideological positions. This is Hegelian dialectic, and the new thesis, developed dialectally out of the first thesis and its antithesis, represents an entirely new position, like, but distinguishable from, the original thesis. Although extreme skepticism “recapitulates some features of the romance idealism which it is equally committed to opposing,” the new intellectual order that develops out of the “two-stage pattern of reversal” is quite different. The conservative and radical counter-critique and reaction to the challenges of the seventeenth century are incorporated into the new emerging categories: “The traditional categories do not really ‘persist’ into the realm of the modern as an alien intrusion from without. Now truly abstracted and constituted as categories, they are incorporated within the very process of the emergent genre and are vitally functional in the finely articulated mechanism by which it establishes its own domain.”²⁵

McKeon’s ultimate critical interest is with why the novel “rises” in the

²⁴ McKeon 22.

²⁵ McKeon 21.

eighteenth century and how it takes the form it does. Toward the end of this dissertation, I will also be interested in charting a path to the rise of the novel from the hybrid fictional and satirical forms earlier in the century, texts that were engaged in this critique and counter-critique of culture. One thing this dissertation seeks to measure is the degree to which satire performs wholesale rejections, the degree to which it is both instrumental in the challenge to traditional categories and constitutive of the new emerging relationships between traditional and modern forms of culture. To take Swift for an example, how closely does Swift's rhetorical strategy draw on the traditions of skepticism, on the philosophical arguments against scholasticism? Is Swift's satire merely negative? F. R. Leavis (1895 – 1978) found Swift's moral vision lacking and inconsistent because of the intensity of his rejecting spirit.

There are writings of Swift where "critical" is the more obvious word (and where "intellectual" may seem correspondingly apt)—notably, the pamphlets or pamphleteering essays in which the irony is instrumental, directed and limited to a given end. The *Argument Abolishing Christianity* and the *Modest Proposal*, for instance, are discussible in the terms in which satire is commonly discussed: as the criticism of vice, folly, or other aberration, by some kind of reference to positive standards. But even here, even in the *Argument*, where Swift's ironic intensity undeniably directs itself to the defense of something that he is intensely concerned to defend, the effect is essentially negative. The positive itself appears only negatively—a kind of skeletal presence, rigid enough, but without life or body; a

necessary precondition, as it were, or directed negation. The intensity is purely destructive.²⁶

Leavis operates under the assumption that satire must posit a positive virtue to counteract its negativity toward the world. He also, however, describes a destructive “intensity” that has long been the source of critical controversy and even powerful dislike of Swift among his readers. Hence William Makepeace Thackeray’s (1811 – 63) equivocal praise of Swift’s genius: “a vast genius, a magnificent genius, a genius wonderfully bright, and dazzling, and strong,—to seize, to know, to see, to flash upon falsehood and scorch it into perdition, to penetrate into the hidden motives, and expose the black thoughts of men,—an awful, an evil spirit.”²⁷ Critics no longer necessarily judge Swift in the terms that Leavis or Thackeray do, and modern critics concerned with the moral character of an author are more frequently interested in authorial attitudes toward class, race and gender, but terms like “misanthrope” are still used to describe Swift’s attitudes. On the other hand, there have been efforts to reconcile the nihilistic strain in Swift’s satires with the “positive” virtues that he as an Anglican minister is assumed to be articulating in his satires.

The nihilistic aspect of Swift’s irony and method only remains problematic if negation is not recognized as an end in itself. Leavis’s terms “critical” and “intellectual” define Swift’s orientation and a great deal of the impetus behind his satires. Swift is concerned with evacuating out false beliefs. Michael Seidel writes, “In satiric invective the urge to re-form is literally overwhelmed by the urge to

²⁶ F. R. Leavis, “The Irony of Swift,” *The Common Pursuit* (London, 1952) 16-17.

²⁷ *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray*. 12 vols. (London: Smith; Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1876) Vol. X, 381-415

annihilate.”²⁸ Swift’s radical satire, Claude Rawson argues, “flirts ambiguously with velleities of extermination.”²⁹ W. B. Carnochan writes, “One thing satire typically tries to do is to obliterate its subject. It presses toward extinction.”³⁰ Swift draws on the creative energies of negation to construct his major satires. “He builds,” Denis Donoghue writes, “his great work from the resources of negation, featuring as his characteristic gestures the imagery of veto, voiding, riddance, cleansing, deletion and the like. Far from wishing to enrich the world by adding his own mite to its possession, he wants to make it poor but honest.”³¹ In this sense, Swift’s notorious “excremental vision” may be seen as an obsession with evacuation, with rejection, and with pointing at the filth that has been expunged.³² The power of negation may in fact be the greatest resource of the long eighteenth century, employed by rationalists, empiricists and skeptics; by natural philosophers, philosophes, and deists; and, of course, by satirists.

"Menippean satire," or "anatomy," as Northrop Frye called it in his influential discussion of the form (1957), has recently become especially relevant to questions of satire's political and intellectual commitments. The former term is derived from the third-century B.C.E. Greek Cynic, Menippus, who, although his writings have been

²⁸ Michael Seidel, *The Satiric Inheritance: Rabelais to Sterne* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979) 3-4

²⁹ Claude Rawson, “Cannibalism and Fiction: Reflections on Narrative Form and ‘Extreme’ Situations,” *Genre* 10 (1977): 671.

³⁰ W. B. Carnochan, “On Satire, Negation, and the Uses of Irony,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 5 (1971-72): 136.

³¹ Denis Donoghue, *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969) 30-31.

³² Norman O. Brown, "The Excremental Vision," *Life Against Death* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1959): 179-201. Rpt in Ernest Tuveson, ed., *Swift: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice, 1964): 31-54.

lost, is credited with inventing the form. Usually written in prose (with some mixing of verse), these satires often include fantastic journeys, inserted dialogues, mock philosophical arguments, exaggerated displays of learning, and mockery of intellectual positions. Despite application of the label to a swelling collection of texts and increased attention by critics, persistent questions about its conventions, history and ideology have not been resolved. In recent years, especially as Mikhail Bakhtin's (1895 – 1975) hugely influential writings on the form have gained wider acceptance—or have at least become required points of reference—much has been written about the radical, even subversive and transgressive aspects of the form. In several critical studies, Menippean satire in general has been read as a form inherently critical of intellectual institutions and discourses. Through irony, disjunction, play, paradox, dialogue and juxtaposition it seeks to free readers from the confines of traditional structures of thought. This reading of satire is a major departure from earlier theories of the satirist as a defender of social norms and a champion of core Western values.

Menippean satire is a highly learned and intellectual form, and it was employed by some of the most important humanist scholars of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Reconciling this form and its potential to dismantle the western tradition with the uses to which it was put during the period in which it flourished may require an entire reevaluation of what Menippean satire is, how its conventions were used and to what end. Neither the mid-twentieth-century consensus that these satirical works are stable pronouncements against specific vices and in favor of moral norms, nor more recent readings of them in the context of

Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque seem adequate to explain the rhetorical realities of the form or its status as a dominant literary mode at the turn of the eighteenth century. Menippean satire seems to achieve conservative ends through its transgressive literary devices, or despite them.

Menippean satire's strategies are extreme and its powers so fierce, that it is often beyond the control of those who would wield it as a weapon. It frequently argues its own norms out of existence, or draws on the same energies it seeks to limit and control. One critic asks

whether poems like the *Dunciad* participate in the energies they seek to contain. Pope's mock-epic, like other Augustan satirical poems, displays characteristics—laughter, figures of speech, reflexivity, transgressive parody—that Kristeva described as typical of modernist avant-garde texts [...] Crossing out and crossing over its own discourse, the *Dunciad* refuses to answer the question it continually prompts: Who or what is actually triumphing? Without denying the force of Pope's exposure of the cleavages and contradictions in contemporary commercial culture, the answer to this question might qualify the adversarial status of Augustan texts by revealing that their models of symbolic dominance are inevitably connected to, rather than at odds with, the semiotic energies they contest.³³

It is one of my assumptions throughout this dissertation that texts should be understood

³³ Charles H. Hinnant, "Augustan Semiosis," ed. James E. Gill, *Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1995) 272-73. Hinnant's reference is to Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia UP, 1974) 225.

as doing things that would be considered unexpected from the perspective of known authorial “intentions.” The historical, political, and economic conditions that determine the positions from which these authors write will be crucial in defining the attitudes of the texts they compose. These cultural forces are often more determinative than private intentions: these forces include the institutional nature of genres, the cultural resonances of symbolic language, and the cultural assumptions that change over time (and therefore change how a text is received over time). In an age of contradiction these texts of radical examination necessarily internalize the cracks and contradictions of their age. Satire, as a polemical discourse, is problematic in this regard. The expectation is that it promotes clear and distinct norms, yet it often behaves in ways that not only show some acceptance and adoption of the attitudes that would be rejected, but also an undermining of the norms the text would be expected to support.

Finding the ridiculous everywhere and rationality almost nowhere, the texts invariably encourage a critique of larger intellectual structures and formulations. Menippean satire is deeply cynical about the human ability to know. Yet, as is the case with mitigated philosophical skepticism, doubt about the possibility for either metaphysical or empirical knowledge may actually stimulate a profound conservatism—a return to tradition, commonsense, and pragmatism. A dialectical approach to the form, like the one I am outlining here, actually allows us to retain a reading of Menippean satire as a challenge to traditional structures of knowledge, while still acknowledging its more programmatic conservatism.

Genre and the expectations of genre, or “poetic kind,” were instrumental in the rhetorical effect of literary texts in the eighteenth century. Poets worked within

the constraints of particular modes, and any variations from convention were a key component of the meaning of the work. The kinds of poetry were well defined at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but prose traditions were not. In fact, many of the prose forms of the early modern period, from Montaigne's *Essays* to More's *Utopia* to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, to Cervantes's picaresque "novel" were various in structure and content. Menippean satire is an ancient form, but also a form of the Renaissance. In the eighteenth century it is an important transitional fictional mode from the prose satires of the Early Modern period to the novel of the mid-eighteenth century. Menippean satire, however, is a tradition that developed out of the mixing of genres, or radical deviation from generic expectations. Some critics, employing the term Aristotle used in *Poetics* to define Chaerimon's *Centaur*, have described it as a "rhapsody," which Samuel Johnson defined as "any number of parts joined together, without necessary dependence or natural connection."³⁴ But it is not a mere hodge-podge or patchwork. In fact, the chaos of the text or a combination of seemingly incongruous parts is often an essential aspect of an overarching design. The chaos of the text is a further comment on the contemporary state of knowledge.

At stake is how we understand the development of genres in this period and their relationship to changes in the intellectual and political landscape. I have chosen to use "Menippean satire," rather than "narrative satire," "anatomy," "general satire," or other labels that have been used to designate these same works. It has received enough critical usage that it is useful shorthand for describing certain features of these satirical works. They are narrative satires that make use of multiple genres, mock

³⁴ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language, 1755* (New York: Arno, 1979).

modes of discourse, and satirize intellectual, religious and philosophical positions—for example, *Blazing World* (1666), *New Atalantis* (1709), *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* (1741), *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), *Gulliver's Travels* (1726; 1735), *The Dunciad Variorum* (1735; 1745), and *Tristram Shandy* (1759). These satirical works attack intellectual—rather than, or in addition to, ethical—attitudes and positions and deploy learned wit and parodies of literary and philosophical discourses. These texts are fragmentary, hybrid, and riotous. In all these texts the very fragmentation, chaos, and formal impurity are all symptoms of a world that the satirist wants to lash back into order and uniformity.

At the heart of critical controversies over the form and the application of the label to the major satires of the early eighteenth century, especially those of Jonathan Swift, is the radical disjunction between claims of Menippean satire's subversive tendencies and the deeply entrenched conservatism of its producers. How can it be that the most mixed, wild texts of this period are composed by such conservative authors? The answer can in part be uncovered through historicization. Whatever may persist from antiquity as a feature of this genre, and however much the eighteenth-century Menippean satires may resemble the Renaissance ones, the texts of each of these periods is quite different. As Samuel Taylor Coleridge once famously said of Swift: "Swift was *anima Rabelæsii habitans in sicco*,—the soul of Rabelais dwelling in a dry place."³⁵ The implied differences of intellectual orientation and temperament here are also differences in literary culture.

These satires challenge the emerging ideologies of market capitalism, bourgeois

³⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Table Talk*, (1830), qtd. in *Jonathan Swift*, ed. Denis Donoghue (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971) 112.

aesthetics, secularism, and materialist science—the modernity disparagingly portrayed in *A Tale of a Tub* as universal madness. The extreme skepticism, generic hybridity, fragmentation, and dialogism that are correctly located in these texts ultimately serve to defend religious and social values that the satirists seek to define as traditional, mainstream, and rationally obvious. At the same time, Menippean satire performs a powerful critique of intellectual attitudes, and its spirit of rejection leads to a critique even of the positions undergirding the attitudes that the text purportedly defend. These satires push in extreme directions, undermining a great deal of received knowledge, and challenging, as do other discourses of the period, superstition, scholasticism, dogmatism, and zealotry. As such, they are not merely reactionary texts, but are also instrumental in the intellectual developments of the broader Enlightenment.

There has been some resistance to the use of Menippean satire as a generic label. Some of these objections and the difficulties of defining the term and of treating it as a genre will be discussed in later chapters. Throughout this project I intend to show that the label is in fact useful, but will also work toward refining my definition of it and its application to the texts of the eighteenth century. Throughout this paper, I will discuss satire *in* the eighteenth century and will be interested in the way in which position determines the politics of satire in two primary ways. On the one hand, I will be interested in the locations in which satire became a major literary form in the eighteenth century: England, the emerging commercial and imperial power; Ireland, Jonathan Swift's home and colony of England; London, the bustling urban home of the new, modern bourgeoisie; and across the colonial globe. On the other hand, I will be interested in the position of satire among other genres and

discourses and how its practitioners are situated politically. When deployed from "above," it polices and controls subversion and deviation, when from "below" it critiques and transgresses systems and hierarchies. At the same time, as a polemical form that emerges in periods of ideological crisis and transition, Menippean satire also internalizes fractures and contradictions of the culture itself. My placement of this period's satirical works within structures of power and thought will be informed by Raymond Williams's (1921 – 88) theories of "dominant," "emergent" and "residual" classes and their interests, as well as Antonio Gramsci's theory of "hegemony."³⁶ At some moments Menippean satire can be said to inflict the final blow upon a residual ideology; at others it may challenge a dominant ideology, and at others still it may lay out a full assault upon a new and emerging ideology. At all moments, however, Menippean satire is a political form, and the cultural work it does is ideological.

The problem, of course, is that Menippean satire as it has been construed theoretically is one of the few literary forms capable of exposing the rhetorical, discursive, and ideological nature of reality, of distancing us from the categories and language that construct the world and its systems of power, of opposing monological, and monovocal formulations of reality with dialogism, and by decentering the powerful. However, placing it in the hands of conservatives—in fact, arguing that its greatest practitioners were conservatives—completely neutralizes any power it has to unmake hegemony. The novel, which Bakhtin sees as the child of Menippean satire—dialogical though it may be—is ultimately a bourgeois institution that

³⁶ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976).

legitimizes bourgeois conceptions of the self, the exchange of capital, and domesticity. Can literature ever escape such institutions? Can texts gesture toward spaces outside ideology, outside language itself? A number of critics have, of course, attempted to argue that Menippean satire can in fact achieve such subversive ends.

Describing Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of Menippean satire, Julia Kristeva (1941 –) writes,

By introducing the *status of the word* as a minimal structural unit, Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them. Diachrony is transformed into synchrony, and in light of this transformation, linear history appears as abstraction. The only way a writer can participate in history is by transgressing this abstraction through a process of reading-writing; that is, through the practice of a signifying structure in relation or opposition to another structure. History and morality are written and read within the infrastructure of texts. The poetic world, polyvalent and multi-determined, adheres to a logic exceeding that of codified discourse and fully comes into being only in the margins of recognized culture. Bakhtin was the first to study this logic, and he looked for its roots in carnival. Carnavalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging

official law.³⁷

If the world is a text, then it can only be engaged in and through texts. Because there is an identity for Kristeva, as for Bakhtin, between structures of power and literary structures, a carnivalesque inversion or a challenge to official codes in one is a challenge to the hierarchies in the other. Texts reinscribe existing ideologies and social structures. Bakhtin argues that certain texts, especially Menippean satire and the novel, perform a resistance to these structures through their dialogism. For Kristeva and Bakhtin, protest in the form of polyvocality only really comes into being in the margins of culture, through what Kristeva refers to broadly here as “poetic discourse.” It performs a protest both against the laws governing language itself and the conventions and codes governing society. Because both of these find their origins in the symbolic, and because they find their articulation through discourse, they have a kind of equivalence and can be challenged in and through the same forms of textual critique.

This paper does not treat its topics or literary figures chronologically, but rather thematically. I am interested in the history of Menippeanism, and thus there is a loose progression from early modern Menippean satires through seventeenth-century philosophy to the Augustan satirists and finally to the rise of the novel. There is also a parallel history of twentieth-century developments in theories of satire, utopianism and the rise of the novel, but here again I am not as interested in a strict sequence of events as I am in an aggregation of ideas over time and their clustering within time. The most obvious problem this paper addresses is one of generic

³⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1980) 65.

definition, but I am primarily concerned with the relationship between literature as form and literature as an expression of history and politics, or ideology.

Chapter one defines Menippean satire as an ironic, fictional actualization and elaboration of systems of thought within a parodic, mixed-genre form that performs a radical questioning of received knowledge by drawing attention to the discursive nature of ideas. Menippean satire is concerned with the intellectual positions that frame and define reality, and it thus carries a radical potential to transform reality. However, as I argue in this chapter, Menippean satire, like other forms of satire, has deeply rooted conservative tendencies. Swift and Pope's Menippean satires challenge an emergent modernity. Furthermore, what is not satirized as a sign of modern degeneration is attacked as a sign of essential failings in human nature. Menippean satire presents a world whose fallen nature is recapitulated in the incomplete and contradictory nature of philosophical discourse and in the uncrossable gulf between the human mind and Truth. Out of this dark view of reason and of human efforts to know emerge both a radical nihilism and a deep conservatism. But, I argue, it is through this same radical critique that these Menippean satires, despite their resistance to modernity, may be said to participate in the Enlightenment by challenging superstition, dogmatism, and false reason.

This dissertation reorients discussions of Menippean satire toward the epistemological crisis that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is its immediate context. Thus, chapter two associates many of the rhetorical strategies of Menippean satire with Pyrrhonism, a radical skepticism that, although destructive of dogmatic and received knowledge, finally makes necessary some form of faith, even

if only in habit and common life, as in David Hume's philosophy. This chapter argues that *A Tale of a Tub* performs a radical critique of materialist philosophy and the prevailing epistemological justifications for faith. Situating Swift within the skeptical tradition of the preceding century, I make a case for viewing this narrative satire as a radically skeptical text that undermines any support for belief other than faith itself.

Chapter three insists that Menippean satire must be historicized and read in the context of the class interests motivating it. Taking Pope's *Dunciad* as a test case, I argue that the carnivalesque is often a critique coming from above and not below, meant to conflate the middle classes with the mob. This chapter deviates from other recent monographs on Menippean satire by resituating the form within the class antagonisms of the period.

Chapter four, exploring the utopian element frequently noted in Menippean satire, argues that *Gulliver's Travels* and *Blazing World* are both fantastic, parodic discovery narratives that render certain modes of thought other and delimit a geography of knowledge by which the true and the false, the human and the monstrous, may be mapped out. In this chapter I argue that Menippean satire and utopian texts begin from an assumption that the world is socially and discursively created, and that as such its cultural and intellectual institutions can be changed. They are marked by a fundamental cynicism, however, and both utopian texts and Menippean satire are concerned with the vast gulf between human conceptions of the ideal and the social world as it is found.

Chapter five proposes a theory of the rise of the novel that can accommodate

the range of satirical fictions in the period. While the primary focus of scholars of the eighteenth century in the 1950s and 1960s was satire, in recent decades critical attention has turned toward the novel. In both cases, analysis of the literature of the period hinged upon questions of form and genre. Efforts have been made to situate genres in history, thus we do not speak of the novel merely, but of the rise of the novel, an emergent literary form that is determined by its place in history, and that articulates through its form the ideological inscription of its history. While the usual line of influence is drawn from Richardson to Fielding and eventually to Austen and the nineteenth-century novel, this chapter instead charts a new route from the scandal fiction and Menippean satires of Delarivier Manley through Swift and Eliza Haywood to the novels of Fielding and Sterne. The tensions inherent in the Menippean form are especially apparent in the women satirists discussed in this chapter: it offers a space of resistance, even as it re-inscribes traditional social hierarchies.

This final chapter argues that the fictional aspects of Menippean satires that draw attention to their own fictionality, combined with a satirical narration, is ultimately constitutive of the novelistic narrative mode known as free indirect style. With the emergence of a single, unified narrative voice that is both judge and defense attorney, the voice on the page is seemingly an extension of the community itself. Menippean satire is also instrumental in disillusioning, in forcing readers to look behind or beyond fictions. In this sense its spirit is kindred with that of the Enlightenment, and with the realism that emerged in the wake of romance. The novel, perhaps, could even be said to fully enter into the artificial, human world, the world of social conventions so crucial to radical skeptics, and to accept it as reality.

Its conformity to the conventions of that human world is the formal sign of realism.

In the end I will show that Menippean satire as a form allowed for a powerful cultural and intellectual critique in a period characterized by massive political and social change. Although the examples of the form I will discuss draw on long-established and vast bodies of learning, they are not merely backward-looking or traditionalist in their bearing. Menippean satire is, finally, a mode by which inherited knowledge and discourses were challenged. As such, I hope to demonstrate that it was instrumental in, and not resistant to, the intellectual developments known as the Enlightenment. Menippean satire was also a crucial transitional form in the development of the novel in the eighteenth century. Thus, although to some extent it policed literary taste, it participated in a rearrangement of genres, and the development of a tone and style central to the novel as it emerged in the middle of the century. In the cases of both philosophy and literary form, Menippean satire, although it resisted the modern, ultimately cleared the ground for the new.

CHAPTER ONE

“IN ORDER TO PREVENT THESE LEVIATHANS FROM TOSSING AND
SPORTING WITH THE COMMONWEALTH:”
THE COMMITMENTS OF MENIPPEAN SATIRE

The eighteenth-century Menippean satires of Swift, Pope (*The Dunciad Variorum*), and Sterne have troubled readers unable to reconcile the radical and subversive effects of the satires (whether intended or not) with the purported political beliefs of their conservative, Tory authors. These texts can support very different readings, yet in the mid-twentieth century, a near-consensus emerged about satire and its social function. Satire, it was argued, is written in defense of particular social, cultural, literary or intellectual norms while it attacks with unwavering conviction those individuals and positions that deviate from these norms. Normative values, presumably absent from a fallen world, do not appear in the text except as the implied ironic counterparts to the vices and corruption detailed, exaggerated, or ridiculed.

Critics at Yale in the 1950s (Maynard Mack, Alvin B. Kernan, Martin Price, Robert C. Elliott, and Ronald Paulson) asserted that claims could be made about satire in general, and they extrapolated several defining characteristics from the “established” canon of satires. Alvin Kernan, for example, delineated “the plot of

satire,” collapsing the features of the diverse texts of two millennia to a single scene, satirist, plot, and intention.³⁸ In keeping with the New Criticism then dominant at Yale, these critics insisted that satire was a rhetorical art, that the “satirist” is a persona or mask separable from the author, and that studies of the form need not reference the historical particulars outside the text, but should instead engage with the rhetoric of the text itself. While their focus was often on the formal verse tradition developed in imitation of Horace (65 BCE – 8 BCE) and Juvenal (c. 55 – 138 CE) they did not limit their arguments to these texts and were just as interested in exploring satirical prose narrative texts. They argued that even in the farraginous, hodge-podge “baggy monsters”³⁹ of Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745), Henry Fielding (1707 – 54), and Laurence Sterne (1713 – 68), a clear satiric persona with a particular set of values and grudges could be located. All these critics at one point or another made claims of satire’s conservative intentions.⁴⁰

³⁸ Alvin B. Kernan, *The Plot of Satire* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1965).

³⁹ Henry James famously called the nineteenth-century novel a “large loose baggy monster” in “Art of Fiction” but the phrase is also suggestive of Menippean satire’s status as a hybrid, inclusive and mixed form. Bakhtin, of course, argues for a direct line of connection between the “menippea” and the novel, a connection I will explore in depth in Chapter 5 of this paper.

⁴⁰ Alvin Kernan, *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1959), writes that the satirist (albeit the “satirist” considered as a persona), “sees the world as a battlefield between a definite, clearly understood good, which he represents, and an equally clear-cut evil. No ambiguities, no doubts about himself, no sense of mystery troubles him, and he retains always his monolithic certainty” (21-22). Robert C. Elliott, “The Satirist and Society,” *Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), writes, “The satirist claims with much justification, to be a true conservative. Usually (but not always—there are significant exceptions) he operated within the established framework of society, accepting its norms, appealing to reason (or to what his society accepts as rational) as the standard against which to judge the folly he sees. He is the preserver of tradition—the true tradition from which there has been grievous falling away.” Maynard Mack, “The Muse of Satire,” *Yale Review* 41 (1951), claims that satire “asserts the validity and necessity of norms, systematic values and meanings that are contained by recognizable codes.” Not all of these critics insisted on the stability of the satiric form at all times, however. Martin Price, *To the Palace of Wisdom: Studies in Order and Energy from Dryden to Blake* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), sees the satirist as “always demonstrating a failure,” but argues that the effect of this demonstration is frequently transformative, even in potentially subversive ways: “The

Sheldon Sacks and Edward Rosenheim, Jr., critics at the University of Chicago in the 1960s, agreed with the New Critics that satire is a preeminently rhetorical art, but they insisted that an essential aspect of the form is its topicality, and that satire cannot be discussed in isolation from its context. Satire explicitly refers to real-world particulars outside of itself, and only those persons, vices, or institutions that are the *intended* targets should be read as objects of the satire. Anything more ambiguous begins to take us beyond the realm of satire, and thus both Sacks and Rosenheim seek to distinguish satire sharply from other comedic, polemical, and allegorical forms.⁴¹ Sacks offers this definition of satires: they are “works which ridicule particular men, the institutions of men, traits presumed to be in all men, or any combination of the three.”⁴² Rosenheim, like Sacks, allows for the inclusion of narrative satires within the scope of his definition, but again particularity is crucial; general attacks on abstract vices are not sufficient to make a text a satire. Fiction, on the other hand, is allowed to be an incidental aspect of the form, if not an integral component: “satire consists of an attack by means of a manifest fiction upon discernible historical particulars.”⁴³

Theorists of formal verse satire emphasize the role of attack as a fundamental feature of satire, and narrative satires have often been discussed in the same context.

prevalence of satire throughout the eighteenth century served to force apart orders that once were aligned in a universal Order and to set them in ironic opposition” (16).

⁴¹ Sheldon Sacks, *Fiction and the Shape of Belief: A study of Henry Fielding with glances at Swift, Johnson and Richardson* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1964); Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., *Swift and the Satirist's Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

⁴² Sheldon Sacks, “From: Toward a Grammar of Types of Fiction,” ed. Paulson, *Satire* 330.

⁴³ Edward Rosenheim, Jr., “The Satiric Spectrum,” ed. Paulson, *Satire* 323.

The argument goes that the satirist is a moralist, and the culture so corrupt and degenerate that it demands the satirist's response. Hence, Juvenal's oft-quoted ironic pronouncement, "*Difficile est saturam non scribere*" or David Worcester's characterization of satire as "the engine of anger."⁴⁴ Lillian and Edward Bloom provide a typical reading of satire as a conservative literary mode: "Disposed toward didacticism, satire best makes its points by attending to sources and instances of failure in human behavior or institutions."⁴⁵ While failure pointed out with an eye toward reform might imply a call for progressive change, this is not what Bloom and Bloom have in mind. Satire is increasingly vehement, vicious, and Juvenalian (Northrop Frye calls satire "militant irony") in proportion to the degree that the satirist believes individuals or institutions have fallen from their ideals.⁴⁶ The satirist is profoundly cynical about human nature. Knowing that those who deviate from norms cannot be forced back into conformity, the satirist seeks at the very least to shame them or to ridicule them, holding them up to others for instruction. "As part of his intention, the satirist criticizes contemporary shortcomings within a context whose values, ideally, outlast occasions of the moment."⁴⁷ In this conception, the satirist, despite a predilection for topical references, is of all times and for all times, attacking perennial vices in the name of universal and eternal norms.

Much of what was said about satire in those productive decades still seems

⁴⁴ David Worcester, *Art of Satire* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1940) 13. Worcester points out that Juvenal's remark is itself "a brilliant stroke of rhetoric" that intensifies a sense of rampant and pervasive vice.

⁴⁵ Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, *Satire's Persuasive Art* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979) 33.

⁴⁶ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957) 223.

⁴⁷ Bloom and Bloom 33.

true, or at least quite plausible, to those familiar with eighteenth-century satire. Readers of these texts (and here I am referring to the canonical satirists: John Dryden (1631 – 1700), John Arbuthnot (1667 – 1735), John Gay (1685 – 1735), Alexander Pope (1688 – 1744) and Swift) are often steered toward a direct and clear set of conservative values: moderation in religion (an Anglican negotiation between Catholic “superstition” and Protestant “enthusiasm”); a privileging of “ancient” rhetorical rules and aesthetic systems over the chaos and excesses of the “modern;” right reason that neither embraces the analogical madness and system building of scholasticism nor devolves into the mechanical worldview of René Descartes (1596 – 1650), Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679), and the enquiries of a nascent scientific mode; a morality that is free from affectation, flattery and pretension; and learning and erudition that avoid bombast, pedantry, critical obscurity, and partisanship.

This basic argument has not changed much over the years, even as it has been modified. In fact, reevaluations by Brean Hammond, Isaac Kramnick and others have isolated and clarified the ideological positions of the Scriblerians, demonstrating that even what seem to be their most moderate intellectual and social positions can be interpreted as expressions of country party Tory conservatism.⁴⁸ Indeed, the Scriblerians have a particular set of core values and a habitual set of targets. Frequently anti-intellectual in their bias, Scriblerian satires register a class-based antagonism toward professionalized scholarship and literary production.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁸ Brean S. Hammond, *Pope* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester, 1986); Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1968).

⁴⁹ David Bywaters, “Anticlericalism in Swift’s *Tale of a Tub*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 36.3 (1996), has argued that Swift’s *Tale* is often mistakenly read as a satire on Anglicanism because of the strong anticlerical tendencies of the text. Bywaters argues that Swift turns against the intellectualist defenders of Anglicanism in order to win the support of a lay audience. “In attempting

Scriblerian position is that of gentlemanly amateur scholars who see technical proficiency, Egyptiana, obscure scientific enquiry, commercialism, materialism, innovation, projects, schemes, and bubbles as part of the same emerging ideological superstructure.

The intellectual posture of the Scriblerians certainly invites such readings of their ideology. Rhetorically, the Scriblerians distinguish their literary careers from those of the Grub Street crowd and set themselves apart from a world gone mad. What they seek to achieve is a preservation of “proper” spheres of culture. “The quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns [...] imposed an overt class stratification on the pursuit of knowledge.”⁵⁰ Swift, Pope, and the other Scriblerians together in conversations and through their individual works shaped the rhetorical expressions of their ideological position: what began as an attack on pedantry ultimately finds full expression in *The Dunciad* (1728, 1743) as a total assault on the entire class of professional (“mercenary”) writers. In this poem, the monstrous proliferation of paper, of the printed word itself, stands in metaphorically for an age overrun by error. As “Martinus Scriblerus” says of the poet of *The Dunciad*:

He lived in those days, when (after providence had permitted the
Invention of Printing as a scourge for the Sins of the learned) Paper
also became so cheap, and printers so numerous, that a deluge of
authors cover'd the land: Whereby not only the peace of the honest

to make Anglicanism safe for the educated, skeptical lay audience to whom he wished to appeal—and perhaps even to make himself feel comfortable in a new profession about which he seems to have had some doubts—Swift draws upon both the ancients-moderns controversy and an old and popular tradition of anticlericalism to attack not only Catholics and dissenters, but also a certain type of Anglican clergyman from which he was particularly eager to distinguish himself” (580).

⁵⁰ Hammond 101.

unwriting subject was daily molested, but unmerciful demands were made of his applause, yea of his money, by such as would neither earn the one, or deserve the other: At the same time, the Liberty of the Press was so unlimited, that it grew dangerous to refuse them either: For they would forthwith publish slanders unpunish'd, the authors being anonymous; nay the immediate publishers thereof lay sculking under the wings of an Act of Parliament, assuredly intended for better purposes.⁵¹

Cheap paper has allowed a new class of writers to enter the space of the learned, and the lapse (1695) of the Licensing of the Press Act (1662) has removed law and order from the production of texts. The rule of law has been replaced by the rule of public opinion, by the threat of retaliatory slander made safely anonymous by print. *The Dunciad* itself, of course, punishes bad taste and bad writing, and does so through what is essentially slander. It is typical of Pope's rhetoric—and of Swift's—to describe the emergent print culture as a deluge of filth indistinguishable from the sewage ditches where the texts were hawked,⁵² as a reckless multitude, a mob grown dangerous with its taste of freedom. Liberty here is conflated with anarchy and chaos, and the corruptions of the entire age can be seen echoed in, or rather disseminated widely through, the products and presses of Grub Street. Anarchy is inscribed in the texts themselves and built into the system of production by the

⁵¹ Alexander Pope, "Martinus Scriblerus, of the Poem," ed. James Sutherland, *The Dunciad*, ed. John Butt, *et al.*, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*. 11 vols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1939-69) 5.49.

⁵² For a brilliant attempt to situate Scriblerian satire and its Grub Street targets within the urban geography of London see Pat Rogers, *Grub Street: Studies of a Subculture* (London and New York: Methuen, 1972).

reckless mob that has hijacked it. Swift's *Tale of a Tub* (1704) finds a similar impetus in class warfare. Writing to the moment, on any and every subject, spinning empty words, chaos, and innovation out of himself, the narrator of Swift's *Tale* is a representative figure of the age, one who has usurped intellectual and cultural authority inappropriate to his class.

By the 1720s the Scriblerians were taking on the Whig oligarchy in power, confronting an ideological system in the process of achieving cultural hegemony. The Scriblerians, along with Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678 – 1751), and his followers, the Patriots, argued that they were champions of liberty and upholders of the ancient constitution. As defenders of the Country Party ideology, they saw corruption “in terms of a chaos of appetites, productive of dependence and loss of personal autonomy, flourishing in a world of rapid and irrational change,” and these corruptions included bribery, the “trading empire, standing armies, and credit.”⁵³ In this sense, the general Scriblerian satire on the world of ideas is not outside of the pamphlet wars or above (except in artistry) the controversial polemics of their time, and within this frame they serve to express a particular political and cultural ideology. What Hammond says of Pope, could more or less be said of Swift as well: “The character of Pope’s ideology is that of a family-based, Christian aristocrat or landed gentleman, implacably opposed to the elite of, as he believed, corrupt financiers, bankers and brokers who governed the country.”⁵⁴ It was conventional for the satirists of the period to assert that theirs was a moderate,

⁵³ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975) 486, 458.

⁵⁴ Hammond 3.

nonpartisan position, despite their obvious intentions to intervene in matters of partisan significance (Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) is a perfect example of how this works). Therefore, their claims to moderation can be interpreted as merely rhetorical, an attempt to lay claim to the moderate middle on behalf of the conservative opposition.

At the same time, a number of critics have resisted pigeonholing Swift among the Tory conservatives. Carole Fabricant, for example, distinguishes Swift's politics sharply from Bolingbroke, Harley, and Pope. She argues that Swift was radically opposed to the English colonial efforts in Ireland, subverted the country house ideal in his poetry, and presented a vision of the Irish landscape that challenged the dominant ideologies that had led to the destitute and decayed condition of the nation. For Fabricant, Swift is often either radically opposed to the ideological underpinnings of the Tories, or has adopted them only uncomfortably and in the spirit of compromise.

As the divergent views on his politics discussed thus far attest, Swift has the unique status in the history of satire criticism of being the test case by which theories live or die. He is often either the archetypal satirist, or the one exception in a theory of satire. As such, his work represents the horizon of what can be said about satire, the rule by which any argument about the nature of satire and its political intentions must ultimately be measured. Swift is able to be many things because of his power to call into question, to raise doubts, to "vex the world;" his satires are always radical, and are thus naturally resistant to articulations of simple party positions.⁵⁵ This is the

⁵⁵ Swift wrote to Pope on 29 September 1725: "The chief end I propose to myself in all my labors is to vex the world rather than divert it, and if I could compass that designe without hurting my own person

aspect of Swift's work that Fabricant emphasizes, distinguishing him from the ordered, classical, refined poetic world often attributed to Pope, a world described by terms such as *Palladian*, *Augustan*, and *discordia concors*. "In virtually all of [Swift's] works, we may discern themes, energies, or (anti-) structures that are fundamentally inimical to the ordering, idealizing Augustan mind as we have come to understand it in terms of someone like Pope."⁵⁶ The Swift described here is not an author defending traditional norms or opposing vices with easily expressed virtues. Swift's satirical vision is extreme, nihilistic, and avoids simple formulations, even when he is taking a party-line position. He is unable to locate an idealized, ordered world against which to compare the fragmented, crumbling world he finds as fact. Furthermore, "Despite his life-long insistence upon the importance of plain and simple prose style," Swift's experimental uses of language show, "an awareness of the inability of established, officially sanctioned modes of expression to deal with certain kinds of reality, certain kinds of experience."⁵⁷ It is this resistance to ordering systems and to officially-sanctioned discourse that those who refer to Swift as a Menippean satirist have tended to emphasize.

In the last few decades, satire criticism has wrestled with Mikhail Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, which offers a major departure from theories of the satirist as a defender of social norms and a champion of core Western values.

Published in 1929, it was not widely read or discussed in American universities until

or Fortune I would be the most Indefatigable writer you have ever seen." Harold Williams, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, Volume III, 1724-1731 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

⁵⁶ Carole Fabricant, *Swift's Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982) 17.

⁵⁷ Fabricant 17.

the 1980s, when the emphasis shifted to satire's radical energies, its resistance to closure, its antagonism toward social convention, and its tendency to counteract definitive pronouncements with dialogism. In part, this new emphasis also meant canonizing a different set of texts as typical satires—the “dialogic” texts that mix prose and verse and are often filled with a variety of discourses, attitudes and intellectual positions, and that cultivate a critical posture toward the attitudes they parody. These Menippean satires, traceable back to the (nearly mythical) Menippus through Lucian who in turn influenced Rabelais, Erasmus, Swift, and Sterne came to be seen as more important for study than the parallel verse satire tradition. This new importance was especially bolstered by Bakhtin's assertion that Menippean satire is the direct precursor of the novel. Often seen as the central literary form of modernity and of its triumphant middle class, the novel, according to Bakhtin's argument, is also the most dialogical and subversive of literary forms (in his argument the assumed *telos* of literature is Dostoevsky). Bakhtin offered an origin that accounted for the presence of satirical elements in the major novels of the European tradition, and that allowed for a quasi-Marxist re-evaluation of this supremely bourgeois form.

Bakhtin isolated fourteen characteristics of Menippean satire and defined it as the “adventures of an *idea* or *truth* in the world,” and indeed satire's philosophical aspects have become more interesting to critics.⁵⁸ According to Bakhtin, Menippean

⁵⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984). Briefly summarized, Bakhtin's fourteen characteristics of the menippea are as follows: 1) a heightened comic element; 2) “an extraordinary freedom of plot and philosophical invention”; 3) the use of fantasy and adventure in order to “test” an idea or truth; 4) an emphasis on the low and vulgar, or a “slum naturalism”; 5) a concern with “ultimate questions”; 6) an expansive setting that may extend to both the heavens and the underworld; 7) “experimental fantasticality” that radically alters the scale of what is observed; 8) representation of extreme moral and mental states such as madness; 9) the representation of “eccentric behavior,” appearance of “scandal scenes”, and linguistic frankness; 10) the appearance of “sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations”; 11) the presence of

satire gives voice to the energies of folk tradition, mixes high and low forms of culture, and puts a variety of discourses—learned, popular, literary, religious, and philosophical—into play in such a way that hierarchy and the relative authority of each discourse is undermined. This recent critical tradition tends to associate the Menippean satirist with the spirit of carnival, and to align the satirist with the popular forces that are released by the text. Interested in toppling normative ideologies and scholastic and religious orthodoxies, “the menippea,” as Bakhtin calls them, undermine all claims to truth and decenter all claimants to it. Menippean satire does not hierarchalize, but destabilizes, collapses, and demolishes. It does not search after truth, but demonstrates its impossibility.

One persistent fact of literary history remains troubling, however: as we have seen, the major Menippean satirists of the eighteenth century are conservative, Tory, country gentlemen, and often even members of the clergy. Even many women authors who have been claimed as powerful feminist voices employed Menippean satire for conservative ends. In their satires, Margaret Cavendish (*The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*, 1666), Delarivier Manley (*New Atalantis*, 1709), and Eliza Haywood (*The Adventures of Eovaai, Princess of Ijaveo*, 1736) challenge science, implicate the Churchill’s and other Whigs in scandal, and confront the Robert Walpole administration, respectively. The tensions inherent in the Menippean form become especially apparent in the works of these women authors: Menippean satire is a space of resistance, even as it re-inscribes traditional social hierarchies and divisions. The agenda of such defenders of poetic conventions, the

utopian elements; 12) the insertion of other genres; 13) the presence of multiple styles and tones; and 14) a “concern with current and topical issues” (114-19).

church and the landed classes hardly seems compatible with the supposed aim of Lucian and other Menippean satirists of antiquity to challenge all forms of human knowledge. It is equally odd that the British authors who were most disturbed by unreason, innovation, absurdity and zealotry should have chosen as their primary mode of expression a literary form that could be accused of the very same varieties of intellectual “folly.” Swift and his circle, for example, make use of the modern fictional techniques they deplored; they refer knowledgably to the learned debates they mock; they seem to enjoy composing the pedantic commentary of Martinus Scriblerus; and even the fantastic achieves new heights of power and expressiveness in their writings. It is a paradox of learned wit that it mocks the learned world in, and on, its own terms. Joseph M. Levine offers this provocative account of the period:

The Ancients and the Moderns, the wits and the virtuosi, were all locked into the same small snug world of Augustan London, too closely to be entirely distinguished, too cramped together to completely ignore each other. However they might decry it, each of the wits had his own flirtation with learning—as each of the learned continued to advance polite letters. However they might try to laugh only at its excesses, the wits found the allure of the new learning too hard completely to resist.⁵⁹

Such paradoxes are typical of a form that is simultaneously marginal and central, both inside and outside the mainstream literary tradition. Although Menippean satire has a parodic and parasitic relationship to literature and genre, and although it undermines

⁵⁹ Joseph M. Levine, *Dr. Woodward's Shield: History, Science, and Satire in Augustan England* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1977) 240.

literary conventions, blends the high and the low, and often grotesquely transforms the body of the western tradition, it has been the favorite form of canonical authors from Chaucer to Rabelais to Swift to Joyce to Pynchon.

Menippean satire is not properly a genre, however. The attraction of formal verse satire for many critics is that it can be considered a genre, with definable conventions. It can be spoken of in isolation from other literary kinds, and variations from one practitioner to the next can be noted for their impact on the meaning of the piece. Genres often have an implicit ideology built into their structure and conventions. The marriage plot of comedy, for example, restores order to a topsy-turvy world, placing the hero and heroine back within the social world and its hierarchies. Broadly speaking, however, satire has no conventional form, although its style, ironic devices, and even tropes may become conventionalized in various periods. In fact, satire is found in *other* genres. Yet there is something meant generically by “satire”—a form whose sole purpose is to ridicule or mock. Hence the distinction often made between satire and the satirical. In this sense, Jane Austen (1775 – 1817) is satirical, while “A Modest Proposal” (1729) is a satire.

Thinking of satire as a set of rhetorical devices, rather than the presentation of a particular ideology has allowed some critics to divorce satire from any consistent political position. In fact, the intellectual stance of the satirist is hardly uniform and may vary widely within periods and over time. There is no need to argue that satire is inherently conservative or progressive, destructive or constructive, if we accept that different satirists have used its devices to achieve different aims. Ronald Paulson, for example, argues, “A satirist who believes that his society is stuffy, overordered and

convention-ridden employs revolutionary satire, and a satirist who sees his society as chaotic, individualistic and novelty-seeking tries to rein it in by using a defensive satire.”⁶⁰ At some moments, Menippean satire exposes and ridicules those who threaten the social order, and at others, sometimes even within the same works; it turns its ironies against authority and those orthodoxies that structure the very social order itself. For these very same reasons, however, it must be recognized that Menippean satire directly raises ideological questions, and we must necessarily address the problem of political commitment.

The term *Menippean* may prevent, rather than serve, our understanding of these texts. The origins and history of the form, the appropriateness of naming the genre after Menippus, whether or not it is a genre, the nature and conventions of the form, and the parameters of its canon have been argued about exhaustively. Yet some such term is needed to hold together a particular group of texts that resemble one another in attitude, method and theme. As difficult as it is to pin down an exact definition for Menippean satire, it is an absolutely essential category for defining those satires and satirical texts that do not fit the conventions of the formal verse satire (which is most of the works we read as “satire” in the popular sense of the term). Of course, we have none of Menippus’s writings (3rd Century BCE) and just the titles of 95 works and 591 fragments from Marcus Terentius Varro (116 – 27 BCE), and we only know it through a loose collection of texts whose diversity itself is Menippean, and whose scope is as wide-ranging as Northrop Frye’s anatomy of literary types. These texts usually have narrative elements, yet they are not comic

⁶⁰ Ronald Paulson, *The Fictions of Satire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1967) 19.

novels, nor are they the pure verse satires that Quintilian (c. 35 – c. 100) likely meant when he claimed that satire was uniquely Roman (“*satura tota nostra est*”). Clearly, *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726, 1735) is a satire of a Menippean sort, as is *A Tale of a Tub*. Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749) are probably not, strictly speaking, Menippean satires, even though “walking concepts” like Thwackum and Square fit most definitions, but *Tristram Shandy* (1759) certainly is. Northrop Frye’s list of Menippean satirists/ anatomists includes Gaius Petronius Arbiter (c. 27 – 66), Lucius Apuleius (123 – 180), Desiderius Erasmus (1466 – 1536), François Rabelais (1494 – 1553), Sir Thomas More (1478 – 1535), Robert Burton (1577 – 1640), Isaak Walton (1593 – 1683), Michel de Montaigne (1533 – 92), Swift, François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694 – 1778), Thomas Carlyle (1795 – 1881), Thomas Love Peacock (1785 – 1866), and James Joyce (1882 – 1941).⁶¹ Debates over who is in and who is out, and variations from one collection to the next, however, are not limited to modern critics.

