SCRIBLERIAN SATIRE.

A STUDY OF

FORM, METHOD, AND PURPOSE.

SCRIBLERIAN SATIRE.
A STUDY OF
FORM, METHOD, AND PURPOSE.

By

GARY MICHAEL DAULT, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

October 1965

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Professor Richard Morton, under whose supervision this thesis was written, for the time and erudition he has shared with me with an apparently limitless equanimity. I wish also to thank Professor W. J. Cameron for advice and assistance in obtaining material. Professor R. M. Wiles has given me advice both of an academic and non-academic nature for which I am grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SCRIBLERIAN SATIRE: THE METHOD OF PROCEEDING

At one point in his Dialogues of the Dead, Lucian has Hermes impart to Charon some important information about one of his passengers. Hermes says, "Charon, don't you know who this fellow you've ferried across is? Completely independent, doesn't give two cents for anybody. He's Menippus."[1] Little is known about Menippus. We are told[2] that he was born in Gadara, Palestine, early in the third century B.C. Having made his way from slavery to a position of some importance in the world as a Cynic philosopher, Menippus became known for his jests and satires upon the follies of mankind and especially for those at the expense of philosophers. It is appropriate that this study of Scriblerian satire should begin with a mention of Menippus for, if Hermes' brief character sketch of Menippus is accurate, this early philosopher's pursuing of folly wherever he found it and his not giving "two cents for anybody", are characteristics similar to those of the satirists of the Scriblerus Club and, indeed, to those of most satirists from the time of Menippus himself to our own time.

In Lucian's writings, Menippus displays a rigorous independence of thought, an eye that sees through pretension of all kinds, and a rollicking, biting wit. From what we learn of him from Varro, his Roman

---

[1]Lucian, "Dialogues of the Dead" in Selected Satires of Lucian, translated and edited by Lionel Casson (New York: Doubleday,1962), p. 205.

[2]See The New Century Classical Handbook, edited by Catherine B. Avery (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), p. 701a.

disciple, and from Dryden, he is also something of a literary puzzle. For example, he did not seem to confine his satires to any favourite subjects. Menippus is known (through Varro) to have provided mirth and gaiety, while by others he is noted for "cynical impudence, and obscenity".[3] Dryden tells us that in the writings of Lucian, Menippus is pictured as a "perpetual buffoon",[4] and that in his own work he was "much given to...parodies,...that is, he often quoted the verses of Homer and the tragic poets, and turned their serious meaning into something that was ridiculous."[5] Menippus not only plundered the literary forms of other poets for his own work, but he evidently employed many forms within a single piece of writing. The satires of Varro, which Dryden assures us were based on those of Menippus, were "not only composed of several sorts of verse,...but were also mixed with prose; and Greek was sprinkled amongst the Latin."[6] It seems difficult, then, to make any accurate statement about Menippus' personality, his subject matter, or the literary form which he chose as his mode of expression. It is a paradox, in fact, that his only definite characteristic seems to be his

---

[3]John Dryden, "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire" in Essays of John Dryden, selected and edited by W. P. Ker (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926), II, 66.

[4]Ibid., II, 66.

[5]Ibid., II, 66. In conversation with Philonides after he has returned from his visit to Hell, Menippus seems able to speak in nothing but parodies of "classical" poetry. When questioned by Philonides, Menippus replies: "Don't let it worry you, my dear fellow. The fact is, I've been seeing a lot of Homer and Euripides lately, and I seem to have got so saturated with their style that I find myself speaking in verse quite automatically." Quoted from "Menippus Goes to Hell" in Lucian. Satirical Sketches, translated with an introduction by Paul Turner (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 98.

[6]Dryden, op. cit., II, 64.

enigmatic quality, his elusiveness. This apparent elusiveness of Menippus, however, is not solely the result of his being so far removed from us in chronological and cultural time. If he seems an enigmatic figure, so, indeed, do his fellow satirists in all ages, including Pope, Swift, and the other members of the Scriblerus Club.

When one begins an investigation of the satires of the members of the Scriblerus Club, one finds in the writings on Jonathan Swift such phrases as "the skull of Swift" and "the mask of Swift" -- phrases which suggest the mysterious nature of this seat of the cankered muse. Swift is even sufficiently a puzzle to warrant his being coupled with another satirist, Lewis Carroll, as a subject for psychoanalytic speculation.[7] Alexander Pope is as often made an enigma as is Swift. He has been referred to both as the "wasp of Twickenham" and as "the little nightingale". His Dunciad has been described as a "universal shriek of loathing and despair"[8]; it has been said to exhibit a "fatal indefiniteness of purpose"[9], while a reading of the fourth book of the poem has inspired George Sherburn to cry out," 'Here is God's plenty.' There is in the poem not the Chaucerian humanity, but there is a humanity that Chaucer would understand and approve...."[10] James Sutherland, on the

---

[7]Phyllis Greenacre, Swift and Carroll: A Psychoanalytic Study of Two Lives (New York: International Universities Press, 1955).

[8]By Gilbert Highet in "The Dunciad", Modern Language Review, XXXVI (1941), p. 333.

[9]Ian Jack, Augustan Satire (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 134.

[10]George Sherburn, "The Dunciad, Book IV", Studies in English (Texas University), 1944, p. 189.

other hand, compares Pope's writing of the Dunciad to "a naughty boy of genius...writing on walls."[11]

A similar kind of critical confusion can be found clinging to most of the great authors of satire in western literature. Petronius has been hailed as the author of "the first and still the best picaresque novel"[12] whereas William Arrowsmith, the author of a recent translation of the work, recognizing that The Satyricon has been read "as a surreptitious classic, for amusement or titillation, or as one of the earliest examples of the novel," goes on to point out that "it is yet somehow not a novel at all."[13] Nor is it, writes Professor Arrowsmith, "merely the story of the misadventures of a trio of picaresque perverts told by a pornographer of genius."[14] Robert Graves, in discussing his translation of The Transformations of Lucius (The Golden Ass) refers to the book as both "humorous allegory"[15] and "a religious novel".[16] Rabelais' Gargantua

---

[11]James Sutherland, English Satire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 61.

[12]Kenneth Rexroth, "The Satyricon", Saturday Review, June 5, 1965, p. 15.

[13]William Arrowsmith in his introduction to The Satyricon (New York: New American Library, 1960), p. v.

[14]Ibid., p. xiv.

[15]Robert Graves in his introduction to The Transformations of Lucius (The Golden Ass) by Lucius Apuleius (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 19. The Transformations of Lucius will hereafter be referred to by its more commonly known title, The Golden Ass.

[16]Ibid., p. 11.

and Pantagruel is said to exhibit for its two most prominent features "a considerable amount of classical learning and up-to-date scientific and philosophical thought, and an equally large amount of dirty jokes."[17] Laurence Sterne has been cried down and cried up for his "sentimentality." He has also been variously praised and damned for his veiled obscenity. What, after all, is the critic to make of an author who at one time indulges himself in a good cry...

> ...[Maria's] goat had been as faithless as her lover: and she had got a little dog in lieu of him, which she had kept tied by a string to her girdle: as I look'd at her dog, she drew him towards her with the string. "Thou shalt not leave me, Sylvio," said she. I look'd in Maria's eyes, and saw she was thinking more of her father than of her lover or her little goat; for as she utter'd them, the tears trickled down her cheeks.[18]

while in another moment of supposed grief, he apparently spoils the whole episode with bathos?

> The moment my father got up into his chamber, he threw himself prostrate across his bed in the wildest disorder imaginable, but at the same time, in the most lamentable attitude of a man borne down with sorrows, that ever the eye of pity drop't a tear for -- The palm of his right hand, as he fell upon the bed, receiving his forehead, and covering the greatest part of both his eyes, gently sunk down with his head (his elbow giving way backwards) till his nose touch'd the quilt; -- his left arm hung insensible over the side of the bed, his knuckles reclining upon the handle of the chamber pot, which peep'd out beyond the valance, ...[19]

---

[17]Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 183.

[18]Laurence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1960), p. 122.

[19]Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, edited by James Aiken Work (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1940), III, 29, 215-216.

Because of the contradictions in their personalities, the frequent incongruity between their lives and their writings, the variety of their subject matter and of their literary methods, and the multiplicity of the literary forms in which they choose to express themselves, it has been difficult, it seems, for the critic to discuss as an art form the works of such satirists. The critic's task of interpretation and his method of approach to these writers and their works is somewhat simplified, however, if the confusion and elusiveness surrounding them is seen to be partly a characteristic of the satirical genre in which the works of these writers have their place. Perhaps it is the ill-definition of the boundaries and qualities of the genre that is partly responsible for the fact that there are very few discussions of satire as a genre. Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr. in his recent Swift and the Satirist's Art[20] cites only nine studies of satire as a literary form and of these, only two studies are devoted to the general study of the satirical genre;[21] the others illuminate either particular features of satire or discuss the satire of certain narrow literary periods. The present essay will attempt to illuminate the form, method, and purpose of the satiric work of the Scriblerus Club while, as a help to this illumination, it will align itself with studies of the satirical genre and its tradition. The discussion which is to follow will take the form

---

[20]Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 2,n. 1.

[21]The two general genre studies mentioned are David Worcester's The Art of Satire (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960) and "The Mythos of Winter: Irony and Satire" in Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 223-239.

of rhetorical analysis rather than literary history and will thereby allow more easily for rapid comparisons in form, tone, and subject matter between the works of the Scriblerians and selected illustrations from the works of other satirists from Lucian, Apuleius, and Petronius to the satirists of the eighteenth century. This rhetorical approach will avoid, it is hoped, many of the otherwise entangling problems of the personality of the satirist, the motives for his attacks, and the resulting confusion about the "true" position of the satirist himself in his satires.

The work of Jonathan Swift provides examples of the problems that engulf the critic as he approaches the study of satire. Satire is role-playing and Swift plays a great many roles throughout his writings; he is Lemuel Gulliver, World Traveller, Isaac Bickerstaff, rival astrologer, and the Drapier, Irish patriot; he is author of A Modest Proposal, a projector with the best interests of his fellow human beings at heart; he is the objective, Flaubert-like recorder of genteel and ingenious conversation. He is the pedantic Grub-street hack of A Tale of A Tub. More roles could be added as each of Swift's works is recalled. Paradoxically, Swift's effectiveness as a writer can lead the reader (perhaps because of his admiration for the author) into a search for the "real" Swift, a search which,although it might well provide a kind of absorbing scholarly amusement, leads away from an aesthetic appreciation of Swift's art, an appreciation which is dependent upon the reader's recognition of the artifice of the work and upon his awareness of its structural principles. There must be no confusion between the study of the author and the study of the work of art itself.

The problems of the criticism of much of the painting of the last twenty years provide an analogy to the problems involved in the criticism of satire. The question "where is the satirist and what does he <u>really</u> think?" is very much the same kind of question as is often asked by the spectator who upon finding himself confronted by a non-representational picture asks "what is it?" or "what emotional state was the painter here attempting to represent?" The spectator has apparently lost his aesthetic bearings because the painting may present no image; it may present nothing recognizable from his experience of the "real" world. Educated by representational painting, he is perhaps unable to find aesthetic excitement in the non-representational picture in which any aesthetic emotion which is generated is that which results from the viewer's appreciation of colour, and design. Just as irrelevant a question as "what is it?" is "what is the true position of the satirist in his satire?" or any other of the many questions that tend to lead away from the work itself. It is one of the operative principles of this essay that just as a non-representational painting may be valued for other reasons, its chief aesthetic value lies in the appreciation of its structure so the primary aesthetic excitement of satire, whatever other delights it may afford, is generated by an appreciation of its form.

Many of the satiric works with which this essay is concerned seem,at a glance, aesthetically alien in their prolixity and formal shapelessness. An investigation in more detail often discloses in the work a preoccupation with the paraphernalia of topical allusion (one

thinks of Rabelais, Sterne, the Swift of A Tale of a Tub, and the Pope of the Dunciad Variorum); the work seems little more than a glaring chaos and a wild heap of wit. It is another paradox of this satire of localized trivia, however, that when one "stands back" from the work as one would stand back from a painting in order to see the form of the piece, and when one consequently realizes that the paraphernalia is a part of the structural "shape" of the work and is to be regarded as stylistic configuration, one finds satire of this type more readily enjoyable than, for example, one finds much of the no less erudite but much less formidable looking Horatian satire. Mac Flecknoe is not very funny if one does not know who Shadwell was. A Tale of a Tub, however, can be readily enjoyed for the effect it produces of pure literary virtuosity, for its non-historical and purely aesthetic qualities of form.

Satire exists as a kind of artificial, structured world of its own with formal characteristics of its own as distinguishable as those of tragedy, lyric poetry, or of any other literary genre. The study of satire, however, presents problems of form which are less insistent in the study of other genres. Modern tragic drama, for example, despite inevitable evolutions of style and emphasis, remains recognizable as a form of the same genre as that which was described by Aristotle. Satire, in contrast, is, as a genre, a literary parasite, appearing at unpredictable times in unlikely places and adopting almost any kind of form that seems to the satirist convenient and aesthetically necessary. One cannot hope to find in satire features which are as comfortably well-

defined as anagnorisis and peripeteia. What remains to the student of satire, however, as an aid to an organized study of the genre, is the presence in works of satire from the earliest times to those of our day of what can be called here (though unhappily inexact are the terms) a certain "tone", "feeling", or "approach" as well as the frequent appearance of certain themes. Ricardo Quintana, writing about the satires of Swift, speaks of the artificial, structured world of the satiric genre, calling satire "a construct" and "a precisely devised literary composition, a form of rhetoric."[22] Professor Quintana goes on to say of the structured world of satire; "This special world is a most complex structure, having a logic of its own which governs feeling and speech. It is at once a way of looking at things, a way of feeling, and a way of speaking."[23] If, then, rhetoric can be said to mean a study of the ways in which language is manipulated in order to bring about certain desired effects in the reader as well as meaning the study and classification of literary forms, then a rhetorical study of satire may help to isolate and aid in the identification of certain pervasive satiric themes, attitudes, and methods. Such a study, it is hoped, will help to illuminate the form and method of Scriblerian satire.

With the employing in this essay of a rhetorical method of investigation which seeks similarities in tone and similar "ways of

---

[22]Ricardo Quintana, "Situational Satire: a Commentary on the Method of Swift", University of Toronto Quarterly, XVII (1948), p. 131.

[23]Ibid., p. 132.

speaking" goes the belief that one can meaningfully employ such a term as "the satiric personality."[24] While it is beyond the scope of this essay to make forays into the territory of psychology, it does seem possible to account for such things as similarities in tone and subject matter in satiric writings separated by a thousand years with a hypothesis that the authors of such mutually distant works shared some features, at least, of a certain psychic make-up. Since the present study is concerned more with rhetorical similarity than with literary history, since it prefers to replace by satirists the novelists sitting around E. M. Forster's imaginary table, and since it assumes the existence of the satiric personality, the question of literary influence, although interesting, becomes largely irrelevant.

It is possible, of course, to show that with some of the satirists to be considered in this study, there may have been a direct influence of the work of one of them on the work of the other. One of the methods by which this influence is suggested is the study of internal evidence -- the identification of passages in one work similar in incident or phrasing to those of another work. In his study of Gulliver's Travels,[25] for example, William A. Eddy produces evidence that Swift was greatly influenced by, among others, both Lucian and Rabelais. Eddy cites many

---

[24]For a discussion of the personality of the satirist, see The Satirist. His Temperament, Motivation, and Influence. by Leonard Feinberg, (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1963), pp. 105-120.

[25]William A. Eddy, Gulliver's Travels. A Critical Study (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963).

examples of Swift's borrowing of ideas from Lucian; in A True Story, Lucian is pressed into military service on the moon[26] just as is Gulliver in Lilliput. Like Gulliver when he is forced to leave the land of the Houyhnhnms, Lucian is filled with dismay when he is compelled to leave the Isles of the Blest; "I broke into tears at the thought of leaving such a good life and becoming a wanderer again".[27] Laputa, Swift's marvellous flying island is, of course, very much like Lucian's "island in the sky"[28] in A True Story and Gulliver's visit with departed spirits of Glubbdubdrib probably owes something to Lucian's Dialogues of the Dead. Eddy devotes a considerable space in his study to the similarities between Swift and Rabelais, pointing out that in some cases Swift quotes directly from Rabelais. In An Answer to a Paper, called A Memorial of the Poor Inhabitants, Tradesmen, and Labourers of the Kingdom of Ireland, Swift wrote, "For as to your Scheme of raising one Hundred and ten Thousand Pounds, it is as vain as that of Rabelais; which was to squeeze out Wind from the Posteriors of a dead Ass",[29] a reference to one of the futilities practised by Queen Whims' officers in Rabelais' "queendom of

---

[26]Lucian, Selected Satires of Lucian, p. 18.

[27]Ibid., p. 44.

[28]Ibid., p. 17.

[29]Jonathan Swift, The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, edited by Herbert Davis (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939-1959), XII, 22 (hereafter referred to as Prose Works). Eddy (op. cit., p. 59) refers to this example but quotes from Temple Scott's edition of Swift's Prose Works (London: George Bell and Sons, 1907).

Whims, or kingdom of Quintessence."[30] Later, Gulliver was to find in Laputa the same kind of experiment in progress, the bellows being applied to a dog instead of to an ass. Eddy suggests that Swift's Lagado was, in fact, modelled on Rabelais' court of Queen Whim. As evidence for such a statement, he produces a kind of chart[31] by which the reader may compare the frivolous activities of both centres of spurious learning. In Lagado, a professor is writing a treatise on the malleability of fire[32] while at the court of Queen Whim, "Others cut fire into steaks, with a knife!"[33] In Lagado, "Some were condensing Air into a dry tangible Substance",[34] while at Queen Whim's court "Others pitched nets to catch the wind."[35] And so the list continues. The parallelism is striking and persuasive. Eddy feels compelled to warn the reader, however, that all such literary "influence" is to be examined with caution. "A debt inferred wholly from parallel passages", he writes, "...must almost always remain subject to doubt."[36] He states his own theory of the validity of literary influence as a rule that "parallel passages alone, unless verbal duplicates, can seldom establish a direct literary debt; there is always

---

[30]François Rabelais, Gargantua and Pantagruel, translated by Sir Thomas Urquhart and Peter le Motteux (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1954), II, 302.

[31]Eddy, op.cit., p. 161.

[32]Swift, Prose Works, XI, 164.

[33]Rabelais, op. cit., II, 302.

[34]Swift, Prose Works, XI, 166.

[35]Rabelais, op. cit., II, 302.

[36]Eddy, op. cit., p. 57.

the possibility of another intermediate work which may have been the one consulted."[37]

Another way of suggesting possible literary influence, though not as persuasive or as conclusive as the examination of parallel passages, is the discovery that one writer has at least read the works of the other, thereby allowing for a possible unconscious influence if not a direct borrowing of ideas or phrases. In the introduction to their edition of A Tale of a Tub,[38] A. C. Guthkelch and David Nichol Smith refer to a list made by Swift of the books he had read in 1697 and the beginning of 1698. Because of what is to follow, it is of special interest here that among the other thirty-five works listed is "Petronius Arbiter."[39] Sir Harold Williams has provided more of this kind of useful information in his study of Swift's library.[40] He points out that in the catalogue of Swift's books (a facsimile of the catalogue of Swift's library prepared for sale by auction in 1745), certain of the books listed are marked with an asterisk. This is of interest for what it might indicate about "the general character of Swift's closer reading."[41] Especially

---

[37] Ibid., p. 57, n. 32.

[38] Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub, edited by A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith (2nd ed.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958). All subsequent quotations from A Tale of a Tub are from this edition.

[39] Ibid., p. lvii.

[40] Harold Williams, Dean Swift's Library (Cambridge: The University Press, 1932).

[41] Ibid., p. 48.

noteworthy for the present study is Swift's starred copy of "Rabelais, ses OEuvres."[42] Also to be found in this catalogue of the Dean's library are the works of Lucian,[43] the Moriae Encomium of Erasmus,[44] and The Satyricon of Petronius.[45] The catalogue of Laurence Sterne's library[46] provides a similar kind of information. Among the more than two thousand, five hundred volumes listed are the works of Swift,[47] Pope,[48] Robert Burton,[49] and Rabelais.[50] For the following attempt at the identification of a certain satiric tradition, such hints of a

---

[42]Listed as No. 42 on p. 2 of the facsimile catalogue.

[43]No. 5, p. 1.

[44]No. 45, p. 2.

[45]No. 47, p. 2.

[46]A Facsimile Reproduction of a Unique Catalogue of Laurence Sterne's Library with a Preface by Charles Whibley (London: James Tregaskis and Son, 1930).

[47]The Pope-Swift Miscellanies (1727), Nos. 10 and 18, p. 41; Gulliver's Travels, No. 1151, p. 45; Swift's Miscellanies (1731, etc.), No. 1524, p. 59; Swift's Works (1751), No. 1620, p. 62.

[48]In addition to the Pope-Swift Miscellanies (1727) there is listed Pope's Dunciad with Notes Variorum (1729), No. 1436, p. 55, as well as Pope's Miscellaneous Poems (1720), Works (1754), Homer's Iliad and Odyssey (1754), and Pope's Essay on Man with Warburton's Commentary (1745), Nos. 1599-1602, p. 61.

[49]Burton's The Anatomy of Melancholy, No. 61, p. 3.

[50]No. 1225, p. 48.

possible literary influence are useful as factual milestones along the route of what is to be impressionistic criticism and rhetorical analysis. But although the reader can be certain that Swift read Rabelais for example, when one attempts to show that much of the satire written by Swift and his friends of the Scriblerus Club is satire belonging to a certain tradition which also includes the works of Rabelais, a more convincing case can be made for their inclusion in the same tradition by the isolation and identification in the works of both writers of similar uses of literary form, similar stylistic configurations, and similar preferences for subject matter, than by a demonstration of the particular influence of one upon the other. The latter method is contained within the former. If one allows the premise of this essay -- that satirists may share the same spirit without having been directly influenced, then, of course, Swift and Rabelais can be shown to belong in the same literary tradition regardless of whether or not one read the other.

Until now we have spoken rather vaguely about the literary tradition to which writers such as Lucian, Petronius, Swift, and Sterne all belong. It is now necessary to consider more precisely these terms and others which will be used in the pages to follow. Arthur O. Lovejoy, in his preface to Essays in the History of Ideas, has commented on the value to the historian of the aphorism, "man lives not by bread alone, but chiefly by catchwords".[51] For Lovejoy, the most persistent catchword is "nature". In this essay, two of the catchwords in frequent use

---

[51]Arthur O. Lovejoy, Essays in the History of Ideas (New York: Putnam, 1960), pp. xii-xiii.

in the pages to follow are "Menippean satire" and "Scriblerian satire".

It is as difficult to define Menippean satire as it is to say anything very definite about Menippus who has given his name to the genre. Like the works of Menippus and of Varro ("Varronian satire" is used synonymously by critics for "Menippean satire"), Menippean satire is identifiable in one way by its variety and its apparent lack of rigorous formal principles. Most critics agree, at least, that Menippean satire is "satire overlaid on a narrative pattern."[52] It also seems widely agreed upon that, though mainly narrative and mainly in prose, there is often a sprinkling of poetry in Menippean satire. William Arrowsmith speaks of "that genre we call Menippean satire, the curious blending of prose with verse and philosophy with realism...."[53] Northrop Frye refers to it as a "loose-jointed narrative form... [which] relies on the free play of intellectual fancy and the kind of humorous observation that produces caricature",[54] and as the "creative treatment of exhaustive erudition."[55] Each example of the genre, however, seems to elude rigorous definition by its displaying some feature not previously accounted for, or by its lack of a feature deemed requisite for its being labelled a Menippean satire. The emphasis in the pages to follow, then, is not on definition but on demonstration, in the hope that if one cannot <u>say</u> precisely what Menippean satire is, one can at

---

[52]David Worcester, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 157.

[53]<u>The Satyricon</u>, p. viii.

[54]Northrop Frye, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 309-310.

[55]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 311.

least attempt to show what it is.

The other catchword which must be explained is "Scriblerian satire". In the pages to follow, "Scriblerian satire" is used to designate those satiric works written as part of the official activity of the Scriblerus Club,[56] the literary gathering whose members were Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, John Gay, John Arbuthnot, Thomas Parnell, and, for a time, Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford. The satiric works thus properly referred to as "Scriblerian" are The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, The Origin of Sciences, Virgilius Restauratus, Memoirs of P. P. Clerk of This Parish, Annus Mirabilis: or, The Wonderful Effects of the Approaching Conjunction of the Planets Jupiter, Mars, and Saturn, Stradling versus Stiles, and, of course, the pieces usually associated with Pope, Peri Bathous: of the Art of Sinking in Poetry, and the "Notes and Prolegomena" to Pope's Dunciad Variorum. Sometimes, however, in referring to the spirit with which these works are imbued, it has been convenient to widen the term "Scriblerian" so that it means not only these "official" Scriblerian works but also other works by members of the Scriblerus Club which have a definite connection to the work of the Club, such as Gulliver's Travels, the Dunciad, and Three Hours after Marriage. There has been no attempt in the present study to discuss the problems of authorship, especially of

---

[56]For a learned account of the formation of the Scriblerus Club, its periods of activity, the political and social background of the club, and detailed information about its members, see the preface and notes to his edition of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus by Charles Kerby-Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950). All further references to The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus are to this edition.

The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus; because the members of the Club evidently went to no little trouble to make their collaboration seem the work of one man, they suppressed any rhetorical individualities as much as they were able, in an attempt at stylistic homogeneity throughout the work. For evidence of the authorship of particular sections of The Memoirs, the reader is directed to the knowledgeable Mr. Charles Kerby-Miller.

The present study has a two-fold objective. An attempt will be made to investigate the characteristics of both Scriblerian satire in particular (primarily The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus and Peri Bathous) and Menippean satire in general. It is hoped that the presentation in the following pages of what Martinus Scriblerus would probably refer to as a"cloud of examples" will readily enable the reader to see the similarities in form, tone, and theme between the Scriblerian satires and other more famous satiric works. The presence of such similarities helps simultaneously both to define the Menippean tradition and to elucidate Scriblerian satire. While the Scriblerian works are our main concern in this essay, frequent references to other satires helps to make the Scriblerian works more meaningful by showing how they fit into the larger tradition of Menippean satire.

