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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

MENIPPEAN SATIRE AND THE POETICS OF WIT:  
CONVENTIONS OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN DUNTON AND STERNE

BY

GARRY H. SHERBERT

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and  
Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta  
Spring, 1992



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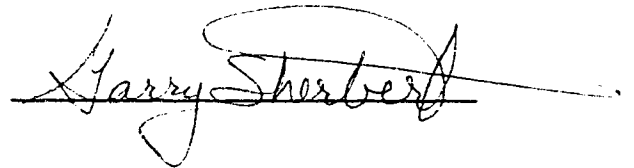
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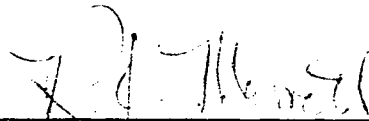
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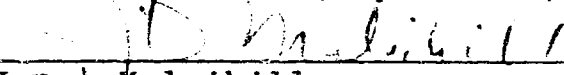
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled MENIPPEAN SATIRE AND THE POETICS OF WIT: CONVENTIONS OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN DUNTON AND STERNE submitted by GARRY H. SHERBERT in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.



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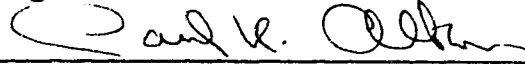
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February 18, 1992

DEDICATION

For Troni Grande

"tyed together by the striving tongues"

## ABSTRACT

The prose genre of Menippean satire attacks prevailing philosophical and literary decorum primarily through the ridicule of the philosophus gloriosus, or glorious philosopher. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, wit's prominence in learned circles transforms the gloriosus into the "learned wit." Ironically praising the "false" over the "true," the satirist uses wit to parody wit. Wit's wild lawlessness as a mental faculty, combined with its corresponding tendency to go beyond mimetic decorum as a rhetorical product, makes it an ideal weapon for satirists. Focussing on John Dunton's A Voyage Round the World (1691) and Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy (1759-1767), my argument demonstrates that Menippean satirists deliberately and self-consciously exploit wit to attack their intellectual targets. Indeed, where Dunton simply adapts the Baroque poetics of wit, inherited primarily from Thomas Hobbes, Sterne explicitly defends wit against John Locke and others by developing his own alternative poetics.

Dunton and Sterne's learned wits Don John Kainophilus and Tristram Shandy dramatize the paradox that, despite their self-consciousness, they cannot fulfill the Delphic command of self-knowledge. My study distinguishes two kinds of wit which symbolize the absence of self-control resulting from the gloriosus's failure to know himself: at

the narrative level, Kainophilus loses control of his self-conscious, digressive wit; at the linguistic level, Tristram loses control of his anti-mimetic, metaphorical wit. Although self-conscious digression recurs throughout the Menippean genre, my first chapter concentrates on narrative digression, or "rambling" wit, in Dunton's narrator, Kainophilus. The following three chapters examine three aspects of Sterne's metaphorical wit. Chapter 2 examines Sterne's defence of false wit and his parody, not only of Locke (significantly, the philosopher of self-consciousness), but also of the creative process. Chapter 3 looks at Sterne's visual conceits, especially devices like the marbled page, which remind readers that they are reading a material text. The fourth chapter recovers Sterne's moral theory of wit, or festive wit, as a defence against self-deception. The self-referentiality and antimimetic nature of digressive and metaphorical wit illustrate the existence of narrative and linguistic metafictional techniques before the twentieth century.

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A University of Alberta Dissertation Fellowship gave me a badly needed year of research time, and to those who deemed me worthy of the honour I give my heartfelt thanks. The English department's Sarah Nettie travel bursary also allowed me a day in the American National Library of Congress to read Cogan's John Buncle Jr. and the chance to deliver my findings the next day in a conference at Queen's University. These awards made me read Burton's account of the scholar's miseries in the Anatomy with a lighter heart.

If there is any merit in my thesis for eighteenth-century scholars, I owe it to the many conversations with my supervisor. With Professor Robert Merrett I learned the eighteenth-century ideal of conversation in its fullest sense. For Joseph Butler, conversation provides a sense of fellow-feeling; and, for Hume, conversation is a model for the learned because it is a source of aesthetic pleasure and ethical disinterestedness. Only by following Robert Merrett's example will I combine these ideal qualities and turn instruction to delight.

I would like to give special thanks to Miss James of Photographic Services at the Bodleian Library for her assistance. Her kindness spanned the great divide. James Mulvihill proved to be a fountain of information, particularly where Peacock and Hazlitt were concerned. My ~~enthusiasm~~ for the product/process dichotomy was heightened

by Paul Hjartarson's Canadian Literature class.

Writing the thesis, however, turned out at times to be an intensely isolating experience. Troni Grande saved me from making the thesis a prison-house of language. David Gay and Anne Smith gave the gift of their conviviality. Encouragement from fellow deipnosophists like Don and Eva Perkins, Deb Wills, and Teya Rosenberg, kept me going and spurred my wit. The love of my family silenced my doubts and, gathered with the imaginary society of friends in Ontario--Brad and Nancy Lockwood; Marion Fischer; and Irene Cottee, my kindred spirit--communed with me in the intelligible world.

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## Introduction

Correct my error with thy pen  
 And if any ask me then  
 What thing right Wit and height of genius is,  
 I'll only show your lines, and say, 'Tis this.  
 (Cowley, "Ode: Of Wit")

The historical relationship between Menippean satire and a poetics of wit is best described, in D. W. Jefferson's phrase, as a "tradition of learned wit." Although he never names the genre, Jefferson shows that the tradition of learned wit, Sterne's tradition for Tristram Shandy (1759-1767), belongs to Menippean satire. The Menippean genre, a kind of intellectual prose satire, parodies prevailing forms of learned discourse. Not surprisingly, the Menippean tradition of learned wit from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century reflects wit's prominence in learned circles. For Jefferson, learned wit merely parodies the mental habits of disciplines such as law, medicine, and medieval scholasticism. But when the conventions of wit themselves become orthodox, the Menippean satirist turns learned wit against itself. To launch their attack, Menippean satirists adapt the ridicule of the philosophus gloriosus, or boasting philosopher (a constant theme in the genre, as Northrop Frye tells us



[Anatomy 309]), to the contemporary doctrine of wit. The glorious philosopher exposes learned wit through those aspects of wit that break with philosophical and literary decorum. Since the norms in satire are often implicit, the critic must recover the historical traditions of learned wit to appreciate the Menippist's satiric anatomy.

Jefferson forges the link, albeit unwittingly, between Menippean satire and learned wit through Sterne. Based on Jefferson's work, Roberta Tovey's thesis Learned Wit in the Novel (1984) charts the tradition of learned wit from Sterne through Peacock, Carroll, and Joyce to Nabokov. And, while Jefferson and Tovey both demonstrate that the techniques of Sterne's satiric wit resemble other Menippists like Francois Rabelais and Jonathan Swift, they fail to consider learned wit as an object of attack. For instance, one of the principal targets of Sterne's satire, Obadiah Walker's Of Education (1673), translates into English two Italian writers who develop an elaborate poetics of wit. In chapter 11 of his book, borrowing from Emanuele Tesauro's Il Cannochiale Aristotelico (1654) and Matteo Pelligrini's I fonti dell'ingegno ridotti ad arte (1650), Walker equates wit with rhetorical invention, the ability to discover and amplify a given subject. Wit, however, is carried to excess when Walker, following Tesauro, supplies the reader with a language machine that generates an endless number of commonplaces. Walker's work

plays an essential role in Sterne's parody not only of Walter Shandy's magniloquence, but also of the tradition of learned wit.

Learned wit's excesses attract the Menippean satirist because they thwart the obsessive, idealistic pursuit of order in the philosopher and of formal perfection in the artist. But, ironically, wit's rise to prominence as a dominant concept in literary and cultural history during the seventeenth century coincides with wit's connection to satire. In fact, Obadiah Walker nearly identifies wit with satire. For Walker, "Wit is the mother of facetiousness, conceits, jests, raillery, satiricalness (which is almost synonymum to wit), drollery, quick reparties, quaint metaphors, and the like in conversation" (133).<sup>1</sup> The eighteenth-century critic Samuel Johnson, in The Rambler no. 22, gives a similar genealogy of satire's psychological origins, saying that "Wit, cohabiting with Malice, had a son named Satyr" (123). Wit, in other words, is intrinsic to the satiric attitude.<sup>2</sup> The Menippean satirist, then, objects not to wit but rather to wit promoted in philosophical and aesthetic systems as a concept which explains human psychology or the whole of literary experience. For example, Dryden's definition of wit as "a propriety of thoughts and words" (Ker 1: 190) might meet resistance from satirists who see such definitions as oversimplifications. Reflecting a moral tradition in his Lives

of the Poets, Johnson observes with approval that Abraham Cowley's "Ode: Of Wit" (1656) "condemns exuberance of wit" (Lives 1: 130) for, among other things, producing far-fetched metaphors. Menippean satire, however, attacks moral or aesthetic constraints by praising and, indeed, practising the improper and exuberant forms of wit that the learned deem as false.

For a critic in the Menippean genre, learned wit's significance stems primarily from the historical content it gives to the figure of the philosophus gloriosus.

Documenting the various gloriosi's participation in academic debates over wit further substantiates Eugene Kirk's claim in his monumental genre study, Menippean Satire (1980), that "the historical courses of Menippean satire reflect tellingly what the major currents of intellectual and theological controversy have been, since antiquity" (x). And, while it is true the philosophical and rhetorical traditions of wit manifest in the philosophus gloriosus show that "a genre's mutations are strongly shaped by non-literary history" (Kirk, Menippean Satire ix), wit also has a long literary history.

The Renaissance stylistic movement known as euphuism, initiated by John Lyly's Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit (1578), marks the early arrival of wit as an aesthetic concept in England. Lyly's work reveals the close relation between wit and rhetoric in the Renaissance, a relation

Jefferson excludes from the tradition of learned wit. But, as W. G. Crane demonstrates in his book Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance (1964), rhetorical treatises represent the central tradition of wit in Renaissance England. In the late seventeenth century or Baroque era, some rhetorical treatises develop a poetic where wit represents the creative process itself. Contemporary poetic movements of wit on the Continent even find defenders in these rhetorical treatises. For example, the critic Tesauro, already mentioned, praises the conceited style of Italian marinism, and Baltasar Gracian in his Agudeza y arte de ingenio (1642) praises the parallel movement of Spanish gongorism. Although there are no equivalent admirers of the English poetic movement that Dryden and Johnson disparagingly call the "metaphysical," wit also names the creative process in England. Still revealing a debt to the rhetorical tradition, philosophical investigations of wit as a mental faculty by the empiricists Thomas Hobbes in Leviathan (1651) and John Locke in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) establish wit as the reigning aesthetic concept in the Baroque and Augustan eras.

The tendency in Menippean satire to parody learned wit through wit, however, gives evidence of more than just an author's negative relation to his "cultural surround" (Kirk, Menippean Satire ix). A witty parody of wit also creates a highly self-conscious discourse. Indeed, I will

argue that self-conscious discourse--or, in Bakhtin's phrase, "double-voiced discourse" (Dialogic Imagination 324)--is a feature that must be added to the conventions of Menippean satire. An increase in the frequency and intensity of this self-conscious "inward turn of narrative" after the Renaissance has been attributed to historical events such as print culture, which individualizes its readers, or the rise of empiricism, which separates the scientific subject from its object.<sup>3</sup> However, no study I am aware of explores, within literary history, the self-conscious rhetoric Menippean satire has displayed since its inception, let alone during wit's dominance as a poetic.

To focus my study, I will examine the way wit affects the self-consciousness of two Menippean satires from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. First, John Dunton's A Voyage Round the World (1691) exemplifies the Baroque poetics of wit and exhibits what is for his time an unparalleled level of self-consciousness. Known mostly to twentieth-century historians of the book-trade, Dunton has received scant attention as a literary artist. Although critics have noticed his influence on the great Menippean satirists Swift and Sterne,<sup>4</sup> I will emphasize Dunton's Menippean identity rather than his status as a possible source for Sterne. Sterne's Tristram Shandy merits extended treatment because it attempts to revive wit during its decline in the eighteenth century. Few critics,

however, see Sterne as a Menippean satirist. Most critics recognize the importance of self-consciousness in Sterne, but even fine scholars like John Traugott do not explore the implications for self-conscious technique of his own statement that "Sterne did not want the reader to forget that he was in the presence of a wit" (Tristram Shandy's World 67). Tristram Shandy, in fact, develops an entire poetics of wit that links him with a tradition of classical origins. Although he lacks the depth of Sterne's theoretical interest in wit, Dunton, through his parody of Hobbesian decorum, forms an important link in the Menippean tradition of learned wit.

My introduction to Menippean satire involves four steps, the first of which examines the validity of the major critical statements made on the genre in the twentieth century by Northrop Frye, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Eugene Kirk. An historical outline of the theme of self-consciousness in the genre follows the critical statements, in order to provide a generic context for self-conscious conventions in Dunton and Sterne. I then sketch wit's history with special stress on the formal devices of wit relevant to self-conscious writing, including various kinds of metaphor and narrative digression. Finally, my introduction briefly considers a satire whose Menippean lineage has been questioned, namely Delariviere Manley's New Atlantis (1709). Manley's work, by raising the

question of the "female wit's" social status, also advances our understanding of wit's cultural significance.

### I. Critical Statements on the Genre

One of the great failures in genre criticism is Samuel Johnson's comment regarding Tristram Shandy that "Nothing odd will do long" (Alan Howes, Sterne 219). Victor Shklovsky in his 1921 essay, despite taking a different position than Johnson, errs by measuring Sterne against the wrong generic conventions when he calls Tristram Shandy the "most typical novel in world literature" (57). It would have been more accurate to call Sterne's text the most typical Menippean satire in world literature. Insofar as Sterne "defamiliarizes" the conventions of the autobiographical novel, Shklovsky's analysis contributes to our understanding of Sterne's parodic technique. But the purpose of Sterne's text exceeds parody or its "anti-novel" status and includes other conventions which can be positively identified as consistent with Menippean satire. Any critic who examines Sterne in terms of the conventions he chose becomes immediately aware of the benefits by discovering a whole genre of satire which parodies prevailing literary decorum. More significantly, the feature of self-consciousness which so many critics have said marks Sterne's text also becomes recognizable as a convention of Menippean satire.

Mikhail Bakhtin in his book Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (trans. 1973) calls Menippean satire the self-conscious genre. As Bakhtin states, "The dialogical attitude of man to himself (containing the seeds of the split personality) which appears in the menippea also contributes to the destruction of his integrity and finalizedness" (96). Bakhtin's comment, while it mainly concerns the method of characterization, clearly relates to the self-conscious rhetoric in Menippean satire. Kirk's extensive historical research supports Bakhtin's claim when he identifies digression as a Menippean convention in his article "Tristram Shandy, Digression, and the Menippean Tradition." Menippean digression often leads to a pointless yet self-conscious narrative mise en abyme, such as in Swift's Tale of a Tub (1704), where the narrator writes a digression in praise of a digression or refers to such narrative enclosures as a "Nest of Boxes" (124). Kirk states that one of his aims in his article on digression is to give "more extensive historical validity for Frye's insight on Menippean digressing" (Korkowski, "Tristram" 4). Frye argues that a "deliberate rambling digressiveness . . . is endemic in the narrative technique of satire" and that an extraordinary number of great satires are fragmentary, unfinished or anonymous, with "a good many devices turning on the difficulty of communication" (Anatomy 234). The "family resemblances" amongst the genre



critics themselves demonstrate their agreement that the infinite regress of self-conscious digression in Menippean satire destroys its integrity and formal closure.

Despite the points of agreement amongst critics, certain aspects of Bakhtin's approach to Menippean satire confuse the genre with the novel. As Craig Howes says, by "tracing polyphony's destined progress through history toward its aesthetic culmination in the novel . . . Bakhtin . . . relegates satire, Menippean or otherwise, to the status of abortive or heralding genre" ("Rhetorics" 217). Bakhtin's novel-centred view of prose fiction contradicts his "sociological poetics" because he neglects Menippean satire's socially subversive, or carnivalesque, features surviving the novel's ascendancy. Tristram Shandy, on the other hand, shows the successful merging of the novel with Menippean satire. Sterne manages to subvert the eighteenth-century canon of novelistic probability, taunt his audience's sexual mores with a kaleidoscope of sexual themes, and snare their consciences with double entendres. As flexible as the novel genre appears to be, its "realistic imagination," in George Levine's phrase, represents a form of monologism alien to Menippean works like Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland or Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels.

Another difficulty with Bakhtin's "historical poetics" (86) lies in the concept of "carnival." Genres, for

Bakhtin, reflect social realities, and Menippean satire has roots that "reach directly back into carnivalistic folklore" (92). But Bakhtin idealizes the carnival and renders it an impotent and purely ceremonial activity. As one critic has recently pointed out, "carnivals often 'ended in violence that proved devastating both to the innocent victims and to the community as a whole'" (Michael Bernstein, qtd. in Cobley 334). Far from representing the "jolly relativity" that Bakhtin ascribes to it (102), carnival activity in England, such as "mumming" or masquerading, was prohibited because it was "used to cloak sedition: partisans of Richard II tried to seize Henry IV on Twelfth Night in 1400; in 1414 Sir John Oldcastle and his Lollards were accused of cloaking sedition in a mumming" (Withington 104). Bakhtin's generic notion of carnival depends on a faulty correspondence between genre and social reality that leaves precious little hope for achieving the carnivalesque in any genre. Perhaps the best chance for the carnivalesque rests on the genre of satura itself and the "parody of form" which Frye says runs through the entire genre (Anatomy 233). For, as Frye tells us, Menippean satire "shows literature assuming a special function of analysis, of breaking up the lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitious terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement (not

necessarily, of course, the progress) of society" (Anatomy 233).

Alastair Fowler's Kinds of Literature (1982) remains the most detailed analysis of Frye's description of Menippean satire. Fowler, regrettably, overlooks Kirk's annotated catalogue. Had Fowler seen this impressive catalogue, he may not have asserted so unequivocally that Frye's description of Menippean satire "is too lacking in unitary force to be of lasting value without qualification" (119). Fowler objects to Frye renaming Menippean satire as the "anatomy" genre in order to include all intellectual forms of prose fiction and non-fiction. In Fowler's view, "So many forms are united in the 'anatomy' that it threatens to prove a baggier monster than the novel" (1990); and yet Fowler's definition of the novel swallows all three forms of prose fiction that Frye distinguishes from the novel--the romance, anatomy, and confession genres. Fowler states, "We probably do best to retain the broader concept 'novel.' It is too deeply in the grain of criticism to be removed without endangering continuity" (120). With such an all-encompassing generic concept of the novel, Fowler's sense of continuity seems in little danger.

Many of Fowler's arguments against Frye's genre description are answered in Kirk's historical catalogue. But when, for example, Fowler states that "Burton's Anatomy

really has little to do formally with Walton's or Plato's dialogues" (1990), no historical knowledge of the genre is needed to correct him. Walton's Compleat Angler and Plato's dialogues both share the symposium format.

However, like Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, Walton's work mixes prose and verse and "anatomizes" a single theme--in this case, fishing. Thus, although Fowler believes that Wittgenstein's "Family resemblance theory seems to hold out the best hope to the genre critic" (42), his review of Frye's sketch of Menippean satire shows little acquaintance with its family resemblances. For critics already working in Menippean satire, perhaps what holds out the best hope is greater empirical knowledge of the field.

That Kirk's extensive historical research in Menippean satire does not offer anything substantially different from Frye's 1942 essay "The Anatomy in Prose Fiction" attests to the "heuristic value" of Frye's typology of prose genres (Fowler 119). In his article "Donne's Ignatius and Menippean Satire," Kirk states that Frye's account of the Menippean genre "sketches a hypothetical Menippean 'temperament' more than the descent of Menippean codices and their imitations" (421). I would add, however, that Frye's rendering of the Menippean temperament stands as the most reliable and useful heuristic description to date. Kirk's weakness as a critic in the genre arises from his reluctance to discuss the family resemblances between

different Menippean subgenres like the Utopian satire. Kirk never discusses whether Utopian satires, like George Orwell's 1984, are Menippean or not, even though Kirk includes Thomas More's Utopia and other Utopian fictions in his historical survey. Frye, by contrast, clearly states that Menippean satire presents a "serious vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern, in other words a Utopia" (Anatomy 310). The implications of Frye's statement are enormous not only for the Victorian period, when Utopian fiction increased dramatically, but for the twentieth-century genres of fantasy and science fiction as well.

Kirk's catalogue of Menippean satire, combined with Frye's hypothetical sketch of the Menippean temperament, provides a solid foundation for any genre critic working in the field. Reliance on Bakhtin's account, as Anne Payne's Chaucer and Menippean Satire (1981) indicates, leads to serious confusion. While Bakhtin's concept of carnival can be generalized to fit any genre, the presence of polyphony, or the "jolly reflexivity" of class interaction, in Chaucer does not make the Canterbury Tales a Menippean satire. Bakhtin's description of the "menippea" is far too vague at points, and Payne's application stretches the genre beyond recognition, as when she dares to call Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and Shakespeare's Hamlet "Menippean tragedies" (12). Compared with Bakhtin's treatment, Frye's

synchronic approach proves to be based more soundly on historical knowledge than it first appears.

The Anatomy of Criticism owes its title, Frye says, to the "special affection" he has for the prose genre he identifies by that name. His conception of the anatomy differs from Menippean satire by expanding Menippean intellectual exuberance to include prose writings that are inconsistent with satiric attack. But before we develop the importance of the anatomy to Frye's criticism, we must first define Menippean satire. According to Frye, Menippean satire is a fictional genre that "deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes. Pedants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosi, enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds, are handled in terms of their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behaviour" (Anatomy 309). The last distinction between occupation and social behaviour helps separate the Menippean genre from the novel and, more importantly, from the picaresque subgenre. Fowler avers that Frye's scheme of prose genres "finds no place for such distinctive forms as picaresque, which is clearly not 'central novel,' but is not always very easy to construe as confession, romance, or anatomy either" (119-20). Yet Frye states that Menippean satire's free play of intellectual fancy "differs . . . from the picaresque form, which has the novel's interest in the actual structure of society"

(Anatomy 310). Like the novel, a picaresque satire dissolves all "theory into personal relationships" (Anatomy 308), whereas the Menippean intellectual form of satire freely ignores such novelistic constraints.

In a recent publication of Eighteenth-Century Studies, Frye returns to the question of the anatomy genre and clarifies its relationship to Menippean satire. The anatomy genre includes intellectual prose satire, but, for Frye, it "also includes other fiction that expresses itself through information and ideas rather than through study or plot" ("Varieties" 157). The anatomy, then, comprehends encyclopaedic farragos such as Athenaeus's Deipnosophists, and works often referred to as "bad" novels, such as Thomas Carlyle's Sartor Resartus (1833), Johnson's Rasselas (1759), and William Blake's Island in the Moon (1784). The anatomy covers a greater area of literature than Menippean satire; nevertheless, it does not represent a progressive development from its Menippean origins.

Like any other anatomy or Menippean satire, Frye's Anatomy presents us with a "vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern" (Anatomy 310). The anatomy genre, however, also assumes the special function of analysis. Frye's anatomy can build literature into an autonomous order of words reflecting the cultural goals of civilization, but the anatomist's disintegrating approach to form, revealed in disruptive chapter divisions,

sections, and digressions, betrays a mistrust of order. Fully aware of the paradox (or what some in stronger terms might call "aporia") within his genre, Frye, like all good ironists, allows readers to solve the riddle of his critical method themselves.

The studies by Robert Denham and A. C. Hamilton on Frye's critical method offer a clue to the significance of the genre in relation to his critical position. According to Frye, Menippean satire "is the only kind of art that defends its own creative detachment" (Anatomy 231). When, for instance, an intellectual system threatens to establish a hierarchy in the arts, "or censor and expurgate as Plato wished to do to Homer," Frye suggests Menippean satire, "art's first line of defence against all such invasions," attacks that system and its social effects (Anatomy 231). Furthermore, in a phrase which seems to contradict the very order of words his Anatomy represents, Frye says Menippean satire shows us that "no one system can contain the arts as they stand" (231). A. C. Hamilton helps us reconcile the contradictory aspects of the anatomy genre by asserting that there is an absence at the centre of Frye's order of words, "not any presence that authenticates his criticism" (206). Frye's anatomy of criticism for Hamilton "resists any closure" because the literary critic's goal is unattainable (206). As evidence, Hamilton quotes Frye's The Critical Path, which states that the critic can



envision but not reach the Promised Land, "the world of the definitive experience that poetry urges us to have but which we never quite get" (170-71; Hamilton 206). The implication of Hamilton's argument makes Frye, like Faust, appear caught in a ceaseless dialectic between the desire to enclose literature within his system and the ironic knowledge that he must fail. No disparagement is intended, but Frye's critical dilemma agrees with the anatomy genre and the dilemma of its central character, the philosophus gloriosus.

If explicitly comparing Frye to a philosophus gloriosus goes beyond critical decorum, placing Frye in the tradition of learned wit does not. Hamilton analyzes the Anatomy's dialectical method and, like Robert Denham, finds Frye relying heavily on analogy (Hamilton 207; Denham 215). In fact, Hamilton and Denham praise Frye's wit in discovering surprising analogies between seemingly dissimilar literary works and literary conventions. But Meyer Abrams is the first to comment extensively on Frye's witty method:

When we are shown that the circumstances of Pope's giddy and glittering Augustan belle have something in common with the ritual assault on a nature goddess, that Henry James's most elaborate and sophisticated social novels share attributes with barbaric folk tales, and that ritual expulsion of the pharmakos, or

scapegoat, is manifested alike in Plato's Apology, in The Mikado, and in the treatment of an umpire in a baseball game, we feel that shock of delighted surprise which is the effect and index of wit. Such criticism is animating; though only so, it should be added, when conducted with Frye's special brio, and when it manifests a mind which, like his, is deft, resourceful, and richly stored. An intuitive perception of similars in dissimilars, Aristotle noted, is a sign of genius and cannot be learned from others. Wit-criticism, like poetic wit, is dangerous, because to fall short of the highest is to fail dismally, and to succeed, it must be managed by a Truewit and not by a Witwoud.

(Abrams 196; qtd. in Denham 229)

Denham rightly questions the logical force of arguing by analogy and points to the arbitrariness of Frye's method (Denham 217). But the "study of genres is based on analogies of form" (Anatomy 95), and, since Frye tells us that the anatomy is a "systematic study of the formal causes of art" (Anatomy 29), analogy is a justifiable aesthetic method.

Critical reaction to Frye's "wit-criticism" and his choice of genre points to the close association of Menippean satire and the poetics of wit. Frye's Anatomy, alongside Sigmund Freud's study of wit and the unconscious

and T. S. Eliot's essays on metaphysical wit, numbers among the authoritative works on wit in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Frye alone locates wit's relationship to literature in general and satire in particular. Frye's theoretical statements and his stylistic practice establish the affinities between wit and the Menippean genre, but he does not discuss the historical impact that an entire poetics of wit has on intellectual satire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Traditionally associated with the intellect rather than with the emotions, seventeenth-century theories of wit supply the cultural environment of aesthetic detachment, giving rise to an unprecedented number of intellectual satires. Critics like Thomas Hobbes, Joseph Addison, and Frances Hutcheson define wit as the conscious perception of incongruity, a definition indicating that wit is well suited to the self-conscious rhetoric of the Menippist, whose "erudition is curious and eccentric . . . bringing out the element of play in collecting information" (Frye, "Varieties" 158). The next section gives a brief historical synopsis of self-consciousness as a theme in Menippean satire. The anatomy of wit which follows discusses narrative digression and conceited metaphors as the common formal devices of self-conscious writing by Menippean satirists.

## II. Menippean Satire: Narcissus Alter

The philosopher's inability to fulfill the Delphic maxim of self-knowledge, despite his self-consciousness, constitutes a central theme in Menippean satire. The satirist ridicules the boasting philosopher, or what Northrop Frye calls the philosophus gloriosus, by simply allowing him to display his knowledge and thereby expose it as impractical and even dangerous (AC 311). The philosopher's absorption in his own quixotic systems blinds him to the proper use of his talents. Without a proper estimate of his own abilities, or decorum speciale, as Cicero names it in De Officiis, the philosopher, through pride, forces his ideas on others.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Love Peacock, in his Romantic Menippean satire Headlong Hall (1816), sums up the mental habit of the glorious philosopher on his title-page, with a motto from Petronius:

All philosophers, who find  
Some favourite system to their mind,  
In every point to make it fit,  
Will force all nature to submit.

The satirist's pragmatism measures the ethical strength of the philosopher's system against the variety of nature to expose its limitations. Far from creating utopian benefits for society, any single philosopher's intellectual system, should it become a social program, augurs a tyranny similar

to Socrates' Republic and Orwell's 1984.

Invoking the Delphic oracle in Menippean satire traditionally signifies the need to strip a deluded individual of his mask, which in the philosopher's case means his pride in his system of ideas. Since only fragments of Varro's Menippean satires are extant, the occurrence of the Greek phrase Gnothi seauton (or "know thyself") as a title reveals little about his satiric technique. Varro, nevertheless, initiates the Menippean parody of the philosopher's quest for wisdom in self-knowledge. Lucian, perhaps the most influential Menippean satirist, frequently makes Menippus himself a character in his works. In his "Dialogues of the Dead," for instance, Lucian has Menippus mix in a chorus of Gnothi seautons with the complaints of other illustrious figures in Hades. Unlike the other departed souls who hanker to return to their fame and fortune, Menippus, true to his Cynical philosophy, remains content in death, as in life, with nothing but his independence. Because Menippean satirists stress the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of self-knowledge, the appearance of the Delphic injunction is inevitably ironic. When a religious fanatic compares the Delphic phrase to papal decretals, Rabelais exposes the absurdity of the Pope's canonical laws in Book Four of Gargantua and Pantagruel (1534-1551). John Dunton, the Grub Street writer whose fictional autobiography A Voyage

Round the World: Or a Pocket Library (1691) we will examine in greater detail, defends his obsessively self-conscious, fictional autobiography with the Delphic injunction.

A less explicit but important variant of the Delphic maxim in Menippean satire lies in Ovid's story of Narcissus in the Metamorphoses. Narcissus may live to mature old age, but Tiresias, the prophet, cautions only, "'If he does not know himself'" (iii.343). The tragic fate of Narcissus parodies the Delphic maxim because he acquires the wrong kind of self-knowledge. Narcissus, then, serves as an archetype for the philosophus gloriosus who, rather than discovering wisdom, finds self-love. Thomas Durfey puts the Narcissus myth to satiric use in his fine Menippean satire An Essay Towards the Theory of the Intelligible World (1707). Durfey's philosophus gloriosus is John Norris, the Cambridge Platonist known for his work An Essay Towards the Theory of the Ideal of Intelligible World (1701-1704). Durfey's narrator Gabriel John, a follower of Norris, at one point in the satire identifies himself with Narcissus. A strange irony develops, however, as Gabriel follows the logic of Norris's theory that the metaphysical, the invisible, but ideal, reality is the true reality. Gabriel's Platonic theory renders his physical existence an illusion. In terms of Ovid's narrative, Gabriel becomes in effect the illusory reflection Narcissus sees in the pool of water, the water in which Narcissus drowns.

Durfey's characterization of his narcissistic philosopher, Gabriel John, illustrates the self-consciousness of Menippean satire by making him a figure for the fictional illusion itself. Gabriel's function as a trope of the fictional process is most conspicuous when his visions end suddenly and Gabriel relapses "into the Sensible World" (Durfey 198). The vision vanishes because Gabriel's eyes, closed during his visions, burst open in a moment of ecstatic rapture. Gabriel's rapture springs from contemplating an ideal vision of himself, for

as 'tis sung of the former Narcissus, that his  
Idea in the Water, as cruel as he found it, never  
 refused to smile, when it saw that he smiled in  
 Return; I on the other side, Narcissus alter,  
 could not chuse but rejoyce to see my Idea so  
 joyful

(Durfey 198).

Back in the physical environment of his Grub Street garret, Gabriel invites the reader, as disappointed as he, to share a "Paper-Diet" with him (Durfey 199). He offers to furnish the reader with the "Paper-Diet" in the subsequent pages "at reasonable Rates with all sorts of Ballads, Madrigals, Anagrams, Acrosticks, and Heroick Poems, either by whole Sale, or by Retail" (Durfey 199). By sharing his "Paper-Diet" and his visions, Gabriel identifies with his reader and converts that reader into another Narcissus alter. Gabriel's metaphysical adventures allegorize the reader's

adventures.

Durfey's work is also helpful for introducing the historical relationship between wit and self-consciousness before the time of John Locke, the philosopher who coined the noun "self-consciousness."<sup>6</sup> Although his work appears well after Locke's revolutionary Essay, Durfey attacks the followers of the pre-eminent philosopher of self-consciousness, Plotinus. Plotinus's work The Enneads deeply influenced not only Cambridge Platonists like Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, and John Norris, but also Romantic writers like Samuel Coleridge.<sup>7</sup> Menippean satirists customarily ridicule Platonic idealism "from within" by allowing the playful ambiguities and paradoxes of wit in the philosopher's own words to "deconstruct" or lay bare the contradictions of his theoretical system. Durfey also portrays his philosophus gloriosus besieged by critics and satirists. Significantly, Gabriel refers to his opposition as "Little wits":

'Tis certain, that a pleasant Vein of Raillery  
may sport it self with the noblest Composition,  
and make the most sublime Truths a Subject of  
Laughter; and there are a Crew of Little Wits,  
the very Pest of a Common-wealth, that will be  
nibbling at every thing that's great.

(Durfey 210)

John Hoyles, in his short but excellent analysis of



Durfey's work, correctly observes that this passage recalls the "controversy over the merits of witty raillery" against pious enthusiasm or religious visionaries (90). Although Shaftesbury does not support the brand of Swift's railing wit, Hoyles rightly names these two figures as opponents of enthusiastic idealism.<sup>8</sup>

### III. Anatomy of Wit: The Digressive and the Metaphorical

Menippean satire attacks learned discourse more than any other target. When the mouthpiece of the learned discourse is self-conscious, the satirist can bring in an element of self-parody by emphasizing an inner division or sense of alienation. We can attribute the psychological fragmentation of the philosophus gloriosus, as a character or narrating persona, to the Menippean satirist's interest in "conflicts of ideas, with all the paradoxes, associated metaphors, and demonstrations of the half-truths of argument that go with such conflicts" (Frye, "Varieties" 158).<sup>9</sup> When we add, as Frye does in the recent essay just quoted, that the Menippist approaches his materials playfully, the significance of wit in this genre of satire comes into focus. Wit in fact serves as an important index of self-consciousness in Menippean satire and its central character the glorious philosopher. The kinds of self-conscious wit most commonly used in the genre are narrative digression and some form of literal symbol (such

as the pun), or paradoxical metaphor (such as the conceit).<sup>10</sup> All these examples of the obsessed philosopher's rhetorical wit call attention to their situation in discourse; that is, they show themselves to be literally verbal devices in a book of prose fiction.

To dramatize the sense of alienation within a self-conscious narrating persona, the Menippean satirist shows the philosophus gloriosus struggling to control his digressive habit. Kirk has traced the digressing convention from Lucian to Sterne, but his observations on Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (1621) will provide a typical example. Indeed, Kirk contradicts himself when he criticizes Frye for renaming the Menippean genre the "anatomy" and yet says that Burton had "almost a caretaker's interest in the genre" ("Genre" 84).<sup>11</sup> Burton is typical, however, in more than his digressiveness, for he checks his wandering discourse, as Kirk states, "with an obsessive self-consciousness that typifies the Menippean voice" ("Genre" 82). Kirk then gives the following passage from Burton, who writes the Anatomy under the fictional persona Democritus, the laughing philosopher:

I have overshot myself, I have spoken foolishly, rashly, unadvisedly, absurdly, I have anatomized mine own folly. And now, methinks, upon a sudden I am awaked as it were out of a dream, I have had a raving fit, a phantastical fit, ranged up and

down, in and out. . . . (Burton 1: 140)

The narrator's sense of having awakened from a dream aptly illustrates the reader's analogous feeling of having been awakened from the illusion of representation by a self-conscious digression. The self-referentiality of Burton's discourse gives both narrator and reader a returning feeling of conscious control over the text, ironically as the narrator's repetitive style again signals loss of rational control.

No modern critic, however, has directly associated the digressive habit with wit. Since in some contexts wit is virtually synonymous with the faculty of fancy and imagination, critics have been content to overlook its role, in spite of its enormous importance for aesthetics from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Hobbes, for example, identifies a "Good Wit" with a "Good Fancy," but without judgment, he cautions,

a great Fancy is one kind of Madnesse; such as they have, that entering into any discourse, are snatched from their purpose, by every thing that comes in their thought, into so many, and so long digressions, and parentheses, that they utterly lose themselves. (Leviathan 57-58)

Even though a digressive wit or fancy signifies madness, Hobbes makes it clear that "In a good Poem . . . both Judgement and Fancy are required: But the Fancy must be

more eminent" (Leviathan 58). The poet's reputation for madness stems from the absence of any certain standard for measuring when a work of art shows too much wit. Dryden's epigram in Absalom and Achitophel (1681) that "Great wits are sure to madness near alli'd, / And thin partitions do their bounds divide" (ll. 163-64) expresses the difficulty of establishing standards for creativity. Driven to display his vast erudition, the philosophus gloriosus further undermines rational decorum by defending his madness as a sign of his great wit.