Among the Early Modern critics, Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614), in his influential essay on satire (*De Satyrica Graecorum Poesi & Romanorum Satira*) includes Petronius, Seneca the Younger (4 BCE – 65 CE), Lucian of Samosata (125 – 80), Julian, Martianus Capella, and Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (480 – 524). André Dacier (1651 – 1722) includes Seneca, Petronius, and Boethius, but not Lucian. Dryden, who drew heavily from both critics, includes Petronius, Apuleius, Seneca (he specifically cites *Apocolocyntosis*, the “Pumpkinification” of Claudius), and Julian. Dryden’s modern additions include Erasmus’s *Encomium Moriae* (1509),

⁶¹ Frye 308-312.

Barclay's *Euphormionis Lusini Satyricon* (1604 – 05), Alessandro Tassoni's *La Secchia Rapita* (1622), Edmund Spenser's *Prosopopoia, or Mother Hubbard's Tale* (1591), and his own *Absalom and Achitophel* and *Mac Flecknoe* (1682).⁶² All three critics included Varro, but did not, or were reluctant to, include Menippus who was too cynical and who, according to Dryden had turned Homer and the tragic poets into "something that was Ridiculous."⁶³ This exclusion, and his naming of the form "Varronian" rather than "Menippean," suggests that the form was seen as serving a more serious purpose in a more dignified style. But the definition need not be limited to this high seriousness, as according to Dryden, Samuel Butler's doggerel burlesque, the "Excellent" *Hudibras* (1663, 1664, 1678), is a satire "of the Varronian kind, though unmix'd with prose."⁶⁴ Dryden's own satires are unmixed with prose, however, suggesting that even this is not a hard and fast feature of the form for him. This led Sir Walter Scott (1771 – 1832) to remark, "Dryden's idea of a Varronian satire was, that, instead of being merely didactic, it comprehended a fable or series of imaginary and ludicrous incidents, in which the author engaged the objects of his satire."⁶⁵ Aaron Santesso, attempting to extract a useful definition from these Early Modern critics to apply to early eighteenth-century Varronian satires writes,

Absalom and Achitophel and *Mac Flecknoe* are both highly topical poems, and both mix serious 'philosophy' with their formal burlesque.

⁶² "Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," ed. Edward Niles Hooker and H. T. Swedenborg, Jr., *The California Edition of the Works of John Dryden*. 20 volumes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1956-) 4:48

⁶³ Dryden 4:47

⁶⁴ Dryden 4:81

⁶⁵ Walter Scott, *The works of John Dryden*, Quoted in Dryden 4:561-62.

Both use a variety of poetic techniques and move between different poetic forms and genres. Indeed, in all the works Dryden mentions, elements of various genres are present, topical matters are allegorized, false learning is satirized, and various digressions appear.⁶⁶

Hybridity, topicality, the mixture of serious and burlesque elements are all crucial, but some sort of controversy is necessary as well. Eugene Kirk proposes that Menippean satire, especially suited to controversy, and appearing at moments of intellectual crises and ideological shifts, is a register of the history of controversy. It reflects “tellingly what the major currents of intellectual and theological controversy have been, since antiquity.”⁶⁷ While Kirk argues that the content of the form—its intellectual and social concerns—may change with time, or even within the *oeuvre* of one author, and that even those things latched onto as worth imitating can vary widely from one period to the next, there is a definable Menippean *style* whose features can be named. Kirk notes some of the “family resemblances” that help constitute this style:

The chief mark of the Menippean style was unconventional diction. Neologisms, portmanteau words, macaronics, preciosity, coarse vulgarity, catalogues, bombast, mixed languages and protracted sentences were typical of the genre, sometimes appearing altogether in the same work. In outward structure, Menippean satire was a medley

⁶⁶ Aaron Santesso, “The *New Atalantis* and Varronian Satire,” *Philological Quarterly* 79.2 (2000). Santesso’s definition and his application of it Manley will be discussed in Chapter 5 below.

⁶⁷ Eugene Kirk, *Menippean Satire: An Annotated Catalogue of Texts and Criticism* (New York: Garland, 1980) x.

— usually a medley of alternating prose and verse, sometimes a jumble of flagrantly digressive narrative, or again a potpourri of tales, songs, dialogues, orations, letters, lists and other brief forms mixed together. Menippean topical elements included outlandish fictions (i.e., fantastic voyages, dreams, visions, talking beasts) and extreme distortions of argument (often, “paradoxes”). In theme, Menippean satire was essentially concerned with right learning or right belief. That theme often called for ridicule or caricature of some sham-intellectual or theological fraud.⁶⁸

There is no disagreement among critics that Menippean satire is *some* kind of “medley,” mixture, or variety of *something*, but exactly what is mixed and in what proportions has not always been agreed upon. Building on Casaubon’s dismantling of the false “satyr” etymology, Dryden wrote that *satura* “signifies a dish plentifully stored with all variety of fruits and grains.”⁶⁹ This hodge-podge, however, need not necessarily be “satirical”—i.e. intended to ridicule either those things brought into textual proximity or the things referred to outside of the text—as the term is meant in common parlance today. “*Saturae Menippeae*,” as used by Varro, may merely have implied a medley in the style of Menippus (whatever that may be). Historically, it has been argued that Menippean satire is a mixture of verse and prose. Menippus supposedly mixed them, Varro’s fragments show that he sometimes did, and Lucian frequently inserts verse into his prose texts. This does not appear to be an essential

⁶⁸ Kirk *xi*.

⁶⁹ Dryden 4:48.

generic feature, however, as what are called Menippean satires are usually mostly in prose, finding their variety in the discourses and voices they parody. Garry Sherbert downplays the role of verse in shaping the genre: “Menippean satire has been known as a predominately prose genre with only internal verse.” More important is “its mixture of satire and philosophy.”⁷⁰ M. H. Abrams’s definition of the genre suggests that the bringing together of people themselves and the philosophical positions they represent is what shapes its mixed character. Menippean narratives present “a series of extended dialogues and debates (often conducted at a banquet or party) in which a group of immensely loquacious eccentrics, pedants, literary people, and representatives of various professions or philosophical points of view serve to make ludicrous the intellectual attitudes they typify by the arguments they urge in their support.”⁷¹ This definition, however, seems incapable of application, except partially, to certain texts widely believed to be Menippean satires such as *Tale of a Tub*, and only to certain scenes of others, such as the banquet and feasting scenes in *Satyricon*, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532) and *Tristram Shandy*.

The form’s encyclopedic aspects have also been emphasized,⁷² but to call it “encyclopedic satire” would be redundant (a full plate of fullness) unless we mean *satire* in its more modern sense (a plate filled with everything in order to mock either something—the whole world employed to mock a particular rogue element—, or everything—the whole world called in to indict itself). Bakhtin calls it simply

⁷⁰ Garry Sherbert, *Menippean Satire and the Poetics of Wit: Ideologies of Self-Consciousness in Dunton, D’Urfey, and Sterne* (New York: Lang, 1996) 32.

⁷¹ M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York: Holt, 1981) 169.

⁷² See Ronald T. Swigger, “Fictional Encyclopedism and the Cognitive Value of Literature,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 12 (1975).

“menippea,” Frye “anatomy,” and others locate some of its formal variations within larger categories, like Frank Palmeri’s “narrative satire.”⁷³ It would, of course, be a mistake to insist that every miscellaneous text or generic hybrid is a Menippean satire. As Rosalie Colie has pointed out eclectic, “uncanonical” forms abounded in the Renaissance and became one of the literary inheritances of the period. Yet there is something that writers such as Burton, Rabelais, Erasmus, and Sir Thomas Browne (1605 – 82) have in common and it is more than just their allusiveness, their filling of texts with quotes and ancient and medieval generic kinds either in miniature or in fragments. Rather there is an attempt to fit the entire world within their texts, an inclusive, expansive tendency that can also be found in *A Tale of a Tub*, *The Dunciad*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Sartor Resartus* (1833 – 34) and *Ulysses* (1918 – 20). Of Rabelais, Colie writes, “Merely in the way he manages the languages of countries, provinces, professions, trades, social classes, and even of sexes, we can see Rabelais’s extraordinary interest in the variety of modes of thought in his world, as well as his powerful drive to get ‘everything’ in, so as to make his book represent and comment on culture.”⁷⁴ Other eighteenth-century literary forms and practices, such as commonplace books and newspapers, also grouped disparate forms together. These, however, are of course not Menippean, but the bringing together of multiple forms and discourses within the same text, does necessarily line systems of thought alongside each other. As such, miscellaneous, mixed genre texts may unsettle

⁷³ Frank Palmeri, *Satire In Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Gibbon, Melville and Pynchon* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1990). Palmeri is discussed in Chapter 2 below.

⁷⁴ Rosalie L. Colie, *The Resources of Kind. Genre-Theory in the Renaissance*, ed. Barbara K. Lewalski (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973) 77.

unifying, universalizing, systematic, or even ideological visions of the world. At the same time, satire, mockery, and skepticism, within these texts do not blind readers to the positions of their authors. In a war of language-systems, these authors frequently hierarchalize, elevating one system above another. “For all his skepticism of the new learning, [Rabelais] supports it against the old.”⁷⁵

Many of the texts Frye labels as anatomies—and Colie resists the term, but reluctantly adopts it for the sake of utility—actually embrace systematic thinking in their efforts to bring everything within their compass. Colie writes, “They are ‘centos,’ books of quotation and allusion, on a very large scale, to all the conceivable elements of their culture. Though they mix the categories by which aspects of culture are usually communicated, they nonetheless recognize those categories as the scaffolding for their own constructions.”⁷⁶ Nonetheless, despite these similarities, these texts resist cohering as a genre, as a canon.

Yet incoherence and diversity are the mark of the satirical. As Alistair Fowler has argued, “Diversity of form is paradoxically the ‘fixed’ form of satire.” It is a genre that is no-genre, a literary mode that must parasitically inhabit other literary kinds if it is to have life. “Menippean or narrative satires [...] require borrowed structures—such as the travel-book kind inhabited by *Gulliver’s Travels* or the dystopic science fiction of *1984* or the novel of *Decline and Fall*.” Fowler finally settles on a theory of “mode” to explain what satire is and how it functions. While a genre has a fixed “repertoire,” and exists within a range of established forms and

⁷⁵ Colie 78.

⁷⁶ Colie 81-82.

structures, a mode has “an incomplete repertoire, a selection only of the corresponding kind’s features, and one from which overall external structure is absent.”⁷⁷ Menippean satire never seems to call attention to itself as such, but always seeks to pass as something else.

Dustin Griffin has complained about the tendency to see Menippean satire as a genre distinct from other satirical kinds, arguing that the time has come for more productive studies that look at both prose and verse satires together. However, he also claims that Frye and Bakhtin in their accounts of Menippean satire seem to be “describing different forms,” inadvertently giving credence to the idea that Menippean satire or satires can be distinguished from other satirical kinds.⁷⁸ In the classical use of the term, *satura* referred to satire in general and not just the full-plate Menippean modes. Thus even Juvenal referred to his formal verse poems as “farrago.” Satire is always various, always miscellaneous, keeping every rhetorical and literary device available and at its disposal. For Leon Guilhamet, the “distinction between verse satire and Menippean satire may be a false one.” He writes further that “Menippean satire, usually regarded as a mixture of prose and verse is too vague a generic concept. Taking its name from a Greek Cynic philosopher, Menippus, who was reputed to have pioneered the form, it would seem to carry a substantial residue

⁷⁷ Alistair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature. An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982) 110, 189, 107.

⁷⁸ Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1994). Griffin outlines several possible family lines of Menippean satire, each one serving as the background for one account or another of the “genre,” but very rarely being explained all in the same place: “a tradition of fantastic narrative, from Lucian to *Gulliver’s Travels* and beyond; a parallel tradition of wild and parodic display of learning from Erasmus through Robert Burton to *A Tale of a Tub*; and a tradition of dialogue and symposium from Plato and Lucian to Fontenelle and Blake” (33). Individual satirists can be found writing in each of these Menippean modes, but the three seem different enough to give credence to those who see the attempt to define a single genre here as futile. It is also worth noting

of philosophy along with it.”⁷⁹

This “residue” of philosophy seems to be key. Menippean satire is a necessary category for satires that, like *A Tale of a Tub*, consider ethical questions and dole out punishment, but are more fully concerned with ideas, philosophical, political and ideological systems, forms of discourse, and attempts to fit the world within some kind of intellectual pattern. For example, throughout *Gulliver’s Travels* and *A Tale of a Tub*, dogmatists, projectors, scribblers and others made mad by their own ideas are truly threatening and need to be violently exposed, and their madness is often seen as a moral deficiency. Frye writes, “The novelist sees evil and folly as social diseases, but the Menippean satirist sees them as diseases of the intellect, as a kind of maddened pedantry which the *philosophus gloriosus* at once symbolizes and defines.”⁸⁰ Attacks on dogmatism, fools and pedantry can, and often do, take on a moral valence, but they do not have to. Frye places Menippean satire along a continuum from the “entirely fantastic” to the “entirely moral.”⁸¹ Although the form is often more intellectual than moral, the degree of denunciation in anatomy often fits within the range established by the satires of Juvenal and Horace. There can be gentle Horatian mockery couched in tones of benevolence, such as we see in Sterne’s treatment of Uncle Toby—we playfully poke fun at people given over to misguided ruling systems. Menippean satire can also adopt more Juvenalian attitudes, as in the

that Griffin never challenges the central “canon” of Menippean satire in a significant way.

⁷⁹ Leon Guilhamet, *Satire and the Transformation of Genre* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1987) 5.

⁸⁰ Frye 309.

⁸¹ Frye 310.

fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*—here we see total misanthropy, and a blanket condemnation of human nature. Menippean satirists, however, have also been charged with immorality. Throughout its history, opponents of the form highlighted its power to undermine structures of belief. Lucian enjoyed a revival among religious men like Sir Thomas More who produced a translation of his works with Erasmus. Lucian had, however, authored an infamous satire against the Christians and was abhorred throughout the Renaissance for his irreligion. His imitators were also often accused of doing more harm to faith than good even if they claimed to be defending their church or faith (as in the case of some reactions to *A Tale of a Tub*).

Although most Menippean texts are located in his third “phase” of satire, Frye’s “second or quixotic phase” applies just as easily to the features he identifies as typically Menippean.⁸² Frye characterizes satire in this second phase as a “setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain.” Explanatory systems are tested by reality and fail—ultimately—either to explain the world or to appease the desire to understand it, because “experience is bigger than any set of beliefs about it.”⁸³ “Systems” and “system builders” were ridiculed in the eighteenth century for their attempts to reduce the world to a single pattern or to organize knowledge within a coherent structure of their own devising. Yet fools buy into dogmatism, living their lives according to false and incomplete systems. Lucian literalizes this fact when he puts philosophers

⁸² I am not going to recount all the “phases” of satire that Frye outlines. It should be remembered, however, that when Frye speaks of a phase he does not refer to a temporal succession of literary forms, but rather is pointing toward distinct generic manifestations united by a common attitude or myth. Frye does, however, intend to evoke the progression of life and the cycle of the seasons, and satire is the form associated with winter. His system is thus both synchronic and diachronic.

⁸³ Frye 230.

themselves up on the auction block in one of his satires.⁸⁴ More than just “mouthpieces of the ideas they represent,” the dogmatists of Menippean satire represent the folly of any attempt to bring the world within the compass of an explanatory system.

Menippean satire also finds its place in Frye’s third, or “high norm,” phase of satire. These satires call into question commonsense itself and the shared communal values (low norms) that the first and second phases rest upon. The “riotous chaos” of Rabelais and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) are Frye’s examples, but Lucian, Petronius, Apuleius, Burton, Thomas Nashe (1567 – c. 1601) and Swift also make appearances in this phase. The chaos of the text, the yoking together of disparate modes, styles, even traditions, dramatize the impossibility of seeing the world from a single frame of reference or containing it within a single discursive system or ideology. “This type of fantasy breaks down customary associations, reduces sense experience to one of many possible categories, and brings out the tentative, *als ob* basis of all our thinking.”⁸⁵ The goal of the Menippean satirist is not to end philosophical enquiry, but to suggest that any answers are merely provisional, and that we should be willing to abandon them when they fail the test of reality. “The satiric attitude here is neither philosophical nor anti-philosophical, but an expression of the hypothetical form of art.”⁸⁶

Frye’s text itself borders on the Menippean, and his titling of his work “an

⁸⁴ “Vitarum Auctio (Philosophies for Sale),” ed. and trans. Lionel Casson, *Selected Satires of Lucian* (New York: Norton, 1962).

⁸⁵ Frye 229.

⁸⁶ Frye 231.

anatomy” seems to suggest a special, and perhaps winkingly ironic, relationship between his project and the encyclopedic tendencies of the mock-learned projects he discusses. This encyclopedism is the defining characteristic of this genre for Frye, which he finally determines to call “anatomy” after Burton: “This creative treatment of erudition is the organizing principle of the greatest Menippean satire in English before Swift.”⁸⁷ Frye’s is an attempt to put all literary productions within one explanatory frame—even if the realities of generic ambiguity often resist such categorization; his catalogue of forms, both exhaustive and impossible to complete, resembles Burton’s encyclopedic attempts to catalogue the types, causes and cures of melancholy, and to understand the world within this “intellectual pattern.” Perhaps Frye realizes of his own work that it is an attempt to make order out of chaos, and that like all such endeavors, it is doomed to failure.

Arguing that Menippean satire is an “anti-genre,” Joel Relihan sees intellectual abuses as its target, and sees the form as a challenge to philosophies for their consistent failure to improve human experience. Varro, for example, “crosses Menippus and Lucilius to create a strange hybrid whose focus is the failure of the academic pedant to understand and improve the world around him.”⁸⁸ But, Milowicki and Wilson ask, “Is the Menippean aim to mock philosophy out of existence or to mock it into a more commendable version of itself?”⁸⁹ The Cynics did the former,

⁸⁷ Frye 311.

⁸⁸ Joel C. Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993) 28.

⁸⁹ Edward J. Milowicki and Robert Rawdon Wilson, “A Measure for Menippean Discourse: The Example of Shakespeare,” *Poetics Today* 23:2 (2002): 301n. Milowicki and Wilson, who choose to refer to Menippean “discourse” rather than “satire,” write about Menippean satire in terms that are not period-bound: “In whatever age, Menippean discourse seems always to have possessed a similar intellectual thrust: to test unexamined cultural assumptions and philosophical ‘truths’” (303).

but Varro sought to achieve the latter, correcting errors within philosophy. Varro believes that philosophical discourse has its place, and he turns his attacks against quacks, charlatans and fraudulent systems and not against philosophy itself. But at its most extreme, following the cynical tradition of mocking the philosophy of the academies and exhorting listeners to the simple life, Menippean satire takes on the philosophical enterprise in general. Although specific targets often seem to be intended (however broad these targets may be), the overall seriocomic tone of the work, its tendency toward paradox and absurdity, and its persistent attitude of doubt and irreverence (perhaps the only things ever remarked as consistent in the form by readers like Relihan) suggest that the Menippean satirist will settle for no answer, can tolerate no form of human learning, will rest at no dogmatic pronouncement.

The genre is primarily a parody of philosophical thought and forms of writing, a parody of the habits of civilized discourse in general [...]

What I see as essential to Menippean satire is a continuous narrative, subsuming a number of parodies of other literary forms along the way of a fantastic voyage that mocks both the traveler who desires the truth and the world that is the traveler's goal, related by an unreliable narrator in a form that abuses all the properties of literature and authorship.⁹⁰

Relihan's radical reading of the form comes from his association of the Menippean attack on philosophy with a broader attack on discourse in general. The satirist reveals the failure of words to explain. Because all truths must be expressed

⁹⁰ Relihan 10.

in language and because no language can ever adequately and sufficiently express truth, all discourse is suspect. “Menippean satire, one may say, opposes the word-centered view of the universe, and is a genre that, in words, denies the possibility of expressing the truth in words.”⁹¹ The satirist speaks in the language of those who he would mock, tries on discourses like clothing, only to show that they do not fit, maintaining all the while an ironic attitude, a sense that words are empty, and that no matter how many of them are exhausted in seeking the truth, the truth will always recede from the philosopher’s reach.

Menippean texts use literary language ironically, draw attention to their artificiality and to the rhetorical nature of political, literary and philosophical discourse. Satire’s principal device, irony, is, of course, already a double form of discourse, but for Bakhtin and those, like Relihan working in his wake, Menippean satire mobilizes entire fields of discourse, and thus the class interests that underpin them and the worldviews they express. The parodic, polyvocal, heteroglossic language of the Menippean satirist is able to undermine the tyranny of what Bakhtin refers to as “straightforward language,” and the “national myth and national tradition that permeate this language.” Language itself reveals its own discursive nature.

The position and tendency of the parodic-travestyng consciousness is, however, completely different: it, too, is oriented toward the object—but toward another’s word as well, a parodied word *about* the object that in the process becomes itself an *image*. Thus is created that distance between language and reality [...] Language is transformed

⁹¹ Relihan 11.

from the absolute dogma it had been within the narrow framework of a sealed-off and impermeable monoglossia into a working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality.⁹²

The world expressed in a discursive system is allowed to exist within the text, but as discourse, as a word or image. It is thus revealed to be a product of discourse, a function of language, and not truth. In the process discourses and the worlds they put into motion are alienated from us—systems are mere words, and the world a sequence of shifting poses and modes of being. Words express ideologies contending for supremacy in a world where the only access to the real is through the constructed universe of discourse. When discourse and genre become self-referential, they are defamiliarized, and we are able to see their forms as institutions, as conventions. Thus the Bakhtinian structuralist, Viktor Shklovsky, finds *Tristram Shandy* to be the most representative of novels because it is about its own narration, about its own status as discourse.⁹³ As Lahcen Haddad puts it, “narrative is subordinated to the play of discourse, to its struggle against the conventionality and artificiality of narration.”⁹⁴

The Menippean text is a parade of words, a discursive chaos in which all possibilities are still in play. Words often appear *as words*, as puns, as conventionalized generic patterns that are parodied, as the rhetorical deceptions of a sophist, or as exuberant lists. In the process, truth can be exposed as *mere words*, a

⁹² Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981) 61.

⁹³ Viktor Shklovsky, “Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*: Stylistic Commentary,” trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1965).

⁹⁴ Lahcen Haddad, “Bakhtin’s Imaginary Utopia,” *Cultural Critique* 22 (1992): 150.

sequence of arbitrary signs. Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* offers a great example of words taking on a material reality that paradoxically reveals their emptiness (the carrying around of objects *as words* in Swift's Academy of Lagado is another example of this trope). Hudibras's rhetorical skills are a series of parlor tricks:

For Rhetoric, he could not ope
 His mouth, but out there flew a trope;
 And when he happen'd to break off
 I' th' middle of his speech, or cough,
 H' had hard words, ready to show why,
 And tell what rules he did it by;
 Else, when with greatest art he spoke,
 You'd think he'd talk'd like other folk,
 For all a rhetorician's rules
 Teach nothing but to name his tools.⁹⁵

Philip Stevick remarks, "Stylistic density [...] enables anatomy to use language as a critique of language, to go beneath language, and to see, in a way impossible to the novelist, the sub-discursive power of language, as incantation, as totem, as shibboleth, as a means to self-intoxication, and as a stimulus to laughter."⁹⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951) is relevant here, too. Of his attempt to draw limits to thought, he writes, "It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be

⁹⁵ Butler, Samuel, *Hudibras*, ed. John Wilders (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 1.81-90.

⁹⁶ Philip Stevick, "Novel and Anatomy: Notes toward an Amplification of Frye," *Criticism* 10 (1968): 163. Stevick adopts Frye's use of the term anatomy as preferable to Menippean.

drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense.”⁹⁷ Carter Kaplan has also found Wittgenstein useful in his discussion of how Menippean satire takes on truths presented in language. It is the discursive nature of knowledge that invites its critique. Kaplan writes, “Wittgenstein said, ‘Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language’ (PI §109). It was Wittgenstein’s desire to produce philosophical insight by a kind of rearrangement of his reader’s mental patterns.”⁹⁸ Menippean satire, according to Kaplan, is allied with philosophy in its war against myth, fiction, and superstition. Mental frames dictate our perception of the world; Menippean satire challenges them at the site of their articulation: language. “In philosophy, Menippean satire is a method for analyzing propositions, clearing off conceptual confusion, and discrediting intellectual mythology.”⁹⁹ Kaplan, moving beyond a notion of Menippean satire as a mode, suggests here that it is a method. It is a set of rhetorical structures and strategies that presumably could be employed by writers working within other discourses, including philosophers themselves. Thus, some critics of Menippean satire include even Jacques Derrida (1930 – 2004) as a central figure in their canon of Menippeans.¹⁰⁰

Kaplan has also opened up ways for beginning to understand the Menippean stance within the context of the philosophical tradition, finding kinship between

⁹⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (New York: Routledge, 1975) 4.

⁹⁸ Carter Kaplan, *Critical Synoptics: Menippean Satire and the Analysis of Intellectual Mythology* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2000) 59.

⁹⁹ Kaplan 21.

¹⁰⁰ Garry Sherbert, *Menippean Satire and the Poetics of Wit: Ideologies of Self-Consciousness in Dunton, D’Urfey, and Sterne* (New York: Lang, 1996).

Menippean satire and both the British empirical tradition in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and analytical philosophy in the twentieth century. In fact, Kaplan directly invokes the idols of the mind articulated by Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626): “From the Menippean perspective there is no formula, artifice, or theory that can explain the world or natural phenomena. Such mechanisms are products of folly, an exercise in affectation perpetuated by those who impose some rigid subjective perception or *a priori* theory upon the world and then bow down to it like an idol.”¹⁰¹ These idols are the enemy of the Menippean satirist and the perpetual object of the satirist’s ridicule.

Menippean satire often explicitly addresses the problem of knowledge and mocks learning itself through its encyclopedic approach to knowledge. It tends to be endlessly inclusive, to develop exhaustive catalogues, and to bring incompatible discourses and forms of knowledge into proximity. The Menippean satirist toys with the possibility of bringing all human knowledge into one text, but the project is not in earnest like Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* (1265 – 74). Instead, the satirist aims to reveal its futility. Aquinas’s pious quest for a marriage of faith and Aristotelian logic and to compile all that can be said on the subject in one place becomes an example of the extremes to which the vanity of reason will lead humankind. (It was also very useful for the British Protestants to connect what they saw as a grotesque and monstrous project to Catholicism). Of course, this work and the minute quibbles and esoteric speculation of scholastic philosophers like Duns Scotus (c. 1266 – 1308)—whose name gives us the word “dunce” so enjoyed as an

¹⁰¹ Kaplan 53.

insult by the Augustans—are the object of endless mockery throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both from satirists and philosophers alike. In fact, the tone that Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Glanville and others take toward the scholastic philosophers is often quite satirical, and perhaps even—as I will argue further in the next chapter—Menippean.

Yet, anti-scholastics and empirical natural philosophers were just as likely to engage in ambitious projects like Aquinas's. Indeed, *A Tale of a Tub* recognizes such projects as *modern* phenomena. Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) is such a project. Itself a kind of anatomy of the body politic, it attempts to fit human nature, politics, morality and finally religion within its initial presentation of the world as a material, mechanistic system. Similarly, Francis Bacon believed that the new organ of experimentation that he provided to natural philosophy would yield not further divisions in human knowledge, but rather a total picture of the world into which each part would fit. In *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) he asks “that all partitions of knowledge be accepted rather for lines and veins, than for sections and separations; and that the continuance and entireness of knowledge be preserved.”¹⁰² Bacon is a system-builder, whose Great Instauration (like the *Summa*) is itself an unfinished and unrealizable project. The “author” of *A Tale of a Tub*, presumably no different from the moderns he praises, lists dozens of projects abandoned, half-finished or soon to appear in print. The “Hack,” as Ronald Paulson calls him, certainly believes that with just enough effort all of human knowledge can flow through his pen, and that his audience will be interested in every addition and addendum thereto.

¹⁰² Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, in *Francis Bacon*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 205.

Bacon allows that knowledge is broken into units, but he also seeks to construct a total body of knowledge out of its constituent parts. Others found a perfect correspondence between the dissected body and the branches of knowledge—they can be cut up, cut out, but they all fit within a larger system. Such analogies of microcosm to macrocosm and of knowledge to nature are, of course, typical of Renaissance theories of knowledge. R. Grant Williams has discussed the parallels between anatomy as a form of knowledge about the body and seventeenth-century efforts to structure the body of knowledge. “Renaissance anatomical discourse is founded upon an axiomatic misrecognition—the notion that the body, an *a priori* structure, can make known the self and world [...] Because the human body, [...] measures every disciplinary object as a unified corporeality, the anatomical cut, by revealing design, can comprehend any body of knowledge.”¹⁰³ Robert Burton’s *Anatomy* is both a medical investigation into the nature, causes and cures of melancholy and a compendium of human wisdom on this, and—really—all subjects. The body is itself a text and is composed of texts. Burton proposes the possibility that knowledge about the body and the body of human knowledge illuminate each other, and that the understanding that one brings to the other, might even end the melancholy that motivated this exhaustive exploration of human wisdom in the first place. But, the compendiousness of the text reveals the impossibility of ever achieving total mastery, and the body and the intellectual tradition splayed out within Burton’s text distort each other. Burton only teasingly offers the “illusory prospect of

¹⁰³ R. Grant Williams, “Disfiguring the Body of Knowledge: Anatomical Discourse and Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy*,” *ELH* 68 (2001): 594.

epistemological mastery.”¹⁰⁴ Instead, the *Anatomy* “disfigures the body of knowledge,” becoming a “monster of knowledge.”¹⁰⁵

Like Rabelais’s, Burton’s writing is characterized by lists without hierarchical relationships, monstrous lists that defy the order they seem to offer. They are merely “an ever lengthening proliferation of printed matter” unable to point toward “new” knowledge. The more knowledge is gained, the further we are from possessing it, and the more monstrous the products of human reason begin to seem. Menippean satirists seek to distort knowledge in just this way, so that readers reconsider not only what is known, but also reconsider the very nature of the world that is constructed by that knowledge. The human mind can only give birth to monsters, and thus our picture of the world must be monstrous. And Menippean satire is the most fabulous monster of all.

Along these lines, Michel Foucault recounts laughing uncontrollably and having his thinking turned upside down by something similar in an essay by Jorge Luis Borges (1899 - 1986), “El idioma analítico de John Wilkins” in which a “Chinese” encyclopedia, “*The Heavenly Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*,” is described as dividing animals into a number of categories that on their own could belong within one taxonomic system or another, but that combined within a list, lose the coherence of any taxonomy we might recognize:

Animals are divided into (a) those that belong to the emperor; (b) embalmed ones; (c) those that are trained; (d) suckling pigs; (e)

¹⁰⁴ Williams 595.

¹⁰⁵ Williams 593, 600.

mermaids; (f) fabulous ones; (g) stray dogs; (h) those that are included in this classification; (i) those that tremble as if they were mad; (j) innumerable ones; (k) those drawn with a very fine camel's-hair brush; (l) etcetera; (m) those that have just broken the flower vase; (n) those that at a distance resemble flies.¹⁰⁶

Classification is a futile enterprise, and an absurd one in Borges's essay. This mock catalogue demonstrates the arbitrary nature of taxonomic systems. Foucault uses this passage to argue that systems make sense only within existing structures of knowledge, within the *epistemes* that render them useful and meaningful. The taxonomic system of one era may be useless to another. Borges's list draws attention to this problem of taxonomy, and reveals the troubling relationship between language and knowledge. "Where else could they," Foucault asks of this collection of categories, "be juxtaposed except in the non-place of language?"¹⁰⁷ Language is the (non-)space in which the body of knowledge reveals its shape, but what if what we see is a false body, or language has misled us into seeing totality, systems, complete taxonomies where they cannot exist? Anatomy, in performing a disfigurement of the body of knowledge, does a service to those who seek after knowledge, reminding them that their systems are merely formulations of knowledge in language, that knowledge is always escaping them, even as it seems to be achieving greater and greater synthesis within an organizing structure. The "&c" so prevalent in Burton

¹⁰⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. Eliot Weinberger, trans. Esther Allen and Suzanne Jill Levine (London: Penguin, 2000) 231.

¹⁰⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994) *xvi*.

defies the closure of knowledge, implying a list that could never be exhaustive. With Borges the “et cetera,” here an entire sub-category and one that finds itself humorously out of its expected position in the sequence, reveals the insufficiency of this taxonomic system to account for everything and the need to relegate some things to a miscellaneous category.

Both Borges and Burton revel in the absurdities and profundities of the human quest for knowledge. There is a pleasure derived from playing with ideas, compiling texts and authorities, quotations and curiosities, anecdotes obscure and well-known, all while maintaining a sense that knowledge is impossible and the search may in fact be downright silly. Although this impossibility may be the ultimate cause of melancholy, Burton wants to create an acceptance of this situation by inviting his reader to gently laugh with Democritus Junior at the world. This laughter may not encourage a total reevaluation of all we have been taught, but it can help point toward an acceptance of limitations. Democritus would not laugh if people could only discover the wisdom that the world is mutable and “wheels about, nothing being firm and sure.” We should adopt an amused attitude toward the world, but continue to live according to its rules and stay busy. And thus, Burton appeals to a consoling code of ethics, ending his massive tome with these words: “Be not solitary, be not idle.”¹⁰⁸

Quite a few Menippean satires, in fact, seem to point toward a kind of quietism. Although they deny the possibility of ultimate, total, or even partial knowledge, many seem finally to encourage a return to innocence, quiet simplicity, and the solace of tradition. At the center of many Menippean satires is a statement of

¹⁰⁸ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: New York Review Books, 2001) 50, 432.

acceptance of the world as it is, in particular, an acceptance of the weaknesses of the human intellect and its vast separation from any knowable truth. For example, the dervish in Voltaire's *Candide* (1759) sees work as the cure for any intellectual malaise, as it keeps "at bay three dreadful evils: boredom, depravity and poverty." The dervish also literally closes the door on higher metaphysical enquiry, slamming one shut when Candide requests a philosophical discussion. Ultimate questions about the nature of God or the good are not only useless according to the dervish, but demonstrate an impudence out of proportion with the insignificant scale of the one asking questions: "Why does it matter whether there is evil or good on earth? When His Highness sends a vessel to Egypt, does he worry whether the rats who are on the ship are comfortable or not?"¹⁰⁹ The satire also finally ends with Candide, the disfigured Cunegonde and the persistently optimistic Pangloss cultivating a garden, (an imperative to "work our land" in David Wootton's translation of "*Il faut cultiver no notre jardin*"), no longer in search of happiness or final answers, discovering (perhaps) contentment in work. The ending of *Candide* has been read in two primary ways—as a return to innocence, a shift from the project of knowledge to the solitude of the garden (but such a reading implies that there can be a best possible place, a laborer's Eden), or as an imperative to work, to take our minds off the miseries of the world, and to not stop for one second lest doubt and questions creep back into our minds. Either way, it is not philosophy that assuages our misery.

The King of Brobdingnag in *Gulliver's Travels* desires only practical wisdom for his people: "He gave it for his Opinion; that whoever could make two Ears of

¹⁰⁹ Voltaire, *Candide and Related Texts*, trans. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000) 78.

Corn, or Two Blades of Grass to grow upon a Spot of Ground where only one grew before; would deserve better of Mankind, and do more essential Service to his County, than the whole Race of Politicians put together.”¹¹⁰ From the King’s perspective, the knowledge sought by the violent Europeans and the impractical Laputan philosophers is useless. Moreover, it actually degrades human life. Gulliver, of course, also meets Lord Munodi, an aristocrat and the only sensible farmer in all of Barnibarbi, who serves as a living rebuke to the foolish enterprises of his modern, scientifically-minded fellow citizens. They have not only failed to cultivate their garden or to double its productivity, but rather have left the nation starving. The overreaching human intellect and the dismal failure of human “projects” are attacked here and everywhere in *Gulliver’s Travels*. Only a select few seem to have discovered any kind of wisdom, but that wisdom is foolishness in the eyes of one’s neighbors: Lord Munodi’s “countrymen ridiculed and despised him for managing his Affairs no better.”¹¹¹

Jonathan Swift and other satirists of the period make use of irony that blames-by-praising.¹¹² Michael Suarez writes, “[Swift uses] a potent mixture of irony, parody, and comedy to exhibit and ridicule things that are bad as if they were good [...] Again and again in Swift’s writings, the egregious is ironically exhibited as the exemplary.”¹¹³ This inversion of values runs through Menippean satires and other

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, ed. Herbert Davis, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, 14 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1939-) 135-6.

¹¹¹ Swift 150.

¹¹² For a full explication of this kind of irony and how it functions, see Norman Knox, *The Word Irony and Its Context, 1500-1755* (Durham: Duke UP, 1961), especially 45-76.

¹¹³ Michael F. Suarez, “Swift’s Satire and Parody,” ed. Christopher Fox, *The Cambridge Companion to*

closely related genres of the Early Modern period, especially the paradoxical encomium and utopia. In *Utopia* (1515), for example, Thomas More implies that conventions that appear natural (such as that wealth and property should be unequally distributed because hierarchy is natural) from the limited perspective of current cultural assumptions, can seem ridiculous from another cultural position and set of values (an enlightened position that recognizes that gold has no *actual* value). More finds the justification for the Utopian attitude toward money in the Christian tradition—money is a worldly thing and a false desire. Thus corrupt English economic attitudes are attacked through another set of values that is also English. These other values, however, are religious, unworldly and therefore truer, despite their unpopularity. As with Erasmus's *Christian Folly*, an inversion of cultural values is implied, but through which one perspective, usually the unexpected one, is privileged over the other. What from one perspective seems to be the furthest removed from normal, conventional values (folly), actually turns out to be the closest to a true expression of supposed cultural ideals (a life lived according to Christian teaching).

Erasmus's discussion of Silenus statues in his essay, "The Sileni of Alcibiades," is useful for understanding this attitude toward values. The Silenus is described by Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium* (c. 385 BCE) as an ugly little statue that can be opened up to reveal a perfect, god-like form inside. Erasmus sees Christ and Socrates ("He who said he knew nothing was judged to know more than those

who proudly claimed to know everything”)¹¹⁴ as sileni, seemingly ridiculous from the exterior to the inattentive, worldly, and prideful, but beautiful inwardly. Likewise, those who are powerful, rich, and beautiful from the outside are inverted sileni—nasty on the inside. Furthermore, David Wootton suggests that the silenus “entails a radical uncertainty regarding the meaning of words. As Erasmus says, what one person calls bitter another calls sweet; what is life to one is death to another.”¹¹⁵ Menippean satire is ugly from the perspective of decorum and classical literary conventions, but beautiful when its paradoxes are opened up. Menippean satire demonstrates that what passes for truth to the world is not truth. But, it may also reveal that the world itself is an inverted silenus, allowing us to see certain social conventions and worldly beliefs as foolishness, and allowing us to embrace the ignorance that we shunned before because the world called it ignorance.

What, then, is the relationship of Menippean satire to knowledge in the eighteenth century? It is my contention that although these texts are quite often reactionary and encourage a conservative acceptance of cultural authority and the limitations of human reason, their rhetorical effect is to subvert the discourses that construct power and through which knowledge is made manifest. In this sense, satire allows for intellectual change, even promotes it, while still asserting a set of core values the satirist believes will be even more essential in a philosophically-transformed world. The satirist outlines the parameters of a modern value system,

¹¹⁴ Desiderius Erasmus, “The Sileni of Alcibiades,” ed. and trans. David Wootton, *Thomas More: Utopia, with Erasmus’s The Sileni of Alcibiades* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999).

¹¹⁵ Wootton, *Thomas More* 25.

establishes a literary test for conventional wisdom, and demonstrates the need for vigilant rationality in a world full of new ideas. If the satirist is going to continue to embrace tradition, it will be after human knowledge has been challenged on the level of language and the discourses through which knowledge finds its expression.

Near the end of the eighteenth century (1784), Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) argued that enlightenment is humanity’s escape from immaturity and tutelage. People lack not reason but the “resolution and courage to use it without direction from another.”¹¹⁶ Here he has in mind religion, scholasticism, and superstition. In its war on myth and superstition, and on religious sects first on one side and then the other, Menippean satire seems consistent, in fact, with this project. Thus Bakhtin and others see Menippean satire as a realistic genre, even if it is also often the most fantastical. It can strip away all illusions, which is why it is appropriate that the genre is named for a cynic, why it seems to deal with sacred subjects irreverently, and why it has such a parodic relationship to the romance, as Frye argues. It is a genre of the intellect, and it asks its readers to ask themselves: what is rational; what is true; and what is it they insist upon believing despite all evidence to the contrary?

F. Anne Payne makes the case for reading Menippean satire as a libratory attitude, an attempt to break the human habit of settling for easy answers. Menippean texts (and here she sees Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* (c. 524) and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1380 – 1400) as central and exemplary texts of this kind) wage war on the stifling intellectual conventions and orthodoxies of their time. Like William Blake’s “mind forg’d manacles,” these conventions are both cultural and

¹¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” trans. Lewis White Beck, *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959).

self-imposed:

The great evil Menippean satire perceives is the propensity human beings have for creating faulty systems and institutions that drag them into the abuse and limited understanding of even such ideals as they have managed to build into those systems and institutions. The divine justice it perceives is that the minds of men and women are created free to transcend their self-made stereotypes, their philosophical systems, their conventional utterances about their gods, their loves, their deaths, only, it is true, to construct new ones which in their turn prove confining and capable of abuse.¹¹⁷

Through the force of ridicule and mockery, exposure and paradox, through a demonstration of a mind and wit never satisfied with any answers, never content with simple proclamations of truth, these texts perform a libratory function. Boethius's text, Payne argues, is "an intellectual's supremely powerful, even amused, assertion about how the mind can stay free of its own and other's formulations." Menippean satire is an attempt by the educated mind to unhinge itself from the pervasive power of tradition, orthodoxy, and entrenched ideologies; the learned mind seeks to triumph over learning itself by first mastering knowledge and then turning it on its head. Menippean satire is inherently subversive in this formulation. Tradition and convention are not only inadequate to explain, but they settle finally into the "tyranny" of an "Establishment" that cannot be endured.¹¹⁸ Menippean satire at least

¹¹⁷ F. Anne Payne, *Chaucer and Menippean Satire* (Madison: U of Wisconsin, 1981) 35-6.

¹¹⁸ Payne 4.

offers the hope of freedom within one's own mind.

In *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant delineates the ways in which reason itself shapes the world it understands through the categories it necessarily imposes upon what it apprehends. This "Copernican Revolution" in how the relationship between the mind and the world was understood, resolved for Kant the conflict between the empirical and rationalist strains of thought in the eighteenth century. Reason, with ontological categories already built into it, is the constructor of what it apprehends, rather than a passive process of sensations. But, in making these categories the very foundation for perception, Kant defined the limits of what can be thought; we can never, for example, know things-in-themselves independent of the conditions of our perception of them. Reason can be free and should be free, but we should not expect it to operate beyond certain bounds.

Kant also famously claimed that he and his contemporaries were not living in an enlightened age, but in an age of enlightenment. He recognized enlightenment as a process, even as a struggle. Satire enters this struggle, sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other. Certainly Voltaire and his satires assault the inherited intellectual frameworks that he and the *philosophes* saw as limiting the growth of human knowledge. But were the British satirists doing the same earlier in the century? In other words, is satire a tool of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth-century? The answer seems to be a qualified "yes." Menippean satire was instrumental in the critiques of scholasticism and religious dogmatism that laid the foundation for the empirical stance of modern epistemology. It also lent its rhetorical devices to the philosophers engaged in the same project. Although its politics are not

often consistent with the broader Enlightenment, especially the more radical manifestations in the Dutch circle around Baruch de Spinoza (1632 – 77) in the seventeenth-century¹¹⁹ or the French radicals around Voltaire and Denis Diderot (1713 – 84), its war against unreason and dogmatisms of all kinds belongs within, and not outside, the main line of Enlightenment thought. The eighteenth-century satirists, as much as they may have despised him, can be located in the tradition of Descartes. Like Descartes, they make public the inner battles of the mind, committing to paper the struggle of the modern with the ancient and with medieval Christian philosophy. They find fault with intellectual systems new and old that obscure the truth, that prevent enlightenment, and that only bring misery to humankind. In the process, however, they also suggest that truth may be unattainable; for them even Descartes’ “clear and distinct ideas” may be too certain. In their attack on folly, they also open up the disturbing possibility that what passes for truth—conventional wisdom and mainstream attitudes—may be a set of false assumptions. If so, then all beliefs are suspect. If so, then Menippean satire is more fully committed to the project of disillusionment and rejection that characterize the Enlightenment, than it is to the assertion of comfortably adoptable norms.

¹¹⁹ For a reading of the Enlightenment that makes Spinoza the central protagonist, see Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001).