It would perhaps be possible to find within the Menippean tradition two lines of satiric development, one line of which one might call the line of obscene or "improper" Menippean satire and another line of which one might refer to as the line of the non-obscene or decorous Menippean satire. E. V. Knox in The Mechanism of Satire suggests the

different qualities of the two satiric types (although he writes of the two types he finds within all satire, and not just that of the Menippean tradition). Commenting on satirists in general, Mr. Knox says:

> ...some of them are angry men and must be approached with due humility...There is something in them that urges them onward to express their rage in mockery... But there are others...figures of scholarly calm, eupeptic, good livers, contented with their lot and their times, not disappointed of preferment nor prestige;...they have tried in fact, easily and gracefully, to tell the kind of truth that no one has ever denied.[57]

Northrop Frye also suggests the difference between the two lines within the Menippean tradition:

> In the Menippean satires...the name of the form also applies to the attitude. As the name of an attitude, satire is...a combination of fantasy and morality. But as the name of a form, the term satire, though confined to literature, is more flexible, and can be either entirely fantastic or entirely moral.[58]

If one thinks of Lucian's A True Story and of Erasmus' The Praise of Folly the differences suggested by Professor Frye become evident. Works of literature cannot, of course, be kept conveniently or accurately in compartments and, as will become apparent, the examples of Scriblerian satire and of other Menippean satires which are cited in the following pages are neither of them entirely fantastic or entirely moral

---

[57]E. V. Knox, The Mechanism of Satire (The Leslie Stephen Lecture 10 May 1951), (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1951), pp. 1-2.

[58]Northrop Frye, op. cit., p. 310.

but usually a combination of both. In this essay, however, the emphasis has been on the examination of the "improper" line of the Menippean satire with the result that most of the works referred to are more concerned (or at least more obviously concerned) with fantasy than with morality. In a letter to Pope (Sept. 29, 1725), Swift wrote that he wished rather to vex the world than to divert it. In what is to follow, however, it has been assumed that despite Swift's statement, the importance of his work is shown in the fact that while the world Swift meant to vex has changed, the power of his work to divert has remained. It is Swift's artistry that delights us, not his moral and ethical fervour. In this essay we are more concerned to see the satirist as Dryden saw Varro, of whom he writes that "as learned as he was, his business was more to divert his reader, than to teach him."[59] The study of these works is, consequently, an investigation of aesthetics and not of ethics. The examination in the following pages of Menippean subject matter has necessitated some discussion of the ethics and morality of satire; the morality implied in the choice of subject, however, is linked closely to matters of aesthetics.

The present study of Scriblerian satire is divided into three sections. The first section, chapter two, is an examination of certain aspects of satiric form. The second section, chapter three, examines the Scriblerian approach to one area of their interests -- that of

---

[59]Dryden, op. cit., II, 66.

literature and literary criticism, and demonstrates, in a detailed investigation of Peri Bathous, the presence in that work of the general principles of Menippean satire discussed in chapter two. It is hoped that such an investigation, in conjunction with that of chapter two, will provide insights into the general Scriblerian method of approach to satire. The third section, chapter four, presents suggestions about the general purpose of Scriblerian satiric work and presents notes towards a possible theory of satire.

THE AESTHETICS OF IMPROPRIETY

An investigation of the Scriblerian satires and of some of the other satires in the Menippean tradition shows that many of them exhibit certain characteristics which can be enlisted under the heading of what we have chosen to call "impropriety". The word "impropriety", used in the sense in which it is to be used in this discussion, does not mean merely a lack of moral discretion or even a flagrant ammorality. Instead, the word has here been pressed into use as a comprehensive term to refer to a particular literary tone, which might well be called "extravagance" or "exuberance" -- the tone that has come to be known loosely as "Rabelaisian".[1] In addition to an exuberant tone, "impropriety" is also to mean here an extravagance of the literary structure itself. Within the structural extravagance, moreover, there is frequently found a certain extravagance or impropriety of subject matter; this is "impropriety" used (as the word is usually used) to mean"indelicacy"; one finds subject matter ranging from the mildly improper to the outrageously obscene. The discussion that follows attempts to examine Scriblerian satire (with other Menippean satires) first for impropriety of form, then(very briefly) for impropriety of tone, and finally, for impropriety of subject matter.

---

[1]The term "Rabelaisian", like most catchwords, has become too flexible to be of great use except as an indicator of an area of meaning. Louis Cazamian discusses "Rabelaisian" as "full relish in handling certain aspects of physical life", and as "the broad laugh...[that] carries with it the cleansing virtue of frankness" (A History of French Literature (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 76). Crane Brinton uses the term to mean excess, literary "fertility and formlessness" (The Shaping of Modern Thought (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 42).

It is a commonplace of aesthetics that the basis of the structural analysis of a work of art is the assumption of unity in the work.[2] Before one has read very much Menippean satire, however, one becomes aware that either the work has attained the status of art through some widespread error in critical judgement, or that the aesthetic commonplace mentioned above is untrue, or that with these works one must look for a different, broader kind of unity than that which is commonly denoted by the word. That the latter is the case is suggested even by the origin of the word satire, the root being "satura" or more fully, "lanx satura" which is usually taken to mean " a full dish, a hotch-potch".[3]

Certainly, the phrase "a full dish" seems an appropriate one by which to describe such a work as A Tale of a Tub which exhibits, in addition to the divisions, digressions, and massive erudition of the text of the Tale itself, a list of "Treatises wrote by the same Author", the author's apology, a lengthy dedication, a notice from "The Bookseller to the Reader", "The Epistle Dedicatory: to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity", and a substantial preface, all of which take up almost one quarter of the work. The search for unity in Pope's Dunciad Variorum (a work closely related to the Menippean tradition if not strictly a part

---

[2]See Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963), pp. 11, 70, 71.

[3]See The Oxford Companion to English Literature, compiled and edited by Sir Paul Harvey(3rd. edition; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 697b, and Dryden, op. cit., II, 45.

of it) appears also to be a fruitless one when one is confronted by the poem which appeared in 1729 and, in addition to commentary by Martinus Scriblerus, displayed (as Pope had told Swift it would[4]) the "full dish" of Proeme, Prolegomena, Testimonia Scriptorum, Index Authorum, and Notes Variorum. Early Menippean satires exhibit similar problems of unity. The unity of Petronius' The Satyricon is endangered by the inclusion in the work of Eumolpus' epic poem[5] which translator William Arrowsmith calls "intolerably long". Professor Arrowsmith goes on to describe as the central problem of translation "that of knowing just what purpose Eumolpus' lengthy epic is meant to serve;...."[6] A similar artistic danger is apparent in The Golden Ass, and is the result of the long fairy tale of Cupid and Psyche.[7] The tale of the mythical lovers, with its emphasis on fidelity, desire, and metamorphosis does, of course, have a certain bearing on the adventures of Lucius, but it completely drops the main narrative which Lucius does not pick up again until three chapters later when he writes:

> I stood close by the girl prisoner listening to this beautiful story, and though it was told by a drunken and half-demented old woman, I regretted

---

[4]See Pope's letter to Swift of June 28, 1728 in The Works of Alexander Pope, edited by Rev. Whitwell Elwin and William John Courthope (London, 1886), VII, 134.

[5]The Satyricon, pp. 129-140.

[6]Ibid., p. 185.

[7]The Golden Ass, pp. 114-157.

that I had no means of committing it to writing.[8]

Laurence Sterne's The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, ostensibly a novel, so obviously presents problems of structural unity that both D. W. Jefferson and Dorothy Van Ghent begin discussions of the work with assurances to the reader that Tristram Shandy does indeed have a literary form. Jefferson makes the statement that "the tendency among critics has been to comment on its structural oddities without first discovering to what literary kind it belongs...Perfect fidelity to an artistic scheme would be too much to claim for Sterne, but it is important to realize that he had one."[9] Dorothy Van Ghent finds that Sterne is engaged in "deliberate demolition of chronological sequences...."[10] Volume four of Tristram Shandy, for example, is delayed in the same way as is Apuleius' tale by the insertion of a long, self-contained episode related amusingly but surely very tenuously to the main narrative -- the Rabelaisian "Slawkenbergius's Tale." Dorothy Van Ghent goes on to explain Sterne's structural vagaries by reference to his having been influenced by Locke's theories of the association of ideas. While Locke's influence can undoubtedly be felt in Tristram Shandy, that influence is not sufficient to explain Sterne's self-conscious delight in literary structure, nor, of course, can it do very much to explain the appearance of a similar kind of structural impropriety and apparent cavalier unconcern

---

[8] Ibid., p. 157.

[9] D. W. Jefferson, " 'Tristram Shandy' and its Tradition", in From Dryden to Johnson, edited by Boris Ford (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963), p. 333.

[10] Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel. Form and Function (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 84.

with unity of form in authors of Menippean satire who wrote earlier and later than the period of Locke's influence.

The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, like these other Menippean works, exhibits, upon examination, a formal impropriety true to its tradition, a structure which appears to have come into being almost according to the laws of chance. That the seemingly spontaneous structure of The Memoirs is anything but spontaneous will, it is hoped, become apparent. Like other Menippean satire, The Memoirs displays a carefully devised formal extravagance which is the product not of hasty craftsmanship but of literary virtuosity. A cursory examination of the work, however, seems to belie any statement about the work's displaying of unity. As in Tristram Shandy, the period before the hero's birth and the period covering his early life are the most elaborately dealt with. In what is a rather short prose work (74 pages[11]), six of the seventeen chapters (26 pages) cover the period in which Martin is very young. By chapter seven, which is nearly one-third of the way through the work, Martin is supposedly mature enough to begin his studies of "Rhetorick, Logick, and Metaphysicks", but from chapter seven until the end of the work, he is merely a literary peg on which the authors hang satires of a great many subjects. In chapter fourteen, "The Double Mistress", Martin gains some personality, but never as much as is given to his father, Cornelius. By chapter sixteen, The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus is really over, brought to a rather hurried conclusion with a short chapter,

---

[11]In the edition of Charles Kerby-Miller.

"Of the Secession of Martinus, and some Hints of his Travels" and finishing (chapter seventeen) with a list "Of the Discoveries and Works of the Great Scriblerus, made and to be made, written and to be written, known and unknown." Obviously, The Memoirs lacks a sense of neo-classic proportion; it is something quite different structurally from the leisurely and journal-like orthodox "memoirs".

This apparently chaotic and disproportionate structure of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus is,however, in some measure prepared for in the first chapter, which discusses Martin's unorthodox begetting (the similarity of which is close in spirit to Tristram Shandy's beginnings), and it is prepared for by a suitably bizarre method. Along with the other "Prodigies" attending Martin's birth, the most wonderful was what at first seemed to be a large bird which had dropped through the sky-light near Mrs. Scriblerus' apartment but upon inspection was seen instead to be a paper kite "which had broke its leash by the impetuosity of the wind!" The kite is described:

> His back was armed with the Art Military, his belly was filled with Physick, his wings were the wings of Quarles and Withers, the several Nodes of his voluminous tail were diversify'd with several branches of science; where the Doctor beheld with great joy a knot of Logick, a knot of Metaphysick, a knot of Casuistry, a knot of Polemical Divinity, and a knot of Common Law, with a Lanthorn of Jacob Behmen.[12]

The separate parts of the kite, as Charles Kerby-Miller has noted, can be seen to "foreshadow Martinus' fields of activity as set forth in the

---

[12] Memoirs, p. 99.

Memoirs".[13] For example, Mr. Kerby-Miller points out that Physic is dealt with in chapter eight ("Anatomy") and chapter ten ("Of Martinus's Uncommon Practice of Physick, and how he applied himself to the Diseases of the Mind."). Rhetoric and poetry are the subjects of chapter seven ("Rhetorick, Logick, and Metaphysicks.") and chapter nine ("How Martin became a Critick.")[14] and in Pope's Peri Bathous. Logic and Metaphysics are also dealt with in chapter seven. The kite's knots of Casuistry and of Polemical Divinity are represented by chapter twelve ("How Martinus endeavoured to find out the Seat of the Soul, and of his Correspondence with the Free-Thinkers."). Common law is dealt with in chapter fifteen ("Of the strange, and never to be parallel'd Process at Law upon the Marriage of Scriblerus, and the Pleadings of the Advocates."). The only one of Martin's future interests suggested by the construction of the strange kite that is not dealt with at all is that one mentioned first in the description of the kite -- "the Art Military".[15] The prophetic

---

[13]Ibid., p. 195, n. 34.

[14]On the contents page of the Memoirs (p. 89), chapter nine is given as "How Crambe had some Words with his Master", while "How Martin became a Critick." is listed as chapter ten. In his notes to chapter eight, Charles Kerby-Miller explains that chapter eight as it now stands "is a combination of two chapters in the original manuscript -- chapter eight, "Anatomy", and chapter nine, "How Crambe had some Words with his Master." For the bibliographic explanation of what happened to the missing chapter, see Memoirs, pp. 262-264.

[15]Charles Kerby-Miller suggests that by the time The Memoirs was ready for publication, the old Tory-Scriblerian urge to damn both Marlborough, the war, and the Peace of Utrecht, passed away with the death of Queen Anne and the ascension of George I to the throne. Marlborough was again idolized by the people. The opportunity for satire of "the Art Military" was gone. See Memoirs, pp. 195-196.

bird-kite thus becomes an elaborately ingenious introduction to the major satire of The Scriblerus Club. In An Essay on Criticism, Pope had written; "A perfect Judge will read each Work of Wit/ With the same Spirit that its Author writ"[16]. Even if The Memoirs is read with Pope's advice clearly in mind, even when it is recognized that the Scriblerians are on the one hand attacking pedantry and affectation by over-employing those same qualities of pedantry and affectation, the keen delight the authors seem to have taken in literary excessiveness and over-ingenuity for their own sake can be felt both in this bizarre "introduction" and throughout the rest of the work. The Pope of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus shows quite a different side to his personality from the Pope who had written that if one let "unerring Nature" be one's guide, then one would of necessity produce "Works without show, and without Pomp".[17]

Unity, as it is usually understood, means cohesion, literary tightness of construction. Judged by the usual standards of unity, Menippean satire seems to exult in disunity. In chapter five of The Memoirs, for example, Martinus Scriblerus is still a child but is growing rapidly and it is thus necessary that plans should be made for his education. The seemingly small matter of choosing for Martin sufficiently educational toys becomes an opportunity for the authors to devote an entire chapter to "A Dissertation upon Play-things", in which they are able not only to exhibit Cornelius' absurd fondness for classical precedents but, at the same time, they are able to display their own eru-

---

[16]Alexander Pope, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, edited by E. Audra and Aubrey Williams (London: Methuen, 1961), ll. 233-234, p. 266.

[17]Ibid., l. 75, p. 247.

dition in the verbal luxuriance of the resulting catalogue of ancient games:

> I heartily wish a diligent search may be made after the true Crepitaculum or Rattle of the Ancients, for that (as Archytas Tarentinus was of opinion) kept the children from breaking Earthen Ware. The China Cups in these days are not at all the safer for the modern Rattles;which is an evident proof how far their Crepitacula exceeded ours.
>
> I would not have Martin as yet to scourge a Top, till I am better informed whether the Trochus which was recommended by Cato be really our present Top,or rather the Hoop which the boys drive with a stick. Neither Cross and Pile, nor Ducks and Drakes are quite so ancient as Handy-dandy,tho' Macrobius and St. Augustine take notice of the first, and Minutius Felix describes the latter; but Handy-dandy is mention'd by Aristotle, Plato, and Aristophanes.
>
> The Play which the Italians call Cinque, and the French Mourre, is extremely ancient; it was play'd at by Hymen and Cupid at the Marriage of Psyche, and term'd by the Latins digitis micare.[18]

This may indeed be mock-pedantry and a playful show of erudition; it is also high rhetorical art, a prose rich in its details and lists of names.

The learned dissertation, the prolonged digression are common structural configurations in works of the Menippean genre. Swift's A Tale of a Tub, for example, contains as its "Section III" (and despite the fact that Swift has barely begun the piece) "A Digression concerning Criticks".[19] This digression is followed by "A Digression in the Modern Kind", [20] "A Digression in Praise of Digressions", [21] and "A Digression

---

[18] Memoirs, p. 109.

[19] A Tale of a Tub, pp. 92-104.

[20] Ibid., pp. 123-132.

[21] Ibid., pp. 143-149.

concerning the Original, the Use and Improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth".[22] Robert Burton's The Anatomy of Melancholy, called by Northrop Frye "the greatest Menippean satire in English before Swift",[23] exhibits several typically Menippean disgressions; the "Digression of Anatomy",[24] "Digression on the Misery of Scholars",[25] and a "Digression of the Air",[26] all poetically and exhaustively erudite. Gargantua and Pantagruel too, although it contains nothing specifically entitled "Digression", uses disgressiveness as its structural principle, an apparently random thought being provocation enough for Rabelais' turning aside from his main business to anatomize his new idea -- as he does, for example, with Gargantua's games:

> Then the carpet being spread, they brought plenty of cards, many dice, with great store and abundance of checkers and chessboards.
>
> There he played
>
> At flusse
> At primero
> At the beast
> At the rifle
> At trump
> At the prick and spare not
> At the hundred
> At the peeny
> At the unfortunate woman
> At the fib
> At the pass ten [27]

---

[22] Ibid., pp. 162-180.

[23] Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 311.

[24] Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy (London: J. M. Dent, 1948), I, 146-147.

[25] Ibid., I, 300-333.

[26] Ibid., II, 34-69.

[27] François Rabelais, Gargantua and Pantagruel (London: J. M. Dent, 1954), I, 50-53.

and at two hundred and fifteen other games.

The digression by its very name suggests a lapse in structural unity, a wilful disproportioning of the work by the author, a temporary structural chaos. In The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, however, as in Rabelais, the digression becomes, perversely, the part of the work which is the most important structurally and thus aesthetically. Moreover, as in Rabelais, so in The Memoirs, writing imbued with the spirit of digression takes up most of the work. From chapter five to the end of the work, the reader loses track of Martin and instead becomes engrossed in the particular subject which the Scriblerians are satirically dissecting. It is true that there are several sections in The Memoirs that deal directly with the adventures of Martinus or his family. These episodes, the amusing presentation of the infant Martin on Cornelius' ancient shield,[28] Cornelius, Albertus, and the powers of music,[29] Crambe's adventures with the body of the malefactor,[30] the case of a young Nobleman at court,[31] and "The Double Mistress"[32] (subtitled "A Novel" on the contents page), are the most strongly narrative sections of the work; they are really short tales that seem notable in their cohesion and in their movement when they are seen against the background of the rambling

---

[28] Memoirs, pp. 102-104.

[29] Ibid., pp. 115-117.

[30] Ibid., pp. 125-128.

[31] Ibid., pp. 134-136.

[32] Ibid., pp. 143-153.

erudition of the complete Memoirs.[33] But stylistically, these rather self-contained narrative episodes can be seen to be, in fact, themselves digressions. They are distributed at almost equal intervals throughout the work, relieving the Menippean intellectualizing and anatomizing with a broad comic action relief which, although it changes the pace of the work, continues the Menippean spirit in its absurdity. Structurally, the placing of the episodes in The Memoirs makes that work an almost direct complement to A Tale of a Tub. In the Tale, the story of Peter, Martin, and Jack is interrupted at nearly regular intervals by mock-pedantic digressions. In The Memoirs, the main business of mock-pedantry and mock-affectation is interrupted in a similar kind of orderly, regular way by self-contained farcical episodes. Like the tale of Cupid and Psyche in The Golden Ass, the autonomous "Dinner with Trimalchio" section of The Satyricon,[34] and Slawkenbergius's Tale and the stories of Le Fever and the Abbess of Andouillets in Tristram Shandy, the narrative episodes in The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus provide such a great deal of interest in themselves that they slow down the reader's forward progress, and weaken the structural unity of the work. This is, of course, not as aesthetically disastrous as might be expected. The aesthetics of the Menippean

---

[33]It is interesting to note that these episodes (with the possible exception of the "case of a young Nobleman at court"), in extravagance, absurdity of incident, and rapidity of movement (especially "The Double Mistress") are very closely allied to farce, of which John Mason Brown has written, "Its business is to make us accept the impossible as possible, the deranged as normal, and silliness as a happy substitute for sense." (Quoted by Leo Hughes in A Century of English Farce (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 20).

[34]The Satyricon, pp. 38-84.

satire is constructed according to rules different from those of other literary genres.

Ricardo Quintana, in discussing the satirist's methods, refers to his frequent creation of a character and the corresponding creation of "a fully realized world for him to move in".[35] He goes on to speak of this world as a "cloud -cuckoo-land" and talks of the "crazy assurance with which the character makes himself at home"[36] in his world. In order that the satirist might give this character as much room as possible in which to exist, and in order that the creator-satirist might enjoy a kind of literary freedom, the Menippean satire exhibits as part of its structural looseness, a tendency to become encyclopedic, a tendency to include as much as possible in its world. Not only is the satire a "mixed bowl"; it is also a very large bowl. Thus it is that Lucian in his short prose work, A True Story, is able to visit such a variety of places as the moon, the isles of the Blest, and the country that lies within a huge whale; so it is that Lucius Apuleius travels many miles both as man and as ass, endures a festival of laughter, a stud-farm, a band of eunuch priests, and finally is granted even an interview with the goddess Isis. Encolpius, too, undergoes many similarily strange adventures, even in the small fragment of The Satyricon which we possess.

Even more important, however, than the number and variety of the

---

[35]Ricardo Quintana, op. cit., p. 130.

[36]Ibid., p. 130.

physical adventures in Menippean satire (more prominent in ancient examples of the genre, and represented in The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus by the farcical episodes discussed above) is what Northrop Frye calls the Menippean satirist's "free play of intellectual fancy",[37] his encyclopedic interest in abstract ideas. Rabelais shows less interest in Lucian-like physical adventures than he shows, for example, in the purely literary adventure of the listing of Pantagruel's lineage. After a long prose account which ends, "Others grew in length of body, and of those came the giants, and of them Pantagruel", Rabelais begins to compile a list of Pantagruel's ancestors:

> And the first was Chalbroth,
> Who begat Sarabroth,
> Who begat Faribroth,
> Who begat Hurtali, that was a brave eater of pottage, and reigned in the time of the flood;
> Who begat Nembroth,
> Who begat Atlas, that with his shoulders kept the sky from falling;
> Who begat Goliah,
> Who begat Erix, that invented the Hocus pocus plays of legerdemain,
> Who begat Titius,
> Who begat Eryon,
> Who begat Polyphemus,
> Who begat Cacus,....

The list continues for forty-seven more begetters.[38] Examples of the encyclopedic tendency in Rabelais could (most appropriately) be multiplied. Burton's The Anatomy of Melancholy, dealing wholly with the abstract, and Tristram Shandy, in which very little happens but as much as

---

[37] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 310.

[38] Gargantua and Pantagruel, I, 143-144.

possible is discussed, provide further examples of the work of the encyclopedic satirist. In The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus the reader discovers the same encyclopedic tendency in the list of the succession of noises made by Martin as soon as he was born:

> There went a Report in the family, that as soon as he was born he uttered the voice of nine different animals. He cry'd like a Calf, bleated like a Sheep, chattered like a Mag-pye, grunted like a Hog, neighed like a Foal, croaked like a Raven, mewed like a Cat, gabbled like a Goose, and bray'd like an Ass.[39]

and in the list of Martin's future occupations,[40] the rules of Syllogisms,[41] the metaphysical "theses" of Martin and Crambe,[42] and a page of puns on the work "led":

> Who is not govern'd by the word Led? Our Noblemen and Drunkards are pimp-led, Physicians and Pulses fee-led, their Patients and Oranges pil-led, a New-married Man and an Ass are bride-led, an old-married Man and a Pack-horse sad-led; Cats and Dice rat-led, Swine and Nobility are sty-led, a Coquet and a Tinder-box are spark-led, a Lover and a Blunderer are grove-led. And that I may not be tedious -- ....[43]

The encyclopedic spirit leads to the inclusion in The Memoirs of Martin's observations of the physiological causes of the diseases of the mind,[44]

---

[39]Memoirs, p. 99.

[40]Ibid., p. 101.

[41]Ibid., pp. 121-122.

[42]Ibid., pp. 123-124.

[43]Ibid., p. 128.

[44]Ibid., pp. 131-133.

several letters -- from the Society of Free-thinkers to Martin, [45] and from Martin to Lindamira, [46] a complete law case,[47] and chapters wholly given over to lists of Martin's discoveries, works, [48] and the pieces already published, "written in his youth".[49] Here, too, as well

---

[45]Ibid., pp. 138-142.

[46]Ibid., p. 149.

[47]Ibid., pp. 154-163.

[48]Ibid., pp. 166-170.

[49]Ibid., p. 171. The list of titles seems to be a favourite structural configuration of Menippean satire. As common as is the list of "pieces already published" by a real or fictitious author, is the list of works which the satirist promises to publish in the future. At the end of his A True Story,Lucian writes, "You now know our story up to the moment we reached this new continent:...what happened to us on the new continent I will tell in the subsequent volumes." (Selected Satires of Lucian, p. 54.). Lucian's translator, Lionel Casson, is moved to write of this, "The biggest lie of all, as a disappointed ancient scribe noted in the margin of his copy." (Ibid., p. 57, n. 54). In A Tale of a Tub, Swift uses the same device to parody the prolific Grub-street denizen. At the beginning of the Tale, Swift lists "Treatises wrote by the same Author, most of them mentioned in the following Discourses; which will be speedily published" and includes in his list such tantalizing and absurd titles as "A general History of Ears" and "A Description of the Kingdom of Absurdities" (A Tale of a Tub, p. 2). At the end of Dr. Arbuthnot's The History of John Bull, there appears a "Postscript" in which it is explained that

> It has been disputed amongst the literati of Grub-Street, whether Sir Humphrey proceeded any farther into the history of John Bull. By diligent inquiry we have found the titles of some chapters, which appear to be a continuation of it;....(George A. Aitken, The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1892), p. 289.)

The work ends with a list of the titles of seventeen more chapters. The satirist promises good things to come and has little intention of fulfilling his promise. This kind of literary lie is one more Menippean structural impropriety.

as in The Canterbury Tales, is God's plenty.

Pope's Dunciad Variorum, though it is not strictly a product of the Scriblerus Club, has obvious connections with Club activity and provides a useful example of the structural use of prolixity and excess as a principle of the aesthetics of impropriety.[50] The Dunciad of 1728 is a mock-epic poem, a complete work of art. The Dunciad Variorum of 1729, bent under the weight of the mock-scholarly appendenda of Martinus Scriblerus, "Summi Critici", is another complete work of art and is something very much more than the earlier mock-epic poem with Scriblerian additions; it is aesthetically more than just the sum of its parts. Aubrey Williams points out that "most of the editorial paraphernalia is as much a construction of the imagination as the poem".[51] He goes on to say:

> That the quality of the new material attached to the poem has never been adequately defined is due, I think, to the assumptions most critics and editors have made: that the notes are to be taken at the level of history, and that their main purpose is to continue the personal satire in a prose commentary. The counter-assumption that all this paraphernalia is a deliberate displacing of history, 'notes toward a supreme fiction', a consciously contrived hoax... has never been widely entertained. Not, of course, a hoax in the sense of a cheap trick; rather in the sense of a distortion of history so magnificent and well-conceived that it has imposed upon the dunces a character Pope knew they never actually possessed (though many readers have accepted it as 'truth'), and imposed upon editors and critics a never-ending (though in part fruitless) job of clarification, a laborious correction of Pope's careful misstatements of fact.[52]

---

[50] See Appendix A, below.

[51] Aubrey L. Williams, Pope's Dunciad. A Study of Its Meaning (London: Methuen, 1955), p. 60.