The strongest objections raised against wit, including charges of immorality, relate to wit's tendency to go beyond mimetic decorum. Dryden echoes a conventional distrust of wit's imaginative excesses, saying that the "imagination in a poet is a faculty so wild and lawless, that like an high-ranging spaniel it must have clogs tied to it, lest it outrun the judgment" (Ker 1: 8). However, Dryden uses the metaphor of the "high-ranging spaniel" again in his "Preface to Annus Mirabilis" (1667), where he asserts, "The composition of all poems is, or ought to be, of wit" (Ker 1: 14). Apparently, more confident about the aesthetic function of wit, Dryden turns to the ranging spaniel because it has acquired status as the emblem of wit.

Burton testifies to the importance of wit for a Menippean satirist by making it the faculty which gives

rise to his encyclopedic treatment of melancholy. To convey the nature of his digressive habits, Burton has recourse to the emblem of wit. Burton speaks of his "running wit," and his "roving humour" which "like a ranging spaniel . . . barks at every bird he sees, leaving his game" (Anatomy 1: 14). Another text related to the Menippean genre, John Lyly's Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit (1578), puts the phrase in the mouth of a female wit, Lucilla. Throwing aside her narcissistic lover Philautus for the more witty hero, Euphues, Lucilla defends her fickle love with the emblematic phrase. Employing the sophistic reasoning proper to a character defined solely by wit, Lucilla argues that it is not her "desire but his deserts" that justifies her change of heart (Euphues 40). Her behaviour, she feels, is natural under the circumstances, for a bee will choose a flower over a weed to gather honey, and "the kind spaniel though he hunt after birds yet he forsakes them to retrieve the partridge" (Euphues 41). Lyly's allegory shows that wit is "wild and lawless," since Lucilla's fancy for Euphues has outrun her judgment. Without judgment, wit lacks discretion and breaks with all forms of decorum. Euphues' wit has "turned her head," as wit turns the head of the philosophus gloriosus to exhaust every aspect of his subject, no matter how many digressions it takes.

Self-conscious digression reflects the intellectual

approach to form that led Northrop Frye to rename Menippean satire the anatomy genre (AC 311). This intellectual approach comprehends the intellectual exuberance that Frye proposes is also characteristic of philosophus gloriosi who crush themselves under an "avalanche of their own jargon" (AC 311). But just as the "wild and lawless" wit produces a digressive style, wit also produces the intellectual exuberance in Menippean satire. W. G. Crane in his excellent book Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance states that "Both in classical times and in the Renaissance copiousness and ornateness were associated with wit" (4). The copia of the philosophus gloriosus, however, concerns trivial things of no use and therefore does not win the reader's concern morally or emotionally. Frye's remark that the "element of play" in Menippean satire comes from its "curious and eccentric" erudition ("Varieties" 158) suggests the superficial, and often ironic, connection between the ideas assembled by wit. In terms of a metaphorical comparison, wit, as Joseph Addison in 1711 defines it, consists in discovering a resemblance of ideas that do not "lie too near one another in the Nature of things" or in order that the metaphor give "Delight and Surprize to the Reader" (Spectator 264). The surprising but delightful turns of digression then enact at a narrative level what the surprising tropes or metaphorical turns enact at the linguistic level. The mad philosopher's

"wild and lawless" wit ranges like a spaniel to assemble things that do not lie "too near one another in the Nature of things," creating a grotesque system which stands like an aborted conceit, or to quote Pope, like "One glaring Chaos and wild Heap of Wit" (Essay on Criticism 272).

One of the most eccentric, but lesser known, collections of information is a digression on seashells that appears in Thomas Amory's The Life and Opinions of John Buncle, Esquire (1756). Buncle digresses for three pages at the outset of this fictional autobiography to catalogue seashells in the grotto of one of his future wives, Harriet Noel. Buncle's practice of collecting information on seashells is matched only by his practice of collecting wives. Although the idea of collecting seashells does not "lie too near" the idea of collecting wives in the "Nature of things," Amory's playful treatment of Buncle, his theologus gloriosus, connects the ideas through Unitarianism, a form of eighteenth-century Deism. Collecting seashells and wives is, according to the rational Christian, justified by the natural revelation of God in the "Book of nature."

Hazlitt calls John Buncle a "Unitarian Romance" (Works 4: 52). But after we find each of Buncle's wives dies within two pages of marrying, we feel Hazlitt is much closer when he refers to the text as the "English Rabelais" (Works 4: 51). Amory, a Unitarian, advocates a Menippean

satirist's version of polygamy which the Christian Deist and others were proposing more seriously. For instance, David Hume's essay "Of Polygamy and Divorce" defends the practice as consistent with natural law and the Old Testament patriarchs, both familiar as Deistic arguments.<sup>13</sup> Amory's narrator, like the two Menippean satirists who concern us most, Dunton and Sterne, exhibits a self-conscious regard for his autobiography's fictionality. For example, like Dunton and Sterne, Buncle playfully tells a proverbial "story of a Cock and bull" to a character named "Cock" (310). In a note Buncle also rebuffs critics who doubt the reality of his history: they might as well "proceed to deny the reality of my existence" (Amory 220n.). The irony of self-conscious references designed to support the story's historical veracity is that they reduce the author's words to the level of the literal symbol. Narrative self-referentiality raises questions in the reader's mind about linguistic representation by reminding us that, historical or fictional, the story remains, at one level, just a story.

A digressive wit may wander away from representing an author's subject at a narrative level, and it may also wander away, through a witty metaphor, at a linguistic level. Samuel Butler in the seventeenth century opposes witty metaphors, arguing "that Poets ought to apply themselves to the Imitation of Nature, and make a



Conscience of digressing from her" (Characters 90). Butler details what he means by "digressing" from Nature metaphorically, and his examples anticipate those used by Addison in the Spectator papers Nos. 58-63 to illustrate false wit. Attacking the pattern poems of the Renaissance poet Edward Benlowe, Butler states that Benlowe has tried every "Gambol of Wit." Along with anagrams, Benlowe

has all Sorts of Echoes, Rebus's, Chronograms, &c. besides Carwitchets, Clenches, and Quibbles --As for Altars and Pyramids in Poetry, he has out-done all Men that Way; for he has made a Gridiron and a Frying-Pan in Verse, that, beside the Likeness in Shape, the very Tone and Sound of the Words did perfectly represent the Noise, that is made by those Utensils. (Characters 90)

The aspects of wit Butler rejects are the accidental resemblances in language, aural and visual, that poets exploit. The aural resemblances of "Clenches" or puns, and the visual resemblances of the rebus or visual conceit, like that in George Herbert's "The Altar" and his "Easter Wings," obscure the transparency of representational language by foregrounding the language system. The tendency of Neoclassical aesthetics to link anti-mimetic metaphor with wit may explain the relegation of wit in the eighteenth century to the "lower" comic and satiric genres that Stuart Tave charts in his book The Amiable Humorist.

Theorists of wit typically censure any poet who uses wit freely, yet metaphors that "digress" from nature are congenial to the purpose of satire. Frye observes that two things are "essential to satire; one is wit or humour founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack" (AC 224). The "sense of the grotesque or absurd" a reader feels in the system of the philosophus gloriosus reflects the satirist's implicit appeal to a moral standard which the object of attack has violated. The philosopher's violation of nature, for instance, often surfaces first in his language, the language of the learned wit. His wit, to quote Butler again, expresses "sense by Contradiction and Riddle" (Prose Observations 144). Witty language does not completely lose its representational function, but rather, through some hyperbole, paradox or catachresis, strains mimesis so far that the reader becomes aware that the metaphorical comparison is possible only as a language-event.

The philosophus gloriosi who narrate Dunton's and Sterne's satires provide an ample supply of paradoxical metaphors with their digressive wits. Dunton, for example, paradoxically begins the autobiography of his main character, Don John Kainophilus, before conception. After birth, Kainophilus claims, with a "pretty Oximoron," that "When he first came to Life, [he] was as dead as a Herring" (Voyage 1: 31). A description of a Duck eating a spider

becomes for Kainophilus an eccentric "Emblem of the common course of this World, where the greater Vices generally devour the lesser, and both of them joyn to destroy the Vertues" (Voyage 3: 383). And finally a bookseller like Dunton, Kainophilus develops a riddle, or obscure conceit, of a "conger" and fish.<sup>14</sup> Declining to tell his reader that a conger is book-trade jargon for an association of booksellers, Kainophilus goes on to say that some congers are "Leviathans" that devour "all the Food from the weaker Grigs" and that when they want other Food, they swallow the weaker fish too into the bargain (Voyage 2: 77). Dunton's text shares many generic features in common with Sterne, but his wit, as subsequent chapters show, tends toward the riddles of narrative rather than metaphor.

Sterne's conceited wit has received much critical attention, particularly by Eugene Hnatko in his article "Tristram Shandy's Wit." Hnatko compares Sterne's paradoxical metaphors to the seventeenth-century conceits of the metaphysical poets and proceeds to list a series of them. One of Hnatko's examples is Tristram's conceit, developed in Chapter 5 of Volume 8, that desire is a torch lit by water. But neither Hnatko nor any other scholar seriously considers Sterne's marbled page, black page, or graphic flourish of Trim's stick as witty visual conceits. Like Herbert's "Easter Wings," Sterne's visual conceits body forth a metafictional paradox in which a literary

symbol points to the world inside and outside the fiction at the same time. For the internal fiction of the Shandean world, Sterne claims the marbled page as the "motley emblem of my work" (3.36.268),<sup>15</sup> symbolizing the comic spirit of Yorick's festive wit which pervades the whole book. That the ancestor of Tristram's Yorick is coincidentally the jester portrayed in Shakespeare's Hamlet represents a historical irony proper to comic satire. Although the Parson Yorick no longer wears the jester's motley of his ancestor, Tristram's "motley emblem" shows that Yorick's wit survives even in the printed medium. The marbled page, however, also acts as a literal symbol pointing outward to its place in a printed book, making readers aware of their participation in Sterne's textual wit.

For Menippean satire between the Renaissance and the eighteenth century, the metafictional paradox translates, in historical terms, into the paradox of wit. Twentieth-century critics like Linda Hutcheon have constructed a postmodern poetics based on metafictional techniques, but the theory and practice of metafiction can be traced through wit, especially the learned wit of Menippean satire, as far back as Classical Greece and Rome. Critical interest in wit appears to have risen with the advent of the Humanist revival, judging by the work of scholars like W. G. Crane and, more recently, Ernest B. Gilman and J. W. Van Hook, the latter in his article on Baroque Poetics.

However, no work I am aware of discusses wit and Menippean satire as traditions relevant to the modern concern with metafiction. Hutcheon has identified Sterne as a "major forerunner of modern metafiction" (Narcissistic Narrative 8). But she does not note that Sterne's self-conscious style to a large degree springs from his choice of genre and an interest in developing his own poetics of wit.

That an increasing number of the texts cited as metafictional in Hutcheon's study, as well as in Patricia Waugh's book Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction, have been identified as Menippean satires testifies to the importance of this satiric prose genre to metafictional techniques. Theodore Kharpertian's 1990 book identifies Thomas Pynchon, whom Hutcheon examines as an example of metafictional writing, as a Menippean satirist. Roberta Tovey's 1984 thesis calls James Joyce and Vladimir Nabokov Menippean as well. Other theses label John Barth and Kurt Vonnegut as Menippists. All of the authors mentioned above receive notice as metafictional writers. My thesis does not reconstruct the link between Menippean satire of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and that of the twentieth century. Noting some of the parallels between periods, however, will help us better understand the conventions of self-consciousness in the various periods. The word "metafiction" was not coined until 1970 by William Gass (Waugh 2), whereas the words

"self-consciousness," coined by Locke in 1690, and "wit" are current in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and help us historicize our discussion of self-conscious technique in Dunton's and Sterne's satiric works. One of the purposes of this study is to clarify the connection between wit and metafiction through the Menippean satires of Dunton and Sterne.

Placing digressive wit and metaphorical wit alongside Hutcheon's diegetic and linguistic techniques, respectively, helps clarify how an investigation of metafiction in the Baroque and Neoclassical periods might proceed. However, where I believe Hutcheon's brilliant study would directly benefit from a connection to a historical study of wit is in the area of linguistic metafiction. In her list of covertly metafictional devices (the riddle, joke, anagram, and pun), Hutcheon identifies the devices which have customarily been covered by the term "wit," but not metaphors, of which the conceit is only one form. Indeed, her entire chapter on "Generative Word Play: The Outer Limits of the Novel Genre" reminds us of the "verbal exuberance" that defines the philosophus gloriosus (AC 311) and the witty, conceited style of writing peculiar to Menippean satire. Although Hutcheon's concern for narrative excludes any direct attention to the effect that metafiction has on metaphor, the link from metafiction to metaphor can be made, as I have already shown, through wit

conceived as a literal symbol. The concept of the literal symbol that I have borrowed from Frye is in fact used by Hutcheon, albeit indirectly, and a short analysis of the relationship between Hutcheon and Frye will support the central role wit plays in Menippean metafiction.

Throughout her book, Hutcheon employs Northrop Frye's assertion that there is a recurring opposition of Aristotelian and Longinian views in literary history. The Aristotelian views literature as a static imitation of nature, or mimetic product, whereas the Longinian views literature as the imitation of natural processes. Self-conscious, metafictional texts correspond favourably to the Longinian view because they imitate the psychological process of the narrator, and address the reader. The emphasis on the narrator's ideas or theme makes plot, an important Aristotelian feature, almost an obstruction. The emphasis on the author and the reader in Longinian texts, on the other hand, tends to direct the significance of its narrative and symbols outward. Aristotelian plot detaches both author and reader and draws the significance of narrative and symbol toward its internal fictions. Any given work comprehends both Longinian and Aristotelian elements, but the dichotomy helps clarify the final direction of that work's meaning through analysis of its aesthetic form and its effects. Hutcheon, following Frye, states that metafiction or "narcissistic texts merely make

explicit the two directions--centripetal and centrifugal--in which the reader's attention moves in reading all literature" (Narcissistic Narrative 141; cf. AC 73).

Hutcheon's allusion to Frye identifies metafiction with the literal symbol, the centripetal direction of signification, since the centrifugal direction is initiated by the descriptive symbol, the basis of mimetic representation.

The conception of wit as a literal symbol and therefore a metafictional device raises some important issues for Neoclassical aesthetics regarding the power of fictional representations to deceive through mimetic illusion. The "literal" basis of meaning in literature for Frye refers not to the historical accuracy of description, as a Neoclassical critic would hold. For Frye, the "literal basis of meaning in poetry can only be its letters, its inner structure of interlocking motifs," since "a poem cannot be literally anything but a poem" (AC 77). New criticism, with its emphasis on the poem as an objective structure of words, exemplifies the critic's approach to the literal symbol and helps, furthermore, to isolate the formal features of wit and its aesthetic effects. New Critical concepts of "irony" and "paradox," for example, stress the detachment of both author and reader, avoiding the Scylla and Charybdis of the biographical and intentional fallacy. But the detachment of New Criticism (the kind of self-conscious detachment



achieved through wit) differs, as we shall see, from the detachment of a Neoclassical mimetic view of art.

The literal basis of poetry in the Neoclassical era is firmly situated in the historical, and the descriptive, symbol, and the corresponding response of conscious detachment protects the reader from the poet's "lying" fictions. As Dryden states, "You are not obliged, as in History, to a literal belief of what the poet says; but you are pleased with the image, without being cozened by the fiction" (Ker 1: 185). Unlike Plato, Dryden saves room for poetry in the republic by keeping the reader aware of its moral dangers. But Dryden's remark does not endorse the self-conscious detachment achieved by a witty or self-referential turn of phrase. In his "Preface to *Annus Mirabilis*," Dryden, separating the true from the false, asserts that wit is "not the jerk or sting of an epigram, nor the seeming contradiction of a poor antithesis (the delight of an ill-judging audience in a play of rhyme) nor the jingle of a more poor paranomasia" (Ker 1: 14-15). Wit, however, comes to mean precisely the kind of deliberate pyrotechnical display of language Dryden condemns.

Dryden's theoretical statements, taken as a whole, ask readers to use their conscious judgment and avoid being "cozened" by wit, which only appears to represent nature or truth. Dryden's position is not unique. Butler refers to

wit's self-referential symbols as "Tricks with words" (Notebooks 144), and Addison later as "tricks in Writing" (Spectator 253), both making deception synonymous with the antimimetic. And, since the mental faculties of "Wit and Fancy finds easier entertainment" in the "figurative Speeches" of rhetoric than "dry Truth and real Knowledge," Locke denounces wit in his influential Essay because it misleads the judgment (Essay 508). Sterne in Tristram Shandy attempts to reverse the decline of wit's moral reputation because of its association with deceit. Using every device of wit he can muster, Sterne defends wit against Locke by arguing that wit can be an aid to the conscious mind and, consequently, an aid in making moral decisions. As I show in my final chapter on Sterne, Locke, having refuted theories of the innate conscience, redefines conscience by making it equivalent to consciousness or, more accurately, to self-consciousness. Even though it is not precise to say, as Elizabeth Kraft has in a recent collection of essays, that "consciousness is in effect an abuse of conscience or a state of false reasoning" (Approaches 126), it would be true to say that wit's deceptions for Locke are an abuse of conscience and consciousness.

Tristram Shandy's self-conscious wit represents the most sophisticated parody of Locke's theories. But Sterne is not the first Menippean satirist to attack Locke by

using wit to parody his theory of self-consciousness as the basis of identity and conscience. Matthew Prior in his "Dialogues of the Dead" (1718), a subgenre of Menippean satire, and Alexander Pope in his Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus (1741) both explicitly address the theme of Lockean self-consciousness. In his dialogue, Prior pits Locke, the systematic reasoner, against the antisystematic sceptic Montaigne. The conflict of ideas dramatized by the two philosophers centres on the problem of self-knowledge, for, as Locke proudly says, "I Studied to know my Self, Nosce Te ipsum" (Literary Works 1: 623). Montaigne, stressing the difficulty of self-knowledge, criticizes Locke's Essay, saying, "You and Your understanding are the Personae Dramatis," and the whole amounts to no more than a Dialogue between John and Locke.

As I walked by my Self  
I talked to my Self  
And my Self said unto me.

(Prior, Literary Works 1: 620).

Wright and Spears' edition of Prior's works notes that Montaigne quotes a popular nursery rhyme (Literary Works 2: 1014). The playful nonsense of the nursery parodies the seriousness of Locke's philosophical enterprise. The wit in Montaigne's nursery rhyme goes to the heart of the problem he sees in Locke's theory of self-consciousness: that it alienates the self from the self. Rather than

discovering a unitary self, Locke discovers a divided one.

Pope and the Scriblerians in Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus launch a number of witty analogies and conceits to parody Locke's theory of self-consciousness. The various Scriblerian conceits must respond to Locke's argument "that Self-consciousness cannot inhere in any system of Matter, because all matter is made up of several distinct beings, which never can make up an individual" (Memoirs 138). In other words, the Scriblerians must show how personal identity can reside in the various particles of matter which are also, over time, replaced or renewed in the body. The first half-serious answer employs a meat-roasting "Jack," which, though made of different parts, still manages to generate a single "meat-roasting Quality" (Memoirs 138). The second answer introduces the analogy between self-consciousness and the legal theory of corporations, a fiction which makes a corporation a legal "person." For instance, self-consciousness can reside in a body which renews itself over time because it functions like the king, who is a corporation; in English law, the "King never dies" (Memoirs 139). The Scriblerians do not explain this legal fiction which preserves continuity of royal office by making the king the head of the body politic, or society. Though individual members of society die, society as a whole is perpetual. The king, as head of the body politic, through a mystical process, shares

directly in the social body's perpetuity. The satire, however, subordinates the philosophical merits in each argument to the confusion which results from their proliferation.

The Scriblerian parody of Lockean self-consciousness carries on throughout the Memoirs by playing on the traditional Menippean theme of the alienated self, or Doppelgänger. Two excellent articles by Robert A. Erickson and Christopher Fox have already discussed self-consciousness and identity in the Memoirs, but some new points in relation to Menippean satire bear attention. The confusion of identity in the final episodes, for example, surround the Siamese Twins, Lindamira-Indamora. This sexually sensational affair is significantly entitled "The Double Mistress, A Novel"--a typical satiric swipe at the upstart prose genre. Legal problems arise when the women want to marry separate men. Arguments settle on the legal absurdity that Lindamira-Indamora are one person because they are joined at the "Organ of Generation" (Memoirs 158), the seat of the soul. The much more familiar theme of narcissism occurs in the case of the "young Nobleman." When asked to cure the young man of his love-melancholy, Martin, only one of the many philosophus gloriosi, cites various cures from Burton's Anatomy. If contemplating himself "naked, divested of artificial charms" does not break the spell, Martin suggests letting him "marry

himself" (Memoirs 136). Yet marriage, Martin fears, will generate the tragic fate of Narcissus, for when the young Nobleman is "condemned eternally to himself, perhaps he may run to the next pond to get rid of himself, the Fate of most violent Self-lovers" (Memoirs 136).

The Menippean satirist seldom introduces the theme of self-consciousness without introducing some self-conscious narrative device. Mock footnotes frequently adorn the margins of Menippean texts. The Scriblerian Memoirs, Dunton's Voyage, and Sterne's Tristram Shandy, for instance, all use notes to reflect narcissistically on the body of their text. Menippean footnotes generally form an ironic commentary on the text, sometimes alluding to another text for a contrasting norm, and sometimes pointing the finger at a satiric victim. Jonathan Swift's absorption of William Wotton's Observations and Edmund Curll's Key into A Tale of a Tub (1704) illustrates an innovative use of footnotes for satiric attack. But footnotes in Menippean satire always function as an ironic display of the obsessed philosopher's erudition.

The discovered manuscript topos is another reflexive device which commonly turns up in the genre. In Michael McKeon's phrase, the discovered manuscript represents a "claim to historicity" (56) which, when used parodically, questions the fictionality of a given text. The Memoirs of Scriblerus begins with the mysterious delivery of the

Memoirs themselves. Thomas Carlyle's Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh (1833) revives the tradition when his narratorial persona, the Editor, receives Professor Teufelsdröckh's Die Kleider, Ihr Werden und Wirken from the obscure figure Hofrath Heuschrecke. The discovered manuscript acts like a mirror or mise en abyme reflecting the personality of the main character. The very need to edit and reconstruct the text that contains the "Life and Opinions" of the central character suggests the psychological fragmentation in all self-conscious narratives. A related form of the discovered manuscript topos is the corrupt manuscript. A lacuna or hiatus makes interpretation of the corrupt document difficult for the philosophus gloriosus. But, rather than err on the side of caution, the gloriosus often seizes on the obscurity to speculate wildly in order to support his own quixotic theories. Kirk's annotated catalogue of Menippean satire traces this convention back to Lucian. Since we meet the device in Sterne, it will be sufficient to say here that Menippean lacunae symbolize, ironically, the difficulty of communication. The lacuna becomes a reflexive, literal symbol foregrounding both the material unit of the book the readers hold in their hands and the fictional verbal structure that entertains them.

Distinguishing between self-conscious and self-reflexive metafiction currently concerns scholars. The

dichotomy recalls Plato's distinction in the Republic between diegesis and mimesis, and the corresponding twentieth-century categories of "telling" and "showing." Neoclassical decorum restricts the poet speaking in his own voice (that is, diegesis) to specific genres such as the essay, historiography, and lyric. However, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, any metafictional form, with a visible narrator or not, is regarded as witty and antimimetic. Even Shaftesbury, who advocated a "doctrine of two persons in one individual self" (Characteristics 1: 21), or "Soliloquy," for an author's self-development in learned discourse does not support an intrusive self-conscious narrative. Shaftesbury recommends representing the mind through a dramatic dialogue form, or "inward colloquy" (Characteristics 1: 211). This "vocal looking glass" (Characteristics 1: 114) indicates, for Shaftesbury, a morally disinterested kind of writing because it does not address the reader. Shaftesbury believes that through philosophical soliloquy an individual can avoid the fate of Narcissus and fulfill "that celebrated Delphic inscription, Recognise yourself; which was as much as to say, divide yourself, or be two" (Characteristics 1: 113). As the founder of the sentimental school, Shaftesbury develops a "doctrine of two persons" which, contrary to his expectations, partly creates the kind of self-conscious style Sterne exploits in



Tristram Shandy and A Sentimental Journey (1768). Indeed, literary sentimentalism demands a narrator's presence and the fiction of direct address to the reader for the proper display of moral feelings. Shaftesbury's identification of the self-conscious style with an "interested" moral position, however, proves to be ironically prophetic. The self-conscious style in Sterne's works, and Henry MacKenzie's book The Man of Feeling (1771), helps to expose the "interested" motives lurking beneath the sentimentalist's benevolence.

Given the prominence of self-conscious narrative in Menippean satire, the ridicule of the philosophus gloriosus seems to demand his full presence as a narrator. The self-referentiality of the mad philosopher's own digressive and metaphorical wit exposes the impracticality of his ideas because his language fails to represent the nature he claims to control. The philosopher's self-consciousness, furthermore, marks his lack of control over both language and himself. The struggle of the psychological subject with the textual object occupies the philosophus gloriosus so that his ideas are never put to use. The philosopher's narcissistic narrative only reflects the designs of his learned wit and, rather than holding a mirror up to nature, holds the mirror up to art. Consumed with displaying his wit, yet unable to control and complete his witty designs, the gloriosus creates a self-enclosed system, and his text

traps him like a spider caught in its own web.

#### IV. Female Wit and Menippean Family Resemblances:

##### A Test Case

The arrival of serious women playwrights on the British stage provoked the anonymous play The Female Wits; or, The Triumvirate of Poets at Rehearsal (1704). This play recognizes Delariviere Manley's literary stature by satirizing her in much the same way that The Rehearsal (1672), by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, satirizes Dryden. The play attacks two other "female wits," Catherine Trotter and Mary Pix, but only Manley's reputation as a female wit and as a writer who claims to have written a Menippean satire called The New Atlantis (1709) warrants close attention for our study.

Manley's literary works record the misogyny of her society as does so much other contemporary writing by women. But her work also wins our interest for her comments regarding wit and gender. The prologue to Manley's first play The Lost Lover (1696), which made her the object of attack in The Female Wits, contains a complaint that people doubt a woman's ability to write creatively:

Who if our Play succeeds, will sorely say,  
Some Private Lover helpt her on her Way  
As Female wit were barren like the Moon,

That borrows all her influence from the Sun.

(lines 14-17; qtd. in Clark 151)

Since "pregnant wit" customarily signifies literary creativity, the metaphor of a "barren" female wit carries a psychological as well as a biological meaning. As the passage above suggests, female wit is barren in the psychological sense merely because of gender. And, should a woman manifest wit, biological barrenness is thought inevitably to result. Gilbert and Gubar have worked out some of the implications of this misogynist poetic of female wit or creativity: "female writers are maligned as failures in eighteenth-century satire precisely because they cannot transcend their female bodily limitations: they cannot conceive of themselves in any but reproductive terms" (32).

In The New Atlantis, Manley exploits the cultural stigma of female wit against a contemporary playwright, Sarah Egerton. A serious quarrel with Egerton led to a lawsuit against Manley. Manley takes her revenge by depicting Egerton as the "poetical wife" in The New Atlantis. The reader first encounters the poetical wife during a violent attack on her elderly husband in which she crowns him with a hot apple pie. The long-suffering husband, a priest, addresses the allegorical figure of Astrea: "I am an old Man, as you see, and she's a Wit, that took me, tho' I understood never a Word of what she writes,

or says: Deliver me from a poetical Wife" (Manley 431). Children appear in the story, but significantly they are the priest's from a previous marriage. Manley limits the socially acceptable form of wit for women in The New Atlantis to intelligence and the capacity for lively conversation.

The representation of female wit or creativity in Manley justifies the feminist project of exposing cultural bias in aesthetic concepts. Manley turns the mythical sterility of the female imagination to her advantage by using it for sympathy in The Lost Lovers and for satiric attack in The New Atlantis. Given the cultural stereotype, Addison could easily have added female creativity to his well known definition of false wit in the The Spectator (1711) no. 62. However, judging from Addison's definition, Manley's allegory in the New Atlantis qualifies as a species of "true" wit. Whether Manley qualifies as a Menippean satirist requires more analysis, but her satiric allegory, or more specifically, her roman-a-clef recalls the keys appended to Swift's Menippean Tale of a Tub.

The most important description of Menippean satire for the eighteenth century is John Dryden's A Discourse Concerning the Origin and Progress of Satire (1693). After weighing the merits of Horatian and Juvenalian satire, Dryden states,

it will be necessary to say somewhat of another

kind of satire, which was also descended from the ancients; 'tis that which we call the Varronian Satire, (but which Varro himself calls the Menippean) because Varro, the most learned of the Romans, was the first author of it, who imitated, in his works, the manner of Menippus the Gardarenian, who professed the philosophy of the Cynics. His sort of Satire was not only composed of several sorts of verse, like those of Ennius, but was also mixed with prose. (Ker 2: 64)

From the time of Varro and Lucian, Menippean satire has been known as a predominantly prose genre with only incidental verse. Delariviere Manley's satire The New Atlantis (1709) conforms to Menippean satire in this mixture of prose and verse. However, Manley also quotes Dryden's Discourse in the dedication to her second volume and, on his authority, identifies her satire as Varronian, or Menippean. Since Dryden has since been corrected by Frye and Kirk, Manley's claim also bears closer examination.<sup>16</sup>

The most distinctive feature of Menippean satire that Dryden mentions is its mixture of satire and philosophy. One of Dryden's sources for this point is Cicero, who has Varro say that he imitated Menippus by sprinkling his works with "mirth and gaiety, yet many things are there inserted, which are drawn from the very entrails of

philosophy'" (Ker 2: 65). Cicero's words also reflect the Menippean satirists' playful approach to their materials, which Dryden emphasizes by noting the Greek word spoudogeloion or joco-seriousness. Dryden states, "Thus it appears, that Varro was one of those writers whom they called [spoudogeloion], studious of laughter; and that, as learned as he was, his business was more to divert his reader, than to teach him" (Ker 2: 66). Frye regards the eighteenth century as the "greatest period in English literature" for Menippean satire, and so we would expect, based on Dryden's remarks, the "conception of art as play" to be in the ascendant (Frye, "Varieties" 157-58). In addition, Frye points out that no "critical issue was discussed more frequently and eagerly than the theory of wit," reaffirming the close connection between the history of wit and Menippean satire ("Varieties" 158).

Though Manley herself is attacked as a "female wit," she appeals to Dryden's Discourse to defend her satiric use of the roman-a-clef.<sup>17</sup> Manley quotes various passages from Dryden to justify satire directed not only at "general reigning Vices" but also at "individual persons" (New Atlantis 528). However, Manley's strongest precedent for both her claim to Menippean status and her defence of the roman-a-clef technique can be found in one of the examples Dryden cites, John Barclay's satiric allegory Euphormio's Satyricon (1605). Manley does not mention Barclay in her

dedication, but, based on Dryden's claim that the highly political Absalom and Achitophel is a Menippean satire, she justifies her politically motivated satiric allegory.

Of those authors who have imitated Varro, Dryden states,

the chief is Petronius Arbiter . . . . Many of Lucian's dialogues may also be called Varronian satires, particularly his True History; and consequently the Golden Ass of Apuleius, which is taken from him. Of the same stamp is the mock deification of Claudius, by Seneca: and the Symposium or Caesars of Julian, the Emperor. Amongst the moderns, we may reckon the Encomium Moriae of Erasmus, Barclays Euphormio, and a volume of German authors, which my ingenious friend, Mr. Charles Killigrew, once lent me. In the English, I remember none which are mixed with prose, as Varro's were; but of the same kind is Mother Hubbard's Tale, in Spenser; and (if it be not too vain to mention anything of my own) the poems of Absalom and MacFleckno. (Ker 1: 67)

In his notes, Ker rightly identifies the "volume of German authors" as Ulrich Von Hutten's Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum, or The letters of Obscure Men (1516-17) (Ker 2: 283). Dryden's English examples are oddly incorrect because they are not in prose. However, Dryden's English

examples represent a departure from his Renaissance source, Isaac Casaubon's book on classical satire.

Manley in her dedication contends that The New Atlantis is "written like Varronian Satyrs, on different Subjects, Tales, Stories and Characters of Invention, after the Manner of Lucian, who copy'd from Varro" (1: 526). Ronald Paulson says that Manley's dedication "makes a great pretense . . . of writing satire," but he does not examine whether the kind of satire she writes is a pretense or not (Satire and the Novel 221). Content to call Manley's work a chronique scandaleuse and therefore just another form of anti-romance, Paulson ignores an important precedent in Barclay's Euphormio. Manley's work is an anti-Whig satire and the scandalous erotic intrigue makes the work both a popular and a political success. But to locate its generic identity, the work's formal qualities are most relevant. And the formal quality Manley's New Atlantis shares with Barclay's Euphormio is the sustained satiric allegory of a roman-a-clef. In fact, David Fleming in his modern translation from the Latin calls Barclay's Euphormio "the first major roman a clef and an initiator of some important trends in seventeenth-century fiction" (xv). Using Barclay as a basis of comparison can clarify the generic identity of Manley's New Atlantis.

Both Manley's and Barclay's satiric allegories have a political purpose and focus on the plight of the ingenu in



a corrupt society. The plot in both books might be said to resemble Petronius's Satyricon by recounting the trials and adventures of characters, who, from their respective genders, suffer the wrath of Priapus. However, given the much more graphic sexuality of Petronius, perhaps it is more accurate to call it, if I may borrow from Fleming, the "wrath-of-Venus motif" (Barclay xxii). The romantic love traditionally associated with Venusian eros seems more appropriate to these two authors than the bestial eros linked to Priapus. Euphormio's sexual encounters are restricted to one episode in which he encounters the Eleusinian rites of the witch Hypogaea. For males, witnessing such feminine rituals usually results in death. But Euphormio escapes, with his companion, to experience other adventures in Barclay's highly episodic, but finely structured, narrative. Manley's equally episodic narrative relates the misfortunes of many women, but one recurring pattern, as Janet Todd states, "assumes the status of a myth" (49). This pattern we might call, after Nicholas Rowe, a "she-tragedy" narrative. Manley herself, through the fictional name of Delia, undergoes the same tragic pattern that typifies the fate of women in most eighteenth-century literature.

The "she-tragedies" in The New Atlantis constitute Manley's satiric weapon against the Whig Ministry under Anne I. Euphormio's tenure as slave to Callion (Charles

III, Duke of Lorraine), and his later, drug-induced mental bondage to the Acignians, constitute Barclay's satiric attack on the Jesuits. To begin with the New Atlantis, the story of Charlot sets out the "she-tragedy" pattern in which Manley specializes. Made a ward of her father's friend, the Duke, Charlot possesses a beauty that soon wins the desire of her guardian. Historically, her guardian is William Bentinck, first Earl of Portland, and King William's Dutch adviser (see Richetti 143). Although entrusted to educate and protect her, the Duke seduces the young virgin by exploiting her fatherly affection for him. The instrument of the Duke's seduction is literature, particularly Ovid's story of Myrrha's incestuous love for her father. As a reader of Machiavelli, the Duke could not have a worse moral character. Manley's own ruin (as Delia) parallels Charlot's, for both women are prepared for seduction by a steady diet of romantic literature. Specifically, Charlot's reading consists of the "most dangerous Books of Love, Ovid, Petrarch, Tibullus, those moving Tragedies that so powerfully expose the force of Love, and corrupt the Mind," preparing Charlot for her sexual and social ruin (Manley 1: 339). The Duke soon abandons young Charlot and, ironically, marries a wise, older Countess who has been trying to advise Charlot.

The contrast between the end of Charlot's life as "one continu'd Scene of Horror, Sorrow and Repentance" (Manley

1: 355), and the Countess's shrewdly successful manipulation of the Duke suggests that Manley's moral message rests on a series of cautionary tales. Manley's worldly wise Countess, in Janet Todd's view, acts as a role model which Charlot tragically neglects (51). Todd's interpretation gives Manley's text the sophisticated moral pragmatism normally at work in satire.

The worldly wise role model in Euphormio's Satyricon is Theophrastus, who Fleming believes may have been Barclay's former teacher at Paris, Philippe de Cospean (Barclay 374). Theophrastus has better luck than the Countess in Manley's satire in saving Euphormio from the licentious activities of Protagon's (Henry IV's) court in France. But the greatest threat to Euphormio, and indeed all of Europe, is the "Jesuit peril." Although a Scottish Catholic himself, Barclay's autobiographical allegory takes a more politically moderate view of his religion than the Jesuits. Barclay not only opposes the involvement of papal authority in secular matters but also satirizes the zealous Jesuits on two matters: that is, as Fleming puts it, their claim of "sole dominion in the realm of learning," and their "unscrupulous . . . methods of recruiting" (Barclay xxxi). Ironically reduced to feigning insanity and playing court jester while in the clutches of Callion, Euphormio later becomes, as he says, "quite conscious of my own learning" (Barclay 213) and enters a Jesuit college.

Euphormio soon becomes disillusioned with the factious Acignians, an entire sect of theologus gloriosi.