CHAPTER TWO

“THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING,”

OR “A DESCRIPTION OF THE KINGDOM OF ABSURDITIES:”

JONATHAN SWIFT AND THE SKEPTICAL TRADITION

Midway through the last century, Richard H. Popkin made a provocative argument for interpreting all seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy as a response to the sixteenth-century crisis of Pyrrhonism. “Renaissance scepticism,” he argued, “became crucial in the formation of modern philosophy, contrary to the view that it was only a transitional moment in the history of thought.”¹²⁰ Modern philosophies either began from skeptical interrogations, or else were elaborated in response to the kinds of questions and challenges that skepticism had brought to bear on matters of truth, knowledge, and religion. Almost at the same time that Popkin demonstrated the centrality of skeptical thinking in modern Western philosophy, Northrop Frye popularized the term “Menippean satire.” This term, as we have seen, later went on to acquire a wider application—and a politics—after several key

¹²⁰ Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 43. This text is an expansion of Popkin’s original, groundbreaking work, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1960).

translations of Mikhail Bakhtin's works.¹²¹ Both "Menippean" and "skeptical" were subsequently enlisted to describe the intellectual attitudes of quite a few eighteenth-century texts, often even the same text—*Tristram Shandy* is one example.¹²²

The recent use of "Menippean satire" as a label for Jonathan Swift's major satires, along with the parallel debate over what that genre (or mode) is, has made the problems and politics of knowledge a central concern for his readers.¹²³ This chapter

¹²¹ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984); Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981). Several book length treatments of Menippean satire that mention Swift at least briefly were discussed in the previous chapter: F. Anne Payne, *Chaucer and Menippean Satire* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1981) 3, 14, 68; W. Scott Blanchard, *Scholar's Bedlam: Menippean Satire in the Renaissance* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1995), especially 164-67; Howard D. Weinbrot, *Menippean Satire Reconsidered: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005) 115-137. Other scholarly treatments, also discussed in the previous chapter, deal with Swift at least in passing, including Carter Kaplan, *Critical Synoptics: Menippean Satire and the Analysis of Intellectual Mythology* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2000); and Joel C. Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993). Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1994), finds the term useful for discussing Swift, but argues that the term encompasses what are more appropriately considered different genres: for example, the fantastic journey and the mock symposium. *A Tale of a Tub* is an example of those Menippean satires that entail a "parodic display of learning" (33).

Several critical studies have been devoted primarily or exclusively to Swift. See, for example, W. E. Yeomens, "The Houyhnhnm as Menippean Horse," *College English*, Vol. 27, No. 6 (Mar., 1966), discussed in Chapter 4 below. See also, Qingyun Wu, *"Gulliver's Travels" and "Ching-hua yuan" Revisited: A Menippean Approach* (New York: Lang, 1995). Bringing together Western theories of Menippean satire and the Chinese concept of *fengts'u* (satire), Wu argues that Menippean satires are imaginative utopias that present an "exchange of ideas in a heteroglossia of interpretive perspectives."

¹²² For Sterne as a Menippean satirist see Garry Sherbert, *Menippean Satire and the Poetics of Wit: Ideologies of Self-Consciousness in Dunton, D'Urfey, and Sterne* (New York: Lang, 1996). For Sterne as a skeptic see Donald R. Wehrs, "Sterne, Cervantes, Montaigne: Fideistic Skepticism and the Rhetoric of Desire," *Comparative Literature Studies* 25 (1988). Wehrs argues that Sterne, rather than composing a "novel" that would be at home among modernist or postmodernist fiction, wrote *Tristram Shandy* as a conservative defense of religion. Skepticism, as it often does in Humanist works, serves fideistic ends in *Tristram Shandy*. The arguments I will be making in this chapter about Swift are in a similar spirit, but I will argue that there is a residue of uncertainty in these texts that, once left behind, is quite difficult to remove.

¹²³ Of course, Swift's attitudes toward learning and philosophy have always been of interest to his readers in one form or another. For three important examples, and a sense of the range of critical approaches, see Miriam Kosh Starkman, *Swift's Satire on Learning in "A Tale of a Tub"* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1950); R. S. Crane, "The Houyhnhnms, the Yahoos, and the History of Ideas," ed. J. A. Mazzeo, *Reason and Imagination: Studies in the History of Ideas: 1600-1800* (New York: Columbia UP, 1962); and Douglas Lane Patey, "Swift's Satire on 'Science' and the Structure of *Gulliver's*

measures Swift's response to the skeptical crisis of the early modern period and the extent to which skeptical, or Pyrrhonist, arguments are present in his thought. It is my contention that Swift cultivated an attitude of extreme skepticism in works such as *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), but that this skepticism was employed in the service of an equally extreme conservatism. As an iconoclast and debunker of ideals and falsehoods, Swift is a radical thinker and one whose natural intellectual attitude seems to have been a skeptical one. However, his Anglicanism, his partisan polemics for the Tory organ, *The Examiner* (1710), and his deep belief in the fallen nature of humankind, all locate this skeptical attitude within the parameters of a kind of conservatism that flourished in the early eighteenth century around Robert Harley (1661 – 1724) and Bolingbroke, and of which Swift is frequently considered a paradigm.

Throughout this chapter, however, I will be interested in the persistence—despite the solutions offered at various moments in the period (by empiricism and fideism especially)—of the skeptical problem itself. I argue that this residual uncertainty is in the nature of Menippean satire and that Swift is finally no more able than others to put to rest ultimate skepticism. In fact, *en route* to his normative positions, he performs a radical purging of discourses of knowledge, and essentially neutralizes nearly all epistemological criteria other than faith. His profoundly conservative skepticism leads him to challenge the two major defenses of religion in the period—Deist claims that Christianity is reasonable and its tenets empirically demonstrable and the “enthusiastic” inspiration of dissenting sects. Yet Swift's

Travels,” English Literary History 58 (1991).

arguments are intended to bolster the hegemonic status of the Anglican Church: tradition, not revelation; faith, not reason, are the only satisfactory criteria for an extreme skeptic like Swift. It is because of, not in spite of, skepticism, that faith is essential to Swift's satiric vision. Yet it is also a satiric vision that finds faith difficult—humanity has fallen too far, and God has seemingly evacuated the earth.

It has usually been assumed that at the beginning of the eighteenth century only a radical fringe was truly skeptical, meaning they doubted the possibility—or expressed the absolute impossibility—of any certain knowledge in either the realm of religion or natural philosophy. Furthermore, the consensus has long been that satirists of the period were free from the taint of doubt, finding security in the age-old verities they upheld. Most of the eighteenth-century writers who have enjoyed canonical status ultimately aligned themselves with the Tories and certainly against the Whigs under Sir Robert Walpole (1676 – 1745; minister from 1721 – 1742), and their expressions of conservative values are seemingly unqualified and earnestly maintained. The traditional argument about Swift, for example, is that he negotiates a “middle way” between Puritan enthusiasm and Catholic dissent and between faith and reason (the *via media* of Anglican rationalism), that he endorses traditional conceptions of order, and that he is an advocate of right reason and of the ancients.¹²⁴ In fact, as shown in the previous chapter, much of the satire criticism of the 1950s and 1960s relied on a definition of satire based in the formal verse tradition of Juvenal and Horace in which a particular vice is attacked and its opposing virtue praised, and these theories were readily imported to prose and narrative satire.

¹²⁴ See Philip Harth, *Swift and Anglican Rationalism: The Religious Background of A Tale of a Tub* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1961).

The use of terms like “skeptical” to describe these same works has encouraged entirely different readings of the texts. In fact, it has made possible readings that are perhaps unsettling of the very ideology the texts are assumed to endorse. Most importantly, for the context of this chapter, there is no longer as much emphasis on satiric closure and a defense of clear positions, as there is on a growing sense that satire, regardless of its ultimate intention in questions of knowledge, adopts poses of doubt, and comes close to advancing the skeptic’s cause. Such readings allow for the uncertain, the provisional, the paradoxical, the absurd and facetious, and even, perhaps most shockingly, the playful. One such critic, G. F. Parker locates what he calls “sceptical thinking” in Swift, Pope, Samuel Johnson (1709 – 1784), and Sterne, which he defines as “a certain doubleness of stance. It is a practice, or a process, not an intellectual position, and where if it advances positions it does so with a certain playfulness or irony, with a consciousness of their necessary and provisional contingency: as if opening a dialogue.”¹²⁵ Parker draws attention to the fact that these texts fail to settle into a monological presentation of their argument. Similarly, as I have shown in the previous chapter, Bakhtinian critics of Menippean satire argue that the dialogism of the Menippean form poses a challenge to hegemonic systems of knowledge.

There are several problems with this approach. First, neither skepticism nor Menippean satire has enjoyed a precise, agreed-upon definition. Second, neither evokes a clearly defined canon or tradition. Third, neither implies a uniform set of beliefs or opinions, or a particular ideology. Rather, both are methods of

¹²⁵ Graham Frederick Parker, *Scepticism and Literature: An Essay on Pope, Hume, Sterne, and Johnson* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 2-3.

argumentation, modes of ironic analysis, or even just attitudes. However, in this chapter the terms will be useful in two ways. First, they begin to account for those aspects of eighteenth-century satire that are extreme, those that extend beyond a simple assertion of traditional values, and instead raise profound questions about the state of knowledge and the place of humanity in the universe. Second, a comparison of Menippean satire to Pyrrhonian skepticism as it was understood by those in the period who embraced its arguments, if not its name, allows us to understand how the satires of Swift in particular can be unsettling, paradoxical, and radically disruptive epistemologically and culturally, and yet still be expressions of traditional, conservative Anglican values.

Satire is a negative discourse, destructive rather than constructive; any norm it advocates must be deduced from the negative vices that are under assault, but it also demands that we examine those extremes that it keeps constantly, even violently, on display. Satire seeks to expose; in Menippean satire it is intellectual attitudes that are opened up for scrutiny. Northrop Frye's definition of the form is especially useful for understanding its approach to ideas and knowledge: "The novelist sees evil and folly as social diseases, but the Menippean satirist sees them as diseases of the intellect."¹²⁶ The exposure and destruction of attitudes and systems of thought serves as a preparation for a new conception of reality, or the reestablishment of an older conception of reality—a worldview freed from, cleansed of, or cured of, errors in religion, learning, and politics. In this sense, the satirical project bears at least a superficial resemblance to philosophical modes of argumentation in the seventeenth-

¹²⁶ Frye 309.

century. For example, although John Locke's empiricism posits a knowable world, it does so only after stripping away *a priori* and innate knowledge, scholastic conceptions of order and reason, idealism, and other vestiges of classical philosophy. Likewise, the "new philosophy" in the writings of Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Joseph Glanvill (1636 – 1680), and Pierre Gassendi (1592 – 1655) is founded in a skeptical spirit that is often quite satirical. In fact their style and metaphors are sometimes indistinguishable from the satirists. Locke (1632 – 1704), excoriating the superstitions passed on to children and the false beliefs retained by the force of custom, writes,

It is easy to imagine, *how* by these means it comes to pass, that *Men* worship the Idols that have been set up in their Minds; grow fond of the Notions they have long been acquainted with there; *and stamp the Characters of Divinity, upon Absurdities and Errors*, become zealous Votaries to Bulls and Monkeys; and contend too, fight, and die in defence of their Opinions.¹²⁷

For an even more compelling example of the rhetorical and satirical flourishes of seventeenth-century philosophy, one need only look to Glanvill's "Vanity of Dogmatizing":

For considering the *shortness* of our *intellectual sight*, the *deceptibility* and impositions of our *senses*, the tumultuary *disorders* of our *passions*, the prejudices of our *infant educations*, and infinite such like [...] I say, by reason of these, we may conclude of the science of most

¹²⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975) I.iii.26, 83.

men, truly so called, that it may be truss'd up in the same room with the *Iliads*, yea it may be all the certainty of those high pretenders to it, the voluminous Schoolmen, and Peripatetical Dictators (bating what they have of the first Principles of the Word of God) may be circumscribed by as small a circle, as the Creed, when *Brachygraphy* had confined it within the compass of a penny.¹²⁸

The typical skeptical arguments regarding the fallibility of the senses, the impact of the passions on reason, poor education, and the dictatorship of false authorities can all be found in Glanvill. But there is a rhetorical flourish, a quickening of the language, as Glanvill compares human learning to fiction, and then offers the monstrous image of the volumes of the scholastic philosophers compressed into a tiny circle (angels, perhaps, dancing on the head of a pin). This collapsing of distinctions between modes of discourse, and the impossible and fantastic inversion of the great and the little are both typical of Menippean satire and of Swift in particular. The rhetoric of the philosophers rises to a near-satirical indignation as they attack the vanity of the pursuit of knowledge, the limitations of reason, the absurd and tortured arguments of scholasticism, *ignis fatui*, superstition, and “wives” and “nurses” tales. Intellectual idols, temples to false gods, the ground itself, must be cleared before the moderns can set out on the right road to truth. As Ricardo Quintana writes, “The search for truth beneath the concealments of false appearance was the prime function of reason.”¹²⁹

Many major thinkers of the seventeenth-century felt compelled to respond to

¹²⁸ Joseph Glanvill, *Scepsis Scientifica* (London, 1885) 8.

¹²⁹ Ricardo Quintana, *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift* (1936; London, 1953) 96.

the problem of skepticism, but nearly all rejected the label. Total skepticism was vilified as a dogmatic and irrational position that if maintained, would find people walking off cliffs, and into fires and closed doors. Even those writers who admitted making use of skeptical arguments in their own work insisted that their doubt, love of paradox, and probing of truth all stopped short of religious concerns. Sir Thomas Browne (1605 – 1682), for example, writes, “In philosophy where Truth seems double-fac’d, there is no man more Paradoxical than myself: but in Divinity I love to keep the Road.”¹³⁰ The problem was that, despite their religion, Browne and his contemporaries had begun to recognize truth as a many-faced creature, and paradox had, since the time of Erasmus and More, been a major Humanist mode of reasoning. Joseph Glanvill, like Swift a clergyman, made use of skeptical arguments to attack scholasticism and defend Cartesian cosmology, yet in *The Vanity of Dogmatizing*, he makes the same distinction as Browne:

Though I confess, that in Philosophy I’m a Seeker; yet cannot believe that a Sceptick in Philosophy must be one in Divinity. Gospel-light began in its Zenith; and, as some say the Sun, was created in its Meridian strength and luster. But the beginnings of Philosophy were in a Crepuscular obscurity; and it’s not yet scarce past the Dawn.¹³¹

Glanvill’s own defense elsewhere of a belief in witchcraft was intended to support a continued belief in the spiritual realm.¹³²

¹³⁰ Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, ed. Charles W. Eliot (New York: Collier, 1909–14).

¹³¹ Joseph Glanvill, *Scepsis Scientifica* 163.

¹³² Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus triumphatus: or, Full and plain evidence concerning witches and apparitions. In two parts. The first treating of their possibility. The second of their real existence* (London: T. Newcomb, for S. Lownds, 1682).

The anxiety, of course, was that one could be accused of atheism. There was also a real assumption that the spheres of theology and of philosophy could be developed separately; after all, they relied on different criteria—the former upon revelation and faith, the latter upon reason and the senses. In other words, one found the basis of truth in the divine, the other in the human. Bacon had encouraged just such a division. He writes, “Heretical religion as well as fanciful philosophy derives from the unhealthy mingling of divine and human. And therefore it is very salutary, in all sobriety, to give to faith only what belongs to faith.”¹³³ Nevertheless, what began as a defense of faith against the encroachments of reason, had by Swift’s time become a dangerous affront to it. The sphere inhabited by faith was shrinking, and rationalist arguments, at every turn of the printing press, crushed in closer on the mysteries of the divine.

Calls to accept the authority of faith increasingly had an ironical ring, and the authority of revelation became even more tenuous when Baruch Spinoza (1632 – 1677), Richard Simon (1638 – 1712), and Thomas Hobbes turned the devices of textual historicism and skeptical history upon the Bible itself. Arguing that Moses did not write the first five books and demonstrating the inconsistencies of historical accounts within the text itself, Spinoza boldly insisted that a believer in the text was “worshipping paper and ink.”¹³⁴ The comfortable divide between faith and reason was further complicated in the later seventeenth century when the rationalist project

¹³³ Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, ed. Lisa Jardine, trans. Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 1.lxv.

¹³⁴ Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, ed. Carl Gebhardt, *Opera*, 4 vols. (1925; Heidelberg: Winter, 1972).

turned more aggressively against religion. John Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696), in its attempt to find a rational basis for belief and to secure religious doctrine in the foundations of reasonable argument, invited doubt.

The period was defined by a return to first principles, a sense that the dominion of Aristotle and the Church over philosophy needed to be overthrown and that the foundations of knowledge, ethics and society needed to be rediscovered. Knowledge needed new foundations. When Bacon (1561 – 1626) called for a new era of scientific investigation, for the application of experimental and observational methods to the phenomenal world, and for the destruction of all the “idols” of the mind that hindered empirical research, he endorsed a rudimentary formulation of the scientific method. This method was not to rely on the senses alone; it would require tools and technology—such as Galileo's telescope (1609)—that extended the range of the fallible senses, and would make no claims about reality except those supported by observation. Philosophy and the nascent field of science turned away from first causes and toward the real world. When new theories were formulated, such as Newton's of gravity, they were considered universal, but they were concerned with “what” not “how.” It is one thing to understand *why* gravity should exist, another merely to argue that it does, and that we can know the laws by which it operates.

Seventeenth-century science was characterized by a shift from deduction to analysis. Ernst Cassirer writes about this shift, “The ideal of deduction is now confronted with the ideal of analysis. And analysis is by nature unending; it cannot be limited to a definite, verifiable chain of thought that could be anticipated *a priori*. It must rather be taken anew at every stage of empirical science. Analysis knows no

absolute end but only relative and provisional stopping points.”¹³⁵ Bacon still believed that the reasoning mind ultimately had the capacity to know how things worked, but he argued that knowledge of things beyond the scope of ordinary experience was not worth speculating about. “Man,” he writes, “is Nature’s agent and interpreter; he does and understands only as much as he has observed of the order of nature in fact or by inference; he does not know and cannot do more.”¹³⁶ The universe was no longer the perfect system imagined in the Great Chain of Being or the Ptolemaic Spheres, to be understood by a series of symbolic analogies. Rather it was a mechanistic system, governed by laws that could only be discovered through careful observation, as in Williams Harvey’s (1578 – 1657) work on the circulation of the blood; or by the application of mathematics, as in the models of the solar system worked out by Nicolaus Copernicus (1473 – 1543) and Johannes Kepler (1571 – 1630).

The empirical method also initiated a radical questioning of all received ideas. Reason, no longer considered a set of innate ideas, was conceived instead as a faculty, impressed upon by the outside world. Cassirer writes of this new notion of reason: “It dissolves [...] everything believed on the evidence of revelation, tradition, and authority; and it does not rest content until it has analyzed all these things into their simplest component parts and into their last elements of belief and opinion.”¹³⁷

Empiricism led to Deism and other forms of natural religion that found proof of God

¹³⁵ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Boston: Beacon, 1955) 52.

¹³⁶ Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, 1.i

¹³⁷ Ernst Cassirer 13.

in the mechanistic universe or that maintained God's existence only nominally. It led to a dismantling of Platonic metaphysics, and of all types of propositions—geometric, religious and logical—that were said to be known prior to experience. Locke turned these methods inward to develop a psychology based wholly in experience, and an epistemology derived only from what the mind was able to acquire through the five senses and from the observation of its own processes. Even identity, the correspondence of a thing to itself, which previous philosophers had argued was so irresistibly logical that it had to exist in the mind as an idea prior to any experience, Locke claimed was inferred from sensation and reflection.

However, central to Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) was the paradox that if all knowledge comes from experience, then knowledge can only be as good as, and no more complete than experience. Beyond Locke's simple ideas are those complex ideas that cannot be known empirically (even though Locke strains to show how complex ideas are built out of constituent simple ideas), especially those of a spiritual nature. In this realm of knowledge, we must rely upon belief or "assent": "The entertainment the Mind gives this sort of [probable] Propositions, is called *Belief, Assent, or Opinion*, which is the admitting or receiving any Proposition for true, upon Arguments or Proofs that are found to persuade us to receive it as true, without certain Knowledge that it is so."¹³⁸ David Hume (1711 – 1776) would eventually extend Locke's notion of assent (and the skepticism it perhaps masks) to the material world itself: even our most basic assumptions about appearances and the relationships between appearances rest on belief. Experience

¹³⁸ John Locke, IV.xv.3, 655.

alone is not enough to definitively prove to us, for example, that there is a “necessary connexion” between two seemingly connected events in time. Observation may show two events to be “constantly conjoined,” meaning one always seems to follow the other, but this is not evidence of *causation*. A belief in causation, then, cannot be said to be either empirical or rational, yet it is necessary that we operate under the assumption that such relationships exist in the world. Therefore, “constructive skepticism,” a solution developed by the natural philosophers of the late seventeenth century, and one that Hume extends, allowed scientific propositions to be advanced despite doubt.¹³⁹ Hume argues through Cleanthes in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) that natural philosophy can only rest on probability. Furthermore, certain forms of knowledge are more probable than others. Cleanthes opposes “brutish and ignorant” skeptics with those who are “refined and philosophical” in their skepticism. Doubt should not be careless and misdirected or employed merely for the sake of doubt, but should rather be used to test propositions and to assist in the drawing of limits around what can be asserted with certainty. Refined skeptics, Cleanthes says,

push their researches into the most abstruse corners of science, and
their assent attends them in every step, proportioned to the evidence

¹³⁹ For an extended treatment of the role of constructive skepticism in the development of science, see Henry G. Van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought 1630-1690* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963). “This position takes seriously the claims of skepticism but refuses to acknowledge their finality. Insofar as these arguments cannot be overcome but are simply put aside, there seems to be an acknowledgement of a fundamental irrationalism, namely that reason is, in the last analysis, unable to cope with the real and bring it within the range of comprehension. In this respect the ultimacy of skepticism is acknowledged, but is not permitted to destroy the practical activities of life nor all claims to certainty. Some evidence is still within reach and on the basis of it some certainty can be had. It is recognized that ordinary persons are not affected by skeptical doubts, but are certain in spite of them, or rather, pay no attention to them. To each kind of evidence an appropriate kind or level of certainty is matched” (144).

which they meet with. They are even obliged to acknowledge that the most abstruse and remote objects are those which are best explained by philosophy. Light is in reality anatomized; the true system of the heavenly bodies is discovered and ascertained. But the nourishment of bodies by food is still an inexplicable mystery; the cohesion of the parts of matter is still incomprehensible. These skeptics, therefore, are obliged in every question, to consider each particular evidence apart, and proportion their assent to the precise degree of evidence which occurs. This is their practice in all natural, mathematical, moral, and political science. And why not the same, I ask, in the theological and religious?¹⁴⁰

This argument expands on Bacon's earlier distinction between natural philosophy and religion, but it grants much more ground to science, and, if new evidence makes such enquiries possible, the scope of science could be extended even further. However, for Hume all truth claims are provisional, and assent is proportional. Karl Popper's (1959) insight into the nature of scientific theories is relevant here as well: no number of experiments could ever sufficiently verify a hypothesis to allow one hundred percent certainty, whereas even one experiment or new piece of data could falsify it.¹⁴¹ A theory is useful and "true" as long as it is not disproved. For Hume in the *Dialogues* and elsewhere, this constant threat of doubt is not destructive of knowledge, but keeps it in check. This line of reasoning is also the foundation of his

¹⁴⁰ David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Henry D. Aiken (New York, 1955) 11.

¹⁴¹ See Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1959; New York: Routledge, 2002).

refutation of the miraculous: when weighing the probability of a miraculous event that defies natural laws against the likelihood that there has instead been deception, delusion, or some misinterpretation of events, we must always reject the less probable scenario.

Despite the prevalence of skepticism and doubt in many of the philosophical enterprises of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many of them solidified into dogmatism. Seventeenth-century philosophers did not end with rejection. They were guilty, the Scriblerians maintained, of making truth claims and elaborating them into what the satirists disparagingly referred to as “systems.” There had been a shift in how knowledge was understood, and what practical functions were imagined for it, a shift the Scriblerians resisted. Basil Willey describes the change thus: “Instead of the kind of ‘truth’ which is consistent with authoritative teaching, men began to desire the kind which would enable them to measure, to weigh and to control the things around them.”¹⁴² In fact, the epistemological shift was so total, that it would be fair to describe it as an ideological transformation of the structure of reality itself. The way the world itself was viewed and understood changed not just for philosophers but also for the population at large: “mechanico-materialistic explanations began to be ‘felt as facts.’”¹⁴³ What Willey describes is akin to the paradigm shifts described by Thomas Kuhn: a total change occurs in the way the world is perceived making possible new theories of its functioning. Even the satirists, despite their resistance to it, were increasingly working within a new intellectual framework. Yet the pervasive

¹⁴² Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth-Century Background: Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion* (1933; New York: Columbia UP, 1965) 4.

¹⁴³ Willey 7.

presence of satire in this period, and the virulence with which it maintained older attitudes, also highlight the difficulty of changing beliefs by means of evidence. Kuhn writes, “Though each may hope to convert the other to his way of seeing science and its problems, neither may hope to prove his case. The competition between paradigms is not the sort of battle that can be resolved by proof.”¹⁴⁴ In the rhetorical world of the eighteenth century, this battle is waged through ridicule and mockery. It is against the emerging worldview detailed by Willey that Swift rails in much of his work. In particular, he wants to undercut its entrenchment as “fact.” Ernest Tuveson locates the germ of all these modern developments in the controversies between science and religion in the 1690s in which Swift decidedly took the position against the moderns. The enemies included, “faith in teleological progress and in a kind of ‘progressive’ religion; the testing of revelation and authority in general by reason and scientific concepts rather than vice versa; the supremacy of materialistic physical law, even to the exclusion of miracles; the tendency to replace the Christian humanist conception of man’s nature with one which tended inevitably to deny original sin, spiritual salvation, and the place of ‘mystery’ in religion.”¹⁴⁵

Philosophers who continued to erect elaborate metaphysical systems or argue that many truths (such as the existence of God) could ultimately be maintained through the self-evidence of “clear and distinct ideas,” as René Descartes (1596 - 1650) does, began from a spirit of almost total doubt. Descartes’ skeptical break with his learning begins with a questioning of the ideas he was brought up to believe.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1962) 148.

¹⁴⁵ Ernest Tuveson, “Swift and the World-Makers,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 11.1 (1950): 74.

“Several years have now passed since I first realized how numerous were the false opinions that in my youth I had taken to be true, and thus how doubtful were all those that I subsequently built upon them. And thus I realized that once in my life I had to raze everything to the ground and begin again from the original foundations, if I wanted to establish anything firm and lasting in the sciences.”¹⁴⁶ Strangely, Descartes’ skepticism is not fully a crisis in the text—a number of years have passed since skeptical questions occurred to him; now he returns to them deliberately and systematically. He presents his act of demolition as a prescription for all thinking people: at least once in one’s life, the problems of skepticism should be taken up. Once they have, deductive universal propositions can be asserted with conviction. In rejecting the wisdom of antiquity, and in making the pursuit of knowledge about himself, Descartes typifies the moderns for Swift.¹⁴⁷ While Swift is suspicious of Descartes’ skepticism, it is his dogmatism, and his arrogance that are most offensive.

The early modern period also saw the rediscovery of ancient skepticism with the 1562 Latin translation by Henricus Stephanus of Sextus Empiricus’s 2nd century *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Richard H. Popkin associates the rapid popularization of skeptical arguments with the Reformation.¹⁴⁸ Others have made the case for locating the emergence of the skeptical crisis not only in the religious debates of the time, but also in a broader crisis in learning. Arguing *in utramque partem*—presenting equally

¹⁴⁶ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy in which the Existence of God and the Distinction Between the Soul and the Body are Demonstrated*, trans. Donald A. Cress, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998) 59.

¹⁴⁷ For an analysis of Swift’s attack on Descartes as a “mad introvert” in *A Tale of a Tub*, see Michael R. G. Spiller, “The Idol of the Stove: The Background of Swift’s Criticism of Descartes,” *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 25.97 (1974).

¹⁴⁸ Popkin 3-16.

developed arguments on both sides of a question—became a device of instruction as early modern scholars honed polemical and rhetorical skills and as disputation became the central activity of the learning environment. Academic skeptics such as Cicero (106 BCE – 43 BCE) had made use of the technique to argue against the possibility of absolute certainty; only probability could be hoped for. For humanists using the technique, the claim supported by a preponderance of evidence (or that was best defended in rhetoric) was considered the truer proposition. Zachary Schiffman argues that Montaigne’s skeptical crisis was the direct result of this pedagogical method. In his essays and thought Montaigne (1533 – 1592) tested the truths that had been distilled as commonplaces in his schoolboy notebooks by examining them from multiple sides, bringing arguments *pro* and *contra* to bear upon every subject. The technique now became a tool in the search for truth:

He transformed an instrument used to exploit truths into one used to search for them. But this attempt to establish new norms emphasized the diversity of examples rather than their similarity. Instead of building commonplaces, Montaigne unwittingly found himself demolishing them. This unexpected development was genuinely frustrating for a man imbued with the idea that reality could be systematized in terms of commonplaces.¹⁴⁹

Montaigne’s reading of Sextus Empiricus (probably not until 1576)¹⁵⁰ ultimately was not the cause of his skeptical crisis, but rather its resolution. He found

¹⁴⁹ Zachary S. Schiffman, “Montaigne and the Rise of Skepticism in Early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45.4 (1984): 510.

¹⁵⁰ Schiffman 512.

his own method of reasoning echoed in Pyrrhonism: “Their expressions are: ‘I establish nothing; it is no more thus than thus, or neither way; I do not understand it; the appearances are equal on all sides; it is equally legitimate to speak for or against.’”¹⁵¹ It is a common gesture of the skeptic to swing to extremes, to argue against both sides of a position with equal force. The sceptic is relentless in dismantling his opponent’s arguments and in showing the degree to which dogmatic thinking infiltrates his opponent’s conception of the world. The skeptic is willing to apply both reasonable and unreasonable doubt, if only to show that doubt can always be maintained as a position. There is, thus, an element of sophistical game playing to skepticism. The skeptic’s rhetorical sleight of hand is to conflate uncertainty with nihilism. In turn the dogmatic thinking of the nihilist is exposed and his positions subjected to the same rigorous tests. Kant describes skepticism as a

method of watching, or rather provoking, a conflict of assertions, not for the purpose of deciding in favour of one or the other side, but of investigating whether the object of controversy is not perhaps a deceptive appearance which each vainly strives to grasp, and in regard to which, even if there were no opposition to be overcome, neither can arrive at any result.¹⁵²

Ultimately, a Pyrrhonian skeptic asserts neither the possibility nor the impossibility of knowledge, for to do so would be to descend into dogmatism, and a

¹⁵¹ Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*. In *Oeuvres complètes de Montaigne*, eds. Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1962) 485. The translation is Zachary Schiffman’s adaptation from *The Complete Works of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1958).

¹⁵² *Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. N. K. Smith (London: 1933) 395.

sceptic cannot tolerate this. Montaigne recognizes as much when he writes, “[Pyrrhonists] hold that the philosophers who think they have found [the truth] are infinitely wrong. They go on to add that [a] second category—those who are quite sure that human strength is incapable of reaching truth—are overbold and vain.” For Montaigne the positive end of skepticism was the knowledge it affords about epistemological limitations. “To determine the limits of our powers and to know and judge the difficulty of anything whatsoever constitutes great, even the highest, knowledge.”¹⁵³ The skeptic finally chooses to suspend judgment, discovering mental tranquility, or *ataraxia*, where before there was only disagreement and intellectual strife. Of the skeptic’s solution, Sextus Empiricus writes,

[The Skeptic’s] initial purpose in philosophizing was to pronounce judgment on appearances. He wished to find out which are true and which false, so as to attain mental tranquility. In doing so, he met with contradicting alternatives of equal force. Since he could not decide between them, he withheld judgment. Upon his suspension of judgment there followed, by chance, mental tranquility in matters of opinion.¹⁵⁴

In the middle of the eighteenth century, Hume offers a similar solution through his “mitigated scepticism.”¹⁵⁵ Throughout the *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739 – 1740),

¹⁵³ Michel de Montaigne, “An Apology for Raymond Sebond,” trans. M. A. Screech, *The Complete Essays* (London: Penguin, 1991) 560.

¹⁵⁴ Sextus Empiricus, *Selections from the Major Writings on Scepticism, Man, & God*, ed. Philip P. Hallie, trans. Sanford G. Etheridge (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985) 41.

¹⁵⁵ Hume insists on distinguishing his position from Pyrrhonism. This is despite the fact that, as Richard H. Popkin, “David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and His Critique of Pyrrhonism,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 1.5 (1951) argues, he “actually maintained the only ‘consistent’ Pyrrhonian

Hume finds the problems of philosophy and the impossibility of satisfactorily resolving them overwhelming. These doubts can even rise to the level of an existential crisis:

Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, and whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me? and on whom have, I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environ'd with the deepest darkness, and utterly depriv'd of the use of every member and faculty.

Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther.¹⁵⁶

point of view" (385).

¹⁵⁶ Hume, *Treatise*, Book 1, Part IV, Sec. 7, 269. The Bishop of Avranches, Pierre-Daniel Huet, *A Philosophical Treatise Concerning the Weakness of Human Understanding* (London, 1725) anticipates Hume in his posthumous work of Catholic Pyrrhonism:

It is one Thing to live, another to philosophize. When therefore the Question is about the Conduct of our Lives, and the Performance of our Duty, we cease to be Philosophers, to be Opponents, doubtful or uncertain; and become poor, simple, credulous Idiots; we call Things by their Names, and re-assume our Understanding and Manner; we conform our Manners to those of other Men,

One avoids the problems of philosophy by avoiding philosophy. Life itself—games, conversation, entertainment—distract the mind from its philosophical concerns, but they also serve as proof of life. The warm glow of life when contrasted with the cold, solitary project of philosophical speculation needs no further argument. The world of appearance had seemed an illusion to the philosopher, but when he is in the social world his doubts become the “chimera.” The world of time progresses ineluctably. The solution for Hume as for many Pyrrhonian skeptics is in a community that together establishes a shared reality. For George Berkeley (1685-1753) it is the mind of God that guarantees our belief in the external world, but for Hume it is “strong instinct” and “common life.”¹⁵⁷ We must argue that we *have* knowledge of the world, and that this knowledge is useful, even if its origin is mere probability, and its proof merely a matter of assent. His solution is not found through religious faith, but faith in the force of Francis Hutcheson’s (1694 – 1746) psychology. “This type of skeptical believer is a man of faith, of course, but of an animal faith rather than a blind faith; a psychological rather than theological fideist.”¹⁵⁸

One historian of skepticism has argued that, “Pyrrhonism resembles a method of philosophical therapy rather than a set of doctrines.”¹⁵⁹ It ultimately seeks to

and to their Laws and Customs. I who, a while ago, doubted whether I did exist, or whether there were any more Men, do now banish all those Thoughts, and as if I was sure both of my own and other Men’s Existence: I eat and drink, I visit my Friends, I show my Respects to them, and entertain them: I affirm and deny that this true, or that is false (182-3).
Huet’s answer to how a Pyrrhonist is able to live could not be simpler: he just does; but we can see here the affinity between Hume’s mitigated scepticism and other forms of skeptical fideism.

¹⁵⁷ See Donald W. Livingston, *Hume’s Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984).

¹⁵⁸ Richard H. Popkin, “The Sceptical Precursors of David Hume,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 16.1 (1955): 71.

¹⁵⁹ Christopher Hookway, *Scepticism* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 6.

resolve the difficulties it raises: how are we to live if nothing can be known with certainty? Pyrrhonism, like all philosophy finally, takes us back to fundamental epistemological questions, and to the problem of the criterion. Hookway writes, “Given the conflicts among appearances, we require a rule which will determine which appearances provide us with knowledge of reality. Sceptical probing can then always question why [...] this rule or criterion is an adequate one.”¹⁶⁰ Skepticism is a method of testing hypotheses and weighing probabilities, but at its most extreme moments, its arguments are turned against the intellectual devices making these measurements. How philosophers negotiate this problem is frequently telling of their entire system. For Descartes, the existence of clear and distinct ideas, such as the reality of the thinking self, is sufficient evidence. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), on the other hand, offers “a political rather than an epistemological criterion of truth.”¹⁶¹ Knowledge of true and false, good and evil, is not secured by revelation or reason, but by the magistrate. When it comes to controversies, questions of definition, and issues of moral belief, Hobbes asserts in *De Cive* (1642, 1647), “Every single subject should obey the laws and determinations of his city.”¹⁶² What begins to emerge here is the profoundly conservative impulse underpinning skepticism. As Norman Philips writes, “[Conservatives and skeptics] realize that human nature, by its very limitations, is incapable of perfectibility. From this common foundation, skeptics and conservatives are led to a common emphasis upon custom and tradition as the means

¹⁶⁰ Hookway 9.

¹⁶¹ Popkin, *History of Scepticism* 20.

¹⁶² Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* (London: Printed by J.C. for R. Royston, at the Angel in Ivie-Lane, 1651) XII.12.

whereby human nature may be ennobled.”¹⁶³

To return, then, to the central question of this chapter: to what extent do Swift’s satires present an opposition to false appearances, a testing of criteria, or a suspension of judgment on irresolvable matters? Of course, Swift, that most acidic of satirists, does not suspend judgment on the purveyors of dogmatism, spreading his judgment and condemnation liberally. He seeks to close the door on certain questions, and he rejects those defenses of religion that rely on fraudulent criteria—the rationalism of Toland and the zealous inspiration of enthusiastic dissenting sects. Despite his doubt, skepticism, and refusal to be a dupe or fool, he finds stability in tradition, custom, and habit. However, this echoes the Pyrrhonian prescription, the fourfold solution outlined by Sextus Empiricus that resolves the skeptical crisis. In this sense, Swift’s unwavering mooring in the traditions of the Anglican Church seems to conform to the *ataraxia* found by skeptics in the common forms of life. Marcus Walsh is comfortable arguing for skepticism in Swift’s works, but he makes it clear that it is a deeply conservative skepticism in the service of tradition: “The unreliability of human knowledge is taken by Swift to point not (as more modern radical skepticism might conclude) to an absolute relativity, an epistemological sea of shifting sands, but to an overriding need for all in society to accept existing institutions, political as well as religious.”¹⁶⁴ At the same time, this acknowledgement of the conservative dimension of skepticism has not prevented

¹⁶³ Norman Philips, “The Conservative Implications of Skepticism,” *The Journal of Politics* 18.1 (1956) 31. For a full account of the political implications—both conservative and progressive—of skepticism, see John Christian Laursen, *The Politics of Skepticism in the Ancients, Montaigne, Hume, and Kant* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

¹⁶⁴ Marcus Walsh, “Swift and Religion,” ed. Christopher Fox, *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 169.

some critics of Swift from seeing an insistence upon skepticism in his works as a blatant misreading of his conservative motivations.¹⁶⁵ The fear for many of Swift's critics, of course, is that reading him as a skeptic will introduce uncertainty, even atheism, into interpretations of his texts—an unsustainable reading given Swift's lifelong textual battle against schism, faction, and errors in learning and religion. An interpretation emphasizing skepticism risks echoing William Wotton's (1666 – 1727) misreading of *A Tale of a Tub* as an attack on religion in general, a “Banter upon all that is esteemed as Sacred among all Sects and Religions among men.”¹⁶⁶ Against such interpretations, Swift defended the text as perfectly orthodox: “It celebrates the Church of England as the most perfect of all others in Discipline and Doctrine, it advances no Opinion they reject, nor condemns any they receive.”¹⁶⁷ Most importantly and most problematically, a skeptical reading might begin to put Swift on the side of “modernity,” a term that best sums up everything Swift saw as

¹⁶⁵ Howard D. Weinbrot, “Response,” Menippean Satire Panel, ASECS Atlanta, March 2007, recently remarked, “From its inception, however, and certainly in Thomas Stanley’s *History of Philosophy* skepticism attempted to differentiate itself from dogmatism. On practical if not on philosophical grounds it failed. Both Pyrrho of Elis and Derrida of Paris are overwhelmingly confident of their own dogma if not of anyone else’s in their world of certain uncertainty. Moreover [...] it is difficult to put Jonathan Swift into such a skeptical category. There is a too easily forgotten truth regarding that troubled man: he was a Doctor of Divinity and priest in the Churches of England and of Ireland. There is nothing provisional about the oaths he took, and nothing paradoxical about his affirmation of the superiority of the Anglican to the Catholic or to Dissenting alternatives which seemed to threaten English episcopacy and monarchy. He indeed insists upon the essential mystery of his religion and the need to live a common sense and unambitious life—his own excepted; but those are Christian homiletic commonplaces [...] Swift defended his view of normative certainties. He excoriated any one who thought that they were not certainties.”

¹⁶⁶ William Wotton, *Defense of the Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning in answer to the objections of Sir W. Temple and Others. With Observations upon The Tale of a Tub* (London, 1705).

¹⁶⁷ Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, ed. A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith (1958; Oxford: Clarendon, 1973) 5 (“Apology”). Of course, even the Swift of the “Apology” may be a persona, and therefore not entirely reliable. For a reading of the “Apology” as an ironic parody of other apologies, and as an effort to turn “accusations of heresy and immortality” back upon the accusers, see Judith C. Mueller, “Writing Under Constraint: Swift’s “Apology” for *A Tale of a Tub*,” *ELH* 60.1 (1993): 101.

reprehensible in his culture, but that Enlightenment thinkers came to accept as essential to the progressive development of human reason. In controversies such as that between the ancients and the moderns, Swift is not an impartial judge observing from a distance: he is in the midst of the battle, and we know what side he is on. The dilemma for modern readers of Swift's satire is that we are unable to see ourselves satirized in the glass he holds up to us. As Miriam Kosh Starkman puts it, "To conceive of Swift as an enemy to progress, when we are the heirs of that very progress that Swift would have exterminated in the seed, interferes seriously with the cult of the writer as hero."¹⁶⁸

At the same time, it would be a mistake to deny the radical potential of a literary mode like Menippean satire that mocks learning itself, that challenges human institutions in the truth business, that can reduce even the most rational thinkers to the level of the mad, and that collapses vastly different intellectual positions as if they are the same system or are symptoms of the same intellectual disease. Perhaps the challenge posed by Menippean satire is that readers and critics want it to accomplish certain intellectual work. They hope to find an unstable dialogical relativism in which no system of knowledge is given preferred status. They want to see our modern, "enlightened" secularism preformed in these texts or at least in nascent form and to see these texts as critiques of the discourses that construct social power. Such readings, however, are bound to be frustrated by many of the normative ethical and cultural pronouncements of Swift and other Menippean satirists in the period. Equally frustrating will be their endorsements of the *status quo* in their Menippean

¹⁶⁸ Miriam Kosh Starkman 4.

and other works, claims like Pope's in "Essay on Man" (1734), that "Whatever is, is right." On the other hand, those critics who maintain that these texts offer comfortable endorsements of mainstream and conservative religious, social, and cultural values are just as likely to be thwarted by countervailing energies in the texts—facetiousness, dialogism, skepticism, paradox, and the falsehoods of fiction. When Swift takes positive positions they are not easily won.

Menippean satire for W. Scott Blanchard is a means for testing ideas, for questioning positions, certainties, and authorities. In the process, he associates the form and its attitudes explicitly with Pyrrhonism:

Menippean satire is far from being pessimistic in its pronouncements on intellectual uncertainty; it is, on the contrary, optimistic in its exercise of the freedom to question certainty [...] The ancient skeptic Pyrrho had set aside the epistemological problem of the uncertainty of knowledge by arguing for the adoption of a mental attitude of *ataraxia*, a tranquility that follows from the quiet suspension of judgment; it is a position that informs Montaigne's most extensive treatment of the vanity of human reason, the *Apologie pour Raymond Sebond*.¹⁶⁹

Menippean satire liberates the rational mind from what Blanchard calls the "philosophical despotism of certainty" and F. Anne Payne the "tyranny of Establishment."¹⁷⁰ False and dogmatic intellectual positions are attacked, even if, or

¹⁶⁹ Blanchard 42-44.

¹⁷⁰ Payne 4.

especially if, they have been institutionalized or become mainstream, in short, become hegemonic. Yet as we have seen, Swift has particular intellectual formulations in mind: the eighteenth-century Menippean satirists attack specific systems and system-builders: the usual suspects include Protestant enthusiasm, Catholic superstition, materialist philosophy, and bourgeois commercialism. Various forms of intellectual folly are measured against right learning, right reason, and right belief. The target is not certainty itself (i.e. skepticism for the sake of skepticism), but falsehood, deception, and ignorance. As Howard D. Weinbrot puts it, Menippean satire takes on not orthodoxy itself, but false heterodoxies threatening to become orthodoxies. Weinbrot also makes a case for seeing Menippean satire as a form that rejects the attitudes and ideas exchanged as popular currency at a particular time. Weinbrot defines Menippean satire as “a form that uses at least two other genres, languages, cultures or changes of voice to oppose a dangerous, false or specious and threatening false orthodoxy.”¹⁷¹ It is interesting that Weinbrot refers to a false orthodoxy and not heterodoxy or heresy. The Menippean satirist challenges a set of intellectual attitudes that have become mainstream, have been normalized, that pass for truth. This is not to suggest that the target is high culture or tradition. Rather, Menippean satire aims its sights at emergent intellectual formulations, such as science, and political and religious attitudes, such as dissent, that are associated with the rising commercial class. Weinbrot’s example is *A Tale of a Tub* in which

Swift regards the Moderns and Dissent as heterodoxies that are becoming false orthodoxies. In so doing, they replace both the

¹⁷¹ Weinbrot, *Menippean Satire Reconsidered* 6.

Ancients and the Church of England in the dominant culture and theology, just as in Juvenal's third satire numerous aliens replace the true native Romans. Under such circumstances, England is not England and Rome is not Rome.¹⁷²

What Weinbrot recognizes is that Menippean satire emerges at moments of intellectual and cultural transformation, during which one worldview or set of intellectual systems is replacing another. The satirist, as a conservative, attacks the new because it is a challenge to traditional authority and order. The threat comes from sects and ideologies that threaten to make the world anew. Weinbrot's definition offers an interesting attempt to distinguish Menippean satire from formal verse satire on formal grounds, but he reads their satiric intentions according to the same conservative structure—a specific false orthodoxy is challenged while a true one is implicitly recommended. This is reminiscent of the pattern that Weinbrot observed is the structure of formal verse satire: there is “an attack upon a particular vice and praise of its opposite virtue.”¹⁷³ The reference to Juvenal in the quote above is telling, as it further cements the implicit parallels in Weinbrot's argument between verse satire and Menippean satire. The only difference with Menippean satire seems to be that here intellectual, and not moral, orthodoxy is important.

This theory of Menippeanism could not be further from that of Theodore Khapertian, whose focus is on the works of Thomas Pynchon. He argues that Menippean satire seeks to overcome sterility, stasis and limitation by clearing the way

¹⁷² Weinbrot. *Menippean Satire*, 6.