[52] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

Although the Martinus Scriblerus notes certainly "continue the personal satire in a prose commentary", and although they produce a "magnificent" distortion of history, although they have the immediate effect of out-pedanting the pedants and thus of representing a kind of "action-satire", satire in which the reader is compelled for the moment to cover the same territory in an exhausting reading of the notes as the indefatigable "editor" had to in a laborious writing of them, the notes are so "well-conceived" as to give a new dimension to the work. Unlike The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, in which the authors were able to be as prolix and as formally eccentric as they wished, the Dunciad, as a mock-epic poem, imposed a rather rigorous form on the author, demanding in addition to a mock loftiness of language and a regular heroic line, such legitimate epic features as the depiction of public games and a descent to the underworld. The notes of the Dunciad Variorum provide a reaction to formal regularity and an escape from it into the freedom of prose. The notes also provide the author with the delights of the use of prolixity as a rhetorical exercise, the delights of the composing of a literary tour de force.[53] The Dunciad Variorum has, then, a unity of its own,

---

[53]It is noteworthy that Fielding seems to have seen artistic possibilities enough in the Dunciad's editorial paraphernalia to have supplied his The Tragedy of Tragedies with a preface and annotations by "H. Scriblerus Secundus". Chapter six of Fielding's Jonathan Wild, "Of hats" also displays features that are quite Scriblerian in their effect -- the brevity of the chapter, for example, combined with its digressive quality and apparently trifling subject. Not the least of the Scriblerian features of the chapter is Fielding's absurdly long and pedantic footnote which is affixed to the beginning of Wild's address to his gang the night after Fierce's execution. The note reads:

> There is something very mysterious in this speech, which probably that chapter written by Aristotle on

an aesthetically different kind of unity from that found in the Dunciad.

If studied prolixity is a common characteristic of the aesthetics of impropriety, equally "improper" is excessive brevity. In contrast to the discursiveness of most of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus is chapter nine, "How Martin became a great Critic", [54] which is,in its entirety,

---

> this subject, which is mentioned by a French author, might have given some light into; but that is unhappily among the lost works of that philosopher. It is remarkable that galerus, which is Latin for a hat, signifies likewise a dog-fish, as the Greek word kuven doth the skin of that animal; of which I suppose the hats or helmets of the ancients were composed, as ours at present are of the beaver or rabbit. Sophocles, in the latter end of his Ajax, alludes to a method of cheating in hats, and the scholiast on the place tells us of one Crephonates, who was a master of the art. It is observable likewise that Achilles, in the first Iliad of Homer, tells Agamemnon, in anger, that he had dog's eyes. Now, as the eyes of a dog are handsomer than those of almost any other animal, this could be no term of reproach. He must therefore mean that he had a hat on, which, perhaps, from the creature it was made of, or from some other reason, might have been a mark of infamy. This superstitious opinion may account for that custom, which hath descended through all nations, of showing respect by pulling off this covering, and that no man is esteemed fit to converse with his superiors with it on. I shall conclude this learned note with remarking that the term old hat is at present used by the vulgar in no very honourable sense. (Quoted from The Complete Works of Henry Fielding(New York: Croscup and Sterling, 1902), II, 74.).

The note is Scriblerian in almost every way except for the awkward breaking down of the mock-pedantry in Fielding's self-conscious remark in the last sentence that he "shall conclude this learned note...." (Italics mine) See also the learned footnote on "noses" in Sterne's "Slawkenbergius's Tale", Tristram Shandy, IV, p. 260.

[54] Memoirs, p. 129.

only two short paragraphs in length. Martin is described (in what is a succinct statement of the kind of personality the Scriblerians disliked) as having a most peculiar talent "to convert every Trifle into a serious thing, either in the way of Life, or in Learning".[55] The remainder of the chapter is a satirical thrust at Richard Bentley, a favourite Scriblerian butt,[56] and a suggestion to the reader that in order to sample Martin's critical talents, he should consult Virgilius Restauratus, that burlesque of Bentley's methods of classical emmendation, which is attached to the Dunciad Variorum.[57] A chapter which is overly brief is as aesthetically extravagant as a digression which is overly long. Formally, The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, like other Menippean satires, runs to extremes.

The author's ability to successfully deviate in his writing from a classical aesthetic norm of proportion and tastefulness into a work of formal extravagance is, as was previously suggested, evidence not of bad craftsmanship, but of his knowledge of literary forms and of his technical mastery of them. For an author to be able to manipulate a form for aesthetic effect, he must possess a sensitive knowledge of that form's essential characteristics and possibilities. This knowledge is surely the result of the writer's ability to view literary form from a position external to it, a position which allows him an objective view of the forms he may wish to

---

[55] Ibid., p. 129.

[56] See Charles Kerby-Miller's useful notes on the Scriblerians and Bentley in the Memoirs, pp. 266-271.

[57] Alexander Pope, The Dunciad, edited by James Sutherland (London: Methuen, 1953), pp. 217-221. All further references to the Dunciad are to this edition.

use. The writer who has this power of detachment is one who uses in his work any form which he thinks aesthetically expedient. He does not have his literary form romantically forced upon him by the muse. The authors of Menippean satire seem to display in abundance this quality of self-assurance that accompanies a mastery of forms, and it is this power to manipulate literary form that helps to give the Menippean satirist the appearance of formal virtuosity he so often displays. Unlike the writers who are usually referred to as "romantic" (and can thus be so referred to once more here) and whose works focus the reader's attention on the writer himself rather than on the literary form he is using, the Menippean satirist presents little to the world but the impersonal artistry of his literary "construct". When he does address the reader, it is almost always in the words of one of the constructed figures of his artificial satiric world. The satirist remains aloof and addresses his reader by using the mask or "persona" of a fictitious character.[58] The Scriblerians, for example, employ their Martinus Scriblerus for this purpose. Lucian often speaks through a literary Menippus while Erasmus creates Folly for his persona. Sterne somehow manages to satisfy the reader that Tristram Shandy is authorized to discuss in detail his own begetting and the minute family events of his early years. Satire, then, (as was mentioned in chapter one) is role-playing and as with drama, the appreciation of satire demands a willing suspension of disbelief. To attempt to find the "real" author behind the satiric mask is to attempt to pull the satirist down from his

---

[58]There is a discussion of the satirist's detachment and his use of "masks" in John M. Bullitt's book on Swift, Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 38-67.

detachment and make him speak with his "real" voice. To do this, of course, is to destroy the artistry of the satiric work. To be unsatisfied with the satirist's persona and to attempt to get behind the mask to the real author is the result of the reader's failure to play the satiric game. To help to guard against this destroying of his elaborately constructed edifice, the satirist goes to no little trouble to place a certain amount of the reader's interest and confidence in the persona the satirist happens to be using. The reader is more likely to leave the satirist in his detached position and read on with the satirist's persona as his guide if the satirist has taken some care to establish the authority with which this persona speaks. Maynard Mack refers to the establishing of this authority as the establishing of the speaker's ethos.[59] Whether or not one agrees entirely with Professor Mack's views on the satirist's ethos and the purpose of the satiric "apology", one does notice in a great many satires of the Menippean type, a preliminary concern with the proper introduction of the persona figure.[60] The persona, then, allows the satirist a kind of freedom of speech and a detached and objective view of his literary construction. Because the satirist controls both his persona and the literary forms (from which he is detached and free to manipulate) he often displays a marked stylistic and formal self-consciousness -- a self-consciousness which is probably not frequently found in writers to whom form and content are inseparable and who have their

---

[59]Maynard Mack, "The Muse of Satire", Yale Review, XLI (1951), p. 86.

[60]See, for example, the "Introduction" to The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus (pp. 91-94), the first few pages of Erasmus' Praise of Folly, and St. Thomas More's Utopia.

forms thrust upon them, the form being one with the organically developing subject. The Menippean satirist shows in his extreme awareness of the mechanics of form, a characteristic which is pervasive in Menippean satire and almost unique to writers of that genre. In The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, the authors seem very much aware of the extravagance of the structure they are erecting; their consciousness of the work's digressiveness is revealed by such statements as; "Though I'm afraid I have transgress'd upon my Reader's patience already, I cannot help taking notice of one thing more extraordinary than any yet mentioned;..."[61], and "But it is high time to return to the History of the Progress of Martinus in the Studies of Physick,..."[62]. The note prefixed to chapter fourteen of The Memoirs, "The Double Mistress", shows the authors' objective awareness of the form and style of their work:

> N. B. The style of this Chapter in the Original Memoirs is so singularly different from the rest, that it is hard to conceive by whom it was penn'd. But if we consider the particular Regard which our Philosopher had to it, who expresly directed that not one Word of this Chapter should be alter'd, it will be natural to suspect that it was written by himself, at the Time when Love (ever delighting in Romances) had somewhat tinctur'd his Style;...[63]

Menippean objectivity is revealed also in the satirist's awareness of what

---

[61] Memoirs, p. 121.

[62] Ibid., p. 130.

[63] Ibid., p. 143.

might be called the mechanics of the literary work; he seems to delight in making the reader very much aware of the physical aspects of the composing of the satire. In A Tale of a Tub, for example, the reader finds "A Digression in Praise of Digressions", and the frequent use of that mechanical and external intrusion upon the content of the writing -- the hiatus. A typical example of its use occurs in section nine of the work where Swift writes:

> For, I now proceed to unravel this knotty point.
> THERE is in Mankind a certain x x x
> x x x x x x x x x x x x
> x x x x x x x x x x x x
> Hic multa x x x x x x x x
> desiderantur x x x x x x x x
> x x x x x x x x x x x x
> x x x x And this I take to be a clear
> Solution of the Matter.
> HAVING therefore so narrowly past thro' this intricate Difficulty, the Reader will, I am sure, agree with me in the Conclusion;...[64]

The writer's self-conscious intrusion into his text of a preoccupation with the physical act of the making of a book is a common occurrence in Sterne's Tristram Shandy.[65] In chapter ten of volume four, Sterne writes:

> Is it not a shame to make two chapters of what passed in going down one pair of stairs? for we are got no farther yet than to the first landing, and there are fifteen more steps down to the bottom; and for aught I know, as my father and my uncle Toby are in a talking humour, there may be as many chapters as steps; -- let that be as it will, Sir, I can no more help it than my destiny: -- A sudden impulse comes across me -- drop the curtain,

---

[64] A Tale of a Tub, p. 170.

[65] For a useful discussion of Sterne's use of the "mechanics" of composition see "The Rhetoric of Self-Consciousness" in John Traugott's Tristram Shandy's World. Sterne's Philosophical Rhetoric (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), pp. 107- 128.

> Shandy -- I drop it -- Strike a line here across the paper, Tristram -- I strike it -- and hey for a new chapter! [66]

A few paragraphs later, Tristram informs the reader that he is now reading the "chapter upon chapters" which was promised to him before the author "went to sleep". The chapter closes with the comment, "So much for my chapter upon chapters, which I hold to be the best chapter in my whole work)."[67] The reader is not allowed to lose himself in what the satirist is saying. The satirist's breaking into his "story" with self-conscious utterances and mechanical devices forces the reader both to share something of the satirist's concern with form and to attain something of the satirist's detachment from his subject.

There are some general observations about the form of both Scriblerian and Menippean satire which can be drawn from the preceeding discussion. The Menippean satiric form seems, at first, to be little more than literary chaos. One finds, in this kind of satire, continual deviations from what one has always thought of as a norm of proportion and tastefulness. One finds digressions which retard the reader's progress, useless erudition, the inclusion of lists -- apparently just for the sake of listing, lengthy introductions, footnotes, and appendices, and the physical extremes of sections of great length or great brevity; one finds oneself on a tour conducted by what is usually an untrustworthy guide in the form of the persona of the satirist -- a figure who may have little similarity to the author of the satire. The author's abundant inventiveness, however, his wit, and his learning lead one to the conclusion

---

[66] Tristram Shandy, IV, 10, 281.

[67] Ibid., IV, 10, 283.

that behind this chaos is a literary virtuoso. One's urge to censure the author for apparently allowing his form to run away with him into extravagance is often disarmed by the author's candid agreement that he has indeed been nodding or that he has simply been unable to control his writing. A writer sensitive enough to form to know when he is breaking the "classical" rules (and to comment upon it) and gifted enough to bend literary forms into any extravagant shape in which he wants them, is a writer of genius who is not ignorant of literary rules but who merely wants to break them. If, as was suggested, formal unity is requisite in a work of art, then in Menippean satire we must look for a different kind of unity if we are to allow Menippean satires the status of works of art. Just as the satirist invents his own form to meet his satiric needs, so, in the process, he invents his own kind of formal unity. It is one more paradox of Menippean satire that the only unity which these rich and crowded works constantly display is that which can best be referred to as a pervasive unity of disunity. The "mixed dish" of Menippean satire has unity which is the opposite of that unity by which critics mean leanness of construction and the subordination of parts to the whole in the work. If unity means "oneness" it would be better, perhaps, to call the unity of Menippean satire "plurality". The Menippean satirist (and the Scriblerian satirist) rejects tightness of construction in favour of a looseness of construction. He enthusiastically assents in his use of form to the advice Rabelais found over the gate of the Abbeye de Thélèmes-- "Do what you will".

Although it has been suggested that Menippean satire displays, as

part of its impropriety of form, a recognizable "unity of disunity", it has not yet been explained how such satiric works might be distinguished from other non-satiric works which also display a characteristically Menippean looseness of construction, erudition, prolixity, and tendency to be encyclopedic. Such works as Francis Bacon's Wisdom of the Ancients or Sir Thomas Browne's Vulgar Errors, on the basis of these characteristics alone, might be classed as Menippean works. How different from Scriblerian erudition, after all, is the following paragraph from Browne's discussion "of the Unicorn's horn"?

> Great account and much profit is made of unicorn's horn, at least of that which beareth the name thereof; wherein notwithstanding, many, I perceive, suspect an imposture, and some conceive there is no such animal extant. Herein, therefore, to draw up our determinations: beside the several places of Scripture mentioning this animal (which some may well contend to be only meant of the rhinoceros) we are so far from denying there is any unicorn at all, that we affirm there are many kinds thereof. In the number of quadrupeds, we will concede no less than five; that is the Indian ox, the Indian ass, the rhinoceros, the oryx, and that which is more eminently termed monoceros or unicornis. Some in the lists of fishes; as that described by Olaus, Albertus, and others; and some unicorns we will allow even among insects, as those four kinds of nasicornous beetles, described by Muffetus.[68]

Formally, (no doubt partly because it is taken out of context) the passage displays the qualifications necessary for use as a typical Scriblerian footnote. When read in context, however, the example quoted above is

---

[68]Sir Thomas Browne, "Enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors" in The Works of Sir Thomas Browne, edited by Simon Wilkin (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852), I, 23, 337-338.

seen to have nothing of satire about it. Where, then, lie the differences between such a work as Browne's Vulgar Errors and Menippean satire -- differences which allow the reader to be able to distinguish clearly the one kind of work from the other, despite their similarities of form? The answer is largely to be found in what is usually referred to as "tone" or "approach" and which we have chosen to call (in a phrase borrowed from Ricardo Quintana) "way of speaking".

To isolate and examine completely or even adequately the Menippean "way of speaking" is beyond the scope of this essay. In brief, the difference between the passage from Vulgar Errors and an erudite section of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus is the difference between sincerity and irony. Before one has read very many pages of Sir Thomas Browne, one becomes aware of that learned gentleman's sincere desire to clarify and explain. Although he is always (and rightly) referred to as a stylist, Browne's style is surely first a means by which he may explain clearly the problem before him and, second, an end in itself as elegant and entertaining reading. If his subject is sometimes grotesque, Browne's handling of his subject, despite its baroque richness, is never anything but logical and controlled. In addition, his logic is sustained throughout the work. Here one finds no use of the "persona". Sir Thomas Browne speaks with his own voice. In comparison, to read The Memoirs is to experience studied insincerity and elaborate attempts by the authors to lead the reader from a normal, logical world into chaos -- to make us accept "the deranged as normal and silliness as a happy substitute for sense". Here, as in most

Menippean satire, what the author says is true is often untrue; the apparently virtuous is unvirtuous; the fool is a hero and the honest man is a dupe. In other words, the Scriblerian way of speaking is the ironic way of speaking, and the ironic way of speaking is a sustained writing of what the Houyhnhnms called "the thing which is not".

Because satiric irony has been well and fully discussed by such authorities as John Bullitt and David Worcester, it seems unnecessary to discuss it at length here. The only point that seems to need some mention is that while the Menippean satirist usually writes ironically, the reader cannot count on the satirist's maintaining his ironic tone (or the same ironic tone) throughout the work. Just as the "mixed bowl" of satire may include many literary forms within one work, so it may exhibit an apparently random adopting and discarding of its way of speaking. In The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, for example, Martin is not a reliable and sustained persona. He is the joint creation of five men and is as unpredictable in what he says and does as the minds of five satirists could make him. Sometimes, for example, Martin is the foolish pedant and the butt of the Scriblerian joke as he is in the "Double Mistress" episode. Here, the reader laughs at Martin. At other times, however, he displays all the intelligence and perception of the Scriblerians themselves as he does in chapter eleven of The Memoirs,"The Case of a young Nobleman at Court, with the Doctor's Prescription for the same". In this case, the reader laughs not at Martin but with him. The discussion of Peri Bathous in chapter three of this essay shows the same

sort of randomness in the satirist's use of irony. Thus, just as the Menippean satire displays the aesthetic impropriety of a chaotic use of literary form, so also does it display, in its unpredictable irony, an impropriety of its way of speaking, an impropriety of tone.

Up to this point in our investigation of Scriblerian satire, there has been a stressing of the structural characteristics of satire -- its form and its way of speaking. The discussion of these has been mainly concerned with aesthetics and not with the ethics and morality of satire. For a consideration of the subject matter of Scriblerian satire, however, it is necessary to point out that when the satirist chooses the subjects upon which he will build his satiric structure and display his literary virtuosity, he exercises his moral sense as well as his aesthetic sense, his resulting satire being "the creation of a combined artistic and ethical perspective".[69]

It is a premise of this essay (resulting, in part, from the premise of the existence of the "satiric personality") that when the satirist writes a satiric work, his chief concern is for the writing of the piece and not for the choice of a subject. There are, no doubt, many subjects for satire. Juvenal, looking about him, was prompted to say that it was difficult not to write satire. Like the painter of still-life pictures who finds himself surrounded with possible subjects and whose whole concern is for the arrangement and execution of the subject he happens to choose, so the satirist is concerned for the aesthetics of his work, once he has finished

---

[69]Aubrey L. Williams, op. cit., p. 77.

the simple task of the choice of a subject. In the same way as his greatest concern is not subject matter, similarly, the satirist is not overly concerned about the immediate practical results of his writing.[70] In what is often referred to as the satirist's "ironic attack", surely the important word in the phrase is not "attack" but "ironic". For the satirist, means are more important than ends. Such statements, of course, are impossible to prove. A study of the structure of satire, however, reveals in the satirist such a great interest in the aesthetics of his art and such a self-conscious awareness of the writing process that one is forced to believe in the primacy in the satiric mind of the aesthetics of the work over the provocation for it or a concern for the results of the work. Swift was doubtless more concerned with the composition of the Bickerstaff papers than he was with whether or not the unlucky Mr. Partridge stopped writing almanacs. In a statement that seems somewhat to rescue Pope from the accusations of cruelty by readers of his Dunciad, Pope wrote that "whoever will consider the Unity of the whole design, will be sensible, that the Poem was not made for these Authors, but these Authors for the Poem".[71] It was the poem that was of prime importance, not its resulting effect on society of mocking the dunces. Swift, in A Tale of a Tub, wrote ironically (but with some truth) that "Satyr...is never resented for an offense by any, since every individual Person makes bold to understand it of others, and very wisely removes his particular Part of the Burthen upon the shoulders of the World".[72]

---

[70] See, however, the discussion of the larger purpose of satire in chapter four, below.

[71] The Dunciad, p. 205.

[72] A Tale of a Tub, p. 51.

If there is little the satirist can do to truly vex the world, then he can at least attempt to deliver his message with all the artistic skill he commands.

The aesthetics of satire, then, is more important to the satirist than the immediate social stimulation for the attack. Despite the immediacy and locality of the attacks of the Scriblerus Club -- the defaming of Richard Bentley, [73] the baiting of Dr. Woodward, [74] and Pope's attacks on Grub-street in the Dunciad, the Scriblerian satirists possessed an "ethical perspective" large and general, and incorporating in its view subjects similar to those of the other satirists of the long Menippean tradition. It is a further paradox of the Scriblerians, that these Augustan satirists, often thought to be "local" in their interest in coffee-house gossip and the minute political issues of their day, should fit so comfortably in their choice of subject matter (as well as in their structural and stylistic characteristics) into a tradition which runs through ages so distant chronologically and culturally. This is, however, somewhat more understandable if, as was previously suggested, [75] the urge to write satire is primarily an aesthetic urge and is more a result of a satiric personality than of the external stimulation of particular political events or social mores. The discussion which follows refers frequently to the satirist's interest in delineating man's lack of self-knowledge and in correcting what the

---

[73] For example, in Memoirs, chapter IX, p. 129.

[74] Ibid., chapter III, pp. 102-104, and in Three Hours after Marriage.

[75] Chapter one, p. 11, above.

satirist believes to be, in man, a dangerous and misplaced sense of pride. This interest of the satirist's is found frequently in satiric works from the earliest times to those of recent years and is regarded here (though it is partly a moral matter) as part of the aesthetics of the satiric work because of its pervasiveness as a structural principle. This larger purpose of satire is thus not to be confused with such non-aesthetic factors in satiric writing as particular personal and social provocations to satire (such as the antiquarian interests of Dr. Woodward) which we subordinated to the aesthetics of satire. As with our investigation of the formal properties of Menippean satire, the following discussion of the satirist's subject matter disregards chronology and influence, and concerns itself with the isolation and identification of similar areas of subject matter where they are found in The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus and in other Menippean satires.

Safe in his detachment, like the Menippus described by Erasmus as looking down from the moon upon the "commotions and tragedies of this insignificant being"[76] man, secure in the belief in his clarity of mind and authoritative powers of intellect (or at least that is the picture he presents to the reader by the establishing of the authority of his persona), the satirist proceeds to attack what seems unhappily to be his fellow man and to convince the reader that the trouble with his objects of study is their persistent and thorough lack of self-knowledge. Depending, presumably, upon his temperament, the satirist may expose his

---

[76] Erasmus, The Essential Erasmus, selected and translated by John P. Dolan (Toronto: New American Library of Canada, 1964), p. 138.

victims genially and exhort them to virtue (as does Erasmus, for example, in his Praise of Folly), or he may revel in the aesthetics of the delineation of his victims and leave it at that (as do a great many Menippean satirists including, for the most part, the Scriblerians).

As is now well known, The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus is an evolution from an early plan of Pope's for exposing and ridiculing pedantry by the publication of a parody journal of the current Account of the Works of the Learned. In The Spectator for Thursday, August 14, 1712 (No. 457.), Pope wrote:

> Now Sir, it is my Design to Publish every Month, An Account of the Works of the Unlearned. Several late Productions of my own Country-men, who many of them make a very Eminent Figure in the Illiterate World, Encourage me in this Undertaking....I may,... take into Consideration such Pieces as appear, from time to time, under the Names of those Gentlemen who Compliment one another, in Publick Assemblies, by the Title of the Learned Gentleman. Our Party-Authors will also afford me a great Variety of Subjects, not to mention Editors, Commentators, and others, who are often Men of no Learning, or what is as bad, of no Knowledge....[77]

It is evident from this, however, that Pope's proposed journal was to ridicule more than the literary pretentiousness that is often called "pedantry"; it was to expose the lack of self-knowledge of men of many fields and professions. At the beginning of chapter nine of The Memoirs

---

[77]Alexander Pope, The Spectator, No. 457, Thursday, August 14,1712, in The Prose Works of Alexander Pope edited by Norman Ault (Oxford: The Shakespeare Head Press, 1936), p. 62. Charles Kerby-Miller (Memoirs, p. 15) feels that at the time of this Spectator paper, Pope was not seriously entertaining the idea of the burlesque journal. The principle of the broad exposure of the lack of self-knowledge is, however, clearly evident.

("How Martin became a great Critic"), it will be recalled that the reader is told that "It was a most peculiar Talent in Martinus, to convert every Trifle into a serious thing, either in the way of Life, or in Learning".[78] This, too, is broader than what is usually referred to as pedantry. It is, however, as Charles Kerby-Miller points out, close to Swift's definition of pedantry; "It was customary to define pedantry as a pretence to learning...Swift went deeper and recognized that the basic fault of the pedant lies not so much in his lack of real learning as in his placing too high a value on the knowledge he does possess".[79] Pedantry, then, is an unknowing blindness, a wilful disproportioning of one's values and potential. Mr. Kerby-Miller goes on to quote Swift on pedantry. In his On Good-Manners and Good-Breeding, Swift wrote:

> There is a pedantry in manners, as in all arts and sciences; and sometimes in trades. Pedantry is properly the over-rating any kind of knowledge we pretend to. And if that kind of knowledge be a trifle in itself, the pedantry is the greater. For which reason I look upon fiddlers, dancing-masters, heralds, masters of the ceremony, &c. to be greater pedants than Lipsius, or the elder Scaliger.[80]

In "A Letter to the Publisher" prefixed to the Dunciad Variorum as a justification of Pope's attack on dunces, William Cleland wrote:

> If Obscurity or Poverty were to exempt a man from satyr, much more should Folly or Dulness, which

---

[78] Memoirs, p. 129.

[79] Ibid., p. 268.

[80] Swift, Prose Works, IV, 215-216.

> are still more involuntary, nay as much so as personal deformity. But even this will not help them: Deformity becomes the object of ridicule when a man sets up for being handsome: and so must Dulness when he sets up for a Wit... Accordingly we find that in all ages, all vain pretenders, were they ever so poor or ever so dull, have been constantly the topicks of the most candid Satyrists, from the Codrus of JUVENAL to the Damon of BOILEAU.[81]

If by pedantry we understand what Swift and Pope meant by it, then The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus is indeed a satire directed against pedantry, an exposure of "vain pretenders", and the work can be seen to take its place with other Menippean satires in exposing the pretensions of mankind.

Arthur O. Lovejoy has shown in The Great Chain of Being[82] that man has always speculated about his place in the order of creation and has erected for himself a complex philosophical structure in order to explain it; the philosophical structure is modified with the changing times but the basic idea of a "chain of being" stretching from God to the lowest order of creation has, it seems, always been with us. On this hypothetical chain of being, man, like every other object of creation, has his proper place -- higher than the animals and a little lower than the angels. Pretentiousness, the dunce's urge to "set up for a Wit", is his attempt to occupy a place in the scale of being higher than that which belongs to him. In a short essay, "On Affectation", which appeared

---

[81] The Dunciad, p. 17.

[82] Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (New York: Harper, 1960).

in The Spectator No. 404 for Friday, June 13, 1712 (and has been attributed to Pope by Norman Ault[83]), one finds in the opening paragraph a concise statement of the Augustan desire that man should obey the established cosmic order.