Barclay's satire on the followers of Acignius, or Ignatius Loyala (whose first name, if spelled "Ignacius," is the basis of the anagram "Acignius") as gloriosi places his work firmly within the Menippean genre. The absence of intellectual satire in Manley significantly weakens her claim. The myth of the Golden Age associated with the figure of Astrea, however, moves her close to Utopian satire, a Menippean convention found, for example, in Lucian's True History, More's Utopia, and, more significantly, Francis Bacon's New Atlantis (1627). Nonetheless, even as a Utopian satire, Manley's text only loosely qualifies through the poorly integrated personification of Astrea and the utopian myth of Atlantis she implies. More evidence of a utopian satire should be found in Manley's work to support her text's membership in Menippean satire. The vision of society based on a single intellectual pattern, for instance, defines utopias, according to Frye (AC 310). A Utopian satire, or dystopia, which exposes a society's hypocrisy, "holds up a mirror to society which distorts it, but distorts it consistently" (Frye, "Utopias" 124).<sup>18</sup>

Manley distorts, though not very far, eighteenth-century society in the direction of political and sexual corruption to attack the Whig ministry. The distortion of

Utopian satire, Frye tells us, heightens the contrast between the anarchy the writer sees in contemporary society and the social order projected in a future vision, or, as in Manley, in a pastoral myth of the Golden Age. And, should the Golden Age return, the permanent establishment of a Utopian social ideal depends on a theory of education. Theories of education are common to this genre of intellectual satire and provide an important index for identifying Menippean texts. A vestige of a theory of education, which bridges the gulf between the Utopian society and the satiric one, can be detected in Manley through the figure of Astrea.

The mythic figure of Astrea, the goddess of justice, presides over Barclay and Manley's satires. Manley makes Astrea, whose return represents the establishment of social justice in the Golden Age, a device to unify her survey of vice in London's courtly circles. Astrea's conversations in the New Atlantis with the allegorical figures Virtue and Intelligence, as well as her conversations with the female protagonists, parallel the symposium convention of Menippean satire, which we will discuss shortly. Barclay's Astrea appears only in a few invocations. A remark made by Astrea in Manley helps clarify the generic conventions relevant to the moral education of the ingenu. Upon hearing yet another tale of "virtue in distress and of love betrayed" (Todd 49), Astrea says, "Tho . . . this Story be

entertaining, yet I find nothing in it of use to my Prince, at least not till he be marry'd" (Manley 1: 402). Her comment recalls the classical genre called the speculum principis, or Mirror for Princes in the Renaissance. The classical writer Xenophon in his Cyropaedia began a genre exclusively designed to educate a prince for governing. Manley hints at a similar didactic aim when Astrea declares that in order to cure the social corruption she sees, "some great good Man should stand up and fearlessly regulate these Disorders" (Manley 1: 289). The patriarchal language of Astrea's words does not, however, preclude women from the speculum genre. Manley shows herself aware of Anne I, who is fictionally represented as both princess and queen in various characters throughout the text. Cornelius, the father of Martinus Scriblerus, recognizes the necessity of a speculum tradition for each sex, and so composes two treatises, "one he called A Daughter's Mirrour and the other A Son's Monitor" (Memoirs 97).

This brief sketch of Manley's New Atlantis shows the text to possess, in Ludwig Wittgenstein's phrase, various "family resemblances" to the Menippean genre. The roman-a-clef or satiric allegory in her text, based on the precedent of Barclay's Euphormio, strengthens her claim despite Dryden's confusing inclusion of his allegorical poetry in the genre. Her novelistic interest in the psychological and social condition of characters weakens

the text's Menippean identity. However, the heterogeneity in the mixture of prose and verse, and her symposium of various allegorical characters, fulfill the Menippean emphasis on satire as satura, which Dryden reminds us, "signifies a dish plentifully stored with all the variety of fruit and grain" (Ker 2: 103). The symposium convention in particular allows Manley to make abrupt scene changes in the lives of characters. Astrea's conversations with Virtue and Intelligence shift from episode to episode as the characters they discuss ride the carriage in the Prado, Manley's fictional name for the famous "Ring" at Hyde Park. Prior's colloquy, the Dialogues of the Dead already mentioned, exemplifies the symposium. Sterne uses the fiction of the symposium for discussing intellectual matters at the reading of Yorick's sermon and the ceremonial "visitation dinner" in Tristram Shandy. Dunton creates a Menippean symposium of books in A Voyage, for, as the subtitle suggests, his text is also A Pocket Library.

Sudden changes in theme, style, and mood are an integral feature of Menippean satire, and the exuberant wit in narrative and metaphor of the philosophus gloriosus carries the reader along. The patron philosophers of the rapidly changing moods in Menippean satire are Heraclitus, the weeping philosopher, and Democritus, the laughing philosopher. Burton ironically writes his Anatomy of Melancholy under the pseudonym "Democritus Jr." because the

recommended cure for melancholy is the diversion of laughter. Kirk has charted the ancestry of this pair of philosophers back to the Attic wit Lucian and his Vitarum auctio, or Philosophers for Sale. Dunton and Sterne allude to Heraclitus and Democritus, symbolizing the witty detachment of the satirists' rhetorical eloquence. We should not look, therefore, for a serious commitment to the ideas or emotions expressed in a Menippean satire, but only for wit. And wit, Hazlitt remarks, is the "eloquence of indifference" (15). The only thing taken seriously in Menippean satire is the play of ideas.

My analysis of self-conscious wit in Menippean satire begins with John Dunton's narrative digression or "rambling" wit. Identified by Kirk as a Menippean convention, Sterne's digressive technique has received adequate critical treatment. Dunton's rambling narrator Kainophilus violates Hobbes's aesthetic doctrine of wit because his fancy outweighs his judgment. Divided from himself, Kainophilus creates a digressive narrative without any purpose except the pursuit of novelty, the source of pleasure in Hobbes's poetic. Kainophilus's rambling wit digresses so far from mimetic decorum that he questions the boundary between his own identity and that of the author, John Dunton, producing probably the most self-conscious prose text in British literature before Sterne.



My second chapter deals with Sterne's defence of false wit, which provokes not only a parody of Locke, the philosopher of self-consciousness, but also a parody of literary creativity. This chapter, as well as the subsequent chapters, explains in part Frye's remark that Sterne "prefigures the change from eighteenth-century discourse into nineteenth-century language, from wit and Hartleian association into verbal organism, a process completed by Coleridge when he turned against Hartley and began his great treatise on imagination and the Logos" ("Varieties" 171). Chapter 3 of my study explores the ways in which Sterne's wit, especially his visual wit, embodied in the marbled page and typography, raises self-consciousness in the reader. The self-referentiality and anti-mimetic nature of Sterne's digressions, metaphors, and typographical emblems makes the readers aware that they are literally reading a book. Through these self-conscious formal devices, Sterne's wit exceeds Neoclassical mimesis and draws attention to language as a process or, in Frye's term, as a "verbal organism."

Against the charge of immorality, Sterne defends wit by developing a moral theory of wit, the focus of my last chapter. Identifying the fear of moral judgment as the basis of self-deception, Sterne advocates the pleasures of festive wit to achieve moral honesty and a good conscience. Sterne's theory of festive wit's moral effects parallels

the aesthetic effects of his witty practice by making the readers morally self-conscious, that is, conscious of their moral defects.

As my conclusion shows, the style of self-conscious wit in Menippean satire survives Sterne's Tristram Shandy, but the theme of wit declines in importance. Sterne indeed played a large part in the cultural transition of literature from a poetics of wit to a poetics of the imagination. The influence of Sterne on Menippean satire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, like that of Swift or Rabelais, can be easily demonstrated through the great number of direct references and allusions to him, as well as through the playful manipulation of the printed texts which rose in popularity after Tristram Shandy. Though the tradition of learned wit survives in aesthetics after the eighteenth century, wit's faded fortunes force intellectual satirists to hunt for bigger game in the glorious philosophers of "reason in her most exalted mood."

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Walter Charleton in his Two Discourses (1664) contrasts festive wit with malignant wit. A person possessed with malignant wit is void of humanity and usually becomes a critic: "Nor will it be easie for Satyrists and Comical Poets, those especially of the more licentious and railing sort, to exempt themselves from the Tribe" (qtd. in Tave 14).

<sup>2</sup>See also Tave, who documents this passage.

<sup>3</sup>See Kahler. For the empirical transformation of the individual, see Reiss, Discourse. On pages 26-27, Reiss discusses the significance of the scientific metaphor in the title of Tesauro's treatise on wit, which is translated as The Aristotelian Telescope. Reiss takes Tesauro's telescope as the symbol of "analytico-referential discourse," or scientific discourse used as a transparent instrument which makes objectivity possible. The "telescope" refers to Aristotle's analysis of proportional metaphors in the Poetics and Rhetoric, where metaphorical comparison is based on a feature that two different things have in common. Tesauro uses the metaphor to explain the conceit. This kind of metaphor is discussed in more detail in the Sterne chapter. For the creation of the "individual" or Cartesian subject by print culture, see Eisenstein 228-237, and Ong.

<sup>4</sup>For Dunton's influence on Swift, see J. M. Steadmond, "Another Possible Analogue"; and Cormick.

<sup>5</sup>See Rolf Soellner, Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge.

<sup>6</sup>See OED, and Davies' study of the word "conscience" in relation to problems of French translations of Locke (29). For Locke's use of the word "self-consciousness," see 341.

<sup>7</sup>See Patrides' introduction to The Cambridge Platonists, and M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism. For a careful reading of the terms for self-consciousness in Plotinus, see Edward W. Warren, "Consciousness in Plotinus."

<sup>8</sup>For Shaftesbury's attitude to Swift, see Grean 23.

<sup>9</sup>All citations marked "Varieties" refer to Frye's "Varieties of Eighteenth-Century Sensibility."

<sup>10</sup>See Frye, AC 73-82.

<sup>11</sup>Kirk formerly published under the name Bud Korkowski: see Works Cited under "Korkowski."

<sup>12</sup>See Deporte 16-17, and Thorpe 179-180.

<sup>13</sup>See Aldridge, and Watt 147-49.

<sup>14</sup>For "conger" as a book-trade term, see John Feather, A Dictionary of Book History. For the conger as a fish, see Walton's Menippean satire, The Compleat Angler 175.

<sup>15</sup>All citations from Sterne's Tristram Shandy refer to volume, chapter, and page number in parentheses, to facilitate easier reference to other editions.

<sup>16</sup>For Frye's correction of Dryden, see his still valuable article "The Anatomy in Prose Fiction" (37-38). See also Kirk's thesis, under his previous name Korkowski, where he corrects Dryden (25-26).

<sup>17</sup>See the anonymous play The Female Wits (1704).

<sup>18</sup>All citations marked "Utopias" refer to Frye, "Varieties of Literary Utopias."

"Rambling Wits": Dunton's Voyage and Baroque Poetics

. . . rambling stuff

May pass in satire.

-John Oldham,

The Eighth Satire of Monsieur

Boileau Imitated (1682)

John Dunton's A Voyage Round the World: Or, A Pocket-Library (1691) combines the conventions of Menippean satire and a Baroque poetics of wit. Critical treatments of Dunton have either focussed on his life as a bookseller, or on his work as an ancestor of Sterne's Tristram Shandy (1759-1767).<sup>1</sup> But viewing Dunton's text in the light of its genre shows that his Voyage represents more than an eccentric predecessor to Sterne. The similarities between Dunton and Sterne arise from the "family resemblances" of Menippean satire. The strength of the resemblances motivates a contemporary of Sterne to republish the first of Dunton's three volumes in 1762 as "the Grandfather to Tristram Shandy." The anonymous publisher renames the Voyage as The Life, Travels, and Adventures of Christopher Wagstaff, Gentleman to advertise the similarities with Sterne. However, the Menippean spirit of an exuberant, yet learned wit in Dunton and Sterne affirms their genealogical bond more reliably than any other single feature. In fact,

this chapter will show that wit, a fundamental concept in Baroque poetics, provides the key to the Menippean satirist's digressions and self-consciousness.

J. Paul Hunter's recent identification of Dunton's Voyage with the novel tradition leads to hasty and dismissive value judgments. Hunter feels that "one could easily make a case for A Voyage Round the World as an autobiographical novel or as an anti-novel" (Insistent "I" 27). From this statement, Hunter's analysis proceeds to delineate the Voyage's "proto-Shandean" features, such as its beginning the narrator's life-story ab ovo.<sup>2</sup> The anti-novel concept offers an attractive solution to novel-critics who want to claim a work that they know (albeit unconsciously) does not fit their novel-centred view of prose fiction. In his later book Before Novels (1990), Hunter drops the anti-novel label and refers to the Voyage as "a kind of allegorical autobiography" (336). Hunter's interest in Dunton's text centres on the suggestions it gives of the novel's "eclectic heritages" (336). Praising Dunton's text, Hunter says,

In its use of developments in print technology, mixing of narrative and expository strands, inclusivity of other quasi-related documents, didactic insistency, and playful refusal to move the story forward while savouring its own obsessive reflexivity, Voyage is technically way

ahead of its time (336).

If Hunter is right to say that, by novelistic standards, Dunton is ahead of his time, by Menippean standards, Dunton is technically traditional.

After damning Dunton with faint praise, Hunter damns him for writing a bad novel:

But the Voyage is not an artistic success. It has entirely too much of Dunton's flair for novelty and restlessness and too little care to push a story line forward, resolve narrative or compositional difficulties, or realize a character in a full enough way to generate identification or anything beyond superericial curiosity about what comes next. (336)

In Menippean satire, all of Hunter's criticisms are positive virtues. But Hunter's studies show surprisingly little interest in Dunton's Voyage and devote much more attention to Dunton's non-fictional autobiography, The Life and Errors of John Dunton, Citizen of London (1705).

Hunter's conception of the novel as a fictional version of history blinds him to the family resemblances that the Voyage shares with Menippean satire. Although the autobiographical tradition gives some shape to Dunton's text, my analysis of the Voyage focusses on its Menippean characteristics. Furthermore, while critics like Hunter and Henri Fluchere devalue Dunton as a trial run at



Shandeism that failed, Dunton's Voyage deserves to be considered on its own terms, within its own chosen traditions. Learned wit represents one important tradition; Menippean satire, I will argue (as Kirk has before me), represents another.

Dunton identifies his text with the Menippean tradition of intellectual satire through his long title: A Voyage Round the World: or a Pocket Library, Divided into several Volumes. The First of which contains the Rare Adventures of Don Kainophilus, From his Cradle to his 15th. Year. The Like Discoveries in such a method never made by any Rambler before. The whole work intermixt with essays, Historical, Moral and Divine; and all other kinds of Learning. Done into English by a Lover of Travels. Recommended by the wits of both Universities.

Kainophilus's eagerness to display his learning, to join the ranks of the learned wits, makes him a p' phus gloriosus. The irony of the recommendation . he "wits of both Universities" lies in wit's traditional association with madness. As Hobbes's comments (quoted above in my introduction) make clear, wit, when controlled by judgment, provides socially acceptable forms of mental discourse and outward behaviour. Uncontrolled, wit reduces a person to madness, which in extreme cases causes either a wandering intellect or, worse, an obsession (Deporte 115). Dunton's narrator, Don John Kainophilus, strangely mixes them

together, for his obsession is "rambling."

Rambling, for a learned wit like Kainophilus, means a wanderlust for travel and a digressive writing style. But if, as Ben Jonson avers, "No glass renders a man's form, or likeness, so true as his speech" (Timber 435), Kainophilus reveals himself most through his writing. Walter Charleton, translator of Petronius and president of the Royal College of Physicians, offers an explanation for those who suffer the same mental affliction as Kainophilus, in his treatise Concerning the Different Wits of Men:

if there be not a constant regulation of thoughts to some certain End, the more we are conducted by the heat of Phansie, the nearer we come to Extravagancy, which is a degree of Madness; such as is observed in those Rambling Wits, who . . . having entred into discourse of one thing, are by every new hint, however remote and impertinent, transported from their subject into so many digressions and Parentheses, that not recovering what at first they intended to speak, they lose themselves, as in a Labyrinth.<sup>3</sup>

(28-29)

Charleton's description of "Rambling Wits" paraphrases Hobbes's passage from Leviathan (1: 8), already mentioned. The image of the labyrinth well represents the digressive structure of Denton's text. Charleton's comment that

rambling wits "lose themselves" in their labyrinthine discourse suggests not only a lack of self-knowledge in Dunton's philosophus gloriosus, but a lack of self-control.

Dunton parodies Kainophilus by exposing his philosophical search for self-knowledge as nothing more than a satiric fable of narcissistic self-consciousness. Kainophilus justifies his intellectual narcissism with the Delphic oracle's injunction to all philosophers, "Know yourself":

If the World find fault that I speak of my self,  
I find fault that they do not so much as think  
of themselves. Socrates that taught, Nosce  
Teipsum; learnt likewise to know himself; and by  
that study was arriv'd to the Perfection of  
setting himself at naught. And the old  
Philosopher [Heraclitus] never wanted occasion  
for his Tears, whilst he considered himself.

(Voyage 3: 19)

The reference to Heraclitus, who weeps at the folly of humanity, is a Menippean convention. Unfortunately, no matter how earnestly Kainophilus searches for himself, he remains blind to the error of his mental disposition. "Not being able to govern Events," Kainophilus declares, "I endeavour to govern myself, (as knowing a Man never taken in Passion is a mark of the sublimest reach of Wit, seeing thereby he puts himself above all vulgar Impressions

. . . ) (Voyage 3: 36). But Charleton warns that "Rambling Heads. . . so far from attaining to sublime and extraordinary Wisdom . . . sink themselves by aspiring" (66-67). Until he gives up the "sublimest reach of Wit" as an ideal, Kainophilus defers any chance of self-knowledge, or self-control.

Without the right proportion of rational judgment, the philosophus gloriosus cannot put his learned wit to a useful purpose, and it becomes, therefore, an end in itself. The subject of Kainophilus's digressive wit, for example, often takes up the self-referential subject of digression, or refers to some other useless point of learned wit. To begin the latter case, Kainophilus, in the first chapter of volume 2, outlines the design of the volume. Having assumed the pseudonym Evander, he describes chapter 5.

Towards the end of which Chapter Evander confesses his Wit has a little run away with him; so ungovernable a thing is towring Fancy, when not hand-cufft by powerful Reason, flying out against Learning, beloved Learning, at so Satyrical a rate as almost makes his heart bleed to read it, when he thinks he has been so unkind to that which has been so kind to him--But . . . any one wou'd be glad to be so wittily abused, to have so good amends made him---See pag. 107.

## (Voyage 2: 12-13)

Significantly, on page 107, Kainophilus (or Evander) displays his reading, particularly of Menippean satirists. Politely avoiding a querulous dialogue between a married couple, Kainophilus picks up a book of Lucian's dialogues and digresses on the use of Lucian in sermons. Kainophilus for an unknown reason launches a defense of Lucian, the most influential classical progenitor of Menippean satirists. He asks, proverbially, "why mayn't good Wits jump, the Fathers and Lucian, as well as you and Dablancour?" (Voyage 2: 107). Perrot D'Ablancourt, qualifies as a good wit who "jumps," or agrees, with Kainophilus because he translates Lucian in the Renaissance. Lucian is often accused of atheism, and even Deism, forcing translators like D'Ablancourt to defend him by citing his use by Church fathers like St. Chrysostum (Craig 146). The obscure, learned debate to which Kainophilus alludes is lost on most of his readers. And yet the obscurity exemplifies the mad pedantry of philosophus gloriosi and the "extravagancy" of their learned wit.

The narcissism in Kainophilus's wit intensifies when a digression, instead of referring to some other digression in the Voyage, addresses the subject of digression itself. When he senses a reader's objection that his digressions serve no purpose, Kainophilus rationalizes his digressive

wit. He even complains that such objections initiate an infinite regress:

--don't let the Reader trouble me with so many impertinent Objections, for that unavoidably leads a Man into Digressions from the main subject, and then the Digressions lead a Man into further Digressions, for Error is infinite, and the longer you wander in a wrong Path, my Shoes to yours, the further you go from the right, if they are opposite on to t'other: Not but that Digressions are so far from being always a fault, that they are indeed often pardonable, and sometimes, a great Beauty to any discourse----but then they must be well turn'd and managed, they must come in naturally and easily, and seem to be almost of a piece with the main Story, tho never so far distant from it.----I love a Digression, I must confess with all my Heart, because 'tis so like a Ramble. . . . (1: 142)

Dunton's paradoxical praise for digressions anticipates Swift's Tale of a Tub and reflects a long practice of Menippean satirists, as Kirk points out in his work.<sup>4</sup> But Kirk does not relate digression to self-consciousness as a Menippean convention in its own right, the term for which, in the seventeenth-century mind, is wit.

The ironic praise of beauty in digressions launches

Dunton's parody of Baroque poetics. The digressive wit of Dunton's *Kainophilus*, for instance, carries the exuberantly ornate style that characterizes Baroque literature to an extreme. Dunton's self-conscious digressions also redefine the limits of a Baroque "mannered" or "affected" style, previously laid down by Lyly's euphuistic prose in Eupheus: The Anatomy of Wit.<sup>5</sup> Dunton's "anatomy of wit" focusses on narrative discontinuity through digression at the paragraph level, rather than on the self-contained inwardness of the humanism at the sentence level. And, unlike Lyly's hero Euphues, who reforms his wit by directing it toward an end or purpose, Dunton's *Kainophilus* never acquires this wisdom. *Kainophilus* possesses what Charleton, echoing Hobbes, calls a "RANGING Wit, whose Pregnancy is so diffused, that it flieth at all things" (Two Discourses 62). A "pregnant wit" balanced with judgment indicates a gift for oratory, but *Kainophilus* "discourseth copiously rather than closely" and is "hardly brought to observe Decorum" (Two Discourses 90: 62-3). The resourcefulness of Dunton's narrator makes his distortions of seventeenth-century aesthetics often difficult to discern. A close comparison with Baroque theorists alone will reveal the reductio ad absurdum in *Kainophilus*'s parodic poetics of wit.

An issue of fundamental importance in Baroque poetics and Dunton's Voyage involves the relation of wit to mimetic

decorum. Reflecting on the ravages of his sexually contracted disease "small Pox," Kainophilus simply asserts, "Beauty is Fancy" (Voyage 2: 46). The sexual context of the statement does not preclude its relevance to other, more directly literary, aesthetic statements in the Voyage. The narrator elsewhere foregrounds the fictionality of his text, saying "This Voyage round the World was made in the Ship of Fancy, which every one knows, like the Cossacks Boats, sails as well by Land as Water" (2: 17). Dunton's "Ship of Fancy" recalls the "Answer to Davenant's Preface to Gondibert" (1650), where Hobbes consigns the structure of a poem to the poet's faculty of judgment, and the ornaments to the poet's fancy. Fancy, Hobbes goes on, moves swiftly,

So that when she seemeth to fly from one Indies to the other, and from Heaven to Earth, and to penetrate into the hardest matter and obscurest places, into the future and into her self, and all this in a point of time, the voyage is not very great, her self being all she seeks; and her wonderful celerity consisteth not so much in motion as in copious imagery discreetly ordered & perfectly registred in the memory . . . .

(59-60)

Dunton's "Ship of Fancy" bears a striking likeness to Hobbes's fancy. The absence, nevertheless, of "Judgment,



the severer Sister," who examines Nature for "order, causes, differences, and resemblances," means that the plausibility of mimetic decorum will also be absent in Dunton's Voyage.

Reducing Dunton's Voyage to a mere flight of fancy ignores the narrator's valid claims to the empirical virtues of the historian. Dunton republishes a great deal of the same material found in A Voyage in his non-fictional autobiography The Life and Errors. Dunton's Life and Errors holds unique historical information regarding the literary world which only a bookseller with Dunton's exceptional marketing experience can acquire. Dunton, for instance, publishes Jonathan Swift's first literary effort in his Athenian Mercury, a poetic ode which elicits Dryden's notorious remark that his cousin Swift would never be a poet. Swift's original enthusiasm for Dunton's learned Athenian society, however, soon changes, and he attacks Dunton's commercialism in A Tale of a Tub.<sup>6</sup> Dunton retorts in Life and Errors by calling Swift a "Scoffing Tub-man" (xvi). A significant sign, however, of Dunton's deliberately playful attitude toward history emerges when we discover him, in Life and Errors and A Voyage, quoting the same couplet from John Oldham's translation of Horace's Art of Poetry, which states, "That whatsoe'er of Fiction / bring in, / 'Tis so like Truth, it seems at least akin" (xvi) (Life xvi; Voyage 3: 400). Conventional readings interpret

the Horatian couplet as a defence of mimesis which restrains fiction through probability. With the Menippean satirist's playful approach, the Horatian couplet challenges the reader to discern between fiction and history in Dunton's game of wit.

Dunton invokes Horace ironically to sanction his transgression of mimesis and explore the purely fictional in the "Ship of Fancy." The misappropriation of another well-known author's learning allows Dunton to ridicule his philosophus gloriosus, Kainophilus, while at the same time showing his erudition. A learned commonplace, especially important in linking Dunton to a tradition of Baroque poetics, turns up in volume 3. Dunton's persona Kainophilus meets an old friend, whose name, Philaret, is another pseudonym of Dunton's (Parks 320). The two friends, who "dwell together like Soul and Body," agree to ramble together "as far as Earth, and Seas, and Love" can carry them (Voyage 3: 358-59). Philaret descants on the idea of rambling:

Wee'll Ramble till we can see both Poles knock;  
till we leave the Moon and Stars, and Light  
behind us; till we find Mountains of Gold without  
a Fiction (and seeing Novelty in a thing so  
agreeable to our Natures) wee'll wander still on,  
till we view the Cradle of the Infant-Morn,  
observe the Chambers of the Rising Sun.

(Voyage 3: 359)

Two verbal echoes of Hobbes's aesthetics occur in this passage. The first echo, "Mountains of Gold," relates to the Baroque theories of the imagination, whereas the idea of "novelty" echoes an essential concept in Hobbes's doctrine of aesthetic effects. Since the phrase "Mountains of Gold" provides a historical context for Hobbes's aesthetics, we will discuss it first.

Dunton's "Mountains of Gold" testify to his knowledge of Baroque theories of the imagination. Clarence W. Thorpe, in his book The Aesthetic Theory of Thomas Hobbes, traces the phrase, through Hobbes, to the Renaissance Spanish physician and educator, Juan de Dios Huarte. Translated into English by Richard Carew, Huarte's Examen de Ingenios (1575) becomes the Examination of Mens Wits (1594). Huarte's treatise examines the causes for the different wits in people, and how best to apply one's wit to the various sciences and arts. His traditional analysis places the imagination in a mediate position between the sense and the memory with the ability to communicate to the understanding as well. Among its many powers, such as creating the delusions of frenzies and fevers, the imagination combines sense impressions into complex phantasms such as "mountains of gold, and calves that flie" (Examen 132).

Hobbes in his theory of the imagination as "decaying

sense" (Leviathan 4) adds a distinction between the simple and compound imagination. The simple imagination imagines single objects as a whole which have been presented to the sense, such as a horse, or a man. With the compound imagination, an individual can conceive a Centaur, which is "properly but a fiction of the mind" (Leviathan 6).

Reviewing the idea of the compound imagination in The Elements of Philosophy, Hobbes explains that "in the silence of sense, there is no new motion from the objects, and therefore no new phantasm, unless we call that new, which is compounded of old ones, as a chimera, a golden mountain, and the like" (Elements of Philosophy, 1.3.4., qtd. in Thorpe 83). Philaret's careful qualification that he will find "Mountains of Gold without a Fiction" shows that, like Kainophilus, he too is a learned wit.

The pursuit of novelty by Dunton's two learned wits evinces one more mark of Hobbes's aesthetic. Their pursuit of novelty parallels the reader's, since as the Hobbesian Walter Charleton states, "Novelty begets pleasure" (Two Discourses 70). Two things, in Hobbes's view, are essential to good poetry: to know well, and to know much. The sign of the former quality, perspicuity, gives clear and distinct images of nature. The "signe of the latter," Hobbes says, "is novelty of expression, and pleaseth by excitation of the minde; for novelty causeth admiration, and admiration curiosity, which is a delightful appetite of

knowledge" ("Answer" 63). A philosophus gloriosus, like Kainophilus, prides himself on knowing much and takes every opportunity in the Voyage to exhibit the copiousness of his pregnant wit. Kainophilus may not know anything well, but he can take encouragement from Hobbes again, "For men more generally affect and admire fancie than they do either Judgment, or reason, or Memory, or any other intellectual Vertue; and for the pleasantness of it, give to it alone the name of Wit" ("Vertues" 70). Kainophilus exhibits all the Hobbesian virtues of knowing much and possessing fancy, novelty, and wit, in the example below.

From the beginning of his rambles, Kainophilus expresses an abiding interest in the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis. Indeed, Kainophilus begins his narrative speculations on his rambles in a pre-existent state before birth. Dunton parodies the seventeenth-century version of atomistic metempsychosis (which holds that the souls of living things are exchanged through atoms) through a witty allusion to the nursery rhyme "The House that Jack Built." Pondering the question of "how many particles of a Lyce" have gone into his soul's composition, or whether his "great Grandfather might be made out of a Whale or an Elephant," Kainophilus asks his readers to "remember the Story of the Dog that kill'd the Cat, that eat the Rat" (Voyage 1: 27-28). In typically Menippean fashion, Kainophilus self-consciously explains

his learned wit: "for I love to illustrate Philosophical Problems, with common instances for the use of the less knowing part of the World" (Voyage 28). Wit, as Locke defines it, proceeds by way of "Metaphor and Allusion" (Essay 156). However, the juxtaposition of learned knowledge with popular knowledge represents an ancient Menippean technique. Dryden in his discourse on satire, quoting Cicero, describes Varro's mingling of philosophy "with pleasantries on purpose, that they may more easily go down with the common sort of unlearned readers" (Discourse 2: 65). Dunton's Menippean technique of mixing higher, more serious forms of learning with "lower," often humorous, popular forms illustrates what the twentieth-century critic Bakhtin calls the "jolly relativity" of carnivalized literature (Dostoevsky's Poetics 88). More recently, the philosopher Michel Foucault proposes a similar challenge to higher forms of knowledge by traditionally lower, popular kinds of knowledge in what he calls an insurrection of popular knowledges (Power/Knowledge 81-82). Menippean satirists like Dunton seem to parallel important aspects of postmodern philosophy and its postmodern poetics.

A more explicit example of Hobbes's aesthetic occurs when a number of his critical terms appear in another attack on metempsychosis. Kainophilus pretends to portray his own character through the eyes of his tailor:

'Were there any Metempsychosis, my Soul would want a Lodging, no single Beast could fit me; for I shou'd out of pure love to novelty change more Lodgings than ever Pythagors's Soul did. Twice every day a thousand Fancies and Fegaries crowd into my Noodle so thick as if my Brain kept open-house for all the Maggots in nature.'

(Voyage 3: 30)

Part of the parody on metempsychosis involves the reduction of the soul to its material composition, making the differences in the sizes of soul an obstacle to the process. The "maggots" and "fegaries" both refer to the eccentric whimsicality of Kainophilus's fancy, the same creative faculty of fancy that produces his Voyage. Possessed with such a surplus of fancy in his soul, and a "pure love to novelty" which he expresses through his rambles, Kainophilus well personifies important aspects of Hobbesian poetics.

The excessive intellectual exuberance of Dunton's learned wit, nevertheless, distorts Hobbes's poetics of creation. Hobbes in Leviathan names wit an intellectual virtue only if fancy and judgment are kept in proper balance. In a "good poem," Hobbes believes "the Fancy must be more eminent; because they [literary forms] please for the Extravagancy," but he limits the fancy, for it "ought not to displease by Indiscretion" (Leviathan 58).

Furthermore, Hobbes disapproves of "those that think the Beauty of a Poem consisteth in the exorbitancy of the fiction" ("Answer" 61-62). A poet may go beyond the strict imitation of nature, but not, Hobbes asserts, "beyond the conceived possibility of nature" ("Answer" 62). The distinction between "extravagancy" in a good poem and "indiscretion," however, is a difficult boundary to maintain. And Menippean satire, which specializes in the parody of form, and illustrates the etymological meaning of satire as satura (or hash), seizes on the ambiguities in idealized theories of "the beauty of perfect form" (Frye, AC 233). The "exorbitancy of the fiction" that Dunton, like so many Menippists, exploits is the metafictional technique of a self-conscious wit.

Evidence of the deliberate exploitation of wit's exorbitant fictions, its meta-fictions, lies in Dunton's parody of the Horatian aesthetic and the roles of author and reader. Insofar as Dunton uses wit to explore the ways in which art is distinct from nature, he conforms to the traditional questions of Baroque poetics. Dunton goes beyond conventional Baroque poetic values, however, by transgressing the norms nature imposes.<sup>7</sup> In other words, Dunton transgresses the mimetic theory of art, in Patricia Waugh's phrase, by holding the mirror up to art. Dunton's text represents not just nature, but art as well. Dunton represents his art by talking about the way he constructs



his narrative and the way the reader receives it. He foregrounds the act of diegesis by making the normally external fictions of author and reader "intradiegetic" figures within the fictional narrative.<sup>8</sup> Dunton leaves his narratee undeveloped in the narrative, portraying the figure primarily as a fellow pilgrim. Most of the wit in the text plays with the identities of Kainophilus and the authorial figure John Dunton. Besides the two figures, the most exorbitant fiction of wit by Baroque standards in Dunton's Voyage is the text itself. The extraordinary attention Dunton devotes to the text turns the language back on itself so that it represents not nature or truth but the play of wit.

Dunton's parody of the Horatian aesthetic maxim displays the power of metafiction to mingle in a unique way the profits of history with the pleasures of poetry. Pleased with the sale of the first volume of the Voyage, Kainophilus proudly comments that he has seen all his readers, who have a "true taste of Wit and Humour justly hugging and admiring" the book (Voyage 2: 1). Yet some objections arise, the chief of which is that readers "don't know what to make on't" (Voyage 2: 1) and therefore ask "What use, what profit, what account it turns to" (2: 2). Kainophilus answers bluntly, "I am't bound to find Sense both for my Book and my Readers" (2: 5). But Kainophilus goes further than just refusing to say whether his text

represents any truth or moral purpose. He parodies the Horatian poetic aim of giving profit and delight. He is not averse to "mingling utile dulci" (2: 9) in the customary way for the reader. But Kainophilus departs from custom when asked how he will "make profit of what's only pleasant?," and he answers,

Why as easily as I make this Book. . . . If  
Pleasure be the chief Good, as some Philosophers  
 . . . have asserted, then whatever is pleasant,  
 must undoubtedly contain all other goods under  
 them and among them the profitable ones"

(2: 9).

But, as we shall see, Kainophilus parodies Horatian decorum in more ways than by subordinating the didactic aims of the text to the pleasures of the text.

Kainophilus's most radical violation of Horatian decorum occurs when he openly refers to the author's economic relationship with his reader. In fact, his first answer to questions regarding the usefulness of his design boldly asserts, "'twas highly useful to Me, which none need doubt I think the principal Verb, I can assure 'em by my own Experience, [it] has turn'd a penny these hard times" (2: 6). Contrary to the gentlemanly ethos of the disinterested author advocated by writers like the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Dunton explicitly weaves self-interest as a theme of central

significance. The autobiography Life and Errors shows that Kainophilus's apprenticeship to a printer and career as a Bookseller corresponds to details of Dunton's own life. Through Kainophilus, Dunton plays with the historical narrative of his career throughout volume 2 and even advertises some of his books. For instance, after Kainophilus commends "Dunton's Blessed Martyrs" (2,69), he rambles up to Dunton's shop, the Raven at the Poultry, and praises his character. Kainophilus admits that Dunton is "something like" him but he emphatically states that whatever others say, "they can never prove "I am he" (2: 69). Dunton's constant oscillation between affirming and denying that he is Kainophilus transforms the question of the differences between historical and fictional autobiography into a game.

Dunton begins his game of wit with the figure of the author in an anagram. Samuel Butler and Joseph Addison both attack anagrams as false wit because they are merely tricks in writing governed by chance (Characters 8; Spectator 254). Dunton's anagrammatic false wit appears in the twenty pages of panegyric verses that introduce the Voyage. A title heading one of the verses reads as follows: "The AUTHORS NAME when Anagramatized is Hid unto None" (1,sig. B4r). Isaac D'Israeli solves the anagram "Hid unto None" "by which John Dunton would, and would not, conceal himself" (Life and Errors xiii). Dunton continues

the game in a much more elaborate form at the beginning of volume 2, which narrates the seven years of Kainophilus's printing apprenticeship. Along with proposing that his "pleasant and useful Digressions . . . will cure the Melancholy" (Voyage 2: 6), Dunton's narrator believes that readers also benefit from the whim and pleasantries of seeing "a Man describ'd and not describ'd, playing Bo-peep with the World, and hiding himself behind his Fingers; like Merry Andrew, clapping his Conjuring Cap on, and then crying, Who sees me now?" (2: 7). References to an absconding author recur throughout the Menippean genre in pseudonyms and anagrams and stand as a figure for the author's ironic approach to the meaning of the text. As Frye puts it, "suppression of all explicit moral judgments" is essential to ironic fiction (AC 40). Dunton's narrator, for instance, claims that he is not "bound to find Sense for my Book and my Readers," and leaves the reader to supply the norms for his often enigmatic text.