¹⁷³ Howard D. Weinbrot, *The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1969) 74.

for *new* perceptual and intellectual orientations. A transcendence of older patterns of thought yields mental freedom. Representing satire in generative terms, in part inspired by Elliott's discussion of the relationship between satire and ritual,¹⁷⁴ Khapertian argues that Menippean satire sees conventional intellectual structures as threatening to creative expression. "The reformatory impulse of Menippean satire, its ancient and original goal of terrestrial fertility, is synonymous in fiction with perceptual fertility, its avowed enemy. Perceptual habitude is destabilized, thereby opening the possibility of regarding the object or objects of attack—indeed all experiential objects and states of affairs—*anew*."¹⁷⁵ The satirist makes creation possible in a world in which static intellectual arrangements and dogmatism seem to preclude that very possibility. Weinbrot and Khapertian see Menippean satire approaching authority, orthodoxy, and the *status quo* with entirely different intentions: the latter arguing the Menippean satire staunchly defends tradition, and the former insisting that tradition itself is the enemy of a Menippean satirist's vision of intellectual freedom. One way out of this critical impasse, may in fact be to argue, as I did in the previous chapter, that Menippeanism is a mode, and a portable one, that may be deployed with varying targets in mind. It is also possible, however, to argue that in both formulations certain aspects of Menippeanism seems to remain consistent—a desire to challenge false conceptions of reality, fundamental doubt about the ability of the human mind to formulate theories of its universe, and an assumption that most people live their lives operating under a set of delusions.

¹⁷⁴ Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1961).

¹⁷⁵ Theodore D. Kharpertian, *A Hand to Turn the Time: The Menippean Satires of Thomas Pynchon* (London: Associated U Presses, 1990) 42.

Menippean satires, regardless of where they fall on the spectrum defined above, often proceed as if no rational position has ever been put forward by the human mind. Even satires that ultimately advocate traditional social and intellectual values, present a deformed and monstrous human intellect, that spins falsehoods out of its own fancy, universally incapable of discovering the truth, and yet everywhere proudly convinced of its success. This insight into (or exaggeration of) the limitations of reason, may either serve a liberating demolition of the cultural systems that determine structures of power, or a conservative defense of traditional authorities and hierarchies. In fact, it is quite probable, as I have been arguing, to read even the most radical critique of systems of knowledge as arising from a conservative outlook. As we have seen, Menippean satire has a great deal in common with skepticism. Skeptical arguments (or satires) that challenge first one system of knowledge and then another, often stir up such doubt not to undermine cultural authorities, but to demonstrate their utility in an uncertain world.

After the Reformation, skeptical arguments into the eighteenth century often served fideist ends. Even Pierre Bayle (1647 – 1706), the radical skeptic whose dictionary of philosophical and historical figures challenged deeply held beliefs and assumptions and whose defense of Pyrrhonism in his dictionary of historical persons was notorious, was able to find security in the perspective of religion. According to Popkin, Bayle's skepticism leads him to two discoveries about the nature of the philosophical enterprise: "(1) That by the principles of philosophy one is lead to doubt everything, and (2) that the futile search within philosophy for certitude by the 'natural light' leads one to conclude that it is necessary to turn to the supernatural

light.”¹⁷⁶ Unable to answer the questions it raises, philosophy is the source of its own undoing. The skeptic uses philosophy to demonstrate its inadequacy in the search after truth. Certitude, if it is to be found, must be sought in religion. As Edward Gibbon (1737 – 1794) says of Bayle: “In reviewing the controversies of the times, he turned against each other the arguments of the disputants; successively wielding the arms of the Catholics and Protestants, he proves that neither the way of authority nor the way of examination can afford the multitude any test of religious truth; and dexterously concludes that custom and education must be the sole grounds of popular belief.”¹⁷⁷ He is a destroyer who stands seemingly alone, challenging first one and then another disputant. The skeptic “wields” arms, but he wields the arms of those who he attacks, as he pits them against one another. Neither the authority of philosophy nor its method of testing is a sufficient guarantor of the truth. Only custom and the beliefs of the community transmitted through education can serve as “truth.” Does this not mean, however, that truth “dexterously” stumbled upon by argumentation of the skeptic is merely conventional, local, relative as we move from one community to the next? Why should a community cling to its beliefs if the skeptic demonstrates that those beliefs cannot be shown to be universal? Does Bayle not also reveal the provisional and artificial nature of the customs that are adopted?

While Bayle seems to stumble upon the necessity of religion in the above characterizations of this thought, the same may not be the case for a skeptical satirist like Swift. In fact, if we adopt the argument that satire is able to communicate its

¹⁷⁶ Popkin, “Precursors” 63.

¹⁷⁷ Edward Gibbon, *Autobiography*, ed. Dero A. Saunders (New York: Meridian, 1961) 89.

disgust of a particular point of view by evoking a norm shared with the reader, then we could argue that perhaps the satirist begins from the religious point of view rather than ending at it. Religion would not, in this reading, be a compromise meant to assuage doubt, but the truth by which all absurdities may be measured. There is no doubt that Swift's readers are reminded of the role that the desire for knowledge played in the Fall, of the misery derived from knowledge and the bliss that comes from ignorance, of Saint Paul's claim that to be a fool for Christ is holiness. The vanity of small, insignificant and mortal creatures attempting to understand the true nature of God's work could not be more pathetic, or—according to the satirist—more ridiculous. Erasmus and More, sources of eighteenth-century Menippean tropes, remind their readers that the true Christian recognizes that “The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God”¹⁷⁸ and knows that it is the faithful and not the learned who have the choicest places in heaven. In the hands of a Menippean satirist or a skeptic, an awareness of our intellectual limitations can actually lead us to an acceptance of cultural authority. Hence Montaigne's expansion of Paul, “Weakness of judgment helps us more than strength; blindness, more than clarity of vision. We become learned in God's wisdom more by ignorance than by knowledge. It is not surprising that our earth-based, natural means cannot conceive knowledge which is heaven-based and supernatural; let us merely bring our submissiveness and obedience.”¹⁷⁹

In his sermon, “Upon the Excellency of Christianity,” Swift's rhetoric echoes

¹⁷⁸ 1 *Corinthians* 3:19.

¹⁷⁹ Montaigne, “Apology” 557.

Montaigne's and borders upon the fideistic logic of Pyrrhonists like Bishop Huet.¹⁸⁰ According to Swift, the ceaseless philosophizing and reasoning of the ancients before and around the time of Christ caused "not only an acknowledgement of the weakness of all human wisdom, but likewise an open passage hereby made, for the letting in those beams of light, which the glorious sunshine of the gospel then brought into the world."¹⁸¹ Here, as in Gibbon's Bayle, doubt precedes religion, and philosophy's failure makes way for the light of religion. Kathleen Williams acknowledges the skeptical attitude in this sermon, though she limits its implications:

Though the use to which Glanvill's scepticism is often put is antipathetic to Swift, the scepticism itself has much in common with his attitude, and its tendencies and purpose can be more clearly seen in the works of these contemporary philosophers than in his own more complex writing. One might say that had Glanvill followed the sceptic attitude to conclusions more properly to be deduced from it, as did the Bishop of Avranches, he like Swift would have regarded Descartes' efforts as vanity, embracing nothing in the end but a cloud. Of course Swift cannot be described as a sceptic or a Pyrrhonist: there was no distinct school of sceptic philosophers in the seventeenth century, and if there had been he would have disapproved of them. To doubt all things was no longer possible, for truth had been revealed once and for all in the Bible, and Swift's reference to the skeptics as a distinct

¹⁸⁰ See note 156 above.

¹⁸¹ Jonathan Swift, *Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1937-) 10.241.

philosophical sect, in the *Four Last Years of the Queen*, shows plainly enough that he would—as is only to be expected—condemn a skeptical attitude toward revealed religion, which is not, as he puts it, in the category of ‘speculative opinions.’¹⁸²

What about this skeptical “attitude,” though? How can it be that Swift shares it in some cases (philosophical ones) and condemns it in others (theological ones)? The answer, in part, is in the term “speculative.” Projectors, world-makers, and system builders, those who overreach, and speculate beyond what is known by revelation and custom to be true, are always condemned in Swift’s works. He also condemns those speculative opinions that solidify into the dogma of schools and sects. Even though Swift would never identify himself as a skeptic, his condemnation of speculation and of sectarian opinion is consistent with skepticism. In fact, Williams suggests that Swift is more perfectly a skeptic than those who, like Glanvill and Descartes, answer skeptical arguments by dogmatizing. By separating religion out of the realm of speculative opinions, Swift allows himself to be expansively and pervasively skeptical about everything else.

Michael McKeon makes the case for a powerfully destructive Swift, one whose conservatism leads him to destroy everything in his path. McKeon places Swift beyond the “naïve empiricism” of the seventeenth century among the more radical skeptical reactionaries to empiricism:

In his capacity as an Anglican clergyman, Jonathan Swift was directly confronted by the profoundly unsettling questions of the deists. Yet

¹⁸² Kathleen Williams, *Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise* (Lawrence: U of Kansas P, 1967) 61.

Swift resisted the hopeful logic of naïve empiricism and its conflation of revelation with sense impressions, referring his congregation instead to the venerable Pauline creed: ‘Faith, says the Apostle, is the Evidence of Things not seen.’ The only apparent alternative to Swift’s resolute refusal is the extreme skepticism of a David Hume, who pleasantly and insidiously demonstrates what Swift would leave unsaid.¹⁸³

Swift’s only criterion is faith, and this faith is especially necessary because the corrosive effects of extreme skepticism have spread across every institution of knowledge and learning, and have eroded empirical and spiritual defenses of religion.

Where does such a challenge to reason, learning, and philosophy end? At what point is it no longer correcting “errors” of learning and religion, but challenging the institutions themselves? The fact that Bayle, Spinoza, and Hume make real the radical implications of skepticism gives credence to fears in the period that skepticism, given just enough latitude, could be turned ultimately against miracles, scripture, revelation, and even seemingly obvious beliefs in causation, identity, and the material world. In fact, arguing against one side can frequently imply a similar argument against the other side, or even against one’s own side. Basil Willey writes, “[It is] one of the advantages enjoyed by the seventeenth-century ‘Protestant’ writers, that under cover of the usual attack on ‘Popery’ they could with every appearance of religious zeal, demolish the very foundations of religion itself.”¹⁸⁴ G. F. Parker finds

¹⁸³ Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 83.

¹⁸⁴ Willey 116.

similar radical potential in the skeptical attitudes of Pope, Sterne, and Johnson. He writes,

The natural tendency of scepticism, then, would seem to be radically disillusioning and destabilizing. Of course, it could be used, and often was used, as a local tactical weapon, a way of breaking down support for one position in order to give breathing-space for another. An Enlightenment thinker with a positive, more or less rationalist programme, might play the sceptic with his adversaries. Or, on the other side of the religious divide, when Johnson demolished Soame Jenyn's pertly optimistic cosmology, this was, in part, to preserve orthodox Christian piety from contamination by such foolish rationalizations. But when the skeptical intelligence is once allowed free play, it readily invokes a more general negativity.¹⁸⁵

A great deal of recent writing on Menippean satire elaborates similar arguments.

Frank Palmeri, calling it "narrative satire," distinguishes it from other kinds:

Satire in verse almost always expresses a conservative view of the

¹⁸⁵ Fred Parker 14. Jack Lynch, "Samuel Johnson, Unbeliever," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 29.3 (2005), has characterized Parker's argument as an expansion "beyond the tradition derived from Pyrrhonism into a kind of essayistic understanding of the world" (17, note 12). Indeed, Montaigne's essayistic mode of thought and of writing became a Humanist paradigm—a device for measuring ideas, testing their applicability to the world of appearance, and holding them up against commonsense. Johnson may be typical of many such thinkers in the period. Lynch details Johnson's crisis of belief: he found doubting easy, but believing difficult. Yet, he was "an exceptionally determined believer" (13). In the end for Johnson, "true quietude lies not in embracing but rejecting doubt; it is not skeptical *ataraxia* but reposing on the stability of truth that offers happiness" (11). Lynch describes a recovery of belief, a wresting of belief from the pervasive force of doubt: "Truth is for him a kind of discipline, a never-ending battle against falsehood. Any error, even one expressed ingenuously, might be harmful, and vigilance is therefore an ethical duty. Johnsonian epistemology slides into moral philosophy" (4). Johnson defines Pyrrhonism in his *Dictionary* (1755) as, "Scepticism; universal doubt," and it is against such doubt that he writes and argues.

world in language that approaches a purely dogmatic, monological state. By contrast, narrative satire usually expresses a more subversive line of attack, making a more dialogical use of language. Many critics have asserted the fundamentally conservative nature of satire and the satirists. Indeed, verse satire does function conservatively to enforce an established cultural code by ridiculing deviations from it. However, narrative satire parodies both the official voice of established beliefs and the discourse of its opponents. In doing so, it interrogates any claims to systematic understanding of the world. Narrative satire parodies both the official voice of established beliefs and the discourse of its opponents. In doing so, it interrogates any claims to systematic understanding of the world. Narrative satire is therefore less tied to a conservative cultural project and potentially more subversive.¹⁸⁶

Critics of satire must inevitably nod to the conservative nature of the form, as Palmeri does. Yet, if we follow Palmeri in his approach to these texts, we must acknowledge that a reading that stops at the conservative intentions of the text ignores major aspects of the reading experience of narrative, or Menippean, satire. It should be noted, however, that both Palmeri and Parker refer to the potential for subversion in these discourses, and not to the actualization of such subversion, even if the discourses “tend” to move in that direction.

As Palmeri argues, satire is dialogical but not dialectical; it offers no synthesis. Like Bayle, it attacks one extreme from the position of the opposite

¹⁸⁶ Frank Palmeri, *Satire In Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Gibbon, Melville and Pynchon* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1990) 6.

extreme or collapses them, eliding and effacing their differences. Neither position is, in fact, attacked from some moderate norm; they are allowed to destroy each other through their juxtaposition. Neither becomes acceptable, but in destroying each other, they leave nothing in their place. Thus, Palmeri writes of an “excluded middle.” Blanford Parker has also written about a “general satire, beyond the limits of traditional religious controversy and calling into question the validity of debate itself” which he locates specifically in Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras*, but also in Augustan satire more widely.¹⁸⁷ In his reading Swift and Butler collapse any and all differences between dissenting sects and Catholics. Tropes used to attack one are used to attack the other. In the process religion itself comes into question. For the satirist, there is always a position from which any human endeavor or metaphysical system can seem absurd, pretentious, or Lilliputian, from which any controversy is as useless as that over which end of an egg is the proper to break.

Swift asks his readers not only to see the absurdity of certain positions, but also to become critical of the rhetorical substructures of the systems he attacks. For example, in the *Tale* he undermines an enthusiast’s claim to be inspired by pretending to take seriously the notion of such inspiration and then by literalizing the rhetoric of inspiration. Swift effectively imitates the modern conflation of matter and spirit, drawing attention to the complete absence of spirit in modern philosophy:

In most Corporeal Beings, which have fallen under my Cognizance,
the *Outside* hath been infinitely preferable to the *In*: Whereof I have
farther been convinced from some late Experiments. Last Week I saw

¹⁸⁷ Blanford Parker, *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 13.

a Woman *flay'd*, and you will hardly believe, how much it altered her person for the worse.¹⁸⁸

Looked at from far away, close-up, or dissected, the material world offers us no new insight into the true nature of reality. This brilliant satirical moment serves as a critique of Hobbes and Descartes as well as the Royal Society, and it exposes the inadequacy of materialism as an explanation of the phenomenal world. The whole world has confused depths and surfaces, inner and outer, appearance and reality. The skepticism, however, does not end there. Elsewhere, enthusiasm is linked to the same rhetorical structure—“inspiration” is merely flatulence, it is no less physical than the guts of the flayed woman, and it is no more attractive:

After certain Gripings, the *Wind* and Vapours issuing forth; having first by their Turbulence and Convulsions within, caused an Earthquake in Man's little World; distorted the Mouth, bloated the Cheeks, and gave the Eyes a terrible kind of *Relievo*: At which Junctures, all their *Belches* were received for Sacred, the Sourer the better, and swallowed with infinite Consolation by their meager Devotees. And to render these yet more compleat, because the Breath of Man's Life is in his Nostrils, therefore, the choicest, most edifying, and most enlivening *Belches* are very wisely conveyed thro' that Vehicle, to give them a Tincture as they passed.¹⁸⁹

Here Swift mocks materialist explanations of inspiration and of the soul, and is thus

¹⁸⁸ Guthkelch and Smith, *Tale* 173.

¹⁸⁹ Guthkelch and Smith 154.

taking on Deism and other rationalist explanations of faith, but he is also able to mock inspiration itself and those who lay claim to it. They have misconstrued indigestion as the Holy Spirit, and have deceived people with their physical displays of faith. The gestures of the Quakers and other enthusiasts are “earthquakes” in the body and not in the soul. Even Humanist conceptions of microcosm are ridiculed here: the little microcosm, man, is no longer an allegorical counterpart to a vast and significant universe, but a physical shell, a body whose breath is mistaken for spirit, a body that only becomes more physical when we peer inside. The soul is also emptied of mystery as it is vulgarly associated with the wind that passes through the nostrils and anus. Of course, Aeolism is a totalizing system, and a product of the mad modern narrator, and must be taken ironically; it is a parody of modern systems. Yet Swift is able to get tremendous use out of it: “*Alexander the Great, Jack of Leyden* and Monsieur *Des Cartes*,” despite their differences, are all individual instances of the Aeolist.¹⁹⁰

A profound skepticism emerges with the juxtaposition of these several passages: what can we know about the world of appearance or the world of spirit? Swift destroys systems through their own language and jargon, and demolishes their epistemological foundations. Whether built by materialists or windy enthusiasts, unsound systems have been erected on false proofs and corrupt sources of knowledge, and they threaten to become dogma and orthodoxy. Swift trains his readers in philosophical disbelief; his satire is a tool of disillusionment. Swift shows modern philosophy to be either all dead matter or all mad spirit. Is the resulting empty void

¹⁹⁰ Guthkelch and Smith 170.

the fault of the moderns, of their separation of spirit from body, or is Swift evacuating this middle realm—a middle that should resemble neither extreme, yet should somehow incorporate elements of both? Both are so thoroughly destroyed, that a reader must wonder, as they did and have, what allows for continued belief of any sort in the face of such extreme doubt. If the goal is to turn us back to the realm of spirit, could it be only at the expense of a belief in the reality of matter? And based on what evidence given by Swift would we accept the realm of spirit as truer access to the nature of things? Henry More (1614 – 1687) sought to resolve the problem by distinguishing false enthusiasm from the real inspiration of the prophets and of other true believers. True and false inspirations in his formulation, however, are troublingly alike. He writes, “*Enthusiasme* is nothing else but a misconceit of being *inspired*. Now to be *inspired* is to be moved in an extraordinary manner by the power or spirit of God to act, speak, or think what is holy, just and true. From hence it will be understood what *Enthusiasm* is, viz. A full, but false, perswasion in a man that he is inspired.”¹⁹¹ This, of course, is dangerous logical ground: by what ultimate criterion shall the difference be judged? Swift seems to acknowledge the difficulty by abandoning inspiration entirely as a criterion of belief.

In both the attack on materialism and enthusiasm, Swift satirizes modern “errors”: excess, curiosity, credulity, a confusion of depths and surfaces, solipsism, a measuring of the world by the rule of one’s own self. The implicit argument is that the purveyors of these systems have all overreached and are ignoring common forms. The narrator embodies all these errors. Whether he is one “Modern”—the “Hack”—

¹⁹¹ Henry More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus; or, A Brief Discourse of the Nature, Causes, Kinds, and Cure of Enthusiasm* (London, 1662) sect. II.

or is several personae, he reveals the cracks and divisions in modern forms of belief, the inconsistencies and incompatibilities of modern “reason.” The text fails to achieve unity because the modern world is fragmented and fracturing; there is no unifying reality or conception of reality by which the world can be made whole again. At least it cannot be made whole if the criteria of the moderns are to be retained. The mind-body dualism of Descartes cannot be undone; there is no “universal field theory” by which to make sense of advances in science and philosophy in the context of religion. Swift’s response is to mock these intellectual developments, to reject them wholesale. Swift, like More, seeks to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate forms of belief, between faith on the one hand and credulity on the other. But how safe is the faith of the true believer from the withering assault on the fraudulent beliefs of fools? The danger, as is always the case for a skeptic, is that Swift will throw-out the tub with the bathwater.

CHAPTER THREE

“GREAT ANARCH’S ANCIENT REIGN RESTOR’D:”

CONTAINMENT AND RELEASE, ORDER AND CHAOS IN THE DUNCIAD

Forgive, for a moment, a personal anecdote. While dealing recently with a rambunctious puppy, I sought advice on how to train away his undesirable behaviors. One training manual suggested that it was not enough merely to train a dog to “heel,” “sit,” or “lie down,” but rather that the dog needed to learn that there were appropriate and inappropriate times to play. The lesson involved the teaching of two commands: “go wild,” and “freeze.” The idea was that the dog needed to learn that he was only permitted to go wild at my command, but that at any moment any fun or wild behavior could be stopped short, and that it was in my power to do so. I bring this up, because it occurred to me that this pattern of release and containment resembled the patterns I was discovering in the satirical texts I was reading. How could it be, I wondered, that texts such as *Blazing World*, *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Dunciad*, all of which seemed to be composed according to the principles of chaos, frenzy, and incoherence, were the fullest, most developed literary expressions of the deep conservatism of Cavendish, Swift, and Pope? The answer is readily available in the analogy to the untrained dog: these Menippean satires allow license to the very forces

that they most hope to regulate, but they do so only so they may finally be brought under control, reabsorbed into the ideology of containment that the satires seek to express. “Going wild” is the very thing meant to be expunged by the satire, but this can only be achieved by giving it free play, by allowing it to become so out of control that it needs to be reined in. The separating out of the “going wild” from culture, associating it with the popular presses, with the masses, with projectors, enthusiasts and others serves to define that wildness, and to distinguish it from more “civilized” forms of culture.

The previous chapters have examined the political and intellectual commitments of eighteenth-century satire, especially in the context of the problem of knowledge as articulated by seventeenth and eighteenth-century philosophers and divines. My principal argument has been that these satirical texts, especially those I have been calling Menippean satires, although profoundly conservative in their response to social and intellectual changes in the period, are also quite radical in their epistemology. This critique of knowledge and learning implies an ideology of class, and an attempt to regulate access to learning itself. However, my readings have left room for radical skepticism in these texts: they achieve their conservative expressions by withering, corroding, or demolishing (choose what metaphor you will) discursive structures of knowledge. Resistant to systematic and dogmatic visions of the world in general, Menippean satire turns against learning itself, presenting mock systems of knowledge, mock philosophies, and mock universes.

The critical dispute over Menippean satire is in part over whether it challenges orthodoxy, heterodoxy, or heterodoxy passing for orthodoxy. Does it challenge all

systems or some systems of knowledge? Does it parody “bad” literature or literature itself? Is it instrumental in the Enlightenment and its resistance to received knowledge, or does it represent counter-Enlightenment positions? As we have seen, the satirical challenge to learning itself (in the abstract and in general), and satire’s characterization of reason as vain, proud, and inadequate, frequently serve to defend traditional types of knowledge, such as revelation, and reinforce traditional social relationships within those systems of knowledge. Both skepticism and the carnivalesque paradoxically reinforce the existing social order—doubt demands faith; the licensed and sanctioned inversions of carnival actually legitimize political authority as it is presently expressed. Such extreme forms of resistance to systems of knowledge, however, are necessarily destabilizing and encourage further challenges to what is known, further re-evaluations of beliefs, conventions, and ideologies, further re-evaluations of what passes for the “real” and for the “true.” We must, then, return to a question broached in the first chapter: what is the ideological position of the Menippean satirist? And what is the relationship between the form of Menippean satire and its ideology?

There is a tension in Menippean satire between tradition and a critique of tradition, between rational discourse and a depiction of the world as mad, between doubt and belief. This chapter will elaborate a similar tension between order and chaos, fragmentation and unity in these same texts. Previous chapters began to examine concepts like dialogism, dialectic, and paradox as ways into an understanding of how Menippean satire works. These may be aspects of Menippean satire’s “repertoire” as a genre (to repeat Fowler’s terminology), characteristics that

define it as a genre. But the way these features are expressed within and through the form, and the uses to which they are put, may vary from text to text. Menippean satire must, therefore, be historicized. Many previous critical attempts to explain its approach to knowledge, its ideology, and its form have been undermined by the effort to generalize and by an assumption that genres remain unchanged over time, from period to period. Genres, in fact change over time, are products of their time, and develop in response to other times and the uses to which literary texts have been put in the past. The goal here should not be to understand how Menippean satire in the abstract works or what ideological work it achieves in all periods, but how it works in this period, and what forms it ultimately takes. Dialogism, whatever it may achieve in Dostoevsky, may serve an entirely different purpose in Swift and Pope.

Interpretations of Menippean satire within Bakhtin's framework and terminology are useful, but perhaps pose too severe a challenge to the conventional readings of these texts as conservative polemics to be casually embraced. The dialogical may not be merely or always deconstructive of ideologies or of the discourses that construct power as a simplistic Bakhtinian reading might suggest. Hegemony may be too powerful for even a radical heteroglossia to unsettle structures of power. Furthermore, dialogism, carnivalesque inversions, the turning of ideas into adventurers on the road of life, may ultimately be *constitutive* of hegemony rather than destructive of it. As will be argued below, the carnivalesque often ultimately reinforces existing power structures, legitimizes current ideology, and normalizes the *status quo* of non-festival, non-carnival time. The assessment of Menippean forms in this chapter will therefore move beyond a concern with the problem of knowledge

itself to the ways that knowledge is articulated discursively, in short to the way that forms of discourse, dominant or otherwise, express ideology.¹⁹² What is the relationship between the containment by these texts of energies of social transformation and the tendency of these texts toward the fragmentary, chaotic, explosive, and wild?

How the role of satire in this period is understood depends upon our conception of the period itself: to return to general questions, does satire emerge in an age of stability or an age of upheaval? And, which of these is the most appropriate characterization of the eighteenth century? James Sutherland writes, “The eighteenth-century satirist was the child of a stable society, and he repaid the advantages of being born into a settled age by constantly reinforcing its sturdy foundations.”¹⁹³ He further argues, “The importance of satire in eighteenth-century poetry can only be grasped if we remember that as often as not the satirist was deliberately reinforcing the agreed standards of the age by pointing at the eccentric, the freethinker, the profligate, the antinomian.”¹⁹⁴ Is this true; is it really an age built on sturdy foundations? Are the standards of the age really agreed upon? The major shifts underway in philosophy discussed in the previous chapter hardly seem to suggest a world built upon stable intellectual foundations. Perhaps any stability that might be posited is in fact a product of these texts rather than the condition of the

¹⁹² I am using the plural, “forms,” here, because Menippean satire does not have one uniform generic manifestation. The two texts discussed in this chapter, *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Dunciad*, are quite different from one another and, in fact, take radically different forms. What makes them both Menippean satires is their use of multiple genres and parody to satirize intellectual attitudes.

¹⁹³ James Sutherland, *A Preface to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (1963; London: Oxford UP, 1970) 40.

¹⁹⁴ Sutherland 38.

messages they communicate. The standards themselves may be constructed by the ironies that separate out the “eccentric” characters of the day. In other words, the stability may be a function of the texts and their ideology, rather than their cause. Beyond this, however, it hardly seems necessary to point out that the world as represented in these Menippean texts is far from stable. Instead we find the mad scribbling world of the Hack and his discovery of the entire social world in the cages of Bedlam; the progress of Gulliver through a world structured by difference, in which any totality that may be asserted is in the discovery that each of the worlds Gulliver finds is just another mirror of this one, and that it is filled with every kind of threat to order imaginable; the progress of Dullness and her forces of uncreation; or *Tristram Shandy*’s world of swirling objects, in which anything not nailed down is likely to be picked-up and reworked through another hobby-horsical system. There is no stability in these texts, and the implicit message of the satires is that there is no stability outside of them in the real world either.

This age was the child of civil war, and was as such necessarily more stable than the mid-seventeenth century. In fact, Swift’s rejection of extreme religious positions in the *Tale* can be read as an attempt to defuse the still very real tensions of the civil wars. The political parties in the late seventeenth century expressed their differences through radical rhetoric rather than with weapons, but this shift from the field of battle to the field of language made their disputes no less dangerous. In fact the increasingly rhetorical nature of dispute and the solidification of positions in language seem to make things more urgent for Swift. An intervention in language, through parody, irony, and lampoon has become necessary.

Swift was born just seven years after the Restoration; Pope was born in the year of the 1688 revolution. Thus the ages of both men were the products of restored order and great political compromises. Comparisons were of course made in their period to the Augustan age, the *pax romana*, as England enjoyed a period of unrivalled stability at home, and as its empire rapidly expanded. But this was not an expansion without wars: first the War of the League of Augsburg (King William's War, 1688 – 97), then, the War of the Spanish Succession (1701 – 1714) dominated the early years of the period; the union with Scotland (1707) was uneasy; there was the constant threat that Jacobites would undo the settlement of 1688; and Ireland was enduring tremendous repression and poverty. There was a jostling for power in the New World, a struggle between seafaring states for imperial domination and an intellectual landscape undergoing massive and rapid transformation.

The battles of political parties were also more acrimonious than ever. In fact, partisan tension came into being for the first time in the longer eighteenth century, with the Tory and Whig parties dividing over the contested succession of Charles II.¹⁹⁵ This emerging partisanship was itself an outgrowth of even more substantial

¹⁹⁵ David Hume writes in his *History of Great Britain*, London: Printed for A. Millar, opposite Catharine-Street, in the Strand (1757): "Wherever the church and court party prevailed, addresses were framed, containing expressions of the highest regard to his Majesty, the most entire acquiescence in his wisdom, the most dutiful submission to his prerogative, and the deepest *abhorrence* of those, who endeavored to encroach on it, by prescribing to him any time for assembling the Parliament. Thus the nation came to be distinguished into *Petitioners* and *Abhorrrers*. Factions indeed were at this time extremely animated against each other. The very names, by which each party denominated its antagonist, discover the virulence and rancor, which prevailed. For besides *Petitioner* and *Abhorrrer*, appellations which were soon forgot; this year [1680] is remarkable for being the epoch of the well-known epithets of *WHIG* and *TORY*, by which, and sometimes without any very material difference, this island has been so long divided. The court party reproached their antagonists with their affinity to the fanatical conventiclers of Scotland, who were known by the name of *Whigs*: The country party found a resemblance between the courtiers and the popish banditti in Ireland, to whom the appellation of *Tory* was affixed. And after this manner, these foolish terms of reproach came into public and general use; and even at present seem not nearer their end than when they were first invented."

changes in the structure of society itself, as the landed classes began to lose power to bourgeois capitalists, as hegemony was passing from one class to another. The middle classes had been emergent since the Middle Ages, especially the since the fourteenth-century plague had allowed survivors to enter the workforce at higher wages, but they began to assert their dominance in this period as consumers and producers of culture, and ultimately as drivers of political revolution. The rise of satire in the period corresponded with the emergence of this partisanship. Every text, satirical or otherwise, was composed within the context of party politics, and terms of aesthetic and social judgment became saturated with political meaning. Thus Dryden speaks of a world in which “Wit and Fool, are Consequents of Whig and Tory.”¹⁹⁶ Steven Zwicker, writing about the periods after the civil wars and Restoration, has made the argument that all literature became political and polemical, even, or especially, those texts, like *The Compleat Angler* (1653), that seem to eschew overt engagement with politics. The particular pastoral vision in Walton’s text serves to critique Puritanism, and to advocate for traditional aristocratic values and social relationships. “The polemicization of the literary is properly part of the polemicization of an entire society at all levels of discourse.”¹⁹⁷ This polemicization of discourse persisted well into the eighteenth century. Satire, especially equipped to handle polemical discourse, and to operate within a politicized literary culture, emerged as the dominant literary mode in the period. “The civil wars displayed the full implications of contest and confrontation, what it meant to stir public opinion, to

¹⁹⁶ *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. James Kinsley, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958) 1:215, ll. 4.

¹⁹⁷ Steven N. Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649-1689* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993) 9.

deploy oratory and eloquence, to indulge verbal savagery and violence.”¹⁹⁸

Theorists of history, culture, technology, and economics identify the eighteenth century as a period of great change. Marxists point to this period as one of transition from one mode of production to another, as bourgeois ideology and market capitalism emerged. Likewise, Michel Foucault’s various archaeologies find their significant narrative turns in this period, whether it is the story of the emergence of modern conceptions of madness, sexuality, or of the modern police state. In *The Order of Things* (1966), the seventeenth century in Foucault’s text stands like a gulf across which those living within the symbolic and analogical *episteme* of the sixteenth century would hardly recognize the world as understood by those whose conception of the world is defined by the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century empirical *episteme*.¹⁹⁹ I would argue that the changes in this period are more gradual and can be traced further back into the early modern and even medieval periods, but they are ultimately no less total than Foucault argues. The satirists, in defending one worldview militantly against another, and doing so while imitating the rhetoric and ideology of the worldview they are attacking, suggest the parallel existence of worldviews in this period. Discourse in the period is perhaps necessarily dialogical, as parallel cultural and political traditions attempt to lay claim to the same language. We could argue, following the terminology of Raymond Williams, that the satirists represent a residual set of class interests in the face of emergent ones.²⁰⁰ From the

¹⁹⁸ Zwicker 9.

¹⁹⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. of *Les Mots et les choses* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

²⁰⁰ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976).

perspective of a Marxist teleology, the Scriblerians are more aligned with a feudal aristocratic ideology, and serve as reactionaries in the dialectical emergence of the modern, capitalist state. On the other hand, it is new men, “organic intellectuals” (to use Antonio Gramsci’s phrase) like Samuel Richardson (1689 – 1761), who are ultimately responsible for formulating the ideology of the emergent class, and of making it “self-conscious.”²⁰¹

The long eighteenth century was an extended period of revolution, of increasingly irresolvable contradictions tending toward crisis. Christopher Hill has carefully recuperated the thought of the radical sects of the mid-seventeenth century, and convincingly argues for a reading of the English civil war as a class and cultural revolution more than a religious one.²⁰² Hill argues that doctrinal questions were secondary to political and economic ones, even if they achieved the primary place in Dissenting rhetoric. Max Weber’s reading of the Protestant ethic as constitutive of a bourgeois ideology also suggests that changes in religion and the battles over religion were ideological, and were a matter of class interests, even if Weber backs away from the ultimate Marxist implications of his formulation.²⁰³ The period witnessed a “cultural revolution,” which Fredric Jameson defines as “that moment in which the coexistence of various modes of production becomes visibly antagonistic, their

²⁰¹ Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1982).

²⁰² Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside-Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (1972; London: Penguin, 1991). Hill’s reading of history is relevant to arguments I will make below about Menippean satire and inversion and to arguments in the next chapter about utopia and the remaking of the world. He writes, “What was new in the seventeenth century was the idea that the world might be *permanently* turned upside down: that the dream world of the Land of Cokayne or the kingdom of heaven might be attainable on earth now” (17).

²⁰³ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Allen and Unwin, 1930).

contradictions moving to the very center of political, social, and historical life.”²⁰⁴ For Jameson, the revolution also begins earlier than the events of 1789, or even than the political philosophy of the philosophes: “The Western Enlightenment may be grasped as part of a properly bourgeois cultural revolution, in which the values and the discourses, the habits and the daily space, of the *ancien régime* were systematically dismantled so that in their place could be set the new conceptualities, habits and life forms, and value systems of a capitalist market society.”²⁰⁵ The systematic dismantling of the ideologies that secured the power of the *ancien régime* can already be found in the most surprising places, in the Augustan project for example. It could be argued that these texts aim to undo structures of power, to radically unsettle the discourses that constitute that power. They would therefore be instrumental in the intellectual agenda of the Enlightenment: the endorsement of a literalist, scientific, rational worldview at the expense of superstition, religion, and scholasticism.

Rather than find a comfortable fideism in the “Augustan” writers, including Butler, Swift and Pope, Blanford Parker has argued that they were in fact instrumental in the emergence of a literalist view of reality, one implicitly not spiritual, but rather physical and “real.” In the hands of the Augustans the Christian analogical and metaphorical worldview was replaced by a literalist one. “The empty space brought on by the erasure of both analogy and fideist theology was, in the last phase of Augustan writing, filled with a plethora of novel descriptions. The natural

²⁰⁴ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. (New York: Routledge, 1981) 81.

²⁰⁵ Jameson 81.

world and the world of incidental appearances, stripped for the first time of their iconic burden, burst forth and flooded the scene of eighteenth-century writing.”²⁰⁶

Parker is somewhat unconventional in these claims: the empirical revolution and the simultaneous reevaluation of the metaphorical aspects of language, the shift from the symbolic to the descriptive, from allegorical to scientific conceptions of nature, are often attributed to Robert Hooke (1635 – 1703), Thomas Sprat (1635 – 1713), and Robert Boyle (1627 – 1691), and to Daniel Defoe (1660 – 1731) and other novelists. The Augustans, on the other hand, are seen as reactionaries, railing against these modern innovations in thought. It is in this sense that Parker’s analysis is truly insightful, and even revolutionary in our understanding of the relationship between satire and periods of ideological and cultural change. Parker makes aesthetic shifts primary (as opposed to, say, philosophical shifts). According to Parker, by the end of the seventeenth century, not only had the conceptual framework of the scholastics been destroyed, but so too had the imaginative foundation upon which it stood. The rhetorical moves made by Hobbes, and Butler in particular, are the necessary preconditions not only for the tropes and argumentative structures in Swift and the later Augustans, but also for the emergence of a secular modernity. Parker’s implicit argument seems to be that changes in philosophy and religion are predicated upon changes in imaginative associations. The later logics of science, literalism, and positivism depend upon lateral, metonymic, and spatial associations rather than upon analogy, and this shift occurs first in Butler and his contemporaries. Once the change has occurred in poetry, every aspect of culture, literary and intellectual, must come

²⁰⁶ Blanford Parker, *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1998) 18.

into ideological alignment (despite, of course, the persistence, as Parker quickly points out, of figures like John Bunyan (1628 – 1688), John Wesley (1703 – 1791) and George Whitefield (1714 – 1770)—but their rhetoric, too, is sharpened by the need to respond to the changed imaginative landscape, post-Butler).

Because this change must necessarily occur first in the imagination and be made manifest in poetry, it might make sense to argue for the slow growth of a newly organized set of imaginative relationships and associations, their gradual deployment by writers, and a slow seepage of a new ideology into the broader culture. While we might suppose changes in poetic style to be gradual, Parker makes it clear that these changes in style and the attendant intellectual modes they imply are quite sudden. “The process whereby English culture moved from the acrobatic credulity of Browne to the cool and abject skepticism of Hume in less than eighty years was neither automatic nor inevitable [...] The suddenness and severity of this moment of Augustan interruption is still of the greatest significance in our endless struggle to explain modernity.”²⁰⁷ Here, in addition to arguing for the speed of these changes, he also insists that their occurrence is far from inevitable. I understand this to mean that these changes seem to grow out of acts of imaginative will, deliberate interventions—both rhetorical and stylistic—on the level of representation. It is the collective effort of writers and thinkers overthrowing the tyranny of scholasticism, and challenging all at once, through a reordered set of imaginative relationships, the four traditions of Christian theology that Parker argues the Baroque world inherited.

The question remains, and I think it may (still and always) be the central

²⁰⁷ Parker 24.

question for students of the Early Modern Period (and of the Enlightenment): how radical is the break and how sudden? What is entirely new, and what remains either transformed, or perhaps fully intact, from one period to the next? Parker is careful to distinguish the changed set of imaginative relationships from what others might call “Zeitgeist.” He also challenges Foucault’s assumption that the episteme of one period is unknowable to people of another. Furthermore, he argues for a continuity of imagination—here called modernity—from the age of Butler to our own age (the age, perhaps of Stephen Colbert?—Colbert seems to use satirical techniques similar to those Parker describes, including exclusion and leveling, especially in his efforts to collapse differences between liberals and conservatives). But, despite Parker’s efforts to argue that history is not marked by divides across which one generation may fail to recognize another, Parker argues for a pretty sudden and severe shift. No doubt, the civil wars are the great traumatic event allowing for such a compressed period of intellectual change—in Britain at least.

It was common for the satirists to speak of their period as an age of decline, to see all change as negative and regressive. Frank Palmeri writes, “Satirists discover in the past an image of pristine integrity, in relation to which their contemporary situation signifies a falling off into ambiguity and doubleness. Yet it is precisely this fall that enables satire, for it provides satirists with their form and strategy of parodic reversals—the creative structural principle of narrative satire.”²⁰⁸ It is telling here that the fall described is not necessarily a moral one, and does not necessarily suggest sin, but rather is an intellectual decline, a fragmentation which in turn produces and

²⁰⁸ Frank Palmeri, *Satire In Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Gibbon, Melville and Pynchon* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1990) 1.

necessitates satire. Golden ages, however, are a construction: the past is an imagined Eden. This is a period of transition in which old verities are falling apart and fragmenting, when worldviews are necessarily ambiguous and double. As James Drever writes, “The legacy of the sixteenth century was neither certainty nor scepticism, but perplexity. It left men divided against themselves and trying to cling to incompatible points of view.”²⁰⁹ The satirist argues against this state of affairs, referencing a golden age of unity, but it is the fragmentation that allows satire to happen. In fact, the doubleness allows satire to perform a powerful critique on knowledge in general—both the received and the modern.

These texts bring into being the very world against which they are reacting. The ideological basis of that world is emphasized. The texts reveal the discursive nature of reality, its constructedness, and the political basis of knowledge systems. Menippean satire performs an anatomy of the social reality that it recreates, and the biases, contradictions, and perversions of the world are brought to the fore. In fact, the satires of the early eighteenth century clarify the ideological shifts in progress, making real and realizable the ideologies they reject. Here the formal relationship to ideology seems to be to put into fictional form, to make discursively and figuratively manifest, the ideology of an opposing class interest. “Ideology is not something which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal

²⁰⁹ James Drever, “A Note on Hume’s Pyrrhonism,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 3.10. (1953): 41.

‘solutions’ to unresolvable social contradictions.”²¹⁰ Clearly defined class interests, antagonistic toward each other, with one pushing toward cultural and economic revolution are developments often associated exclusively with France, its revolution, and the writings of the philosophes leading up to it. But massive changes were clearly already underway in early eighteenth-century Britain. Satire, even as it attempts to offer aesthetic solutions to contradiction through purging, rejection and ridicule, is formally determined by “unresolvable social contradictions.”

A history of ideas is necessarily a history of class interests, a history of the material and historical circumstances of cultural production. If ideas are historically-determined, then worldviews must be situated within the circumstances of their emergence. Ideas exist within structures of power, and thus may express forces of control and domination, becoming devices of hegemony in the hands of the ruling class; or ideas may express forces and forms of resistance. These expressions of resistance often occur within existing power structures, and emerge within ideological constraints upon what can be said, and even what can be thought. Once the bourgeoisie has achieved hegemony, the historically-determined nature of their power must be masked by ideology. Their view of the world, their system of economics, their science, art, and domestic relations must be mystified as “natural.” Georg Lukács (1885 – 1971) puts it this way: “It ceases to be possible to understand the *origin* of social institutions. The objects of history appear as the objects of immutable, eternal laws of nature. History becomes fossilised in a *formalism* incapable of comprehending that the real nature of socio-historical institutions is that

²¹⁰ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (New York: Routledge, 1981) 64.

they consist of *relations between men*.”²¹¹

In its most basic definition, used consistently by Marxists, ideology is, as Raymond Williams succinctly puts it, “a system of meanings and values” that are the “expression or projection of a particular class interest.”²¹² As such, there are multiple ideologies coexisting within a state and across states, within periods and across them. Ideologies are related to each other, however, according to Antonio Gramsci (1891 – 1937) by hegemony. One class rules, but its ideology also comes to dominate and subordinate those of other, subaltern groups. The ideology of subaltern groups may ultimately be appropriated into the service of the ruling group. But hegemony (*egemonia*) should be distinguished from rule (*dominio*). Emergent hegemonic cultural superstructures may already be in place before the class for whom they guarantee power actually comes into power. Gramsci argues that “the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as ‘domination’ and as ‘intellectual and moral leadership.’” Physical domination by war and state apparatuses of control should be distinguished from forms of cultural power. Leadership ultimately rests in culture: “A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise ‘leadership’ before winning governmental power [...] It subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power.”²¹³ Cultural and intellectual control or “hegemonic activity” precedes a rise to power and makes political power possible. Cultural domination,

²¹¹ Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT P, 1968) 48.

²¹² Raymond Williams 108.

²¹³ Antonio Gramsci, “Notes on Italian History,” ed and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971) 57-58.

because more pervasive and complete, is ultimately more total than martial control, and is capable of governing minds and perceptions as much as bodies.