> NATURE does nothing in vain; the Creator of the Universe has appointed every thing to a certain Use and Purpose, and determined it to a settled Course and Sphere of Action, from which, if it in the least deviates, it becomes unfit to answer those Ends for which it was designed. In like Manner is it in the Dispositions of Society, the civil Oeconomy is formed in a Chain as well as the natural; and in either Case the Breach but of one Link puts the Whole into some Disorder. It is, I think, pretty plain, that most of the Absurdity and Redicule we meet with in the World, is generally owing to the impertinent Affectation of excelling in Characters Men are not fit for, and for which Nature never designed them.[84]

The cause of this pretentiousness in man is pride which, if one can judge from the amount of writing it engenders, is certainly for the eighteenth century the deadliest of the deadly sins. Because pride disturbs the chain of being, it is a sin against man, against God, and against the order of creation itself.

> For my Part, I could never consider this preposterous Repugnancy to Nature any otherwise, than not only the greatest Folly, but also one of the most heinous Crimes, since it is a direct Opposition to the Disposition of Providence, and, (as Tully expresses it) like the Sin of the Giants, an actual Rebellion against Heaven.[85]

---

[83] See The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, pp. xliv-xlv.

[84] Ibid., p. 37.

[85] Ibid., p. 41.

The satirists of the Scriblerus Club had a great deal to say about pride and man's place in creation. Pope's An Essay on Man, of course, is devoted almost entirely to the "proper study", the study of man and his place in the universe, and is typical of much of the Augustan thought on the subject in its stressing of the need for man's recognition of his human limitations:"The bliss of Man (could Pride that blessing find)/ Is not to act or think beyond mankind;"[86]. In Fable XLIX, "The Man and the Flea", John Gay describes Man blissfully contemplating the glories of Nature, made for his domination; "I cannot raise my worth too high;/Of what vast consequence am I!", only to hear (in an echo from Pope) the reply:

> Not of th' importance you suppose,
> Replies a Flea upon his nose:
> Be humble, learn thyself to scan;
> Know, pride was never made for man.
> 'Tis vanity that swells thy mind.
> What, heav'n and earth for thee design'd!
> For thee! made only for our need;
> That more important Fleas might feed.[87]

Man must know his physical place in the universe; he must not "act beyond mankind". He must also realize his mental limitations; he must not "think beyond mankind", either. Arthur O. Lovejoy has shown [88] that

> It was upon [man's] rational faculty and his

---

[86]Alexander Pope, An Essay on Man, edited by Maynard Mack (London: Methuen, 1950), Bk.I, ll. 189-190, p. 38.

[87]John Gay, "Fable XLIX" in The Poetical Works of John Gay, edited by C. G. Faber (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926), p. 273.

[88]Arthur O. Lovejoy, " 'Pride' in Eighteenth-Century Thought" in Essays in the History of Ideas, pp. 62-68.

> intellectual achievements that modern man had been wont most to plume himself. But the conception of the graded scale of being tended to fix attention especially upon the limitations of man's mental powers. Moveover, the primitivism which had long been associated with the cult of the sacred word 'nature' had expressed itself, among other ways, in the disparagement of intellectual pursuits and the depreciation of man's intellectual capacity.[89]

Professor Lovejoy remarks that in the early eighteenth-century, it became "customary to berate and satirize all forms of intellectual ambition"[90] and quotes from An Essay on Man; "Trace Science then, with Modesty thy guide; /First strip off all her equipage of Pride"[91]. This is not anti-intellectualism. The learned man who maintained a classic balance of brilliance and humility was applauded. Pope had, after all, written, "Nature, and Nature's Laws lay hid in Night./ God said, Let Newton be! and All was Light."[92] But while man was to trace science with modesty as his guide, he was warned that in stripping off her "equipage of Pride", he must

> Deduct what is but Vanity or Dress,
> Or Learning's Luxury, or Idleness;
> Or tricks to shew the stretch of human brain,
> Mere curious pleasure, or ingenious pain:[93]

---

[89]Ibid., p. 66.

[90]Ibid., p. 67.

[91]An Essay on Man, Bk. II, ll. 43-44, p. 61.

[92]Alexander Pope, "Epitaph. Intended for Sir ISAAC NEWTON, In Westminster-Abbey", in Minor Poems, edited by Norman Ault and John Butt (London: Methuen, 1954), p. 317.

[93]An Essay on Man, Bk. II, ll. 45-48, p. 61.

While Pope and others of the Scriblerus Club sometimes made such clear statements of their beliefs, in the satiric works of the Club, these beliefs are not usually explicitely stated. If they are painfully obvious to the reader they are so because of the effectiveness of the Scriblerian satiric method -- the deftness of their irony and the skill with which they manipulated literary forms. In Scriblerian satire, the authors never lecture the reader. They exhort him to virtue by showing him (by a virtuosic use of irony) virtue's opposite. They present absurd examples of human blindness and pretentiousness without editorial comment. Here, in a passage rich with Scriblerian erudition, is the Scriblerian portrait of Cornelius Scriblerus attempting to demonstrate the power of ancient music:

> ...I have here a small Lyra of my own, fram'd, strung, and tun'd after the ancient manner. I can play some fragments of Lesbian tunes, and I wish I were to try them upon the most passionate creatures alive." -- "You never had a better opportunity (says Albertus) for yonder are two Apple-women scolding, and just ready to uncoif one another." With that Cornelius, undress'd as he was, jumps out into his Balcony, his Lyra in hand, in his slippers, with his breeches hanging down to his ankles, a stocking upon his head, and a waistcoat of murrey-colour'd sattin upon his body: He touch'd his Lyra with a very unusual sort of Harpagiatura, nor were his hopes frustrated. The odd Equipage, the uncouth Instrument, the strangeness of the Man and of the Musick drew the ears and eyes of the whole Mob that were got about the two female Champions, and at last of the Combatants themselves. They all approach'd the Balcony, in as close attention as Orpheus's first Audience of Cattle, or that of an Italian Opera when some favourite Air is just awaken'd. This sudden effect of his Musick encouraged him mightily, and it was observ'd he never touched his Lyre in such a truly chromatick and enharmonick manner as upon that occasion. The mob laugh'd, sung, jump'd, danc'd, and us'd many odd gestures, all which

> he judg'd to be caused by his various strains and modulations. "Mark (quoth he) in this, the power of the Ionian; in that, you see the effect of the AEolian." But in a little time they began to grow riotous, and threw stones: [94]

Cornelius, in his pedantic blindness, cannot see that he is an object of derision. He leaves the balcony with "the greatest air of Triumph in the world". This is the way he interprets the event to his brother Albertus:

> Brother (said he) do you observe I have mixed unawares too much of the Phrygian; I might change it to the Lydian, and soften their riotous tempers: But it is enough: Learn from this Sample to speak with veneration of ancient Musick. If this Lyre in my unskilful hands can perform such wonders, what must it not have done in those of a Timotheus or a Terpander?" Having said this, he retir'd with the utmost Exultation in himself,....[95]

If there can be attributed to the satirist, and especially the Scriblerian satirist, any motive for satire except that of the aesthetic satisfaction in its composing, it is here taken to be, for the purpose of what follows, the satirist's wish to destroy human pretentiousness by the displaying of human lapses in self-knowledge. In this connection, as Aubrey Williams points out in his study of the Dunciad,[96] the explicit statements about man's place in the universe in An Essay on Man provide a useful background against which to view the Scriblerian campaign against man's lack of self-knowledge.

If, then, man distorts himself through pride, so the satirist

---

[94] Memoirs, p. 116. In The Satyricon, (p. 95) Eumolpus' demonstration of his talents is met with the same reaction. After the recitation of his "The Fall of Troy", "several of the people who were strolling about the gallery greeted Eumolpus' epic effusion with a volley of stones".

[95] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

[96] Aubrey Williams, op. cit., p. 84.

distorts man, both as an aesthetic adventure in its own right and as a means of illuminating man's shortcomings. In the following pages, we shall examine a sampling of these aesthetic distortions in an investigation of the Scriblerian satiric exposures of pretentious professionals -- philosophers and lawyers. The Scriblerus Club's satire on the rhetoricians has been reserved for the discussion of Peri Bathous in chapter three of this essay. There has been, in the pages to follow, a concentration on the Club's satire of lawyers, partly because the Scriblerian treatment of the legal profession is a convenient example of the standard Menippean attitude to the professions and also because a detailed investigation of Scriblerian legal satire serves to display in the work a common Menippean theme -- the pervasive preoccupation with the physical and bestial aspects of man.

There is very little satire of physicians in The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus or in the other Scriblerian works, a fact which is surprising when one recalls the influence of Dr. Arbuthnot in the Club. Mr. Kerby-Miller explains the lack of medical satire in The Memoirs by suggesting that Arbuthnot purposely did not encourage satire at the expense of his profession. "Since quackery as such fell outside the scope of the Scriblerian scheme", writes Mr. Kerby-Miller, "Arbuthnot was limited to more or less legitimate medicine."[97] The satire of legitimate medicine would tend to become overly technical, suggests Mr. Kerby-Miller, and there was always the danger of Arbuthnot's estrangement

---

[97] Memoirs, p. 272.

from his satirically-wounded colleagues in the College of Physicians. As a result, the physicians remain unmolested by the Scriblerus Club.

If physicians escape the Scriblerus Club, however, philosophers do not. Probably because the philosopher's tortured quest for truth seems so often to be a fruitless or pretentious occupation, the philosopher has been a favourite Menippean target. The Menippean satirist apparently resents the logical encumbrances with which the philosopher has seemed to surround himself. The philosophers (in the words of Erasmus) "are protected by a wall of ...definitions, arguments, corollaries, and implicit and explicit propositions." [98] Lucian, who even goes so far as to sell to the highest bidder both the philosophers and their philosophies,[99] has Diogenes describe his favourite philosopher-satirist, Menippus, as "Old, bald, wears a coat so full of holes it lets in every breath of wind and is a crazy quilt of patches, always laughing, and generally to be found making fun of those quack philosophers".[100] Pollux, to whom Diogenes has been describing Menippus, is then asked to carry to earth a message from Diogenes to these philosophers:

> Pollux. Say on. No trouble at all.
>
> Diogenes. Just this: tell them to cut out the nonsense -- cut out arguing about the universe and making horns grow on each other and conjuring up crocodiles; stop training the mind to ask such useless questions.[101]

---

[98] The Essential Erasmus, p. 143.

[99] "Philosophies for Sale" in Selected Satires of Lucian, pp. 314-333.

[100] Selected Satires of Lucian, p. 194.

[101] Ibid., p. 195. Translator Lionel Casson comments that one

Like Menippus, the Scriblerians can often be found making fun of quack philosophers. Most of their satire on philosophers in The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus is to be found in chapter seven ("Rhetoric, Logic, Metaphysics") and chapter twelve ("How Martinus endeavoured to find out the Seat of the Soul, and of his Correspondence with the Free-thinkers"). In chapter seven, one finds outlined the basic Scriblerian distrust of metaphysical speculation and their consequent antidotal attempts to reduce the abstract to the concrete (of which there is more to be said presently). Martin's difficulty in learning logic and metaphysics stems from the fact that his "understanding was so totally immers'd in sensible objects, that he demanded examples from Material things ...."[102] Cornelius, however, is not daunted in his desire to make Martin a philosopher; he was "forced to give Martin sensible images".[103] In a typical example of his use of "sensible images", Martin supposes "an Universal Man to be like a Knight of a Shire or a Burgess of a Corporation, that represented a great many Individuals".[104] The authors expand an already absurd idea into sublime nonsense:

> His Father ask'd him, if he could not frame the Idea of an Universal Lord Mayor? Martin told him, that

---

symptom of the verbal quibbling of the philosophers was the fondness they had "of stumping each other with logical posers such as the riddle of the horns (Anything you haven't lost you still have, right? Have you lost your horns? No? Then you have horns." (p. 196, n. 2) For the riddle of the crocodile see Selected Satires of Lucian, p. 326.

[102] Memoirs, p. 119.

[103] Ibid., p. 199.

[104] Ibid., p. 120.

> never having seen butone Lord Mayor, the Idea of that Lord Mayor always return'd to his mind; that he had great difficulty to abstract a Lord Mayor from his Fur, Gown, and Gold Chain; nay, that the horse he saw the Lord Mayor ride upon not a little disturb'd his imagination.[105]

Crambe, on the other hand, a "more penetrating genius", swore that

> he could frame a conception of a Lord Mayor not only without his Horse, Gown, and Gold Chain, but even without Stature, Feature, Colour, Hands, Head, Feet, or any Body; which he suppos'd was the abstract of a Lord Mayor. Cornelius told him that he was a lying Rascal; that an Universale was not the object of imagination, and that there was no such thing in reality, or a parte Rei. But I can prove (quoth Crambe) that there are Clysters a parte Rei, but clysters are universales; ergo. Thus I prove my Minor. Quod aptum est inesse multis, is an universale by definition; but every clyster before it is administered has that quality; therefore every clyster is an universale.[106]

Crambe's Treatise of Syllogisms follows. In a short introductory section to the two page "Treatise", the authors provide an excellent example of Scriblerian reduction of the pretentiously abstract to the crudely absurd:

> Crambe suppos'd that a Philosopher's brain was like a great Forest, where Ideas rang'd like animals of several kinds; that those Ideas copulated and engender'd Conclusions; that when those of different Species copulate, they bring forth monsters or absurdities; that the Major is the male, the Minor the female, which copulate by the Middle Term, and engender the Conclusion. Hence they are call'd the praemissa, or Predecessors of the Conclusion; and it is properly said by the Logicians quod pariunt scientiam, opinionem; they beget science, opinion, &c.[107]

---

[105] Ibid., p. 120.

[106] Ibid., pp. 120-121.

[107] Ibid., p. 121.

Martin's search for the seat of the soul, in chapter twelve, is really more a continuation of his medical-scientific studies than it is philosophy. The seat of the soul is evidently to be found in a certain part of the body, its exact position being different in each person according to "Inclinations, Sexes, Ages, and Professions".[108] The remainder of the chapter is devoted to the letter to Martin from The Society of Free-thinkers and the satire of philosophy becomes rather more a satire on that sect itself and on the theological arguments about the existence of the immaterial soul.[109]

Those who seem most to have converted "every Trifle into a serious thing", however, are the lawyers. Not all lawyers, of course, deserved a satirical scourging, but for aesthetic reasons, for the necessity of presenting an aesthetically neat united front against lawyers, the good (as with other satiric targets) suffer with the bad. William Fortesque, for instance, a lawyer friend of the Scriblerus Club, may even have had a hand in the composition of Stradling versus Stiles, a satire on legal quibbling.[110] There are many instances in the work of the members of the Scriblerus Club of satire on lawyers and the workings of the law. The organizing joke of A Tale of a Tub is really a legal quibble, the wilful and ingenious misinterpretations by Peter, Martin, and Jack of their father's will. Gulliver's Travels is, of course, rich with satire at the

---

[108] Ibid., p. 137.

[109] For discussion of the sect of the Free-thinkers and the theological quarrels that raged around them, see Memoirs, pp. 280-293.

[110] Memoirs, p. 46.

expense of the operation of civil law. Gulliver's usual complaint is that an encounter with the law means eventual ruin whether or not the case is won.[111] His law-discourse to the King of Brobdingnag is prefaced with the remark that he would easily be able to satisfy his Majesty's curiosity "having been formerly almost ruined by a long suit in chancery".[112] In the fourth voyage, Gulliver finds that his Master in Houyhnhnmland is also puzzled by the English law system. Gulliver explains.

> I had said, that some of our Crew left their Country on Account of being ruined by Law: That I had already explained the Meaning of the Word; but he was at a Loss how it should come to pass, that the Law which was intended for every Man's Preservation, should be any Man's Ruin.[113]

Gulliver goes on to explain to his Master.

> I SAID there was a Society of Men among us, bred up from their Youth in the Art of proving by Words multiplied for the Purpose, that White is Black, and Black is White, according as they are paid. To this Society all the rest of the People are Slaves.
>
> FOR Example. If my Neighbour hath a mind to my Cow, he hires a Lawyer to prove that he ought to have my Cow from me. I must then hire another to defend my Right; it being against all Rules of Law that any Man should be allowed to speak for himself.[114]

---

[111]It is probably because of reform movements and other efforts since the eighteenth century to make the processes of law more efficient that legal tangles do not play the important part in modern satire that they did. A novel like Franz Kafka's The Trial, however, could probably be seen as a sinister extension of the tradition of law-satires.

[112]Swift, Prose Works, 11, 114.

[113]Ibid., 11, 232.

[114]Ibid., 11, 232-233.

Employing a masterful cynical irony, Swift shows that as the rightful owner of the cow, Gulliver lies "under two great disadvantages". The result of this exemplary law suit is that Gulliver might very well be allowed to keep his own cow if he pays a double fee to his adversary's lawyer or if his own lawyer can make his right to his own cow appear unjust "and this, if it be skilfully done, will certainly bespeak the Favour of the Bench".[115] Aesthetically, the section is a magnificent success, cynicism so controlled as to be delightful. In every other way but the aesthetic, however, the piece is outrageous -- bitter, and unfairly generalized. It is the crystallization of the aesthetically "improper".

Dr. Arbuthnot's The History of John Bull,[116] as one would expect from its original title, Law is a Bottomless Pit,[117] has something to say about the labyrinths of the law. In chapter eleven, "How John Looked over his Attorney's Bill", Arbuthnot provides the reader with not only a Swift-like cynicism but also clothes what he has to say in the typical satiric luxuriance of language. John discovers that he is liable to pay

> Fees to judges, puisni-judges, clerks, prothonataries, filacers, chirographers, under-clerks, proclamators, council, witnesses, jurymen, marshals, tipstaffs, criers, porters; for enrollings, exemplifications, bails, vouchers, returns, caveats, examinations, filings of writs, entries, declarations, replications, recordats, noli prosequis, certioraris, mittimuses, demurrers, special verdicts, informations, scire facias, supersedeas, habeas corpus, coach-hire, treating of witnesses, &c. 'Verily', says

---

[115] Ibid., 11, 233.

[116] George A. Aitken, The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1892), pp. 193-290.

[117] Ibid., p. 204. "Law is a bottomless pit; it is a cormorant, a harpy that devours everything."

> John, 'there are a prodigious number of learned words in this law; what a pretty science it is!'[118]

Lawyers in satire seem always to be tediously prolix. The only lawyer who appears in St. Thomas More's Utopia takes part briefly in a discussion which also includes Raphael Hythlodaeus and Cardinal Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and is rudely silenced when he begins to reply in what promises to be more than the few words he has promised.[119] In Erasmus' The Praise of Folly, the goddess curtly dismisses lawyers, also finding them guilty of making much of nothing:

> Among men of the learned professions, a most self-satisfied group of men, the lawyers may hold themselves in the highest esteem. For while they laboriously roll up the stone of Sisyphus by the force of weaving six hundred laws together at the same time, by the stacking of commentary upon commentary and opinion upon opinion regardless of how far removed from the purpose, they contrive to make their profession seem to be the most difficult of all. What is actually tedious they consider brilliant.[120]

Rabelais devotes a considerable portion of Book III of Gargantua and Pantagruel to making a mockery of the legal profession. In chapter thirty-four, "How Pantagruel was present at the trial of Judge Bridlegoose, who decided causes and controversies in law by the chance and fortune of the dice", Judge Bridlegoose rationalizes his use of chance in determining

---

[118] Ibid., pp. 211-212.

[119] St. Thomas More, Utopia, edited by Edward Surtz, S. J. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 28. The lawyer mentioned here is described not as a professional but as "a layman, learned in the laws...." The editor's note reads "The legal profession was often a means to wealth, fame, and power". (n. 36, p. 20.)

[120] The Essential Erasmus, p. 142.

justice by

> observing that which hath been said thereof by D. Henri. Ferrandat, et not. gl. in. c. fin. de sortil. et. l. sed cum ambo. ff. de jud. Ubi Docto. Mark, that chance and fortune are good, honest, profitable, and necessary for ending of, and putting a final closure to dissensions and debates in suits of law.[121]

The Judge seems to sense that this is not very convincing to Trinquamelle, "grand president of the court", and Rabelais seems to sense that it would be an excellent opportunity to out-prolix the prolix; as a result, the reader is treated to a catalogue of legal terms. Judge Bridlegoose attempts to convince his listeners that he has

> well and exactly seen, surveyed, overlooked, reviewed, recognized, read, and read over again, turned and tossed over, seriously perused and examined the bills of complaint, accusations, impeachments, indictments, warnings, citations, summonings, comparitions, appearances, mandates, commissions, delegations, instructions, informations, inquests, preparatories, productions, evidences, proofs, allegations, depositions, cross speeches,...

and so the list continues for another twenty-five lines.[122] The satirist has here attained a double objective -- he has buried the absurdities of legal language in a great explosion of verbosity and he has well displayed his powers of invention and literary skill.

The examples so far cited can be included in a discussion of the aesthetics of impropriety only in so far as they are examples of the satiric distorting of the honesty of the legal profession, and that they are either

---

[121]Rabelais, op. cit., II, 39.

[122]Ibid., II, 39.

statements about the tedious legal jargon or satiric demonstrations of it. The examples of law-satires which follow are illustrative of a more obvious kind of aesthetic of impropriety, combining satire on the absurd entanglements of the law with the Menippean satirist's interest in delineating the physical side of man's existence.

Laurence Sterne combines his interest in the convoluted processes of law with what seems to be a theme of some importance in Tristram Shandy, the theme of begetting, conception, and birth. In Book one, is found the "petite canulle" controversy, the question of when and indeed, where a child should be baptized. The legal and religious complexities of the question allow Sterne the opportunity for such foolery as this:

> But the Doctors of the Sorbonne, by a deliberation held amongst them, April 10, 1733, -- have enlarged the powers of the midwives, by determining, That tho' no part of the child's body should appear, -- that baptism shall, nevertheless, be administered to it by injection, -- par le moyen d'une petite Canulle, -- Anglicè a squirt.[123]

In Book four, chapter twenty-nine, the possibility of re-naming Tristram leads to the question of whether or not the mother is of kin to her own child and, by the same token, whether or not the father is. The child, the mother, and the father, it is decided, although they are of one flesh are "no degree of kindred". In addition, since "there is no prohibition in nature, though there is in the Levitical law" the company considers the possibilities of a man's begetting a child upon his grandmother.

> But who ever thought, cried Kysarcius, of laying with his grandmother? -- The young gentleman, replied Yorick,

---

[123] Tristram Shandy, I, 20, 58.

> whom Selden speaks of -- who not only thought of it, but justified his intention to his father by the argument drawn from the law of retaliation -- "You lay'd, Sir, with my mother, said the lad -- why may not I lay with yours?" -- 'Tis the Argumentum commune, added Yorick.[124]

This Shandean impropriety of the legal and the sexual brings us again to the legal satire of the Scriblerus Club.

In Three Hours after Marriage, by Gay, Pope, and Dr. Arbuthnot, which we may regard as Scriblerian satire although it is not really a product of Scriblerus Club activity,[125] there is a plot near the end of the play in which Possum attempts to convince Fossile that he is the father of Townley's illegitimate son. As Pope and Fortesque had written in Stradling versus Stiles, "Reason is the Life of the Law",[126] and in Three Hours after Marriage the authors show that ideal of Reason tortured out of existence. Fossile, of course, rightly protests that the child is not his:

> Fossile. This is all from the Purpose. I was married this Morning at Seven; let any Man in the least acquainted with the Powers of Nature, judge whether that Human Creature could be conceived and brought to Maturity in one Forenoon.
>
> Possum. This is but Talk, Dr. Fossile. It is well for you, though I say it, that you have fallen into the Hands of a Person, who has study'd the Civil and Canon-Law in the Point of Bastardy. The Child is either yours or not yours.[127]

---

[124] Ibid., IV, 29, 330.

[125] Memoirs, p. 46.

[126] Alexander Pope, The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq., edited by Rev. William Lisle Bowles (London, 1806), VI, 304.

[127] John Gay, Alexander Pope, and John Arbuthnot, Three Hours after Marriage, edited by Richard Morton and William M. Peterson (Painesville, Ohio: The Lake Erie College Press, 1961), p. 54.

According to Possum, one aspect of the case to be considered important is that of Nomination. The following excerpt is an example of Scriblerian virtuosic invention of chop-logic:

> Fossile. I tell you, I never had any Children. I shall grow distracted, I shall --
>
> Possum. But did you give any Orders against registring the Child by the Name of Fossile?
>
> Fossile. How was it possible!
>
> Possum. Set down that, Clark. He did not prohibit the Registring the Child in his own Name. We our selves have observed one Sign of Fatherly Tenderness; Clark, set down the Water-Pap he order'd just now. Come we now --
>
> Fossile. What a Jargon is this![128]

In the Memoirs, one finds Martinus Scriblerus rather than Dr. Fossile to be the victim of the legal morass; the jargon that so distracted Fossile is expanded into an entire chapter delightfully improper both in its characteristically Menippean structural and stylistic excessiveness and in its indelicate toying with its delicate subject matter. Martin, it will be recalled, gains the favour of his lady Lindamira in chapter fourteen by rescuing her from Mantager, "the hairy son of Hanniman", the "Sylvan Ravisher", whom he slays with the horn of a unicorn.[129] Lindamira (and, one should think, Indamora, too) is suitably grateful to Martin and as "a joyful witness of his Triumph" she consents to marry him, thus providing the chapter with an ending befitting any good romantic novel. Their happiness, however, is short-lived.

---

[128] Ibid., p. 55.

[129] Memoirs, p. 153.

> ...Nemesis, who delights in traversing the best-laid designs of Cupid, maliciously contrived the means to make these three[130] Lovers unhappy. No sooner had the Master of the Show received notice of their flight, but he seiz'd on the Bohemian Ladies by a Warrant; and not content with having recover'd the Possession of them, resolved to open all the Sluices of the Law[131] upon Martin. So he instantly went to Counsel to advise upon all possible methods of revenge.[132]

The resulting legal case affords the authors an excellent opportunity for satire. The case is too complex to allow a complete summary here. Very briefly the situation is this. The Master of the raree-show, Mr. Randal naturally resents Martin's removing one of his prize attractions and wishes to contest Martin's right to Lindamira-Indamora, claiming that she (they) is (are) (a) slave(s). While the problems of such a case might have been sufficiently absurd, the situation is made even more outrageous by Mr. Randal's roguery:

> At length Mr. Randal, being vex'd to the heart, to have been so long and so quaintly disappointed, determined to commence a Suit against Martin for

---

[130] One must recall the singular physical condition of Lindamira.