Dunton's game of "Bo-peep" with his readers through his persona Kainophilus represents a contest within the author's self-conscious psyche between the eiron, or self-deprecating dissembler, and the alazon, or impostor (Frye, AC 39-40). Kainophilus, the philosophus gloriosus, personifies the impostor's role through his uncontrollable learned wit. Dunton plays with his ironic role as the self-deprecating "implied author" (Rimmon-Kenan 86-89).

But the struggle in the narrative to identify the author of the Voyage typifies "[t]he dialogical attitude of man to himself" that Bakhtin sees in Menippean satire as early as Varro's Bimarcus, or The Double Marcus (Dostoevsky's Poetics 96). The narrating persona's rambling wit symbolizes the author's search for a unified identity and the reader's search for a unified understanding of the author's textual themes. And if, as Dunton's rambling narrator states, poetry is the "Efflorescence of Wit" (1: 105), deferring the end of the narrator's and the reader's search constitutes the fundamental pleasure of Dunton's text. Dunton's association of the floral metaphor with wit implies an organic relationship between the psychological faculty of creativity in the poet, and its written product. Dryden in the "Preface to Annus Mirabilis" (1667) develops the relationship between wit as a process and a product in his distinction between "wit writing," the writer's imagination, and its product, "wit written" (Ker 1: 14). However, Menippean satire portrays the learned wit of the philosophus gloriosus locked in a conflict between form and content, between the effort to force some order on his subject, and the Faustian desire to display the content of his encyclopedic knowledge.

In order for Dunton to play "Bo-peep" with his readers, Kainophilus must assume the pose of an author setting out to correct the problem of his mistaken

identity. Kainophilus designs Chapter 2 of the second volume to function as "A word of Reproof to all such as pretend they know the Author of these Rambles" (Voyage 2: 19). Kainophilus states that he considers it "So great a Glory . . . to be the Author of these Works, that I cannot without great injury to myself and Justice, endure that any shou'd own 'em who have nothing to do with 'em, like the Fellow at Rome, who pretends to Virgil's Verses" (2: 19). He feels that the "whim in the style" (2: 19) is enough to convince anyone of his authorship. But, indignant over the audacity of those who pretend to know the Voyage's author, Kainophilus represents an especially stubborn case of these "over-bold persons" (2: 20). The witty irony in the dispute over the identity of the author comes at the end when Kainophilus advertises a book for John Dunton, the name the reader silently substitutes during the episode.

A "grave and good Man" walks up to Kainophilus for writing "such a confounded silly Book as this of your self" which makes him the "perfect Maygame of the Town" (2: 20). Heartily glad that the world talks of him, Kainophilus answers, "I'm a made Man,--I shall get Money by't, besides Fame, Renown, and Honour in abundance into the bargain" (2: 20). The grave, good Man becomes "ten times madder" (2: 21) when Kainophilus, ironically, argues that noone can prove that he is the author of his own book any more than they ~~can~~ prove he is the "Man in the Moon" (2: 21). For

Kainophilus, any evidence submitted to prove his authorship is circumstantial. A "strong fancy," Kainophilus says, "often makes Likeness where it never finds any," and he even grants that he looks like Kainophilus (2: 21). But he contends that "no like is the same" (2: 22). And, since no Man is ever "hanged for Circumstances,"

no Judge in England, not a George Lord Jeffreys whose Life you may have at Mr. Dunton's in the Poultreys, would be such a cruel bloody Dog to hang me by the Neck till I were dead, without any other Proof than this seeming Similitude

(2: 22; see also 2: 94).

The deferral of Dunton's name until the context of bookselling arises illustrates the ironic tone of Dunton's humour. In Life and Errors, Dunton objects to authors who "turn themselves into Half-Booksellers" (168) by meddling in the sale of their books. Dunton, nevertheless, finds a fictional way to unite the two professions for humorous effect.

Dunton adds a further dimension to the game of Bo-peep when he refers to other books he has written or sold. These intertextual references reduce Kainophilus to an allegorical figure, making the reader aware that his name is only a word on a page. An allusion to an earlier version of the Voyage, in particular, foregrounds Kainophilus's status as a literal symbol. The 1689

version, A Ramble Round the World, published in a periodical form, proves less than successful, since only two numbers are published.<sup>9</sup> As Kainophilus himself observes,

There was once a silly Fellow who pretended a Design a little like this we are about, to Ramble round the World; he began I think with Kent, and the rest of the World; but the pitiful abortive Project, which could never pretend to that height of thought, and profundity of Invention with ours, for that cause never liv'd above two or three days, and then was justly condemned to the stinking darkness of some ignoble Bog-house

(2: 24-25).

Ironically, calling attention to his own fictional status, Kainophilus cites the Ramble as the origin of his "own proper Cognomen": "'Tis not deny'd but that hence we may have taken the Name, the only thing worth living in it" (2: 25). If, as Barthes says, we "desire the author" (27), not as an institution, but as a "figure" in the text, then Dunton flirts with the reader's desire for that figure at a time in history when the modern institution of authorship is establishing itself.<sup>10</sup>

Dunton's game of Bo-peep turns to another long-standing Menippean convention of parodic plagiarism when he masks himself behind other authors. In Tristram Shandy



(5.1.408), for example, Sterne plagiarizes Burton's attack on plagiarism in the Anatomy (1.20). Dunton openly explains his motives for plagiarism, challenging the readers with another game to exercise their wit:

If . . . I transplant any of others Notions into my own soil, and confound them among my own, I purposely conceal the Author, to awe the temerity of those precipitous Censures that fall upon all sorts of Writings: I will have my reader wound Plutarch through my sides, and rail against Seneca, when they think they rail at me; I must shelter my own weakness under these great Reputations. (Voyage 3: 25)

An objection made against Kainophilus is that he does not "reconcile Book and Title" (2: 2). By leaving to his reader the completion of the "source-work," that is, of identifying and cataloguing his thefts, Dunton at least fulfills the claim that the voyage is a Pocket Library.

The emblem for Dunton's plunders we might call the humanist's commonplace of the spider and bee analogy. Printing, which brought about the enclosure movements of patents, congers, and copyrights to the literary common, changed the humanist's rambling bee into a plagiarizing plunderer.<sup>11</sup> However, long before the advent of print, the satirical impulse for variety permits Dunton to turn plagiarism into a positive advantage. Menippists flouting

generic decorum display their hybrid works. Burton calls his work a "cento" (Anatomy 1: 22), or patchwork, and Swift's Hack describes his Tale as an "Olio," or mixed stew (143). In such an illustrious tradition of generic and authorial violators, Dunton need only alert his readers to his violations to increase the humorous enjoyment of his odd collection:

an ingenious Person, who has prefixed an ingenious Poem to these my works . . . styleth me. . . a Bee, nay a mellifluous Bee, or Brother to one who gathers Sweets and Dainties wherever he comes. . . who would refuse the delicate present this his little industrious Tenant would make him forsooth, because he had stoln it from other folks Gardens and not gathered it only out of his own, or as the Spider Spins his thred drawn from his own Bowels.

(Voyage 1: 7)

In The Battle of the Books (1704), Swift makes the bee an emblem of the gentlemanly humanist who reads widely and gathers knowledge from ancient traditions. Swift's rancorous spider, who spins his works out of his own bowels, suffers from the modern author's pride of self-sufficiency. Both the spider and the bee have been used as emblems of wit, the creative faculty in the author. The spider-bee analogy, then, can serve as index of the

attitude of an author, such as Dunton, toward the issues of authorship and literary originality.

Dunton converts the commonplace of the spider and the bee into an apology for his patchwork of plagiarism. The inordinate attention Dunton gives to the issue of plagiarism testifies to his belief in the ideal of wit as the author's self-originating creativity. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, W. G. Crane tells us, "wit was particularly associated with rhetorical devices, such as proverbs, maxims, similes, examples, apophthegms, definitions, and set descriptions, as a number of collections of such matter explicitly testify" (8). The association of a copious, pregnant wit with a close knowledge of the traditional wisdom collected in a commonplace book also manifests itself in Charleton's definition of "Fine Wits" in 1650. For Charleton, "Fine Wits" are "Living Libraries, walking Epitomes of all Sciences, and Magazines of Knowledge" (Two Discourses 109). The need to apologize, as Dunton repeatedly does, for borrowing from other writers suggests that the conception of wit has become increasingly understood as the psychological faculty in the poet, and not the products of that faculty. Hobbes's and Dryden's interest in the psychological faculty of wit indicates that a Baroque poetics comprehends an expressive theory of literature, despite adherence to Aristotelian mimesis.

The rambling wit of Dunton's narcissistic narrator shows that Kainophilus figures forth a Baroque poetic, if only parodically. Since he is a bookseller and former printer's apprentice, Kainophilus's disposition to collect authors simply makes his professional experience the instrument through which he expresses his creative wit. Always aware of the reader, the self-conscious Kainophilus explains,

you must note I have an Invention, though it extends it self no further than the patching together a few Chamber-Collections, and you'll find my disposition of them to be as methodical as the Book-binders, when he places (X) in the place of (A): I wear my Wit in my Belly, and my Guts in my Head, a very Natural might bob my Brains, my Pia-mater is not worth the ninth part of Sparrow. I cannot in circumvention deliver a Fly from a Spider, without drawing the massy Irons, and cutting the Web (Voyage 3: 25-26).

Kainophilus's modest claim that his creative "Invention" extends only to gathering the sheets of other, more original authors, the way a bookbinder "gathers" sheets for authors, is confirmed by the conceits on wit which come from Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida (2.3.15-17).<sup>12</sup> Dunton's conceit of the spider as an original author's wit or invention, in this context, carries the disparaging

intent of the original, where Thersites attacks a soldier's lack of wit or intelligence.

Having praised the originality in other authors through the spider metaphor, Kainophilus indirectly praises his own original wit by implicitly applying the metaphor to himself. William Davenant in his 1650 "Preface to Gondibert" establishes the connection between the self-origination of wit and the spider when he says that wit "like that of a Spider is considerately woven out of ourselves" (2: 20). But Dunton has his own explanation for Kainophilus's rambling wit. As an infant, Kainophilus sneezes his brains out his nose, and they are fed back through his mouth by his wet-nurse. Ever since the mishap, Kainophilus has, significantly, "worn his BRAINS IN HIS GUTS" (1: 15). Kainophilus, then, draws his wit, like a spider, "from his own Bowels" (1: 7). The narrative often directs the reader's attention away from the spider metaphor in relation to the narrator, but the analogy supports the metaphor that Kainophilus "write his Guts out" (1: 7) for his readers. As often as Kainophilus denies that his "Whimsies . . . are spun out of myself" (3: 24), he just as frequently reminds the reader that his wits are lodged in his stomach. Indeed, Kainophilus routinely links his wanton wit to his unfortunate accident. He says, at one point, "Reader, you know, an empty Belly makes a witty Brain" (3: 39). The inference that Kainophilus travels for

his livelihood as a bookseller also surfaces on several occasions. Life and Errors, for instance, records Dunton's travels to Ireland and even overseas to New England to sell books, travels depicted in the Frontispiece to A Voyage. The economic motive for his rambling wit lies behind Kainophilus's quotations of the proverb that "When Belly is full, Bones be at rest" (2: 36). But, as we shall see, only if we add the appetite for knowledge as a motive to Kainophilus can we explain his travels in the "visible and intellectual World" (1: 4). Dunton's title capitalizes on the seventeenth-century view of travel as education.<sup>13</sup> As a title, A Voyage Round the World or, a Pocket Library exploits the popularity of travel books with the promise of romantic adventure, but the moral and educational subtitle attracts more serious and learned readers. The figure in the seventeenth century who epitomizes the educational ideal of growing wise by travel is Ulysses. Dunton notes that Ulysses came to know the way of many men and their cities (1, sig. B1r). Kainophilus's errant pen, however, wanders "Ulysses like" (1, sig. B1r) more through books than cities, and travels more pages than miles. Justifying the combination of a geographical with an intellectual ramble seems no more difficult for Kainophilus than justifying his combination of a rambling with a learned wit:

It has been said of Accomplished Persons that

they have Read Men as well as Books; and why is there not as great a Commendation belongs to those who have Travell'd Books as well as Men, and brought thence the Gold and precious Jewels, leaving 'em still, as the Bee the Flower, to return to the Metaphor already used, not a jot the worse for wearing. (1: 7-8)

Although Kainophilus's voyage around the world is largely imaginary, seventeenth-century readers were, as Michael McKeon says, "heir to an ancient and habitual association of travel narratives with tall tales and travelers with liars" (100). Menippean satire, as we shall see, contributes significantly to the "travelling liar" tradition.

Lucian's True History and Icaromenippus stand as prototypes for imaginary voyages, especially for Menippean satirists like Dunton. Dunton refers to the "witty Rogue Lucian" as "the very Roger of his Age" (1: 52), since Roger L'Estrange, a notorious contemporary of Dunton, translates the Spanish writer Quevedo's Menippean satire, Los Suenos, or The Visions (1627). L'Estrange translates a fantastic journey through hell. Other fantastic voyages not mentioned by Dunton, such as Gulliver's Travels (1726), Thomas More's Utopia (1516), and Joseph Hall's Mundus alter et idem (1605), are just a few samples from a much longer list given by Kirk (Menippean Satire).<sup>14</sup> Since he travels

books more than he does countries, Kainophilus provides a generic navigational chart for his reader to follow. Genre records, as it were, the trade routes Kainophilus travels on the literary map. Kainophilus boasts that, in his way, he is a greater traveller than Cavendish and Drake. He promises the reader that "Terra Incognita shall fly before us" and that he will "mend the Maps, where Bleau and Janson's out" (1, sig. B4v). Furthermore, in Volume 3 he advises the "way-faring" reeader to "take a Map" along to avoid misfortune (3, sig. A1r). But Kainophilus and his reader will "mend" maps not geographic but generic.

Kainophilus's generic map appears in the "Preface to the Booksellers of London" in volume 2. Menippean satirists commonly give what Kirk (borrowing from Gilbert Highet) calls a satiric "pedigree," or a list of generic predecessors.<sup>15</sup> Cervantes, "a neat Wit and a vast Genius . . . was the first who wrote in this Drolling Sort of Prose-Satyr" (2, sig. A3r), according to Kainophilus. Kirk points out that Rene Rapin's description of Menippean satire in his Reflexions sur la Poetique d'Aristote is a probable source for Dunton's confusion of Cervantes' work with Menippean satire (Kirk Menippus 594; Menippean Satire 271). Kainophilus correctly identifies Quevedo as "another Attempt of the same kind" (2 sig. A3v), but A Voyage shows little influence of the Spanish author. Kainophilus ends the pedigree saying, "I can't tell why I should repeat any



more on't, unless to show my READING" (2 sig. A3v).

Dunton's recognition of Quevedo represents more of a tribute to Roger L'Estrange, who appears later as Dunton's "old Friend Nobbs" (2: 100), than an acknowledgement of a source for A Voyage.

Dunton shows an obvious concern for his readers when he asks them to take along with them a "Map" such as the pedigree. Nonetheless, his apologies for plagiarism indicate that Dunton wants his readers to recognize when a literary transgression occurs. The narrator's constant address to the reader, for instance, violates Aristotelian mimetic decorum. Shaftesbury reminds us in "Advice to an Author" that authors should speak as little as possible in their own person and follow Homer, the "great mimographer" (Characteristics 1: 129). Timothy J. Reiss argues that the exclusion of both author and reader in Neoclassical aesthetics, or what he calls, in his formidable phrase, "the occultation of the enunciating subject as discursive activity" (42), achieves objectivity but also excludes responsibility for the discourse. Dunton, by contrast, emphasizes the author's and reader's responsibility in the enunciation through the fiction of the narrator and narratee.

Kainophilus establishes an identity with his readers on an ethical basis. He begins by casting the reader in the role of confessor: "I (here) make the whole World my

Confessor, and many things that I could not confess to any one in particular, I deliver to the Publick" (3: 6). By divulging his faults, Kainophilus hopes to bring the reader's faults to remembrance. But the threat of others misrepresenting his faults prompts Dunton to remind readers of their complicity in spreading "tales":

I know which is worse, the Bearer of Tales, or the Receiver; for the one makes the other. The generous Man, where he cannot stop others mouths, he will stop his own Ears: The Receiver is as bad as the Thief. (3: 19)

Kainophilus's plagiarism makes his accusation of theft in the reader humorously ironic. Sensing that he has gone too far with his readers, Kainophilus tries to recover by identifying himself as a reader:

Reader, while I speak this to you, I prescribe to my self, what I write I read, and desire to reduce all my Meditations to the ordering of my own Manners. (3: 19)

Kainophilus's failure to order his "Manners" in the passage before this one shows the moral blindness of his narcissism. Shaftesbury charges that his age seldom sees "the character of the writer and that of the critic united in the same person" (Characteristics 2: 324).

Kainophilus's self-deception proves Shaftesbury's point. The dispersion of the writer's self into John Dunton,

Kainophilus, and Philaret, however, shows Dunton the critic interrogating the construction of the self far more radically than Shaftesbury envisions.

A closer consideration of Shaftesbury's argument against the self-interested writer like Dunton exposes some of its weaknesses. Shaftesbury advises authors to raise themselves above courting the reader and strive for a kind of Stoic indifference, or disinterestedness. An author achieves this independence by addressing his speech not to the reader but to himself, in an inward colloquy, or dramatic dialogue, which Shaftesbury calls soliloquy. Soliloquy transforms the author into his own critic, making self-improvement possible. In contrast to this ancient form of dialogism, Shaftesbury complains about the self-aggrandizing nature of the modern writer's self-consciousness:

An author who writes in his own person has the advantage of being who or what he pleases. He is no certain man, nor has any certain or genuine character; but suits himself on every occasion to the fancy of his reader, whom, as the fashion is nowadays, he constantly caresses and cajoles.

All turns upon their two persons.

(Characteristics 1: 131)

But Menippean satire, by virtue of its generic tradition, attacks the formal, self-enclosed systems of the self like

Shaftesbury's "doctrine of two persons" (Characteristics 1: 121). Shaftesbury himself says that "Of all the artificial relations formed between mankind, the most capricious and variable is that of author and reader" (2: 296). The ridicule of the philosophus gloriosus aims, in part, at revealing the variability and, more importantly, the artificiality of the relation between author and reader.

His game of Bo-peep with the figure of the author constitutes one way Dunton reveals the artificial relations between author and reader. Dunton also foregrounds the artificiality of the readers' role by representing them and their activity in the text. Shaftesbury expresses contempt for this practice of readerly patronization. Witness Dunton's assaults on the reader with instructions from the opening pages of the work through an elaborate folio-sized, zodiacal frontispiece attended by "A Poetical Explanation of the Frontispiece." The reader must read through numerous panegyric verses in praise of rambling, a lengthy introduction, a chapter on "The Impartial Character of a Rambler," and another chapter on "Evander's character. The author of these Rambles, Review'd by himself" before the narrative begins. Kainophilus's exhausting preliminaries go far beyond familiarizing the reader with the author's donnee in order to exalt his virtuosity and originality.

Although he directs much of his criticism at Dryden,

Shaftesbury's complaints apply to all contemporary self-conscious writers:

And as in an amour or commerce of love-letters, so here the author has the privilege of talking eternally of himself, dressing and sprucing himself up, whilst he is making diligent court, and working upon the humour of the party to whom he addresses. This is the coquetry of a modern author, whose epistles dedicatory, prefaces, and addresses to the reader are so many affected graces, designed to draw the attention from the subject towards himself, and make it be generally observed, not so much what he says, as what he appears, or is, and what figure he already makes, or hopes to make in the fashionable world.

(Characteristics 1: 131)

Shaftesbury aims his charge of "coquetry" not just at Dryden but at memoir writing, lamenting that "The whole writing of this age is become indeed a sort of memoir writing" (1: 32). At one point, Kainophilus calls the Voyage his "Memoirs" (2: 6). The extraordinary, often playful, attention Kainophilus gives to exclusively readerly concerns mitigates Shaftesbury's argument that any address of the reader signals self-aggrandizement of the author.

Dunton illustrates the reader's own digressive

activity with witty emblems and allegorical conceits. His Frontispiece portrays the visual emblem for the entire Voyage and features a zodiacal theme in the motto:

The sun Rambles much, but Kainophilus more,  
That thro' the twelve signs, this thro' twenty  
and four.

When this world he has view'd, to the next he is  
carry'd,

And see where he mounts in ganzales his chariot.

[SEE FIGURE]

A large circular pattern contains twenty-four circlets or "Globes" (1: 26), each depicting an autobiographical episode which parallels Dunton's Voyage and the more complete Life and Errors. But Dunton is not the first to use the sun as a metaphor of rambling wit. Davenant in the "Preface to Gondibert" says that "Wit is not only the luck and labour, but also the dexterity of thought, rounding the world, like the Sun, with unimaginable motion, and bringing swiftly home to the memory universall survey" (2: 20). Kainophilus tells the reader that the frontispiece is a "Hieroglyphick Account of all my Life" (Voyage 1: 26). He assures us that the frontispiece makes the purpose of his story clear "without the trouble of telling it" (2: 6). Kainophilus's frequent reference to the frontispiece more than hints that it too may be a map for his fellow ramblers.

The reader shares in the narrator's rambling wit through Dunton's parody of the pilgrimage. The parody expands into an elaborate witty conceit when the figure of Kainophilus, the index, and the printer's error all become symbols of the pilgrimage, especially the reader's pilgrimage, through Dunton's Voyage. Each of these symbols exemplifies the paradoxical metaphors of wit, which, as Butler states, expresses "Sense by Contradiction and Riddle" (Notebooks 144). Further, each is a literal symbol that emphasizes its place in a prose narrative, and, even more ironically, its place in a printed book. Such metafictional or reflexive symbols, by mirroring the reading process, allow readers to participate in the narrative.

The index best represents the reader's rambling wit, despite being the least symbolic of our three symbols. The first chapter of volume 2 reviews volume 1 and offers an index of page references like the following: "Turn over to chap. 2. and see but what a sound and useful Discourse of Life presents it self to your Observation" (2: 11). Analeptic passages, ostensibly intended to help readers understand the text, only serve to break the narrative's mimetic illusion. Mentioning the pagination marks the materiality of the book and calls attention to the normally sequential process of reading which has just been interrupted.

Hoping that the "novelty of the Humour" will sell his book, Kainophilus creates a parodic index in volume 1 which rambles nowhere (3: 32). Kainophilus contemplates the difficulty of giving his father's death proper treatment just as the narrative turns to his new life in London. The reader also waits, "big up to the Chin with expectation" (1: 108), for a promised description of London. However, Kainophilus says that, whatever he made them believe in the last chapter, readers are "not like to hear a word more on't in this two hours" (1: 108). Breaking from story-time to text-time, or the time represented in the fictional autobiography to the time it takes to read about it (see Rimmon-Kenan 44-45), prepares the reader for the interruption of the index:

turn to the Index; let's see, run along wi' your Finger--Chapter, Chapter Chapter, no, 'tis n'there, Chap. 4. Chap. 5. not yet, Chap. 6. there, there, ye have it, but then what volume? ay, that shou'd have bin thought of before the Chapter; why Volume the tenth? no, eleventh, twelfth, twenty three, twenty five, no, that can never be it because there bee n't so many. Is't the first then? Ay, the first be sure, which shou'd it be else sure? The Father ought to go before the Son because he was Born before me.

(1: 110)



The index is designed to help the reader find the story of Kainophilus's father in "a Lump" not "Drawn and Quartered" (1: 110) throughout the twenty-four proposed volumes (1: 109). Readers soon discover that the story of Kainophilus's father occurs in the very chapter they are reading:

I write nothing but what's chastest Truth, and all the Neighbours can justifie it: Well then now ye have it; ye can't miss't if ye had ne'ere so much mind to't. Vol. 1 Chap. 6. The Life and Death of Evander's immediate Male Progenitor. [All this pains I take now to make the matter clear, and instruct even the meanest capacity how to make the best use of this most useful Book] Why then? Stand by London, and Room for Father.

(1: 110)

Ironically, the index is not alphabetically arranged because Kainophilus gives only an imaginary one to teach the reader of the "meanest capacity" the best use of the book.

The rambling referentiality of the index in A Voyage parallels the metaphors of wit used by Kainophilus, who, in Butler's phrase, makes no "Conscience of digressing" from nature (Characters 90). Kainophilus's efforts to impose the pattern of a spiritual autobiography on his "Ulisses like" wandering proves that a "strong fancy . . . makes

Likeness where it never finds any" (Voyage 2: 21). Despite his statement that "Life is but a Pilgrimage" (3: sig. A1), Kainophilus's rambling wit leaves him wandering in the wilderness, worshipping "an Erratick, Rambling Deity" (1: sig. A8v). Dunton's parody of Kainophilus identifies the pen with the pilgrim's staff, and the printer's "error"--as mistake and as wandering--with the pilgrimage. Dunton even parodies Kainophilus's name, meaning "staff-lover," by making it symbolize the pilgrim's faith and the phallus. The parody of the pilgrimage foregrounds not the outward historical accuracy of the symbols but their inward meaning, as part of the self-contained verbal pattern of Dunton's fiction. In Shaftesbury's words, Dunton's "enigmatical wit" focusses on the paradoxical "play of words" (Characteristics 1.80) rather than imitating history. Kainophilus, then, becomes less a persona for Dunton's autobiography and more an allegorical figure for the reader's experience of the "play of words," the theme of rambling wit.

The transformation of the pilgrimage into an allegory of the reader's pursuit of pleasing novelties begins with Kainophilus's name. And since, Addison proposes, "not only the Resemblance but the Opposition of Ideas . . . produce Wit" (Spectator 270), we should expect to find the figure of the learned wit to embody this opposition. Kainophilus's name can signify basically two opposing

meanings. As a "staff-lover," his name suggests the conventional symbol of the wayfaring pilgrim's need for spiritual support and a spiritual home wherein to lay his staff. On the other hand, the word "Kain" recalls the biblical wanderer, Cain, and makes our character a "lover of wandering." The fundamental duality in Kainophilus represents the reader's conflict between reading the story as a linear, providential plot, or a series of discrete episodes. Dunton plays with this opposition in the figure of Kainophilus by developing a phallic association with the character's name and his profession. The adventures of male heroes driven to wander by the wrath of Priapus recurs as a theme in Menippean satire, beginning with Petronius's Satyricon. In Dunton's Voyage, the priapic theme signifies only Kainophilus's impotence through his failed pilgrimage, and his inability to control the instrument of his rambling wit, his pen.<sup>16</sup>

Dunton pretends to disguise the phallic associations of Kainophilus's name by claiming that it means "a Lover of News" (1: 141). But, Kainophilus also says, hinting at his merely allegorical existence, "I am a Rambling Name as well as Thing, that all may be of a Piece that belongs to me" (1: 26). Dunton emphasizes the priapic image with Gothic type in the following passage when "The Author of the Book" says of Kainophilus:

Other People are for walking with a Horse in

their Hand, he's o' the contrary, for riding with  
his Staff in his Hand; or rather Walking with a  
Horse between his Leggs. . . . (1: 13)

The imagery of Dunton's narrator intimates the traditional phallic metaphor of the hobby-horse which Sterne exploits so well in Tristram Shandy.<sup>17</sup> Kainophilus, however, explicitly refers to the hobbyhorse as a children's toy, and indirectly as a hobby, when he sets himself up with tools needed in the "universal Trade of Rambling: a Hobby-Horse . . . a pair of little Boots . . . [and] A Staff" (1: 43). Kainophilus accentuates the term's sexual connotation, which is difficult to miss, by underlining the word "horse." He regrets that sometimes he travelled on foot, that is, "dismounted," for it is "directly against the most sacred Rules of Knight Errantry, and never to be done, unless in a Pilgrimage" (1: 43-44). The opposition between knight errantry and the pilgrimage prepares the reader for Kainophilus's perambulations as a printing apprentice in London and for the playful manipulation of the symbolic meanings in the printer's "error."

By raising the printer's error to an emblem of life, Dunton also raises the reader's awareness of the textual artifice of Kainophilus's fictional existence. The printer's error, for Dunton, acts as a literal symbol of wit which tells readers not only that Kainophilus is an allegorical fiction, but also that the story of his rambles

is made up of printed words. To begin with the diegetic level, Kainophilus tells of his moral awakening regarding the temptation to error in the city after his father has indentured him as printer's apprentice in London. He calls London "Sodom and Gomorrhah" but hastens to add, "Not that I speak any ill at all of any place in the World by way of experience" (1: 145). Dunton raises, but does not fulfill, the expectation that the printer's error is the sexual act of a young apprentice, even though a "Termagent Whore" could easily kidnap him, "carry him away from his careful Master, get him into some blind hole and ravish him" (1: 145).

Dunton sustains the analogy of Kainophilus's printing apprenticeship with his moral apprenticeship throughout the Voyage. The panegyric verses end Volume 1 with an overt identification of life with the printing press:

To the READER.

Instead of the ERRATA

The Author hath his Faults, the Printer too,

All Men whilst here do err, and so do You.

(1: sig. B6r)

Dunton's substitution of the epigram for the printer's corrections transforms the printed book of the Voyage into an emblem, a literal symbol of wit comparable to George Herbert's "Easter Wings" and Sterne's "motley emblem," the marbled page. Even at the diegetic level, Kainophilus's

pilgrimage to salvation, rather than recounting the story of his moral conversion. calls attention to the text and its verbal construction. Kainophilus, for example, says it is "as natural for Men to err, as to be" (3: 8). But Kainophilus thinks of error from a primarily professional rather than a moral point of view. Far from seeing any moral lesson in his fantasies about being kidnapped by "Termagant Whores," Kainophilus shows more concern about a reader's objection to his possible theft of a description of Westminster from another author. He answers the reader that he does not "Colour Old Books, or new Bind 'em and then put 'em off for New" (1: 141). The printer's error, in Kainophilus's case, consists mainly in his persistent reduction of life to a problem in a printed book.

The reduction of life to printed signs in a book well represents the fundamental error in the learned wit of the philosophus gloriosus. Whether it is in self-conscious digression, or a printer's error, the learned wit rambles away from mimesis, obstructing the reader's access to the story. But the printer's error in particular obscures the transparency of the printed sign and illustrates what Derrida calls "the opacity of the signifier" (166). Even the moral significance of Kainophilus's repentance seems disingenuous because of his previous playfulness with the word "error": "But Reader, wherin I have err'd upon any account, 'tis from Heaven and my Master and not from thee,

that I (heartily) ask forgiveness" (3: 11). A few sentences later, the association of the text's rambling narrative and witty style with the emblem of error comes to the reader's mind as readily as the moral associations:

for though I am but just peept into the Thirtieth year of my age, and have Always industriously devoted my Time and Rambles to the knowledge of Countreys, Books and Men; yet were I to correct the Errata's of my short Life, I would quite alter the Press. (3: 11)

Ironically, in his Life and Errors, Dunton uses this same passage, only slightly altered, to repent the publication of seven books as "rash and heedless," including A Voyage Round the World (159). The passages in both books remind the readers that they are reading a book in a world of books, and in a world seen as "the great Book of Nature" (3: sig. A1r).

The influence of printing stimulates Kainophilus's desire to reduce the experiences of his rambling wit to a printed book:

Give me the Man that without let or stay  
O're all the World eternally does stray, . . .  
And by his own Authority can tell  
Tales far more strange and more incredible,  
And has the Knack, when all his Labour's done,  
To cram 'em in a Book and make 'em known:

Fearless essays to show himself in Print

For a stupendous bold Itinerant

(1: sig. A7r-A8v)

In order to encompass the range of his wit, Kainophilus stretches to their limit the printing conventions connected to the learned encyclopedia and the travel diary.

Menippean satire routinely mixes generic styles, especially those of the traveller and philosopher, for, as Ronald Paulson states, "The narrative equivalent of the catalog or anatomy of satura is the journey" (21). As the philosophus gloriosi struggle to contain their encyclopedic knowledge, their digressive style often turns their work into an anatomy of the printed book and its conventions. The "bold Itinerants" in the genre of Menippean satire and their anatomies of the printed book offer an excellent starting point for modern critics like D. F. McKenzie, who calls for a study of the printed book as an expressive form (Bibliography ix,24,50). Philosophus gloriosi like Kainophilus will always voyage on the boundaries between art and life with their readers, and will always play "Bo-peep with the world," to the very end of their textual existence:

But whither do I Ramble? How many Miles (alias Pages) am I again out of my Way? Surely my Readers will think I have forgotten myself, or my End of coming to London: But let them if they



will, for I'll not trust myself here to this Heat  
that so noble a Subject inspires, and shall  
therefore reserve it for the next Volume so that  
now

Exit Bookseller, and enter Author, to  
act all the other Parts. (3: 416)

The next volume never comes, but the spirit of Kainophilus is resurrected in 1762, through the metempsychosis of printing, as Christopher Wagstaffe, "Grandfather to Tristram Shandy."

Dunton contributes to Baroque poetics a unique display of wit's exorbitant fictions, a meta-fiction which exceeds Aristotelian mimesis. Dunton's fiction digresses from nature through his metaphorical, and especially digressive, wit and takes Hobbesian aesthetics to its limit. The novelty of Dunton's wit pleases the reader by exposing the artificiality of his fiction. Dunton's self-conscious wit may be more consistent with the metaphysical wits or the Continental theorists of wit and their "'poetics of the marvelous'" (Van Hook 32). However, the Menippean convention of violating prevailing literary decorum most satisfactorily explains the extravagancy of Dunton's exuberant wit. In fact, the ridicule of philosophus gloriosi and their learned wit throughout the history of Menippean satire might be regarded, in Addison's phrase, as a "History of false Wit" (Spectator 245). No author

reveals the indecorum of Menippean wit better than Sterne. And, although his work may overshadow other Menippists, his techniques have a long ancestry, one which is not novelistic. But, I digress.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>See Wilbur D. Cross, Life and Times 1: 127-136; and Henri Fluchere 185-187.

<sup>2</sup>Kirk outlines the similarities between Dunton and Sterne in his 1975 essay. Digression, of course, marks the style of both Menippists, and in both cases the reader must wait for many chapters for the narrator's birth. Dunton's Kainophilus also writes romantically to his beloved Iris, as does Sterne to Julia, though both women never appear as characters. Kirk gives one particularly striking example of the many verbal echoes: when he digresses upon his love for Julia, Kainophilus asks what the reader thinks of an author who "Rambles to a Tale of a Cock and Bull, and scarce says one word of her" (Voyage 2: 80); Tristram Shandy ends with a similar Cock-and-Bull tale.

<sup>3</sup>For Charleton's translation of Petronius, see Kirk, Menippean Satire 143. This passage is cited in Deporte 16; see also Thorpe 179-80, cited below.

<sup>4</sup>See Kirk's article "Tristram Shandy, Digression, and the Menippean Tradition"; and his book Menippean Satire, index under "Digression."

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion of Baroque poetics, see J. W. Hook, Rene Wellek; and "Baroque Poetics" in Preminger.

<sup>6</sup>For Swift's change of heart, see Stephen Parks 90-93; and McEwen 12.

<sup>7</sup>I am paraphrasing the summary of "Baroque Poetics" in the Princeton Encyclopedia.

<sup>8</sup>For the term "intradiegetic," see Prince; and Rimmon-Kenan 94-96.

<sup>9</sup>For a discussion of the periodical version, see Parks 49, 241; McEwen 14-16.

<sup>10</sup>See Chapter 6 of John Feather's book A History of British Publishing; Rogers 37-56; and Woodmansee.

<sup>11</sup>See Eisenstein 121.

<sup>12</sup>For the technical use of the word "gathering," see Gaskell 7.

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, George B. Parks; and McKeon 100-105.

<sup>14</sup>See Kirk's index, under "Fantastic or imaginary voyages."

<sup>15</sup>Kirk, Menippean Satire xiv, and index: "Pedigrees": Highet 16.

<sup>16</sup>Menippean satire anticipates the modern deconstruction of "phallogocentrism," which Jonathan Culler defines as a cultural system that erects a "transcendental authority and point of reference: truth, reason, the phallus, 'man'" (172). Menippean satire undermines the hierarchies of a "phallogocentric" cultural system by satirizing all systems which attempt to explain reality. Although misogyny manifests itself in Menippean satire, the values of patriarchal society frequently come under attack,

Petronius himself offering a good parody of Roman patriarchy.

<sup>17</sup>See New's note on the hobbyhorse in the Florida edition (3: 58).

Pregnant Wit: Sterne's Parody of Literary Creativity

To be born with a pregnant Wit  
is no such high indulgence of  
Nature, if no more be required  
therein, than a Propension to  
and Capacity of Erudition  
Scholastick.

-Walter Charleton, Two Discourses

The fundamental paradox of Tristram Shandy is that, despite his self-consciousness, Sterne's narrator Tristram cannot fulfill the Delphic command of self-knowledge. Even with the aid of the "sagacious Locke" (1.4.7), Tristram repeatedly loses himself in his writing. John Locke, the philosopher who defined the self as self-consciousness (and coined the phrase), is the principal philosophus gloriosus Sterne ridicules through Tristram (Korkowski 682).<sup>1</sup> But the sense of urgency readers feel in Tristram's struggle to represent himself is not just the result of his Lockean search for identity. As a philosophus gloriosus himself, Tristram, with his lack of self-knowledge, cannot avoid the moral dangers of self-deception which lie in the ethics of sentimentalism. The ground of certainty in sentimentalism, as Shaftesbury (its philosophical founder and Locke's

former pupil) shows, is a self-conscious use of feeling in moral decisions.