The daily functioning of ideology, its role in constituting not only political parties and governmental structures, but also the very nature of reality and of culture is not apparent to a culture isolated in space, or undisturbed by shocks within time. It is only during periods of political crisis and change that the ideological nature of reality and of all social institutions becomes apparent. Suddenly, partisans on both sides appeal to ideology with urgency, while arguing, of course, that the ideology they endorse *is* reality; the appeal is to truths that are assumed to be so true they are not recognized as being ideological. It is worth quoting at length Clifford Geertz on Edmund Burke's (1729 – 1797) defense of the ancient English "constitution" against the kinds of innovations under way in France during the Revolution:

In politics firmly embedded in Edmund Burke's golden assemblage of 'ancient opinions and rules of life,' the role of ideology, in any explicit sense, is marginal. In such truly traditional political systems the participants act as (to use another Burkean phrase) men of untaught feelings; they are guided both emotionally and intellectually in their judgments and activities by unexamined prejudices, which do not leave them 'hesitating in the moment of decision, sceptical, puzzled and unresolved.' But when, as in the revolutionary France Burke was indicting and in fact in the shaken England from which, as perhaps his nation's greatest ideologue, he was indicting it, those hallowed opinions and rules of life come into question, the search for systematic

ideological formulations, either to reinforce them or to replace them, flourishes. The function of ideology is to make an autonomous politics possible by providing the authoritative concepts that render it meaningful, the suasive images by means of which it can be sensibly grasped. It is, in fact, precisely at the point at which a political system begins to free itself from the immediate governance of received tradition, from the direct and detailed guidance of religious or philosophical canons on the one hand and from the unreflective precepts of conventional moralism on the other, that formal ideologies tend first to emerge and take hold [...] It is when neither a society's most general cultural orientations nor its most down-to-earth, 'pragmatic' ones suffice any longer to provide an adequate image of political process that ideologies begin to become crucial as sources of sociopolitical meanings and attitudes.²¹⁴

Ideology in this period is mystified as "ancient opinions," "rules of life," "common courses," "common forms," "natural laws." It is necessary that they not be recognized as ideological if the rhetoric is to be effective. An appeal to norms, standards and tradition implies that these things have a reality beyond history, beyond the circumstances of the moment. Thus a satirist and an audience are both within the same ideological system in which "ancient opinions" should mean the same thing to all. "Ideology in action," Gayatri Spivak writes, "is what a group takes to be natural

²¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Perseus, 1973) 218-219.

and self-evident.”²¹⁵ The naturalization of ideology as custom and habit is the precondition and essence of hegemony. The appeals made by the skeptics examined in the previous chapter are similar. Custom, habit and social convention are all culturally conditioned and ideologically determined. They become the “real,” the source of stability that individuals can fall back upon when all else, especially belief systems and scientific paradigms have been rendered obsolete. Yet they are no more real, only more deeply entrenched, more fully and totally naturalized.

Satire is a difficult test case for an ideological reading of literature. As a polemical form, it seeks to make its ideology known. At the same time, satire resists ideologies. Unlike a novel that recapitulates the bourgeois ideologies of domesticity and a psychologically-coherent identity, inscribing them in the form of the text, satire points out particular ideological constructions of the world, holding them up to ridicule. Satire seems aware of the structural nature of such ideologies—the critique of contemporary culture in *The Dunciad*, for example, links class, state, jurisprudence, and culture in a chain. All are expressive of the same underlying (“corrupt”) ideology. In this sense, satire pits one ideology against another, a battle summed up most simplistically by reference to the period’s great ideological struggle: the battle of the ancients and the moderns, in which superficial disputes as to whether moderns were in fact intellectually taller or merely dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants masked deeper disputes over economics, forms of government, and even the nature of reality. Despite its drive to regulate threatening ideological positions, satire as a cultural production cannot be read as an apparatus of the state. In fact, it is

²¹⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Politics of Interpretations,” *Critical Inquiry* 9.1 (1982): 259.

frequently directed against the state. In the case of the Scriblerian satires, Whig state power is among the things being challenged.

The dialogical approach to discourse within these texts can be explained by the status of these satires as an oppositional discourse in the period. The satirists sought to put chaos, doubt and disorder on display in order to divorce themselves from it, in order to associate it with the “dangerous” changes underway under the influence of the Whig government, and the rule of a fickle, corrupt mob.²¹⁶ These satires were attacking an emerging set of ideological constructions, and thus needed to, despite their violence and virulence, approach the *status quo* with a certain degree of caution. Charges of libel and censorship were very real threats. Such threats were also constitutive of satire: focusing satirical arguments and transforming their discursive and rhetorical strategies. The richness and variety of the literature of the Tory opposition, and their lasting literary impact, may in fact derive from the constraints placed on their participation in cultural and political power. The danger of punishment demanded ever-new fictional refractions and distortions of actual people and events within satirical texts. What Anabel Patterson says about literary production and political commentary and protest in the Elizabethan Age still seems applicable in the eighteenth century, a period that saw Delarivier Manley (1663 – 1724) arrested for libel and the theaters shut down after Fielding’s plays had been found threatening to those in power:

The unstable but unavoidable relationship between writers and the holders of power was creative of a set of conventions that both sides

²¹⁶ For a study of the rhetoric of the satirists, see Bertrand A. Goldgar, *Walpole and the Wits: The Relation of Politics to Literature, 1722-1742* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1972).

partially understood and could partly articulate: conventions as to how far a writer could go in explicit address to the contentious issues of his day, and how, if he did *not* choose the confrontational approach, he could encode his opinions so that nobody would be *required* to make an example of him.²¹⁷

By the early eighteenth century, the powerful had come to realize that writers were necessary to their success, and that politics was about rhetorical persuasion in the public sphere. The Whigs developed their own party organs, and developed their own satirical tropes to respond to the Tory challenge. But the polemicization of politics made—to use Elizabethan terms—the powerful familiar.

Some recent theorists of literature have attempted to work their way out of what Alan Sinfield calls the entrapment model of ideology, “whereby even, or especially, maneuvers that seemed designed to challenge the system help maintain it.”²¹⁸ This concept of ideology maintains that even tropes in a text that superficially appear subversive are ultimately employed to confirm or reinscribe the dominant ideology they seem to subvert. Against this structure, Sinfield posits instead a model of ideology that includes a notion of “dissidence” that emerges “from conflict and contradiction that the social order inevitably produces within itself, even as it attempts to sustain itself.”²¹⁹ The presence of dissidence does not in and of itself imply a subversion of the dominant ideology. At various times the dominant

²¹⁷ Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England. With a New Introduction* (Ann Arbor: U of Wisconsin P, 1984) 12.

²¹⁸ Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1992) 39.

²¹⁹ Sinfield 41.

ideology may appropriate dissident discourse; at other times the dominant discourse may be appropriated for dissident purposes. Sinfield reads this dissidence as a “potential” because “it posits a field necessarily open to continuing contest, in which at some conjunctures the dominant will lose ground while at others the subordinate will scarcely maintain a position.”²²⁰

Though cultural materialists like Sinfield regard literary texts as situated in history, occurring at the intersection of historical pressures, beholden to material forces and relations of production, they allow the possibility that the text, because it absorbs the conflicts of these relations, can never entirely achieve closure. Culture, because it is a dynamic process, is never monolithic or heterogeneous. As Raymond Williams has argued, the dominant culture “has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified,” because it is constantly embattled and barraged from below and from outside, from subordinate and marginal groups. The dominant, on the other hand, is “continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own.”²²¹ These competing pressures, shaping and reshaping each other, *together* comprise culture. A cultural expression, by necessity, gives voice to both the dominant and subordinate (resistant) aspects of culture, because they are both embedded in discourse, they are both mobilized when culture is produced. Therefore, there is always the possibility for what Jonathan Dollimore has referred to as an “intervention” in the present.²²² In any reading, we can prevent inherent tensions

²²⁰ Sinfield 49.

²²¹ Raymond Williams 112.

²²² Jonathan Dollimore, “Introduction,” ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985).

from settling or resolving themselves.

A dialogical assault does not merely pit an antithesis against an existing term, laying one discourse or worldview alongside another. In a more Hegelian sense, the antithesis often incorporates into itself the rejection of the thing it rejects. And the two discourses are rarely presented as equal. Dialogues, however, rarely give equal value to all sides. Plato's dialogues, for example, are frequently a vehicle for Socrates to make his argument. Furthermore, the dialogical literary modes discussed above often insist upon hierarchalization. The dialogical allows two things to be seen at once but in such a way that one can be granted priority, or one can be seen as an overt challenge to the other. Satire and parody are especially relevant in this regard: *Gulliver*, Swift's anti-novel, mocking Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), is necessarily like the text it rejects, and we have already seen how the *Tale* is in many ways a perfect imitation of the modernity it would destroy. Satire is ideological, yet it seeks to mask its own ideology in the process of rejecting the ideology it mocks. Such a text must necessarily be dialectical—one worldview is shown coming into being, even as its emergence is shown replacing a more desirable (from the perspective of particular class interests) worldview. Whether such a gesture is dialogical—meaning that both are merely juxtaposed, placed side by side in apposition as much as opposition, and that neither is finally successful in annihilating or replacing the other—however, remains to be seen.

Satire demands keeping multiple points of view, even incompatible ones, in view at the same time. By definition this is what irony does—the text retains a surface meaning that is still undermined by the truer intentions of the argument of the

work. Parody works this way, too—the model text and its conventions are imitated to expose them as silly, or a new discourse is forced through the conventions of an ancient form to show its unworthiness for such lofty expression. Mock epic also works this way—ideologically a mock epic text is on the side of the ancients, the heroism of antiquity, and is mocking a miniscule age that would see itself by the light of epic poetry. The modern world and the heroic world must be kept in view at the same time; the text must keep both of them rhetorically alive and in constant ironic juxtaposition. But mock epic also participates in the literalizing gestures of eighteenth-century literature. Human experience is stripped of its heroic dimensions; the mythic frame is shown to be inadequate because it does not apply. The world is no longer mythic. A text like *Rape of the Lock* (1712, 1714) is just as instrumental in demythologizing aristocratic ideology and epic culture as in pointing out the new reality, a world already unhinged from aristocratic myths and situated in the empirical world. The disjunction, however, is humorous, satirical, ironic, devastating in its social implications, because we are able to see two conceptions of reality at the same time, two ways of conceiving human life and experience—the heroic and epic versus the novelistic, mundane and sentimental. Incidentally, the latter is expressive of a bourgeois ideology, the former of a heroic, romantic aristocratic aesthetic. The mock heroic text becomes an expression of a “real” state of the mind and of culture, and this mental world is made more real by attaching it to an exquisitely physical, matter-bound universe. Menippean satire often makes schools of thought and false mental constructions of reality real. One example can be found in the nymphs in *Rape of the Lock*. What Belinda perceives as real fairies, as champions of her virtue, as little

sprites engaged in keeping her perpetually pretty are in fact indistinguishable from motes in the sun and sheens on silk; she has romanticized her material world. The text operates on two levels: developing an incredibly lavish, detailed physical and Lockean world on the one hand; and on the other, satirizing Belinda's romantic reading, her sense of self-importance, and the mad system of the Rosicrucians. The fantasy is an inadequate explanation of the real world. In making it literal, Pope exposes its emptiness as a system.

The immediate background of this text is, of course, the real life clipping of Arabella Fermor's lock of hair by Lord Petre. Pope's fictionalization of this event within the mock heroic form allows him not only to make light of an incident that affected the peace in his circle of friends, but to develop a complex critique of the small, insignificant concerns of the aristocratic elite, and of the modern age. No one in this social world escapes the satirical critique or the distortion of mock epic; even Queen Anne (1702 – 14), praised in *Windsor-Forest* (1713) as a force of peace and stability, is found coming to Hampton Court where she “dost sometimes council take—, and sometimes tea.” (III.8) Through zeugma, the verb “to take” unites statecraft and the popular diversions of the fashionable elite, effacing the differences between the two.

One of the major devices of mock epic is diminution: “maidenhead” is reduced to a lock of hair and warfare to a game of cards, for example. In fact, the catalogue near the end of the poem of lover's trifles abandoned to the moon, and the apotheosis of Belinda's lock of hair, provide a scale by which to understand the events and metaphors of the entire poem. The opening lines—“What dire Offence

from am'rous Causes springs,/ What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things"—can almost serve as a definition of the mock epic. Another key aspect of mock epic is the collapsing of differences of value and scale. Belinda seems to make no distinction between the things on her dressing table: "Here files of pins extend their shining rows, / puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux" (I.137-38). In a similar manner, Belinda's response to the Baron's use of the "fatal engine" (scissors) on her hair, is the same that women supposedly reserve for the death of a husband or a dog—or broken pottery:

Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,
 When husbands or when lapdogs breathe their last,
 Or when rich china vessels, fallen from high,
 In glittering dust and painted fragments lie! (III.157-60)

This, however, is not a light and trivial poem. Although it presents neither the complex moral analysis of Pope's Horatian imitations and the *Epistles* nor the dark assessment of human nature and the modern state of the arts and sciences that is found in *The Dunciad*, lurking behind the quaint trivialities of this poem is a severe indictment of the moderns and their concerns. Michael McKeon associates the mock heroic with the microscope and its ability to make the small great, as well as with the general tendency of Baconian natural philosophy to find the low and profane worthy of study. This, he goes on to argue, is why we get the inversion of the classes in *Jonathan Wild* and *The Beggars' Opera*, with criminals behaving like "great" men. The inversion of great and little is related to an inversion of depth and surface, the ironic deployment of which Pope gets so much use in *Peri Bathous*. McKeon writes,

Both [the relationships of depth and surface and little and great] are central to the ironic mechanism of mock heroic as well as to the method of the new philosophy. Indeed, the familiar valorization of depth over surface that emerges at this time may help us to understand how the relation of little to great is subtly altered under conditions of modernity. In the traditional scheme of universal correspondence the little stood in relation to the great (e.g., the family to the state) in a hierarchical continuum of tacit distinction, each level illuminating, in its inferiority, the superiority of the next [...] In this [new] argument for knowledge of the little, the promise of illumination is comparatively open ended: the ‘information’ to be gathered is not governed by its presumed relevance to the great.²²³

There is something repulsive about the small and insignificant, and something absurd in taking it seriously as if it is the entire world, and Swift also often mocks this misdirection of priorities. For Swift the microscope is the symbol of science, but perhaps also of the age. It is a world obsessed with the trivial and insignificant, and we as “little odious vermin” are on the same scale. Pope also glorifies the insignificant for satiric purposes, but there is a kind of gratuitous and voyeuristic obsession with detail as his couplets carry us over Belinda’s toilet. By the time we get to Sterne the detail and the trivial (action, gesture, object) are still sources of satire with a mock heroic inflation of the insignificant to the level of absolute importance. Just as reputations die with a single glance in *Rape*, in Sterne a single gesture

²²³ Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005) 403.

suggests an entire story, even an entire universe of associations. The empirical worldview is necessarily Sterne's subject, but so is the cult of sentiment with its emphasis on the minutest gestures. Even further, though, details for Sterne also always arise from "am'rous Causes," or so we are often tricked into believing.²²⁴

We can see here from these examples that the mock heroic is necessarily dialogical, that it pits two entire worlds against one another. The disparity between them is in the way the worlds are conceived, and in the way language itself functions to constitute reality. These texts, however, also register rifts within the structure of society: between social classes, ancient and modern learning, and the powerful and the marginalized. These rifts enter the structure of the language itself, through irony, multiple perspectives, satirical allegory; we are always asked to see two things at once. It is also more than an ideological product born of a particular class consciousness. These texts, as Jameson argues of literature more generally, internalize irresolvable cultural and social contradictions. This is, in part, what Bakhtin means by heteroglossia and poststructuralists by aporia. Between these double points of view and between what the text wants to say, and what—because culture itself is multiple—it actually says, "dissident reading" becomes possible.

Contradiction itself, however, is a function of modernity, and has come to be seen as a necessary aspect of capitalism, as crucial to the functioning of the system, of reality itself. Lukács argues that contradictions in "the nature of reality itself" under capitalism "will be seen to be necessary contradictions arising out of the antagonisms

²²⁴ See David H. Richter, "The Reader as Ironic Victim," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 14.2 (1981).

of this system of production.”²²⁵ We could argue, perhaps that satire takes contradictions in the structures of knowledge and society as the fodder of its argument. The form of Menippean satire itself is built on contradiction: incompatible discourses, and the pairing of radically different literary modes, including fantasy and realism. The contradictions it points out are the contradictions of the world as given; they are ironic expressions of antagonisms within the system of production, or in the case of the early eighteenth century, between systems of production, between class-based ideologies, between, in a sense, modes of being. The satirists represent an interest that once enjoyed hegemony, but that has now become a minority ideology in the process of being subsumed by the emerging bourgeois ideology. As a challenge from without, albeit a challenge from a former ruling class, satire could be said to resemble a challenge from below. In fact, in associating Menippean satire with folk and popular culture, with the masses and their carnivalesque expressions of resistance, Bakhtin makes just such an association.

One of the most important features of Bakhtin’s theory of Menippean satire is his association of it with popular festivals, especially carnival, during which traditional social hierarchies are inverted. For Bakhtin carnival defines “the people” and serves as a populist, utopian inversion of “high” culture. Carnival takes “official” culture as the source of its representational forms, subverting and mocking it by putting it into a new context. Menippean satire undermines textual and cultural authorities by putting them into play within a carnivalized vision of the world. Stallybrass and White argue that “control of the major sites of discourse is

²²⁵ Lukács 10.

fundamental to political change.”²²⁶ Carnival holds out the hope for Bakhtin that the people can wrest this control from the powerful and that changes can be made in the structures of political ideology itself. Those theorists of Menippean satire who follow Bakhtin make similar claims about satire’s relationship to discourse. Kirk Combe summarizes Bakhtin’s four attributes of carnival and similar festivals thus:

The first attribute is the breakdown of normal social barriers such as class, wealth, age, and education in the free and familiar contact among people at carnival time. Second is eccentricity; all manner of ordinary inappropriate behavior becomes not just permitted, but encouraged and expected. Third is *mésalliance*, the unsuitable marriage of dissimilar or opposite things [... such as] the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid, and the like. Fourth is the deliberate profanation of all solemn and sacred offices, ritual, texts, and institutions.²²⁷

Attempts by the powerful to suppress carnival and fairs at various times further politicized these sites of social transgression. But, we must wonder if they were, when allowed, just a sanctioned release in order to further solidify social control. In *Mac Flecknoe*, for example, Dryden does not endorse the carnivalization of the world, but rather sees Shadwell and the misrule he represents as a threat to social order. Likewise, in *The Dunciad* Pope uses the carnivalesque, not to resist

²²⁶ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986) 202.

²²⁷ Kirk Combe, “Shadwell as Lord of Misrule: Dryden, Varronian Satire, and Carnival,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 24 (2000): 4-5.

authority, but to represent a powerful threat from below. The power of *The Dunciad* is derived from the dialogical interplay of a carnivalesque insurgence of popular energies with Pope's deeply conservative fear of these energies. Thus, the presence of the carnivalesque may not in the end serve to subvert the social order, but rather to show the dangers of subversion to the powerful, and to locate those energies within the masses.

Pope's carnivalesque is drawn from the "low" world of Smithfield fairs, Lord Mayor's Day Parades, anti-catholic riots, and street theater. It is an inverted world, in which the lower orders imitate their social betters, prizes are awarded to the worst, destruction is the goal of productive activity, progress is the movement toward sleep, books are burned rather than read, and dunces rule. The poem also evokes another major scene of the carnivalesque in the eighteenth century: the masquerade balls enjoyed by the city elite, but at which the middle and lower classes—provided they could afford a ticket—might be subversively present. At such events identities were donned through a highly ritualized and formalized sartorial discourse. As Terry Castle has argued, the masquerade was a "systematic anarchy, a discordia concors." The masquerade, central, as she argues, to the rise of the novel, also has deep affinities with satire, its character types and its inversions:

Like the world of satire, the masquerade projected an anti-nature, a world upside-down, an intoxicating reversal of ordinary sexual, social, and metaphysical hierarchies. The cardinal ideological distinctions underlying eighteenth-century cultural life, including the fundamental divisions of sex and class, were broached. If, psychologically

speaking, the masquerade was a meditation on self and other, in the larger social sense it was a meditation on cultural classification and the organizing dialectical schema of eighteenth-century life. It served as a kind of exemplary disorder. Its hallucinatory reversals were both a voluptuous release from ordinary cultural prescriptions and a stylized comment upon them.²²⁸

“The masquerade resists containment in discourse,” yet it reveals the very order it subverts. In fact, this may be its primary function. Inversions are temporary, and they refer to the prohibitions that they violate. These prohibitions and structures of difference are ultimately not superseded but reinforced. There is, however, radical subversive potential locked up in the masquerade: traditional gender roles are temporarily suspended. Dangerous cultural differences are elided, mocked, or ignored as the “other” is adopted as a mask. Nuns dance with rakes; ladies dress as chambermaids and footmen as princes. The possibility of social interchangeability is played with. The status of social costumes as mere clothing and the performative nature of identity are dramatically revealed, just as Menippean satire reveals language as mere words. Yet in the morning, things return to normal and the powerful social experiment is relegated to the dream-space of the masquerade ball. The social world had briefly been rearranged, but only according to particular rules, and only in a place safely fictional.

The masquerade allows social tensions to release themselves. Dustin Griffin suggests something along these lines when he argues that satire, rhetorically, and

²²⁸ Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986) 5, 6.

through the medical metaphors it employs characterizes itself as a release of anger, a “venting of spleen,” rather than an attempt to instigate actual political change. It is “not that satire has no political power at all, but that most claims about its revolutionary or subversive power are overstated and misplaced.”²²⁹ It only serves to “vent” political rage; it is a tirade that would be perceived as raving, were it not bound by the formally ritualized aspects of literature. Transgression is allowed to give release to dangerous political energies, or in Griffin’s phrasing, spleen is vented innocuously in literary form to diffuse the more violent potential of religious and political differences after the civil wars. In this sense inversion, subversion, and critical attack ultimately serve the *status quo*, even reinforce it because the criticism is deployed through socially sanctioned forms that were developed as substitutions for real revolution. Terry Eagleton makes similar claims: “Carnival, after all, is a *licensed* affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art.”²³⁰

The carnivalesque often finds its expression within forms of high culture, and thus seems to transgress culture from within its borders meekly, like Eagleton’s “revolutionary work of art” (no doubt happily embraced by a wealthy couple for display over a penthouse couch). But Stallybrass and White remark further that, “the endless ‘rediscovery’ of the carnivalesque within modern literature is but a common trope within that particular site of discourse.” This trope is often incorporated in order to be expelled. “The carnivalesque was marked out as an intensely powerful

²²⁹ Dustin Griffin, “Venting Spleen,” *Essays in Criticism* 40 (1990).

²³⁰ Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin: Towards a Universal Criticism* (London: Verso, 1981) 148.

semiotic realm precisely because bourgeois culture constructed its self-identity by rejecting it. The ‘poetics’ of transgression reveals the disgust, fear and desire which inform the dramatic self-representation of that culture through the ‘scene of its low Other.’”²³¹ In this sense, the carnivalesque serves not to formulate an idea of the “people” but to reject such a concept and all that is associated with it, defining instead the class to which the satirists belong. Thus the mob that rises up in *The Dunciad* and claims cultural production as its own is exposed as other, as a cheap, and ultimately dangerous, imitation. In Pope’s poem, the masquerade is never perfect: no fool will be mistaken for a king; no poet laureate will be mistaken for a true genius. The carnivalesque serves to draw the boundaries of culture and to stir up class anxieties. The dialogical ultimately establishes ruling class hegemony by appropriating and subsuming minority or subaltern discourses for its own ends. In this sense, Pope wields Menippean satire as a weapon of exclusion.

Menippean satire works from within tradition to develop its challenge; it belongs to the learned, to the teacher, to the preacher. Scott Blanchard finds fault with Bakhtin’s claims that the “menippea” have a popular anti-intellectual bias. Rather, it is “a genre both for and about scholars,” whose “master of ceremonies is the humanist as wise fool [;] its audience is a learned community whose members need to be reminded [...] of the depravity of their overreaching intellects, of the limits of their human understanding.”²³² Eugene Kirk, on the other hand, places the satirist and the audience on different social planes, depicting the Menippean satirist as a

²³¹ Stallybrass and White 202.

²³² Blanchard 15.

preacher convinced of his own authority:

The Menippean writer assumes an audience less learned, less intellectually committed, than himself; but he believes his audience is curious, sincere, sensible and humor-loving enough to see his point, when that point is presented in an entertaining and knowledgeable way. The genre is nearly always written downward to this audience.²³³

In this description of satire's downward pressures Kirk is perhaps recollecting Swift's brilliant representation in *A Tale of a Tub* of the stages from which words are dropped upon audiences. Yet, his formulation assumes a perspective shared by the audience and the satirist, or at least an audience receptive enough to be persuaded by the speaker's argument. The audience is not "committed," but the satirist is and intends to make a "point."

In pitting one era, one worldview, and one ideology against another, the Menippean satirist endorses one as the normal. In this sense, the commonsense and common forms that the satirist refers to are a rhetorical construction. As I have argued in previous chapters, the Scriblerian satirists, as reactionary ideologues, must be able to attack the world as it is in its totality, while still deferring to a set of conventions and norms that they assert as universal norms. Jonathan Swift's satires gesture toward common forms of belief, or demonstrate the deviation of attitudes from established opinion and consensus. Swift, however, does not state these common forms, because to refer to them directly would be to subvert their status as universally held beliefs. Satirical arguments occur within a cultural and social

²³³ Kirk *xi*.

framework that guarantees they will be understood, that relies upon the preexistence of a social community. While this community may be small—perhaps just the few men meeting as the “Scriblerian club,” a coterie, or a larger class, or even a vast majority of the population, the satirical argument always occurs within a community and is pointed outward toward another. The satirist, however, seeks to write his argument larger, to claim the nation, or all sensible people, or the thinking world itself, as his community.

It is a shared sense of irony that establishes a community between satirist and reader and that allows ideological positions to come through as commonsense truths. Linda Hutcheon has argued that discursive communities precede ironic acts and make irony possible. While this certainly seems to be the case in the way a great deal of Augustan satire works—essentially they are preaching to the choir—the fictional and imaginative works of Pope and Swift construct ironic discursive universes (such as the “modernism” depicted in *A Tale of a Tub*) that become objects of mockery and derision. The reader is not always complicit in this irony, and is often dragged into it, hence the interest in recent decades in the idea of “entrapment” when discussing *A Tale of a Tub*.²³⁴ What Stanley Fish says specifically of meanings, and how they are known to mean what they are said to mean is useful here as well. For Fish, meanings are not in the text, but in the meanings already built into the understanding of an interpretive community approaching that text. Meaning does not need to be worked out. Rather,

²³⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (New York: Routledge, 1994). For an overview of the discussion of entrapment and the related debate over “personae” in Swift, see Richard Nash, “Entrapment and Ironic Modes in *Tale of a Tub*,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 24.4. (1991).

Meanings come already calculated, not because of norms embedded in the language, but because language is always perceived, from the very first, within a structure of norms. That structure, however, is not abstract and independent but social; and therefore it is not a single structure with a privileged relationship to the process of communication as it occurs in any situation but a structure that changes when one situation, with its assumed background of practices, purposes, and goals, has given way to another.²³⁵

Fish argues that he is not seeking to introduce relativism into the realm of interpretation. In fact, a particular meaning or interpretation may be widely held, but this does not mean that its meaning is not determined within a social grouping, within an institution, within a community that shares a particular set of preexisting notions, attitudes, and approaches. “While no institution is so universally in force and so perdurable that the meanings it enables will be normal forever, some institutions or forms of life are so widely lived in that for a great many people the meanings they enable seem ‘naturally’ available and it takes a special effort to see that they are the products of circumstances.”²³⁶

As was seen in Chapter two, belief in the face of skeptical doubt is relieved by tradition and custom. This means that beliefs have a social character. As we have seen in this chapter, these beliefs become ideological when a socially-determined belief is extended to encompass the nature of reality itself. Leo Damrosch has also

²³⁵ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980) 318.

²³⁶ Fish 309.

argued that that social reality played a major role in dispelling skepticism in the eighteenth century. He summarizes his argument thus:

They lived in an age of epistemological crisis or destabilization, but they were still close enough to a tradition of stable ontology—a ‘real’ reality that was supposed to be independent of human minds and grounded in the order of the universe—to try to salvage the coherence and reassurance of that older view. They were well aware that a more or less skeptical empiricism had become the intellectual norm, casting doubt on philosophical abstractions and on the assumptions of established religion, and they were at least partly aware that the notion of ‘reality’ is always relative to some community (cultural community, interpretive community, community of believers, and so on). But instead of being baffled or silenced by this crisis, they sought to resolve it through writing.²³⁷

For Damrosch, texts comprise and guarantee, and are composed within, a socially-constructed reality. The key, again, is in the real world, or rather, the socially-constructed world which is accepted as real. Kevin Cope recently has written about this “real” world as a kind of mediating realm that evolved in seventeenth-century thought as a tentative solution to the mind-body dualism debate triggered by Descartes and exacerbated by Hobbes (who removed mind from the equation). “Like ‘instinct’, nature discourses from a low, natural foundation, empirical evidence; God talks from on high, from his divinized production, revelation; people discourse from

²³⁷ Leo Damrosch, *Fictions of Reality in the Age of Hume and Johnson* (Madison: University of Wisconsin P, 1989) 4.

an intermediate ethical podium, from apparently groundless theories in which, as Dryden says, they ‘must believe.’”²³⁸ Cope argues that it is only in this middle and artificial realm that we can begin to speak of certainty—too much doubt can be cast on revelation, and no amount of empirical study can ever bring us any closer to matter than the senses do. The doubt that we can bring to bear on the other two realms, even the seemingly immediate and obvious empirical realm, demands that something else must be deferred to. Debates between Deists and fideisms, Puritans, Catholics and Anglicans, all who argue for varying degrees of revelation and reason in the foundation of faith, leave the epistemological grounds of religion in turmoil.

Similarly, the debates over the relationship between ideas and the real world, and the epistemological basis of a belief in matter and a world beyond appearance are irresolvable. Even if we argue that extension is the proof of material existence as Descartes did, or that motion is, as Hobbes did, we still must observe these facts through the senses. And as George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, points out (though with the very different intention of showing the foundation of all things in spiritual activity rather than material substances), if we can bring sceptical doubt to bear on secondary qualities such as color and smell, than we can also question primary qualities such as shape and extension which are also only made available to the mind through the senses. Still, something must be posited, at least tentatively, as “real” if functional life is to continue. For Hobbes this is faith in a material reality; for Berkeley this is faith in spirit; for Hume it is faith in the social realm that Cope is describing.

²³⁸ Kevin L Cope, *Criteria of Certainty: Truth and Judgment in the English Enlightenment* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1990) 34.

Is satire mitigated as scepticism is? Does it defer to “common life,” or is “common life” the very thing under attack? Satire, at its most extreme and most general, depicts a state of total and universal chaos. The progress of ruin and corruption is so far advanced, it argues; human institutions so ruined; order, justice, taste, virtue, proportion and balance so given over to their opposites, that no transformation seems possible. Even the promise of redemption inherent in apocalypse, is promised ultimately to no one. Thus, John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester (1647 – 1680) can threaten to revoke his entire “Satyr on Reason and Mankind,” if even one honest priest can be found, presumably an impossibility.²³⁹ Reason is unredeemed in Rochester’s poem, and humans are shown to be the beasts that their vanity has prevented them from seeing that they are.

The Menippean aspects of the Alexander Pope’s *Dunciad Variorum in Four Books*—the formal hybridity, the overlaying of multiple discursive elements, the carnivalesque scenes, and the presence of a mock metacommentary—all place it in the same camp as *A Tale of a Tub*. And just as the digressions of the Tale ultimately overwhelm its structure and madness takes over the narrative, *The Dunciad* ends with a cultural apocalypse. The forces of dullness, invigorated by the presses of Grub Street and the popular delusions of the mob, have overcome the world. The great queen herself, Dullness has been enthroned and rules a world of inverted values in which bad literature passes for good, false religion for true, and popular science for true knowledge. Human civilization begins to break down, and light, the first

²³⁹ John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, “A Satyr against Reason and Mankind,” ed. David M. Vieth, *The Complete Poems of Rochester* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1962) 94-101. Of such a priest, he writes, “If such there be, yet grant me this at least:/ Man differs more from man, than man from beast” (l. 220).

creation of God's spoken word, begins to withdraw as dullness and anarchy advance.

The advance of Dullness is rendered with characteristic sublimity:

Lo! thy dread Empire, CHAOS! is restor'd;
 Light dies before thy uncreating word:
 Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
 And Universal Darkness buries All.²⁴⁰

But before the apocalypse, an inversion of the *fiat lux*, Pope describes a literary chaos that could be argued to describe Menippean satire itself:

There motley Images her fancy strike,
 Figures ill-pair'd, and Similes unlike.
 She sees a Mob of Metaphors advance.
 Pleas'd with the Madness of the mazy dance:
 How Tragedy and Comedy embrace;
 How Farce and Epic get a jumbled race;
 How Time himself stands still at her command,
 Realms shift their place, and Ocean turns to land.²⁴¹

Pope's expansive imagination, his tendency to force a metaphor reverberating outward into the entire world, is at work in this passage. The passage begins with an image only, albeit a motley one; the image already fully formed is dangerously mixed. The problem is identified as one of decorum and of form: these figures are

²⁴⁰ *Dunciad* B. IV. 653-656, *Poems of Alexander Pope*, 5.409. In my references to *The Dunciad* I follow the conventions of the editors of the Twickenham edition and refer to *The Dunciad Variorum* of 1729 as "*Dunciad* A" and *The Dunciad, in Four Books* of 1743 as "*Dunciad* B."

²⁴¹ *Dunciad* A. I. 63-70, *Poems of Alexander Pope*, 5.67.

“ill-paired.” It is a mixing without balance, symmetry, or presumably, wit, the intellectual activity believed in the period to bring together disparate ideas in compelling ways. But this image reveals greater defiance of literary conventions and expectations as genre itself falters. Generic forms, the very categories that give meaning to literature, and that shape the human experience that literature frames and explains have been confused with one another. Tragedy collapses into comedy. Farce passes for epic, and their offspring is a monstrous jumble, perhaps the novel itself. Fielding’s later definition of the novel as a comic epic in prose echoes these lines from *The Dunciad*. Certainly, one of the literary corruptions that emerge from the chaotic, seething intellectual milieu Pope describes is the novel. As J. Paul Hunter has asserted, the crowdedness of urban experience itself may be a necessary precondition both for an age of satire and the rise of the novel. Both seem to arise out of the uncomfortable, jumbled and cramped experience of daily life: “The great distinctive forms of the English eighteenth-century—satire and the novel—both have something crucial to do with urbanness, and both are characterized by an addiction to representing human space filled beyond comfortable capacity.”²⁴² The taste of the urban mob makes such monstrous creations possible; they are the audience for this motley, hybrid literature. But, Pope, as is the case throughout the poem, does not stop at literary matters. What begins in this passage as confusion in the realm of genre ultimately translates into ontological disorder. The real world itself is finally affected and undone by perverse hybridity as “Ocean turns to land.” The binary opposition of sea to land upon which the very structure of nature depends is finally undone by the

²⁴² J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1990) 125.

triumph of Dullness. On the one hand this is just a fantastic metaphorical expansion of a literary problem, a forcing of a complaint about literature, however urgently the declines may be felt in that realm, outward into the realm of philosophy. For the persona uttering this literary jeremiad, what happens first to literature happens finally to the world. This is like Swift's *Battel of the Books* (1704) all over again as metaphors step off pages and advance like marching mobs. In this sense the critic's fears are somewhat ridiculous and overblown, and much of the humor of the poem comes from the high seriousness with which the poem is able to attribute the collapse of civilization to Colley Cibber (1671 – 1757). Bad poetry, of course, is not going to cause the sea and the land to lose their separate identities. This is Pope's aggressive conservatism elevated to the levels of sublime terror.

The "great Anarch" whose "ancient reign" is restored at the end of Pope's *Dunciad* (it is phrased this way in the three book variorum edition: "Lo! The great Anarch's ancient reign restor'd/ Light dies before her uncreating word."²⁴³) is a carnival monarch put into place by the people to stand in the stead of the traditional authorities. But the restored reign of anarchy is paradoxical. This is the rule, or rather unrule, of chaos, the upside-down order of carnival. Pope evokes its spirit; he directs its energies through his poem, dubbing it the "Smithfield muse," puts it into motion, shows it operating against the foundations of the elite and classical European and British intellectual tradition. But this is also a mock restoration, the return of something long suppressed or forgotten, an entire system come to replace another and to reestablish itself according to its own ancient rules. But unlike the coronation of

²⁴³ *Dunciad* A. III. 339-340, *Poems of Alexander Pope*, 5.192.

Charles II this Restoration can only bring division and chaos and civil war. Dullness is a ruler of a world turned upside down, governed by the wrong rules—or no rules at all. Hers is an ancient reign, however. The forces of Dullness have always existed; her kingdom stands alongside this world, ready at any moment to invade, to destroy, to return the universe to the chaos that ruled *before* the creation. The enthronement of chaos, the queen dunce, threatens not only the destruction of “art after art,” but total apocalyptic darkness; civilization and light themselves are being snuffed out, erased by an anti-word, by empty, “uncreating” speech. The passage evokes the restoration of monarchy, and the logic of the phrase suggests the necessity of power in one form or another, but here it is a dark, underworld double of monarchical power, a carnival king. A long, mock epic, *The Dunciad*, is concerned with preserving elite culture, traditional social structures and conventional forms of power and it does so by linking all those ideas and individuals that threaten the social order in a chain of associations that finally binds them all to darkness, disorder and madness.

According to Maynard Mack, Pope’s poetry “honors a whole body of reticences, reserves, restraints, exemplified perhaps in the term ‘correctness.’”²⁴⁴ Pope’s poem registers contradictions in its form. The cultural and intellectual tensions of the period, the struggle between classes, epochs, and intellectual systems become a part of the fabric of this and his other poems. Within the constraints of form and decorum, Pope finds ample space for variety, and poetry.²⁴⁵ Mack

²⁴⁴ Maynard Mack, *Pope and His Contemporaries: Essays Presented to George Sherburn* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949) 20 -21.

²⁴⁵ One of the most surprising questions in the history of Pope criticism is the debate over whether or not he is even properly a poet. Central to this discussion is an opposition between what has come to be known as Augustanism—a term now frequently avoided but once widely used to describe the eighteenth-century obsession with decorum, technical correctness, and formal perfection—and

continues, “Pope reconciles correctness with a subtle complexity, offsets and complicates the abstract logical patterns of his verse with counter patterns which are alogical, poetic.”²⁴⁶ This reconciliation does not mean that the ingredients are included in equal proportions. There is a hierarchy implied in Pope’s mixing of logic and alogic, statement and metaphor, correctness and disorder: the latter in each binary is always at the service of the former. One concept at the heart of Pope’s poetry is that of *discordia concors*. This discordant harmony, a pairing of opposites, often serves to establish Pope’s sense of the complexity of human life. It also develops a theory of order that accounts for chaos; in fact, for Pope, order is born of difference and variety. Here is a passage from *Windsor-Forest* as an example:

Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
 Here earth and water seem to strive again;
 Not chaos-like, together crushed and bruised,
 But, as the world, harmoniously confused:
 Where order in variety we see,
 And where, though all things differ, all agree.²⁴⁷

We can observe in these lines a theory of nature but also of composition. In general,

Romanticism. Perhaps the most famous challenge to Pope's poetic credentials came from the Victorian critic, Matthew Arnold, “The Study of Poetry,” *Essays in Criticism*. 2nd series (London: Macmillan, 1898), who, calling Pope the “splendid high priest, of our age of prose and reason,” insisted that both Pope and Dryden were classics of English prose and not verse (35-42). Arnold had in mind the epigrammatic nature of the heroic couplet, and the eighteenth-century elevation of reason over emotion. T. S. Eliot, “Introduction: 1928,” *Selected Poems by Ezra Pound* (London: Faber, 1948), later countered this view by asserting, “The man who cannot enjoy Pope as poetry probably understands no poetry” (18).

²⁴⁶ Mack 21.

²⁴⁷ “Windsor Forest,” 11-16. Ed. E. Audra and Aubrey Williams, Volume I, Ed. John Butt *et al.*, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*. 11 vols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1939-69).

the enforced structure of the heroic couplet, far from producing monotony and repetition, allows for subtle and disruptive variations of syntax and punctuation within a line, and there are innumerable ways in which rhythms can be overlaid upon the single five-beat, end-stopped line. In all his works, Pope plays with the tension between order and chaos, constraint and release, social hierarchy and anarchy. His poetry is always on the side of order and art. Yet order is not easily won: here “earth and water strive” in ways that anticipate the later turning of ocean into land in *The Dunciad*. If categories are to persist they must survive against all odds, survive in a world structured by opposition. The difference between a “chaos-like” confusion and “harmonious confusion” seems in part to be a matter of degree. It also arises from a shift in scene, from the mild dissonance of the pastoral to the cacophonous din of the urban.

The structure of *The Dunciad* develops a tension between order and chaos, control and release. The couplet as a form inscribes ideology itself. The text performs through its structure a containment of its internal madness. Martin Battestin writes, “Even in *The Dunciad*, which sardonically records the triumph of Chaos, Pope’s skillful couplets and his control of form implicitly affirm the victory of Art, the power of form and music to redeem the time.”²⁴⁸ Furthermore, the balance achieved is not only a poetic principle, but also assumes metaphysical and epistemological implications. In *An Essay on Man*, like Milton in *Paradise Lost* (1667), Pope asserts that his intention in writing this poem is to “vindicate the ways of God to man”—in other words, to explain the presence of evil in the world, justify

²⁴⁸ Martin Battestin, *The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1989) 78.

the natural limitations placed on humanity as a species, and to demonstrate the necessity for the world to exist in its current form. The latter effort has made this poem especially controversial. Were it not for this intention, the poem might otherwise have come across as a moderate distillation of philosophical platitudes—certainly, the text makes the case for concepts such as the great chain of being and plenitude that were already out-of-date in the eighteenth century. However, Pope’s concluding claim at the end of Epistle 1, that “One truth is clear: Whatever IS, is RIGHT,” almost demands a response: Are we to accept pain, poverty, misery as necessary? Should we not strive to better the world? If the solution to scepticism is to accept the artificial, human world and live by its conventions, is the solution to political misery and social ills to just live? Does satire not seek to transform the social world? If not, then what is its purpose?

Pope’s system requires hierarchies and imbalances. It is developed on the assumption that human nature is a mixture of animal appetites and reason, but we reside in a middle state perfectly formed to our nature:

Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
 A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
 With too much knowledge for the skeptic side,
 With too much weakness for the Stoic’s pride,
 He hangs between; in doubt to act or rest,
 In doubt to deem himself a God or beast.²⁴⁹

Once Pope has established human nature on these terms, everything else in his system

²⁴⁹ *An Essay on Man*, II.2-8. Ed. Maynard Mack, Volume III. i. Ed. John Butt *et al.*, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*. 11 vols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1939-69).

follows necessarily. Brean Hammond describes the poem's very deliberate ideological intentions thus: "The social philosophy that results from the metaphysics of gradation and order is represented to us as a moderate, middle-of-the-road value-system, but it need not be accepted by the reader as such."²⁵⁰ Instead, the poem defends particular forms of power, unequal distributions of wealth, and the conservative values of the opposition party. "The power of money was creating a set of new men who were able to by-pass established hierarchies which were based on landownership."²⁵¹ Pope was thoroughly opposed to this and other modern developments. Therefore, Pope's assertion that "whatever IS, is RIGHT," needs to be understood as an endorsement of a particular conception of how the world *should* be, a vision of the world that Pope seeks to delineate as the normal, the ancient, and the true. It is against this world that mobs of *The Dunciad* rise up, with cultural energy and subversive intentions. And the poet, Pope, is the last, but fading spark that may be able to illumine a world so totally in decay, and in which rational and literary ideals have been so completely inverted that it is as if mind itself has abandoned the earth forever. Although Pope's powers as a poet and the exuberance of his language are on the side of apocalypse, and the destruction of the known world, the force of the rhetoric and the satirical devices of control are on the side of order and "whatever is." In *The Dunciad*, however, there is no "whatever is." The world is becoming a *what was* or a *what isn't*.

Although Pope's poems advocate order and restraint, they often reverberate

²⁵⁰ Hammond 43.

²⁵¹ Hammond 48.

with emotional intensity and a perverse obsession with the very disorder they seek to limit. The ruptures, inconsistencies and tensions within *The Dunciad* are all points where Pope almost gives over to his negative, apocalyptic sublime, even as the ordering force of the couplets keeps everything neatly and constantly under the poet's control. These excesses, however, are points where perhaps "dissident reading" becomes possible, where the failure of the poem to fully embrace its express ideology become apparent, or where the exuberant Smithfield muses almost overwhelm the irony, ridicule, and other stays put in place to hold them in. There are also fractures between the layers of the poem, between the poem itself and its commentators, and commentators on commentators. There is no one *Dunciad*, no one final poem, just as moving from *The Dunciad* in three books to *The Dunciad* in four, there is no one dunce. The poem, like the world it depicts is undone by language, by madness, and by the dullness of the critics whose dense commentaries marginalize the poem itself on the page. The poem yields to chaos because it must, because the world is chaotic, and no poetic structure, or network of critical commentaries can bring order to it. The world is in a sense beyond hegemony. It is too far gone, a mess of words on fields of oblivion. There might perhaps be some room for transformation in such a vision, but not in the vision of this poet, or, more exactly, of the persona narrating *The Dunciad*: for him this is the Apocalypse. Pope's ideological position becomes quite clear when we consider that this Apocalypse has been caused by the lower classes, modernity, and the printing presses. The perfectly crafted poem and the very last "human Spark" that may yet "dare to shine," are the only vestiges of the old world order. The satirist laments their loss at the moment of their vanishing.

CHAPTER FOUR

“SEE WORLDS ON WORLDS COMPOSE ONE UNIVERSE:”

UTOPIA AND MENIPPEAN SATIRE

In his introduction to *The Dunciad*, Martinus Scriblerus describes a work that includes more of the world with each successive book. While the first book offers a satire on bad poets, “The crowds assembled in the second book demonstrates the design to be more extensive than to bad poets only, and that we may expect other Episodes, of the Patrons, Encouragers, or Paymasters of such authors, as occasion shall bring them forth.” Both parties (the producers and consumers) involved in the corruptions of taste are depicted, and an entire network of social relationships brought forth. But the design of the poem is not limited to the bad taste of mercenary authors and their undiscerning and enabling public, for “the third book, if well consider’d, seemeth to embrace the whole world.”²⁵² “The world” in the eighteenth century was often a metonym for elite culture, the social scene in which, “at ev’ry Word a Reputation dies.” In *The Dunciad*, “the world” refers to more general masses of people, to the crowd or mob that threatens to overwhelm all public and elite spaces at

²⁵² Alexander Pope, “Martinus Scriblerus, of the Poem,” *The Dunciad*, ed. James Sutherland, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt *et al.*, 11 vols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1939-69) 5.51.

every moment. The world is also the world of print and the world defined within and through print: a world made of the same paper that since the invention of printing has “become so cheap, and printers so numerous, that a deluge of authors covered the land.” The rhetorical movement here—the collapsing of difference between the authors, the paper that is their product, and the material waste with which it is ultimately mingled in the sewer ditches—is in many ways the organizing movement of the poem. Pope describes a material, human, and intellectual wasteland, empty of significance and value, yet filled to capacity, bursting.