[131] It is interesting to note the frequency with which Pope and Swift and the others use the deluge as a metaphor for describing the onslaught of some physical or mental evil. Here, Martin is to be engulfed by the law. In the Dunciad, Pope speaks of Dulness as "drowning" sense, shame, right, and wrong (Aubrey Williams, op. cit., p. 153) and describes Dulness as the Great Mother who bids Britannia sleep, "And pours her Spirit o'er the Land and Deep"(Ibid., p. 153). Aubrey Williams notices the deluge metaphor and points to Pope's application of it to the ominous rising tide of scribblers, the "deluge of authors" who threatened to "make one Mighty Dunciad of the Land".(Ibid., p. 158). It is interesting also that Phoebe Clinket's bad play in Three Hours after Marriage is called "The Universal Deluge" (p. 15).

[132] Memoirs, p. 154.

> Bigamy and Incest. Mean while he left no Artifice or Address untried to perplex the unhappy Philosopher: He even contriv'd with infinite cunning, to alienate Indamora's affections from him; and debauch'd her into an intrigue with a Creature of his own, the black Prince; whom he secretly caus'd to marry her, while her Sister was asleep.[133]

It is this treacherous second marriage that results in the law suit that occupies the remainder of the chapter, for

> Hereupon Martin was reduc'd to turn Plaintiff, and commenc'd a Suit in the Spiritual Court against the black Prince, for Cohabitation with his said wife. He was advised to insist upon a new Point, (viz.) "That Lindamira and Indamora together made up but one lawful wife." [134]

The authors have now moved beyond the area of mere satire on the legal profession. They have so arranged it that while satirizing lawyers and legal procedures they are able to indulge in the literary impropriety of which they seem so fond. There is, here, an opportunity for both Menippean prolixity and indelicacy of subject. The only excuse offered the reader for this literary indulgence of the authors is that a full explanation is a favour to the reader; "as both the Cause and the Pleadings are of an extraordinary Nature, we think fit here to insert them at length".[135] Martinus' attorney, Dr. Penny-feather, pleads that Lindamira-Indamora is one person and rightly belongs to Martin. His case, both because of the anatomy of the real twins[136] and because of the Scriblerian fondness for

---

[133] Ibid., p. 155.

[134] Ibid., p. 155.

[135] Ibid., p. 156.

[136] See Charles Kerby-Miller's discussion of the physical structure of the real twins and of Lindamira-Indamora, Memoirs, p. 309.

impropriety, inevitably depends upon the genital structure of Martin's bride. Dr. Penny-feather's discourse is a masterful combination of obscenity and formal legal language.

> Secondly, We are to prove, that though Lindamira-Indamora were two individual Persons, consisting each of a Soul and Body, yet, if they have but one Organ of Generation, they can constitute but one wife. For, from whence can the Unity of any thing be denominated, but from that which constitutes the Essence or principal Use of it? Thus, if a knife or hatchet have but one blade, though two handles, it will properly be denominated but one knife, or one hatchet; inasmuch as it hath but one of that which constitutes the Essence or principal Use of a knife or hatchet. So if there were not only one, but twenty Supposita Rationalia with one common Organ of Generation, that one System would only make one Wife.[137]

However ingenious it is, Dr. Penny-feather's case is lost to Mr. Randal's attorney, Dr. Leatherhead, who maintains that Lindamira-Indamora is not as simple a zoological structure as was hitherto imagined:

> We come now to our second point, wherein the Advocate for the Plaintiff asserteth, that if there were two persons, and one Organ of Generation, this System would constitute but one Wife. This will put the Plaintiff still in a worse condition, and render him plainly guilty of Bigamy, Rape, or Incest. For if there be but one such Organ of Generation, then both the persons of Lindamira and Indamora have an equal property in it; and what is Indamora's property cannot be dispos'd of without her consent. We therefore bring the whole to this short issue; Whether the Plaintiff Martinus Scriblerus had the Consent of Indamora, or not? If he hath had her consent, he is guilty of Bigamy; if not, he is guilty of a Rape, or Incest, or both.[138]

---

[137] Memoirs, p. 159.

[138] Ibid., pp. 161-162.

The conclusion of the case is absurd, clever, and pretty well unprintable. In brief, Martin and the black Prince as "joint Proprietors of one common Tenement;"[139] are instructed to cleave to their own wives and to their own wives only. The possibility of accidental adultery is so great that neither bridegroom is satisfied by the court's decision. The inconvenient marriages are finally dissolved by a "Commission of Delegates" who reverse the findings of the inferior court and sensibly see any marriage to Lindamira-Indamora to be "a natural, as well as legal Absurdity".[140]

When compared with previous examples of the legal satire of More and Erasmus, Rabelais, and even Arbuthnot and Swift in their own works, John Bull and Gulliver's Travels, the legal satire of the Scriblerus Club, as here demonstrated by Three Hours after Marriage and The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, can be seen to be concerned less with the correction of the entangling processes of the legal profession than it is with the creation (for example in "The Double Mistress" and the ensuing trial) of a purely aesthetic structure. The extravagance of the structure and the inventiveness of the wit reveal in the work a formal and literary self-consciousness which leads one to believe that the desire to illuminate a regrettable lack of self-knowledge in England's lawyers is only an excuse upon which the Scriblerians might build their edifice of satiric wit and invention. Certainly the emphasis on the physical (primarily sexual) side of man's existence is not demanded aesthetically for a satiric exposure of

---

[139] Ibid., p. 162.

[140] Ibid., p. 163.

the legal profession. Examination reveals, however, that this pre-occupation with the physical in Scriblerian legal satire is found almost as a structural principle in much of the Scriblerian work.

In "'Tristram Shandy' and Its Tradition", D. W. Jefferson, in discussing Sterne's place in what he calls the "tradition of learned wit" -- a tradition that is a more specialized one within the larger tradition of Menippean satire, makes a good deal of the "concreteness" of the learned wit of Sterne and others of his school.[141] Jefferson is impressed with the frequent Menippean wedding of the abstract idea to the concrete example. Jefferson compares this technique of the reduction of the abstract to the concrete, the technique of the use of images to convey ideas (or at least to make them more vivid), to the metaphysical poets' fondness for the same kind of technique. He finds the same kind of thing being done by Sterne in Tristram Shandy. On hearing the theory of Coglionissimo Borri," the great Milaneze physician", that there resides in the cellulae of the occipital parts of the cerebellum a "certain, very thin, subtle and very fragrant juice" which is none other than the "principal seat of the reasonable soul", Walter Shandy finds himself in some distress.

> ...the very idea of so noble, so refined, so immaterial, and so exalted a being as the Anima, or even the Animus, taking up her residence, and sitting dabbling, like a tad-pole, all day long, both summer and winter, in a puddle, -- or in a

---

[141] Jefferson, op. cit., p. 338.

> liquid of any kind, how thick or thin soever, he would say, shock'd his imagination;....[142]

Well might Walter Shandy's imagination be shocked. The rude comparison of the "Anima" to an indolent tadpole is overly vivid -- aesthetically delightful, perhaps, but jarring to the refined sensibility and degrading to man in the suggestion of the unabashedly organic quality of the seat of the soul, that part of man which is usually hoped to be ethereal and angelic. This linking of the abstract with the often vulgarly concrete Jefferson refers to as a "formidable rhetorical display".[143] Inadvertently, in his discussion of Tristram Shandy, he suggests a pervasive aesthetic method of the Menippean satirist and a method particularly used by the satirists of the Scriblerus Club. The abstract made skilfully concrete is, in the hands of the satirist, a formidable rhetorical display. But it is more than that. Jefferson fails to mention the frequency with which the abstract idea is wedded only only to the concrete image but to the particularly physical or even bestial image. The linking of the seat of the reasonable soul and the tadpole implies that there is a real similarity between the two and if the reader's imagination is shocked, so much the worse (or, aesthetically, so much the better) for him. The satirist is provided with a method of achieving simultaneously his two-fold objective suggested earlier; he is at once able to dazzle the reader with his wit, the rhetorical display being the result of his yoking together by violence the airily abstract and the physical or bestially concrete, while in the resulting unflattering comparison he is provided with an effective means of

---

[142] Tristram Shandy, II, 19, 148-149.

[143] Jefferson, op. cit., p. 339.

putting man in his place, of opening man's eyes to the vulgarity of his condition and thus producing an antidote to pride. Whether the satirist's shock tactics have any remedial effect on mankind is, as was mentioned previously, really unimportant. His shocking lesson for man does, however, give the satirist a believable excuse for his art, a reason for the bare structure which he delights to decorate. Once again, before returning to The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, it seems of some value to look briefly at the delineation of the physical and bestial man in Menippean satire before Scriblerus.

It is significant that it is Menippus, the first of a long tradition of satirists, whom Erasmus imagines to be looking down upon the earth from his vantage point on the moon and seeing mankind to be like nothing so much as a swarm of gnats or flies.[144] Lucian tells us that Menippus did not give two cents for anybody; but from Menippus' vantage point, and from the vantage points of many satirists after him, the human race in its folly did not seem worth the two cents. In the earlier examples of Menippean satire, there is not the subtle Shandean linking of the abstract and the physical. There is, however, an effective method of linking man to beast; this method is simply the frequency with which the reader is treated to what is apparently an abiding interest of the satirist's, the delineation of the mechanism of copulation, conception and the processes of birth. Lucian, for example, delights in strange variants of the human functions. In A True Story, he tells of the adventures he and his

---

[144] The Essential Erasmus, p. 138.

men encounter with strange women who are partly vine, having "branches bearing clusters of grapes growing out of the tips of their fingers and, instead of hair, actual shoots with leaves and grapes!"[145] The women, writes Lucian, "were burning to have intercourse with us"[146] but when the deed is attempted the men are trapped by the deadly female plants and are abandoned by their terrified companions. Lucian devotes a considerable space to a very earthy examination of the physiology of the moon-men he meets:

> Marriage is with males, and there isn't even a word for "woman". Men under twenty-five are the wives, men over, the husbands. The embryo is carried not in the belly but in the calf. Once conception takes place, [Lucian spares the reader the details of this] the calf swells up; after a due period of time it is cut open and the child, not yet alive, extracted. Life is induced by placing the child, mouth wide open, toward the wind.[147] It's my opinion that the Greek word for calf, which literally means "belly of the leg", came to us from the moon, since there the calf and not the belly serves as the region of gestation.[148]

Lucian continues with some enthusiasm to explain that these moon-men do not urinate or defecate. They have no rectal orifices. "Their nasal discharge is a very bitter honey", and when they work or exercise,"they sweat milk from every pore[149] (which milk they use to curdle into cheese).

---

[145] Selected Satires of Lucian, p. 16.

[146] Ibid., p. 17.

[147] The similarity to the behaviour of Swift's AEolists is striking.

[148] Selected Satires of Lucian, p. 23.

[149] Ibid., p. 24.

Even the inhabitants of the Isles of the Blest do not escape; their methods of sexual intercourse are described in detail.[150]

Encolpius and his friends in The Satyricon lead a meaningless animal-like existence. When Encolpius, whose name,the reader is told, "means roughly 'The Crotch'"[151], is not sexually involved with his Ganymede, Giton, over whom he fights like a dog with his friend Ascyhtus,[152] he is being plagued by Priapus, the lord of lust whose celebration and secret rites he had rudely disturbed. Encolpius' punishment for his blundering transgression reduces him to the kind of behaviour far removed from his endless sexual encounters in the earlier part of the book; he is forced into his picaresque journey by the wrath of Priapus, and becomes a hero "whose every advantage and opportunity is reduced to folly and shame by his impotence!" [153]

Erasmus, whose Menippean satire is much less aesthetically improper than the other authors which have been more mentioned in these pages, assures both Thomas More and the reader that in his Praise of Folly he had"striven to bring forth the ridiculous rather than the foul".[154] Despite the sense of decorum exhibited both in the literary work itself, and in the character of the narrator, Folly, [155]however, Erasmus often

---

[150]Ibid., p. 41.

[151]The Satyricon, p. xii.

[152]Ibid., p. 26.

[153]Kenneth Rexroth, op. cit., p. 15.

[154]The Essential Erasmus, p. 100.

[155]Ibid., p. 100.

relies upon the reduction of man to the beast for his satiric effect. Martinus Scriblerus, who in attempting to "find out the Seat of the Soul", had, it will be remembered, discovered it to be intimately connected to the various parts of the body which assume the most importance for the individual examined; "Thus in Epicures he seated her in the mouth of the Stomach, Philosophers have her in the Brain, Soldiers in their Hearts, Women in their Tongues, Fidlers in their Fingers, and Rope-dancers in their Toes."[156] Erasmus performs a similar kind of literary dissection in an attempt to account for man's ruling passions, anger and lust.

> Now, in order that man's life should not be completely sad and gloomy, Jupiter put in much more of passion than of reason -- about a five-to-one ratio. Because of this fact, he put reason in a narrow corner of the head and left the rest of the body to the passions. Finally, he instilled two violent tyrants, as it were, against reason, namely: anger, which occupies the fortress of the breast and therefore the very font of life, the heart; and lust, which rules a wide empire farther down even to the private parts. The ordinary life of man shows how good reason is in combating these two forces; for all reason can do is shout his prohibitions until he is hoarse and dictate formulas of virtue.[157]

Folly is instrumental in producing in man a second childhood. With heavy irony, the goddess asks if the man whose spirits "have all the vitality sucked out of them by cares" can possibly be as happy as her "morons" who are "fat, sleek, and succulent like the hogs of Acarnania".[158]

---

[156] Memoirs, p. 137.

[157] The Essential Erasmus, p. 110.

[158] Ibid., p. 108.

Rabelais, of course, displays a preoccupation with the physical side of man; so much so, indeed, that, as was mentioned [159], the word "Rabelaisian" has come to mean a frankness about and exploitation of the physical. The reader finds in Rabelais the typical Menippean interest in copulation and the birth-processes. In Book One, chapter three, the reader finds the conception of Gargantua and is treated to historical precedents for Gargamelle's eleven-month pregnancy.[160] Chapter four recounts how Gargamelle's "fundament escaped her" after her having eaten at dinner "too many godebillios".[161] By chapter six of Book One, Gargantua is born. The piece is famous but worthy of quotation at least in part as an example of Menippean impropriety of form and impropriety of subject matter -- verbal luxuriance with a preoccupation with man's physical processes. Here is Rabelaisian distortion and exuberance; "...the cotyledons of her matrix were presently loosened, through which the child sprung up and leaped, and so, entering into the hollow vein, did climb by the diaphragm even above her shoulders, where the vein divides itself into two, and from thence taking his way towards the left side, issued forth at her left ear".[162] Like the infant Martinus Scriblerus, who at birth utters the "voice of nine several animals",[163] Gargantua does not cry like other new-

---

[159] See above, p. 23.

[160] Gargantua and Pantagruel, I, 12-13.

[161] Ibid., I, 14.

[162] Ibid., I, 19.

[163] Memoirs, p. 99.

born children but "with a high, sturdy, and big voice shouted about, Some drink, some drink, some drink, as inviting all the world to drink with him".[164] Lest the reader not believe the manner of this wonderful birth, Rabelais in a stylistic configuration common with Menippean satirists, enriches his narrative with a miniature digression, providing for the reader a list of precedents for Gargantua's unusual method of arrival. "Was not Bacchus," he writes, "engendered out of the very thigh of Jupiter? Did not Roquetaillade come out of his mother's heel, and Crocmoush from the slipper of his nurse? Was not Minerva born of the brain, even through the ear of Jove? Adonis, of the bark of a myrrh tree; and Castor and Pollux of the doupe of that egg which was laid and hatched by Leda?"[165]

Scriblerian satire is as much concerned as earlier Menippean satire is with the reduction of man to the level of the beast. In The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, there is a consistent and continual reduction of this kind. Cornelius' attempts to have a son are as "scientifically" planned as the breeding of a certain kind of livestock. Martin's bestial noises at birth reinforce the comparison of man to beast as does the section on "the Suction and Nutrition" of the child. As we have seen, even so abstract a subject as philosophy is reduced to the image of copulating animals. Man's virtues and vices are compared to the natural endowments of birds and animals:

> He consider'd Virtues and Vices as certain Habits

---

[164] Gargantua and Pantagruel, I, 19.

[165] Ibid., I, 19.

> which proceed from the natural Formation and Structure of particular parts of the body. A Bird flies because it has Wings; a Duck swims because it is web-footed; and there can be no question but the auduncity of the pounces, and beaks of the Hawks, as well as the length of the fangs, the sharpness of the teeth, and the strength of the crural and Masseter-muscles in Lions and Tygers, are the cause of the great and habitual Immorality of those Animals.[166]

"The Double Mistress" episode shows Martin to be a great fancier of beasts and monsters and very knowledgeable about them. His abstract love of the monstrous is given physical shape in his love for Lindamira-Indamora. In the introduction to their edition of Three Hours after Marriage, Professors Richard Morton and William M. Peterson have called attention to a "pervasive theme of metamorphosis" in the play.[167] This theme of metamorphosis, displayed in Three Hours after Marriage by the actual "physical" change of Plotwell and Underplot to their respective states of mummyhood and crocodiledom by means of costume, is a pervasive theme as well in most Menippean satire and in most of the satire of the Scriblerus Club. In earlier Menippean satires, man is found already changed into a beast or monster (as in Lucian's A True Story), changes into a beast in the course of the work (as in Apuleius' The Golden Ass) -- usually with the result that his sexual powers are considerably heightened, or acts like a beast (as does Encolpius in The Satyricon, whenever he is able to). In Scriblerian satire, (with the exception of Three Hours after Marriage), the metamorphosis is not usually a genuine physical one; man is

---

[166] Memoirs, p. 131.

[167] Three Hours after Marriage, p. x.

changed into beast (as we shall see in the study of Peri Bathous in chapter three, below) by the more subtle means of implicit metaphorical identification. A comparison of man to the beast in Scriblerian satire is a literary means by which the reader is led to see that man, for all that, really is a beast. In The Life of the Drama, Eric Bentley writes of the author of farce that he "does not show man as a little lower than the angels but as hardly higher than the apes".[168] The similarity of much of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus to farce has already been pointed out.[169] Man, certainly, is here depicted as hardly higher than the apes; in Peri Bathous, he is shown to be, in some cases, not even as high. The beast is lower on the scale of being than is man. A linking of man with the beasts thus lowers man's cosmic status. Man is degraded still more, however, if the beasts are seen to be superior to man himself as, for example, are the Houyhnhnms to Gulliver. In the short Scriblerian piece entitled "An Essay of the Learned Martinus Scriblerus concerning The Origin of Sciences," Martin, writing from "the Deserts of Nubia", tells about his discovery of "those primitive longaeval and ante-diluvian man-tygers, who first taught science to the world".[170] Martin's discovery of these mute philosophers leads him to exclaim:

> And now what shall I say to mankind in the thought

---

[168] Eric Bentley, The Life of the Drama (New York: Atheneum, 1964), p. 250.

[169] See above, p. 34, n. 33.

[170] Works of Alexander Pope, Esq., edited by Rev. W. L. Bowles, VI, 284.

> of this great discovery? what, but that they should abate of their pride, and consider that the authors of our knowledge are among the beasts. That these, who were our elder brothers, by a day, in the creation, whose kingdom (like that in the scheme of Plato) was governed by philosophers, who flourished with learning in AEthiopia and India, are now undistinguished, and known only by the same appellation as the man-tyger and the monkey![171]

These intellectual "man-tygers", like the Houyhnhnms, find mankind odious. Martinus, however, (sounding very much like Swift) optimistically proposes to go on communicating with them and hopes eventually to be able to bring them to Europe where, he feels, they could serve admirably as teachers for mankind:

> Might not the talents of each of these be adapted to the improvement of the several sciences? The man-tygers to instruct heroes, statesmen, and scholars; baboons to teach ceremony and address to courtiers; monkeys, the art of pleading in conversation, and agreeable affectations to ladies and their lovers; apes of less learning, to form comedians and dancing-masters; and marmosets, court pages and young English travellers? [172]

Thus in the course of the Scriblerian satires, man is lowered to the level of the beast, he is metaphorically changed into the beast, and he is now made to change places with the beasts and to receive instruction from them. Does man deserve this unkind reduction of his biological and mental status? The Scriblerians evidently think he does if, in his blindness, he exclaims with Cornelius Scriblerus, "is not Man the Lord of the Universe?"[173]

---

[171] Ibid., VI, 284.

[172] Ibid., VI, 286.

[173] Memoirs, p. 100.

The satiric works of the Scriblerus Club, The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, Peri Bathous, and the others, are often dismissed by critics as literary oddities to be listed with the minor works of the Club members; the works are often thought to be extremely local in their satire, obscure and only occasionally amusing or pointed. It is of course true that the Scriblerian works are to some extent pieces of "localized trivia". This locality of the satire, however, though it is of some historical interest, is certainly only a superficial quality of the works. More important is the fact that beneath the local satire (which is indeed obscure without the explanatory notes of such a historian of literature as Charles Kerby-Miller) are characteristics which place the works legitimately in the very long and well-established but rather vaguely understood tradition of Menippean satire. Unfortunately for those who prefer well-defined edges to their literary categories, the Menippean satire seems to be most easily definable first by the recognition of its categorical fuzziness, and then by a recognition that Menippean satire lacks many of the qualities one looks for in a work of literature. Most of these qualities can be subsumed under the general heading of "unity". It is the Menippean satire's lack of a unified form and tone, and its "mixed bowl" of subject matter, which suggests the conclusion that its only unity is the large and all-embracing disunity of the aesthetic of impropriety; the work displays, as has been discussed, improprieties of form, tone, and subject matter. As we have seen in The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, Scriblerian satire, like other Menippean satires, displays a constantly recurring Menippean characteristic in its formal extravagance.

Delightful in its richness and prolixity, the work soars beyond the reach of the rules which apply to the works of other genres. Its form can be judged only by the anti-rule of the Menippean satire -- do what you will.

The Scriblerian satiric works are as stylistically Menippean in their impropriety as they are formally so. The tone they adopt is usually ironic and can often be identified by its self-consciousness, its extravagance and exuberant coarseness, and by its virtuosic caricature of many other styles. But the tone is often not sustained throughout the work. The Scriblerian way of speaking changes as rapidly and as unpredictably as does its form.

Scriblerian-Menippean satire seems devoted to outraging the conservative mind. It seems purposely designed to offend those who ask for order, reason, and decorum in their art. Perhaps, if Menippean satire is the product of a certain kind of satiric personality (as was suggested), that personality belongs to the man who finds himself in the intellectual minority and who delights in the employing of his mental resources to horrify the bourgeois mentality. At any rate, the Menippean satirist, in his choice of subject matter, displays what comes closest to a common denominator for all Menippean satire in his interest in the artistically "improper"; the Menippean satirist seems always to delight in the diminution of man from the state of semi-divine humanity to the level of the totally physical man, the beast. The Scriblerian satirists are no exception. Furthermore, it is here believed that this Scriblerian-

Menippean diminution is the result of both the virtuoso satirist's fondness for artistic extravagance and his wish to provide an antidote to pride in his demonstration of man's blindness to the true nature of the human condition.

In the preceding pages, we have attempted simultaneously to illuminate the characteristics of both Scriblerian satire in particular and Menippean satire in general by demonstrating the presence in both of similarities of structure, tone, and subject matter. We have suggested that Scriblerian satire, rather than being only a localized literary curiosity, fits aesthetically into the larger literary tradition of the Menippean satire. Up to this point, the investigation has employed what might be termed (in a phrase from Northrop Frye) "centrifugal" criticism; that is, the discussion of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, our central interest, has proceeded with frequent reference to many other works which are external to The Memoirs and unrelated to it chronologically. In the discussion which follows, the "direction" of the criticism is reversed. The critical investigation is "centripetal" in that it largely ignores other works in its concentration on the characteristics of Peri Bathous. The discussion attempts to demonstrate, in a close investigation of that work, a crystallization in Peri Bathous of the characteristics which in the preceding pages were suggested as those of Scriblerian-Menippean satire.

THE LOWLANDS OF PARNASSUS: THE SCRIBLERUS CLUB AND LITERATURE

Although The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus satirizes pedantry and affectation in many professions (among them, medicine, science, philosophy, and law) it has surprisingly little to say about the writing of literature and of literary criticism. Only twice in The Memoirs is the subject touched upon at all. In chapter nine, "How Martin became a great Critic", literary criticism is mentioned only very briefly (as was previously pointed out), most of the two-paragraph chapter being used to inform the reader that if he wishes to sample the critical talents of Martinus Scriblerus, he must go to the "Specimen on Virgil he has given us" [1] (Virgilius Restauratus) which forms a part of his critical apparatus to the Dunciad Variorum.[2] In chapter seven of The Memoirs, "Rhetoric, Logic, Metaphysics", rhetoric is very quickly dispensed with. Cornelius Scriblerus here sets about to educate his son, judging it "high time to apply to the Culture of his Internal Faculties"[3] and begins what is to be a rigorous educational program with the study of rhetoric. At the mention of the subject, however, the authors interrupt:

> But herein we shall not need to give the Reader any account of his wonderful progress, since it is already known to the learned world by his Treatise on this subject: I mean the admirable Discourse Περὶ

---

[1] Memoirs, p. 129.

[2] The Dunciad, pp. 217-221.

[3] Memoirs, p. 118.

> Βάθους, which he wrote at this time but conceal'd from his Father, knowing his extreme partiality for the Ancients. It lay by him conceal'd, and perhaps forgot among the great multiplicity of other Writings, till, about the year 1727, he sent it us to be printed, with many additional examples drawn from the excellent live Poets of this present age. We proceed therefore to Logick and Metaphysick.[4]

The authors thus seem to confine Martin's skirmishes with the world of literature to that treatise "written in his youth", Peri Bathous, The Art of Sinking in Poetry. It is with this work in particular, then, (with brief forays into other Scriblerian statements about literature and criticism) that the following discussion will be concerned. It is possible that an investigation in some detail of one Scriblerian interest (here, the making of literature) will help to show something of the general Scriblerian satiric method. As an aid to this, it is hoped that a detailed examination of the Peri Bathous may reveal specifically those characteristics of Scriblerian (and Menippean)satire which were discussed only generally in the previous chapter. As with the discussion of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus in chapter two, the following discussion of Peri Bathous will be divided into three sections, the first section dealing with form, the second section commenting on the work's tone or way of speaking,and the third section isolating and investigating certain dominant subjects and themes in the work.

Peri Bathous or The Art of Sinking in Poetry,[5] like The Memoirs of

---

[4]Memoirs, p. 118.

[5]All subsequent references to Peri Bathous are to The Art of Sinking in Poetry. Martinus Scriblerus' ΠΕΡΙ ΒΑΘΟΥΣ. A Critical Edition by Edna Leake Steeves (New York: King's Crown Press, 1952).