Sterne satirizes both the Lockean and the sentimental systems by showing that self-consciousness does not prevent Tristram's judgement from being the "dupe of his wit" (1.29.61). Wit's lively assemblage of ideas, as Locke warns, proceeds in the mind by "Metaphor and Allusion," going beyond descriptive or rational resemblance (156). Traditionally linked with rhetoric and poetry, wit has the power to deceive the conscious mind by appealing to the fancy through misleading "similitudes" and other imaginative pleasures (cf. Deporte 13-14; Hobbes 59). Within his tradition, Sterne's satirical attack on Lockean self-consciousness through wit is the contemporary manifestation of the Menippean satirist's spoudogeloion or joco-seriousness, his playful approach to serious learning which has undone philosophers since Plato.

By making the defence of wit his declared theme in the belated "Author's Preface," Tristram promises to pursue self-consciously, and, as we learn, obsessively, the creative powers of his imagination to their origin. But Tristram's very name signifies a "sorrowful birth" that implies a parody of the conventional metaphors applied to the creative artist.<sup>2</sup> If Tristram Shandy is in one sense "an allegory of a writer waiting to get born" (Frye, "Varieties" 171), then the difficulties surrounding

conception and birth reveal, by analogy, that the hero of the story will be the "sport of . . . fortune" (1.5.8) in more than the literal, biological sense. In other words, despite traditional warnings of wit's power to deceive, Tristram's reckless pursuit of wit's creative origins puts him, and his text, beyond reason and nature. In an Age of Reason, a wit uncontrolled by the conscious will is madness, a descent into the labyrinth of the endless association of ideas where self-knowledge is impossible. Tristram's wit is to "madness near allied" (Dryden, "Absalom" 163) because he loses the distinctions of judgement in the "mystick labyrinth" (6.37.565) of his own narrative. The pleasurable motive of metaphor in Tristram's writing is governed by his imagination, and, aside from its moral dangers, it rivals Tristram's sense, making even the perception of reality difficult (cf. Deporte 14). And, since Tristram the lunatic is, with the "lover and the poet / . . . of imagination all compact" (Shakespeare, MND V.i.7-8), perhaps the best way to draw the character of Tristram is from his hobbyhorse, his poetics of wit.

To speak of an organized poetic in a satiric work is possible only if it is viewed as a negative or parodic poetic. Sterne's parody of Locke is successful only to the extent that Tristram can build an alternative philosophical system, his poetics of wit, on the very thing Locke



excludes from, and defines against, his system. The conflict between Sterne's Tristram and Locke will, like that between wit and judgment, go unresolved and remain "two incompatible movements" (1.10.20-21).<sup>3</sup> Yorick on his "jack-ass of a horse" (1.10.18) is an ironic symbol of the dialectical opposition between Lockean rationalism and irrational Shandean wit. For even though horse and rider are "of a piece," they are "centaur-like" (1.10.20)--an image of laughable incongruity, or wit.<sup>4</sup> While on his steed, Yorick can "unite and reconcile everything" (1.10.21).

Sterne redefines Lockean wit through the parodic figure of wit, the well-mounted Yorick. Addison's more explicitly stated revision of Locke's definition, however, offers a close approximation to Sterne's poetics of wit. To Locke's definition of wit as the "Assemblage of Ideas . . . wherein can be found any Resemblance or Congruity" (Locke, qtd. in Addison, Spectator 62, 263-64), Addison adds the qualification that wit must give the effect of "Delight and Surprize to the Reader" (264). In order to achieve this effect "it is necessary," he goes on to say, "that the Ideas should not lie too near one another in the Nature of things; for where the Likeness is obvious, it gives no surprise" (264).<sup>5</sup> Addison's efforts to exclude metaphors which threaten the illusion of mimesis, on the other hand, contradict his inclusion of surprise as an

essential ingredient of wit. Addison approves of Bohour's definition that wit should have "its Foundation in the Nature of things" (268), but also advocates that "the Opposition of Ideas does very often produce Wit" (270). Whether or not we attribute Addison's distrust of his own innovation to his adherence to Neoclassical values, his position regarding metaphors of wit is traditional. George Williamson puts the tradition in perspective when he says that "Addison was no more successful than Dryden or Butler in stemming the wit that expresses 'sense by contradiction and riddle'" (124). Wit that expresses "sense by contradiction and riddle" is, for Addison and his tradition, false wit. But false wit most interests Sterne. The paradoxical or ironic comparison between two things, however false by conventional standards, expresses Sterne's theory and practice of wit. In fact, the very falseness of the comparison provides humour while raising the reader's awareness of wit's metaphorical processes.

The inventory of false wit in Addison's Spectator (Nos. 58-63) anticipates many of the devices in Tristram Shandy. Sterne is not necessarily attacking Addison specifically, but he is aiming at the moral anxiety and hypocrisy of Addison's orthodox position. Melvyn New attributes Sterne's penchant for false wit to Augustan influences (1-2). But, more accurately, Sterne's false wit reflects the Menippean practice of parodying prevailing

forms of literary decorum (New 1-2). What Addison disapprovingly calls the "Elaborate trifles" of false wit becomes "vive la Bagatelle" (1.19.60) for Menippean satirists like Sterne and Swift. In fact, Menippean satire specializes in the ironic praise of trifles, through the conventional form of the paradoxical encomium. Lucian praises the fly in Laus muscae, and Erasmus praises folly.<sup>6</sup> Some of the elaborate trifles of Addison's false wit that Sterne indulges are conceits, puns, and "Quibbles" or equivocal words (265). Addison's conventional disparagement of the Greek technopaignia as a procrustean bed of "external mimicry" (247) does not discourage Sterne either. The pictorial tradition of the Greek technopaignia carried on by Herbert and emblem writers like Quarles takes on a more abstract appearance in Sterne's emblems and other typographical oddities. The paradoxes of Sterne's false wit express an ironic attitude toward the symbol. Tristram and the other characters are conscious at times of the paradox of metaphor which states that two things are the same yet different. On one level, Sterne's hobbyhorse extends metaphor beyond the Neoclassical and Augustan conception of it as a consciously "condensed simile" where its "real or common-sense basis is likeness, not identity" (Frye, "Towards an Age" 136). The hobbyhorses of Walter and Toby show minds in which metaphor has "Passed beyond the stage of resemblance" (136). In the imaginative world

of the hobbyhorse, Walter and Toby try to ignore the difference between their obsessive, subjective perceptions and reality. But viewing the hobbyhorse with the pragmatic eye of the satirist as Sterne does will not allow the quixotic rider of the hobbyhorse to have his way with the world. Quixotic hobbyhorses share with the Romantic poet an ideal notion of metaphor where "two images are identified within the mind of the creating poet" (Frye, "Towards an Age" 136). Nevertheless, the Shandean world is governed by chance, and if a thousand "cross accidents" do not frustrate the idealism of the imagination, the element of chance in the association of ideas will put even the imagination beyond control.

Sterne's quixotic struggle against the mimetic basis of metaphor begins with the accidental, and therefore ironic, connection of ideas at Tristram's birth. Yorick carries the quixotic struggle further on behalf of false wit by tilting against the windmills of rational and moral decorum. To a large extent, Yorick's fate is allegorically tied to that of wit's standing in the literary community. But if he can unite and reconcile everything--the dream of the philosophus gloriosus--Yorick can only do so on his horse, or in his imagination, as the growing motif of the hobby-horse suggests (cf. New 94). Tristram's parson of the sorrowful countenance, Yorick, is not above the "temptations of false wit" (1.10.20) of which he had "but

too many" (1.11.29). Sterne reinforces the "breach of all decorum" (1.10.18) that Yorick represents by associating the monstrous centaur with false wit as Addison has done in a Spectator essay (1711).<sup>7</sup> However, where Addison, following Locke, restrains the pleasures of the imagination, Sterne courts them in his parodic poetics. And where Addison employs Locke's antithesis of wit and judgment to distinguish the mimetically "true" wit from the rhetorically playful "false" wit, Sterne undermines such rational distinctions to enjoy the temptations of the latter (Tovey, chap. 1, 2).<sup>8</sup>

Sterne's satire on both Locke and sentimentalism depends on wit's subversive lawlessness as a psychological activity of the mind and as a verbal literary product. In fact, Sterne is driven to a defence of wit because of its increasingly marginalized position in philosophy and literary criticism after the Restoration. The historical decline of wit's status is not entirely due to its traditional opposition to judgement, an opposition which has been traced to classical sources.<sup>9</sup> Wit's decline is to a significant degree related to the lowering of its moral reputation.<sup>10</sup> Sterne takes full advantage of wit's moral decadence to expose the lurking self-interest and sexuality in sentimentalism, but this is a point which will be discussed later in the chapter. Locke is Sterne's main antagonist where wit is concerned, and no history of wit is

complete that ignores Locke's role in impugning its moral reputation.

Richard Blackmore's "A Satyr against Wit" (1700) levels perhaps the most serious charge against wit with the typical accusation that it has morally corrupted "his Native Land" (325) by pulling "all Virtue and right Reason down" (326). Blackmore does not fail to include Locke's part in wit's fallen prestige. The mere mention of Locke's name puts the witty poets "in clammy Sweats" (Blackmore 327). What Blackmore calls the debased coinage of "false wit" (329) approaches the intellectual and moral bankruptcy Locke finds in all wit. When Locke links the fanciful metaphors of wit with the pyrotechnics of rhetoric in his chapter on the "Abuse of Words" (3.10.34), he is passing on a Renaissance commonplace which is particularly well-displayed in John Lyly's Euphues: An Anatomy of Wit (1578), a work sometimes overlooked in histories of wit.<sup>11</sup> Sterne defends wit against Locke by claiming that wit--along with judgment, and not judgment alone--governs the thinking mind.<sup>12</sup> That Tristram should choose individuals from his own experience as examples, individuals in whom wit predominates, may reflect the historian's use of particulars to refute the philosopher's abstract individual. Whatever reason Tristram uses to justify his evidence, it remains only to show how Sterne makes an equally plausible explanation of the way people think based

on the "inconvenient data" (Frye, AC 223) that Locke's systematic explanation wants to minimize or leave out. It is doubly ironic (an irony proper to Menippean humour) that "false wit," the lowest verbal product of wit which exploits the accidents of language, should be one of the chief instruments of Sterne's poetic defence.

Sterne's best apology for wit is not his belated preface, nor is it Walter Shandy, the primary focus for ridicule of the Lockean philosopher. His best apology for wit is Yorick. Though Tristram may not convince us that the "great Locke" had been "bubbled" or "outwitted" by the "graver gentry" (Preface 237) into condemning the wit of the Restoration court, he may be able to win our sympathy for Yorick's decline in public opinion. Yorick's opposition to gravity, or more precisely, the affectation of gravity as a "cloak for ignorance [and] folly" (1.11.28), is consonant with Sterne's satiric purpose and Tristram's defence of wit. Yorick believes gravity "bubbled people out of their goods" (1.11.28), much as Tristram believes Locke had been. Yorick's own "honesty of mind" (1.12.30) contrasts with gravity, the essence of which he believed "was design, and consequently deceit" (1.11.28). There was no danger of deceit, on the other hand, in the "naked temper which a merry heart discovered" (1.11.28). Before Sterne, Shaftesbury holds up a similar "test of ridicule" (1.10) to expose the imposture of

gravity.<sup>13</sup> The "one thing needful" in such a test is wit, an ingredient that Yorick, who "seldom shunn'd occasions of saying what came uppermost" (1.11.29), was always ready to supply.<sup>14</sup>

The traits that we admire in Yorick are, however, the source of his indiscretion and a cause of his ruined reputation. More sinned against than sinning, Yorick gains our sympathy because he is a victim of malicious gossip. Since his parishioners constantly borrow his horse to fetch a distant midwife, Yorick is always forced to ride a broken-winded horse. To save his horses and his money, he offers to buy a licence for a local town midwife. The town sees Yorick's expedient as a "fit of pride" (1.10.23)--his desire to be well mounted--and, anticipating the sentimental theme, a failure of his "charity" (1.10.23). When he dies in the midst of his trial, he is raised from a centaur, an emblem of wit, to a scapegoat, an "innocent and helpless creature" (1.12.32) tragically sacrificed to the grave, suspicious minds of his parish. Some have seen in Yorick a comic and (through his sermon) a moral norm for the entire satire (Stedmond 69, 135; New 76), and I agree. I would add, nevertheless, that if Yorick functions as a norm it is an ironic norm that reflects the incongruity of false wit and Menippean satire. So close is Yorick's false wit to the technique of satire itself that Sterne may have used the "centaur-like" parson as a modulated image of



Menippean satire. Lucian and Burton both refer to their Menippean mixture of prose and verse as centaurs.<sup>15</sup> The parson who "loved a jest in his heart" (1.10.19-20) embodies the spirit of Menippean satire not simply because he is, as Dryden might put it, that "mixt kind of animal" ("Discourse," Ker 4: 28) that once defined satire. Yorick also embodies the Menippean spirit because, always self-conscious, he "saw himself in the true point of ridicule" (1.10.20).<sup>16</sup>

Yorick's role cannot be reduced to a personification of wit, but such a reduction would be a problem only in a novel, not in a Menippean satire such as Sterne's.

Tristram Shandy is novelistic, but it is not a novel.<sup>17</sup>

Even Walter Shandy's characterization, despite its greater development, is subordinate to the theme of wit that he exemplifies through his systematic reasoning. We learn too much about the social relationships of Yorick and Walter for them to be just "mouthpieces of the ideas they represent" (Frye, AC 309). However, Tristram's habit of drawing characters from their hobbyhorse, their "ruling passion" (2.5.106; cf. 85 n.), limits his personae to very few social roles. In fact, while each character's hobbyhorse marks his "great singularity" (1.24.86), as Toby's does, it also marks his isolation (see Traugott 8; Deporte 149).<sup>18</sup> When a hobbyhorse, or humoural obsession, emerges as the imagination gains greater control over the

mind, reality is abandoned for what the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries regarded as the madness of individual subjectivity.<sup>19</sup> No one typifies this madness better than Walter who, as Tristram states, routinely becomes "the dupe of his wit" (1.19.61). Walter, as the dupe of his own wit, and his philosophy suffer all the defects that traditionally go with wit, that is, with a man governed by his imagination. The illusion of self-sufficiency is the fundamental error of a mind diseased by wit, and, given the preponderance that metaphors of procreation have in his intellectual speculations, Walter's difficulties with autogeny, or self-begetting, are an effective parody of the creative imagination--particularly Tristram's.

It is Walter's burden that the parody of creation, the basis of Sterne's poetics of wit, should be laid in his lap. Walter's every issue seems ill-conceived, and, since Tristram numbers himself among the sorrowful offspring, the reader is not surprised to find resemblances in the mental as well as the physical constitution of father and son. And, in spite of their differences, Walter's ideas reflect badly on Tristram. Although, for example, not nearly as misogynistic as his father, Tristram possesses a habit of sexualizing his female reader (1.20), even his beloved Jenny (4.32), that makes him, like Walter, guilty of derogatory wit, especially where woman are concerned. Nevertheless, Nature gets her revenge on their misogyny

through the displaced sexual energy both men display; almost every thought Tristram and Walter have is reduced to a sexual witticism.<sup>20</sup> By making the strongest family resemblance between Tristram and Walter their learned but sexualized wit, Sterne gives his Lockean gloriosi a distinctively Menippean quality. Tristram's wit reduces Locke's association of ideas to the priapic hobbyhorse, and Walter, "an excellent natural philosopher" (1.3.4), lacks the proper Lockean judgement. Add to Tristram's imaginative onanism Walter's autogenous wit, and the parodic analogy between the creative imagination and procreation will be found promiscuously scattered across virtually every page of Tristram's Life and Opinions.

Walter's natural philosophy can be nicely summed up using his own words: "Every thing in this world . . . is big with jest--and has wit in it, and instruction too,--if we can but find it out" (5.32.470). Being in possession of the faculty of wit is the surest way to discover the truth of Walter's vision. Walter's overriding concern is to instill this vision in others, and writing his Tristapaedia (or The Education of Tristram) is the most certain method he knows of passing on his witty vision, at least to his son. Whether Walter transmits his witty way of viewing the world to his son sexually, intellectually, or both, the fruits of his labour are plainly evident in Tristram's preoccupation with wit as a style and a theme. Wit can be

natural, or acquired, but if it be anything at all it must be pregnant.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, wit in, and after, the Renaissance often carried the adjective "pregnant" with it when it appeared, because of its association with rhetorical copiousness or invention.<sup>22</sup> Wit's common appearance in books of rhetoric and the "mirror tradition," called the speculum principis tradition in the Renaissance, and most recently the Cyropaedia tradition by Frye, is what is most relevant to Walter's Tristapaedia and Tristram's apprenticeship under it.<sup>23</sup>

Reflecting its author's character, Walter Shandy's Tristapaedia inadvertently reverses the purpose of the speculum principis, by teaching sophistry more than the art of governing oneself. Sterne's specific target for parody in the Tristapaedia is Obadiah Walker's Of Education, Especially of Young Gentlemen (1673), notable not only for the elaborate engine of eloquence it constructs in its eleventh chapter, but also for its unique treatment of wit. Walker's eleventh chapter borrows heavily from the works of two Baroque Italian theorists of wit, Emanuele Tesauro's Ill connocchiale aristotelico (1654) and Matteo Peregrini's I fonti dell'ingengo ridotti ad arte (1650).<sup>24</sup> The inordinate attention Walker's Of Education gives to supplying the young gentleman with a fund of rhetorical commonplaces brings it closer, if I may borrow from Pope, to "Wits false mirror" (Essay on Man 4.393), than the

proper moral instruction of the mirror tradition. Sterne's use of Walker's work, and through him the Italian theorists, illustrates the close tie wit and rhetoric have in Walter's mind, along with the long line of learned wits he represents.

The self-deluding nature of Walter's imagination is most humorously represented when his misogyny drives his wit. Walter's distaste for the carnal act compels his wit to devise a rhetorical machine to do figuratively what he cannot do literally--give birth without female intervention, or, more exactly, female interruption. The post-coital tristesse he feels over Tristram's hapless conception makes Walter obsessive, perhaps out of guilt, about the act of generation. The Tristapaedia is Walter's way of assuming greater responsibility for his son's upbringing. Ironically, the central lesson of the Tristapaedia repeats the error of Walter's delusion by teaching methods to achieve complete autonomy over the act of generation. To achieve this autonomy, "the whole entirely depends," Walter says in a low voice, to Yorick, "upon the auxiliary verbs" (5.242.484). This short-cut, or "North west passage to the intellectual world" (484) is of course first mapped out by the Italian theorists of wit and passed on to Sterne via Obadiah Walker. Surprised that those in the "republick of letters" entrusted with the "education of children," have made so little use of

auxiliary verbs, Walter descants on their ability to open children's minds and "stock them early with ideas, in order to set the imagination loose upon them" (484). In the following passage, Sterne's play on the word "engine" (a cognate of the Latin ingenium, which can be translated as "wit") combines its etymological meaning of "begetting" with the English sense of a mechanical device to suggest the error of Walter's thinking.

Now the use of the Auxiliaries is, at once to set the soul a going by herself upon the materials as they are brought her; and by the versability of this great engine, round which they are twisted, to open new tracks of enquiry, and make every idea engender millions. (5.42.485)

Feminizing the soul here reveals, as Juliet McMaster observes, what troubles Walter during Tristram's entire history--that Walter "has a severe case of ovary-envy" (448).<sup>25</sup>

A closer comparison of the passage above with Sterne's source, Walker's Of Education, suggests that Walter's engine of eloquence is the engine of wit. The word "versability" (for which the Oxford English Dictionary cites Walker [1673] as the first entry and Sterne as the third) is taken from a definition of wit that Walker borrows from Tesauro:

WIT; the actions wherof are fancy, or invention

is in ordinary acception, nothing else but a quicker apprehension of such notions, as do not usually enter into other men's imaginations. It consists (saith Thesauro) in 1. perspicacity, which is the consideration of all, even the minutest, circumstances: and 2. versability, or speedy comparing them together; it conjoins, divides, deduceth, augmenteth, diminisheth, and in sum puts one thing instead of another, with like dexterity, as a juggler does his balls.

(Walker 130)<sup>26</sup>

Walter, who possesses the mental dexterity of the witty juggler, may be more profitably compared to Sterne's other witty jester, Yorick. Sterne parodies Walker's serious application to wit of scholastic logic and rhetoric by having Walter take it even more seriously. For instance, Walker generates seven pages of rhetorical commonplaces using the ten predicaments of Aristotle, contradicting Yorick's claim of "the bare use" (6.2.493) to which the predicates can be put by scholars. But Sterne's lack of interest in the predicates is owing to the sexual pun made available in the verbal auxiliaries of logical propositions by the word "conjugate." In other words, Sterne wants a witty use of "conjugation" to show us rather than tell us his definition of wit. Sterne's indecorous pun fulfills Johnson's definition of wit in which "the most heterogenous

ideas," in this case auxiliary verbs and marital sexuality, are conjugated or "yoked by violence together" (Johnson, "Cowley," Lives 14).

The futility of Walter's ingenious language machine, and the digressive and progressive "machinery" (1.22.80) of Tristram's work, stems from the means of production which traps both men in the "mystick labyrinth" of process. Both men are caught in a condition of unrelieved process because the machinery of wit condemns the creators to endless overproduction. Walter's desire to see his son engender millions of ideas by conjugating verbs on the topic of white bears, however, requires that he first provide his son with a "pregnant wit." Lyly's Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit, a Cyropaedia, supplies a norm against which we can judge Walter's education of Tristram and indirectly Walker's Of Education, by warning that it is "a greater show of a pregnant wit than perfect wisdom . . . to use superfluous eloquence" (6). Unfortunately for Tristram, Walter forgets his own axiom that "SCIENCES MAY BE LEARNED BY ROTE, BUT WISDOM NOT" (5.32.470), and proceeds to stock Tristram's memory with the machinery of "superfluous eloquence." As Walter states, a "child's memory should be exercised [so that] there is no one idea can enter his brain how barren soever, but a magazine of conceptions and conclusions may be drawn forth from it" (5.43.486).

Walter's "magazine of conceptions" is another of



Sterne's witty allusions to Walker's Of Education. The magazine, or storehouse, of rhetorical commonplaces is what Obadiah Walker promises will improve the young gentleman. Couching his passage in the same sexually charged metaphors of organic creation as Walter Shandy's, Walker promises that the most "barren" subjects can be "fertilized" with his ten predicates and conjugated propositions (Walker 144; Florida ed. 3: 394). Significantly, he adds that his system of rhetorical invention is not as useful to gifted students who can "descant ex tempore," as it is to "ordinary wits; who must read, and observe much" (Walker 144). The irony that Sterne reveals in Walker's work through the humour of Walter's parody is that the model person Walker holds up for emulation is a sophist, and therefore a moral relativist.<sup>27</sup> The original context of the statement made by Walter regarding Pellegrini's ability to teach a student in a few lessons "to discourse with plausibility upon any subject, pro and con" (5.42.484), belongs, in Walker, to those "whom they called Sophistae" (142). Using Lyly's Anatomy of Wit as a norm again, the main character Euphues rejects the sophistry of wit to become a "mirror of godliness" (86), a conversion consistent with the didactic aim of the speculum genre. Walter's Tristapaedia, by contrast, follows Walker into the moral and linguistic relativism of wandering wit.

At the heart of Walter's frustrated desire to be an

"onlie begetter" (Dedication to Shakespeare Sonnets; Riverside 1749) lies his impatience and intolerance toward any process over which he does not have complete control. Walter, for example, tries to convince Toby, Yorick, and Mrs. Shandy that there are two kinds of love to gain a masculine advantage over the creative process:

of these Loves, according to Ficinus's comment upon  
Vesalius, the one is rational--

--the other is natural--

the first ancient--without mother--

where Venus had nothing to do: the second,

begotten of Jupiter and Dione--

(7.33.720)

Walter's audience dismisses his distinction, and preference for the Platonic ideal, as without practical benefit. The rational creative process "where Venus has nothing to do" is an artificial and, Walter hopes, therefore entirely conscious one.<sup>28</sup> Walter's lack of control over his artificial creation, the Tristapaedia, however, implies otherwise. Walter's obsession with artificial originality in the Tristapaedia is heavily saturated with the themes and metaphors of sexual originality. The "prefatory introduction" or "introductory preface" concerning the origins of political or civil government is a discourse on the "first conjunction betwixt male and female for procreation of the species" (5.31.466). Given that, as

John Stedmond states, "Tristram Shandy itself begins with an act of procreation" (114), the tendency of Shandean thinking towards metaphors of sexual genesis to describe even artificial creation suggests that Sterne sees poetic wit itself as a process and not merely a product.

\* \* \*

By representing Shandean wit as comprehending a verbal product and a psychological process, Sterne reflects his inheritance of Baroque and Augustan theories of wit. This dichotomy finds its most concise expression in Dryden's Preface to "Annus Mirabilis":

Wit in the poet, or Wit writing, (if you will give me leave to use a school distinction), is no other than the faculty of imagination in the writer, which, like a nimble spaniel, beats over and ranges through the field of memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after; or without metaphor, which searches over all the memory for the species or ideas of those things which it designs to represent.

(Ker 1: 14; see Ker's note, 1:287)

Dryden's spaniel metaphor recalls Hobbes's description of the imagination in Leviathan (14), though the metaphor is a Renaissance commonplace and can also be found in Burton's

Anatomy (1.14; Tovey 35n35) and Lyly's Euphues (41).<sup>29</sup>

"Wit written," Dryden goes on, "is that which is well-defined, the happy result of thought, or product of imagination" (Ker 1: 14).<sup>30</sup> The products of Tristram's and Walter's imaginations are, by their own accounts, more often than not the unhappy "result of thought," unhappy conceptions which may account for the fixation on their own sexual and literary originality.

Tristram's theme of wit stresses "wit-writing," the faculty of the writer's imagination. The desire to "come at the first springs of the events" (1.21.74) he tells testifies to Tristram's interest in wit's processes. His "history book . . . of what passes in a man's own mind" (2.2.98) reflects an age when the surest means to the "first springs" of true knowledge is introspection. Tristram's description of his history book is too near Locke's definition of consciousness as "the perception of what passes in a Man's own mind" (2.1.19; cf. 115) to deny that conscious mental processes, including Lockean wit, are of primary concern. Nonetheless, Yorick's sermon on conscience shows that the mind is not entirely "conscious of the web" (2.17.146) she weaves. Wit's capacity to explore beyond the limits of the conscious mind explains why it is likely to "take a bribe" (2.17.147) in the court of conscience and undermine the judge. The moral consequences of wit's exorbitant flights of fancy are more

relevant to sentimentalism, which will be discussed at the end of the chapter. Here it is necessary to show how Sterne, like Edward Young in his "Conjectures on Original Composition" (1759), invents his own "fable of poetic inspiration" (234) and makes the author "his own progenitor" (238-39).

Sterne's version of wit-writing associates wit with the "unconscious" cycles of nature. The word "unconscious" had not acquired its modern connotation in the eighteenth century, but Tristram's pursuit of the "hidden springs" (5.15.444) and motives invites the comparison, if used advisedly (see Hagstrum). Tristram's authorial preface continues, for example, to equate wit, as Walter does, to the female sexual cycle of pregnancy, but adds the climactic conditions of the seasonal cycle as a complicating factor. The sexual passions which Walter consciously tries hard to suppress, Tristram decides are necessary to promote poetic and sexual creation. If, for instance, the climactic environment is "cold and dreary" (3.20), as in the arctic regions of North Lapland

--where the whole province of a man's concernments lies for near nine months together, within the narrow compass of his cave,--where the spirits are compressed almost to nothing,--and where the passions of a man, with every thing which belongs to them, are as frigid as the Zone

itself;--there the least quantity of judgment  
 imaginable does the business,--and of wit,--there  
 is a total and an absolute saving. . . .

(3.20.230)

It would have been a "dismal thing" to govern such a kingdom or, significantly, as Tristram tells us, to have "[written] a book, or [gotten] a child with so plentiful a lack of wit and judgment about" (3.20.230).

The image of the cave in Tristram's defence signifies Sterne's sympathy for descent metaphors to represent the unconscious creative process. And the creative process Sterne projects is clearly Longinian. Not only do Tristram and Walter recommend Longinus (8.5.661; 4.10.337), but passion, specifically sexual passion, is indispensable to generate wit.<sup>31</sup> Walter, then, is no Longinian, at least voluntarily. But Walter protests too much against the bestial passions for the reader to take his condescension at face value. It is a pity, Walter avers, that so

godlike a being as man should need to continue  
 the race by means of a passion which bends down  
 the faculties, and turns all wisdom,  
 contemplations, and operations of the soul  
 backwards--a passion, my dear, continues my  
 father addressing himself to my mother, which  
 couples and equals wise men with fools, and makes  
 us come out of caverns and hiding places more

like satyrs and four-footed beasts than men.

(9.33.806)

Walter, in Patricia Meyer Spacks's words, "fears losing himself in the act of merging" (132). The loss Walter fears is that of the rational conscious mind. He is a satiric, rather than a tragic, figure, and yet, like Faustus, another philosophus gloriosus, Walter would leap up to his God, but the irrational processes of wit pull him down.

Tristram's efforts to join Lockean wit and judgment like two knobs on the back of a chair represent another way that Sterne parodies the psychological processes of creation. Sterne, more specifically, parodies the Neoclassical theory of the creative process by allegorizing the faculties of wit and judgment through Walter and Elizabeth Shandy. The marital relationship between Walter and Elizabeth illustrates the troubled interaction of the two faculties in a creative mind. The allegory reveals a creative process driven to impotence by a wit struggling to break free from its connubial obligations to judgment. Disappointed with the condition of their previous offspring, namely Bobby and Tristram, Walter seeks more fanciful, and unnatural, means to gain control over the act of generation. And, whereas Walter's native wit compels him to exceed the bounds of discretion, Elizabeth, endowed with a pragmatic sense of judgment, chooses to remain

discreetly silent and let the nature of things, including Walter's wit, run their course.

The tension arising from the sexual struggle between Walter and Elizabeth Shandy expresses the traditional tension one encounters in the many theoretical attempts to reconcile wit and judgment. Hobbes epitomizes the difficulty surrounding the issue when, in his "Answer to Davenant," he describes it as a struggle of the exorbitancy of fiction against the doctrine of probability. Walter's wit, for instance, makes him "by nature eloquent" (5.3.419). But when Tristram says Walter is "hourly a dupe" to his eloquence (5.3.419), he refers to the self-indulgent ecstasy Walter experiences in creating his beautiful discursive designs. Elizabeth Shandy, "a woman . . . of few words" (1.7.10), tends to action by doing the duty that lies nearest, that is, her sexual duty. Walter's sexual repression therefore forces him to spend his wit keeping "all fancies of that kind out of her head" (9.1.736). Walter hopes to solve his problems by relying on a fallacy of logocentrism, what we might call, after Derrida, "phallogocentrism," in keeping with Walter's compulsion to father a child without female help. Walter hopes to invoke the presence of sexual activity when it is absent by saying "That talking of love, is making it" (9.25.787). His wit satisfies his desire for transcendence, but, without judgment, Walter's verbal



creations serve no purpose, practical or moral. Hobbes asserts that for "some use to be made" of wit, it must combine with judgment (Leviathan 57). By a "Good Wit," Hobbes states, "is meant a Good Fancy," but without judgment, "without Steadiness, and Direction to some End, a great Fancy is one kind of Madnesse" (Leviathan 57-58). Walter suffers the fault that Sterne, in a letter, feels he himself is not entirely free of. Quoting Quintilian's censure of Ovid, Sterne says he finds himself "Nimium ingenij sui amator," too fond of his own wit (Letters 79).

In making Walter too fond of his own wit, Sterne makes Walter fond of the very faculty of wit that produced him. Walter's self-love parallels the self-consciousness of Sterne's witty text. Indeed, Walter's characterization illustrates the essential quality of metafiction in Sterne's poetics of wit. Metafiction calls attention to the mimetic processes, for instance, by questioning its representation in relation to laws of probability. Stylized in Menippean fashion, Walter is at times an allegorical character, rather than a fully realized representation of a person, and he becomes reduced to a personification, just another word on a page. Sterne uses the improbabilities in Walter's witty discourse to emphasize his characterization as a mouthpiece of wit. The prevalent wit in Walter's rhetoric does not fail the Neoclassical doctrine of mimesis so much as exceed it with

fantastic improbabilities. Hobbes forcefully expounds the doctrine of probability: "Beyond the actual works of Nature a Poet may now go; but beyond the conceived possibility of nature, never" ("Answer," in Spingarn 1,62). Walter, however, wants to go beyond the "conceived possibility of nature." In eighteenth-century terms, then, Walter is no "True wit," for he seeks a "Nature to advantage dress'd" (Essay on Criticism 293) in a way Pope would not support. Walter fantasically seeks exclusively male control over procreation, and the sheer enthusiasm with which he chases his Platonic ideal reflects his allegorical function.

Sterne's Longinian interest in representing the psychological processes makes him press his mimetic art as far as it will go. As a fictional character, for example, Walter does not appear to address the reader directly as Tristram does, though his discourse shows his characterization as a personification of wit. Walter's lengthy discourses closely parallel Tristram's thematic statements and involve the reader although they are addressed to other fictional characters. As the "mouthpiece" for the idea of wit, Walter's oratory surpasses its mimetic function through its "verbal exuberance" (AC 236). The reader, caught up by the verbal exuberance of Walter's ornamental rhetoric, loses interest in the character's fictional existence but remains aware of the character as a thematic function.

Walter's verbal exuberance places him in a tradition which Northrop Frye identifies as Menippean (AC 236, 311), a point which we will consider in the next chapter. Wit's association with a verbally creative exuberance, however, can be traced throughout its own history as a critical concept. Richard Flecknoe's "A Short Discourse of the English Stage" (1664), for example, shows the difference between wit and judgment, "Wit being an exuberant thing, like Nilus, never more commendable then when it overflows; but Judgment, a stayed and reposed thing, alwayes containing it self within its bounds and limits" (94). Flecknoe's comparison clarifies wit's aesthetic function by contrasting it with judgment, the faculty whereby an artist creates a mimetic work that "holds the mirror up to nature." Judgment contains imitation within the bounds of probability and conventional decorum. Wit's exuberance goes beyond the mimetic form of judgment by introducing such things as stylistic excesses, surprising, conceited metaphors, or improbable events in a plot sequence. Wit's exorbitancy breaks down the integrity of a mimetic work's internal structures, involving a reader in the processes that a mimetic author generally tries to conceal. The strained sense of comparison of a conceited metaphor, for instance, draws attention to its verbal status, reminding the reader of a given word's "literal" context in a poem. Rather than acting as a transparent sign for its referent,

the conceit asks a reader to attend to its part in a poem's design as a structure of words. Having broken down the internal fiction, wit approaches the Longinian technique of involving the reader in the artist's own ideas and creative processes.

The exuberance of wit grants Sterne the opportunity to fuse the Longinian expressive theory with the Aristotelian mimetic theory. By repeatedly pointing to the formal boundaries of a mimetic work, wit always hints to readers that they are involved in an artistic illusion. Sustaining an interest in the internal fiction of Toby's sentimental encounter with a fly, while facetiously calling attention to the rhetorical construction of the episode as the drawing of Toby's "Hobbyhorsical" character, is but one sample of Sterne's witty virtuosity. In fact, this self-conscious or witty virtuosity--which the Renaissance called "sprezzatura . . . , a sense of buoyancy or release that accompanies perfect discipline" (AC 93)--explains the aesthetic effect of mimetic art in terms analogous to the Longinian. The cathartic detachment historically associated with a mimetic theory of art does not adequately account for a reader's emotional involvement. Frye resolves this difficulty by adding the pleasures of exuberance to the mimetic theory of catharsis. For Frye, the mimetic pleasure of exuberance felt upon observing something beautiful is analogous to the ecstatic feeling

for sublime effect. Sterne resolves the conflict between the Longinian and the Aristotelian by making Walter's exuberance a parody of both traditions. Too exuberant for mimesis, and too intellectual for a proper Longinian emotional effect, Walter is Sterne's medius terminus for measuring both artistic propositions.

Northrop Frye, who gave the process-product dichotomy currency in modern eighteenth-century criticism, offers a useful summary of the features which characterize these "two knobs" on the chair of poetics. Briefly, the Aristotelian mimetic tradition sees the literary work as an imitation of nature. The conception of nature in the mimetic tradition as the completed work of God, natura naturata, corresponds with the conception of the literary work as a thing made, Aristotle's techne or artifact. The "Book of Nature" is God's second Word, and truth, therefore, lies outside the individual in the objective order of nature. To acquire significance, an individual or thing must find a place in the system of nature or, in Pope's words, the "chain of being" (Essay on Man 44). Any sign of the author's presence in a mimetic work would interfere with the representation of nature's order. The Longinian "creative" tradition, however, requires that the artist's inspired presence be expressed in the literary work. The Longinian imitates the processes of nature, natura naturans, in which the artist participates through

his own creative powers. Unlike the detached, cathartic effect of mimetic art, the effect of Longinian art allows the author and his audience to participate in the processes of the literary work through the psychological experience of the sublime.