In this prologue, Scriblerus points to a feature of the poem that many of the critics discussed in earlier chapters have located in Menippean satire more generally. Menippean satire “embraces” the world, encompasses it, and consumes it. The entire social and intellectual universe is drawn in by Newtonian gravity, or rather by a Cartesian vortex, into Dullness’s sphere of influence:

The gath’ring number, as it moves along,
 Involves a vast involuntary throng,
 Who gently drawn, and struggling less and less,
 Roll in her Vortex, and her pow’r confess.
 Not those alone who passive own her laws,
 But who, weak rebels, more advance her cause.²⁵³

The rise of Dullness is described as if inevitable. Her sway need not even be powerful, as the whole world, asleep, drifts mindlessly toward her. Pope satirizes the whole world, like Swift does in *A Tale of a Tub*, because the entire world has already been swallowed

²⁵³ *Dunciad* B. IV. 81-90. *Poems of Alexander Pope*, 5.349.

up by the things he wants most to satirize. “Universal darkness covers all” as “art after art goes out.”²⁵⁴

The features that have been articulated in earlier chapters—the concern with systems of knowledge as much as with ethics, the skeptical challenge to dogmatism, and the use of carnivalesque imagery and mock epic to develop a class warfare that puts into motion a conflict of discourses—are all necessary features of the definition of Menippean satire I have been working with and developing. These texts offer a vision of the world under the distortion of a totalizing system. But the great epic Menippean satires—*The Dunciad*, *A Tale of a Tub*, *Ulysses* (and here we might add *Moby Dick* (1851) and even *Anatomy of Melancholy*) have another thing in common, and that is their tendency to take into their fictional universes the whole world. They are accretive and cumulative in their scope and structure. Howard Weinbrot complains that Menippean satire is the genre that “swallowed the world.” By this he means to criticize those critics who find the genre everywhere. “A genre that includes Johnson’s *Dictionary* (1755) and *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1969), *Utopia* (1516) and *The Waste Land* (1922) is less baggy than bulbous.”²⁵⁵ Critics of the form, he argues, seem to recapitulate the inclusive Menippean gesture by pulling everything within its orbit. But the expansive, totalizing, universalizing tropes and rhetorical gestures of the form cannot be ignored. It swallows the world because the intellectual structures and dogmatisms it mocks have swallowed the world. Its rhetorical inclusiveness, its tendency to use catalogues, to speak sweepingly of mobs, crowds and masses of people, its expansive allusiveness, parodying

²⁵⁴ *Dunciad* B. IV. 656, 640. *Poems of Alexander Pope*. 5.409, 5.407.

²⁵⁵ Weinbrot, *Menippean Satire Reconsidered* 2.

of multiple genres, and yoking together of disparate fields of culture—all necessarily evoke the whole world within its fictional space. As I have argued, Menippean satire is an ironic, fictional actualization and elaboration of systems and schools of thought within a parodic, mixed-genre form. The Menippean satirists of the period attack a worldview in the process of achieving hegemony: the modernity disparagingly portrayed in *A Tale of a Tub* as universal madness. Menippean satire is also, as I am suggesting here, a fictionalized, ironic, inverted, distorted, or exaggerated representation of the world itself. We might modify Bakhtin's definition of Menippean satire as the adventures of an idea in the world to accommodate the proliferation of worlds within the form: it is the adventures of ideas-as-worlds in the universe.

Weinbrot's inclusion of More's *Utopia* in his list is not accidental. Quite a few critics have noted correspondences between utopian and dystopian literature and Menippean satire, including both Frye and Bakhtin. When critics attribute to Menippean satire a desire to free the mind from dogmatism, they are articulating a utopian purpose for the form. Menippean satire becomes a utopian escape not just from dogmatism but also from convention, from the strictures of form and discourse. Furthermore, the forms of literary criticism exemplified by Jameson and Bakhtin that I have examined in previous chapters are also suggestive for their utopian potential. As one critic has argued, "Despite their differences, Bakhtin and Jameson share a relentless desire to re-create the text's own suppressed story of its conflict against the homogenizing, centripetal and symbolic forces that mediate and qualify the very moments of its articulation."²⁵⁶ In other words, they seek within the text a resistance of the actual material and ideological

²⁵⁶ Lahcen Haddad, "Bakhtin's Imaginary Utopia," *Cultural Critique* 22 (1992): 144.

circumstances of its production. In the process of dislodging the text from the same conditions by pointing out the cultural contradictions internalized in the text, the critic is able to liberate the reader from the oppressive forces of his or her own culture. The clearing of intellectual space—like the creation of imaginary space, the discovery of alternatives within the real, and the location of aporias, dialogism, and *différance* within a text—is a deliberate utopian act within the field of criticism.

By “utopia” I mean in part “eutopia,” the desire for a “good” place established on some principle, ideal, or in the case of these critics, conception of intellectual freedom. But I also mean, “outopia,” “no place.” Following the implicit paradox of More’s naming of his island Utopia, a distinction must be made between an entirely fictitious place existing nowhere and one which is brought into being, or can be imagined as being brought into being, to make real a particular conception of a good or ideal human society. This distinction has governed utopian studies and marks internal divisions between those who study utopia as a realizable social blueprint, a concept, or a history of the ideal society, and those who study utopia as the history of imaginary literary worlds. Imaginary worlds themselves, including the fictional and quasi-(e)utopian worlds of romance and pastoral are frequently distinguished from places that represent or express some idea of the good (as Plato’s utopia does). Thus, even within a text where imaginary worlds proliferate, such as *Gulliver’s Travels*, only certain places are singled out as truly eutopian. There are the original laws of the Lilliputians from which their modern legal system has devolved, and the Lilliputian system of education, described in detail, echoing similar descriptions from More’s and Plato’s utopias. We find Brobdingnag, with its benevolent monarch, the

estate of Lord Munodi in Book Three, and, of course, the rational Houyhnhnms who are constitutionally unable to utter a falsehood. Each of these utopias, however, is a thing which is not. They are impossible, both in the worlds in which they appear and in our own. Lord Munodi is a laughingstock in a world where projects and scientific improvements dominate. Corruption in Lilliputian politics and interminable war between neighboring states have nullified any wise government that may have once existed. The Struldbruggs who enjoy eternal life do not gain wisdom, but rather suffer from a perpetual state of senility and bodily degeneration. But even the “bad” worlds in *Gulliver’s Travels* are utopias, in the sense that they are imaginary, created worlds.

A number of critics have made efforts to demonstrate the degree to which desire and ideology impact the reading of utopia and its literary creation and articulation. Steven Hutchinson, for example, emphasizes the imaginary character of utopia, arguing that eutopias and dystopias are a subset of utopia differing “only in the degree to which the criteria of good/bad and desirable/undesirable predominate. Otherwise the same kinds of imaginative processes are involved in making them and the same kinds of interpretive processes involved in understanding them.”²⁵⁷ So, we can also speak of utopian inventions to discuss satirical universes in which imaginary worlds serve as satiric mirrors or as ideal foils to this one.

If satire is implicitly static and reactionary, laying out an indictment rather than a plan for change, it could be argued that utopias are more optimistic, or even progressive, in that they point to practical things that can be changed and offer

²⁵⁷ Steven Hutchinson, “Mapping Utopias,” *Modern Philology* 85.2. (1987): 179.

potential solutions. Ideal societies may not be producible on Earth, but the study of them through literary modes could suggest real reforms. Bacon, in the *New Atlantis* (1626), for example, is not advocating that a new island be founded and created in the image of his fictional creation, but that the approach of its inhabitants to experimentation and natural philosophy be considered as a model to be implemented in England, and in fact Solomon's House is a fictional ancestor of the real Royal Society. Satire, on the contrary, in attacking not only the present age, but general limitations of human nature and reason, does not offer much opportunity for reform, transformation or redemption, but instead points to an inevitable and portending apocalypse—a future governed by ruined institutions, mob mentality, false reason, and vice.

This chapter explores the utopian element frequently noted in Menippean satire and argues that *Gulliver's Travels* (1726, 1735) and Cavendish's *Blazing World* (1666) are both fantastic travel narratives that anatomize the social, intellectual, and sexual world of England in an experimental, fictional space.²⁵⁸ I make the case, however, that they may principally be read as Menippean satires that inhabit the neighboring modes of the fantastic voyage, utopia, and the philosophical treatise. The texts discussed in the next chapter, Delarivier Manley's *New Atalantis* (1709), and Eliza Haywood's *Adventure of Eovaai* (1736) are also fantastic fictions in which travel, and a comparison of the real political world with fictional analogues, figure centrally. Manley's text is a *roman à clef* with thinly veiled references to actual

²⁵⁸ All references to *Gulliver's Travels* will be to *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis, 14 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939-). Page numbers to this edition will be cited parenthetically in the body of the text.

political figures, and its primary purpose is political satire. But Haywood's text and *Gulliver's Travels* (especially the first book), although not immediately recognized as such, are also in the *roman à clef* tradition, as each of them is written explicitly against the Walpole administration, a fact that is and was quite clear to readers with or without a key. All five texts are hybrid and various in their styles, allusions, and genre; they mingle polemic with fantasy, satire with romance, philosophy, and history. And the satires function to mock figures, attitudes, and discourses. All five texts have More's *Utopia* in their background, as well as the realities of the contemporary colonial enterprise. These texts also grow directly out of a Menippean tradition traceable back to Lucian's *True Story* (*Verae Historiae*), in which a self-consciously fictional text draws attention to its falsehood and the conventionalized discourse of travel. Like Lucian's, Swift's text mocks travel texts. His immediate targets include the accounts of explorers, seaman's cant, and *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), but the form is a vehicle for larger concerns, and a more expansive satirical vision, one that ultimately encompasses the whole world and its history. *Gulliver's Travels* is Menippean specifically in its assault on intellectual and cultural patterns and on ideologies, both emergent and dominant. Modes of thought and ways of being are adopted, mocked, rejected, or held up as impossible ideals.

In this chapter I also argue that Menippean satire and utopian texts begin from an assumption that the world is socially and discursively created, and that its cultural and intellectual institutions can be changed. As we have begun to see in previous chapters, satire, in attacking the contemporary world (whether a set of conventional beliefs or an emergent (false) orthodoxy), was inaugurating a developing sense that

reality is socially constructed and that it can therefore be remade. The acknowledgement that the “world” is coterminous with a set of created institutions and customs—in short that it is a “construct”—is a precondition for satirical critique. Whether existing conventions have fallen from an ideal or should be striving toward one, inherent in the critique of society as it is, is the assumption that the made world, because artificial, could have been built on other principles or should be reformed back into alignment with the first principles from which it has strayed.

There are as many *Gulliver’s Travels* as there are worlds that Gulliver visits, perhaps more. Swift’s satiric genius allows him to satirize multiple discourses at once, and it is a foolish critic who would attempt to argue that the text is only about one of these. Whether the text is a sustained allegory of recent Whig and Tory politics,²⁵⁹ a universal satire on reason and mankind, a satire on state relations between Ireland and England,²⁶⁰ a parody of travel and discovery narratives, a mockery of the novel,²⁶¹ a satire on European colonialism *and* a misogynist text,²⁶² a

²⁵⁹ See C. H. Firth, “The Political Significance of Gulliver’s Travels,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1919-1920); Arthur E. Case, *Four Essays on Gulliver’s Travels* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1945). Both argue that the text is a sustained allegory of contemporary politics and that specific targets can be identified throughout; the ultimate meaning of the text is discovered in uncovering its topical references. On the other hand, F. P. Lock, *The Politics of Gulliver’s Travels* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980) has insisted that the “accumulated weight of personal and particular allusions” need to be rejected (3). J. A. Downie, “The Political Significance of *Gulliver’s Travels*,” ed. John Irwin Fischer, Hermann J. Real, and James Wooley, *Swift and His Contexts* (New York: AMS Press, 1989) has sought a middle road between these two arguments, claiming that the text is not a sustained political allegory, but rather a “parallel history” that draws on the events of its days, but is also more general in its satirical scope.

²⁶⁰ Thomas Metscher, “The Radicalism of Swift: *Gulliver’s Travels* and the Irish Point of View,” ed. Heinz Kosok, *Studies in Anglo-Irish Literature* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1982).

²⁶¹ J. Paul Hunter, “*Gulliver’s Travels* and the Novel,” ed. Frederick N. Smith, *The Genres of “Gulliver’s Travels”* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1990). The anti-novelistic aspects of *Gulliver’s Travels* are discussed further below as is Hunter’s argument that *Gulliver’s Travels* is in part a parody of *Robinson Crusoe*.

²⁶² Laura Brown, “Reading Race and Gender: Jonathan Swift,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23. (1990).

hyperbolic mockery of school book logic,²⁶³ a satire on science,²⁶⁴ or all of these at once, there is no arguing that much of the satire is developed against intellectual patterns and the language by which they are expressed. Swift is not concerned with characters, or even reality, *per se*, but with the ideas that move behind reality and constitute it. The world as it is or could be or should not be is contemplated in a space that is safely fictional and thus has an angular and complex relationship with the given world. Part of my argument here, fitting with my broader argument about the relationship between satire and convention (i.e. ideology), is that the real world and the fictional world interpenetrate each other, and the utopian text brings the real world into an illuminated fictional space where it may be interrogated. *A Tale of a Tub* functions as a fully formed fictional world, complete with an ideology, physics, and social structure. This world, of course, is only made manifest in elaborate fashion to show that it must be destroyed or at least challenged. However, the coherence of the world and its fullness gives to Swift's satire upon it a sense of urgency and futility—Swift perhaps recognizes that it is already too late to challenge modernity; it already *is* the world. Likewise, *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Dunciad*, however fragmentary and chaotic they are, put into motion entire universes.

For Swift, within the context of an emergent modernity, it seems to make sense to speak of *worlds* rather than *a world*, however much his satires may resist

²⁶³ R. S. Crane, "The Houynhnms, the Yahoos, and the History of Ideas," ed. J. A. Mazzeo, *Reason and Imagination: Studies in the History of Ideas: 1600-1800* (New York: Columbia UP, 1962). Crane locates Swift's idea to invert horses and humans in Book IV in classical syllogisms and specifically in a book of logical exercises used locally in Dublin. See also William H. Halewood and Marvin Levich, "Houyhnhm Est Animal Rationale," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 26.2 (1965): 273-281.

²⁶⁴ Douglas Lane Patey, "Swift's Satire on 'Science' and the Structure of *Gulliver's Travels*," *ELH* 58 (1991).

multiplicity and relativism. Philosophers like Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657 – 1757) posited a plurality of worlds. The discovery of new worlds not merely by ship but also on the hairy legs of a flea under a microscope or orbiting around other planets through a telescope destabilized the central position of humanity in the universe. *Gulliver's Travels* plays with the potential of new forms of vision through the alternating perspectives of the first two books. In one a little world is observed from a distance, and perfect, garden-like symmetry is discovered. In the other the human body becomes as large and monstrous as Robert Hooke's magnified fleas. Working out some of the implications of the changing relationship between the empirical world(s) and the mind knowing it, Swift demonstrates the unsettling nature of shifting perspectives, but also the danger of latching onto one perspective at the expense of another. While More's *Utopia* was a world complete unto itself, and its peninsula to the mainland destroyed to further isolate it, Swift's worlds are a half dozen atoms, each a little world, almost able in the aggregate to compose one universe. One thinks of the astronomical vision of Milton presenting a perfect, spherical earth hanging in space (Satan walking "upon the firm opacous Globe/ Of this round World"), or of Pope in *Essay on Man* describing the knowledge of multiple worlds, known only to God, yet met by the human compulsion to know and understand:

Thro' worlds unnumber'd tho' the God be known,
 'Tis ours to trace him only in our own.
 He, who thro' vast immensity can pierce,
 See worlds on worlds compose one universe,

Observe how system into system runs,
 What other planets circle other suns,
 What vary'd being peoples ev'ry star,
 May tell why Heav'n has made us as we are.²⁶⁵

The vast globe and its oceans, and even the vast expanse of space, are the ultimate laboratory of utopian experimentation. And in the utopian works of Bacon, Cavendish, and Swift, science and the world(s) it makes known (or cannot make known) are major concerns. For Bacon, natural philosophy will remake the world, as the world yields up knowledge and as the practical applications of that knowledge make the whole material world useful to humanity. Or as Thomas Sprat put it in his history of the brand new Royal Society (est. 1660), “the knowledge of nature [is...] an instrument whereby Mankind may obtain a Dominion over Things and not only over one anothers Judgements.”²⁶⁶ In direct opposition to this optimistic vision of knowledge and the power it will afford, in Book III of *Gulliver's Travels*, natural philosophy threatens to undo the world, as fields lay waste. Book III of *Gulliver's Travels* is in many ways a mock-*New Atlantis*. The science of the Academy of Lagado offers a parody of the kinds of practicality Bacon envisions, as absurd efforts are made to extract the sun from cucumbers and food from feces. Furthermore, on the floating island, Laputa, the contemplation of the heavens and of distant worlds leads to a kind of Popean dullness as contemplation becomes a trance that can only be ruptured by a Flapper's thump on the head. This pursuit in Laputa has lead to a

²⁶⁵ *Essay on Man*, I. 21-29. Volume III.i, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt, et al., 11 vols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1939-69).

²⁶⁶ Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society* (London, 1667) 62.

privileging of the arcane over the practical, the distant over the near, and false and irrational fears (such as that the sun will burn out) over real. Projection is also a utopian impulse, but it is one of Swift's consistent targets: attempts at "improving" humanity's situation are often ill-conceived, doomed to failure, or driven by selfish private interest. Gulliver, however, is often sympathetic with the projector's point of view, a sympathy that grows out of his social position. He is a measurer, a scientist, a modern economic man, seeking his fortune at sea and through trade. The perversions of knowledge and the impractical uses of knowledge in the third Book grow out of the attitudes that Gulliver represents.

The principal context of *The Blazing World* is also the new, emerging natural philosophy—what we today call experimental science. René Descartes and Pierre Gassendi, both of whom dined with the Newcastle's in France, had recently revived Epicureanism and the atomic theories of Democritus. Although Cavendish was an early proponent and popularizer of the atomistic theory of nature, she challenged its materialism, favoring instead a vitalistic conception of nature that drew on Neo-Platonic and Cabalistic traditions.²⁶⁷ Atomism is an apt metaphor for Cavendish's approach to composition, indeed of a great number of eighteenth-century texts, especially those fragmentary Menippean texts discussed in this present study. In a "World Made by Atomes," Margaret Cavendish writes:

Small Atomes of themselves a World may make,
As being Subtle, and of every Shape:

²⁶⁷ See Brandie R. Siegfried, "Anecdotal and Cabalistic Forms in *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*," ed. Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz, *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2003).

And as they dance about, fit places finde,
Such Forms as best agree, make every kinde.²⁶⁸

But Cavendish, despite her exploration of atomism as a concept, was ultimately too skeptical a thinker to be a proponent of atomism. Atoms, like plural worlds in *An Essay on Man*, represent the horizon of the knowable:

Nature gives no such Knowledge to Man-kind,
But strong Desires to torment the Mind:
And Sense, which like Hounds do run about,
Yet never can the perfect Truth find out.²⁶⁹

Writers opposed to the atom as a concept, latched onto it as a metaphor for faction, diversity of opinions, and solipsistic individualism. As a concept, they argued, it grew out of the follies of modern science. Satirists employed it as a trope to criticize a fractious modernity. In her *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (1666), Cavendish attacks atomic theory, but shifts into a rhetorical register that reveals the political implications of her philosophical arguments.

For, if there can be no single parts, there cannot be Atomes in Nature, or else Nature would be like a Beggars coat full of lice; Neither would she be able to rule those wandering and stragling atomes, because they are not parts of her body it self, having no dependence on each other; Wherefore, if there should be a composition of Atomes, it would not be a body made of parts, but of so many whole and intire single bodies

²⁶⁸ Margaret Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies* (London: Martin and Allestrye, 1653) 5.

²⁶⁹ "To Naturall Philosophers," Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, unpaginated.

meeting together as a swarm of Bees: the truth is, every Atom being single, must be an absolute body by it self, and have an absolute power and knowledge; by which it would become a kind of Deity; and the concourse of them would rather cause a confusion, then a conformity in Nature because all Atomes, being absolute, they would all be Governours, but none would be governed.²⁷⁰

As Anna Battigelli has argued, atomism is also “a metaphor that might account for the conflict that governed her mind and her world.”²⁷¹ In 1655, Cavendish rejected atomism as a threat to hierarchical social structures. England was, of course, just emerging from civil war, and atomic theory evoked the conflict of rival factions and the complete breakdown of hierarchy (figured by Hobbes as a state of nature in which all individuals are at war with one another). *Blazing World* registers anxiety about the chaos that stems from the fragmentation of knowledge and belief. In the *Blazing World* itself, differences of opinion and conflicts over religion and science introduce division into the social order. Only the absolute authority of the Empress seems capable of smoothing over these divides. Individuals cannot find truth; everyone pursuing his or her own opinion leads to civil strife. We must defer to the determinations of the magistrate, or of an established power, to get us out of the skeptic’s bind. Cavendish believed as Hobbes did, in a powerful monarch. If there are to be many bodies making up a single body, they should not each have their own

²⁷⁰ Margaret Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (London: Maxwell, 1666) 141-42.

²⁷¹ Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Lexington, Kentucky: UP of Kentucky, 1998) 60.

autonomy. Rather, they should be like Hobbes's Leviathan, a single body composed of many, but with only one head. Nature itself becomes a beggar's coat overrun by the ugly beasts of Hooke's microscope.

Like the beggars in Brobdingnag, whose flesh is cancer ridden, this is a world that when looked at too closely reveals its corruption and falls apart. Of the townspeople in Brobdingnag, Gulliver says, "The most hateful Sight of all was the Lice crawling on their Cloaths: I could see distinctly the Limbs of these Vermin with my naked Eye, much better than those of a European Louse through a Microscope; and their Snouts with which they rooted like Swine." (113) In this passage the unseeable is made visible, and the vile and microscopic cannot be avoided by the unaided eye. With Swift we have fully entered the world of the atom, and the atom fills the full field of vision. But we are also still in Pope's world of urban masses as the crowds close in to see the miniature Gulliver.

Both the atom and the mob are suggestive indictments of modernity. A mass of self-governed bodies—uncontrollable and unreceptive to the overawing power of a monarch—is no less threatening to the state than a mass of people moving with the same dull, mindless sense of purpose. Although similar in their expression of chaos, they also represent different things: the senseless, chaotic mobs and the self-absorbed atomic individual. Each represents a different aspect of an emergent class—the atom signifying the rapid rise of the merchant, the individual, Crusoe on his island; the mob, the emergence of a public hungry to see its popular tastes satisfied.

Gulliver's fragmented utopia, scattered across islands is an "epicurean" (i.e. atomic) universe, one governed by difference, disorder and chaos. These are all

made, artificial worlds, however. Not only are they fictions and thought experiments, but they also are deliberate constructions out of particular political, cultural, and ethical ideas and institutions. The *human* world was made by people, and it is, finally, fallen humanity that bears the responsibility for its degenerate form. We could, in fact, argue that these texts produce an image of the real. They are not supposed to be exaggerated accounts of a crumbling world, but descriptions of a world already crumbled. Each fragment is another piece of a larger ruin. This realism, as all realisms are, is of course a rhetorical construction.

The primary purpose, however, of both utopia and satire as modes is to interrogate the real, given world. Satires and utopian fictions are always about the present. This present, however, is defined by its disjunction from some other model, whether this model is implicit as some kind of “norm” as in satire, or explicitly described as in utopian works. Utopias often posit the possibility of transforming society as it is currently structured, making a new world, while satires often detail a falling away from the ideals of a golden age. Both, however, are primarily concerned with anatomizing the present, with cataloging its social ills, with exposing misuses of reason and attacking institutions founded on false ideological grounds or marked by hypocrisy. In order for their rhetoric to function, both utopias and satires must take the world as made and artificial, as a set of conventions—a world comprised by human actions and social relationships. Yet utopias resemble the world in paradoxical and complicated ways. Utopias are simultaneously almost like, and nothing like, the real world. They must have some foundation in the familiar and the recognizable and deviate from them in ways that make logical sense or are

rhetorically useful. “The more surely a given Utopia asserts its radical difference from what currently is,” Fredric Jameson writes, “to that degree it becomes, not merely unrealizable but, what is worse, unimaginable.”²⁷² There is, then, a range to the possible, limits within which worlds alternate or parallel to this one can be imagined. But impossible or paradoxical words, like round squares, can *almost* be imagined, or at least articulated in language.

Utopian writing can also make apparent deficiencies and limitations within the actual world. Christopher Kendrick writes,

Utopian social arrangements are somehow present in the world we know, yet blocked from appearing as such—that the institutions and customs described are all *determined alternatives*, in the sense of being forms at once *blocked out*, that is, inscribed in the field of possibles, and yet *finished off*, or in other words refused a point of entrance into the sphere of the actual, consigned to extreme subordinacy or quasi-spectrality.²⁷³

As we have seen, the texts I have been calling Menippean satires attack entire world views, totalizing systems that function as world views, mental and social constructions of reality, and discursive formulations of the real. Utopian fictions, like Menippean satire, reject the world as it is, but posit another world that could exist in its stead. These fictional worlds may then be upheld as an ideal to strive for, as

²⁷² Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso, 2007) xv.

²⁷³ Christopher Kendrick, *Utopia, Carnival, and Commonwealth in Renaissance England* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004) 33. Italics in original.

Plato's *Republic* is, or else may serve as ironic commentaries, inverted mirrors that reveal the flaws in the existing world, as More's *Utopia* does. Utopian texts that focus on modes of understanding the world, technologies, or existing systems and project them into the future, may take either a positive attitude toward that utopia in order to demonstrate the potential locked up in the current state of affairs, or may highlight the frightening and nightmarish potentialities of the modern world, as dystopian texts such as *Brave New World* (1932) and *1984* (1948) do. In this sense, we might argue that *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Dunciad* are also dystopian texts of the future, even as they are situated in the real, contemporary world of London.

There is always a tension in utopian texts between the real world and a fictional one, between the actual and the ideal. Moreover, there is in utopian texts a desire to see beyond the ideological, to conceive of a world whose most basic categories and relationships can be transformed on the levels of idea and experience. Utopian texts offer a thought experiment: either an effort to think beyond the circumstances that condition reality, or to imagine the human and culture within a different set of structures. Jameson writes,

It is less revealing to consider Utopian discourse as a mode of narrative, comparable, say, with novel or epic, than it is to grasp it as an object of mediation, analogous to the riddles or koan of various mystical traditions, or the aporias of classical philosophy, whose function is to provoke a fruitful bewilderment and to jar the mind into some heightened but unconceptualisable consciousness of its own

powers, functions, aims and structural limits.²⁷⁴

In fact we might use the words that Bakhtin uses to describe the Menippean effect on discourse—alienation and defamiliarization—to describe the mental effect of the utopian thought experiment.²⁷⁵ Similarly, Darko Suvin has referred to the effect science fiction as “cognitive estrangement.” Although science fiction does not fall within the purview of this paper, it is frequently recognized as a species of utopia. Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, Cavendish’s *Blazing World*, and Book Three of *Gulliver’s Travels* are all certainly instances of science fiction. Through them we are able to witness not only what was known in the realm of science, but also what was conceived as possible if the current state of knowledge were projected into the future. Suvin argues that science fiction presents an environment “radically or at least significantly” different from the author’s that is “simultaneously perceived as not impossible within the cognitive (cosmological and anthropological) norms of the author’s epoch.”²⁷⁶

Utopia is as much about architecture and geography as about ideas. Utopian spaces must also be controllable (as experiments, all variables must be managed), and they are frequently located on islands or other isolated worlds. Islands quickly multiply in the world of *Gulliver’s Travels*. There are Lilliput, Blefescu, Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Japan, and Houyhnhnmland. The Brobdingnags, perhaps too

²⁷⁴ Frederic Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986, Volume 2: The Syntax of History* (London: Routledge, 1988) 87-8.

²⁷⁵ See Chapter 1, above, page 67.

²⁷⁶ Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) viii.

big for an island, live on the North American mainland near Alaska. The other islands, of course, are England and its colony, Ireland (whose landscape and people are figured in multiple aspects of the novel, including, as a number of critics have argued, in the Yahoos). With this abundance of islands comes a proliferation of utopian models.

But not even Houyhnhnmland is perfect, and not merely because of the presence of the Yahoos. Among the themes of *Gulliver's Travels* is the impossibility of a perfect society. No place Gulliver visits, least of all England, is perfect. This impossibility arises from the fallibility of human nature. The only utopia possible is a non-human one. Human ideals are alienated and dehumanized in the Houyhnhnms. Not only does their perfection depend upon their extra-human status, but the great problem facing their society is derived from the presence of the bestial representatives of humanity, the Yahoos, in their midst. It has long been common for Swift scholars to debate whether Houyhnhnmland serves as a rebuke to human pride, an image of the perfected rationality that we only imagine ourselves to possess, by which dispute is nullified, and lying is rendered impossible and death insignificant, or if their rationality is also an object of ridicule. Others, however, point out the Houyhnhnms seeming lack of sympathy, their genocidal approach to the Yahoos and their failure to accommodate fiction in the form of the "thing which is not." Their inability to conceive of the world Gulliver describes to them is not necessarily a shortcoming, as it implies that they cannot conceive of the wickedness of Europe; it defies reason that such a place could exist. It also suggests, however, a failure of imagination and an inability to recognize the truth when Gulliver describes his world to them.

Furthermore, what are we to make of their hierarchies based on color, their desire to exterminate the Yahoos, the lack of poetry and writing among them,²⁷⁷ the seeming lack of emotional connection among them, and the lack of religion?

Certain objections result from problems of relativity and can be resolved with a shift of perspective: what appears from a human perspective to be emotional coldness is in fact an example of supremely rational Stoicism. As readers we are not expected to find faults with the Houyhnhnms for this superior rationality, but rather to feel embarrassment that they so comfortably epitomize what has been an ideal of philosophers since antiquity, while our representatives in the text, the bestial Yahoos, and the naïve defender of European values, Gulliver, fail to come close. As A. D. Nuttall puts it: “Certainly it is not enough to point to the coldness of the Houyhnhnms, as if the manifest repulsiveness of frigid rationality will settle the case outright. That Swift may have preferred coldness to warmth is not just conceivable, it is probable.”²⁷⁸ The ideal expressed in Houyhnhnmland, and, as I will argue below, expressed in the Blazing World, is an absolutist one: there is only one truth, and if it is to be known, it will be comprehended with absolute clarity and immediacy. Presumably like us, “Their grand maxim is, to cultivate Reason, and to be wholly governed by it.” But there Houyhnhnm similarities to us end. “Neither is Reason among them a Point problematical as with us, where Men can argue with Plausibility on both Sides of a Question” (267). The “neither” here reminds us that we are not

²⁷⁷ Terry J. Castle, “Why the Houyhnhnms Don’t Write: Swift, Satire, and the Fear of the Text,” *Essays in Literature* 7 (1980) argues that the inability of the Houyhnhnms to write places them in a prelapsarian world. As Castle points out, such a privileging of oral culture over written is of course one of the structuring binary oppositions that Deconstructionists attempt to undermine.

²⁷⁸ A. D. Nuttall, “Gulliver among the Horses,” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 18 (1988): 54.

like the Houyhnhnms even in our desire to cultivate reason. While it may be the highest aim of philosophy, it is the least expressed virtue among humanity, and we may not, although we claim it as our highest desire, actually want it for ourselves.

Readers of *Gulliver's Travels* often follow a "hard" or a "soft" reading of Book Four: the argument is over whether the full force of the satire is directed against humanity as represented by the Yahoos or against the Houyhnhnms for their cold and exaggerated rationality and hatred of the Yahoos, or against both.²⁷⁹ But, whether we read the Houyhnhnms as an ideal representation of rationality, a satirical device by which to measure the animal nature of the Yahoos, or satiric butts of an attack on Deism, and whether the Houyhnhnms represent a final norm in the text or that role is reserved for the Portuguese sailor, Don Pedro de Mendez—does not matter from the perspective of a Menippean interpretation of the text. The debate between the "soft school" and "hard school" of Gulliver criticism misses the fact that no utopia in *Gulliver's Travels* is complete, just as no dystopian world in the text is a perfect satirical mirror of England. The satiric target does not change but the ways in which it is challenged and the places where that target is located do.²⁸⁰ The text is deliberately inconsistent in its point of view, and in how it allows its judgments to

²⁷⁹ James L. Clifford, "Gulliver's Fourth Voyage: 'Hard' and 'Soft' Schools of Interpretation," ed. Larry S. Champion, *Quick Springs of Sense: Studies in the Eighteenth Century*, 1974. Clifford offers a complete and clear account of the major interpretive differences between the hard and soft readings, and the dispute has not advanced much since (except that the sides have become more deeply entrenched). See also R. M. Philmus, "Swift, Gulliver, and 'The Thing which was not,'" *ELH* (1971); and Kathleen Williams, "Gulliver's Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," ed. Norman Jeffares, *Swift: Modern Judgments* (London: Macmillan, 1969).

²⁸⁰ I am inclined to agree with the position outlined by E. E. Sullivan, "Houyhnhnms and Yahoos: From Technique to meaning," *SEL* 24 (1984). Although satire relies on hard judgments, Swift's technique is various and fluid in order to achieve the full range of its satirical assault. Sullivan writes, "Once we approach *Gulliver's Travels* without expecting or demanding consistency of characters or of internal relationships, the scope and reach of Swift's satire may appear" (511).

unfold. W. E. Yeomens, seeking to defuse the critical controversy by locating the text in the Menippean tradition, argues that the Houyhnhnms fill several roles at once: they are “sometimes solemn models of the good life, sometimes vehicles for satiric burlesque attack, and sometimes a combination of both.”²⁸¹ Although Yeomens seems to want it both ways, what he points to is an essential feature of Menippean satire—we can have it both ways. The characters of the text are “idea-spectrums” and their rhetorical roles, because they are not consistent characters in a novel, shift with the needs of the text. It is not that the text is finally equivocal in its satirical condemnations (of human pride, for example) but its presentation of its critiques is necessarily paradoxical, awkward and indirect: the attack is, after all, on us, a creature too proud to recognize itself implicated in the text and too rational to see that all its philosophical verities are finally undone.

Gulliver’s Travels also raises doubts about how completely we should accept its final pronouncements on human nature, whether we should accept the gift of this Trojan horse, this dangerous truth about our fallen nature, couched, silenus-like, in a delightful fiction. Such questioning of a utopia within the text where it is presented is part of this literary tradition. Doubts about the utopia are often expressed by a character within the text. For example, not every aspect of More’s Utopia is possible or even desirable for England; the text offers us a world approaching perfection but imperfect. The *character* More finds much in Utopia to be praised, but finds a great deal of it absurd, including its fundamental principles that all should be held in common in a commonwealth.

²⁸¹ W. E. Yeomens, “The Houyhnhnm as Menippean Horse,” *College English* 27.6 (1966): 265.

When Raphael had finished this report I was left with the impression that many of the customs and laws established in that country were simply absurd: not merely in their approach to warfare and in their views on religion and spiritual matters, along with other practices of theirs, but especially as regards that principle that is the keystone of their whole system, their communal way of life and common ownership without any exchange of money. All nobility, magnificence, splendor, and majesty is utterly destroyed by this one principle, yet these are generally held to be true ornaments and splendors of any commonwealth.²⁸²

Perhaps readers, and likely Thomas More himself, did and were meant to find the Utopian religion absurd. But the irony of this closing passage seems to be directed at the character, More. He is a character who has failed to get the point, a reader who, like Lord Munodi's neighbors or like those fools in Erasmus who praise the wrong kinds of folly, finds the truth absurd. When More, the character, praises money and splendor, he is not speaking for the author, but for worldly men, those individuals who are fully invested in the logic of financial gain. He has failed to completely enter the thought experiment, to imagine a world built on other principles. The ideology of utopia is different from the one he knows, and is therefore unnatural, and absurd. Ideas that are "generally held" are the specific target of Menippean satire, and this utopia. The irony may be even more complex, though, as the character More may also be inadvertently articulating the impossibility of such a world coming into being,

²⁸² *Thomas More Utopia*, ed and trans. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999) 159.

and the impossibility of importing its values into this one. In other words, is “communism” absurd to More, because it defies the “commonsense” of his nation, a commonsense we are meant to see beyond, or because this Utopia can only exist nowhere, and human nature, because fallen, could not support it? Is a world without money, the desire for magnificence, or the need for a king possible if *we* are to be the subjects?

Swift’s argument against the impossibility of a utopian society in a fallen world is much more severe. Every local moment of the text is subordinate to its principal satirical purpose, so that any world that approaches the utopian is understood as a negative image of the world, one that in practice, will invariably, because passed through human hands, fall far short of the ideal. This failure is modeled by the Lilliputians, whose system of law was once admirable and rational, but that over time has degenerated into layers of interpretation and qualifications. The utopian aspects of the text serve dystopian ends, and Swift’s aim in the text is to show a fallen world falling further. Similarly, the fragmentation of the text (despite its formal symmetries) and its hybrid nature are functions of the genre here: a Menippean satire that draws on and parodies utopian, fantastic voyage and novelistic modes. *Gulliver’s Travels* is thus expansively referential: there is a utopian tradition here that explicitly evokes Plato, Rabelais, More and Bacon; a fantastic voyage tradition evoking Lucian, Rabelais, and William Dampier (1651 – 1715); a novelistic tradition modeled especially on Defoe. This ability to poke fun at multiple literary traditions at once makes *Gulliver’s Travels* the rich text it is. It is for these same reasons that the text defies generic designation. This challenging of literary and

discursive modes and the intellectual and ideological positions they imply are the real effects of Menippean satire. This aspect, and not the miscellaneous nature of the form, finally allows us to distinguish something as Menippean.

Critics have moved away from calling *Gulliver's Travels* a novel, and no longer read Gulliver as a typical character in a typical novel. By this I mean that Gulliver is no longer treated as a conventional protagonist, as a character who faces some sort of blockage that he must overcome, and then grows and evolves as a plot unfolds. He is not a consistent character with a definable personality, although we can point to his gullibility, his middle class birth, his love of adventure, hope for a fortune and growing estrangement from his wife and family as formal signs of a character. The consensus now, however, is that he is a persona, an instrument of Swift's satire, changeable as the needs of the satire, and the desired local effects, shift. Some searches for order find novelistic development. For example, each time he sets out on another voyage he is abandoned in a more severe way: the first voyage is interrupted by a shipwreck, in the second voyage Gulliver is inadvertently left behind, in the third voyage he is the victim of pirates, and in the fourth he is left behind by a mutinous crew. There is also a progress toward alienation. The fourth book finds Gulliver unable to tolerate the smell of his family, plugging up his nose, and preferring the company of horses. The unity of the text for this sort of reading must be located in Gulliver as a character. The novelistic mode is one literary frame among many that is ridiculed for its modernity and absurdity in *Gulliver*. Yet, Swift gets tremendous use out the novelistic character, just as he gets use out of the feverish writing to the moment of the Hack in *A Tale of a Tub*. In both cases the very mode that Swift is mocking provides the frame and structure to his text.

The text also presents a sustained parody of *Robinson Crusoe*, a text quite different from More's *Utopia* and from Lucian *True Story*, though both texts are in *Crusoe*'s deep background. Swift would have recognized *Crusoe* as a modern mode of writing, as something "novel" and new. The structure of Defoe's text informs the structure of *Gulliver* as much as the other antecedents pointed to above. In fact, the deliberate parallels drawn between *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe* in the early chapters of the text help define Gulliver as a character. *Robinson Crusoe* was so thickly in the air that even if Swift had not read it, he would certainly have been aware of it, and perhaps even known it intimately and been able to write his work as a response. Claude Rawson claims that, "Swift professed not to notice Defoe, let alone read him, though he took strenuous notice of his not taking notice [...] The question of whether *Gulliver's Travels* contains parody of *Robinson Crusoe* is contested, both as to fact and as to an interpretive issue, though no one doubts that it parodies a style of narrative plainness and particularity."²⁸³ It seems the two books are bound together forever; they will, for example, be forever paired in eighteenth-century survey courses. However, Claude Rawson writes, "I think it is a fair guess that Swift wouldn't be too hospitable to the idea that his book resembled, or would be included in collections with, *Robinson Crusoe*, or *Pamela*, or *Tristram Shandy*." Yet, Defoe seems to be all over *Gulliver*. The inventory of Gulliver's pockets seems to parody the things Robinson saves from the ship; Gulliver's repeated returns to the sea echo Robinson's several (disastrous) trips to make his fortune (until, of course, he succeeds and finds God). Both characters are also "modern" men—practical, middle class

²⁸³ Claude Rawson, *Satire and Sentiment 1660-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 151.

“gentlemen” who make sense of the world by counting, measuring, experimenting and, of course, dominating. The difference is that Defoe takes his creation seriously, as did his readers, and that Swift did not take Robinson seriously, or rather saw him as one more example of the modernizing tendencies of Grub Street, and Gulliver stands in parodic relationship to Robinson. In this sense, Defoe is an influence, perhaps even partially inspiring the imaginative structure of Swift’s texts, but mostly influencing Swift’s anger and serving as an impetus to write.

J. Paul Hunter, although somewhat equivocal about how deep an influence Defoe was, argues that Swift would have seen the *Robinson Crusoe* phenomenon as representing everything wrong with the times and wrote *Gulliver* as a response. He writes,

There are good reasons, though, somewhat contrary ones, for thinking about *Gulliver’s Travels* in relation to the novel and perhaps especially to one book that took the market by storm at about the time Swift began working on what he called ‘my Travels.’ That book is *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York. Mariner*, by Daniel Defoe. Swift found Defoe unspeakable in many religious and political and perhaps artistic ways: even though for some years he worked alongside him in the Harley administration, he once referred to him as ‘the Fellow that was pilloried, I have forgot his Name.’ The introductory paragraphs of *Gulliver’s Travels* seem almost a parody of (or answer to) Defoe and his hero Crusoe. Whether or not Swift had Defoe (and Crusoe) consciously in mind when he

constructed Gulliver's background, character and career—and there is persuasive evidence that he did [Here Hunter has a note where he suggests, among other things, that 'Master Bates' may refer to contemporary jokes about Defoe's failure to mention sexuality during Crusoe's twenty-eight-year exile]—much of what Swift does generically amounts to a revisionary corrective to the developing novelistic mode that was then beginning to codify modern urban patterns of subjectivity and quotidian particularity. Defoe's narrative is a brilliant, original, and satisfying early example of the novel form, but it does depend on a series of artistic and philosophical assumptions—about subjectivity and human nature, for example—that Swift (and the whole Augustan circle) found laughable, repugnant, and even dangerous.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Hunter, J. Paul, "Gulliver's Travels and the later writings," ed. Christopher Fox, *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 224-225. The style of the opening paragraphs of *Gulliver's Travels* seems a direct echo or deliberate parody of *Robinson Crusoe*. Other details, however, seem more than coincidental, including the middle class origins of the characters, their positions as third sons in their respective families, and their situation within dissenting circles and places. *Robinson Crusoe* opens:

I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of *York*, of a good Family, tho' not of that Country, my Father being a Foreigner of *Bremen*, who settled first at *Hull*: he got a good Estate by Merchandise, and leaving off his Trade, lived afterward at *York*, from whence he had married my Mother, whose relations were named *Robinson*, a very good Family in that Country [...] Being the third son of the Family, and not bred to any Trade, my Head began to be fill'd with very rambling Thoughts: My Father who was very ancient, had given me a competent Share of Learning, as far as House-Education, and a Country Free-School generally goes, and designed me for the Law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to Sea.

Gulliver's Travels begins:

My Father had a small Estate in *Nottinghamshire*; I was the Third of five Sons. He sent me to *Emanuel-College* in *Cambridge*, at Fourteen Years old, where I resided three Years, and applied my self close to my Studies: But the Charge of maintaining me (although I had a very scanty Allowance) being too great for a narrow Fortune; I was bound Apprentice to Mr. *James Bates*, an eminent Surgeon in *London*, with whom I continued for Years; and my Father now and then sending me small Sums of Money, I laid them out in learning Navigation, and other Parts of the Mathematicks, useful to those who intend to travel, as I always believed it would be some time my Fortune to do. When I left Mr. *Bates*, I went down

Gulliver is more than an anti-novel. Presumably, by calling it a “revisionary corrective,” Hunter is insisting that Swift found something useful in the emerging novelistic form, but saw the form as needing modification, refinement, and revision. Certainly Swift’s two greatest extended satires are narratives. This form seems especially effective for deploying a satirical attack. But the attack is directed against the very form through which it is presented.

The recognition that the text is not a novel and does not want to be has resolved some problems that plagued readers of the text, not the least of which was the failure for *Gulliver* to cohere as a psychologically consistent individual. But what *Gulliver’s Travels* is generically is still a major problem in studies of the text. One solution is to argue that the text lacks order, and lacks a consistent form, and that its failure to achieve unity is part of its satirical design, much as the chaos and frenzy of *A Tale of a Tub* served to satirize modern forms of knowledge and textual production. The unity of the text is found in Swift’s world and the modernity he mocks. Others have argued that, although its effects are often local, the satirical intentions of the text provide its unifying structure. Others point to deep patterns that structure the text as a whole: Book I and II stand as inverse mirror images of each other in which the great become the small and the small become the great. The unity here is in formal patterning. Jenny Mezcicms has made a useful argument along these lines. Mezcicms argues that *Gulliver* participates in two generic traditions: the fantastic voyage and the utopia. Both, are related to, or may even be seen as a species of travel

to my Father; where, by the assistance of him and my Uncle *John*, and some other Relations, I got Forty Pounds, and a Promise of Thirty Pounds a Year to maintain me at *Leyden*: There I studied Physick two Years and seven Months, knowing it would be useful in long Voyages.

writing. These two genres are sufficient, she argues to explain the form that *Gulliver's Travels* takes, to discover an integral coherence in the text, and, most importantly for her argument, to reintegrate Book III seamlessly into the text as a whole.