Martinus Scriblerus, exhibits certain qualities of form which could in general be called those of aesthetic impropriety. When compared to The Memoirs, however, the Peri Bathous can be seen to wear its formal improprieties with a difference. The improprieties of the Peri Bathous are not immediately externally apparent, but are the aesthetic improprieties of the internal structure, of the smaller structural units. Northrop Frye, in discussing literary structure, uses an analogy to painting and suggests that the reader "back up" from a literary work in order to more readily perceive its structural arrangement, just as one would "back up" from a painting in order more clearly to see its formal properties.[6] If the reader thus "backs up" from Peri Bathous, he sees nothing of the formal extravagances which (it was suggested) are a usual characteristic of Menippean satire. He sees, instead, what appears to be a well-organized treatise on rhetoric, efficiently and classically divided into twelve chapters with a six chapter Appendix. Peri Bathous abounds in paradoxes. One of these paradoxes is that while an investigation of the work shows that it belongs in the tradition of Menippean literary impropriety; while it can be seen to contain the Menippean characteristics examined in chapter two, these characteristics are contained by a neat, formally classical literary exterior. Peri Bathous is, of course, modelled on the Peri Hupsous of Longinus,[7] a fact which somewhat sharply limits the lengths to which the authors can indulge in extravagance of form

---

[6]Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity, p. 13.

[7]See E. L. Steeves' discussion of Longinus' treatise as a model for the Scriblerian treatise in Peri Bathous, pp. liii-lxiii.

and still produce a recognizable parody. The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, on the other hand, while it owes debts of structure to many sources, is based at least partly on the loosely-structured but legitimate "memoirs" so common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even when these basic structural differences are taken into consideration, however, The Memoirs sprawls formally far beyond the boundaries dictated by Augustan good taste. Peri Bathous, on the other hand, remains neatly within them.

If one were carrying on a continuing literary battle against dullness, pedantry, and affectation; if one were waging literary war on mediocrity and muddled thinking (as were the members of the Scriblerus Club), there are two methods one could employ in the struggle. One could erect against the enemy a literary wall of neat, firm, classical construction and thereby fight chaos with a show of calm and order. Or, indulging oneself with recourse to the other extreme, one could fight stupidity with a show of what is apparently greater stupidity, and fight tastelessness and muddled thinking with a display of super-tastelessness and over-wrongheadedness. Peri Bathous, as we shall see, does both. A Menippean tour de force, it manages to combine an external form of apparent classical control with content of aesthetic impropriety. Because of this dual construction, Peri Bathous also provides a good example of what appears to be a central paradox and something of an underlying dilemma of Scriblerian satire; the work displays a vitality that is the result of the tension between a predilection for the classical control of literary form

(their complete literary control being only the more evident by the Scriblerian virtuosic manipulation of forms for parody) and the opposing urge to burst the bonds of neo-classicism and escape into the freedom of Menippean impropriety.

When seen from an aesthetic "distance", Peri Bathous looks to be a treatise on rhetoric. Within this orthodox framework, however, are found details of form which are those common to Menippean satire and which provide the internal improprieties mentioned above. One finds, for example, a special interest in the Rabelaisian kind of listing. Lists of examples are, of course, to be expected in a treatise on rhetoric. Martin's zeal for exhaustiveness, however, is delightfully in excess of the thoroughness necessary for mere clarity. In chapter five, "Of the true Genius for the Profund and by what it is constituted", one finds that Martin waxes enthusiastic over Sir Richard Blackmore, "a marvellous Genius, prompted by... laudable Zeal",[8] who has in only one poem (Job) represented God in a confusing array of images. Martin joyfully lists them all:

> First he is a PAINTER...
> Now he is a CHYMIST...
> Now he is a WRESTLER...
> Now a RECRUITING OFFICER...
> Now a peaceable GUARANTEE...
> Then he is an ATTORNEY...
> In the following Lines he is a GOLD-BEATER...
> Then a FULLER...
> A MERCER, or PACKER...

---

[8] Peri Bathous, p. 22.

A BUTLER...
And a BAKER....[9]

One finds also that Martin displays a characteristically Menippean fondness for the anatomizing of an idea. Almost the whole of chapter six, "Of the several Kinds of Genius's in the Profund, and the Marks and characters of each", is devoted to an elaborate system of classification of these several kinds of geniuses. Martin explains his intention:

> I SHALL range these confin'd and less copious Genius's under proper Classes, and (the better to give their Pictures to the Reader) under the Names of Animals of some sort or other; whereby he will be enabled, at the first sight of such as shall daily come forth, to know to what Kind to refer, and with what Authors to compare them.[10]

Just as the authors saw fit to "insert at length" in The Memoirs the complex indelicacies of the Lindamira-Indamora trial and to attribute the extravagance of it not to their desire to indulge themselves aesthetically, but only to a desire that the reader might not be confused by an abbreviated account of the proceedings, so here in Peri Bathous, Pope attempts, though not very sincerely, to assure the reader that his only reason for the elaborate linking of his exemplary writers to animals is "the better to give their Pictures to the Reader". The Peri Bathous is therefore a service to mankind. Behind the impropriety on the page is the apparently sincere critic and friend to his "dear Countrymen", Martinus Scriblerus; but behind the persona of the proper and guileless Martin lurks the satiric impropriety of Alexander Pope and the members of the Scriblerus Club.

Peri Bathous displays within its classical boundaries a fondness

---

[9]Ibid., pp. 22-24.

[10]Ibid., p. 26.

for prolixity -- a characteristic typical, it is true, of Martinus Scriblerus, but also a characteristic of much Menippean satire. The following paragraph from Peri Bathous, an exerpt from an outlandish project for the "Advancement of the Bathos", is typically Menippean not only in its prolixity but also in the richness of its verbal extravagance, its inventiveness, its combining in a "mixed dish" of the lofty (Anadyplosis) with the trivial (Oysters).

> Nothing is more evident than that divers Persons, no other way remarkable, have each a strong Disposition to the Formation of some particular Trope or Figure. Aristotle saith, that the Hyperbole is an Ornament of Speech fit for young Men of Quality; accordingly we find in those Gentlemen a wonderful Propensity toward it, which is marvellously improved by travelling. Soldiers also and Seamen are very happy in the same Figure. The Periphrasis or Circumlocution is the peculiar Talent of Country Farmers, the Proverb and Apologue of old Men at their Clubs, the Ellipsis or Speech by half-words of Ministers and Politicians, the Aposiopesis of Courtiers, the Littole or Diminution of Ladies, Whisperers and Backbiters; and the Anadyplosis of Common Cryers and Hawkers, who be redoubling the same Words, persuade People to buy their Oysters, green Hastings, or new Ballads. Epithets may be found in great plenty at Billinsgate, Sarcasm and Irony learn'd upon the Water, and the Epiphonema or Exclamation frequently from the Bear-garden, and as frequently from the Hear him of the House of Commons.[11]

Here, then, is a treatise the content of which belies its external appearance of classical decorum.

The "author" of Peri Bathous frequently (and, Pope would have us think, unconsciously) demonstrates the same kind of writing he recommends. With a delightful prolixity, he exhorts his reader to the heights of

---

[11] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

verbosity.[12] The author aspiring to the true profound is instructed (at some length) in the use of "Amplification" as a further aid to prolixity. Martin exults in its possibilities and thoroughly amplifies his recommendation of the amplification process.[13] In a familiar passage in An Essay on Criticism Pope had written of Longinus that his "...own Example strengthens all his Laws, /And [he] Is himself that great Sublime he draws."[14] Martinus Scriblerus, aesthetically opposed to Longinus in almost every way, emulates him at least in method. Martinus Scriblerus is, a great part of the time, himself the Bathous he describes.

Whenever Martin does not actually demonstrate the literary mistakes of which he speaks, he continues, nevertheless, to recommend easy ways to bad writing, a great many of which have to do with the destroying of classical form and clarity. In chapters ten and eleven of the treatise, the reader is urged to make extensive use of confusing tropes and figures. He is instructed in the proper use of "Catachresis", "Metonymy", "Synechdoche"; he is taught the misuse of the metaphor and the employment of jargon. He is warned that "A GENUINE Writer of the Profund will take Care never to magnify any Object without clouding it at the same time; His Thought will appear in a true Mist,...."[15] Periphrase too, the reader is told, can

---

[12] Ibid., p. 33.

[13] Ibid., pp. 36-37.

[14] Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, ll. 679-680, p. 316.

[15] Peri Bathous, p. 51. The obscuring mist of dulness is a common theme in the work of the Scriblerians. In A Letter of Advice to a Young Poet, Swift suggested dulness as a possible cause of English weather:

> I believe our corrupted Air, and frequent thick
> Fogs, are in a great measure owing to the common

be an aid to both prolixity and obscurity, "...being a diffus'd circumlocutory Manner of expressing a known Idea, which should be so mysteriously couch'd, as to give the Reader the Pleasure of guessing what it is that the Author can possibly mean; and a Surprize when he find it".[16] It is quite clear that Peri Bathous is, as Mrs. Steeves refers to it, a treatise made up of "diverting yet cogent discussions of debased taste".[17] The work is an inverted ars poetica.

The title itself is the key to the work's structure. Peri Hupsous, On the Sublime, is Longinus' handbook on the elevated style. Walter Jackson Bate stresses the importance for Longinus of "emotional transport, of imaginative grandeur, and of the sympathetic reaction of the individual reader or hearer".[18] As a corrective to the impression of the airy rapture suggested by the word "sublime", however, Professor Bate notes that Longinus, despite his love for high poetic flights, took issue

---

> exposal of our Wit, and that with good Management our poetical Vapours might be carry'd off in a common Drain, and fall into one Quarter of the Town, without infecting the whole, as the Case is at present, to the great Offence of our Nobility and Gentry, and others of nice Noses. (from "A Letter of Advice to a Young Poet" in Jonathan Swift, Satires and Personal Writings, edited by William A. Eddy (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 53)

Many such examples of the darkness and the obscuring mists of dulness could similarily be cited from Pope's Dunciad.

[16] Peri Bathous, p. 35.

[17] Ibid., p. lxviii.

[18] Walter Jackson Bate, Prefaces to Criticism (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 40.

with those "who would turn art into mere self-expression, uninhibited and 'unballasted' with knowledge".[19] In contrast to Longinus' treatise, Pope's Peri Bathous provides more than enough "ballast" to ensure that the aspiring poet remain firmly on the ground. Peri Bathous is a treatise of aesthetic falling in contrast to Longinus' aesthetic rising.

The up-down theme, the contrast of rising and falling, is a common one in much of the writing of the members of the Scriblerus Club. In "The Author's Preface" to A Tale of a Tub, for example, Swift sets out to provide the way for a kind of sympathy between himself and the reader by explaining something of his fictitious life as a Grub-street hack who has, at times,"thought fit to sharpen... [his] invention with hunger". Swift is elaborately concerned that the reader become very much attuned to the life of the writer; he wishes there to be "a Parity and strict Correspondence of Idea's, between the Reader and the Author". The only reason for this mutual understanding is that Swift is "extreamly sollicitous, that every accomplished Person who has got into the Taste of Wit, calculated for this present Month of August, 1697, should descend to the very bottom of all the Sublime throughout this Treatise".[20] Later in "The Introduction" to the Tale, Swift explains the necessity, when speaking in public, of speaking from a "superiour Position of Place".

---

[19] Ibid., p. 42.

[20] A Tale of a Tub, p. 44.

The reason for this is

> ...That Air being a heavy Body, and therefore (according to the system of Epicurus) continually descending, must needs be more so, when loaden and press'd down by Words; which are also Bodies of much Weight and Gravity, as it is manifest from those deep Impressions they make and leave upon us; and therefore must be delivered from a due Altitude, or else they will neither carry a good Aim, nor fall down with a sufficient Force.[21]

In his non-Scriblerian critical writings, Pope also seems frequently to have used the rising-sinking contrast. About Bentley's edition of Milton, Pope wrote to Jacob Tonson; "As to Dr. Bentley and Milton, I think the one above and y^{e} other below all criticism."[22] Commenting on the levels of style in translations of Homer, he wrote; "Nothing that belongs to Homer seems to have been more commonly mistaken than the just Pitch of his Style: Some of his Translators having swell'd into Fustian in a proud Confidence of the Sublime; others sunk into Flatness, in a cold and timorous Notion of Simplicity."[23] The up-down theme is, of course, a pervasive one in Peri Bathous; it is, in fact, a structural principle about which is erected not only the irony of the work but also the very figures and images used to develop the ironic message which the work conveys.

It is common knowledge that Peri Bathous is partly at least a parody of Longinus' treatise Peri Hupsous. In her commentary to Peri Bathous, E. L. Steeves frequently cites the parallels in Longinus appropriate to particular sections of Pope's treatise and it seems un-

---

[21] Ibid., p. 60.

[22] Quoted by Charles Kerby-Miller, Memoirs, p. 271.

[23] "Preface to the Iliad" in The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, p. 245.

necessary to do little more here as a discussion of Longinus and Peri Bathous than to direct the reader to Mrs. Steeves' notes. There is perhaps one additional point to be made about Peri Bathous and Scriblerian parody. To the occasional apparent distress of Mrs. Steeves, Pope sometimes closely parodies Longinus, while at other times he seems distressingly to have forgotten entirely about his model. At times, the parody is so close to the original as to be a re-writing by Pope of Longinus' words. In chapter nine of Peri Bathous, for example, Pope writes; "Therefore when we sit down to write, let us bring some great Author to our Mind, and ask ourselves this Question; How would Sir Richard have said this? Do I express myself as simply as A. Ph--? or flow my Numbers with the quiet thoughtlessness of Mr. W--st--d?[24] This is indeed, as Mrs. Steeves observes,[25] of faithful parody of Longinus:

> Accordingly it is well that we ourselves also, when elaborating anything which requires lofty expression and elevated conception, should shape some idea in our minds as to how perchance Homer would have said this very thing, or how it would have been raised to the sublime by Plato or Demosthenes or by the historian Thucydides.[26]

Chapter nine of Peri Bathous is entitled "of Imitation, and the manner of Imitating". Mrs. Steeves remarks that "Longinus had observed that one

---

[24]Peri Bathous, pp. 38-39.

[25]Ibid., p. 145.

[26]Longinus, On the Sublime, translated by W. Rhys. Roberts in The Great Critics, compiled and edited by James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks (3rd. ed.; New York: Norton, 1951), p. 81.

way to attain the sublime was through imitation and emulation of great writers. Pope closely travesties his model here".[27] It seems, in fact, as if Pope most closely imitates Longinus in the section of Peri Bathous which deals (appropriately)with imitation. On the other hand, there are places (as in chapter thirteen, the project for the advancement of the Bathos, and in the sections devoted to the "receipts" for writing dedications and epic poems) where Pope is a very long way indeed from Longinus. Mrs. Steeves seems distressed by what appears to her to be Pope's failure to maintain integrity and artistic consistency in his apparent failure to produce a meticulous reversal of Longinus' treatise. Mrs. Steeves' admirably erudite commentary seldom fails to report each of Pope's deviations from Longinus. One finds such comments as "Pope opposes the two terms which in Longinus may have been synonymous"[28](a separation by Pope of Hypsous and Sublime). In chapter four of the treatise, Pope refers to the necessity of the possession of a genius for the true Bathos and cites Longinus as an authority for his statement. Mrs. Steeves rather carping comment is; "A misinterpretation of Longinus, who did not say that genius was the sole requisite of the sublime. Longinus said that the true sublime was a gift of nature, but that genius could in turn profit from the help of art. The same misinterpretation is found in most contemporary critics".[29] Commenting on Pope's heading to his eighth

---

[27] Peri Bathous, p. 143.

[28] Ibid., p. 97, n. 6:8.

[29] Ibid., p. 100, n. 15:24. Pope's meaning is made somewhat clearer if one interprets "genius" as it was meant by "most contemporary critics".

chapter, "Of the Profund consisting in the Circumstances, and of Amplification and Periphrase in general", Mrs. Steeves writes:

> Dealing first with nobility of thought and vehemence of passion as the principal sources of the sublime, Longinus then turned to a consideration of figures, diction, and composition, those elements of the sublime which in his view could be properly cultivated. Pope does not follow in detail Longinus' order, but uses Longinus' general distinction between sublimity as a product of thought and sublimity as a product of the proper contrivance of circumstances....[30]

For Pope's chapter ten, "Of Tropes and Figures", one finds the comment; "A standard topic in all classical poetic. In a general way Pope is following the drift of the discussion in Peri Hupsous. Longinus considered the sublime as it consisted first in the thought, referred in passing to the importance of passion in poetry, and then turned to a discussion of the figures".[31] It is clear that if Pope is following Longinus, it is, indeed, in "only a general way". This formal changeability from the production of parody faithful to the original to that of something entirely unrelated to it is not (as Mrs. Steeves seems to fear) evidence of Pope's unwillingness or inability to sustain a literary idea; on the contrary, it is evidence of his maintaining of a literary style. This apparently

---

E. N. Hooker points out that in the early eighteenth century, "genius" was taken to mean "special aptitude or peculiar talent", and was "occasionally used interchangeably with humour", or was used to mean an "original bias of the mind". (E. N. Hooker, "Humour in the Age of Pope", Huntington Library Quarterly, XI (1948), pp. 373-374.

[30] Peri Bathous, p. 140, n. 33.

[31] Ibid., p. 148, n. 43:21.

unplanned taking up and dropping of the parody is, in fact, another manifestation of the Menippean formal impropriety and an example of its paradoxical unity of disunity.

Peri Bathous is a piece of writing which one cannot more neatly classify than to call it an example of Menippean satire. Its categorical edges are blurred. Just as it is not wholly a direct parody of Longinus in form, it is not either a direct reversal of Longinus in content. Mrs. Steeves refers to Longinus' treatise as being "in a definite sense Pope's model; he simply reverses its precepts...."[32] She complains, however, that "Considered as a serious treatise, Peri Bathous attempts to accomplish perhaps too much through the medium of a humorous tour de force".[33] But Peri Bathous is not a kind of negative to positive complement of Longinus. Such a literary reversal might well be an amusing novelty -- the humorous tour de force of which Mrs. Steeves speaks. The treatise is kept from this complete buffoonery, however, by Pope's frequent abandoning of its Longinus-parody and his concentration instead on areas of satire unrelated to Longinus. The result of this mixed content is that Peri Bathous is not only an amusing diversion but also a Scriblerian stand in the continuring battle with dulness. As such, the work displays a destructiveness as well as a high good humour. When Peri Bathous is obviously imitating Longinus, humour dominates the work. When the formal parody is relaxed, however, Pope seems less intent on the literary game and more intent on the serious business

---

[32] Ibid., p. liv.

[33] Ibid., p. lxviii.

of laughing out of existence the work of the poets he examines in detail, absurd literary projects,and such things as the plans for shortcuts to fine writing. To fight prolixity, the use of conceits and of amplification, and all the other features of bad writing, the Scriblerians in their Menippean work, use all of these devices themselves. The satire of Peri Bathous is thus a double-edged weapon. In the first place, it shows what is bad in bad writing by isolating horrible examples and by presenting them as examples of the good and,in the second place, it shows what is bad by presenting a display of writing purposely executed even more badly than the original bad examples -- that is, it employs literary caricature or parody. The close parody of Longinus is innocent. Imitation is a form of flattery. But the breaking down of total parody into earnest concentrated sections of semi-parody is literary destruction. Faithful parody is a limited jest. When the writer attempts something more significant he leaves parody behind. Fielding's Shamela will afford us an example. Shamela seems to be,at first glance, as much a total parody, a complete literary reversal of Richardson as does Peri Bathous of Longinus. The Shamela-Pamela parody, however, soon breaks down into the area of broad satire in which, unrestricted by the formal bonds of total parody, Fielding is able to get down to the real business of destroying what he felt to be the overblown reputation of Richardson by the depiction of what the title page of Shamela refers to as "the many notorious FALSHOODS and MISREPRSENTATIONS of a Book called PAMELA,...."[34] Similarily in the case

---

[34]Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews and Shamela, edited with an introduction and notes by Martin C. Battestin (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), p. 299.

of Peri Bathous, the fidelity to Longinus demanded by total parody would have hampered Pope's more immediate purpose. To Pope the enemy was not Longinus but his contemporaries who wrote badly. Longinus, who, at any rate, was safe in antiquity, merely provided the idea of a convenient ars poetica form from which Pope could wander into the satire of contemporary dunces, and to which he could return at will.

A discussion of the Scriblerian tone in Peri Bathous need not detain us long. The treatise's "way of speaking" is quickly established by Martinus Scriblerus' opening remarks. Martinus intends to provide the public with a modern treatise on the writing of poetry, a handbook comparable to the many excellent ancient treatises on the same subject. It has occurred to Martin that while the ancients have left ample instructions for the attaining of the sublime," no Track has been yet chalk'd out, to arrive at our βάθος, or Profund". Martin has evidently deeply felt the public need for such a work.

> Wherefore considering with no small Grief, how many promising Genius's of this Age are wandering (as I may say) in the dark without a Guide, I have undertaken this arduous but necessary Task, to lead them as it were by the hand, and step by step, the gentle downhill way to the Bathos; the Bottom, the End, the Central Point, the non plus ultra of true Modern Poesie! [35]

Typically Scriblerian in its "way of speaking", Peri Bathous launches immediately into its heavy irony. Martinus Scriblerus may mean what he says but the Pygmalion behind him, Alexander Pope, usually means just

---

[35] Peri Bathous, p. 6.

the opposite. It is quite obvious to the reader that despite Pope's early establishing of what Maynard Mack would refer to as Martin's "ethos", his image as the sincere friend to his dear, dull countrymen, the author of Peri Bathous has not considered with grief that bad writers lack a guide to their badness and he does not believe that those figures wandering in the dark without a guide are "promising Genius's". It is fairly clear that the task of writing the treatise was not as "arduous" as it was stimulating. Dr. Arbuthnot conveys nothing of the ardour of Pope's task in a letter to Swift of June 26, 1714,in which he tells Swift that "Pope has been collecting high flights of poetry, which are very good; they are to be solemn nonsense".[36] Nor does a guide book to the downhill way to "the Bottom, the End, the Central Point, the non plus ultra" of modern poetry seem really to be (despite the delight it affords) a "necessary Task". Peri Bathous, then, is a treatise of elaborate irony. As was mentioned above, however, the treatise is never neatly classifiable in any of its qualities. Just as it displays improprieties of form and inconsistencies as parody, so also does it lack a continually sustained ironic tone.

For most of the work, the ironic tone set by Martinus Scriblerus at the beginning is continued. At times, however, Pope seems to become less interested in the preservation of irony than he is in his immediate satiric concern. In chapter six, for example, one feels that Pope's

---

[36]See The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, edited by Harold Williams (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), II, 43.

delight with the intricacies of his categorizing as firds, fish, and animals the species of bad writers (who are labelled with their initials as an aid to the reader's identification of them) overshadows his original ironic plan. Martinus Scriblerus fades into the background as Alexander Pope takes over for a few pages. The following example sounds more like the prose of Swift or the tone of the Pope of the Dunciad than it does Martinus Scriblerus, the super-pedant; "The Porpoises are unwieldy and big; they put all their Numbers into a great Turmoil and Tempest, but whenever they appear in plain Light, (which is seldom) they are only shapeless and ugly Monsters. J. D. C. G. J. O."[37] Then, after almost three pages of this kind of invention, Martin seems to return just in time to close the chapter with the less intense, original ironic tone; "THESE are the chief Characteristicks of the Bathos, and in each of these kinds we have the comfort to be bless'd with sundry and manifold choice Spirits in this our Island".[38] Mrs. Steeves,probably because she does not happen to be looking at Peri Bathous as Menippean satire, is inconsistent with her attitude of annoyance at Pope's not sustaining his parody in her remarks about Pope's handling of tone. She remarks,"There are times when the author labors with difficulty to sustain his irony...." [39]

---

[37]Peri Bathous, p. 27.

[38]Ibid., p. 28.

[39]Ibid., p. lxviii. This statement seems to contradict an earlier statement in which Mrs. Steeves remarked that with Peri Hupsous as his model, Pope "simply reverses its precepts in an extraordinarily sustained irony". (Ibid., p. liv.)

The key to the problem lies, once again, in the placing of Peri Bathous is the literary tradition to which it belongs. As a Scriblerian satire and (within the larger tradition) as a Menippean satire, Pope's relaxation of the irony is analogous to his letting down of strict parody, to his creation of improportioned areas of satiric concentration, and to his indulgence in formal extravagances within an apparently classically controlled external form. The lack of a sustained irony is here artistically permissable and even expected as a characteristic of the general Menippean aesthetic of impropriety.

A consideration of the themes and images by which Pope's manual of debased literary taste is constructed reveals (as did the investigation of the subject matter of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus) a Scriblerian preoccupation with the physical and the bestial in man, a quality which we have previously referred to as impropriety of content -- an aesthetic impropriety which here too seems appropriate in a work which, as we have seen, displays as well as extravagances of content, typically Scriblerian improprieties of form and of tone.

In the previous discussion of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus it was suggested that the Scriblerian attack on pedantry and affectation had more meaning if it was viewed against the concept of the Great Chain of Being, the pedant, the man who lacked self-knowledge, thus being seen as one who, in displaying a disturbing lack of Prufrock-like humility, would willingly "disturb the universe". It was suggested that both for the aesthetic pleasure involved for the authors and as a corrective to the

arrogance and blindness of their victims, the Scriblerians set out to put man in his place by showing him to be not the proud angelic being he supposed, but rather, a silly, irrational animal. The Great Chain of Being also serves here as a background against which to view Peri Bathous. The Memoirs took as its province the very large subject of intellectual man and the perversions of his reason. Peri Bathous, in contrast, is concerned with the more specific interest of man and his making of literature. If, however, one can imagine a purely literary Chain of Being extending, let us say, from Homer at the top to Sir Richard Blackmore at the bottom, one can see that the purpose of Peri Bathous in literature is analogous to that of The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus in life. Peri Bathous, if it serves as anything more than the providing of aesthetic delight for its creator, serves as a corrective for those who would try (through a lamentable lack of self-knowledge) to rise above their rightful places on the literary Chain of Being.[40] Peri Bathous corrects the dunce's blind belief that he is or can ever be higher on the literary Chain of Being than where he really belongs by Martinus' taking him "as it were by the hand" and

---

[40]It is another irony of Peri Bathous that while it is obviously devoted to giving bad literary advice, if, as Pope had written in An Essay on Criticism, "Nature's chief Master-piece is writing well" (l.724, p. 323), then, conversely, to write badly is a sin against Nature. If, therefore, Peri Bathous acts as a corrective to bad writing and as a corrective to the lack of self-knowledge, then it is dispensing good advice and is something of a moral work. Despite the fact that Pope claimed the treatise could be read in reverse as an authentic ars poetica, its use as a corrective is, of course, a joke; it is more than unlikely that any true son of the Bathos would (or could) change his ways because of Pope's satire -- evidence that its value is now and was then largely aesthetic.

leading him (ironically, like Virgil guiding Dante through the underworld) "the gentle downhill way to the Bathos", to his rightful place on the Chain -- at the "very bottom of the Atmosphere".[41]

As the treatise develops it becomes clear that the work implies two methods by which the would-be literary man has reached the bottom of the literary atmosphere, or (with close attention to the treatise) might reach it if he has not already done so. One method is his metamorphosis to the less than human state of the machine, resulting from his eschewing of the dictates of Nature in his adopting of various mechanical aids to writing. The other method of sinking is a metamorphosis from the rational man to the purely physical man or, lower still, to the level of the beast. We shall now briefly consider each of these Peri Bathous themes -- the writer as mechanism and the writer as animal.