Sterne's leading interest is in the Longinian, thought's associative processes which, as Walter puts it, "come out of caverns and hiding places." Sterne's Longinian aesthetic is evinced, as Frye points out, in the absence of a suspenseful plot which throws the reader's interest forward ("Towards an Age" 131). Tristram declares, "if I thought you was able to form the least judgment or probable conjecture to yourself, of what was to come in the next page,--I would tear it out of my book" (1.25.89). Richardson's roughly analogous writing "to the moment" (Selected Letters 316) does not pursue the aesthetic implications of the Longinian as far as Sterne. Sterne's "free prose" style (Frye WTC, 82),<sup>32</sup> however, elevates the unfinished thought of aposiopesis, if I may borrow a phrase, to a "mode of fiction" (Alter, "Game of Love" 323). Sterne anatomizes book conventions and leaves his "Aristotelian" plot (if we consider the romantic comedy between Toby and Widow Wadman a plot) unfinished.<sup>33</sup>

As with so many other aspects of Tristram Shandy, Locke's Essay may be the basis of Sterne's playful staging of the Aristotelian and Longinian conflict. The

Aristotelian mimetic tradition, which expresses "itself in figures of eyesight and space" (Frye, WTC 116) is consistent with Locke's own language throughout the entire essay on understanding, including his discussion of judgment.<sup>34</sup> The phrase ut pictura poesis implies a "detachment of the work of art from the person who contemplates it" (Frye, WTC 116) in the mimetic tradition. The metaphor of "reflection" which Locke uses for thought, and which the Lockean philosopher Francis Hutcheson regarded as a synonym for consciousness itself, also promotes the idea of a detached contemplative mind (Hutcheson, Works 4.6). But the "mind's Presence-room" of understanding, as Locke calls it (2.3.1.121), is also a "dark-room . . . not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light with only some little opening left, to let in external visible resemblance, or ideas of things without" (2.11.17.163). In this camera obscura model of the mind error is "obscurity" (see 2.29.2.363). By Lockean definition, then, the Longinian aesthetic is a dangerous source of error to the rational mind because it has "more tolerance for the sense of mystery, obscurity and magic, for unexplored resources of meaning, and other synonyms for hearing in the dark" (Frye, WTC 117). The Longinian impulse is closely analogous to Locke's traditional view of wit, a source of obscurity which misleads the mind just as rhetoric, that "perfect cheat" (3.10.34.508) does. To see

how Sterne gets wit and judgment, the Aristotelian and the Longinian, "to answer one another" (3.20.236), we must see not how Toby, but how Mrs. Shandy, answers Walter's wit.

The relationship between wit and judgment has before Sterne been described as a conjugal, but contentious, one. As Pope in the Essay on Criticism states, "Wit and Judgment often are at strife, / Tho' meant for each other's Aid, like Man and Wife" (248; cf. Dennis, Works 383). Consequently, if anyone is a deserving representative of "plain household judgment" (3.20.231), the antithesis of Walter's wit, it is logically not Toby, as Melvyn New suggests (135), but Mrs. Shandy. Granted that Toby, and even Yorick, who hails from a region where wit and judgment are in proper balance, possess relatively more judgment than Walter. However, Toby's military hobbyhorse, and Yorick's "false wit," make them poor symbols of judgment. Mrs. Shandy, by contrast, is a perfect satiric foil to the loquacious Walter. Tristram, for example, makes her a type of "the listening slave, with the Goddess of Silence at his back" (5.5.427) while she listens at the parlour door to Walter and Toby's conversation about death. Her curiosity, which is supposed to be, according to Tristram's misogynistic mind, "the weak part of [her] whole sex" (5.13.439), does not extend to Walter's intellectual domain. As Tristram, contradicting himself, says, "It was a consuming vexation to my father, that my mother never



asked the meaning of a thing she did not understand" (6.39.569). In fact, discourse between Mr. and Mrs. Shandy "seldom went on much further betwixt them, than a proposition" (6.39.569). Where Walter's theoretical wit allows him to conjugate the auxiliary verbs of propositions, Mrs. Shandy's pragmatism urges her, in the words of the neoclassical maxim of the mimetic tradition, to "follow nature" (Pope, Essay on Criticism 246). Unlike the useless abstractions of Walter's metaphorical language, Mrs. Shandy's referential language always involves practical conjugal relations, natural love and its natural product, children.

Framing her "plain household judgment" to follow what Pope calls Nature's "just standard" (Essay on Criticism 246), Mrs. Shandy is an apt symbol of natura naturata, things as they are. Her stoic acceptance is summed up when, instead of indulging Walter's elaborate rationalizations for putting Tristram in breeches, she simply responds, "Order it as you please, Mr. Shandy" (6.18.529). Mrs. Shandy's answers to Walter may not appear at first to fulfill her thematic function as judgment, until one considers that Sterne, parodying Locke, explains judgment as a sexual syllogism. The parody of Locke begins when Sterne substitutes the term "judgment" with Walter's topic of "ratiocination and making syllogisms" (3.40.280). In Walter's misogynistic vocabulary, both men and women

"syllogize by their noses" (3.40.280), a phrase which transfers the phallic overtones of Slawkenbergius's tale to Sterne's paraphrase of Locke on Judgment.

the great and principal act of ratiocination in man, as logicians tell us, is the finding out the disagreement or disagreement of two ideas one with another, by the intervention of a third; (called the medius terminus) just as a man, as Locke well observes, by a yard, finds two mens nine-pin-alleys to be of the same length, which could not be brought together, to measure their equality, by juxta-position.

(3.40.280-81; cf. Locke 4.17.17-18, 685)

In other words, Mrs. Shandy as judgment cannot fulfill her proper conjugal function without the "intervention of a third 'idea,'" here the euphemism for the phallus being the "medius terminus."<sup>35</sup> Using the conjugal act as a paradigm for all kinds of productivity, Sterne makes wit and judgment answer one another through "sexual" intercourse. Allegorically speaking, nature never remains as she is, natura naturata--everything in Tristram's world including judgment is big with jest, and has wit in it, and instruction too.

The portrait of Mrs. Shandy as judgment turns into an ironic "speaking picture" of the mimetic tradition with her frozen image at the parlour door. As Aristotle, whom

Shaftesbury calls the "great mimographer" (Characteristics 1,29), states, "The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person" (63) in mimetic works. But Sterne is not an author who is satisfied with "paring his fingernails" while the text speaks for itself. In Sterne's Longinian approach, the author appears to speak to the reader directly, and characters are rendered through what they say rather than what they do.<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Shandy's ironic silence outside the parlour door, a room designed for conversation, is a part of the dialectical characterizaiton in all Menippean satire, dialectical here meaning not only the philosophical conflict of opposing ideas but also its original sense as "conversation" as well. Mrs. Shandy is characterized by what she does not say, as much as by what she does say. With so little to say, Tristram has difficulty incorporating her mute static figure into the processes of Walter's dialectic with his guests in the parlour.

Mrs. Shandy is, however, only one of the clever contrasts Sterne sets up against Walter's wit, a wit that is a perfect, if parodic, embodiment of the Longinian. Judging from Susannah's weeping, the Longinian emotional sublime is more present in Trim's pathetic oratory than in Walter's witty oratory. When, for instance, Tristram contrasts Trim and Walter as orators, his account of Walter is a close paraphrase of Locke's definition of wit.

Tristram relates Walter's oratory as

proceeding from period to period, by metaphor and allusion, and striking the fancy as he went along, (as men of wit and fancy do) with the entertainment and pleasantry of his pictures and images.

(5.6.429; cf. Locke 2.11.2.156-67)

In opposition to the rhetorically embellished style of Walter's learned wit, Trim's untutored style goes "strait forwards as nature could lead him, to the heart" (429). Yorick himself, unhappy with his sermon on conscience, comments that he would "rather direct five words point blank to the heart" (4.26.377) than to preach just to show his reading or "the subtleties of [his] wit" (377).

But Yorick's statement should not be taken to mean that Walter's discourse is entirely deficient in the sublime. Yorick himself thinks Walter's comment that Wisdom cannot be learned by rote memory is "inspired" (5.32.470). And Walter's recitation of Socrates' refusal to use his three desolate children for a pathetic appeal at his final trial is accidentally transformed to a moment of great pathos. When Mrs. Shandy mistakenly attributes Socrates' three children to Walter by saying he had one more child than she knew of, Walter's response momentarily expresses, rather than denies, his feelings about his son, Bobby's death, saying, "By heaven! I have one less"

(5.13.442). Nonetheless, this rare, emotionally sublime moment in Walter's discourse does not mark the limit of his sublimity. The most important source of Walter's sublime oratory is, to quote Longinus, his "power of forming great conceptions" (80). The difficulty Walter has in forming and delivering his "great conceptions" accounts for the humour surrounding Walter and, of course, Tristram as well.

In order to surmount the difficulties of sublime conception and regain a measure of control over their thoughts and lives, Walter and Tristram must return to the dark place where fate presides, the womb. Tristram's determination to trace everything in his life's history "as Horace says, ab Ovo" (1.4.5) represents his attempt to replace the three Fates, who decide the fate of all mortals at birth and weave the pattern of his own life. Unfortunately, Tristram must suffer the same fate as that illustrious philosophus gloriosus, Socrates, whom God has prevented from giving birth to any intellectual conceptions and compelled to be a midwife to other men's (Erickson 6).<sup>37</sup> Identifying with Socrates during his oration on Bobby's death, Walter relegates to himself the role of philosophical midwife. Mrs. Shandy's attitude toward Walter's male midwife, Dr. Slop, suggests, furthermore, that Walter's involvement in midwifery, practical or, as in the Tristapaedia, philosophical, would be unfruitful.

Walter's idee fixe, however, is not to be a mere

midwife but to conceive and give birth, even if it is just to an idea. One of Walter's most pregnant moments for ideation is, appropriately enough, during Mrs. Shandy's labour for Tristram. But, as fate would have it, while trying to explain to Toby the "right end" of a woman by way of a witty analogy, Walter is interrupted. As Tristram narrates,

--ANALOGY, replied my father, is the certain relation and agreement, which different--Here a devil of a rap at the door snapp'd my father's definition (like his tobacco-pipe) in two,--and, at the same time, crushed the head of as notable and curious a dissertation as ever was engendered in the womb of speculation;--it was some months before my father could get an opportunity to be safely deliver'd of it. (2.7.118)

Because Dr. Slop could not stay his "obstetric hand" (2.11.126), the delivery of Walter's oration is crushed by the male midwife's disastrous rap on the door. Unnaturally prolonged gestations or premature births plague the creations of the Shandy males. Ironically, for instance, Tristram anticipates by a few chapters Walter's apostrophe to Licetus, who "was born a foetus" (4.10.337). Walter's interest in Licetus, as Tristram implies in his footnote, is the success of the father's "experimente dans l'art de la Generation" (4.10.338) by bringing Licetus to maturity.

Tristram, on the other hand, is also interested in the astonishing heights to which the five-inch foetus grew in literature by writing "his Gonopsychanthropologia, upon the origin of the human soul" (4.11.338). Walter and Tristram, however, cannot reproduce the elements of Licetus's success in the right way. The Shandean literary interest in the origins of the human soul is "tristram'd" (3.38.278) by ideas ill-conceived and prematurely delivered.

To represent the unfinished creative process, a mind "tristram'd" by premature birth, Sterne must find a way to display the origin and process of wit. His solution is to show, using Toby as one example, a mind "put in jeopardy by words" (2.2.101), not by ideas. Toby's military hobbyhorse predisposes his mind to discover any word in Walter's orations which might have military application. The result is a narrative regularly interrupted by puns and equivocal words that allow a military association. But no matter how abortive Toby's interjections may be for Walter's train of thought, Tristram's complaint about his readers' "vile pruriency" (1.20.66), their concupiscent associations, seems disingenuous. If words are "a fertile source of obscurity" (2.2.100), then the frequency with which Tristram exploits the sexual double entendre suggests a positive delight in that fertile obscurity. In fact, the "verbal exuberance" (Frye, AC 236) of Tristram's wit is entirely generated sexually, for, as he puts it, "one word begets another"

(7.32.630).

Sterne's parodic reduction of Walter's and Tristram's erudite intellectual exuberance to mere verbal exuberance betokens a common Menippean strategy of reducing words to things. Rather than representing reality, verbal exuberance emphasizes words themselves. The play of words may give pleasure, but it may also obscure meaning and fail to communicate properly. In Rabelais's Gargantua and Pantagruel, words freeze in the air, fall into Pantagruel's boat, and make sounds as they thaw. Swift in Gulliver's Travels shows one of the language schemes at the Academy of Lagado abolish words altogether in favour of carrying the things necessary for expression. Walter's theory of auxilliary verbs generates words for their own sake. In every case, the Menippean satirist confronts the prevailing philosophical issues surrounding language and exposes the vanity of those who claim direct access to truth by controlling it. A Menippean satirist like Sterne would sooner display what one twentieth-century philosopher calls the "chance events . . . and awesome materiality" of discourse (Foucault, "Discourse" 216), than try to control or organize it into some system of ideas. Sterne reveals the "awesome materiality" of discourse by laying bare the printed nature of his text. Sterne's witty conceits, like the marbled page and blank chapters, make us aware that we organize discourse into material units like chapters and



books by "defamiliarizing" those conventional units.

The ways in which Sterne turns his material text into an aesthetic object form the subject of the next chapter. What makes Tristram Shandy an aesthetic object from a literary point of view is analogous to the "exuberant sense of design" (AC 281) that we find in the intellectualized images of metaphysical poetry. The "witty and paradoxical sense of stress and tension underlying the design" (AC 181) of Sterne's black page, or the flourish of Trim's stick, is similar to Herbert's "Easter Wings" and other pattern poems. Montaigne, in the sixteenth century, dismisses pattern poetry as a manifestation of the "vaine . . . subtilties of wit" (Essays 1: 351). The use of the word "wit" correctly describes the kind of ironic symbol used not only in pattern poetry, but also in Sterne's text. The "sense of stress and tension" underlying the design of witty metaphors comes from their ironic referral to objects outside the fictional framework. The metaphors in the witty conceit of Sterne's marbled page, for example, refer to the pattern of imagery within the fictional Shandean world, while at the same time ironically shattering the fictional illusion by pointing to the material text that the readers hold in their hands. The referential irony in the metaphors of wit are suggestive of what Linda Hutcheon calls metafiction. Witty conceits like Sterne's marbled page fulfill Linda Hutcheon's formulation of metafiction,

for they exist "on the self-conscious borderline between art and life, making little formal distinction between actor and spectator, between author and co-creating reader" (Theory 72).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Two critics who take a phenomenological approach to the Lockean self-consciousness in Tristram Shandy oppose each other in their conclusions. Wolfgang Iser argues that, despite his self-consciousness, Tristram's pursuit of his identity or subjectivity must fail, for "Instead of self-enclosing, Tristram indulges in unbounded self-dissociation, which is the reverse side of his mobile stances and which he continually overturns in order to prevent the obliteration of the difference between life and its depiction in the act of representation" (113). Iser's reading agrees with the satirist's representation of the self as narcissistic but permanently divided. James Swearingen, however, asserts that Tristram's adventures, like Don Quixote's, "lead to self-discovery" (3). Swearingen believes that Tristram finds "an ecstatic unity" through his self-conscious efforts to show himself in writing (74). But the philosophus gloriosus in Menippean satire traditionally discovers only quixotic visions, the mirror of a learned wit without the benefit of judgment.

<sup>2</sup>See the Florida edition note on Tristram's name (3:93). Cf. Melvyn New, Laurence Sterne 82.

<sup>3</sup>See the Florida edition introduction on Locke (3,17).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Hobbes's centaur, Thorpe 82.

<sup>5</sup>Addison may have borrowed the ideas of delight and surprise from Hobbes's concept of novelty. Dennis's use of the word "surprize" is also relevant: see Thorpe 137 ff.: 243-248; Elioseff 185ff.

<sup>6</sup>See H.K. Miller; and Kirk, Menippean Satire, Index "Paradoxical encomia."

<sup>7</sup>See Motto, Spectator 63, Bond 270; 1.10.20 NOTE, vol. 3.64-65.

<sup>8</sup>Traugott credits Hobbes with starting the wit/judgement antithesis (71), but C. S. Lewis shows it is of classical origin.

<sup>9</sup>For a convenient summary, see C.S. Lewis, Studies in Words; Williamson, Proper Wit; W.G. Crane, Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance.

<sup>10</sup>See Shaftesbury 1,46: "decline and ruin of a false sort of wit." See also Edward N. Hooker, "Pope on Wit," for the historical opposition of wit and religion and morality.

<sup>11</sup>For example, see C. S. Lewis, Williamson; vs. F. F. McCabe.

<sup>12</sup>On the similarity of understanding and judgement, see Tuveson 89.

<sup>13</sup>See New, "Sterne, Warburton, and Exuberant Wit" on Warburton vs. Shaftesbury.

<sup>14</sup>See Florida edition 3: 70 n.; 28.28-29. Scholars have not commented on the necessity of wit either in Shaftesbury or Sterne criticism.

<sup>15</sup>Lucian, Double Indictment; Burton, Anatomy 1: 12; Korkowski, Menippus 93, 447. On the theory of the ideal centaur, see Durfey 174; and Korkowski, Menippus 646.

<sup>16</sup>See also Note (Letters 74), Florida edition 3: 64.

<sup>17</sup>Nor is it sufficient to call it an anti-novel, as Shklovsky and others suggest (see Traugott 66-89). See Frye's rewrite of his pioneering 1942 essay on Menippean satire in Anatomy of Criticism 308-12. For Frye's influence on Sterne criticism, see Stedmond 11f; New on page 2 calls Tristram Shandy a satire, but on 55-57 he sidesteps the Menippean genre for satire in general, despite quoting Frye's generic description of Menippean satire and discussion of characterization specific to it. Compare New with Ronald Paulson's statement that "Tristram Shandy is constructed like a satire rather than a novel" (Satire and the Novel 249). Eugene Korkowski's article "Tristram Shandy, Digression, and the Menippean Tradition" is essential reading for any Menippean critic. Korkowski's historical research is a necessary step forward from Frye's theoretical outline. Korkowski provides the generic context by giving sources for Sterne's digressive style, including Dunton's Voyage.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas Sprat's History of the Royal Society illustrates the close relationship that speculative theorizing, the defining quality of the philosophus gloriosus, had with wit after the Renaissance:

The solitary imaginations of Speculative Men are of all the other most easy: there a man meets with little stubbornness of matter: he may choose his subject where he likes; he may fashion and turn it as he pleases: whereas when he comes abroad into the world, he must indure more contradiction: more difficulties are to be overcome; and he cannot always follow his own Genius: so that it is not to be wonder'd, that so many great Wits have despis'd the labor of a practical course; and have rather chosen to shut themselves up from the nois and preferments of the World, to converse in the shadow with the pleasant productions of their own fancies.

(335-36)

An advocate of Baconian experimental science, Sprat urges wits to ground their metaphors in nature and the discoveries of natural science to avoid the charges of impracticality made by "men of business" (331), the growing merchant middle class. Cowley's "Ode to the Royal Society," which comes after Sprat's "Epistle Dedicatory," is obviously intended as a model for wits, who follow nature, to emulate. Far from dismissing wit as mere

rhetoric, Sprat appears to see a conservative political gain in avoiding an attack on the florid, metaphorical style of the enthusiast. For an excellent discussion of attacks on style motivated by party politics, see Vickers. For a stylistic discussion of the above passage, see Adolph 176-77.

<sup>19</sup>Deporte 308ff., 115. Cf. Obadiah Walker 130-131. See Spacks 130, where she cites Deporte.

<sup>20</sup>Spacks has written eloquently on the displacement of Judean sexuality. See also Alter.

<sup>21</sup>On the characteristics of natural and acquired wit in Hobbes and his follower Charleton, see Thorpe 99, 177; Crane 82-88.

<sup>22</sup>See Crane 4 and passim. Crane cites three significant examples from Renaissance rhetorical handbooks by Angel Day (85); Anthony Maunday (90); and the anonymous *Politeuphuia*, *Wit's Commonwealth* (1597), 150. See also Thomas Brown, *Vulgar Errors* (1646) in Williamson 58. Zachary Mayne also resorts to the commonplace image of pregnant wit (194).

<sup>23</sup>For clarity, I will sometimes use Frye's term for the *speculum principis* tradition, the *Cyropaedia*, to follow, like Walter, "after the example of Xenophon" (5.16.445); but the mirror metaphor in the word "speculum" also serves the theme of parody and imitation. See note, Florida ed. For Frye's thoughts on the genre, see his

essays in Myth and Metaphor.

<sup>24</sup>The best discussion of these two theorists I have seen is J. W. Van Hook's article. Much of Van Hook's work on Tesauro has been anticipated by S. L. Bethell's article "The Nature of Metaphysical Wit." The third chapter of Gilman is also valuable and offers a translation of some passages from Tesauro used by Walker. The note to page 484 in Volume Three of the Florida edition is excellent, but for some reason ignores Tesauro, whose contribution seems far more significant than Sterne's parody of Walker: see Florida edition 30-32 ff.

<sup>25</sup>McMaster's fine article explores Walter's obsessive autogeny as an example of his misogyny but not of his wit: she states, "Tristram Shandy is about misogyny, and against it" (456). McMaster also defends Tristram Shandy against recent charges of misogyny in the satire as a whole. Despite the fact that McMaster is a formidable apologist for Sterne, I cannot agree with her, especially since misogyny has been a recurring theme in the priapic adventures of the Menippean hero, a theme which Sterne deliberately exploits. The most notable source, aside from Swift, for Sterne's Menippean misogyny is Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel (1532-1552), but Petronius's Satyricon (65 AD) may be a source well known to him, judging from the reference to Priapus (7.14.595; see New's discussion in Laurence Sterne 181). Since Sterne knew



Joseph Hall's religious works, Hall's Mundus Alter et Idem may be of interest, though no evidence exists to show Sterne knew it. Hall's second book, "The description of Shee-landt, or Womandecoia," represents a parodic Utopian state ruled by women. For the general theme of misogyny, see Agrippa's ironic eulogy On the Nobleness and Superiority of Women (1509), Kirk, 83, entry 239.

<sup>26</sup>Cited in part in Florida edition 3: 395 n. 485: 12. Compare Gilman's translation of Tesauro (76).

<sup>27</sup>Sterne also has Walter praise both Raymond Lullius (whose notorious language wheel has been satirized by an earlier Menippean satirist), and Pellegrini. Sterne alters his source by giving Pellegrini greater praise than did Walker. For Lull's reputation as a sophist, see Henry Cornelius Agrippa's Of the Vanitie and Uncertaintie (1569), "Cornelius Agrippa, To the Reader" (6, 56).

<sup>28</sup>I am applying Frye's concept of artificial and natural creation. See Secular Scripture 112; Great Code 102-114.

<sup>29</sup>See also Selden.

<sup>30</sup>See also Ker's note on page 287, where he cites Davenant's "Preface to Gondibert" as a possible source of this distinction. Clarence Dewitt Thorpe's excellent book offers a thorough study of Hobbes's relation to Davenant and the whole English tradition of wit. George Williamson's The Proper Wit of Poetry is also a seminal

work on the tradition of wit from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century. Traugott's chapter on "Wit and Sentimentalism" in Tristram Shandy's World should be supplemented by Howard Anderson; Bernard Harrison; and, though less relevant, Melvyn New's "Sterne, Warburton, and the Burden of Exuberant Wit."

<sup>31</sup>See also "Search the scriptures," where Sterne calls Longinus "the best critic the eastern world ever produced" (Sermons 331).

<sup>32</sup>All citations marked WTC refer to Frye, Well-Tempered Critic.

<sup>33</sup>For a recent reaction to Frye's application of this dichotomy to characterize an entire historical period in his 1956 article "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," see the special issue of Eighteenth-Century Studies 24.2 (1990-91). Weinbrot's objections to what he calls Frye's inadequate description of "that age" (177) are unconvincing. Weinbrot ignores that a single work can have both Longinian and Aristotelian elements in it. Weinbrot cites Cowley's pindaric odes as Longinian, but he fails to note the formulaic pattern of strophes and line length. Furthermore, to say that the seventeenth-century pindaric odes of Cowley and his imitators render Frye's attribution of the Longinian to the "Age of Sensibility" one of Frye's oversimplified and distorting "liberties" (175) is a logically weak argument. A single exception or a number

exceptions in a genre do not constitute its failure, as with a logical classification. Genre conventions survive historical change because they are transmitted by a complex set of processes ranging from translation and imitation to parody and experiment. There is no period which, indeed no author who, cannot provide an example of Longinian process. And to say Frye's "anorexic 'process' cannot be nourished by the ample feast of eighteenth-century literature" ignores the entire history of sentimentalism, which had been emerging since Shaftesbury, a historical process in which Sterne was no small player in giving even greater popularity. Weinbrot's discussion of Sterne's "implicit product-making" (183) address of the ideal reader is also puzzling. The mimesis of direct address in thematic works, like Menippean satire, necessarily dissolves much of the fictional heterocosm and involves the reader with the narrator's interest in his own ideas. If Sterne's *Tristram* bullies his reader, it is not, therefore, an example of "product-making," but merely an example of a rude, self-absorbed narrator. The thematic interest in ideas rather than plot, which in Weinbrot's example just happens to be the idea of the reader in Sterne, remains, however, Longinian. Hunter's remark that Frye has "trouble locating anatomies, Menippean satires, and novels" (238) is relevant here, too. Frye's pioneering work on Menippean satire has been amply supported historically by Kirk's annotated

bibliography on the genre, a work Hunter apparently has not read. For another use of the naturata-naturans distinction in the eighteenth-century debate surrounding the origin of the social contract and man in a state of nature, see Basil Wiley 205ff., 243ff.

<sup>34</sup>For a discussion of Locke's emphasis on metaphors of eyesight, light, and space, see Tuveson 21 and all of chapter 1. For an aesthetic use of Lockean metaphors of eyesight, light, and space, see L. A. Elioseff's analysis of Addison's "Pleasures of the Imagination," 178ff. Addison ignores the Longinian emphasis on the aural and adapts its "obscurities" to expansive spatial metaphors (Elioseff 62-63, 95-96).

<sup>35</sup>For the yard as phallus, see Erickson 222.

<sup>36</sup>I have in mind the distinction between fictional and thematic modes which Frye makes in the Anatomy to develop the product-process distinction (65-67).

<sup>37</sup>For a fascinating discussion of fate and its symbolic relation to birth in Tristram Shandy, see Robert A. Erickson, Mother Midnight, part 5.

"Mysteries and Riddles": The Charm and Riddle  
of Sterne's Wit

Whatever word or Sentence is  
Printed in a different  
Character, shall be judged to  
contain something extraordinary  
either of Wit or Sublime.

-Swift, A Tale of a Tub

The poetics of wit in Tristram Shandy takes the reader to the very origins of the poetic process. Most critics have commented on the importance of wit as an organizing principle in Sterne's satire. But Tovey rightly attributes the violent dislocation of narrative structure in Menippean satire to wit, which gives the narrator "freedom to include whatever comes to mind" (58). Sterne's humour also relies on wit's power to bring suppressed mental processes into consciousness, processes which often reveal thoughts contrary to conscious intention. The next chapter will examine the moral effects that can be gained through a witty poetic, but only the aesthetic effects of wit concern us here.

Sterne does not simply represent Tristram being duped, like Walter, by his own wit into awareness of some ludicrous impropriety. Sterne's wit aims to surprise

readers into self-consciousness about the motives of their readerly activity. The surprising effects of Sterne's wit remind readers that they expect satiric authors to violate literary and moral convention. Wit, then, is a metafictional device which keeps readers in the knowledge that their journey up Tristram's "stream-of-consciousness" to "hidden springs and motives" symbolizes their own desire to escape the rational censor of judgment.

The only twentieth-century critic who has seriously dealt with the aesthetic function of wit and its relation to the creative process is Northrop Frye. For the aural and visual elements of subconscious association in the artist, Frye uses the terms melos and opsis, respectively. The significance of the musical and visual aspects of literature in Sterne will be discussed below, but it will clarify matters to treat Frye's discussion of wit itself first.

Identifying paranomasia or puns as one of the essential elements of verbal creation, Frye develops a contrast between verbal wit and hypnotic incantation, which he calls oracle. Wit and oracle are virtually indistinguishable in paranomasia, or the regressive stage where the controlled association of sounds and images rises into consciousness. But, as the associative process becomes controlled by consciousness, wit and oracle represent separate functions. Wit, addressed to the

awakened intelligence, Frye says, "makes us laugh; incantation is humourlessly impressive" (AC 276). More significantly for the effect of self-conscious detachment in Sterne and Menippean satire, Frye states, "Wit detaches the reader; the oracle absorbs him" (AC 276-77).

Tristram's history of what passes in his own mind illustrates Frye's theory of wit and oracle in the creative process. When Tristram says, for example, that "one word begets another" (7.32.630), he suggests the associative process of creation with a witty sexual metaphor. But wit could not have its effect if Sterne did not alternate the mood of laughter with tears in Tristram's history. As Tristram remarks, "'tis the transition from one attitude to another . . . which is all in all " (4.7.331). Hazlitt in his essay on wit and humour confirms this psychological principle when he says, "the alternate excitement and realization of the imagination . . . constitutes physical laughter" ("Lectures" 7). The surprising combination of opposites in a witty metaphor can cause laughter and detachment because "The discontinuous in our sensations produces a correspondent jar and discord in the frame" (Hazlitt, "Lectures" 7). Furthermore, wit's metaphors "make the little look less," in Hazlitt's view ("Lectures" 15). A typical strategy of Menippean ridicule, for instance, treats a mad philosopher's words concretely, focussing on their sound or visual appearance, rather than

abstractly, as signifiers of ideas.

Tristram's thoughts frequently turn regressively to words and their concrete features, such as puns and words that end "in ical" (1.21.72). At its most psychologically regressive, Tristram's wit tickles his fancy by going beyond wordplay and puns, words which sound alike, to sounds themselves. Tristram's "fiddling" in volume 5, for instance, combines the sensual pleasures of onomatopoeia with sexual slang: "--Twaddle diddle, tweddle diddle,--twiddle diddle,--prut-trut--krish-krash-krush.--I've undone you, Sir" (5.15.444). The "crushing" crescendo to Tristram's wordplay foreshadows the crushing of his "nose" by the window sash two chapters later. The analogy between Tristram's sexual "fiddling" and the window sash proves that for the Shandy family "nothing was well hung" (5.17.449), even in the imagination. Finally, the obscenity of Tristram's fiddling breaches social decorum, while the infantile babble breaches the psychological decorum we expect in mature, adult thinking.<sup>1</sup> Emphasizing a word's material signifier, however, Tristram ironically transgresses the fictional boundary and foregrounds the word's concrete status on the printed page of a book. Sterne's self-conscious wit demonstrates that metafiction exploits the literal symbol, or words that point literally to their place in a satiric work.

Tristram's tendency toward the psychologically



"primitive" processes of wit is also evident in his many catalogues and lists, which could help to organize material for schoolchildren. Tuning his fiddle, Tristram repeats the five vowels a child learning to spell phonetically might use: "--'Tis wickedly strung--tr . . . a.e.i.o.u.-twang" (5.15.443). A long list on the theme of love's effects in volume 8 also follows a simple alphabetical series (8.13.671-72). Like the vowel sequence, the alphabetical series indicates an absence of the causal sequences of sentences in conventional prose writing. The theme of love is held together only by a loose, arbitrary association. The associative rhythm of Sterne's "free prose" style, here reminiscent of Rabelais, reflects the "disintegrating approach to form and logical connection" (Frye, WTC 82) which Frye believes is congenial to prose satire. Another influence on Sterne is Burton. The associative rhythm of Burton's writing in the Anatomy, with its "quotations, references, allusions, titles of books, Latin tags, short sharp phrases, long lists and catalogues," Frye calls "a masterpiece of free prose" (WTC 83). An occasional list does not by itself make the case that the unit of Sterne's writing is the associative rhythm, but taken with the broken syntax of the aposiopoesis and the dash and we have examples on virtually every page. Unlike the finished prose of Johnson and the finished verse of Pope, Sterne's associative phrases only

approach the sentence. Because the associative rhythm "represents the process of bringing ideas into articulation" (Frye, WTC 99), it clarifies a basic element in the process of Tristram's wit.

Bringing ideas into conscious articulation is, of course, not confined to the association of sound. The processes of Tristram's visual wit put words into patterns through the association of images. This division of the creative process forms the basis of Frye's distinction between melos and opsis, or the musical and visual aspects of language (AC 275 ff.). Frye later renames these creative principles "charm" and "riddle," respectively ("Charms").

In their formative stages, the psychological processes of charm and riddle are indistinguishable. As these processes are consciously realized, the sound associations of charm develop into babble (like Tristram's fiddling), rhyme, assonance, alliteration, and puns. The "charming" effects of these sound associations absorb and, as with the repetitive formulas of lullabies and hypnotism, cast a "spell" over the listener. By breaking down and confusing the conscious will, the repeated sounds act like a magic charm and hold those who hear those sounds "spellbound" or compel them to certain courses of action (Frye, "Charms" 126). Sterne's associative, free-prose style exploits the techniques of charm in his sentimental passages. The

palpitating rhythm of Trim's speech recounting the death of Le Fever is one of the most absorbing:

Nature instantly ebb'd again,---the film returned  
to its place,---the pulse fluttered---stopp'd---  
went on---throb'd---stopp'd again---moved---  
stopp'd---shall I go on?---No. (6.10.513)

This musical passage is ironically followed by a chapter relating the musical directions Yorick writes--"as he was a musical man" (6.11.515)--in the margins of his sermons. Sterne's juxtaposition of Trim's native and Yorick's sophisticated musical styles compels the readers to compare them, and respond to Trim's speech with their own marginalia: "Adagia" and then, perhaps, "Bravo----" (6.11.515-16)--shall I go on?----No.

Denominating the visual creative process as "riddle" stems, for Frye, partly from the puzzling effect it has on the reader. Yet the name is also appropriate for the process of reducing language to a visible form, since "Riddle is from the same root as read: in fact 'read a riddle' was once practically a verb with a cognate object, like 'tell a tale' or 'sing a song'" (Frye, "Charms" 124). The defining characteristic of the riddle is a "fusion of sensation and reflection, the use of an object of sense experience to stimulate mental activity in connection with it" (Frye, AC 280). The riddle's pictorial affinities relate it to the visual aspect of ciphers, acrostics,

rebuses, concrete and shape poetry. Frye's observations on the riddle's relationship to the emblem and the conceit concerns Sterne most.

The riddling quality in the emblems and conceits produced by Shandean wit denies the sincerity of Tristram's reluctance to drop "a riddle in the reader's way" (1.21.73). The "strong bias" Frye sees in the riddle "toward humour and joking, to puzzle and paradox, to a sense of absurdity in juxtaposing of visual images and ideas" ("Charms" 141), well describes the techniques and effect of Shandean wit. Frye's notion of the riddle as verbal trap or "verbal spider-web" ("Charms" 139) also serves as an apt description of Shandean wit. In fact, the comparison between the spider spinning a web from its own bowels and wit's self-originating power is a commonplace which is made familiar in satire by Swift (Tale 231), but which goes back to Francis Bacon in the Renaissance.<sup>2</sup> Witness William Davenant's influential "Preface to Gondibert," which likens wit's "laborious and . . . lucky resultances of thought to a spider's web. Wit "is a webb consisting of the subt'lest threds; and like that of the Spider is considerably woven out of our selves" (Davenant 20). In Sterne, Walter spins webs of wit "out of his own brain" (5.16.445) and leaves a "large uneven thread" (6.33.558) of wit in his son's. Tristram periodically conveys a feeling of being entrapped in the "mystick

labyrinth" of his digressive wit. Commenting on the slow progress his father makes in his Tristapaedia, Tristram laments "That the wisest of us all, should thus outwit ourselves, and eternally forego our purposes in the intemperate act of pursuing them" (5.16.448). Despite being caught in this literary paradox, Tristram continues to pursue the riddle of his existence through writing.

To spring the verbal trap of the riddle without being caught like Tristram and Walter, the reader must "guess" the object described, or circumscribed, by the circle of words. Until it is solved, Frye informs us, the riddle acts like a charm. Trying to point to the object outside the verbal construct represents "the revolt of the intelligence against the hypnotic power of commanding words" (Frye, "Charms" 137). Delaying the reader's referential search for meaning constitutes an essential pleasure of the text for the reader. Yet Sterne reminds us that the author shares in that playful dalliance, for, as Tristram states: "'tis enough to have thee in my power" (7.6.584).

The most common forms of verbal trap employed by Tristram and Walter are the emblem and the conceit. The flourish of Trim's stick is an emblem, but in this case Tristram supplies the motto or verbal commentary: "A thousand of my father's most subtle syllogisms could not have said more for celibacy" (9.5.744). The theme of

celibacy that Trim ties to freedom from the torturous imprisonment of the Spanish Inquisition moves Toby to look earnestly toward Widow Wadman's cottage while reflecting on the "bonds" of matrimony. Toby's momentary freedom from Widow Wadman's sexual charms parallels the reader's momentary freedom from the verbal charm of trying to understand Sterne's emblem. The spellbinding power of Walter's witty conceits is not so easily broken.