The fantastic voyage has to have a traveler and/or narrator, who need not be a 'character' but who is an essential structural link and to whom the framing narrative belongs [...] The second genre is utopian fiction. This, too, has structure in the shape of an alien society, contained within boundaries, self-sufficient and not susceptible to change [...] the multiplicity of societies in Book III brings variety internally but no inconsistency in the relationship between that Book and others. The narrator figure, himself a structure, is common to both genres, may in either case be a traveler, and forms a link between the two genres. Thus the genres may be distinguished apart even though they overlap.²⁸⁵

Mezciems, however, is too quick to brush off Menippean satire as an explanatory structure for this text. Following Robert C. Elliott, she defines Menippean satire as a "kind of *mélange aduiter de tout*'... [that] has the advantage of allowing a mixture of forms, modes, and structures whole or broken and varying in their degrees of compatibility, to come together in some harmony of intent."²⁸⁶ This generic designation, she insists, is "a genre less demanding [than utopia] in formal terms" and

²⁸⁵ Jenny Mezciems, "The Unity of Swift's 'Voyage to Laputa': Structure as Meaning in Utopian Fiction," *The Modern Language Review* 72.1 (1977): 4.

²⁸⁶ Mezciems 5.

is a designation that critics resort to in order “to avoid the structural issue altogether.”²⁸⁷

As Mezciems allows, the text is neither a fantastic voyage nor a utopian text, but both. She sees the patterning of books III and IV as echoing the structure of More’s *Utopia*. The first of the two describes the deplorable conditions of the present state of humanity, and the second presents a utopian alternative. Such a reading is quite useful as an explanation for these two books, and parallels abound: for example, the sheep consuming the English people (through enclosure) in More are echoed in the starvation of the Laputans under the regime of the Academy of Lagado. Both texts present a political world in decline, corrupt systems of power, misuses of reason and of counsel. The last books of both texts offer us the utopia that resolves the conflicts of the earlier books: Hythlodæus’s Utopia is an answer to economic and social inequality and the crime and disorder that stem from them; the Houyhnhnm utopia is the answer to the intellectual abuses and misuses of reason in Book Three.

Mezciems seeks to explain away the variety of Swift’s work. The variety is “internal,” but is nullified by the ultimate order of the whole. Such disorder, however, is a feature of the various texts I have been examining throughout this paper. Menippean satire, rather than a label applied by lazy critics who do not desire to work to uncover formal structures, is a generic designation that explains a various text. Furthermore, Menippean satire has a close relationship with the fantastic voyage and utopia, as it does with the symposium, mock encomium, and anatomy. If Menippean satire is too amorphous to describe *Gulliver’s Travels*, then to claim that

²⁸⁷ Mezciems 4.

the text participates in two generic traditions is equally limiting. Swift shifts moment to moment from one cluster of generic characteristics to another. While the fantastic voyage may frame the text, and while utopian literature is a universal presence in the form and function of the text, these are not the only modes that are imitated or parodied in the text.

Gulliver's Travels's thematization of fragmentation and degeneration must be related to the problem of genre. They should not be explained away, however, in a search for an elusive, illusory or impossible unity. As I have argued at several points in this paper structure and theme are often intimately related in satire, with the shape of the ridicule often assuming the shape of the thing being ridiculed. Menippean satire offers funhouse mimesis in which flaws are exaggerated. But the most unsettling moments in satire come at those moments that the satirical world and the real world take on an uncanny resemblance—the normal mirror in a hall of distortions. Any perfect image is quickly shown to be flawed as the text moves either toward fragmentation or distortion. *Gulliver's Travels* is about the vast distance between realities and ideals, hence the obsession throughout the text with the theme of degeneration—bodily, intellectual, and cultural. Much of Book III is concerned with the problem of degeneration. I have already mentioned the Struldbruggs above.²⁸⁸ While calling up the ghosts of dead ancients, Gulliver in a moment that anticipates Burkean nostalgia, suddenly desires to see a yeoman. The inherent nobility of the lowly yeoman (the noble yeoman is an oxymoron Swift plays with to

²⁸⁸ For a reading of the Struldbrugg episode as an attack on notions of progress current in Swift's time see William Freedman, "Swift's Struldbruggs, Progress, and the Analogy of History," *SEL* 35 (1995). This section of *Gulliver's Travels*, and the passages in which the dead are called up, can also be read in the context of the ancients and moderns controversy.

mock all levels of society) serves as a rebuke to his corrupt descendants. The progress of generations, like the progress of Dullness, is the advancement of decline.

I descended so low, as to desire some *English* Yeoman of the old Stamp might be summoned to appear; once so famous for the Simplicity of their Manners, Diet, and Dress; for Justice in their Dealings; for their true Spirit of Liberty; for their Valour, and Love of their Country. Neither could I be wholly unmoved, after comparing the Living with the Dead, when I considered how all these pure native Virtues were prostituted for a piece of Money by their Grand-children; who, in selling their Votes and managing at Elections, have acquired every Vice and Corruption that can possibly be learned in a Court (201-202).

Degeneration is not simply a falling off from a golden age, however, nor a natural tendency for all things human to decline, but also the realization of innate shortcomings in human nature. Lilliputian laws are initially praised for their wisdom. Unlike in England where improper behavior is deterred by the threat of punishment, the Lilliputians reward good behavior. But the Lilliput Gulliver discovers has already fallen from its ideals:

In relating these and the following Laws, I would only be understood to mean the original Institutions, and not the most scandalous Corruptions, into which these People are fallen by the degenerate Nature of Man. For, as to that infamous Practice of acquiring great Employments by dancing on the Ropes, or Badges of Favour and

Distinction by leaping over Sticks and creeping under them, the Reader is to observe, that they were first introduced by the Grand-father of the Emperor now reigning, and grew to the present Height by the gradual Increase of Party and Faction (60).

The theme of degeneration is not limited to satire, but is common in the utopian tradition as well. In the *Republic*, Socrates argues that even the great utopian society he and his companions have developed is subject to the ravages of time. He quotes the tragic arguments of the Muses:

It is hard for a city composed in this way to change, but everything that comes into being must decay. Not even a constitution such as this will last for ever. It, too, must face dissolution. And this is how it will be dissolved. All plants that grow in the earth, and also all animals that grow upon it, have periods of fruitfulness and barrenness of both soul and body as often as the revolutions complete the circumferences of their circles.²⁸⁹

Here we see that from the beginning, Utopian thought has not been about recreating society, but about understanding human nature. Humanity is not capable of Utopia. But the decline of states is also a process of nature. The kinds of declines that are further outlined find their echoes throughout *Gulliver's Travels*. Socrates continues:

The older generation will choose the best of these [mismarried] children but they are unworthy nevertheless, and when they acquire their father's powers, they will begin, as guardians, to neglect us

²⁸⁹ Plato, *Republic*, Book VIII.546a-547a, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992) 216-17.

Muses. First, they will have less consideration for music and poetry than they ought, then they will neglect physical training, so that you're young people will become less well educated in music and poetry. Hence, rulers chosen from among them won't be able to guard well the testing of golden, silver, bronze, and iron races, which are Hesiod's and your own. The intermixing of iron with silver and bronze with gold that results will engender lack of likeness and unharmonious inequality, and these always breed war and hostility wherever they arise. Civil war, we declare, is always and everywhere 'of this lineage.'²⁹⁰

The divisions within Houyhnhnm society between colors of horses may be a parody of Plato's distinctions between gold, silver, bronze, and iron souls, but the fact that Houyhnhnm souls remain unmixed is an indication that Gulliver's utopia, unlike Plato's, has staying power, that it is unperturbed by the natural processes of decay. Although even in Houyhnhnmland decay is threatened, as the debates that arise surrounding Gulliver threaten to undo their customary harmony. In Plato, the intermixing of types arises not only from a failure to comprehend the true essence of the individuals being compared, but also misrecognition of difference. The problem is in many ways empirical. Iron and silver, just as bronze and gold, resemble each other in color and thus may be confused by the eyes.

Paradoxically, Swift's text is born of an intermixing of forms. It is a degenerate descendent of ancient literature. Michael Seidel has made efforts to

²⁹⁰ Plato, Book VIII.546a-547a, 217.

demonstrate that satire's obsession with the degenerate, monstrous and grotesque as well as with questions of inheritance and tradition is not a preoccupation with moral or literary norms. In fact, Seidel aims to move beyond readings of satire as a conservative and moralistic literary mode. Narrative satire is instead

a literary system of discontinuities or subversions. Satire's sustained actions are violations, and its generic laws subvert tradition, the *trans dare* or giving across of substance and value in form. Satire's subjects may have known a previous, perhaps higher, ancestral status, but satire's actions depict the falling-off or exhaustion of line. In a modal sense, satire is both *descendant* and *descendent*. It violates the bodily and mental integrity of its subjects by radicalizing rather than conserving issue, and it confuses the moral and spatial notions of direction by divorcing descent from continuity. To be satirically conceived is to be rendered monstrous—too singular, too materially degenerate to carry on.²⁹¹

Menippean satire denies the integrity of a complete totality; it recognizes the world as fragmented and monstrous, and through it we recognize the given world as the faltering of a once noble line. Utopias spatialize a moral and intellectual vision of the world. Yet utopian thought experiments, like Menippean satire, fail to achieve, or they eschew, what Seidel is calling here “mental integrity” because they are necessarily double. Utopia is a descendent of this world, yet not fully of it. It is monstrous either in its absolute perfection or its absolute depravity and madness.

²⁹¹ Michael Seidel, *Satiric Inheritance: Rabelais to Sterne* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979) 263.

Utopia is recognizable and unrecognizable in and through its difference from the known world. This difference, and the space it opens up between the world as ideas and the world as a given totality, allows us to see *this* world through an ironic lens.

The parodies of discovery narratives in the texts discussed in this chapter render certain modes of thought other, delimiting a geography of knowledge by which the true and the false, the human and the monstrous, may be mapped out. Through the frame of the fantastic voyage *Gulliver's Travels* and *Blazing World* appropriate colonialist discourse for satirical purposes, placing England within a comparative and critical context. Menippean satire has more than just superficial similarities with other developments in eighteenth-century thought and culture—the rise of the museum and curiosity collections, the later taxonomies of Linnaeus and Buffon, and an emergent global capitalism. As they do on Belinda's toilet, “The various Off'rings of the World appear,” as a jumble of things, disparate and incongruous, accumulated within one space:

Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and here
 The various Off'rings of the World appear;
 From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,
 And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil.
 This casket *India's* glowing Gems unlocks,
 And all *Arabia* breathes from yonder Box.

“The world” here is a marketplace, a space in which patterns of trade and consumption conspire to produce a world of material goods. Menippean satire and utopia both develop in the context of cultural and intellectual shifts conditioned by

the colonial experience. Maps, museums, and monstrosities are the material registers of these shifts.

Gulliver's Travels and *Blazing World* take very different attitudes toward this emerging globalism and toward colonialism, but these fictionalized travel narratives are able to scatter their satirical assaults out across the entire world, presenting a fragmented universe that *is* the contemporary reality being satirized: a representation of a world that has lost any universal or unifying values. Recent work on the “global” eighteenth century has opened up new possibilities for reading these texts within the context of cultural exchange, colonialism, and the triangular trade of slaves, sugar, and capital. Such readings include Robert Markley’s work on Gulliver and the Japanese; Felicity Nussbaum’s exploration of the intersecting representations of race, gender and disability as forms of “anomaly” in the period; and Joseph Roach’s development of an idea of a “circum-Atlantic” world, a conceptual framework that, unlike “transatlantic,” “insists on the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas, North and South, in the creation of the culture of modernity”; and finally, Claude Rawson’s study of the history of the idea of the savage, and of the emergence of a racialist thought that ultimately led to modern genocides.²⁹²

There is, of course, the problematic Houyhnhnm hatred of Yahoos, and Gulliver’s internalization of their hatred as a self-loathing and total misanthropy. The Yahoos are the only thing the Houyhnhnms have ever disagreed about. Are we to

²⁹² Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003); Robert Markley, “Gulliver and the Japanese: The Limits of the Postcolonial Past,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 65.3 (2004); Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996) 4; Claude Rawson, *God, Gulliver, and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492-1945* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001).

find their drive to genocide reprehensible? Clement Hawes argues that in the Fourth Book, as throughout *Gulliver's Travels*, the discourse of colonialism is under attack, and that we are supposed to recognize the Houyhnhnms as parodies of European colonial attitudes. "The master Houyhnhnm" is "as complacently ethnocentric as the average colonist."²⁹³ And indeed, the master's description of the Yahoos and Gulliver's subsequent recognition of himself as one of the savages, resembling them in their difference from the superior Houyhnhnms, suggest a collapsing of the European colonizer and the victims of colonialism. The master's comments on Gulliver's eyes, nose, and face and their inherent inferiority to the Houyhnhnm faces echo the racist discourse of colonialism: "He then began to find fault with other Parts of my Body; the Flatness of my Face, the Prominence of my Nose, mine Eyes placed directly in front, so that I could not look on either side without turning my head." (242) It is important to note that although the language parodies the descriptions of native populations in the Americas, the actual comparison is between two species and not two races. The Yahoos have the ability in the text to serve as a general other, representing new world natives (and depictions of them) as readily as the Irish, and also marking the limits of the human. They are also, paradoxically, "us," and thus the other in the text forces a self-alienation, an identification with the "savage," that is also a discovery of a common human nature.

The colonial implications of utopia in the early modern period should be addressed. Colonial discourse coincided with an increasing interest among philosophers in theorizing humanity in a state of nature, pursuing the origins of

²⁹³ Clement Hawes, "Three Times Round the Globe: Gulliver and Colonial Discourse," *Cultural Critique* 18 (1991) 204.

civilization, and articulating the structure of the ideal commonwealth. Utopian thought and political philosophy have been companions since Plato, and in Swift they come under parallel critique. Utopia finds its imaginative shape in the colonial discovery narratives and the cultural contact that provided a structure whereby cultures might be relativized. The usual result of such comparisons in texts of the period is to demonstrate a European superiority, a state of civilization at a supposedly advanced state. According to Hawes, *Gulliver's Travels* is principally about colonialism, but the text redirects "the tropes of colonial discourse" as Swift "turns them against the 'wrong' object: the middle-class Englishman."²⁹⁴ Although it may be read for its topicality and embroilment in party politics, its greater expression of the politics of its age is its engagement with the colonialism and the discourses that supported it and that became politicized in the context of colonialism. "Colonial discourse implicated, in a new way, travel literature, adventure novels, illustration, ethnography, cartography, and science: that is, many of the particular targets of Swift's satire."²⁹⁵

Composed fifty years before *Gulliver's Travels*, Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World* is also a fantastic journey that incorporates utopian elements, takes science to task, and imaginatively reconfigures national power within a global framework. Lisa Sarasohn has this to say about Cavendish's approach to science:

Cavendish expressly rejected metaphysics and experimentation because she preferred to rely on a kind of philosophic probabilism,

²⁹⁴ Hawes 189.

²⁹⁵ Hawes 188.

which precluded the possibility of absolute and demonstrative knowledge or the discovery of concrete experimental facts [...]In her opinion, all doctrines were open to question, and all thinkers entitled to challenge the ideas of others.²⁹⁶

We saw this kind of probabalism in the context of the skepticism in an earlier chapter, and I have already discussed the degree to which skeptical thinking can be deployed to open “all doctrines” to question. Probability, I have argued, was often the only response to skepticism possible, besides an appeal to traditional cultural values. Despite the idiosyncrasies of her writings, the flamboyance of her career, and her challenges to the major intellectuals of her day, Cavendish also argued strongly for a powerful, absolutist monarch, and aristocratic values in her work. It must be remembered, however, that despite her conservatism, Cavendish, like Swift, was writing at a time when her party was out of favor. In fact, Cavendish’s status as a royalist exiled in France and a lover of the theater at a time when it was closed is a more severe alienation from the powers that be and from the dominant ideology of her day than the fall of Swift’s fortunes with the fall of the Tory ministry. Cavendish, as a woman, was of course further alienated from spheres of power, and many of her works register a frustration with the failure of her male contemporaries to take her or her intellect seriously.

The Lady, Cavendish’s protagonist, passes at the pole of the earth from this world to another, and finds herself in a world of bird-men, worm-men and other hybrid forms. She becomes empress and organizes them according to their attributes

²⁹⁶ Lisa T. Sarasohn, “*Leviathan and the Lady: Cavendish’s Critique of Hobbes in the Philosophical Letters*,” ed. Cottagnies and Weitz, *Authorial Conquests*, 44-45.

or limitations within a systematic search for knowledge of the world. The whole enterprise is a kind of parody of the Royal Society. Each creature is only able to understand what he is naturally equipped to perceive, and none is capable of a total vision of knowledge. Hybridity is a feature of the text and of the world that it critiques. No complete knowledge is possible in a world of mixed forms:

By their very constitution the Empress's virtuosi destabilize Bacon's differentiation between knower and known, as they combine both man and beast. While investigating and examining natural phenomena, they are also identified as inhabiting and being part of their very areas of inquiry—the bird-men explore the atmosphere, the fish- and mer-men marine life, while the worm-men resemble the maggots they study. The object of knowledge is therefore not seen as something which is clearly extractable from those who examine it, rather it implicates and merges with them.²⁹⁷

It is also a vision of power, royal power in particular, expressed through the dictation of a search for knowledge. Later, power will become even more overt and manifest. Ultimately the social and political worlds are under her complete dominion just as the intellectual world had been in the *Blazing World*. In both cases power is absolute, and is necessary in a world of faction, of fractious knowledge, of a global politics waged by insular nation-states. The Empress, after she has taken a liking to the Duchess (Cavendish's fictional double within the text), also takes an interest in

²⁹⁷ Bronwen Price, "Journeys beyond Frontiers: Knowledge, Subjectivity and Outer Space in Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*," *Literature and History* 7.2 (1998) 28. See also Eve Keller, "Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science" *ELH* 64.2 (1997).

England and its wars, vowing to defend it from its European enemies, entering political and military contests on the side of England. She unleashes a powerful weapon of mass destruction, a fireball capable of setting entire villages ablaze. Using fire stones that only burn hotter when attempts are made to extinguish them, the Empress has her bird- and worm-men destroy entire cities throughout Europe. The result is a “general barrenness over their country that year” that forces “them to submit as well as the rest of the world had done.”²⁹⁸ In the *Blazing World* the stones were an object of worship, in Europe they can only evoke for modern readers the bombing of Dresden and the hydrogen bomb.

But after a short time [since the Empress has guaranteed total naval supremacy for the King of ESFI (Britain)], those neighbouring nations finding themselves so much enslaved, that they were hardly able to peep out of their own dominions without a chargeable tribute, they all agreed to join their forces against the King and sovereign of the said dominions; which when the Empress received notice of, she sent out her fish-men to destroy, as they had done before, the remainder of their naval power, by which they were soon forced again to submit, except some nations which could live without foreign traffic, and some whose traffic was merely by land; these would no ways be tributary to the mentioned King. The Empress sent them word, that in case they did not submit to him, she intended to fire all their towns and cities, and reduce them by force, to what they would not yield with a good will.

²⁹⁸ Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World and Other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilly (London: Penguin, 1994) 214.

But they rejected and scorned Her Majesty's message, which provoked her anger so much, that she resolved to send her bird- and worm-men thither, with order to begin first with their smaller towns, and set them on fire (for she was loath to make more spoil than she was forced to do) and if they remained still obstinate in their resolutions, to destroy also their great cities.²⁹⁹

Is there any irony here? The mercy suggested by the parenthetical comment seems ironically out of proportion with the magnitude of the destruction and the absolute authority desired by the Empress. The description of the condition of the Europeans as enslavement also seems to suggest a power that has been arbitrary, severe, and tyrannical in its distribution. But the text seems to endorse the Empress's actions, and her efforts are in support of a British king against incorrigible rebels who will not even stop fighting for their own good.

The use of a powerful stone, the harnessing of whose powers is partially suggestive of the occult, and partially linked to the power of science over nature is echoed Laputa itself, Swift's giant floating island whose floating properties are maintained by the mastery of magnetism.

The King [of Laputa] would be the most absolute Prince in the Universe, if he could but prevail upon a Ministry to join him [...] If any Town should engage in Rebellion or Mutiny, fall into violent Factions, or refuse to pay the usual Tribute; the King hath two Methods of reducing them to Obedience. The first and mildest Course

²⁹⁹ Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 212-213.

it by keeping the Island hovering over such a Town, and the Lands about it; whereby he can deprive them of the Benefit of the Sun and the Rain, and consequently afflict the Inhabitants with Dearth and Diseases. And if the Crime deserve it, they are at the same time pelted from above with Stones, against which they have no Defence, but by Creeping into Cellars or Caves, while the Roofs of their Houses are beaten to Pieces. But if they still continue obstinate, or offer to raise Insurrections; he proceeds to the last Remedy, by letting the Island drop directly upon their Heads, which makes a universal Destruction both of Houses and Men. However, this is an Extremity to which the Prince is seldom driven, neither indeed is he willing to put it in Execution; nor dare his Ministers advise him to an Action, which as it would render them odious to the People, so it would be a great Damage to their own Estates that lie all below; for the Island is the King's Demesn. (171)

The missiles dropped from Laputa are like an aerial bombardment, and the crushing of cities is an instance of total war. This is the ultimate dystopian expression of the world in Book Three—a world of violent and genocidal tendencies. When Gulliver spoke proudly of gunpowder to the Brobdingnag king he was ridiculed for his small-mindedness and the violent natures of his “pernicious” little race of vermin. In Laputa the possible implications of science, of tyranny, and even of mass destruction become possible. The island itself is used to oppress and terrorize the people—already starving from their failed agricultural projects, already “afflicted with Dearth

and Disease”—on the island below. The relationship is suggestive of England’s colonization of Ireland, but also of tyranny more generally.

Strangely, the authoritarian potential of science is, in Cavendish, its noblest feature, but in Swift it is a dangerous affront to liberty. Cavendish endorses the violence in her text. It is unqualified, and seems a necessary and expedient solution to England’s political problems. It is also a model for the kind of monarchy that Cavendish desires for the nation from which she was exiled in a time of political turmoil and a crisis of power. Swift, on the other hand, is critical and ironic about such power, offering typical Swiftian understatements like “mildest Course.” But even the Laputan king shows some restraint and discretion. The defenselessness of the people of Balnibarbi against the stones and crushing oppression of Laputa is echoed in the final chapter in Gulliver’s description of the likely defenselessness of the nations he has visited in the face of Europe’s “superior” weapons and greater propensity to violence. As in all the worlds Gulliver visits, this world and its violence, just as much as the dullness of its philosophers and impracticality of its projectors, is a mirror of Britain. Europe and Britain are already guilty of such forms of oppression. Hence the Gulliver’s famous attack on colonialism at the end of the *Travels*:

A Crew of Pyrates are driven by a Storm they know not whither; at length a Boy discovers Land from the Top-mast; they go on Shore to rob and plunder; they see an harmless People, are entertained with Kindness, they give the Country a new Name, they take formal possession of it for the King, they set up a rotten Plank or Stone for a

Memorial, they murder two or three dozen of the Natives, bring a Couple more away by Force for a Sample, return home, and get their Pardon. Here commences a new Dominion acquired with a Title by *Divine Right*. Ships are sent with the first Opportunity; the Natives are driven out or destroyed, their Princes tortured to discover their Gold; a free Licence given to all Acts of Inhumanity and Lust; the Earth reeking of the Blood of its Inhabitants: And this execrable Crew of Butchers employed in so pious an Expedition, is a *modern Colony* sent to convert and civilize an idolatrous and barbarous People.

But by this Description, I confess, doth by no means affect the British Nation, who may be an Example to the whole World for their Wisdom, Care, and Justice in planting Colonies. (294-295)

Of course, Gulliver has meant nothing but the British nation, not only in this indictment of colonial practice, but throughout the text, in world after world. The most violent colonial abuses are attributed to pirates and the Spanish, but the text clearly implicates England. Gulliver calls for the worlds he has seen to remain intact, to preserve their isolated status. While Cavendish's solution to fragmentation is the overawing power of a great monarch, of weapons of mass destruction and total domination, *Gulliver's* colonial landscape actually allows, even angrily insists, that these worlds must remain intact, under their own volition and government, protected from the voracious colonialism of Europe. Swift's satires, including this one and *A Tale of a Tub*, see fragmentation as a symptom of modernity. These texts are not merely exaggerated accounts of a crumbling world, but descriptions of a world

already crumbled. Each fragment *Gulliver* encounters along his Travels is another piece of a larger ruin.

CHAPTER FIVE

“SUBJECTS, TALES, STORIES AND CHARACTERS OF INVENTION,
AFTER THE MANNER OF LUCIAN, WHO COPIES FROM VARRO:”

DELARIVIER MANLEY, MENIPPEAN SATIRE,

AND THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

Delarivier Manley’s political allegory and scandal fiction, *Secret Memoirs and Manners of several Persons of Quality, of both Sexes. From the New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean* (1709) is a self-proclaimed Varronian satire. A hybrid text that exploits a variety of narrative modes, it, like similar satirical scandal romances such as Eliza Haywood’s *Adventures of Eovaai, Princess of Ijaveo: A Pre-Adamitical History*, problematizes prevailing critical accounts of the rise of the novel. A contemporary of Swift, Manley complicates any history of Menippean satire, unsettling many critical commonplaces about it, not the least of which is the assumption that it is a form produced predominantly or exclusively by men.

New Atalantis was a major piece of propaganda in the partisan struggles of the period, and was instrumental in the ultimate defeat of the Whigs in 1710 and the rise of the Harley ministry. Among its many targets, the satire of *New Atalantis*, takes aim at John Churchill (1650 – 1722)—Duke of Marlborough and the era’s great

military hero—and Sarah Churchill (1660 – 1744)—Duchess of Marlborough and most favored advisor of Queen Anne. Like ancient Varronian satires, Manley’s text includes inserted verse, dialogue, and criticism. The various nature of the form is integral to Manley’s design: through her deployment of generic kinds, especially romance, allegory, fable, and myth, she is able to find a method to satirize the political scene of her period. Manley develops a thinly veiled account of politics and politicians, a *roman à clef* that focuses relentlessly on the sexual perversions that she and her trio of narrators believe define a degenerate age and its politics. People of “quality” and political significance are described in a variety of scandalous relationships, as political intrigue is allegorized as a sequence of rapes, seductions, and illicit affairs. As a “secret memoir” the text promises special access to a reality normally hidden from view, but the world presented is mostly a fabrication, the lives of real individuals entangled with romantic fictions. The text, thus, presents a parallel history that is also a domestic one; affairs of state are conflated with affairs of the heart; private chambers replace parliaments, courts, and theaters of war as the sites of fame and honor.

Manley’s fictional world is both the real world of Europe and a fictional satirical space. In the opening passage, Justice (Astrea), who has fled the Earth, and has been replaced here by a “mock justice,” returns, alighting upon a strange island in the Mediterranean. This island and the title of the text, *New Atalantis*, evoke the utopian tradition, and like More’s creation, this is a fictional world, a no place. Manley’s satire is thus comfortably fictional, but, also like More’s *Utopia*, the primary purpose of the text is to satirize England and its social institutions. This is

England with a difference, but an England whose flaws poke easily through the fiction.

Once upon a time, Astrea (who had long since abandoned this world, and flown to her native residence above) by a new formed design, and a revolution of thought, was willing to revisit the earth, to see if humankind were still as defective, as when she in disgust forsook it. Her descent was as soon performed as thought upon; the European world being the most famed above for sciences, she resolved her visit should be there. Accordingly [...] she alighted on the cliffs of an island, named Atalantis, situated in the Mediterranean sea, though her design was rather for Rome, or the metropolis of France, or Great Britain, places renowned in the court of Jupiter, for hypocrisy, politics, politeness and vanity. No sooner did she retread the ground, so long abandoned, but in a rapturous soliloquy, thus she began, “All hail thou beautiful product of the eternal mind! How enchanting are thy prospects? how generous is the earth? how charming her fruits? [...] those grassy pastures, the aspiring shady groves, and the whole ample bosom of the terrestrial globe!

But, Oh great Jupiter! [...] to what a race thou hast delivered these enjoyments? how corrupt, how unworthy of benefits so sweet, and of possessions so ravishing?”³⁰⁰

Although Britain is referenced in this passage as a distant place, unrelated to

³⁰⁰ Delarivier Manley, *New Atalantis*, ed. Rosalind Ballaster (New York: New York UP, 1992) 4.

the narrative, the characters and metropolis that Astrea ultimately encounters, and even the cliffs she has landed upon, all explicitly suggest Britain. She will also soon be at the funeral of William II, observing events that an attentive eighteenth-century reader would have recognized as recent history. At the same time, more broad and universal satirical targets are being developed in this opening passage. As for Swift and Pope, human nature and universal human failings are general themes in Manley's text. A utopian tradition and a corresponding pastoral tradition are evoked in this first paragraph with the intention of showing the degree to which the world as Astrea finds it has fallen from its Edenic counterpoint. The birds-eye view from the cliffs, so common in Lucian's satires, affords Astrea with an expansive view of the world. Later she, Virtue and Intelligence will drift over scenes of intrigue, and enter private places, unseen.

In her dedication to the second volume of the text, Manley outlines the ethical agenda of her text and discusses its unusual form. In the process she explicitly calls her text a "Varronian satire."

The *New Atalantis* seems, my Lord, to be written like Varonian [sic] satires, on different subjects, tales, stories and characters of invention, after the manner of Lucian, who copied from Varro. In my opinion, nothing can be added to Mr. Dryden's learned discourse of satire in his dedication to Juvenal. He observes thus, *What is most essential, and the very soul of satire, is scourging of vice, and exhortation to virtue. Satire is of the nature of moral philosophy. He, therefore, who*

*instructs most usefully will carry the palm.*³⁰¹

Dryden had called his *Absalom and Achitophel* a Varronian satire in the *Discourse on the Original and Progress of Satire* that Manley cites here. In evoking Dryden, Manley seeks an authorial respectability, and aims to attach herself to a tradition of Tory political satire. For Manley content and purpose determine form. This mixed bag of literary forms, this full platter (Dryden traces satire back to its etymological roots in *satura*) that she offers up to her reader best serves her political purposes, purposes that she here speaks of in ethical terms.

Although it seems paradoxical to portray a moral vision through a various, generically-impure form, this discrepancy is resolved when we consider that the form of the text reflects the very world being satirized. It is a fallen world, one like the world in Pope's *Dunciad* where the confusion of Dullness reigns supreme and the differences that normally define categories collapse as "Tragedy and Comedy embrace" and "Farce and Epic get a jumbled race." The world at the beginning of Manley's poem is also the same fallen world of *A Tale of a Tub*, one given over to madness and to fraudulent imitations of real knowledge and truth. "Mock justice" prevails, and the world is a fragmentary collection of conflicting private interests. Astrea's mother, Virtue, has degenerated as much as her natural beauty will allow, and "innocence is banished" in this age "defective of heroes." Manley develops a Tory attack on Whig politicians, and builds on a satirical tradition fixated on moral and cultural degeneration. At the same time, however, this text is also a profound attack on the existing power structure and on conventional anti-feminist literary

³⁰¹ Manley, *New Atalantis* 132.

modes. Manley is an outsider, attacking figures, including Marlborough and Sarah Churchill at the very centers of power, describing them as if from within their midst, from their most private spaces.

Manley's adoption of the Varronian label indicates a classical learning rarely attributed to her by her contemporaries or modern critics, yet one revealed by the numerous classical allusions of the text. Just what it means to call the text a Varronian satire, however, is not exactly clear. The term is not necessarily interchangeable with "Menippean." Although no works survive intact from either writer, 95 titles and 591 fragments have come down to us from Varro. Dryden complained of Varro's mixing of prose and verse, and his "Varronian satire," *Absalom and Achitophel*, is entirely in verse, although it takes a narrative form. Verse is interjected into the text throughout *New Atalantis*. Varro seems to have been concerned primarily with correcting philosophical error, and was not a complete cynic as Menippus of Gadara is believed to have been. There is also a moralism in Varro's work that Manley evokes with her attack on the fallen morals of her age. Aaron Santesso offers this account of Varro: "The central theme of Varro's satires is the praise of the good old days, contrasted with the decadent luxury of the present."³⁰² Varro was known to eighteenth-century writers, according to Howard Weinbrot, for "the greater elegance, cohesion, 'witty pleasantries' and moral cleanliness that Roman Varro added to counteract Greek Menippus's 'impudence and filthiness.'"³⁰³ As we shall see, however, Manley, despite her concern with virtue and moral correctness,

³⁰² Aaron Santesso, "The *New Atalantis* and Varronian Satire," *Philological Quarterly* 79.2 (2000): 178.

³⁰³ Weinbrot, *Menippean Satire Reconsidered* 39.

takes a great deal of interest in the filthier side of life.

Other Varronian features present in Manley's text include topicality, and obsession with decay and attacks on luxury. The generic designation, Santesso argues, is used to "signal her conservative positions" and a desire to move beyond "feminocentric traditions such as romance" to enter "what she perceived as the central, classically-based literary tradition." Santesso's principle quarrel is with those who read Manley as a feminist, and her literary productions as subversive of prevailing gender relationships: "In seeking to restore Manley as an object of serious study, critics have at times gone too far in portraying her as a feminist author writing a feminist work for a female audience; occasionally, feminist elements of the texts (which are undoubtedly present) are inaccurately or misleadingly privileged."³⁰⁴ It certainly seems true that Manley sought legitimacy and wanted to rise above her reputation as a hack and "scribbler" (the pejorative label attributed to women writers of the period) and achieve an immortality more substantive than the permanence promised by the jeering remark in *Rape of the Lock* that the Baron's "Honour, Name, and Praise shall live" for "As long as *Atalantis* shall be read." But it seems unlikely that Manley did not see herself and her writing within the context of other modes dominated by women. We are also likely missing a crucial aspect of the work if we ignore the way the application of the Varronian tradition to "feminocentric" traditions allows for a complex critique of gender politics, national politics, and the forces of discourse, literary and otherwise, mediating between the two. Furthermore, the distinction Santesso draws between a contemporary (late-twentieth-century) interest

³⁰⁴ Santesso 180.

only in “serious” feminist writing and an eighteenth-century interest *only* in classical literary traditions is a false one. Both should be taken seriously for their ability to interrogate and challenge each other, and the complex dialogical interaction within the text between Manley’s appropriated classical and romantic modes are not merely a discovery of modern critics, but a crucial component of her design.

The miscellaneous nature of this text may be read in more subversive ways. First, Varronian/ Menippean aspects of the text, as we have seen in earlier chapters, push in both progressive and conservative directions. Frank Palmeri makes much of Manley’s adoption of the Varronian label, but he discusses not her use of it to defend normative morality, or even Toryism. Manley’s text, like the other narrative satires he discusses, “criticizes opposite extremes without embracing a middle term.” Thus her “double and ambiguous ideological position” undermines her text’s “overtly anti-Whiggish line of attack.”³⁰⁵ Second, a number of critics have argued against a comfortable acceptance of Manley’s marginalization by her contemporaries and by modern critics. There has long been a tendency among literary scholars to adopt Alexander Pope’s judgments, to reject the authors criticized in *The Dunciad* and his other works and to see them as deserving of the attack. Against the Grub Street myth, Paula McDowell has argued that Grub Street offered powerful subversive potential and a space in which women and other marginalized groups not only had access to culture and to the power of the press, but were in fact instrumental in the production and dissemination of ideas. She writes,

Changing conditions of literary production and political expression in

³⁰⁵ Frank Palmeri, *Satire, History, Novel: Narrative Forms, 1665-1815* (U of Delaware P, 2003) 222.

late seventeenth-century England, combined with increased literacy, enabled unprecedented female political involvement through print—that is, until transformations in sex roles and in English culture at large left eighteenth-century women increasingly depoliticized. The birth of the modern literary marketplace was concurrent with women's emergence in significant numbers as publishing authors.³⁰⁶

In this chapter I will be exploring the dialogical nature of the hybrid literary forms composed by Manley (and Haywood whose *Adventures of Eovaai* is similar but sustains its central allegory more consistently), and will be interested in the ways in which the Manley's text performs a Tory defense of tradition and culture while still developing a radical critique of the inherited literary tradition and its normative gender roles. Manley resists and challenges the romance tradition as Santesso allows, but she also brings romance into the form she is using; it is subsumed and sublimated into something else. A residue of romance and secret history also worked its way into Richardson's and Fielding's novels even as they attempt to distinguish their texts as more dignified.

Since Bakhtin, it has been customary to see the novel as emerging out of the Menippean tradition. In this context, however, the usual sequence of influence is from Swift to Fielding to Sterne, where a certain mentality is transmitted from one to the next, often captured by the terms "Scriblerian" and "Augustan." I am interested here instead in charting a new route from scandal fiction to the novel. This path has been explored and anthologized by Rosalind Ballaster, John Richetti, J Paul Hunter,

³⁰⁶ Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 5.

and Paula R. Backscheider, but even their heroic attempts to chart a complex route to the rise of the novel have still tended to keep separate the prose tradition coming from Cervantes and Rabelais through Swift, Fielding, Tobias Smollett (1721 – 1771), and Sterne from the one that runs from the French romance through Aphra Behn (1640 – 1689) and Manley to Haywood, Charlotte Lennox (1730 – 1804) and Frances Burney (1752 – 1840).³⁰⁷ These two lines are clearly gendered in literary histories and are often discussed as if they developed in parallel, but isolated from one another, with very little crossover influence. But the riotous slapstick humor of Burney in *Evelina* (1778) owes its debt to Fielding, and Lennox deliberately invokes Cervantes with her *Female Quixote* (1752). Additionally, arguments can and should be made for Manley's influence on Swift and Haywood's influence on Fielding.³⁰⁸ Neither the tradition of prose narrative satire nor the romantic and amatory fiction traditions are monolithic or gender specific. But the persistence of terms like "amatory fiction" continues to make multiple and oppositional histories of the novel necessary. It also continues to suggest that Manley and Haywood are not participating in the other (more significant) novel tradition. In particular, to call Manley's works amatory fiction is to deny their affinity to Swift's works. Swift considered Manley a friend during the hyper-politicized years of 1710-11 and contributed the first page to her

³⁰⁷ Rosalind Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); Paula R. Backscheider and John J. Richetti, ed., *Popular Fiction by Women 1660-1730: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997); J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1990).

³⁰⁸ For an argument situating Swift in the "secret history" tradition, see Melinda Rabb, "The Secret Memoirs of Lemuel Gulliver: Satire, Secrecy, and Swift," *ELH* 73 (2006), discussed below. For an account of the Haywood-Fielding connection and rivalry (a rivalry as significant to the rise of the novel as that of Richardson and Fielding), see John R. Elwood, "Henry Fielding and Eliza Haywood: A Twenty Year War," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 5.3 (1973).

pamphlet, “A True Narrative of What Pass’d at the Examination of the Marquis de Guiscard at the Cock-Pit, the 8th of March 1710/11.”³⁰⁹ She later took over from Swift as editor of *The Examiner*. Ballaster also discusses Manley’s “experimentation with Swiftian irony in two mock ‘Whig’ pamphlets.”³¹⁰ If we are hesitant to call Manley a Menippean satirist or Swift a secret historian this is only because we fail to recognize that these unfixed and unstable fictional forms have been retroactively cemented into an overarching narrative about the rise of the novel. The multiple prose forms available to writers at the turn of the century, including amatory fiction, were not pure and were being developed alongside one another, and were often employed at different times by the same writers. Neither Manley nor Swift was writing novels, because there was no such thing.

Nonetheless, Manley was instrumental in the rise of the novel, and not only because of the romantic elements of her works. Rather it is her Menippeanism and her unique additions to that form that make her a central figure. Manley moves toward the self-conscious, ironic, dialogical narrative voice of novelistic fiction—free indirect style. The three narrators: Astrea, Virtue, and Intelligence travel from one scene of scandal to the next, debating the scene before them or as described by Intelligence. Janet Todd has this to say about Manley’s innovations in narrative voice:

More even than Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley experiments in her fiction with narrative voice. Points of view shift in a world that is

³⁰⁹ Ballaster 119-121.

³¹⁰ Ballaster 121.

corrupt, trivial, harsh and yet vastly entertaining [...] Anecdote, allegory and social comment mingle as the feminine viewpoints vacillate; sometimes the comment is naïve, sometimes condemnatory, sometimes simply cynical or resigned. The goddesses know much and learn more, but they do not and cannot act in the world they perceive; they become fitting examples of the female narrative role of gossip, storyteller, and commentator.³¹¹

The divisions of this narrative voice and its fragmentation into multiple characters develop as an answer to a world that demands multiple responses. These responses are not fixed, vacillating, and they range from amusement to disgust. Todd locates the flexibility of the narrative point of view in a gendered conception of narrative expression, but it could also just as easily be situated in the dialogical aspects of the form itself.

The text is patterned by a sequence of vignettes and inset novellas, and each episode is followed by moralizing commentary from the three character/narrators. Their commentary is presented in dialogue form, and no voice is necessarily privileged at any moment, but each is a voice of reason and strong ethical judgment. They provide an ironic frame through which the characters may be judged, and another layer of dialogical commentary that allows the text to become self-conscious, to become aware of its status as fiction. Menippean texts use literary language ironically, drawing attention to their artificiality. When discourse and genre become self-referential, they are defamiliarized, and we are able to see their forms as

³¹¹ Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction 1660-1800* (London: Virago, 1989) 86.

institutions and conventions. Manley's text is about things beyond its fictions—its satirical targets—but it is also about fiction, about the way anecdotes, gossip, and romance frame experience.

Although she uses a different terminology than I am using here, Josephine Donovan's work on the framed-novelle tradition offers some ways to understand the subversive potential of Manley's method. Donovan's prehistory of the novel includes texts with frame narratives and inserted stories, the framed novelle, and thus she is able to bring into the novel's development such texts as Christine de Pizan's *Le livre de la cité des dames* and Marguerite de Navarre's *L'Heptaméron*. She is also able to argue for the central role of women in the development and the rise of the novel through their deployment of this form. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Margaret Cavendish, Delarivier Manley, Eliza Haywood and Jane Barker (1652 – 1732) inherit this tradition, its conventions, and its politics. Inset stories in Cavendish's *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life* (1656), focusing on the "exploits of a female protagonist" are "more like mini-novels than novellas," and the fictional life history in Manley's *The Adventures of Rivella*, was a form "used by Daniel Defoe in what are generally considered the first English novels, *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*."³¹² The conventions of the mini-novellas define the norms of the novel. When the style, tone and commentary of the frame narrators are united with these novellas, we have the features of the fully formed novel. Novels make use of stories within stories as a central feature throughout the eighteenth century. Fielding uses the technique frequently, but his model is more likely *Don Quixote*

³¹² Josephine Donovan, "Women and the Framed-Novelle: A Tradition of their Own," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 22.4 (1997) 949.

(1605, 1614) where several complete romantic narratives interrupt the adventures of Quixote. The use of internal stories in Fielding's novels is different, however, from the framed-nouvelle and from *Quixote*, in that these inset stories impact the plot of the novel and are impacted by the larger plot. While a dialogical metacommentary may connect the inset stories of the framed-nouvelle to their frame, they may also stand on their own. However, these patchwork texts are not novelistic in and of themselves. They also find their origins in the decidedly non-novelistic framed story collections of Boccaccio and Chaucer.

The framed-nouvelle form, Donovan claims, is innately dialogical, and Bakhtin's failure to include these texts in his history of the novel led to an assumption that the novel was newer and more unique than in fact it was. "Insufficient attention to the framed-nouvelle and its role in the emergence of the dialogic led him to overestimate the dialogical character of the novel."³¹³ Bakhtin is of course interested in dialogical aspects of the novel such as free indirect discourse that allow the text to present a double perspective and make use of a double language that allows an author to subvert and destabilize the "word of the fathers."³¹⁴ Lennard J. Davis, describing the "double discourse" of the novel writes, "It is in the play between criminality and protest, realism and moral probability, fictions and truth, plot and providence that the novel's energetic principle is revealed."³¹⁵ Donovan does not dispute the importance of dialogism for an understanding of the novel. What she seeks to do instead is to

³¹³ Donovan 951.

³¹⁴ Michel M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981) 342.

³¹⁵ Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1983) 137.

resituate dialogism in forms that preceded the novel, especially those produced by women. She argues that women authors made use of the dialogic potential of the framed-novelle to articulate a “feminist standpoint” and develop an “ideological counterpoint to the prevailing misogynistic monologue—the ‘word of the fathers.’”³¹⁶ Donovan’s insistence that male authors of the framed-novelle did not make use of the ironic juxtapositions and dialogical relationships between frame and inset story is somewhat strange given that the *Canterbury Tales* is far from monological, and frequently quite equivocal in its endorsement of the views presented by the various characters. However, her argument for seeing this genre as opening up a space in which women could challenge their culture—or rather the misogynist culture that excluded them—seems quite plausible. It afforded women a space in which to critique an existing literary tradition and its oppressive implications while developing a new form:

The women writers attempted to critique a received body of misogynist folk tales and fabliaux, which reified women in stereotypical molds; as against this monolithic discourse [...] the women counterposed a view that values women as diverse subjects—thus establishing the dialogical heteroglossia Bakhtin identified with the novel [...] Bakhtin indeed conceived the dialogic in political terms as arising from the clash between authoritarian absolutist discourses [...] and antiauthoritarian perspectives. What he failed to note was that in the early modern period, a primary ideological source of

³¹⁶ Donovan 952.

counter-hegemonic resistance was feminism.³¹⁷

The fact that it was women who were writing these framed-novelles is a key reason that early novels, even once more “novelistic” novels have appeared, seem ambivalent or equivocal about power, about literary form, and about the sexual and romantic plots that shape their narratives. The emergent novel draws on the power stemming from its marginalization, but ultimately it moved to the center of literary discourse. The novel developed by ruptures within its tradition, by resistance to the form it was taking at any historical moment. It could, in fact, be argued that many of the great novels of the eighteenth century are also anti-novels, novels designed to correct errors in the deployment of realism, the construction of character, or narrative tone, style and distance. And many of its innovations are developed by women, or, as Joan Douglas Peters points out, they are developed in texts that feature female narrator-protagonists (including, of course, the narrators of Defoe’s and Richardson’s novels). Peters argues that challenges to the novel’s prevailing structure manifest themselves dialogically within the form. The marginalized status of women makes possible changes in narrative form and mode that ultimately become conventional features.³¹⁸

The contest of genres becomes overtly political in Manley’s *New Atalantis*. Perhaps the most discussed episode in the text is the story of the Duke and Charlot, a tale that connects problems of literary kind to issues of education and to the vulnerable sexuality of women in a culture that privileges male cultural authority and domestic

³¹⁷ Donovan 953.