For the Scriblerians, a man who wrote well was obviously in the favour of Nature, that goddess of so much aesthetic importance in the eighteenth century. His talent was a gift from the goddess. His continued production of good writing was evidence that he was a rational man who, realizing the source of his gift, continued to obey Nature's rulings of taste and proportion. He knew his place in the Scale of Being and exulted in the cosmic status quo. Conversely, to write badly was evidence of an author's conscious or unconscious rebellion against Nature. The eighteenth-century aesthetic system seems to be a tautology. To write badly is the result of the writer's perversion of Nature. And the writer's

---

[41] Peri Bathous, p. 16.

perversions of Nature are, at the same time, the result of his bad writing. It seems almost as if in order for a writer to find himself writing well and obeying Nature's dictates, he must have been, of necessity, the member of a sort of literary Calvinist "elect". Happily for the members of this literary "elect" (which included, of course, all the members of the Scriblerus Club) who were proud of the exclusiveness of their position, good writers are in a minority. As it is to be pointed out in chapter four of this essay, while it is in a way rather pleasant to find oneself (as the Scriblerians thought they had done) in a genteel minority, yet it is a frightening threat to one's love for literature that the great majority of writers are bad writers who, if not dealt with severely, might by sheer numbers overwhelm and permanently destroy one's high literary standards. Martinus Scriblerus notes with a hint of pride a fact which Pope may have written with a shudder; "...we shall find those who have a Taste of the Sublime to be very few, but the Profund strikes universally, and is adapted to every Capacity."[42] The writer of the Sublime writes to his own high aesthetic standards as they are dictated by his White Goddess. The scribbler of the "Profund" perverts Nature by writing, presumably, not for posterity and not from Nature's inspiration but instead from a desire for "Profit or Gain".[43] Martin informs the reader that in order to acquire profit and gain, " 'tis necessary to procure Applause, by administring Pleasure to the Reader: From whence it follows demonstrably,

---

[42] Ibid., p. 10.

[43] Ibid., p. 11.

that their Productions must be suited to the present Taste".[44] Fortunately for Martinus but unfortunately for Pope and his fellow Scriblerians the "present Taste" is not very refined. Martin continues; "...and I cannot but congratulate our Age on this particular Felicity, that tho' we have made great Progress in all other Branches of Luxury, we are not yet debauch'd with any high relish in Poetry, but are in this one Taste, less nice than our Ancestors."[45] When an author thus forsakes Nature and sets out to write for applause and material gain he falls in the literary Scale of Being and is metamorphosized into something debased and less than human -- a dehumanized author to correspond to his dehumanized writing. This metamorphosis is close to what Henri Bergson refers to as the process of something mechanical being encrusted on something living. Bergson, too, sees the metamorphic aspects of the change, referring to the laughter that is incited by the "transformation of a person into a thing".[46] Early in Peri Bathous, Martin alludes to the mechanical art of the fallen writer:

> NEVERTHELESS, in making Gain the principal End of our Art, far be it from me to exclude any great Genius's of Rank or Fortune from diverting themselves this way. They ought to be praised no less than those Princes, who pass their vacant Hours in some ingenious Mechanical or Manual Art: And to such as these, it would be Ingratitude not to own, that our Art [that is, the "Profound"] has often been infinitely indebted.[47]

Mechanism in Peri Bathous ranges from examples of (and instruction in) the

---

[44] Ibid., p. 11.

[45] Ibid., p. 11.

[46] Henri Bergson, "Laughter" in Comedy(New York: Doubleday, 1956), p. 97.

[47] Peri Bathous, p. 12.

merely less than natural in literature to discussion of actual mechanical devices by which literature has been made and might continue to be made. The first stage in the descent to the mechanical, however, is the advice Martin gives the writer in the cultivation of an unnatural way merely of thinking and of writing. A large part of Peri Bathous is exhortation to the abandoning of the natural, thus making the treatise an Essay on Criticism in reverse. Martin frequently relies on analogies to painting to make his inverted advice clear. True writers of the profound are "Genius's for Still Life, which they can work up and stiffen with incredible Accuracy".[48] Martin counsels that the writer aspiring to the profound, "...is to consider himself as a Grotesque Painter, whose Works would be spoil'd by an Imitation of Nature, or Uniformity of Design".[49] Whoever would excell at this literary perversion of nature "must studiously avoid, detest, and turn his Head from all the Ideas, Ways, and Workings of that pestilent Foe to Wit and Destroyer of fine Figures, which is known by the Name of Common Sense. His business must be to contract the true Gout de travers';[50] and to acquire a most happy, uncommon, unaccountable Way of Thinking."[51] The advice continues with a

---

[48] Ibid., p. 25.

[49] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[50] E. L. Steeves points out (Peri Bathous, p. 101, n. 17: 21) that Phoebe Clinket uses this expression in Three Hours after Marriage when she remarks that her plays have been unfavourably received by the local "Judges of Wit". She exclaims to the apparently sympathetic Plotwell, "Ah! what a Gout de travers rules the Understandings of the Illiterate!" (Three Hours after Marriage, p. 14).

[51] Peri Bathous, p. 17.

satiric thrust at the grotesqueries of the English stage. Martin seems to include a jest at the expense of the earlier Scriblerian attempt to mock such monstrosities by using the crocodile and mummy of Three Hours after Marriage. The passage also includes images of various kinds of metamorphosis -- a leitmotif in Scriblerian satire.

> Nothing seem'd more plain to our great Authors, than that the World had long been weary of natural Things. How much the contrary is form'd to please, is evident from the universal Applause daily given to the admirable Entertainments of Harlequins and Magicians on our Stage. When an Audience behold a Coach turn'd into a Wheel-barrow, a Conjurer into an Old Woman, or a Man's Head where his Heels should be; how are they struck with Transport and Delight? Which can only be imputed to this Cause, that each Object is chang'd into That which hath been suggested to them by their own low Ideas before.[52]

To satirize something, as it is to be pointed out in chapter four of this essay, is to attempt to destroy it. The apparent approval here of the grotesque on the stage ("admirable Entertainments"), for example, and the inclusion of such grotesque elements in Three Hours after Marriage, are examples of the Scriblerian ironic satiric attack. As was previously mentioned, it is an irony of Scriblerian satire that the obvious delight taken in such attack and the apparent futility of the satiric attacks seem to show a desire in the Scriblerians for an indulgence in the very kind of literature they know to be un-classical in its impropriety. By out-doing the offenders, however, they are able, through sheer literary virtuosity, both to castigate literary vices and, at the same time, to enjoy the aesthetic freedom they provide. In the passage quoted above, Martinus

---

[52] Ibid., p. 19.

Scriblerus urges his scribblers to indulge themselves in the depiction of the unnatural, the monstrous. The advice is clearly given ironically, but the monstrous is, of course, a pervasive feature of Scriblerian satire.

A further step in Peri Bathous to the mechanical production of literature is Martin's supplying the reader with aids to writing which are almost automatic in their step-by-step directions; in chapter fifteen, Pope is able to satirize both writers and critics at the same time in his "Receipt to make an Epic Poem". The Receipt establishes the correctly ironic tone in the opening sentence as Pope shows that with a superlative aesthetic blindness, critics have suggested mechanical aids for the composition of even the epic poem, "the greatest Work Human Nature is capable of".[53] Martin partly redeems these previous critics; "They have already laid down many mechanical Rules for Compositions of this Sort, but at the same time they cut off almost all Undertakers[54] from the Possibility of ever performing them; for the first Qualification they unanimously require in a Poet, is a Genius".[55] Martin, however, promises to show how epic poetry can be made without genius. The task (with the aid of mechanical rules) can be rendered mindless, the result being, of necessity, dehumanized, "life-negating" art.[56] Martin's rules for the use of tropes,

---

[53] Ibid., p. 80.

[54] "Undertakers" is surely used literally here by Pope to imply that the sons of the bathos are destined to pull the epic from the sublime to the bathetic -- as Sir Richard Blackmore always did.

[55] Peri Bathous, p. 80.

[56] It is interesting to note that what Pope feared would happen to art in the eighteenth century has happened in the twentieth century. Once

figures, and rhetorical devices lead to the same kind of literary automatism, "Amplification" being specifically identified as a mechanical process as "the spinning Wheel of the Bathos".[57] It is also to be noted that while Pope is showing how art becomes dehumanized, he is also reinforcing the idea of the fall from the intellectual to the mechanical by rendering in his imagery abstract ideas concrete -- a technique which, as was shown in chapter two, is a common one in Menippean satire. The idea of a reduction of the poet's imaginative powers, for example, is crystallized in the image of the telescope; "...his Eyes should be like unto the wrong end of a Perspective Glass, by which all the Objects of Nature are lessen'd".[58] Such brief allusions to literary mechanism as

---

again, an example from painting is useful. In an article about recent Post-Abstract Expressionist painting, Barbara Rose trys valiantly to show that there is still a human element left in the new painting. She writes:

> Despite a generally mechanical, machine-made quality, it still strikes me as wrong to think that an "untouched by human hands" impression is what is sought after now. Although all except Avedisian (and perhaps Reed) plot their compositions with compass or ruler or both, most avoid the strict precision of the purely mechanical, preserving always some margin for human error. Thus Williams and Bannard curve the corners of rectangles in by hand, with the result that the shapes are slightly irregular, and the Washington painters, by staining paint onto raw canvas, often get a slight blur around the edges of forms, precluding any pretension to geometric exactness. (Quoted from "The Primacy of Colour" in Art International, VIII (May, 1964), p. 26.)

[57] Peri Bathous, p. 36.

[58] Ibid., p. 19.

are scattered throughout the treatise culminate in the appendix which is wholly devoted to mechanical aids to writing and physical projects for the aid of dulness. In addition to the "Receipt to make an Epic Poem" and the chapter on the making of dedications and panegyrics, the appendix includes "A Project for the Advancement of the Bathos" (chapter thirteen) -- the supreme example in Peri Bathous of the Scriblerian vision of the possible mechanization of art. Martin first suggests that all scribblers should unite into "one Regular Body" like other "Arts of this Age". This sub-literary art is explicitely identified not as art at all but as a trade. Each member of the proposed sub-literary guild would then concern himself only with that which he did best:

> The vast Improvement of modern Manufactures ariseth from their being divided into several Branches, and parcel'd out to several Trades: For instance, in Clock-making, one Artist makes the Balance, another the Spring, another the Crown-Wheels, a fourth the Case, and the principal Workman puts all together; To this OEconomy we owe the Perfection of our modern Watches; and doubtless we also might that of our modern Poetry and Rhetoric, were the several Parts branched out in the like manner.[59]

Each writer working at only what he did best (whether it be "Comparisons", "Sarcasms" or "Sentences") would contribute his productions to a co-operative literary bank from which could be drawn not only inspiration but actual words and phrases. Martin's proposal is really for the constructing of a writing machine.

> I THEREFORE propose that there be contrived with all convenient Dispatch, at the publick Expence, a Rhetorical Chest of Drawers, consisting of three

---

[59] Ibid., p. 72.

> Stories, the highest for the Deliberative, the middle for the Demonstrative, and the lowest for the Judicial. These shall be divided into Loci or Places, being Repositories for Matter and Argument in the several Kinds of Oration or Writing; and every Drawer shall again be subdivided into Cells, resembling those of Cabinets for Rarities. The Apartment for Peace or War, and that of the Liberty of the Press, may in a very few Days be fill'd with several Arguments perfectly new; and the Vituperative Partition will as easily be replenish'd with a most choice Collection, entirely of the Growth and Manufacture of the present Age. Every Composer will soon be taught the Use of this Cabinet, and how to manage all the Registers of it, which will be drawn out much in the Manner of those of an Organ.[60]

Mrs. Steeves rather ingenuously remarks that here "A familiar object, in this instance an organ, is used as the basis for the construction of an imaginary invention similar to it, but utterly impractical, absurd, or even impossible when one considers the use for which it is designed. Cf. also the writing machine in the Grand Academy of Lagado in Gulliver's Travels,...."[61] The importance of the writing machine in Lagado is that, like the rhetorical chest of drawers, it is not only "impractical, absurd, or even impossible", but it is a symbol of the dehumanization and thus the destruction of art. Here is Gulliver's description of the Lagado writing machine:

> The Professor then desired me to observe, for he was going to set his Engine at work. The Pupils

---

[60] Ibid., pp. 74-75.

[61] Ibid., p. 186, n. 75:6.

> at his Command took each of them hold of an Iron Handle, whereof there were Forty fixed round the Edges of the Frame; and giving them a sudden Turn, the whole Disposition of the Words was entirely changed. He then commanded Six and Thirty of the Lads to read the several Lines softly as they appeared upon the Frame; and where they found three or four Words together that might make Part of a Sentence, they dictated to the four remaining Boys who were Scribes.[62]

The situation is almost the same as that of the famous hypothesis about the monkeys at the typewriters. The Lagado composing process is as dehumanized and anti-art as a Dada experiment in accidental poetry or a Jean Arp collage of "squares arranged according to the laws of chance".

In addition to a pervasive theme of sub-literary automatism in Peri Bathous is the theme which was previously shown to be a favourite one in Scriblerian satire, that of the reduction of the foolish man to the level of the purely physical being or to the even lower level of the beast. In Peri Bathous, as in much of the satire that features this kind of literary reduction, there is a notable preoccupation with the physiological workings of man with a corresponding tendency in the author to express these qualities in an appropriately coarse and rudely clear way. There is also, as we have seen in part, a stylistic concentration on metamorphosis -- the workings of this human to sub-human reduction.

Pope undertakes to make the sons of the true profound seem less than human. One who commits the sin of writing badly loses his stature as a rational human being. Rational human beings, one gathers from Peri

---

[62]Swift, Prose Works, XI, 168.

Bathous, prefer the light to the darkness, the top of a mountain to the bottom of a cave; they incline towards Olympus rather than gravitate towards the Underworld. Rational human beings also prefer to avoid dirt and nastiness. Beasts and bad writers, however, prefer the opposite of all these. Martin's offense at the unwholesome condition in which his fellow scribblers are forced to live is, even in the opening pages of the treatise, not as strong as it might be:

> At the same time I intend to do justice upon our Neighbours, Inhabitants of the Upper Parnassus; who taking advantage of the rising Ground, are perpetually throwing down Rubbish, Dirt, and Stones upon us, never suffering us to live in Peace: These Men, while they enjoy the Chrystal Stream of Helicon, envy us our common Water,[63] which (thank our Stars) tho' it is somewhat muddy, flows in much greater abundance.[64]

For Martin, the quality of writing produced by his followers is less important than is its quantity (which is increased by the use of such "machines" as a rhetorical chest of drawers). When this idea is reduced from the abstract to the concrete, it is expressed in Martin's lack of concern that their common water is muddy and in his enthusiasm and relief that there is at least more of the muddy water than there is of Helicon's crystal stream. In this passage Pope also makes concrete the up-down theme of the treatise. As well as living aesthetically lower lives, the scribblers are also living

---

[63]Once again Pope has established the contrast of the scarcity of work of literary value in comparison to the abundance of bad writing by using the idea of the flood as a symbol of the inundation of the country with inferior writing.

[64]Peri Bathous, p. 8.

in a geographically lower place than are the writers of the sublime. Peri Bathous is a treatise on the art of sinking; the art of both physical sinking and mental sinking, written for those who already have proven themselves to possess "an Alacrity of sinking", [65] those who, like the Lewis Theobald of the Dunciad, are always "Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound! ". Theobald, like other Scriblerian dunces, "Plung'd for his sense, but found no bottom there; /Then writ, and flounder'd on, in mere despair."[66] In Peri Bathous the dunce's abortive plunge for sense is made a physical plunge. In the following example, the plunge is compared (as it often is in Peri Bathous) to its opposite, an aesthetic ascent; "HORACE, in search of the Sublime, struck his Head against the Stars; but Empedocles, to fathom the Profund, threw himself into AEtna:...."[67] Pope's Dunciad affords many examples of the aesthetic plunge made concrete. As part of the heroic games, the goddess Dulness proposes a diving contest. That one of her sons who shows most "alacrity in sinking" is to win a "pig of lead" as his reward.[68] The Dunciad diving

---

[65] Ibid., p. 14.

[66] The Dunciad, ll. 113-114, p. 77.

[67] Peri Bathous, p. 40.

[68] The prize of the "pig of lead", which is to be an aid to the dunce's future sinking, is similar to the image used by Martin in Peri Bathous as an explanation of the necessity for rules as an aid to sinking. Martin explains; "I grant, that to excel in the Bathos a Genius is requisite; yet the Rules of Art must be allow'd so far useful, as to add Weight, or as I may say, hang on Lead, to facilitate and enforce our Descent, to guide us to the most advantageous Declivities, and habituate our Imagination to a Depth of thinking." (Peri Bathous, p. 16).

contest as well as affording examples of physical plunging also affords (as does much of Book II of the poem) examples of Pope's crystallization of that particularly Scriblerian combination of dulness, physical sinking, and filth, a combination frequently seen in Peri Bathous. For example, in order to win the leaden prize, the dunce must show, in addition to a facility in sinking, a certain love of wallowing in filth. The prize is to go to the one . . .

> ...who best can dash thro' thick and thin,
> And who the most in love of dirt excel,
> Or dark dexterity of groping well.
> Who flings most filth, and wide pollutes around
> The stream,....[69]

The ensuing pictures Pope draws of Dennis, Concanen, Welsted, and Smedley struggling in the mud, though more violently dirty, are similar to Martin's description of the natural habits of some of his followers whom he has classified as birds, fish, and animals, for the easy recognition of their writings. Those scribblers collectively known as the Frogs, for example, "are such as can neither walk nor fly, but can leap and bound to admiration: They live generally in the Bottom of a Ditch, and make a great Noise whenever they thrust their Heads above Water."[70] The "Didappers", Martin tells the reader, are authors "that keep themselves long out of sight, under water, and come up now and then where you least expected them".[71] The true sons of the bathos are naturally directed to what is low both mentally and physically. Just as the mechanical scribbler is less than human, so is

---

[69]The Dunciad, ll. 264-268, pp. 133-134.

[70]Peri Bathous, pp. 27-28.

[71]Ibid., p. 27.

the dirty, animal-like scribbler.

Much of Peri Bathous is given over to demonstrating that Pope's victims are indeed animals. For his victims, for example, the poetic process (like all processes) is a physical one. Pope's literary method for the depiction of such reductions is the same as that employed by Sterne when he shocked both Walter Shandy and the reader by his linking the seat of the soul with a tadpole in a puddle; that is, a reduction of the abstract to the crudely concrete. In chapter three of Peri Bathous, "The Necessity of the Bathos, Physically consider'd," Martin bolsters his argument that the writing of bad poetry is in some cases a physical necessity by stating an "undoubted Physical Maxim", "That Poetry is a natural or morbid Secretion from the Brain. As I would not suddenly stop a Cold in the Head, or dry up my Neighbour's Issue, I would as little hinder him from necessary Writing."[72] The physiology of the production of poetry leads Pope into coprology; "It may be affirm'd with great truth, that there is hardly any human Creature past Childhood, but at one time or other has had some Poetical Evacuation, and no question was much the better for it in his Health".[73] The noble and ethereal urge to create has now become

---

[72] Ibid., p. 12.

[73] Ibid., p. 13. It seems unnecessary here to comment more than briefly that scatology usually appears somewhere in Scriblerian satire and that there has been a great deal of comment about its appearance -- especially in the work of Swift. Book II of Pope's Dunciad supplies examples of Pope's Menippean shock-use of urine and excrement. One does feel that at least Pope, Swift, and even Gay (who seems preoccupied in Trivia with the avoidance of dirt and who even demands that the fisherman use clean worms for bait in Rural Sports (ll. 165-170)) would prefer to leave their natural functions behind and be transformed into disembodied intellects.

nothing more than a physical necessity for continuing good health. If the reader (and the scribbler for whom the treatise was supposedly composed) persists in thinking of the writing of poetry as artistic creation, Pope reduces the image to one of physical creation and includes a mention of conception and birth; "Therefore is the Desire of Writing properly term'd Pruritus, the Titillation of the Generative Faculty of the Brain; and the Person is said to conceive;".[74] Martin continues, getting his biology wrong and his metaphor mixed; "Now such as conceive must bring forth. I have known a Man thoughtful, melancholy, and raving for divers days, but forthwith grow wonderfully easy, lightsome and cheerful, upon a Discharge of the peccant Humour, in exceeding purulent Metre".[75] In the Menippean work of the Scriblerians the physical processes often seem (as in the two above examples) inextricably linked and mixed. The process of birth is frequently linked to the process of evacuation. In that section of Pope's handbook dealing with literary figures, for example, there is included the following example of "The VULGAR" from Blackmore: "Distended with the Waters in 'em pent,/ The Clouds hang deep in Air, but hang unrent." This couplet Pope mockingly sees as a comparison of "Clouds big with Water to a Woman in great Necessity".[76] Pope indulges

---

[74]Ibid., p. 13. Pope and his collaborators in Three Hours after Marriage indulge in the same kind of concrete rendering of the abstract idea of poetic conception in their not very disguised obscene banter between Phoebe Clinket and Sir Tremendous in Act I of the play. Clinket uses "conceive" to mean "formulate". The reader cannot but understand it in its physiological sense. See Three Hours after Marriage, p. 18.

[75]Ibid., p. 13.

[76]Ibid., p. 55.

in full Menippean impropriety of style and subject matter in his discussion of "The ALAMODE Stile"; here, again, is a concentration on the purely physical workings of the body:

> But the principal Branch of the Alamode is the PRURIENT, a Stile greatly advanc'd and honour'd of late by the practise of Persons of the first Quality, and by the encouragement of the Ladies not unsuccessfully introduc'd even into the Drawing-Room. Indeed its incredible Progress and Conquests may be compar'd to those of the great Sesostris, and are every where known by the same Marks, the Images of the Genital Parts of Men or Women. It consists wholly of Metaphors drawn from two most fruitful Sources or Springs, the very Bathos of the human Body, that is to say xxx and x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x Hiatus Magnus lachrymabilis. x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x .[77]

Here is another manifestation of the irony of Peri Bathous and of the Scriblerians themselves. Pope is here jesting at the expense of prurience in writing. He seems to scorn the use of metaphors drawn from the two "fruitful Sources or Springs" of humanity. Yet Peri Bathous, The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, and other Scriblerian works abound in such metaphors. In all of the Scriblerian work one can feel the tension that is a result of the conflicting urges to suppress impropriety and to indulge in it. In the above example, one cannot but feel that Pope is enjoying the extravagance of his own prurience (including the obscene hiatus) while at the same time he is enjoying his destructive parody of such writing. One can hardly agree with Mrs. Steeves who suggests that in his alteration of the above cited couplet by Sir Richard Blackmore, Pope "may have fought shy of the word

---

[77] Ibid., p. 67.

wombs,...."[78] Only one page before, after all, in discussing the use of diminishing figures, Pope had diminished the abstract idea of anti-climax by using a metaphor no less improper than a mention of "wombs" would have been. He writes:

> ...when the gentle Reader is in Expectation of some great Image, he wither finds it surprisingly imperfect, or is presented with something very low or quite ridiculous. A Surprize resembling that of a curious Person in a Cabinet of antique Statues, who beholds on the Pedestal the Names of Homer, or Cato; but looking up, finds Homer without a Head, and nothing to be seen of Cato but his privy Member.[79]

Martin's discourse on the prurient style (quoted above) seems to contain the key to an important thematic structure of Peri Bathous. Just as one connects the Sublime with the ethereal and emotional so Pope identifies the Bathous with the concrete and the physical. But Pope carries the identification even further. Just as one connects the Sublime with the highest, most spiritual part of man, the mind and the imagination, so Pope identifies the Bathous with the lowest,most doggedly physical parts of the body. The Bathous in literature is linked with "the very Bathos of the human Body", a fact which helps to explain the frequent metaphorical connections in Scriblerian satire of literary dulness and the reproductive or eliminating functions of the body.

Frequently Pope combines images of the "Bathos of the human Body" with the up-down theme, the theme of ironic inversion upon which the whole

---

[78] Ibid., p. 157.

[79] Ibid., pp. 53-54.

treatise is built. In Peri Bathous the rules are upside-down in their irony as are the scribblers themselves in their perversion of their humanity. Rational Man walks proudly upright. But the scribbler who in his ignorance combines the worst features of bad literary styles achieves "...the Bathos in Perfection; as when a Man is set with his Head downward, and his Breech upright, his Degradation is compleat: One End of him is as high as ever, only that End is the wrong one."[80] When man perverts Nature by writing badly, Pope leaves him standing, like Swift's broomstick, with the wrong end up.[81]

In Peri Bathous, scribblers are not only made to seem like machines or purely physical human beings. When a man drops on the literary Chain of Being, he forsakes his humanity and is frequently changed metaphorically into an animal. The metamorphosis is brought about (as was the scribbler's demotion to a physical being) by metaphorical identifications of the man with the animal. The most striking example of this literary metamorphosis in Peri Bathous occurs in chapter six, "Of the several Kinds of Genius's in the Profund, and the Marks and Characters of each". A simile is used to

---

[80] Ibid., p. 69.

[81] In Pope's "A Sermon on Glass-Bottles" Pope speaks of man as an irregular, forked Figure, neither so uniform, compact, or standing so firm as you: The heaviest Parts of him (of all which his Head is many times the heaviest) are placed above, and the weakest are Legs unable to support 'em; directly contrary to all good Rules of Architecture. What he values himself most upon, is his having (as the Poet expresses it) Os Sublime, which literally translated, as Things of Consequence ought to be, is a Mouth erect towards Heaven. (Prose Works of Alexander Pope, pp. 211-212.)

show similarities between objects as, for example, when Swift in A Tale of a Tub lists the similarities between a "True Critick" and other forms of sub-human life; "The True Criticks are known by their Talent of swarming about the noblest Writers, to which they are carried meerly by Instinct, as a Rat to the best Cheese, or a Wasp to the fairest Fruit...A True Critick, in the Perusal of a Book, is like a Dog at a Feast...."[82] A metaphor, however, does not only suggest that one object is like another but makes the identification complete, telling the reader that one object is the other. Almost the whole of chapter six of Peri Bathous is thus an extended metaphor identifying Pope's victims with animals, birds, and fish. For example, the "Flying Fishes" are "Writers who now and then rise upon their Fins, and fly out of the Profund; but their Wings are soon dry, and they drop down to the Bottom."[83] Other writers are similarily transformed into swallows, ostriches, parrots, didappers, porpoises, frogs, eels, and tortoises.[84] In chapter seven, a couplet by Broome (from his Epistle to My Friend Mr. Elijah Fenton) leads Pope to more discussion of transformation. Broome's couplet reads "Thus Phoebus thro' the Zodiack takes his way, / And amid Monsters rises into Day."[85] Broome's mention of the zodiac and of monsters

---

[82] A Tale of a Tub, p. 103.

[83] Peri Bathous, p. 26.

[84] See Peri Bathous, pp. 26-28.