The paradoxical metaphor or conceit, along with the emblem and the shaped poem or technopaignia, represents the principal technical development of the seventeenth-century poetics of wit. The pleasure Walter, and Sterne through him, takes in this form of wit significantly marks the style of Tristram Shandy. This "'conceited' style," as New terms it (67), resembles the riddle by fusing the concrete and abstract. Walter's Lockean syllogisms, furthermore, play a key role in the conceit and its "ability to express an exuberant sense of design combined with a witty and paradoxical sense of the stress and tension underlying the design" (Frye, AC 281). But the syllogism proper to the Baroque conceit, as Van Hook's seminal article defines it (34-5), is a faulty syllogism, since it is built around a metaphor. Walter's bovine emblem for humanity's social origin illustrates Locke's reduction of the syllogism to a comparison using a third idea or medius terminus.

The original of society, continued my father, I'm

satisfied is, what Politian tells us, i.e. merely conjugal; and nothing more than the getting together of one man and one woman;--to which, (according to Hesiod) the philosopher adds a servant;--but supposing in the first beginning there were no men servants born--he lays the foundation of it, in a man,--a woman--and a bull.--I believe tis an ox, quoth Yorick, quoting the passage. . . .--A bull must have given more trouble than his head was worth.--But there is a better reason still, said my father (dipping his pen into his ink) for, the ox being the most patient of animals, and the most useful withal in tilling the ground for their nourishment,--was the properest instrument, and emblem too, for the new joined couple, that the creation could have associated with them. (5.31.466)

The fault in Walter's "syllogism" begins with the irony of representing the conjugal origins of society with a symbol of impotence and sterility, a castrated bull.

Duped by the absurdity of his witty conclusion, Walter's humorous emblem possesses all the "paradoxical sense of . . . stress and tension" that a conceit will bear before it becomes nonsense. Still, Walter's conceit supports, in Lockean fashion, what Tesauro, the Italian ~~theorist~~, defines as a conceit. Tesauro (as translated by

Van Hook) calls a conceit "a 'cavillous enthymeme' or 'ingenious fallacy . . . lacking the full syllogistic form' . . . [which] will further guarantee the autonomy of its witty conclusions by ambivalently 'basing its middle term on some metaphor'" (34). Locke dismisses the logical syllogism as unnecessary but keeps the notion of a middle term or medius terminus to explain a comparison between two ideas that cannot be made by juxtaposition but requires the intervention of a third idea. However, as shown above in the parody of Locke's definition of judgment, Sterne converts the medius terminus to a phallic metaphor, rendering the results of Locke's simpler "syllogistic" method as faulty as Tesauro's "cavillous enthymeme." Thus, both the Baroque and Shandean conceits guarantee the autonomy of their witty conclusions by ambivalently "basing their middle term on some metaphor."

Tristram admits to feeling that the world is "beset on all sides with mysteries and riddles" (9.22.776), a statement similar in spirit to Walter's view that the world is big with jest and wit. Tristram communicates the "mysteries and riddles" of life through his visual wit in the following passage, which starts, suitably, with the Rabelasian riddle of Tickletooby's mare:

Who was Tickletooby's mare!--Read, read, read,  
read, my unlearned reader! read,--or by the  
knowledge of the great saint Paraleipomenon--I



tell you beforehand, you had better throw down the book at once; for without much reading, by which your reverence knows, I mean much knowledge, you will no more be able to penetrate the moral of the next marbled page (motly emblem of my work!) than the world with all its sagacity has been able to unraval the many opinions, transactions and truths which still lie mystically hid under the dark veil of the black one. (3.36.268)

The reader's having to guess the moral of the motley emblem makes it a riddle. But the reader suspects that Tristram's self-conscious interest in his own processes of expression "lies mystically hid" under most of his riddles. William Holtz makes a similar observation in his study of Sterne's pictorialism which links his emblems and other typographical oddities to the Greek technopaignia and the English emblem writers. Speaking of Tristram's diagrammatic lines depicting the narratives of the first five volumes, Holtz states that the submerged metaphor in the word "line" erupts into a page of "graphic wit that reveals the very root processes of language" (6.40.570-71; Holtz 83).

Having bypassed the restraints of his own psychological and social decorum, Tristram's visual wit seems satirically designed to bypass the reader's sense of

decorum as well. Tristram states that "the eye . . . has the quickest commerce with the soul,--gives a smarter stroke, and leaves something more inexpressible upon the fancy, than words can either convey--or sometimes get rid of" (5.7.432). Frye's term, "verbal abstract expressionism" ("Varieties" 171), which we might use to describe the technique of Tristram's black and motley emblems, and indeed all of Tristram Shandy, suggests that the rational censor of judgment has been suppressed rather than the imaginative process. In Dryden's words, the "Wild and Lawless" faculty of the poet's imagination has been given free rein by Tristram (Ker 1: 8). Disregarding imitation of reality, Tristram abstracts the essence of a thing and represents it the way it appears to his imagination. The abstract nature of Tristram's emblems gives them an enigmatic quality that allows the reader to participate in producing their meaning. The emblems "leave something . . . inexpressible upon the fancy" which the reader may try to express as if guessing the answer of a riddle.

The riddle in Sterne's Longinian aesthetic inevitably transforms his conversational relationship with his reader from an innocent to a complicitous one. While critics have discussed the "relations of complicity" that Sterne foists upon his reader, none has adequately connected this relationship to the witty emblems and other typographical

oddities (Mayoux, qtd. in Preston 154). These "relations of complicity" represent Sterne's endeavour to tempt the reader into a playful game of wit. Stedmond seems to be the first modern critic to take seriously the "spirit of play" (100n12) in Sterne. Richard Lanham's book Tristram Shandy: The Games of Pleasure captures this spirit of play in Sterne's witty display of rhetoric. But even these seminal books do not clearly integrate Sterne's visual wit with his rhetorical wit. Adopting the word technopaignia for Sterne's emblems and other typographical tricks will help clarify the playful relationship between Sterne's visual and rhetorical wit. The Greek technopaignia contribute significantly to the English emblem tradition, and the word itself signifies a visual "game of art" which need not be limited to verse.<sup>3</sup>

Since the fiddling of Tristram's musical wit is sexualized, we should not be surprised to find the visual wit of his technopaignia, his game of art, mixed with sexuality as well. But since Addison's definition of wit requires that wit should surprise, we should expect only greater ingenuity from Tristram to sustain this essential poetic effect. Drawing a straight line across his page to show how well his narrative, by the "grace of Benevento's devils" (6.40.571), could proceed, Tristram later refers to the line as "The emblem of moral rectitude" (6.40.572). The very next sentence damns the line with praise: "--The

best line! say cabbage-planters--is the shortest line, says Archimedes, which can be drawn from one given point to another.--" (6.40.572). Despite "all that has been said upon straight lines in sundry pages of [his] book," Tristram in a later chapter defies the cabbage-planter to plant his cabbages in straight lines, "especially if the slits in petticoats are unsew'd up" (8.1.655). Tristram's identification with the cabbage-planter here helps him rationalize his own moral weakness for digressing and turning a phrase into a sexual witticism.

Tristram's wit is, like Walter's, sexual. But Tristram's wit will "halve [the] matter amicably" (2.11.125) with the opposite sex; Walter's wit will not, at least consciously. In fact, Robert Alter's analysis of Tristram's cabbage-planter reveals a sexual pun. "Cabbage" is slang for the female pudendum, and "planting" is a "low colloquialism for inserting the male member, or, more generally for sexual intercourse" (319-20; see Note to 572.6). On Gascony's "sportive plains" when the cabbage-planter's sexual distraction throws off his straight line, his "judgment is surprised by the imagination" (8.1.655). On the author's sportive page, Tristram's sexual wit digresses from the moral emblem, thereby surprising his judgment. Both are allegorical figures for Sterne's readers, whose judgments are surprised by their own imaginative indulgence in sexual puns. And while cabbage-

planting and emblems of moral rectitude cannot avoid "sidling into some bastardly digression" (8.1.655), neither can the reader's imagination.

Sterne's graphic wit extends to the typographical under Sterne's newly canonized patron of satiric attack "Saint Paraleipomenon." Sterne's saintly figure represents "Things omitted in the body of a work," but these things will remain omitted and not "appended as a supplement" (OED, see Note 269.2-3), as the saint's name implies, except perhaps in the reader's imagination. Paraleipomenon's ironic figure, representing nothing, or something absent, relates to a locus classicus in the paradoxical encomium, the praise of nothing. Analysis of this Menippean commonplace lies just ahead. Some attention to the sacred character of Sterne's saint should be given first.

Tristram invokes Saint Paraleipomenon's spirit most often through the asterisk. But Tristram's asterisk, as one critic notes, rather than serving as a symbol for "polite or politic elision," becomes a "cue for bawdy speculation" (Holtz 83). The asterisk's visual function parallels that of the emblem by stimulating the reader to reflect on what "lies mystically hid" under its dark veil. One of Sterne's most notorious ellipses comes from the good-natured Toby. Defending Mrs. Shandy's refusal of Walter's male midwife, Dr. Slop, on the grounds of modesty,

Toby states, "My sister I dare say . . . does not care to let a man come so near her \*\*\*\*" (2.6.115). Granted, the riddle solves easily in this case. Nevertheless, Tristram seizes the opportunity to self-consciously thematize the techniques of "things omitted" from sentences such as the aposiopesis. Tristram then considers substituting a bawdy metaphor like "Backside" (2.6.116), but the succession of ideas quickly carries him to other matters. The sainthood of Paraleipomenon is therefore shortlived for any reader who has penetrated the ironic moral behind Tristram's visual wit.

Sterne's wit generated controversy amongst his eighteenth-century readers when they discovered that the "thing omitted" was almost always carnal. In one of his studies on the critical reception of Sterne's work, Alan B. Howes cites the critic Owen Ruffhead who reacts morally to the impropriety of a clergyman writing such a scandalous book (Howes, Sterne 5; see Howes, Yorick 12-13). Ruffhead enlists Hobbes's aid against Sterne's wit in the following quotation: "where Wit is wanting, it is not Fancy that is wanting, but Discretion. Judgment, therefore, without Fancy, is Wit: but Fancy without Judgment, is not" (Ruffhead in Howes, Sterne 121). Hobbes's greater tolerance to works of wit than Locke and the "graver gentry" makes Ruffhead's Hobbesian position ironic.<sup>4</sup> But wit never escapes the antithesis with judgment which may

account, in part, for the moral arguments that are launched against it so readily. The moral force of the wit-judgment antithesis may also fuel the false dichotomy between "true" and "false" wit that so many critics attempted. Certainly, Sterne's various manipulations of print conventions were often dismissed as "typographical tricks," and as such, "debatable examples of wit" (Howes, Yorick 34). And yet the moral attacks on wit often reveal valuable insights into its poetic power, and Oliver Goldsmith's attack on Sterne's wit is one such example.

In Citizen of the World, Goldsmith's attack on Sterne is strangely apt because he justly compares Sterne with another Menippean wit, Thomas D'Urfey. Goldsmith calls Sterne the "successor of Durfey," but adds that where Sterne "does not excel him in wit, the world must confess he out-does him in obscenity" (Works 2: 224; Citizen of the World).<sup>5</sup> D'Urfey's An Essay Towards the Theory of the Intelligible World (1708), or instance, is a Menippean satire strikingly similar to Swift's Tale and Tristram Shandy. D'Urfey's parody of The Theory of the Intelligible World (1701-1704) ridicules the radical Platonism of its author, John Norris, a disciple of the French philosopher Nicolas Malebranche.<sup>6</sup> Goldsmith speaks true when he claims Sterne outdoes D'Urfey in obscenity. That D'Urfey excels Sterne in wit cannot be judged fairly in the example given below, but Sterne's wit does not suffer by comparison with

any Menippean writer.

Using typographical "trickery" to parody Malebranchian idealism, D'Urfey in An Essay leaves a chasm or hiatus in his text for a page and a half. The author's marginal note printed in a column along the left side of the page explains the hiatus:

The Author very well understands that a goodsizable Hiatus discovers a very great Genius, there being no Wit in the World more Ideal, and consequently more refined, than what is display'd in those elaborate Pages, that have ne'ere a Syllable written on them. Yet this Vacuity now under Consideration was not designed, or compiled, upon that Inducement, but full sore against the Author's Will, who has been forced to suppress a Multitude of his choicest things, in Compliance with Mr. Stationer; a Person of so scrupulous Intellectuals, as to refuse to print Things which, he said, he could not understand.

(163)

The wit in this page depends on the paradox that the less it says, which in this case is nothing, the more it says. Well within the tradition of the paradoxical encomium or ironic eulogy which praises trivial things, D'Urfey's narrator praises nothing. To praise nothing presents the greatest challenge a wit can face, a challenge met by



Swift's Hack in the Tale (208) and Fielding in "An Essay on Nothing" (1743), to name but two.<sup>7</sup>

D'Urfey's lacuna, an ironic display of erudition, provides a generic context for Sterne's own game of witty lacunae. Swift's lacunae were also familiar to Sterne, but the device can be traced back to Lucian.<sup>8</sup> Tristram relates his lacunae to his unbridled fancy, a chronic ailment of the witty philosophus gloriosus. And, since everything Shandean has "two handles" (2.7.118), it should not surprise us that Tristram suffers the wit's other chronic ailment, his worry over the effects of his unbridled fancy on his reader's comprehension:

when a man is telling a story in the strange way  
I do mine, he is obliged continually to be going  
backwards and forwards to keep all tight together  
in the reader's fancy---which, for my own part,  
if I did not take heed to do more than at first,  
there is so much unfixed and equivocal matter  
starting up, with so many breaks and gaps in it,  
---and so little service do the stars afford,  
which, nevertheless, I hang up in some of the  
darkest passages, knowing that the world is apt  
to lose its way, with all the lights the sun  
itself at noon day can give it---and now, you  
see, I am lost myself!----

(6.33.557-58)

Tristram goes on to blame his wanton wit on his father. But evading responsibility makes up the principal deception of wit. Tristram is a dupe to the rationalizations of his witty narrative, just as Walter is "hourly a dupe" (4.3.419) to the rationalizations of his witty eloquence. Father and son are alike not merely for hereditary reasons, but also because, as Tristram tells us, "Great wits jump" (3.9.197), that is, they agree.

By invoking Saint Paraleipomenon's spirit, Tristram shows that "Great wits jump" in the more conventional sense of skipping over parts of their story. One of the "many breaks and gaps" Tristram refers to above is the absence of chapter 24 in volume 4. Whether or not Tristram has really torn out the chapter, the printer of our copy honours the author's ten-page chasm by skipping the numerical pagination accordingly. Sterne's play with printers' conventions forms part of the technopaignia, or game of art, that transforms the material text, the book, into an aesthetic object.<sup>9</sup> Related to the missing chapter are the two blank chapters, 18 and 19, in volume 9. Tristram appears to restore the two chapters in chapter 25, but the Gothic chapter headings, as Preston says, "give the impression of material interpolated from another source" (163). Preston proposes that the two chapters are an alternative version of chapter 20, based on Trim's fetching a map from the garret in chapters 20 and 26. But

Tristram's narrative repetition partially contradicts his earlier statement that he looks upon a chapter "which has, only nothing in it, with respect" (9.25.785). Furthermore, his respect for chapters on nothing calls up the ironic praise of nothing customary in Menippean satire; the custom belies his assertion that nothing "is no way a proper subject for satire" (9.25.785).

The paradox of employing hidden knowledge to display learning may be relevant to another attack on Tristram Shandy by Goldsmith. Goldsmith accuses Sterne's narrator of talking to the reader "in riddles" and then sending them "to bed to dream for the solution" (2: 223). His remark throws into relief the riddling quality associated with wit and gives another clue to the aesthetic purpose behind Sterne's "unfixed and equivocal matter." We find an illustration of that aesthetic purpose long before Sterne, in 1629, when Francis Quarles criticizes the "itch of wit" in conceits or "strong lines" such as John Donne's. Quarles censures conceit writers for venturing too far "in trusting to the Oedipean conceit of their ingenious Reader" (Quarles 240, qtd. in Williamson 47). Oedipus gains his heroic stature by solving the Sphinx's riddle. Authors who cast the reader in the role of Oedipus, for Quarles, however, permit the reader to "felloniously father the created expositions of other men" (24). Quarles feels, in other words, that wit allows the reader too much

interpretive authority. Wit gives up too much of the author's responsibility, especially his moral responsibility, for the text's meaning. Though Sterne, as a satirist, would disagree with Quarles's moral position, he would delight in the "Oedipean conceit" of Quarles's own sexual metaphor.

As a satirist, Sterne relies upon the Oedipean conceit of his reader to "father" the text's meaning, for in satire the reader supplies the moral norm, not the author. If Tristram Shandy is to some, as it was to one of Sterne's contemporaries, a "riddle without an object" (Howes, Sterne 169),<sup>10</sup> we can only conclude that some readers expect an author to supply a moral to their stories. Readers who see Sterne's book as a pointless riddle do not necessarily lack wit either. As Samuel Butler asserts, "good wits do not always Jump" (Prose Observations 58). But Menippean satirists often content themselves with paradoxes and riddles, leaving readers to conclude what they like. Not concerned with the exploits of heroes, Menippean satire to keep its reader's interest "relies on the free play of intellectual fancy" (Frye, AC 310), or what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "the adventures of an idea" (Dostoevsky 94). The thematic emphasis in a Menippean satire like Sterne's would lead a reader to look for the writer's personality as a controlling presence. However, the satirist's persona in this tradition not only confesses a lack of control over

the text, but also plays with the author's fictional presence. Without the author as a stable guide to the text's meaning, the reader is left with the physical presence of the book. Sterne's symbol for the author's abandonment of his normative function is the marbled page. Tristram Shandy is a "riddle without an object" only when the reader does not try to "read" the book. The book itself is the riddle, and the object of the riddle is the story of the Shandy household, the moral that readers discover when they penetrate the motley emblem.

The paradox of reading Tristram Shandy as a visual conceit "writ large" raises the reader's Oedipean awareness of it as a material book. The "disappearance of the heroic" (Frye, AC 228) in satire, which means in Tristram Shandy the disappearance of the writer, demands that readers fulfill the hero's role and help finish writing the book. The reader's ironic awareness of the ambiguity between his "real" role and the fictional role (as narratee) that Tristram casts him in corresponds to the sense of strain and paradox of the book as a visual conceit. Readers know, paradoxically, that they do help produce the book, allegorically speaking, by leading themselves out of Tristram's "mystick labyrinth," by solving the "mysteries and riddles" that beset Tristram on all sides. But Sterne promotes the reader's sense of the gap between Tristram as a "naturalized" character and a

"textual node" (Rimmon-Kenan 31-33) when Tristram complains that language often places "tall, opaque words, one before another, betwixt your own and your reader's conception" (3.20.235). The implied reader and the narratee consequently must "fellowionously father" Tristram's meaning because words for him are conceptually opaque, or "contraceptive."

The relationship between author and reader reaches its most ironic level when, in various ways, the fictional illusion appears to dissolve. We confuse Tristram with Sterne, for example, when Tristram "literally" leaves gaps in the text for the reader to fill. References to the actual reception of Sterne's works by the "monthly Reviewers" (3.4.190) of the Monthly Review intensify the identification of Sterne with Tristram. But Tristram's ontological status shrinks to just another of Sterne's "tall, opaque words" when he vows not to be exasperated by the reviewers and remain good-natured, adding the important qualifying words "as long as I live or write (which in my case means the same thing)" (3.4.191).

To carry the conceit further, Sterne takes the reader to one of Tristram's material origins with a visit to the bookseller's shop. At the shop, Tristram feels caught with the reader in the "womb of speculation," wondering whether he can advance the story any more quickly. But thoughts about the poor progress of his Life and Opinions raise

questions about his very existence for, as Tristram states, "my OPINIONS will be the death of me" (4.13.342). He hopes that the "manufactures of paper" (4.13.342) will prosper and enable him to continue his life's story. The irony of Sterne's witty conceit depends on the metaphor of the printed book as a symbol of Tristram's life to give the material book significance, just as George Herbert's conceit "Easter Wings" depends on the metaphor of the wing to give significance to the winged shape of the lines which make up the poem. A conceit, as Frye defines it, fuses, like the riddle, a concrete image and an abstract idea. Sterne, through Tristram's paper-making worries, fuses the concrete image of the book with the abstract theme of Tristram's life. In other words, the readers of Tristram Shandy hold Tristram's life in their hands.

The reader's detached awareness of the material book, however, passes quickly. Unlike allegory, the volatile union of "heterogeneous ideas" in Sterne's conceits is shortlived. The book fails to sustain the reader's ironic detachment because Tristram's wit mingles with his sentimentalism. Sterne's easy alternation between wit and sentimentalism contrasts with the traditional separation of thought and feeling associated with the "Age of Reason," and what T. S. Eliot calls the "dissociation of sensibility." The Longinian critic John Dennis in 1696 clarifies the usual opposition between witty and pathetic

writing:

Poetical Genius . . . is it self a Passion. A Poet then is obliged always to speak to the Heart. And it is for this reason, that Point and Conceit, and all that they call Wit, is to be for ever banish'd from true Poetry; because he who uses it, speaks to the Head alone. For nothing but what is simple and natural, can go to the Heart; and Nature (humanly speaking) can be touch'd by it self alone.

(Critical Works 1,127)

Wit "speaks to the Head" alone for Dennis because its anti-mimetic, paradoxical metaphors alert the reader to its artificiality.

Rather than dismiss wit because it speaks to the conscious mind, Sterne finds a literary and, ironically, a moral use for it. In the minds of Sterne's characters, as Arthur Cash states, "the true motives of any one action are usually at variance with their conscious representation" (Sterne's Comedy 119). Wit can serve as a useful reminder of those true motives. Dismantling, or "deconstructing," the traditional opposition between wit and judgment, Sterne makes wit a rival of judgment, the arbiter of conscience. In certain matters of individual conscience, wit works even better than judgment because it discovers faults with a "merry heart" (1.11.28) and not with gravity. To discover



the moral role wit plays in Tristram's ethics, we must turn to the court of conscience and the theme of sentimentalism.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>I am indebted to Roberta Tovey's stimulating Freudian analysis of this passage. Her Freudian approach, however, seems to have limited her historical exploration of wit as well as her exploration of some of the theoretical implications. For instance, she does not, ironically, explore Sterne's sexual wit in any serious way.

<sup>2</sup>For the Baconian analogy of the spider as a pedantic wit in relation to Swift, see Ehrenpreis 1: 232-33.

<sup>3</sup>For "technopaignia", see A Greek-English Lexicon. For the historical influence of the Greek technopaignia, see Hollander, chapter 12; and Adler.

<sup>4</sup>See Thorpe's comparison of Hobbes and Locke on wit (281-86).

<sup>5</sup>Citizen of the World. See Howes, Yorick 33.

<sup>6</sup>For Tristram's awareness of Malebranche, see 2.2.99.

<sup>7</sup>For the tradition, see Miller, qtd. in Kirk, who extends the tradition to Menippean satire. See Kirk, Menippean Satire, index, "Paradoxical encomia."

<sup>8</sup>See Kirk, "Tristram Shandy" 14; Kirk, Menippean Satire, index: "Lacunae."

<sup>9</sup>See Peter J. de Voogd's two informative articles on Sterne's game of art with printed book conventions.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Howes, Yorick 18, qtd. in Lanham 45n17.

"Wit enough to be honest": Wit as Moral  
Self-Consciousness

Agenbite of Inwit. Inwit's Agenbite.  
-Joyce, Ulysses

In Tristram Shandy, Yorick's decline and death dramatize Sterne's conception of wit as a moral instrument. The story of Yorick's tragic end is a parable of wit, a parable of moral honesty and its fate in the world. Yorick's parable anticipates the theme of moral honesty in his sermon on conscience and establishes the moral context in which Sterne's poetics of wit must be finally understood. Wit's appearance in Yorick's courtroom of conscience indicates that wit's rivalry with judgment extends to the moral domain. According to Yorick, the many deceits to which judgment is subject fail to guarantee a good conscience. The honesty that attends wit, on the other hand, clears the conscience and recommends it as a medium of moral knowledge. Wit's moral usefulness is never more evident than in Sterne's satire on sentimentalism. For, of the "two luminaries" (3.20.232) wit and judgment, wit lights the way out of the obscurities of the sentimental ethic.

David Hume's adage expresses a principle of sentimental ethics when he states that "morality . . . is

more properly felt than judged of" (Treatise 2,178). A sentimental ethic does not, however, obviate the necessity of reason. Shaftesbury's "moral sense" (Characteristics 1: 262), like Locke's "internal sense" of "reflection" (105), rationally or consciously reflects on the mind's operations. Where Shaftesbury's term differs from Lockean "reflection" is in its exclusive handling of moral questions and its conscious use of feeling as the arbiter of value. Sterne does not, therefore, satirize sentimentalism by contrasting it with what Arthur Cash and Melvyn New call Sterne's conservative, rationalist ethic (New 19; Cash "Sermon" 400, 406). Sterne's satire ridicules the rationalist and the sentimental ethics as two reductive systems invented to flatter the vanity of some philosophus gloriosus or, to use Kirk's term, some theologus gloriosus (Bibliography xix).

Sterne's response to the inadequacy of a rationalist and sentimental ethic makes them not two sides of the same coin but "two tables" (2.17.157) in the same Mosaic covenant. By itself, the emphasis in a rationalist ethic, such as Locke's, on the necessity of a future existence with the hope of reward and a fear of punishment provides a poor motive for doing good. In its more militant form, the rationalist ethic threatens even free will. A sentimental ethic, on the other hand, which advocates the need for a "disinterested" conscience that pursues virtue for its own

sake, runs the danger of moral narcissism, or worse, moral relativism. Through Yorick, Sterne unites the two tables of the rationalist and sentimental ethic, the two tables of religion and morality, into a renewed Christian, albeit strongly Anglicized, covenant. Yorick warns his readers that "conscience is not a law" (2,.17.164) and that every individual needs the aid of an objective moral standard, the religious "law . . . already written" (2.17.164). In order to secure a moral character "like a British judge" (2.17.164) and a conscience above abuse, the individual must have the two tables.

The very existence of Yorick's sermon on the abuse of the conscience, however, testifies to the sentimental school's triumph in establishing a moral system prior to religion. Taken alone, Yorick's sermon may appear wholly consistent with the union of religion and morality in the Latitudinarian tradition that New, for example, finds in Sterne (15). In the context of Sterne's whole corpus, and furthermore in the context of Tristram's autobiography, his "mental history" (if I may borrow from John Stuart Mill [Autobiography, ch.3]), Yorick's sermon acquires a new significance. Yorick's sermon evaluates, along with Tristram's history, the reliance, in philosophy and theology, on the Lockean model of self-consciousness for identity and moral autonomy.

All of Sterne's writings, especially Tristram Shandy,

assume Locke has demonstrated the conscience's freedom to the world and shown that individuals are "created free to stand or free to fail" (Sermons 2: 198). The ascendancy of sentimentalism represents in Sterne's day the most sophisticated development of the conscience as moral self-consciousness. Sterne's satiric purpose in Tristram Shandy and Sentimental Journey focusses on exposing the weaknesses of the sentimental conscience. The sentimental conscience, as Shaftesbury defines it, works by Lockean reflection "so that by means of this reflected sense, there arises another kind of affection towards those very affections themselves, which have been already felt, and are now become the subject of a new liking or dislike" (Characteristics 1: 251). In Tristram's Menippean "mental history," wit too operates like a "reflected sense," but one that exposes the deceitfulness of moral sentiments. Tristram's wit subverts the sentimentalist's moral idealism by telling his "mental history" from below, that is, from the point of view of the senses. Wit's associations with the senses in faculty psychology make it the agent of the "pleasure principle." Wit's capacity to act on behalf of sensual pleasure and represent it to the morally conscious mind, the "court of conscience," forms the basis of Sterne's poetics of wit.

Sterne's poetics of wit offers no solution to the conflict between the "two tables" of religion and morality, but it does provide an alternative explanation for the

moral honesty in humour. Sterne's works, including the sermons, repeatedly return to the conflict of the two moral systems in various ways, and wit is always present as a style or theme. The allegorical technique of the sermon "The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning Described" not only reminds us of the allegory in the episode of the visitation dinner, "a master stroke of arch-wit" (4.27.385), but also reminds us that Sterne has hidden behind Yorick's persona more than once to escape blame for his sexual wit. For it is Sterne's deliberate, and not Yorick's accidental, "conceit [that] awaken'd Somnolentus ---made Agelastes smile" (4.27.384) and threw Gastipheres' chestnuts into the "hiatus in Phutatorius's breeches" (4.27.381). And when Sterne as Yorick takes his audience into the pleasurable "house of feasting," his appeal to our hearts and our "imagination" tell us that wit is the vehicle that takes us there. The theme of the "House of Feasting" weighs the moral efficacy of the two systems of religion and morality. The moral lessons Sterne extracts from the pleasures available in the house of feasting, an emblem for autonomous moral systems like sentimentalism, bear directly on his theory of wit. If the "house of mourning" stands for the grave warnings customary in established religious systems, and the rationalist practice of using the fear of punishment to motivate a Christian toward virtue, Sterne allows it little more moral value

than its festive counterpart.

Sterne's sermon "The Levite and His Concubine" explicitly argues for a moral theory of wit. Sterne sets up a dichotomy of wit, like the dichotomy between the "house of feasting" and the "house of mourning," that casts a favourable light on the less judgmental forms of moral expression. The rash judgments of malignant wit are clearly condemned and set aside for a more forgiving "festive wit." Sterne maintains God has "given us a religion so courteous,----so good temper'd" (Sermons 1: 301) that only the healing balm of a festive wit fits as a model for moral discourse. Sterne's recommendation of festive wit's moral propriety echoes Walter Charleton's Two Discourses Concerning the Different Wits of Men (1669), which also uses the distinction between malignant and festive wit.

Shaftesbury's defence of wit in the form of raillery as a test of truth also merits comparison with Sterne. The freedom of thought gained through the free exercise of wit, for Shaftesbury, protects a community from narrow-minded, overly serious, religious fanaticism. Like Yorick, Shaftesbury believes that "Gravity is the very essence of imposture" (Characteristics 1: 10) and that only the good-humoured ridicule of wit can discover its deceptions. Shaftesbury even asserts that Christ himself was "sharp, humourous, and witty in his repartees, reflections,



fabulous narrations, or parables, similes, comparisons, and other methods of milder censure and reproof"

(Characteristics 2: 231). Sterne is not the first to see in wit a means of moral discovery.

Reviewing Sterne's inheritance of wit as the genealogy of a parodic "reflected" or "moral sense" would be incomplete without including Locke. Locke's rationalist ethical system compels him to dismiss wit as a positive threat. But wit has not always been viewed so negatively by rationalists, and, as Robert Burton shows in the Anatomy of Melancholy, it was once held as the active agent of the understanding and the conscience. Sterne's account of wit in Tristram Shandy shows, in fact, that wit's fortunes are directly connected to the theological debate between religion and morality, or a rationalist and a sentimental ethic. Holding wit up as a true yet unrecognized champion of this theological debate admirably suits a Menippean satire like Tristram Shandy. But Sterne distinguishes himself from Tristram and other philosophus gloriosi, like Locke and Shaftesbury, since he has no systematic treatise on the subject of wit. His theory of wit outside Tristram Shandy is, strictly speaking, no more than a number of gnomic utterances scattered throughout his writings. To be fair, Shaftesbury shows an awareness of dogmatism and its dangers when he says that "the most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system" (Characteristics 1,189).

Tristram, however, makes himself foolish by launching his own theory of wit in his preface to show where other philosophers fall short. And, the outlines of an organized aesthetic doctrine come into view for the critic who is not afraid, in spite of Shaftesbury's warning, of making himself foolish by systematizing Sterne's theory of wit.

A significant hint toward Sterne's moral theory of wit comes in a letter where he comments on the moral effect of his sermons:

I will give you a short sermon, and flap you in my turn:--preaching (you must know) is a theologic flap upon the heart, as the dunning for a promise is a political flap upon the memory:--both the one and the other is useless where men have wit enough to be honest. This makes for my hypothesis of wit and judgment.

(Letters 134)

Tristram Shandy represents Sterne's poetic "flap," or reminder, "upon the heart" of the readers to be honest if they have "wit enough." The poetic context of Yorick's sermon (that is, in a satire) makes it, strictly speaking, an imitation of a sermon, but its theme qualifies as a "theologic flap" upon the reader. The most concise, and the most witty, summary of Yorick's moral purpose is Stedmond's when he says the sermon "is intended to catch the conscience of its audience" (Comic Art 85). Indeed,

Stedmond's witty phrase practically sums up the whole aesthetic design of Tristram Shandy and proves that Yorick's ghost "still walks" (2.17.167). Through his poetic or a theologic "flap upon the heart," Sterne wants to "catch the conscience" of his readers, whether their ethic is sentimental or rational.

To catch the conscience of their readers, both Sterne and Yorick must make them conscious of their "true springs and motives" (2.17.145) as readers, just as in any other activity. But the sentimental ethic calls for the same conscious reflection on the motives of behaviour to measure moral value. To expose the errors of sentimentalism, Sterne analyzes the workings of the conscience in terms of the older faculty psychology which personifies passions and modes of thought. The endless opportunities for making witty illustrations with the personifications of faculty psychology explains more simply and satisfactorily Sterne's interest in the older model of the mind than assuming that Sterne subscribes to its philosophical assumptions, as Cash has done (Sterne's Comedy 123, cf.118). Sterne's personifications may also constitute a witty Menippean parody of Locke, since Locke was instrumental in overturning the meaning of "faculties" as "some real beings in the soul that performed those actions of understanding and volition" (237).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Shaftesbury's "moral sense" follows Locke's model of the self-conscious mind as

the ground of truth, giving Sterne's recourse to faculty psychology an added satiric potency.

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Sterne's sense of urgency regarding conscience in his satire and his sermons reflects the concern of an entire age, since after Descartes, and especially Locke, the problem of conscience had become a problem of consciousness. Donne's statement that the "new Philosophy calls all in doubt" ("First Anniversary") is never more prophetic than when Locke questions the existence of innate ideas and irrevocably undermines the authority of conscience. Ironically, Locke's philosophical revolution opens the way to a new sentimental ethic which shares the authority of conscience with the very forces conscience is traditionally meant to control--the passions. To understand Sterne's conception of wit's role in the new model of conscience as a kind of "moral self-consciousness" (Bernstein 35),<sup>2</sup> a background on some of the historical developments in epistemology is needed.

Although it may appear just another digression in Tristram's history, Yorick's sermon mirrors the central theme of Tristram Shandy concerning the difficulty of self-knowledge. Stedmond rightly compares the sermon to "The Mousetrap" in Hamlet, the play within the play (85), not

only because, as Horace and Pope show, the moral essay merges easily with satire, but also because the fictional situation that surrounds the sermon acts as a mise en abyme for the whole satire of Tristram Shandy. Sterne anticipates that some of his readers may follow the text out of intellectual interest, like Walter, or for the pathetic tales, like Toby. Other readers, however, will find their conscience so quiet during the performance they will, like Dr. Slop, fall asleep. For Dr. Slop, Yorick's sermon stirs his conscience so little that it resembles a satire as Swift defines it--"A sort of Glass wherein Beholders do generally discover every body's Face but their Own" (Swift 215). To say that he does not expect to catch all of his readers "conscious" may be going beyond the zodiac of Sterne's wit (to echo Sidney), but not of his thematic exploration of conscience as moral self-consciousness.

The question raised by Yorick in the Sermon, later published under the title "The Abuses of Conscience Considered," is how far we can rely on our conscience. Surely, Yorick asks, "If a man thinks at all . . . he must be privy to his own thoughts and desires" (2.17.145). Significantly, Yorick's hypothesis comes very close to identifying conscience with Lockean consciousness. The mind may be "deceived by false appearances" in its other functions, but Yorick carefully states here, in the

conscience "the mind has all the evidence and facts within herself;---is conscious of the web she has wove"

(2.17.146). The words "conscience" and "conscious" had only recently been given separate meanings in English by Cudworth and Locke, "a notable example of

desynonymisation," as C. S. Lewis puts it (Studies 183).

That Sterne's concept of the conscience shows influences of Locke's new concept of consciousness as reflexive awareness or self-consciousness is, however, not immediately evident.

Yorick's sermon also exploits the traditional synonymous usages of "consciousness" and "conscience" which, to quote

Catherine Glyn Davies' neat summary of C. S. Lewis's word study, varies from "mere awareness or opinion to the

capacity for judgement, from shared or private or guilty knowledge to the moral law within" (Conscience 3). Sterne

profits from the ambiguity of the words "conscience" and "consciousness" by making them, like the puns and double

entendres in "crevices" and "whiskers," another "semantic theme" which "establishes the functions or powers of words"

(Frye, AC 78). In Menippean satire, however, the power of words always functions ironically, working opposite to their ostensible purpose of communicating knowledge.

Although the words "conscience" and "consciousness" do not have the "magic bias" (1.19.58) Walter sees in names, or

the magical effect that the swearing nuns believe "bouger" and "fouter" have (7.25.614), Yorick's, and Tristram's,

semantic theme typifies the Menippean treatment of words as things which obscure reality rather than transparently represent it.