³¹⁸ Joan Douglas Peters, *Feminist Metafiction and the Evolution of the British Novel* (Gainesville: U of Florida P, 2002).

power. William Warner calls the episode the “first full scale novel in the *New Atalantis*.”³¹⁹ It is a complete inset narrative with a beginning, middle and end, a plot, characters who grow and change, dramatic irony, and conflict. Like other stories within the text, the details of the episode overwhelm and marginalize any explicit allegorical dimension (the Duke represents Hans William Bentinck, Earl of Portland, and his charge, Charlot, represents Stuartha Werburge Howard). Once Charlot has been orphaned the Duke takes her education upon himself with the intention of preparing her for marriage to his son. Manley reveals that education can be used as a tool of control and subjugation, but can also produce profound ignorance. “Young Charlot was to be educated in the high road to applause and virtue. He banished far from her conversation whatever would not edify, airy romances, plays, dangerous novels, loose and insinuating poetry, artificial introductions of love, well-painted landscapes of that dangerous poison.”³²⁰ While his intentions at first are to mold her to her “duty” and to help her “avoid her ruin,” once the Duke has fallen in love with her, he uses texts (Ovid, Petrarch, Tibullus) to mold her in a different direction: to excite her desire, and to create a lover under his total command. Even after the text has quickened with their first scene of passion, with a language rivaling the pornographic elements of the new books Charlot is reading, the moralizing voice of the narrator remains present:

There are books dangerous to the community of mankind, abominable for virgins, and destructive to youth; such as explain the mysteries of nature, the congregated pleasures of Venus, the full delight of mutual lovers and

³¹⁹ William B. Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998) 100.

³²⁰ Manley 30.

which rather ought to pass the fire than the press. The Duke had laid in her way such as made no mention of virtue or honour but only advanced native, generous and undissembled love.³²¹

The conservative strain of the text here resembles Pope's attitude in *The Dunciad*: moral degeneration can be traced back to the popular presses. Manley seems to endorse the prohibition of romantic texts originally imposed by the Duke. But Charlot's early reading left her unexposed to texts that may have perhaps taught her to deal with the Duke's advances, or to help her predict that he would ultimately abandon her for a woman more appropriate to his status.

This episode introduces the perennial eighteenth-century concern with the power of literature over the minds of women: the dangers posed by romance, and later in the century, by novels, to the virtue, manners, and minds of young women. A number of critics have argued that the episode is a strong indictment of the dangers of romance, a warning of its corrupting influence on young women. At the same time, however, it is actually Charlot's lack of exposure to romance—her intellectual isolation—that leaves her unprepared for the sexual advances of the Duke. As Barbara Benedict writes, “Manley humorously compares the reading she provides her own reader with that the Duke denies Chariot, thus advertising her own novel as a vehicle of female information.”³²² There is a tension throughout the episode between the dangers of knowledge and the dangers of ignorance. Manley's text, however, as a probing secret history, narrated by a character named “Intelligence,” offers knowledge, and a knowledge

³²¹ Manley 37.

³²² Barbara Benedict, “The Curious Genre: Female Inquiry in Amatory Fiction,” *Studies in the Novel* 30 (1998): 198.

that is explicitly “dangerous” and salacious.

Regardless of whether it is Charlot, the Duke, or the texts that are to blame, Charlot is easily manipulated by texts, and the Duke uses the power of language first to maintain a domineering control over her chastity, and then to make her a device of his sexual desire. If one of the purposes of Menippean satire is to challenge intellectual patterns that cloud thought, then this attack on false education can be read as a challenge to the role texts and discourse play in shaping perceptions of the world and the self. Romantic discourse and the discourse of female chastity reinforce particular gender roles, and the control of discourse and access to it leads to ignorance. Aaron Santesso argues that Manley seeks to “disavow publicly the more stereotypically ‘female’ forms of writing, particularly romance.” On this basis, Santesso insists that Manley’s text is anti-feminist, but his reading disregards the many other women novelists of the period who challenged romance in their texts not only for its absurdities, but for the role it played in the continued subjugation of women. The text rails against the sexual violence of men, and their failure to properly protect women from men: “Thus was Charlot undone! Thus ruined by him that ought to have been her protector!”³²³

At the same time, Manley draws on the power of romance in the text. Romantic expectations are used to set characters up, to situate them in scenes that are damning in their suggestiveness. Amatory elements are also used to titillate as the text, frequently, slips into a pornographic mode (“[The Duke] pressed [Charlot’s] lips with his; the nimble beatings of his heart, apparently seen and felt through his open breast! the glowings! the tremblings of his limbs! the glorious sparkles from his guilty eyes! his shortness of breath

³²³ Manley 39-40.

and eminent disorder—were things new to her that had never seen, heard, or read before of those powerful operations struck from the fire of the two meeting sex.”³²⁴) The pornographic is a device of exposure—showing true motivations and what is really behind the scenes of political power. A weapon of the satire, it is also nonetheless present, for its own sake. This sex scene, like the scenes of Charlot reading (first books of morality, and then books of passion), is also a scene of education, as Charlot discovers things “all new.”

The movement from reading to sex in Manley’s text is swift. As Warner puts it: “Manley intrigues her reader with a narrative which is structured to seduce the reading body into pleasure.”³²⁵ In the process the pleasures of the narrative achieve a kind of legitimacy. Furthermore, Charlot, as a reader within the text is a model for how, and how not, to read novelistic discourse. Warner writes, “Since her seduction requires her own imaginative sympathy with what she reads, Charlot is represented as being complicit with her seduction.”³²⁶ The danger is located not in Charlot’s constitution, but in her (mis-) education and in popular culture and the more erotic aspects of classical culture. Thus the text, while drawing on novelistic conventions, incorporates anti-novel attitudes into its very structure. Warner seeks to resolve this paradox by arguing that what we witness in Manley is a separation out of the novel from politics, and the shift of the novel into a private sphere. The text, as Warner argues, allows itself to be experienced as pure entertainment. But Manley’s text is deeply political, and the attack within the text on

³²⁴ Manley 36.

³²⁵ Warner 99.

³²⁶ Warner 107.

novels is not inconsistent with other aspects of her Tory position and rhetoric. The explanation could perhaps just as easily be located in some of the claims I have been making about Menippean satire: a culture is indicted in and through its products. Young ladies, adopting a novelistic, romantic, and naïve view of the world, are best challenged within the discourse of the novel. Charlotte Lennox takes this approach in the *Female Quixote*, and Jane Austen has similar fun at the expense of readers of the Gothic in *Northanger Abbey* (1803). Mental constructions that frame experience are exposed as false, artificial, products of culture.

Nonetheless, there is an irresistible pleasure that Manley and the reader derive from the fictional aspects of the text. And this tendency runs against the purported aims of the text, just as the exuberant, frenzied writing of Swift's Hack and the sublime mode of Pope's *Dunciad* are themselves—although they are also the very attitudes meant to be expunged—the greatest source of pleasure in the texts, and the reason, ultimately that they are able to continue to attract readers. What seems to keep readers away from Manley is that she does not offer enough inset “novels,” preferring to offer an exhaustive panoramic view of her time. Most of the allegorical narratives in Manley's text are brief, no more than a paragraph, a series of quick satirical sketches. Manley's text is thick with topical references, and the contemporary reader is unable to become lost in the fiction for any sustained period of time. The fiction in *New Atalantis* is thinner than it is in *Gulliver's Travels* which has more coherence as a narrative and can be divorced, more or less, from a great deal of its political allegorizing.³²⁷ Yet these tensions between allegory and fiction, between brief vignettes and full-blown novellas, are sources of the dialogical

³²⁷ See Chapter 4, n.259.

within the text; the inserted “novels” achieve a life of their own and threaten to escape their frame. Furthermore, as Donovan argues, a dialogic tension develops between the inset stories and their frame, between Manley’s moralizing narrators and the stories (with all their bawdy details) that serve as fodder for those moral pronouncements.

Melinda Rabb also makes an argument about the role that genre plays in the ability of the text to undermine straightforward communications of meaning and textual closure. She prefers the term “secret history” to “novel,” and argues that secret history as a mode tends toward dialogism and a subversive destabilization of accepted versions of the truth. “Satire and secret history [...] share a tendency to destabilize meaning by activating contending versions of truth through such means as irony and alternative narratives of the same events.”³²⁸ Regardless of the label we use, we see in these texts (and Rabb’s provocative inclusion of *Gulliver’s Travels* further emphasizes the role that Swift’s text played in defining and challenging the emergent novel) the confluence of several traditions: the framed-novelle, the secret history, the *roman à clef*, Menippean or Varronian satire, amatory fiction and romance. The confluence of traditions itself is constitutive of dialogism, pitting traditions against one another. But it also problematizes most theories of the rise of the novel, because such mixing of forms resists the organizing principles of genre and the coherence of literary forms across history.

The Rise of the Novel and Menippean Satire

³²⁸ Melinda Rabb, “The Secret Memoirs of Lemuel Gulliver: Satire, Secrecy, and Swift,” *ELH* 73 (2006): 326.

A student of the eighteenth century must engage with the problem of genre: after all the most significant modern literary form, and the one associated with modernity's triumphant middle class, the novel, finds its origins in this period. But problems quickly multiply when origins are pursued: What novel do we mean? The picaresque, the domestic, the *bildungsroman*? And by which novel do we measure the full and complete arrival of the form: is it in Jane Austen's careful and comic, sometimes acerbic, dissection of character; in the sweeping portrayal of personalities within time in Walter Scott's historical romances; in the elaborate networks of social relationships in Dickens; or do we already find it fully formed in Samuel Richardson's up-to-the-moment, epistolary analyses of psychological states? What kinds of prose fiction count as its precursors? If syllabi are any indication of consensus, Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, is a novel, or at least points the way to what is recognizable as novelistic discourse. Behn's seventeenth century, however, abounded in prose, much of it of a narrative nature, including the massive French romances against which many of the eighteenth-century novels defined themselves. But if all prose fiction is somehow in the novel's prehistory, can we include Rabelais and Cervantes, Apuleius and Petronius?³²⁹ If so, then to what extent does the novel draw on satirical traditions? To what extent are we seeking affinities, to what extent differences, from neighboring forms? Is there even such a thing as *the* novel?

When literary critics took the nineteenth-century novel as exemplary of the

³²⁹ For a history of the novel that traces the novel back to antiquity, see Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1997). Doody seeks to challenge the "chauvinism" that assumes the novel was a uniquely English invention, and also to dislocate its emergence from the particular contexts of Protestantism and the rise of the bourgeoisie. She writes, "Romance and the Novel are one. The separation between them is part of a problem, not part of a solution" (15).

form, histories of the novel looked back to the eighteenth century to find texts that anticipated the triple-decker, domestic novel designed for consumption by a middle class Victorian audience, novels whose form and content mirrored their vision of the world. Ian Watt's argument for the simultaneous rise of the novel, the middle class and a literate public, is the most important—for its impact—literary history of this kind.³³⁰ Emphases in the history of the novel have shifted, however. Twentieth-century theories of the novel failed in many ways to address what happened to the novel in the twentieth century, or to theorize how those developments in the later novels impacted our reading of the earliest ones. I am referring in part to the greatly exaggerated claims of the death of the novel, the disintegration of the novel in Joyce's *Ulysses* (or, rather, the fullest realization of the novel as the unfolding of consciousness in time in *Ulysses*) and the emergence of postmodern fictions that are part-theory, part-novel, and that inhabit both the worlds of academic discourse and popular culture. There has increasingly been an interest in uncovering earlier prose forms, "novels," that anticipate the directions the form has ultimately taken. Thus we find arguments that *Tristram Shandy*, with its warping of chronology, its failure even to begin, its mockery of pedantic discourse, and its entanglement of its characters within a web of ironies, is a post-modern novel composed when the novel was still but a newborn (or waiting to be conceived).

Of course, from the perspective of this paper, it makes more sense to situate *Tristram Shandy* within a satirical, Menippean literary line that looks backward toward its precursors. *Tristram Shandy* is more properly a *late* Scriblerian text than

³³⁰ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (1957; Berkeley: U of California P, 2001).

and *early* Joycean one. D. W. Jefferson, for example, sees Sterne's novel as oriented toward the Early Modern tradition of learned wit, and uses language suggestive of Menippeanism to describe the text's attitude toward learning: "The theme of *Tristram Shandy* may be seen in terms of a comic clash between the world of learning and that of human affairs."³³¹ Donald R. Wehrs situates Sterne in a fideistic tradition that is also explicitly Early Modern.³³² But influence *for readers* runs in multiple directions. Just as Joyce redefines Sterne, Sterne redefines his precursors—Swift, Fielding and Burton. The later novelist is able to bring out features in his predecessors; to define a tradition where perhaps before one did not exist. Borges made a provocative argument along these lines, arguing that Franz Kafka (1883 – 1924) created his precursors. He writes,

If I am not mistaken, the heterogeneous pieces I have enumerated resemble Kafka; if I am not mistaken, not all of them resemble each other. This second fact is the most significant. In each of these texts we find Kafka's idiosyncrasy to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had never written a line, we would not perceive this quality; in other words, it would not exist.³³³

The same argument could be used to explain the relationship between Joyce and

³³¹ D. W. Jefferson, "Tristram Shandy and the Tradition of Learned Wit," ed. John Traugott, *Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968) 162. Jefferson calls Sterne the "last great writer in the tradition" that included *A Tale of a Tub*, *The Art of Sinking in Poetry (Peri Bathous)*, and *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*. This tradition makes use of a "pre-Enlightenment" form of learned wit (150).

³³² Donald R. Wehrs, "Sterne, Cervantes, Montaigne: Fideistic Skepticism and the Rhetoric of Desire," *Comparative Literature Studies* 25 (1988). See chapter 2, n. 3.

³³³ Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964) 201.

Sterne: the later novelist forces a rereading of the earlier text and the establishment of a new tradition that necessarily culminates in the newer author. The forms that the novel takes in the eighteenth century also has a lot to do with “idiosyncrasy,” as widely disparate innovations are brought to, or dropped from, the form.

It took the rise of the novel to hegemonic status to organize other prose fiction forms into more distinct genres. The distinction between the novel and these other forms, is something that occurred after the fact, and has perhaps made certain prose texts seem more ambiguous and unclassifiable than they would have seemed to contemporary audiences trained in their conventions. This consolidation of generic distinctions may not have even fully occurred by the time of Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* which is perhaps more solidly in the tradition of Rabelais, Burton and Swift than in the newly organized tradition of Richardson and Fielding. As critics like Homer Obed Brown have pointed out, despite Ian Watt’s insistence on seeing a dual rise of the novel in the works of Fielding and Richardson, their techniques were still too different to be considered conventions of the same form; they were producing hybrid and experimental forms (although often in response to each other). It was not until later, especially in the retrospective critical activities of Walter Scott, that the novel became an institution and disparate conventions could be joined under the same heading, or excluded if they did not quite fit.³³⁴ It was also in later retrospective activities, such as Clara Reeve’s *Progress of Romance* (1785) that women, so instrumental in the formation of the novel, began to be excluded from its canon.

Michael McKeon has argued that genres, like modes of production and social

³³⁴ Homer Obed Brown, *Institutions of the English Novel: From Defoe to Scott* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1997).

classes, can only be spoken of as existing after they are well-established, after they can be spoken of as “simple abstractions,” when, in other words, they can be called by their name. McKeon follows Marx’s conception of the “simple abstraction,” which McKeon defines as, “a conceptualization whose experiential referent has a prehistory that is rich enough both to permit, and to require, the abstraction and the dominance of the general category itself.”³³⁵ The category must already have existed before it is finally recognized as existing, yet it must be seen as something fully formed at the moment it is recognized. Thus it acquires an identity through a false sense of its universal and permanent abstractness, as its historical particularity is elided. McKeon, true to his dialectical method, points out that this distinctness is consolidated through separation from other categories and their opposing resolution into “simple abstractions.”

Desires for orderly explanations, systems in which everything seems to have a place and an explanation, will be happily frustrated by the eighteenth century. Perhaps most frustrating is the fact that the writers of this period seem somehow untroubled by this problem of generic confusion. After all, is this not the “Augustan age” in which decorum and proper conformity to literary traditions is a mandatory condition of literary greatness? But this, in many ways, is only true in poetry where the constraints and expectations of genre, or “poetic kind,” were instrumental in the rhetorical effect of literary texts. But while the kinds of poetry were well defined at the beginning of the eighteenth century, prose genres were not. Prose writers drew comfortably from multiple traditions, bringing incompatible forms into the same

³³⁵ Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 163.

work, embedding entirely different modes, mingling fact and fiction, politics, allegory and fantasy with an almost total disregard for categories. Classical poetic education emphasized form and genre. The inherited prose forms from antiquity, however, were mostly various in their structure. And yet these are the same writers, Margaret Cavendish and Jonathan Swift among them, who supposedly craved hierarchy, tradition, and order. Prose fiction is messy, complicated. It undoes expectations, undermines its own intentions, and seems to have the power to bring the whole world into a fictional space where it may be alienated, interrogated, fragmented, and reordered.

Recent theories of the novel have wrestled with the mainstreaming of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of Menippean satire. With this term critics have been able, or have at least attempted, to develop a theory of the novel that can include *Gulliver's Travels*, *Tristram Shandy*, and *The Infinite Jest* (1996), as readily as *Clarissa* (1748), *Middlemarch* (1871 – 72), and *Beloved* (1987). While Bakhtin seeks to demonstrate continuity between the menippea and the novel, showing in fact that the latter developed out of the former, Philip Stevick draws clear distinctions between the forms. Stevick agrees with Frye's inclusion of anatomy as one of four distinct prose fiction types—novel, romance, confession, anatomy—and seeks to further "amplify" the ways in which anatomy may be understood as a unique (and hitherto understudied) genre.

The customary position of the novel is at or near the moral and ideological center of its culture [...] Anatomy on the other hand, tends to be a minority genre, almost an alien one, carried out on the fringes

of its culture, often dealing with human types displaying startling degrees of differentness, often constructed in a form and style which self-consciously mocks the customary modes of the center of its culture, often addressed to those initiates who can handle its slippery allusions and its private jokes.³³⁶

The novel as Stevick defines it is a repository of mainstream values and culture. This is certainly true of the novel as it exists in the nineteenth century. It represents the dominant social class and its conception of reality and its ideological positions on education, marriage, childrearing, the transmission of property, and the proper mourning of the dead. Stevick, however, does not allow for any slippage within the form of the novel toward what he is calling anatomy, toward a form that challenges its culture. Why can a novel not adopt the express purpose of “self-consciously mocking” culture? Are the novels of Fielding and Sterne not filled with “slippery allusions” and “private jokes”? Does the novel not exist on the “fringes of its culture” when it first comes into being in the eighteenth century? Is it not at first an “alien” and “minority” genre, even if it is composed by those who represent elite interests or who are suspicious of all things alien and strange?

From our position, looking at the history of the novel in retrospect, we are often likely to assume that it was inevitable that such a form should have emerged at such a time and in such a way. A great deal of its emergence is, of course, contingent upon material, cultural and ideological forces. The form and concerns of the domestic novel are expressions of a bourgeois ideology and the dominance of the

³³⁶ Philip Stevick, "Novel and Anatomy: Notes toward an Amplification of Frye," *Criticism* 10 (1968), 157.

form later in the century is one measure of the hegemonic status of middle class values. Similarly, its success as a popular form depended upon shifting modes of production, on the rise of print culture and the public sphere. Furthermore, the novel's presentation of individual consciousnesses in a world of material things only makes sense after developments in seventeenth-century philosophy and science. But there is nothing inevitable about the novel. The novel needed to be carved out and defined from a complex mixture of prose and hybrid narrative forms.

Early novelists often found it necessary to justify what they were doing, and to define their form and its distinctions from other genres. It seems that an early feature of the novel is its self-consciousness, is the attention that it draws to itself as narrative act, as a deliberate creation. Part of this self-consciousness is discussion within the text of the nature of the form, of its relation to the history of genre, and of its novelty. Thus Henry Fielding in *Joseph Andrews* distinguishes his form both from Burlesque and Romance. But he also refers to his text as a “comic romance” and also a “comic epic poem in prose,” a definition that refers explicitly to the emergence of the novel out of other forms and to a hybridity that is the very condition of its being.³³⁷ Other aspects of Fielding's definition suggest the features of Menippean satire that I have been discussing in earlier chapters, including a conflation of the high and the low, the introduction of carnivalesque elements, word play, and a mockery of serious and learned forms of discourse: His form distinguishes itself from “serious romance” by “introducing persons of inferior rank, and consequently of inferior manners, whereas the grave romance, sets the highest before us.” It also distinguishes itself “in its

³³⁷ *The Complete Works of Henry Fielding*, 16 vols., ed. William Ernest Henley, vol. 1 (1902; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967) 18.

sentiments and diction, by preserving the ludicrous instead of the sublime.”³³⁸

Fielding seems somewhat uncomfortable with his own form here; the use of “ludicrous” and “inferior” to describe his experimental form hardly serve as an unqualified endorsement. He is still a champion of classical values, and is quite suspicious of ridiculous discourse and forms of literature, quite reluctant to allow lower class characters the dignity of a place in literature. The final purpose of literature and satire are still defined in moral terms as well: Fielding’s abiding concern will be with the ridiculous which arises, he argues, exclusively from affectation. Novelistic discourse, then, mocks the ridiculous, mocks the affected high seriousness of the frauds, pedants, and hypocrites who constitute society, who mask their vices behind the pretense of their opposite virtues.

Fielding’s moral vision is his greatest inheritance from satire, but his satirical approach also finds its roots in the theater and thus in comedic traditions traceable back to humoral Jonsonian characters and to the New Comedy of Aristophanes and others. As in Manley’s *New Atalantis*, Fielding’s narrators seek to expose the disparity between their moral stance and the human nature discovered as fact in the real world. The novel, as Fielding conceives it, allows us to see humanity as it is: “Man, who *is* the very reverse of what he would *seem* to be.”³³⁹ For Fielding realism entails a moral vision. As Ronald Paulson puts it: “By reality Fielding means moral or factual truth apprehended by the reader, whereas he sees in Richardson a reality that means the true workings of a character’s mind, without any concern for the truth

³³⁸ Fielding 18.

³³⁹ Fielding 22.

or falseness of apprehension in relation to the external world.”³⁴⁰ Many of the great early novels are reactionary texts, texts that satirize and mock romance, true histories and novels. The contested nature of these forms arises in part from a debate over what reality is and how it is to be properly depicted. Thus *Gulliver’s Travels* is, among other things, an elaborate parody of *Robinson Crusoe*; *Joseph Andrews* mocks *Pamela*; and *Tristram Shandy* calls into question novelistic discourse itself. In each case the later text serves to correct errors in the presentation of reality, human nature, and time. In a later passage in *Joseph Andrews*, while praising biography and discussing its relation to his text, Fielding directly criticizes other novelists and takes on Manley and Haywood (who also wrote a couple satirical Atlantian fictions) directly. Among those writers he praises, he says,

I would by no means be thought to comprehend those persons of surprising genius, the authors of immense romances, or the modern novel and Atalantis writers; who without any assistance from nature or history, record persons who never were, or will be, and facts which never did, nor possible can, happen; whose heroes are of their own creation, and their brains the chaos whence all their materials are collected.³⁴¹

Certain kinds of fiction—pure fantasy, monstrous romances, and books whose heroes are drawn from deluded minds rather than from life—are singled out for rejection. In

³⁴⁰ Ronald Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1967) 106.

³⁴¹ Fielding 213-14.

his own work, Fielding insists, “Every thing is copied from the book of Nature.”³⁴² This emphasis on realism and mimetic integrity seems to be a key point of divergence between the novel and Menippean satire. Most historians of the novel incorporate realism into their account and definition. Realism is in part, as it is for Fielding, about depicting low life (scenes of low life, or “slum naturalism,” are also one of Bakhtin’s fourteen characteristics of Menippean satire). As Ian Watt puts it: “The ‘realism’ of the novels of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding is closely associated with the fact that *Moll Flanders* is a thief, *Pamela* a hypocrite, and *Tom Jones* a fornicator.”³⁴³ For Watt, however, realism also entails “an authentic account of the actual experience of individuals.”³⁴⁴ There must at the very least be the impression of authenticity; the text must produce an image of human experience that *seems* real. “The novelist’s primary task is to convey the impression of fidelity to human experience, attention to any pre-established formal conventions can only endanger his success.”³⁴⁵ The depiction of the real must be conventionally portrayed; it must fit certain formal expectations. Watt is wrong in arguing that the novelist must avoid established conventions. This is impossible as such conventions are necessary to produce an artificial imitation of reality. What is important is that these conventions not be recognized as conventions. The real, in other words, must be presented in a form that is recognizable to *readers* who have seen it depicted in other texts.

Watt acknowledges that how the real is conceived had changed in this period

³⁴² Fielding 24.

³⁴³ Watt 11.

³⁴⁴ Watt 27.

³⁴⁵ Watt 13.

and that therefore the kind of real world depicted was historically specific: the realism of the novel emerged in the context of a new Lockean conception of personality.

“Many novelists, from Sterne to Proust, have made their subject the exploration of the personality as it is defined in the interpenetration of its past and present self-awareness.”³⁴⁶ More recently, critics have argued that the real is a function of ideology, and that any approximation of it in a text is equally ideological. Realism is a fiction—a formal lie—that actually must be presented through formal conventions, which in turn express the concerns and interests of a particular class. Lennard Davis writes,

Novels work [...] by denying their own mode of production as mere fictions and also by creating the illusion through the use of the median past tense and mimetic techniques that the text is close to—if not completely—reality[... R]ealism, as a technique, is a function of the ideological mode since it allows the work to refer to some ‘reality’ that is cut off from the actual historical continuum [... L]ike ideology, the novel’s point of reference is not history, from which the novel stands autonomously aloof, but the social process of signification, the world of ‘lived’ as opposed to ‘actual’ experience.³⁴⁷

As I argued in Chapter Three, “reality” can be seen as a function of ideology. The form literature takes when imitating that reality is also ideologically determined. One constructed reality imitates another. Because they are both conceived and

³⁴⁶ Watt 21.

³⁴⁷ Davis 221.

perceived within an ideological context that delimits a particular reality, the constructed nature of both goes unnoticed. Louis Althusser's controversial definition of ideology is relevant here: "Ideology, then, is the expression of the relation between men and their 'world,' that is the (overdetermined) unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation between them and their real conditions of existence."³⁴⁸ Existence is a relationship between the real and the imaginary, the socially (over-)determined imaginary and the real that escapes signification and ideology (but that cannot be known in itself, beyond ideology). "Lived" experience as Davis describes it implies a narrative structure, what he calls the "social process of signification." Experience is both real and imaginary, like a fiction. The novel approximates this socially-defined, narratively-realized reality. The novel perhaps could even be said to fully enter into the artificial, human world and to accept it as reality. Its conformity, then, to the conventions of that human world is the formal sign of "realism." It is no coincidence that the realism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was associated with the novel, a middle class product. It is no less surprising, and for similar reasons, that realism in the twentieth century was expressed in cinematic modes or in the twenty first century on "reality" television.

The novel defines its generic identity against the romance. Their antagonism is in many ways a struggle over how reality should be expressed within a text. Perfect, superhuman aristocrats are replaced by flawed gentlemen; exotic, distant locales are replaced by country house domestic spaces; and evil villains are replaced by overbearing fathers. But the novel also has a complex relationship with prose

³⁴⁸ Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: New Left Books, 1977) 233-34.

satire, and the two forms, during the period that they overlap and when one replaces the other as the dominant prose mode, actually share quite a bit in common. Novels have only been considered novels if they resemble the form they became—the form as “perfected” by Austen and her nineteenth-century descendents, but the question readers of the eighteenth-century novel, especially those prose fictions before the “Pamela event” and the subsequent development of “realism” in the battle over the conventions of the form in the 1740s, face is: how like the later novels must these earlier forms be to be considered part of the same category? Likewise, how satirical must a prose fiction be to be generically classifiable as a satire? Satire is quite different from the novel which, in its more direct kinship with comedy and its status as a uniquely bourgeois form, certainly seems to take up a moderate position on philosophical and social questions.

Sheldon Sacks provides a neat solution to this problem of generic designation by arguing that all parts of a prose fiction are subordinate to the dominant purpose of that particular form. Thus every part of *Gulliver’s Travels* serves the *satiric* aims of the piece; every aspect of Johnson’s *Rasselas* (1759) serves to answer the agenda of an *apologue* which is to provide fictional examples “of the truth of a formulable statement;” and all parts of *Tom Jones* serve to satisfy the formal requirements of the *novel’s* plot. Sacks defines the novel, or “action,” as “a work organized so that it introduces characters about whose fates we are made to care in unstable relationships which are then further complicated until the complication is finally resolved by the removal of the represented instability.”³⁴⁹ The primary emphasis of an action is on

³⁴⁹ Sheldon Sacks, *Fiction and the Shape of Belief: A study of Henry Fielding with glances at Swift, Johnson and Richardson* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1964) 26.

character, whereas the apologue focuses on moral statements and satire on judgments. Ralph Rader, also seeking to limit the number of works that can be considered novels, develops a “general action model of the novel” that is modeled in part on Sacks’s:

The general action model specifies works of fiction designed to develop and maximize concern for a character (or characters) along a line of development in which the ground of concern is a dynamically shifting contrast between the reader’s sense of the immediate and ultimate fate of the character (or characters) as compared with his (or their) immediate and ultimate desert, and to resolve this concern by a surprising but probable extension of the means used to raise it, so as to give the reader the greatest satisfaction in the ultimate fate of the character (or characters). To put it more simply, the author pits our induced sense of what will happen to a character against our induced sense of what we want to happen to him, our hopes against our fears, in order to give the greatest pleasure appropriate to their resolution.³⁵⁰

Clearly what is important here in defining novelistic discourse is the fictional integrity of character and plot, the sustained effort of the entire text to perpetuate the fictional realism of that character and the world in which he or she moves. Ironies are meant internally and are derived from the ability of the reader to see more than the character, but are not pointed outward at the real world.

New Atalantis presents challenges to this neat schema: The inset story of the

³⁵⁰ Ralph Rader, "Defoe, Richardson, Joyce, and the Concept of Form in the Novel," William Matthews and Ralph Rader, *Autobiography, Biography and the Novel* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973).

Duke and Charlot in *New Atalantis* is novelistic in its presentation of an action, with all ironies directed inward. The fact that it is followed by a clearly defined moral message, however, places this text in the realm of the apologue—the tale is a moral exemplum. These characters also stand in for real political figures, suggesting that the final purpose of the episode is to satirize figures in the real world. All these dimensions of the text are present at once, however. So which is primary? It would seem the satire is most important, but the fiction of the tale quickly overwhelms the satirical agenda. Is it not possible that the effects of the text rest upon the fact that the conflict between these forms never resolves itself?

A novelist must make explicit from a novel's beginning both what end result is desired for the character (marriage, for example) and what type of obstacles may impede that end result. The parts of the novel all have a relationship to the overarching structure of the novel (the plot); the reader knows at any given point where the character is situated within that structure and where she is supposed to end up. The narrative voice represents the reader's desire within the text, and directs response to the action. Thus, the reader experiences suspense and sympathetic interest in the development of the character, or the reader participates with the narrator in judging the character. But the character is also accepted as a real person, as an individual operating according to normal, understandable, and predictable psychological motivations. Some of the devices a novelist must employ to create our desire for an outcome and our concern for the character's fate include the revelation of the character's desires through direct quotation or free indirect style (by which the desires may be parodied as well), foreshadowing, the interjection of all sorts of

obstacles to the character's goal, blockages caused by other characters or personality flaws that must be overcome, and the controlled use of irony to allow the reader to understand more than the character can of her own desires or to see the personality deficiencies preventing her wish fulfillment. Irony, in particular, can be a powerful tool to represent weaknesses of character, limitations of knowledge, and moral shortcomings that need to be overcome; irony can simultaneously show the planned direction of the work and the roadblocks along the way. All of this invites us to wonder to what extent the rise of the novel depended on the emergence of the type of irony we associate with the novel, a type of irony that on the one hand seems to fix characterization, and on the other to develop the very illusion of realism which is said to define the novel.

Rader's definition leaves little room under its umbrella for *Gulliver's Travels*, *Blazing World*, *The Adventures of Eoavaai*, or *New Atalantis*. These are distinct fictional modes, even if parts of them employ some of the techniques of the emergent novel. Ronald Paulson, though, complicates the distinction by showing the gradual transition in Fielding's writings from the satiric mode to the novelistic. Fielding truly is a transition figure. His contributions to novelistic discourse, especially the voice of the narrator and the narrator's ironic attitude toward the world and the novel's characters, are developed out of the rhetoric of satire, particularly Scriblerian satire. His developments in style and point of view, however, also point toward the realistic novels of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Paulson writes,

Irony is transformed by Fielding from a satiric strategy to a technique for suggesting the complexity of reality and the

mitigating forces that make the ‘mixed’ character in whom he is most interested [...His] aim is to [...] have the reader merge himself in the author as a judge who can sympathize with the characters but never lose perspective on their actions. The psychological purpose of this irony is always subordinate to the analytic.³⁵¹

Even though Sacks argues for generic purity and Paulson for a gradual transition from one mode to the next along a continuum, both positions are simultaneously tenable. Paulson argues that Fielding’s narrative voice, developed in places like the *Jacobite Journal*, retains elements of the satiric persona, but is turned inward toward the characters rather than toward the outside world. This is very similar, in fact, to the argument made by Sacks who sees the particularity of characters and the direction of satiric irony toward the characters *as characters* rather than toward characters as allegories of real world figures, as evidence that the novel cannot be read as satire, but merely as an instance of the satiric. We can argue that during his career Fielding developed a narrative voice and strategy that on one end of his career serves the purposes of satire and on the other resolves the tensions of a novelistic plot.

With the emergence of a single, unified narrative voice that is both judge and defense attorney, the voice on the page is seemingly an extension of the community itself. Fielding typifies this narrative voice. John Bender describes the development of Fielding’s narrative persona thus:

Joseph Andrews (1742) [is] the first of Fielding’s novels to attempt a

³⁵¹ Paulson 14.

narrative stance combining detachment, the appearance of disinterested inquiry into factual detail, and a conversational alliance with the reader [...] In *Tom Jones* (1749), Fielding combines qualities of detached, ironic judgment with omniscient presence and authoritative governance of the narration.³⁵²

By the time Fielding was writing *Amelia* the narrator is “comparatively elusive” and there is more interest in the inner world of the characters. We thus find, “significant movement toward the transparency of the later realist novel.”³⁵³ The narrator as judge and quasi-character in Fielding is akin to the tone developed more fully by the great practitioners of free indirect style: Jane Austen and Henry James. James and Austen make it more subtle, however, capturing the nuances of thought, and exploiting the ironic distances between the self-perceptions of characters and what readers know to be true of them. The characters indict themselves through their own thought, a thought that is paraphrased with the gentlest irony, and with a carefully satirical tone, by the narrator-author. The narrator mimics speech patterns of the character, imitates, like the Menippean satirist does, the language most representative of their status and class position. The result, however, is not broad caricature as we may get when Chaucer, say, imitates the jargon of a Man-of-Law, but the realistic presentation of character (or at least the flawless appearance of realism) in his or her own speech.

Jane Austen’s novels are masterpieces of controlled distance. The narrator, an

³⁵² John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987) 180.

³⁵³ Bender 181.

omniscient deployment of communal speech is also a voice closely aligned with the protagonist, and hovers just at the periphery of her thought. Sometimes moving into her mouth, sometimes into her thoughts, free indirect style is often indistinguishable from the voice of the character, but often comes to the reader at a double remove, filtered through the judging consciousness of the narrator. Changes in point of view occur within the smallest phrases of the sentence, and shift so seamlessly that they are barely noticed, and thus irony slips in, almost undetected, until we find ourselves chuckling that the heroine could be so blind or could so thoroughly misrepresent what we know to be her true opinion, and so on. Irony in a fictional work can only truly be understood or explored within the closed system of the work, taking into account the relation of the parts to the whole, the ending to the interpretation. Irony needs to be thought of as happening within a reading experience, and thus we must consider what we know about plot and character at a given time and how this may affect how we read the given passage.

But where along the line in the history of the novel is the exact point of transition from Menippean satire to these subtly ironic novel-narrations? If it is a continuum, could we imagine a point where a text is neither a satire nor a novel or can be both, or does the very idea of genre preclude this idea of a continuum? Does there instead have to be a leap or a moment at which a writer or a literary tradition flips from one mode to another? What are we to make, in other words, of a text like *Tristram Shandy* that has been called both novel and satire? Or, even more disturbingly, a text like *The New Atalantis* that participates in the conventions of satire, romance, novel, *roman à clef*, and even autobiography? Satire, as we have

seen, makes use of forms as it sees fit. It could be argued that *Tristram Shandy* is such a text, and that Sterne seeks not merely to parody the novel form, but to make use of its devices for other, non-novelistic ends. Sterne, like Manley, plays with the sexual dimensions of the emerging novelistic mode, plays on readerly expectations: a nose in the end is just a nose, but for as long as he can, Sterne keeps alive for the reader the possibility that he is talking about something else. He brings the reader again and again into the semi-pornographic world of Manley's scandal fictions, the point where all satire becomes a sequence of devastating insinuations of sexual perversion, impotence, or genital abnormality. Sterne's ultimate purpose, like Manley's and Swift's, seems to be to attack the fallen world in its totality, however gently. And as is true of Manley, his primary, or ostensible, goal is satirical corrective:

By means of his reader-victimizing irony among other techniques, Sterne has introduced moral correction at every turn of the narrative. When we are brought up short by the sudden consciousness of our failure of sympathy with unfortunate humanity, or of our uncontrollable dirty-mindedness, we have received salutary lessons in humility—not the least of Christian virtues—and in the sense of our own fallen nature [...] It is [...] difficult to dissociate oneself from Sterne's form of corrective satire, where the readers own inappropriate emotional reactions or hasty moral judgments or lewd expectations, as he becomes conscious of them, betray his imperfect state and humble

his pride.³⁵⁴

Richter argues that the text forces readers to reconsider their own failings, their tendency to leap to the sexual explanation. Although Sterne, like Swift, recognizes that “*satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own,*” the form still seeks to entrap readers, to hold a mirror up to them at a moment when they would least expect it. The corrective, sermonic nature of satire speaks to the positions both men held as ministers.³⁵⁵

Moral positions are not pronounced in a straightforward manner the way they are in sermons, however. Language is unstable in Sterne, and so too, frequently, are the ironies of the text.³⁵⁶ *Tristram Shandy* also resists the patterned development of character, and the linear plot that had already become norms of the novel. The instability of the world is reflected in the text. Communication in the text is also often double because of the inadequacy of language, the uncertainty of character, and the conflict of the totalizing systems that frame individual perspectives. Yet Sterne’s

³⁵⁴ David H. Richter, “The Reader as Ironic Victim,” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 14.2 (1981): 143.

³⁵⁵ Irony, although it may entrap readers, usually implies a decided moral viewpoint. D. C. Meucke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1969) argues that it fixes a position, and highlights divergence from it, and thus, like satire, is usually conservative.

³⁵⁶ Attending any ironic statement is the possibility that it will be read literally, that the surface meaning of the words will be taken for the intended meaning. There is always a danger, then, of going too far, of reading something ironically that is not meant to be, or of missing an irony completely. Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1974), attempts to diffuse this potential for misreading by focusing on “stable irony,” and certain fixed ways of defining it. Stable irony must always have been intended; it must be deliberate and not projected onto the work by the reader. Stable irony is “covert”; ironic meaning should be present without being highlighted by an obvious or overt statement. Even though it is covert, however, an ironic statement can only have one actual meaning—the ironic one, and not the literal statement by which it is disguised. “They are all nevertheless stable or fixed, in the sense that once a reconstruction of meaning has been made, the reader is not then invited to undermine it with further demolitions or reconstructions” (5-6). Although the Menippean satires I have been discussing rely on stable irony to communicate their message—and the novels of Fielding certainly do—the form of these texts, and the conflict within them of genres, voices, and intellectual systems make stable, clear and unqualified claims impossible.

is also a realist, empirical text. In fact a great deal of its realism is derived from its resistance to the novelistic form. In seeking to present a narrative time that realistically imitates the real flow of events in lived time, Tristram finds himself unable to keep up. Tristram, like Swift's Hack, hopes to write to the moment, but like Richardson's heroines who also write to the moment, he takes us into his confidence, into his benevolent world, into a world where we are happy to be in the company of novel characters. The novel *cannot* be a realistic representation of life. It can only approximate life. It must be forced into a form that has developed formal conventions for representing reality. But those conventions, as they are artificial, can be parodied, mocked or made ridiculous. The novel is an intellectual pattern meant to explain the world, and Sterne's text, as a Menippean satire reveals the inability of that system to explain the world as given. Although the novel is able to contain Walter's philosophical absurdities and Toby's military obsessions, the novel is just one more system, one more attempt to explain a world that resists explanation.

Yet Sterne enters his novelistic world of details as if it holds the answers, as if the key to narration, plot, psychology and autobiography can be found within it. Sterne takes the world of detail seriously, and with good reason. Details that at first seem trivial become sources of action—a knot tied too tight in Slop's bag, a hot chestnut rolling into a lap, an altered window sash waiting to drop. And these details often leave a mark on the body. Each detail implies an action, and although at first seemingly irrelevant, it becomes a crucial driver of future action. Strangely, though, in *Tristram Shandy* every detail leads to impotence and thus seems to preclude future action, and details become the source of frustration. The characters, My Father,

Uncle Toby and Tristram are all locked within their intellectual constructions and unable to create. Or, rather, the things they create—the *Tristapaedia*, the bowling green battlefield, and the novel itself, are all monstrous constructions growing out of the hobby-horsical mental habits of their creators. These creators, like the *Atalantis* writers Fielding lampoons, are men of “surprising genius.” The satire, as it is in other Menippean satires, is directed against philosophies and worldviews that prevent knowledge, understanding, and production. However, the prevailing force of impotence in the text may be more a damning indictment of hobbyhorse-ism than a benevolent sentimentalism. Melvyn New makes much of the sterility of the characters, arguing that like *The Dunciad*, *Tristram Shandy* is ultimately about the “uncreating spirit” in man, as well as chaos, confusion, destruction and death. Yorick is the measure against which the intellectual impotence of the Shandy men becomes apparent. “Yorick, persevering in simplicity, good sense, mild antagonism, and a tone ‘two part jest and one part earnest,’ provides a contrast to the Shandy world simply by returning from the dead to be in it.”³⁵⁷ Sterne’s unusual book of details, written in a century of details, is not merely an engagement with Locke and his world built up out of empirical sensory details, nor is it simply a parody of the novel—with its emphasis on the mundane gestures and innuendos of daily life. Instead, it is a Menippean universe, in which everything is out of place, but cannot be worked into any explanatory system because no single system is adequate. Like the world itself, the novel is a compilation of insignificant details, trivialities and accidents out of which meaning is to be created. And Sterne, like Rabelais, seeks above all else, to

³⁵⁷ Melvyn New, *Laurence Sterne as Satirist: A Reading of Tristram Shandy* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1969) 139.

record the richness of life. But all of life cannot fit into the text. Time, space, and ink all threaten to run out. The text ends up being about its efforts to be written, and its fictionality becomes one of its central thematic concerns.

Fictionality is the most basic characteristic of Manley's and Haywood's secret histories; it is what distances them from the real political world they allegorize, and distorts their referentiality. As Catherine Gallagher has argued, Manley's efforts to resist prosecution for libel depended upon her insistence that her texts were *wholly* fictional and that any resemblance to real people was merely coincidental; "fiction was her alibi." "By insisting on the pure fictionality of the text, Manley placed the burden of identifying the libeled persons of quality on her interrogators, who were thus tricked into attaching the scandalous stories to the names of the Whig ministers, in a sense becoming party to the libel."³⁵⁸ The move toward fiction and away from satire, even as the satire is heavily meant, is instrumental in the development of a novelistic prose fiction.

Michael McKeon also locates the dialogical emergence of the domestic novel in the confluence of satire, *roman à clef*, and secret history. Manley's contribution to this development is that she was "accentuating more than other's had done the fictionality of the 'romance' level of the narrative, thereby insinuating its merely signifying status, even the logic that a sober truth therefore must lie beyond it."³⁵⁹ In this reading, the fictionality of the text is not a mere alibi, but an end in itself. It is a

³⁵⁸ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994) 88, 90.

³⁵⁹ Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005) 590.

fiction for fiction's sake. It is the degree to which a text is fictional, and the degree to which a fictional narrative has been unhinged from the realities of politics and re-situated within the private, domestic realm, that define the novelistic: In heightening the romantic aspects of her text, "it is as though the allegorical valence of the relation between the state and the family has been overbalanced by a metonymic valence heavily weighted toward the semantic primacy of the family—sexual love, the generative motive, marriage and estate settlement, but also exploitative seduction, rape, adultery, bigamy, incest, and financial corruption."³⁶⁰

National politics are understood in the text through the domestic realm, and public lives are subsumed by their private and sexual lives, but also buried within the conventions of romance: the conventionalized names, plots, and language of the form. Manley's "project" is to shift the "allegorical weight" of the *roman à clef* "from the public signified to the private signifier, from the political to the ethical subject."³⁶¹ In the process, a political language becomes domesticated, but is also undermined by its suggestive doubling. Even as the Menippean text is becoming novelistic, its barbs still point outward. The ironies of the text have not yet fully turned inward, and the fantastical, fragmented, hybrid form of the text has no interest in a sustained novelistic realism encapsulated in a term like "plot." Novelistic discourse, instead, is a merely incidental component of early eighteenth-century Menippean satire, one among many available genres. It is a modern form, there to be ridiculed or to be appropriated as needed. But it is also a form not yet fully formed by Manley's time, a

³⁶⁰ McKeon 590.

³⁶¹ McKeon 598.

form still without a voice, a voice that, it seems, needed to be learned from satire.

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