[85] Quoted on p. 32 of Peri Bathous.

inspires Pope to comment:

> What a Peculiarity is here of Invention? The Author's Pencil, like the Wand of Circe, turns all into Monsters at a Stroke. A great Genius takes things in the Lump, without stopping at minute Considerations: In vain might the Ram, the Bull, the Goat, the Lion, the Crab, the Scorpion, the Fishes, all stand in his way, as mere natural Animals: much more might it be pleaded that a pair of Scales, an old Man, and two innocent Children, were no Monsters: There were only the Centaur and the Maid that could be esteem'd out of Nature. But what of that? with a Boldness peculiar to these daring Genius's, what he found not Monsters, he made so.[86]

What Pope says here about Broome's couplet may well be correct. Pope's acute awareness of Broome's literary lapse, however, does not concern us here as much as does the recognition of the fact that the couplet gives Pope the opportunity to compose an extravagant Menippean paragraph rich with monsters, mythology and a list of all the signs of the Zodiac.

Pope's discussion of Broome's couplet serves, too, to disclose something of Pope's satiric method in Peri Bathous. Wielding the wand of Circe himself, Pope gradually turns his victims into monsters. Using the persona of Martinus Scriblerus, the scribbler's friend, Pope composes an inverted ars poetica in which he parodies and satirizes his victims into absurdity, recommends that they seek their true place on the Scale of Being, and (with Martin's help) leads them to it; Pope then establishes the scribblers' right to inhabit the literary Shades by a literary metamorphosis in which he transforms his victims metaphorically into mechanical beings and physical beings whose interests seem rarely to transcend copulation and

---

[86]Peri Bathous, p. 32.

defecation, and into beasts living in squalor. Taking it upon himself to punish the bad writer for his rebellion against Nature, Pope as Nature's Regent drives the sons of the Bathos out of Nature's world down into the "bottom of the atmosphere", into a perverted world of his own construction in which (like everything else in that world) they stand inverted (their degradation complete) and in which they are to live forever in the darkness.

EPILOGUE: SCRIBLERIAN SATIRE -- THE LARGER PURPOSE

In discussing the "aesthetics of impropriety", it was suggested that Scriblerian satire fits comfortably into the long tradition of Menippean satire. It is perhaps possible to show, in addition, that Scriblerian satire (so often regarded as the literary lapses of five important and otherwise respected men of letters),as well as being a part of a long literary tradition, has an important place in the history of literature and the history of ideas of the last two centuries. Much of what is to follow is of a rather tentative nature and should be regarded as an extended but as yet incompletely developed coda to the preceding pages.

Throughout this essay we have stressed the Scriblerian satirist's lack of immediate moral concern for the subject of his satire or for the results of it; at the same time, we have emphasized his concentration on the importance of the aesthetics of his work and the resulting art for art's sake bias of the Scriblerians. It is possible, however, that there is a larger purpose in Scriblerian satire -- a purpose arising out of this same Scriblerian art for art's sake attitude and a purpose which is at the same time both moral and aesthetic (though whether this "larger purpose" is conscious or unconscious or both would be difficult to say). In order to see this larger purpose behind the Scriblerian work, it is necessary to see the members of the Scriblerus Club as humanist men of letters who prize above all the highest standards both in their own work and in the arts of

mankind in general. Furthermore, the Scriblerians seem to show in much of their work an anxiety which is the result of a feeling that these high standards of excellence in art are being threatened. Herbert Davis writes of Swift's A Tale of a Tub that "the real object of Swift's satire in the Tale is the corruption he saw in English letters during the latter half of the seventeenth century, destroying what he felt had been its finest achievement".[1] Aubrey Williams, discussing Pope's Dunciad, writes that Pope "set out to scourge and damn to fame all who seemed bent on dismantling the humanist structure of values...."[2] The problem of just how it was that English letters were being corrupted or that the humanist structure of values was being dismantled is a very complex one. Marshall McLuhan agrees with Aubrey Williams that Pope's Dunciad is a cry of protest at the threat of the destruction of art and goes on to point out that Pope recognized that the invention of movable type was the cause of this possible aesthetic catastrophe. The printing press had within it the means to a completely mechanized and democratized art. In a thoroughly typical example of what has become known as a "McLuhanism", Professor McLuhan tells us (in heavy black type) that "Pope's Dunciad indicts the printed book as the agent of a primitivistic and Romantic revival. Sheer visual quantity evokes the magical resonance of the tribal horde. The box office looms as a return

---

[1]Herbert Davis, Jonathan Swift, Essays on his Satire and Other Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 110.

[2]Aubrey Williams, op. cit., p. 63.

to the echo chamber of bardic incantation".[3] For what this really means we must again quote from The Gutenberg Galaxy. McLuhan sees the Dunciad as an "explicit study of plunging of the human mind into the sludge of an unconscious engendered by the book". Literature is here "charged with stupefying mankind, and mesmerically ushering the polite world back into primitivism...the unconscious".[4] Professor McLuhan tells us that "it is Pope's simple theme that the fogs of Dulness and new tribalism are fed by the printing press. Wit, the quick interplay among our senses and faculties, is thus steadily anesthetized by the encroaching unconscious".[5] Pope feels that the control of literature is slipping away from the intellectual minority who deserve to control it, and is, in turn, being passed (by the force of numbers alone) to the mass of dunces whose deluge of scribbling pours forth from the printing presses.

> Print, with its uniformity, repeatability, and limitless extent does give reincarnate life and fame to anything at all. The kind of limp life so conferred by dull heads upon dull themes formalistically penetrates all existence. Since readers are as vain as authors, they crave to view their own conglomerate visage and, therefore, demand the dullest wits to exert themselves in ever greater degree as the collective audience increases.[6]

Aubrey Williams, though he does not so much concern himself with the effect of typography on art, sees Pope (as McLuhan does) as a man fighting to save

---

[3]Marshall McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 255.

[4]Ibid., p. 255.

[5]Ibid., p. 259.

[6]Ibid., p. 259.

art from destruction:

> Pope's war with duncery could be called... a battle over words -- over a destructive use of the 'word', as the poet saw it, by the dunces in the most important areas of human experience: literature, education, politics, religion... wherever Pope turned, such abuses of the 'word' evidently presented themselves to him, abuses which, because of the intimate relation he believed to exist between words and thought, eloquence and wisdom, he could only regard as having injurious consequences for man's well-being. After all, if eloquence is a sign of wisdom, then verbal inanity must be a sign of what Pope included in 'dulness'.[7]

A few pages later, Professor Williams reinforces the idea that Scriblerian satire transcends the immediate morality questions of satire and concerns itself ultimately with a "larger purpose". He writes, "Dunces, and duncely writings, were not, to Pope, matters of little or merely personal import. Such 'words', such art, inevitably for him referred to states of mind and soul, and to the state of the social order as a whole".[8] The Scriblerians seemed to see themselves then as a kind of bulwark against the imminent democratization and thus the dilution and eventual destruction of art. The Scriblerians, however, did more than merely point out the threat and call the dunces by nasty names.

Robert C. Elliott reminds us early in his The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art of the influence wielded by the ancient satirist. Beginning with a discussion of the Greek satirist Archilochus, who, ac-

---

[7] Aubrey Williams, op. cit., p. 156.

[8] Ibid., p. 158.

cording to tradition, was "the first who' dipt a bitter Muse in snake-venom and stained gentle Helicon with blood'; travelers are warned to pass softly by his tomb, lest the wasps that settle there be aroused",[9] Elliott shows that Archilochus' satiric invective was powerful enough to kill his enemies just by "satirizing" them. Elliott continues:

> Even today, of course, we speak of satire as "venomous," "cutting," and "stinging," although as we use these terms we may be a little self-conscious about the extravagance of what are, for us, mere metaphors. It was not always so. Our language preserves the memory of a once powerful belief: Archilochus' verses had demonic power; his satire killed. Indeed, all satire "kills," symbolically at any rate, and Archilochus is the archetypal figure in the tradition.[10]

Whether or not one agrees with Professor Elliott's belief that satire has a practical, remedial purpose, it is a convincing argument he outlines which demonstrates that satire had roots in powerful magic and could be used as a destructive force. Just as the once functional Greek ceremonies eventually lost their practical function and evolved into the literary forms of tragedy and comedy, so the weapon of satire became a purely literary construct. It is interesting to note, however, that in some of the work of the Scriblerians, the reader experiences the actual literary destruction of certain individuals who for some reason found themselves targets for satire. Aubrey Williams cites Martinus Scriblerus' notes to the Dunciad Variorum in which he dismisses as phantoms certain genuine Grub-street dunces; "Thou may'st depend on it no such authors ever liv'd".[11] This,

---

[9]Robert C. Elliott, The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art (Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 3-4.

[10]Ibid., p. 4.

[11]The Dunciad, p. 111, n. 118.

writes Professor Williams, "amounts finally to a serious impairment of the victim's historical status".[12] He reminds us of Astrologer Partridge who, as the victim of a satire almost as powerful in its effects as that of Archilochus, was " 'buried alive' and 'dead' under the fictional circumstances imposed upon his existence by Swift and his circle".[13]

It was suggested previously that the literary self-consciousness displayed in their satiric works revealed that the Scriblerians were unusually aware of the characteristics of the external forms of literature, and were skilful enough to be able to do with these forms whatever they desired. It was also suggested that a partial result of this Scriblerian facility at formal manipulation was the frequent production of parody. Before a form can be parodied it must be thoroughly understood. The Scriblerian satirists were thus well equipped for parody in their complete mastery of literary form. It is well known that the primitive man's constructing of a human image in the shape of his enemy is an attempt to gain power over him. The image's subsequent mutilation or destruction was to lead to the same fate for the enemy. This construction and destroying of the human image is found frequently in literature (for example, in Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native) and is found in the sometimes festive and sometimes rebellious act of the public burning in effigy of a current scapegoat. It is possible, furthermore, to see the composing of parody as an analogy to the construction of this kind of voodoo image. The satirist

---

[12]Aubrey Williams, op. cit., p. 70.

[13]Ibid., p. 70.

who wishes to destroy a literary work of which he disapproves constructs an image of the work in his parody or satire of it and thereby gains "control" over the original offensive piece. He then "destroys" it by exaggerating the characteristics of the original work and thereby exposing to the world its "true" silliness. Satire and parody can thus be seen to be possible weapons with which the skilful writer can "destroy" those individuals and those writings he dislikes.[14] The Scriblerians, as upholders of the humanist structure and champions of high artistic standards, while they are indulging themselves in the stimulating aesthetic freedom afforded by the Menippean satire, are able at the same time to use their satire to destroy those whom they feel to be working to undermine the humanist structure of which they are so much a part. Their function as the upholders of art has a broader significance which places the Scriblerians in an important position in the history of art and ideas since the Augustan age. In order to appreciate the importance of the Scriblerian work in this history it is necessary to trace briefly and very generally the major trends in literature with which the Scriblerians can be seen to have some connection.

There are several reasons for arguing that what is referred to as "modern art" can be said to begin in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, not the least of which is the fact that until the

---

[14]In a lecture delivered to the students of McMaster University on November 11, 1964 ("Satire and the American Novel"), Professor Leslie Fiedler discussed this destructive power of satire, remarking that skilful parody forever destroys the original work since after the parody, the reader can never again regard the original piece in quite the same way as he did before the parody.

age of the Augustans, the artist worked apparently without expending very much energy on (or displaying very much concern for) the artist's self-conscious problems of the fate of art itself. The Scriblerians seem to be among the first artists to have to face one of the great problems of the "modern" artist -- the problem of what is to become of art in the mechanized world. Faced with a threat to the high standards of art in the form of the bad writing coming in a deluge from the presses, the Scriblerians satirize duncery and attempt to destroy mediocrity by burying it in the absurdity and the skilful extravagance of their satiric works. The result is that the scribbler who fears such satiric treatment either stops writing (a consummation devoutly to be wished) or abandons his hitherto too easily satirized external literary form and draws within himself, concentrating his attention on the more elusive and less satirically vulnerable area of his own mind. He becomes interested in his complicated state of mind at the expense of the literary form through which he is to express himself. When form is thus subordinated to content (or when form and content are one and are in the control of the "shaping imagination"), one finds in the world of letters less respect for the established mechanical forms and, correspondingly, more respect for the act of creation itself, the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling". The artist who at first retreated from Augustan (and Scriblerian) satire of external forms into the haven of the self as an act of self-defense now begins to embrace with enthusiasm the freedom he has discovered. He has become less an Augustan and more a Romantic. In A Guide to English

Literature, F. W. Bateson quotes Herbert M. Schueller's definition of Romanticism in which the movement is said to be "the tendency to break the confines, the rules, the limits, to go beyond that which has been crystallized".[15] Such a statement is not very helpful here. By Mr. Schueller's definition (and Professor Bateson's), the Scriblerian satirists (as well as Rabelais, Burton, Lucian, Petronius,and the other Menippean satirists) would all be classified as Romantics, having all broken the confines, rules, and limits imposed by classical rules. Surely the main difference between the Scriblerians and the Romantics lies not in the extravagance or the lack of extravagance of their literary forms but in the Romantic emphasis on the self and the importance of introspection in comparison with the Scriblerian emphasis on external forms and impersonality. That Romanticism is a reaction to arid Neo-classicism is a widely held belief. It is perhaps also true that Romanticism is the final result of what was a positive escape from Neo-classicism and especially from Neo-classic Scriblerian satire.

The Scriblerians in their upholding of the high standards of art may also have helped to change literature from a common gentlemanly pastime to an esoteric occupation. When a literary form is externally apparent and well-defined, it is, at the same time as it is easy to satirize and caricature, easy also to duplicate, at least superficially. By following the rigid formulae demanded for the composing of such established forms as the heroic couplet, it was possible for even a dunce to produce

---

[15]See F. W. Bateson, A Guide to English Literature (New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 144.

a great mass of writing. When such helpful formulae began to disappear, however, the writer was thrown back on his inner resources (if he had any) and found himself alone in the world and in something of a Romantic agony. The great deluge of scribblers began to disappear with the old Neo-classical forms. Poetry became no longer a genteel amusement but an occupation for which few were called. The writer ascended his ivory tower where he was both safe from satire and safe from the masses of the vulgar. In what is perhaps a small but, it is here believed, a powerful way, the Scriblerians can thus be seen as precursors of Romanticism.

There is an ironic epilogue to our sketch of literature from the Neo-classic to the Romantic. The twentieth century artist has come full circle and now faces the same kind of dilemma as was faced by the Scriblerian satirists. The artist's high standards are again being threatened -- this time by the deluge of the cultural "boom", of which Jacques Barzun (who should know) has written, "The powerful devices of mechanical reproduction and high-pressure distribution to which we owe the cultural 'awakening' necessarily distort and destroy".[16] The artist seems to have attempted to cope with this Scriblerian problem of the threat of the debasing of art by turning in either of two directions. He has attempted to escape the masses by taking refuge in obscurity, making of the literati a kind of happy few (the painter, for example, becomes an "action painter" whose object is not to paint a recognizable image but just to paint, his very personal "gesture" being the only matter of importance), or, in a later

---

[16]Jacques Barzun, Classic, Romantic, and Modern (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 147.

development, he has turned to meet the masses head on in a kind of artistic despair by presenting to them (with a hollow laugh) what he feels to be the vulgarity of their own world. The writer fills his work with "what time collects", the mundaneness about him. The painter presents modern man with very large images of his soup cans and highway signs; the composer utilizes the sounds of an industrial world. The man of taste purposely debases his taste (or heightens it, depending on one's attitude) in the humourless humour and total irony of "Camp art", the road to sanity for the man with refined sensibilities who is forced to live in an ugly world being, apparently, a positive embracing of the ugly. The Scriblerians may have thought they could stem the rising tide of mediocrity. The artist of today seems to feel he is unable to do so. "Camp art" at first appears to have a great deal in common with the Scriblerian aesthetic. In an article entitled "Notes on 'Camp' ", Susan Sontag writes that "The hallmark of Camp is the spirit of extravagance".[17] She goes on to say that "Camp is the consistently esthetic experience of the world. It incarnates a victory of style over content, of esthetics over morality, of irony over tragedy".[18] Sincerity in the fight to control artistic mediocrity does not seem to be enough. In the fight against modern duncery, writes Miss Sontag, "...irony, satire...seem feeble today, inadequate to the culturally oversaturated medium in which contemporary sensibility is schooled".[19] The answer to

---

[17]Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp' ", Partisan Review, XXXI (Fall 1964), p. 522.

[18]Ibid., p. 526.

[19]Ibid., p. 527.

mediocrity for the present day avant garde is a futile embracing of the mediocre. In what is rather a good example of "Camp" writing, Miss Sontag writes "The ultimate Camp statement: its good because it's awful...."[20]

In their desire to rid the world of art of its dunces and to cleanse it of mediocrity, the Scriblerians satirized and distorted. In their attempts to save art the Scriblerians thus stand at the beginning of the age of "modern art". Their satire begins a line of artistic development that leads from Neo-classicism through Romanticism and to contemporary art trends, the ironic excesses of Martinus Scriblerus' memoirs and the cynical admonishments of his Peri Bathous leading directly to the black and total irony of "Pop" art and "Camp".

---

[20]Ibid., p. 530.

APPENDIX

Figure 1 below, a reproduction of the first page of a facsimile edition of Pope's Dunciad Variorum,[1] provides a graphic example of the "aesthetics of impropriety". Wedged between the ornament and Martinus Scriblerus' extravagant annotations is all of Pope's poem for which there is space -- the first two lines. That the Scriblerian editorial paraphernalia is, as Aubrey Williams points out (see p. 39 above), "as much a construction of the imagination as the poem" is here immediately apparent -- even when it is regarded not as notation but as an element of purely visual design.

---

[1]Alexander Pope, The Dunciad Variorum, introduction by R. K. Root (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1929), p. 1.

THE DUNCIAD.

Book the First.

BOOKS and the Man I ſing, the firſt who brings
The Smithfield Muſes to the Ear of Kings.

REMARKS on BOOK the FIRST

*THE *Dunciad*, *Sic* M. S. It may be well diſputed whether this be a right Reading? Ought it not rather to be ſpelled *Dunceiad*, as the Etymology evidently demands? *Dunce* with an *e*, therefore *Dunceiad* with an *e*. That accurate and punctual Man of Letters, the Reſtorer of *Shakeſpeare*, conſtantly obſerves the preſervation of this very Letter *e*, in ſpelling the Name of his beloved Author, and not like his common careleſs Editors, with the omiſſion of one, nay ſometimes of two *e*'s [as *Shak'ſpear*] which is utterly unpardonable. Nor is the neglect of a *Single Letter* ſo trivial as to ſome it may appear; the alteration whereof in a learned language is an *Atchivement that brings honour* to the Critick who advances it; and Dr. *B.* will be remembered to poſterity for his performances of *this ſort*, as long as the world ſhall have any Eſteem for the Remains of *Menander* and *Philemon*.

THEOBALD.

I have a juſt value for the Letter E, and the ſame affection for the Name of this Poem, as the forecited Critic for that of his Author; yet cannot it induce me to agree with thoſe who would add yet another *e* to it; and call it the *Dunceiade*; which being a French and foreign Termination, is no way proper to a word entirely Engliſh, and Vernacular. One *E* therefore in this caſe is right, and two *E*'s wrong; yet upon the whole I ſhall follow the Manuſcript, and print it without any *E* at all; mov'd thereto by Authority, at all times with Criticks equal if not ſuperior to Reaſon. In which method of proceeding, I can never enough praiſe my very good Friend, the exact Mr. *Tho. Hearne*; who, if any word occur which to him and all mankind is evidently wrong, yet keeps he it in the Text with due reverence, and only remarks in the Margin, *ſic M. S.* In like manner we ſhall not amend this error in the Title itſelf, but only note it *obiter*, to evince to the learned that it was not our fault, nor any effect of our own Ignorance or Inattention.

SCRIBLERUS.

VERSE 1. *Books and the Man I ſing, the firſt who brings*
The Smithfield *Muſes to the Ear of Kings.*

Wonderful is the ſtupidity of all the former Criticks and Commentators on this Poem! It breaks forth at the very firſt line. The Author of the Critique prefix'd to *Sawney*, a Poem, *p.* 5. hath been ſo dull as to explain *The Man who brings*, &c. not of the Hero of the Piece, but of our Poet himſelf, as if he vaunted that *Kings* were to be his Readers (an Honour which tho' this Poem hath had, yet knoweth he how to receive it with more Modeſty.)

fig. 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: The bibliography lists only those works specifically cited in the text.

Primary Sources

Aitken, George A. The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1892.

Apuleius, Lucius. The Transformations of Lucius (The Golden Ass). Translated by Robert Graves. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1964.

Arbuthnot, John, Alexander Pope, et. al. Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus. Edited by Charles Kerby-Miller. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950.

Browne, Sir Thomas. The Works of Sir Thomas Browne. Edited by Simon Wilkin. 3 vols. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852.

Burton, Robert. The Anatomy of Melancholy. 3 vols. London: J. M. Dent, 1948.

Dryden, John. Essays of John Dryden. Selected and edited by W. P. Ker. 2 vols. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926.

Erasmus. The Essential Erasmus. Selected and translated by John P. Dolan. Toronto: New American Library of Canada, 1964.

Fielding, Henry. Joseph Andrews and Shamela. Edited with an introduction by Martin C. Battestin. Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1961.

---------. The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq. 16 vols. New York: Croscup and Sterling, 1902.

Gay, John. The Poetical Works of John Gay. Edited by C. G. Faber. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926.

Gay, John, Alexander Pope, and John Arbuthnot. Three Hours after Marriage. Edited by Richard Morton and William M. Peterson. Painesville, Ohio: Lake Erie College Press, 1961.

Lucian. Satirical Sketches. Translated with an introduction by Paul Turner. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1961.

Lucian. Selected Satires of Lucian. Edited and translated by Lionel Casson. New York: Doubleday, 1962.

More, St. Thomas. Utopia. Edited by Edward Surtz, S. J. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.

Petronius. The Satyricon. Translated with an introduction by William Arrowsmith. New York: New American Library, 1960.

Pope, Alexander. An Essay on Man. Edited by Maynard Mack. London: Methuen, 1950.

--------. Minor Poems. Edited by Norman Ault and John Butt. London: Methuen, 1954.

--------. Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism. Edited by E. Audra and Aubrey Williams. London: Methuen, 1961.

--------. The Dunciad. Edited by James Sutherland. London: Methuen, 1953.

--------. The Dunciad Variorum. Introduction by R. K. Root. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1929.

--------. The Prose Works of Alexander Pope. Edited by Norman Ault. Oxford: The Shakespeare Head Press, 1936.

--------. The Works of Alexander Pope. Edited by Rev. Whitwell Elwin and William John Courthope. 10 vols. London, 1886.

--------. The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq. Edited by Rev. William Lisle Bowles. 10 vols. London, 1806.

Rabelais, François. Gargantua and Pantagruel. Translated by Sir Thomas Urquhart and Peter le Motteux. 2 vols. London: J. M. Dent, 1954.

Sterne, Laurence. A Sentimental Journey. London: J. M. Dent, 1960.

--------. The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. Edited by James Aiken Work. New York: The Odyssey Press, 1940.

Swift, Jonathan. A Tale of a Tub. Edited by A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith. 2nd ed. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958.

--------. The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift. Edited by Harold Williams. 5 vols. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963.

--------. The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift. Edited by Herbert Davis. 14 vols. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939-1959.

The Art of Sinking in Poetry. Martinus Scriblerus'ΠΕΡΙ ΒΑΘΟΥΣ. Edited by Edna Leake Steeves. New York: King's Crown Press, 1952.

Secondary Sources

A Facsimile Reproduction of a Unique Catalogue of Laurence Sterne's Library. Preface by Charles Whibley. London: James Tregaskis and Son, 1930.

Avery, Catherine B., ed. The New Century Classical Handbook. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962.

Barzun, Jacques. Classic, Romantic, and Modern. New York: Doubleday, 1961.

Bate, Walter Jackson. Prefaces to Criticism. New York: Doubleday, 1959.

Bateson, F. W. A Guide to English Literature. New York: Doubleday, 1965.

Bentley, Eric. The Life of the Drama. New York: Atheneum, 1964.

Bergson, Henri. "Laughter", Comedy. New York: Doubleday, 1956.

Brinton, Crane. The Shaping of Modern Thought. Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, 1964.

Bullitt, John M. Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953.

Cazamian, Louis. A History of French Literature. London: Oxford University Press, 1960.

Davis, Herbert. Jonathan Swift, Essays on his Satire and Other Studies. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Eddy, William A. Gulliver's Travels. A Critical Study. New York: Russell and Russell, 1963.

Elliott, Robert C. The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960.

Feinberg, Leonard. The Satirist. His Temperament, Motivation, and Influence. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1963.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

--------. Fables of Identity. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963.

Greenacre, Phyllis. Swift and Carroll: A Psychoanalytic Study of Two Lives. New York: International Universities Press, 1955.

Harvey, Sir Paul, ed. The Oxford Companion to English Literature. 3rd ed. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1960.

Highet, Gilbert. The Classical Tradition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.

--------. "The Dunciad", Modern Language Review, XXXVI (July, 1941), 320-343.

Hooker, E. N. "Humour in the Age of Pope", Huntington Library Quarterly, XI (1948), 361-385.

Hughes, Leo. A Century of English Farce. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956.

Jack, Ian. Augustan Satire. Intention and Idiom in English Poetry 1660-1750. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961.

Jefferson, D. W. " 'Tristram Shandy' and its Tradition", in Boris Ford, ed., From Dryden to Johnson. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963.

Knox, E. V. The Mechanism of Satire. Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1951.

Lovejoy, Arthur O. Essays in the History of Ideas. New York: Putnam, 1960.

--------. The Great Chain of Being. New York: Harper, 1960.

Mack, Maynard. "The Muse of Satire", The Yale Review, XLI (1951), 80-92.

McLuhan, Marshall. The Gutenberg Galaxy. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964.

Quintana, Ricardo. " 'Situational Satire': a Commentary on the Method of Swift", University of Toronto Quarterly, XVII (1948), 130-136.

Rexroth, Kenneth. "The Satyricon", Saturday Review, June 5, 1965, p. 15.

Rose, Barbara. "The Primacy of Colour", Art International, VIII (May 1964), 22-26.

Rosenheim, E. [illegible], Jr. Swift and the Satirist's Art. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.

Sherburn, George. "The Dunciad, Book IV", Studies in English (Texas University), 1944, 174-190.

Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp' ", Partisan Review, XXXI (Fall, 1964), 515-530.

Sutherland, James. English Satire. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962.

Traugott, John. Tristram Shandy's World. Sterne's Philosophical Rhetoric. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954.

Van Ghent, Dorothy. The English Novel. Form and Function. New York: Harper, 1961.

Williams, Aubrey L. Pope's Dunciad. A Study of its Meaning. London: Methuen, 1955.

Williams, Harold. Dean Swift's Library. Cambridge: The University Press, 1932.

Worcester, David. The Art of Satire. New York: Russell and Russell, 1960.