Yorick's conflation of Lockean self-consciousness with the conscience represents one of many attempts in the eighteenth century to grapple with the questions of identity, particularly moral identity, raised by Locke's new coinage. Yorick joins the British sentimental school of ethics, beginning with Shaftesbury, and followed by Hutcheson, Joseph Butler and Adam Smith, which sees the conscience developing out of some form of Lockean self-consciousness in relation to feelings such as sympathy.<sup>3</sup> Before we can understand sentimental ethics, we must therefore understand Locke's historic revision of personal identity and its relation to moral consciousness. As we travel from the new Lockean and sentimental systems and then later to the old rationalist system, we will see that Sterne, the Menippean satirist, undermines each system by parodying it. And, as Juanita Williams aptly reminds us, Menippean satire prefers to "refute a system by working inside that system" ("Towards a Definition" 3).

With the refutation of innate conscience Locke restores the conscience's moral function by developing what David P. Behan has called the concept of "moral ownership" (65) or "concerned consciousness" (63).<sup>4</sup> Behan believes Lockean moral identity is based on the distinction between

the idea of moral man "in praktike" (61) and the idea of natural man "as an animal of a particular shape" or "man in physik" (56). Unlike the natural man who merely possesses consciousness as "the reflexive perception of thinking," the moral man has "concern . . . added to consciousness" (63). Concern gives a moral character to consciousness because a moral man is not, as Behan states, "just reflexively aware of his thoughts and actions; he is concerned for himself, he is concerned for his happiness as it may be affected now and later by his accountability for those substances, thoughts and actions which he owns" (65). Behan later quotes the following from Locke:

For as to this point of being the same self, it matters not whether this present self be made up of the same or other Substances, I being as much concerned, and as justly accountable for any Action was done a thousand Years since, appropriated to me now by this self-consciousness, as I am, for what I did the last moment. (Essay 341)

Locke's use of the neologism "self-consciousness," translated in French as conscience or sentiment interieur, may have been a significant development in sentimentalism's emergence, as Catherine Glyn Davies notes (29).

Moral self-consciousness or identity is not then equivalent to memory, as Locke's critics have traditionally



argued. The concerned consciousness of the moral man, rather than simply remembering, "appropriates or re-appropriates a thought or action as his own and makes it part of his self or person" (Behan 66). Once the moral man appropriates thoughts and actions, what is morally owned as "his moral property" becomes what a "moral man speaks of as himself, or his Self" and others speak of as a person (Behan 66-67). Behan adds that the "moral ownership" of a concerned consciousness also represents "Locke's solution to the problem of personal identity" (69).

Shaftesbury's mixed reaction to his former private tutor cannot disguise Locke's pervasive influence. While Shaftesbury, in a private letter, feels that Locke "struck at all fundamentals, threw all order and virtue out of the world" by rejecting an innate conscience, he cultivates his own version of Lockean consciousness as moral ownership to define identity.<sup>5</sup> Both Locke and Shaftesbury, for example, refuse to accept the extreme skepticism of Cartesian ontology: Locke because we cannot have any knowledge of that "something that thinks" (543), and Shaftesbury because he takes his "being upon trust" (Characteristics 2: 276). More interested in proving the existence of his "moral identity" (Cox 17) than his personal identity, Shaftesbury forges ahead to demonstrate "who and what I ought to be" (2: 276). He then integrates Lockean reflection with the intuitive, instinctive "moral sense," such as in the

following passage when he states, "let us doubt, if we can, of everything about us, we cannot doubt of what passes within ourselves. Our passions and affections are known to us. They are certain, whatever the objects may be on which they are employed" (Characteristics 1: 336-67). Yorick in his sermon clearly lacks the confidence that Shaftesbury expresses toward passions and affections as a ground of moral certainty precisely because we can "doubt of what passes within ourselves." In Lockean terms, Yorick questions the human capacity for "moral ownership." What distinguishes Yorick's description of the conscience is not only the prominence of wit but wit's surprising role as an advocate of "moral ownership."

One of the most striking rhetorical features of Yorick's sermon is that he peoples the courtroom of conscience with the personifications of faculty psychology. Ironically, Yorick quickly overturns the rule of "Right Reason" in the conscience, a surprising reversal considering the elaborate rhetoric of the older psychology. Yorick says, "no doubt but the knowledge of right and wrong is so truly impressed upon the mind of man" that the "religious and moral state of a man would be exactly what he himself esteem'd it," were it not for the "little interests below" that "rise up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions" (2.17.147). Wit's subordinate role in the traditional hierarchy of faculties would lead one to

conclude that it takes part in the rebellion of the lower faculties against the higher. But wit's activities are not entirely dishonest. In the "sacred COURT," Yorick avers, "Did WIT disdain to take a bribe in it;---or was asham'd to shew its face as an advocate for an unwarrantable enjoyment" (2.17.147), the conscience would be what a person esteemed it. But wit does take a bribe, and is not ashamed to face the conscience as an advocate for an unwarrantable enjoyment. That passion gets "into the judgment-seat" (2.17.147) of conscience and pronounces sentence instead of reason may even be attributed to the deceit of wit. And yet, paradoxically, in matters of conscience, wit honestly advocates an "unwarrantable enjoyment," however guilty the pleasure. In a sermon on moral honesty, the paradox of a deceitfully honest wit bears closer examination.

The moral paradox of wit's role in Yorick's model of the conscience stems from its mixed function in what we may call, after Hobbes, the "discourse of the mind" (Elements of Philosophy 4.25.8, qtd. in Thorpe 96). The imagination, like wit, occupies a place between sense impressions and the understanding. And yet the imagination in aesthetics after Locke regularly assumes the role, to use Tuveson's word, of "reconciling" reason and the senses (97). Wit, on the contrary, takes on an increasingly more specialized function of uniting normally disparate things and, rather

than reconciling reason and sense, leaves us aware of their difference. Conceived as the ability to make us aware of differences, wit rivals rational judgment, which also separates ideas. For Tristram and Yorick, distinguishing wit and judgment lies at the heart of Lockean rationalism, since they do not agree with Locke that "Reasons must be our last Judge and Guide in every thing" (704). Yorick conceives wit's functions far more broadly than Locke. Burton's illustration of wit's function in the understanding, which includes the conscience, helps clarify Yorick's representation. Burton's depiction of the rational soul will also show how far from a traditional rationalist ethic Yorick has gone to expose its limitations.

For Burton, conscience is an innate habit, or natural property of the mind called synteresis. As the storehouse of moral knowledge that provides the principles and norms of conscience, synteresis, entirely intellectual, works like a syllogism:

Synteresis, or the purer part of the conscience, is an innate habit, and doth signify a conversation of the knowledge of the law of God and Nature, to know good or evil. And (as our Divines hold) it is rather in the understanding than in the will. This makes the major proposition in a practick syllogism. The

dictamen rationis is that which doth admonish us to do good or evil, and is the minor in the sylllogism. The conscience is that which approves good or evil, justifying or condemning our actions, and is the conclusion of the sylllogism.

(Anatomy 1: 189-90)

Locke's successful attack on innate ideas forced the sentimental school to assume a "modified dispositional version" (Yolton, John Locke and Way of Ideas 48) of conscience, such as the "moral sense." Cash cites Burton's synteresis as evidence that Sterne's notion of "reason operating in the conscience" looks back to a rational theory of ethics (Comedy 118). The utter defeat of reason weakens Cash's argument. New's opposition that Sterne's ethic is an orthodox one, "diametrically opposed to the liberalizing tendencies" of Deism and sentimentalism, comes no closer (19). Sterne's moral theory of wit makes him, despite New's comparison (19), diametrically opposed to Swift, and unorthodox.

The eminence that Burton gives wit's role in the understanding contrasts sharply with Locke's description of wit's diminished and doubtful role in his essay on the understanding. The difference helps illustrate the complexity of Sterne's position regarding a rationalist ethic. Sterne as Yorick plays the older rational system against the new Lockean system through wit. As one of the

understanding's activities, wit does not mislead the judgment, despite Locke's argument, but rather functions as a form of judgment.<sup>6</sup> Beginning this division of the understanding's functions into "agent and patient," Burton gives wit the role of agent (1: 188). The other division of the understanding "speculative and practick; in habit, or in act; simple or compound" (1: 188-89) also relates to the conscience and its application of general principles to particular things and actions. Of his first division, Burton's definition recalls wit's original association in classical treatises with rhetorical invention, or the exploration of a subject to discover material for an argument:

The agent is that which is called the wit of man, acumen or subtlety, sharpness of invention, when he doth invent of himself without a teacher, or learns anew, which abstracts those intelligible species from the phantasy, and transfers them to the passive understanding, because there is nothing in the understanding, which was not first in the sense.

(Anatomy 1: 189)

Given Burton's rendering of wit's dealings with the senses, the "unwarrantable enjoyment" wit advocates in Yorick's court of conscience must be sensual.

To illustrate how wit's sensuality affects its moral

and aesthetic function, Sterne usually turns to Walter Shandy. Wit dupes Walter's judgment by revealing that his true motive in most matters is not intellectual, but sexual. Blinded by his ruling passion for eloquence, Walter fails to see the discordia concors of his own personality. Ironically, Walter, who is "a great MOTIVEMONGER" and generally "knew your motive . . . better than you knew it yourself" (6.31.552), is too self-deceived to fathom his own sexual motives in generating syllogisms. In other words, wit dupes Walter into honesty. Sterne creates laughter by raising awareness in the reader of the disparity between Walter's declared, intellectual motive, and the true sexual motive hidden from him. Similarly, when the reader finds a witty pun or double entendre in Tristram's history, Sterne raises awareness in the reader of the disparity between Tristram's declared intellectual motive and the sexual motive previously hidden from us. Once our "Oedipean conceit" discovers the dirty joke, Tristram "catches the conscience" of the reader, that is, he makes his readers conscious of their own complicity in curiously seeking out a sexual meaning. Wit often discovers our self-interested motive because it escapes the moral censor of rational judgment. Locke warns, the "entertainment and pleasantries of Wit, which strikes so lively on the Fancy" gains everyone's assent "because its Beauty appears at first sight, and there is required no

labour of thought, to examine what Truth or Reason there is in it" (156). Sterne turns Locke's warning against him by showing that wit can act as a "double agent" of the understanding. Recruited on behalf of the conscious will's efforts to rationalize a moral transgression, wit can deceive the conscience. However, as Walter shows, when the conscious will is relaxed by pleasure, wit can surprise the judgment and discover a person's true motive.

Wit's mediating function, often indistinguishable from the fancy and the imagination, may partially account for its hard-fought survival in philosophy and aesthetics. But rather than seek the more socially acceptable form of wit, virtually synonymous with the imagination, and properly controlled by judgment, Sterne favours the outlaw, false wit. Sterne may even have quickened the separation of wit and the imagination for which, George Williamson explains, Addison prepared the way. This separation becomes clear in Hazlitt's The English Comic Writers:

Imagination may be said to be the finding out something similar in things generally alike, or with like feelings attached to them; while wit principally aims at finding out something that seems the same, or amounts to a momentary deception where you least expected it, viz. in things totally opposite. (Hazlitt 23)

Williamson writes that in Hazlitt "the object of the



imagination is to magnify, of wit to diminish" (11). Certainly, Walter's wit "diminishes" his high desire for a Platonic love between the sexes by invariably resorting to sexual metaphors. Tristram himself praises the Pythagorean doctrine of "'getting out of the body, in order to think well.'" No man thinks right whilst he is in it; blinded as he must be, with his congenial humours" (7.13.593). His melancholy observation that "REASON is, half of it, SENSE" (7.13.593) does identify the senses as a source of "intellectual blindness," as New suggests (180; cf. 19). However, Tristram still holds the hope for humanity that those "two luminaries" wit and judgment "will just serve to light us on our way in this night of our obscurity" (3.20.232).

While Sterne's moral theory of wit rivals judgment, Ernest L. Tuveson shows that the faculty of the imagination rivals and surpasses wit as a moral medium in eighteenth-century aesthetics. In Tuveson's terms, nature, through the senses, becomes a source of redemption and the imagination, not wit, becomes a means of grace. Tuveson's book traces "a connection between imagination and moral sense" (161) which Sterne parodies by making wit another kind of moral sense. Divorcing conscience from ratiocination, Locke, as Tuveson argues, forced moral philosophers to speak of conscience as a "sense" (49). In terms of faculty psychology, which divides a person into

the rational, vegetative, and sensitive souls, the "moral sense" would have been considered, Tuveson points out, "a 'lower' part of the soul, for it is a way of sensation, the raw material of experience unworked by intellectual activity" (49). The empirical psychology of Hobbes and Locke argues that the mind discourses through the "'perpetual arising of phantasms, both in sense and imagination'" (Hobbes, Elements of Philosophy 4.15.8, qtd. in Thorpe 95). Hobbes and Locke give sensation an unprecedented importance, overturning, for instance, Right Reason's traditionally exclusive power to govern an individual's moral behaviour. "In short," Tuveson states, "thinking must work upward, from simple impressions, just as, in the state, it was becoming evident, authority must ascend--perhaps from a social compact--rather than descend from divinely established power" (15). Thus wit and the imagination, functioning as mediators between the rational understanding and the senses, become increasingly important powers of the mind in the empirical school. Under what Tuveson terms the "doctrine of separation of powers" (192), however, wit and the imagination, like fancy and the imagination, acquire more specialized functions.

Although Sterne may not claim for wit the imagination's power to convert sensation into a means of salvation, wit can serve a moral function. But Locke's disapproval of wit proves historically to be more

persuasive than Sterne's defence. Tuveson rightly observes that the "ranging spaniel" of wit is far too restless an explorer for Locke's conception of the "understanding as 'considerer'" (89). "Thus," he goes on, "Locke's static immovable understanding looks rather like judgment without her dynamic junior partner in the enterprise of wit" (89). Tuveson's argument that the prevailing model of the understanding as a passive observer hastens wit's decline in philosophy and aesthetics is convincing. The inevitable use of visual metaphors, such as "reflection" and "speculation," when speaking about the rational understanding, may also have promoted the association of the imagination with the understanding. The making of mental images in the imagination is metaphorically consistent with Locke's notion of reflection and the "dark room" of the understanding. Tuveson himself remarks that "Locke . . . makes the process of thinking a matter of seeing and 'considering'" (16). The imagination's subdued relationship with the passive, rational understanding runs counter to wit's more dynamic psychological profile.

Wit's moral victory over the imagination in Tristram Shandy reflects the satirist's preference of experience over theories that claim to explain human motivation. The imagination's role in awakening the moral sense is, in fact, a principal target in Sterne's satire. Theories of a moral sense overestimate the imagination's power to

function with Shaftesburian "disinterestedness" (Characteristics 1,67). By placing the moral sense in the context of faculty psychology, Sterne tries to expose the potential for self-deception in a sentimentalist who relies on the imagination. For Sterne, the imagination is not merely a mediating mirror of passion, but the faculty enabling an obsessive "ruling passion" to govern the mind. In Tristram's words, "When a man gives himself up to the government of a ruling passion---or, in other words, when his HOBBYHORSE grows head-strong--farewell cool reason and fair discretion" (2.5.106). Employing the term "ruling passion" to define the Hobbyhorse does not mean, however, as Cash and New argue, that Sterne supports humoural psychology. Sterne simply depicts sentimentalism, especially through Toby, as a willfully chosen form of self-deceiving idealism, or ruling passion. Wit subverts this sentimental idealism. The ruling passion's importance for characterization has been distorted by Sterne critics and therefore needs further attention if wit's role is to be understood.

Depicting sentimentalism as a ruling passion or Hobbyhorse represents Sterne's executing a technique of characterization essential to all comedy and satire. For instance, Toby's two ruling passions, war and sentimentalism, trap him within compulsive behaviours that prevent him from satisfying his normal desires.

Nevertheless, to explain Toby's hobbyhorse entirely in terms of the older faculty psychology will not succeed. Michael Deporte has convincingly shown that in the eighteenth century, obsession does have its roots in the doctrine of humours. Like the older faculty psychology, eighteenth-century psychology held that, in cases of obsessions or ruling passions, "as the imagination obtained greater control over the mind, men tended to think about fewer and fewer things and finally to become entirely preoccupied with one or two ideas" (Deporte 15). He also discusses Locke's revolutionary argument regarding madness and the association of ideas. But Deporte's argument that Sterne "develops the deterministic implications of Locke's chapter on association that men do not have much control over their lives" mistakes Sterne's satiric fiction for a belief in determinism (123). Like the older faculty psychology, Deporte's supposition leaves out the conscious will, or the important element of choice. In addition, Deporte's description of the imagination's role in faculty psychology reveals its unsuitability as an explanation of the sentimental hobbyhorse because, in a telling phrase, the imagination "lacks moral sense" (Deporte 14). Clearly, Sterne's rhetoric of faculty psychology does not justify ascribing any serious commitment to such a system.

Toby's consciousness of being possessed by a ruling passion, military or sentimental, does not, however, mean

he possesses self-knowledge. Toby, like Swift's Hack, displays the "sublime and refined Point of Felicity, called the Possession of being well deceived" (Tale 174). Most recognize Sterne's ironic treatment of Toby's military hobbyhorse, but few see the irony of Toby's sentimental episode with the fly. Sterne's dramatization of the cliché that Toby "would not hurt a fly" parodies sentimentalism with so fine a wit that none are offended. As we shall see later, the "accidental impression" (2.12.131) of Toby's sentimentalism, to which Tristram owes half of his philanthropy, perfectly illustrates Sterne's definition of "festive wit."

The only way to combat a ruling passion in Tristram Shandy is to outwit it. Walter expresses this view when he says, "widow Wadman has been deeply in love with my brother Toby for many years, and has used every art and circumvention of woman to outwit him into the same passion" (8.34.723). Walter adds his wit to Widow Wadman's when he offers the following words of wisdom to Toby, "Love, you see, is not so much a SENTIMENT as a SITUATION, into which a man enters, as my brother Toby would do, into a corps---no matter whether he loves the service or no---being once in it---he acts as if he did" (8.34.723). The sexualized double entendre behind the word "corps" assures us that Walter is right when he says, "Plato . . . never thought of" the idea first (8.34.723). Maneuvering Toby into the

right situation with Widow Wadman will only happen when Sterne combines a sexual meaning with the geographical in the word "place" (9.20.772). Not until the last volume does Sterne have "wit enough" to relate Widow Wadman's desire to touch the "place" where Toby received his war wound.

Trying to outwit the rider of a hobbyhorse into dismounting takes Tristram to his "wit's ends" (8.6.663) more than once. A mind in the "possession of being well deceived," as Swift puts it, is too aware of the "Advantages Fiction has over Truth" (Tale 172). Attacking Toby's military hobbyhorse, Walter's wit turns to a mockery when he pretends to console Toby over the Treaty of Utrecht. Walter facetiously says that "by God's blessing, we shall have another war break out again some of these days: and when it does,---the belligerent powers, if they would hang themselves, cannot keep us out of play" (6.31.552). Toby takes Walter's joke about this hobbyhorse as an "ungenerous" one, according to Tristram, "because in striking the horse, he hit the rider too" (6.31.552-53). Toby's eloquent defence of his hobbyhorse underscores consciousness as one of its significant features:

And heaven is my witness brother Shandy, that the pleasure I have taken in these things,--and that infinite delight, in particular, which has attended my seiges in my bowling green, has arose

within me, and I hope in the corporal too, from the consciousness we both had, that in carrying them on, we were answering the great ends of our creation. (6.32.557)

The "things" Toby refers to are the principles of honour and liberty a soldier defends against the "ambitious" tyrants. Toby's "consciousness" of answering the end of his creation, playing war-games on his bowling green, or thinking about the glory of war, indicates that anyone hoping to outwit his hobbyhorse must penetrate the fortification of his conscious rationalizations.

In Sterne's poetics, the pleasures of wit penetrate the conscious mind's rationalizations and surprise judgment into moral honesty. Cash argues correctly that "Sterne believes . . . man must be bamboozled into virtue" (Sermons 414). However, Cash does not mention wit as the means by which Yorick and Tristram "bamboozle" their readers. Cash also concludes that Sterne admits an "ethical pleasure principle" (Sermons 412). But, rather than identify the ethical pleasure principle with wit, Cash identifies it with Locke's assumption that good and evil are equivalent to awareness of pleasure and pain. The contradiction in Cash's important work revolves around the argument that reason must guide moral behaviour in Sterne's work despite Sterne's "opinion that reason is limited as a motive force" (Sermons 413). Cash widens the contradiction further by



saying that Sterne, in a letter, believes that "'one passion is only to be combatted by another'" (Sterne, Letters 76; qtd. in Cash 414). Wit resolves the contradictions in Cash's position by supplying a psychological faculty that provides pleasure, as Locke himself admits, while also possessing the power, as Dennis states, to "speak to the head alone." In addition, wit's paradoxes allow "one passion . . . to be combatted by another." Hazlitt's interpretation of wit's traditional meaning sets it in opposition to the imagination which finds "something similar in things generally alike, or with like feelings attached." Hazlitt implies that wit aims at finding feelings that seem to be the same but are totally opposite.

Making an "ethical pleasure principle" of wit, then, we can tentatively comprehend two distinct psychological paradoxes: the conflict of reason and sense, and the opposition of two feelings, one a Platonic emotion, the other a carnal. Wit appeals through pleasure, whether it is emotional or sensual pleasure, but each paradox can be used to attack a different ethical system. Sterne's paradoxical fusion of sensual and rational thought emphasizes the conflict between them and therefore undermines the Lockean, rationalist ethic. The paradoxical confrontation of Platonic and sensual feelings undermines the sentimental system which depends on the higher

sentiments such as love and charity to make moral decisions. These two paradoxes are not mutually exclusive, but they are often distinct aspects of wit, whether that wit is malignant or festive.

In the conflict of reason and sense, wit pleases because, to use Tovey's Freudian language, it "liberates us from subconscious repressions" (Learned Wit 11). Cash is right to warn that Freud's theories are more apt to "confuse than enlighten Sterne's fiction" (Sterne's Comedy 116). Cash adds, importantly, that "motives of any sort--thoughts, appetites, passions, all the evidence for the court of conscience--can be scrutinized at will" (Sterne's Comedy 119). And yet Tovey correctly assesses early theorists' desires to put restraints on wit by using "words like control, restraint, and decorum" (16). Davenant bears out Tovey's thesis when he says that wit "is the Soul's Powder, which when supprest, as forbidden from flying upward, blows up the restraint" (Davenant 2: 20-21; qtd. in Tovey 16). Sterne's sexual puns and double entendres demonstrate that wit escapes the rational censor. The babble of Tristram's "fiddling" characteristic, in Tovey's view, of "Sterne's concrete (as opposed to abstract) treatment of words" (45), is another witty pleasure beyond rational decorum. In the assault on abstract, rational thought, the witty pleasures of Sterne's text, especially his visual conceits, shift the text's significance to the

"sumptuous rank of the signifier" (Barthes 65).

Sterne's wit, whatever its pleasures, still falls within the Horatian maxim that literature should delight and instruct. To instruct or "catch the conscience" of his readers, Sterne believes he must first engage his readers in some pleasurable activity. If the sensual pleasures of word-play do not interest the reader, an emotional narrative even in a sermon may, after Herbert, "find him who a sermon flies" (Works 15). The "mysteries and riddles" of a witty analogy or conceit in a pathetic tale can combat a selfish passion in the reader by confronting it with a surprising irony. Sudden emotional reversal constitutes the second of the psychological paradoxes comprehended by wit. The rapid shift in the reader's emotional identification acts like a recognition scene where, like Narcissus, we experience a new feeling that throws our old feeling into question. Not all recognition scenes end fatally, but the confusion of identity caused by self-love in the Narcissus myth is proper to satire.

The chance of moral reformation from looking into "wit's false mirror" seems small for satirists like Pope and Swift, since the mirror reflects only our defects. Sterne believes the emotional confrontation reflected in a witty paradox, at least, for a moment, gives moral honesty a chance. To achieve moral honesty, however, wit must overcome the fear of moral judgment evoked by rationalist

ethics like Locke's. A witty conceit overcomes this fear by raising certain "pleasing" expectations and then by means of metaphor reversing those expectations.<sup>7</sup> Tristram illustrates the power wit's metaphors have over judgment with a witty "illustration":

an illustration is no argument,--nor do I  
maintain the wiping of a looking-glass clean, to  
be a syllogism;---but you all, may it please your  
worships, see the better for it,---. (3.20.227)

Critics have recognized the importance of this passage as an attack on Lockean judgment, but none has commented on the ironic significance of the ingenious biblical echo of Matthew 7:3 in the remainder of the "looking-glass" analogy. Presumably, wit's power to wipe the mirror of language clean permits the individuals using the mirror to see or judge themselves more truthfully. The emphasis on seeing and judging shows that the wit in this passage rests on the contraries of sense and reason. Tristram elaborates, saying that "the main good" witty illustrations do

is to clarify the understanding, previous to the  
application of the argument itself, in order to  
free it from any little motes, or specks of  
opacular matter, which if left swimming therein,  
might hinder a conception and spoil all

(3.20.227-28).

However, the mention of "specks" and "motes" alludes to Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount and, as in all conceits or witty analogies, conceals a surprising irony.

Tristram introduces the topic of wit's illustrative powers by answering Locke's essay on the understanding with an obscure work on flatulence and, more significantly, on deception. Wit and judgment may be, according to Locke, as different as "farting and hickuping" (3.20.227), but on the authority of Didius's work De fartandi et illustrandi fallaciis, or Of farting, and the explaining of deceptions, Tristram feels that wit in certain situations can clarify an argument in the understanding better than a logical argument addressed to the rational judgment. What is more, if we follow the implication in the title of Didius's work, then wit may discover a deception in an argument where judgment cannot. Clarity and the avoidance of deception represent the goal of two opponents in any argument or debate. The force of the conceit, however, turns the mirror of language back on each of the disputants. Adopting Christ's words from the Sermon on the Mount to his conceit, Sterne says in effect that when wit wipes the "looking glass" clean, a viewer sees not only the "mote" in another person's eye, but also the beam in his own. Sterne's text, and the gospel source, "catch the conscience" of the reader, particularly the Lockean reader, with a moral lesson on judgment, for both admonish us to

"Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1).

Wit cannot signify a good conscience, but Sterne holds that it can signify an active one. That Yorick must prick our conscience primarily through moral exhortation and Tristram through wit reflects the generic decorum of sermon and satire. The techniques of wit and exhortation, though specific to genre, are not mutually exclusive with regard to genre. In fact, the parable, a kind of moral conceit, is a prose genre that persuades through the paradoxes and riddles associated with wit (Frye, AC 300). Tristram employs the parable of Yorick for the satiric purpose of correcting vice, while Yorick's biblical parables in his sermons serve a similar purpose. Sterne's parabolic techniques in both genres help to explain its moral efficacy.

The parable's witty enigmas agree with the sermon's Longinian approach and any story that engages an audience's emotional and intellectual response. But Sterne refers to the paradoxical necessity of combating one passion with another in the passage below. From behind Yorick's persona, Sterne speaks regretfully of the need for parables, here the parable of the prodigal son, as moral instruments:

I know not whether the remark is to our honour or otherwise, the lessons of wisdom have never such power over us, as when they are wrought into the

heart, through the ground-work of a story which engages the passions: Is it that we are like iron, and must first be heated before we can be wrought upon? or, Is the heart so in love with deceit, that where a true report will not reach it, we must cheat it with a fable, in order to come at truth? (Sermons 319)

The religious teacher and the satirist must cheat their audience with a fable or parable, to penetrate self-deceit, since, as Locke in frustration admits, "Men love to deceive, and be deceived" (508). The ethical paradox that wit's deceptions defend against deceit eludes rational explanation. Such paradoxes, Tovey proposes, represent Menippean satire's "intellectual freedom" (24) from any exclusive theory which tries to explain human reality.

Tristram's parable of Yorick's temptation and fall allegorizes wit as both agency and adversary of deceit. Wit's morally ambiguous status in Tristram's parable calls for the distinction between "festive" and "malignant" wit to help discern its moral position in relation to deceit. To begin with "malignant wit," Sterne, borrowing verbatim from Walter Charleton, defines it as "mere quickness of apprehension, void of humanity" (Sermons 299; Charleton 112). In Sterne's "sermon against rash judgment" (297), entitled "The Levite and His Concubine," and Charleton's Two Discourses, malignant wit is, in one of its forms,

rumour. The "rash censurers of the world" (Sermons 300) in Sterne's sermon resemble Charleton's malignant wits whose "pernicious licence of Censuring" (115) foments "obscure and uncertain rumours" to "Eclipse the glory of Worthy Men" (118). The malignant wit of rumour also eclipses the glory of the worthy Yorick. If the moral of Tristram's parable is to "shew the temper of the world" (1.10.23), the temper of the world is malignant, that is, rash in its moral judgments.

The "cervantick tone" (1.12.34) in Sterne's defence of the Quixotic parson against malignant wit suggests the "gracious temper" (Sermons 297) of festive wit that Yorick personifies. Regarded by others as "A man of weak judgment" (1.10.19), Yorick's wit differs markedly from its malignant counterpart which is generally in such haste that it judges others "with more zeal than knowledge" (Sermons 296). When, for example, the story of Yorick's support of a licensed midwife broke, "it ran like wild-fire" (1.10.23) that

'The parson had a returning fit of pride which had just seized him; and he was going to be well mounted once again in his life; and if it was so, 'twas plain as the sun at noon-day he would pocket the expence of the licence, ten times told the very first year:---so that every body was left to judge what were his views in this act of



charity' (1.10.23).

The supposition, "if it was so," reveals the rashness of "every body that was left to judge" poor Yorick. But Yorick, who did not contract his troubles "thro' any malignancy" (1.12.30), also rashly said "what came uppermost." Yorick's festive wit shows a greater degree of moral honesty than does malignant wit, without harsh, rash judgment. This further refinement of the difference between Sterne's two notions of wit requires exploration.

The "gaite de coeur" (1.11.27) of Yorick's false wit evades the moral deceit to which a malignant wit, "void of humanity," is subject. "Honest, well-meaning people [are] bubbled out of their goods and money" (1.11.28) by malignant wit's moral gravity, the very essence of which is "design, and consequently deceit" (1.11.28). A malignant wit may, potentially, share Yorick's "honesty of mind," but Yorick's "jocundity of humour" (1.12.30) gives him the "naked temper" (1.11.28), the "carelessness of heart" (1.12.310), that makes his wit antithetical to moral gravity. In Yorick's sermon, Sterne develops the differences of moral honesty in two contrasting temperaments which correspond to the antithesis of the two wits. A "saint-errant" (2.17.160) or religious enthusiast, "zealous for some points of religion" (2.17.159), parallels the zealous judgment of malignant wit. "Spiritual pride" deludes the enthusiast and cheats "his conscience" into a

judgment" where he "looks down upon every other man who has less affectation of piety---though, perhaps, ten times more moral honesty than himself" (2.17.159). Yorick's "saint-errant" demonstrates the necessity of keeping the "two tables" of religion and morality together, by showing the "error" of a "religion without morality" (2.17.159), of judgment without mercy, or of wit without festivity.

The association of malignant wit with satire itself accounts for some of the apologetic tone in Yorick's treatment. In fact, Stuart Tave's argument regarding the "reaction against satire" (24), largely due to the rise of movements like sentimentalism, calls upon Walter Charleton's definition of malignant wit for an early example. Charleton observes that malignant wits usually become critics; "Nor will it be easie for Satyrists and Comical Poets, those especially of the more licentious and railing sort, to exempt themselves from the same Tribe" (Charleton 119; qtd. in Tave 14). We must, therefore, qualify Melvyn New's suggestion that Yorick's role as the satirist of Tristram Shandy places him in the "traditional situation of having to defend his satire against the cautions of a well-meaning friend, the adversarius of formal verse satire" (Laurence Sterne 80). Yorick's defense, supplied by Eugenius, the adversarius, concerns the indiscretions of Yorick's festive wit and its being construed as malignant, or satirical:

Trust me, dear Yorick, this unwary pleasantry of thine will sooner or later bring thee into scrapes and difficulties, which no after-wit can extricate thee out of.----In these sallies, too oft, I see, it happens, that a person laugh'd at, considers himself in the light of a person injured . . . and reckons up his friends, his family, his kindred and allies . . . from a sense of common danger;---'tis no extravagant arithmetic to say, that for every ten jokes,--- thou hast got a hundred enemies. . . .

(1.12.31)

"Over-power'd by numbers" and the "ungenerous manner" in which the "war" against him is carried on, Yorick dies "quite broken hearted" (1.12.33).

Yorick's festive vision will not permit him to see the world as malignant and populated only by fools and knaves. His naive attitude, however, isolates him and prepares him for his tragedy. Eugenius's defense of Yorick's innocent "sallies" mixes with his greater knowledge of the world: "I believe and know them to be truly honest and sportive:--- But consider, my dear lad, that fools cannot distinguish this,---and that knaves will not" (1.12.32). Sterne winds up the last scene of Yorick's tragedy with the victory of malignant wit over the festive. But, never one to lose an opportunity to catch our conscience, Sterne allows his

readers their own sense of an ending based on their response to Yorick's epitaph. Using Sterne's dichotomy of wit as a commentary on Yorick's gravestone, the reader with a festive wit "may smile at the obelisk raised to another's fame,---but the malignant wit will level it at once with the ground, and build his own upon the ruins of it" (Sermons 300). The close paraphrase of Charleton in Sterne's sermon shows that Tristram Shandy, too, is a discourse Concerning the Different Wits of Men. Yorick's epitaph and black page are Sterne's witty way of improving upon Charleton and Shaftesbury by discovering a new "test of ridicule" (Characteristics 1: 10) to discover the character of the reader's wit.

Yorick's tragic fall spells the end of his fictional life but not the end of the festive spirit of wit he represents. Festive wit, in Charleton's terms, is what the French call

Raillerie, and we [the English] Jesting, whereby a Man modestly and gently touches upon the Errours, Indecencies, or Infirmities of another without any suspicion of hate or contempt of his Person, pleasantly representing as only ridiculous, not odious (Two Discourses 133).

Charleton anticipates not only Sterne, but Shaftesbury, who believes that raillery is a good-humoured "species of wit" which exposes the "monsters" hidden in the "dark corner of

our minds" (Characteristics 1: 44). Shaftesbury's metaphor serves as an excellent gloss on Sterne's moral theory of wit as the disclosure of hidden motive. "Truth," Shaftesbury asserts, "may bear all lights," and the ridicule of good-natured raillery is one of those lights (Characteristics 1: 44). Shaftesbury even says that "without wit and humour, reason can hardly have its proof or be distinguished" (Characteristics 1: 52). Wit as an ally, rather than simply an enemy of reason, coincides with Tristram's desire that wit and judgment answer one another.

The "Honesty and good Manners" (Two Discourses 133) typical of Charleton's festive wit is consistent with Yorick's character and Sterne's satiric tone. Charleton's profile of festive wit, which Sterne appropriates in the eighteenth sermon, charts the basic principles of Sterne's satiric technique.

Festivity of wit . . . comes from the Father of spirits, so pure and abstracted from persons, that willingly it hurts no man: or if it touches upon an indecorum, 'tis with that dexterity of true genius, which enables him rather to give a new colour to the absurdity, and let it pass.

(Sermons 300)<sup>8</sup>

Sterne confirms the festive quality of his satiric wit in a letter to his printer dated October 1759: "All locality is taken out of the book--the satire general" (Letters 81). A

festive, satiric wit avoids what Edward Rosenheim Jr. calls punitive satire, an "attack upon discernible, historically authentic particulars" (317-18). In fact, less interested in protecting satire than festive wit, Sterne identifies satiric attack with malignant wit, which he feels "has helped to give wit a bad name as if the main essence of it was satire" (Sermons 299). But in his essay on satire, Dryden speaks of the "witty pleasantries" of Menippean satire since Varro (Ker 2: 66), rather than the traditional purpose of satire, which is the "scourging of vice, and exhortation to virtue" (Ker 2: 75). "Varro was one of those writers," Dryden states, "whom they called [spoudogeloion] studious of laughter: and . . . as learned as he was, his business was more to divert his reader, than to teach him" (Ker 2: 66). As we enter the Shandy household, then, we have not gone beyond Menippean satire when we speak of entering the "house of feasting" rather than the "house of mourning."

Comparing Tristram's festive wit with the sermon "The House of Feasting" furnishes the unique advantage of examining wit in relation to Sterne's most elaborate moral inquiry into the psychology of pleasure. Returning to the theme of "saint-errantry" (Sermons 21) addressed in the sermon on conscience, Sterne justifies his advocacy of pleasure by doubting that God would begrudge a weary pilgrim "short rest and refreshments" necessary to support

his spirits" (Sermons 20). For his moral lesson, Sterne asks us to go not to the house of mourning, where the weary pilgrim will "meet with something to subdue his passions," but rather to the house of feasting, where the "joy and gaiety of the place is likely to excite them" (Sermons 22). It is unlikely that the house of feasting will improve us morally, but it will "warn the unwary" of "unsuspected dangers" (Sermons 28). If we substitute the phrase "house of feasting" for festive wit, we can see the moral purpose that Sterne gives the latter. As he delineates the moral boundaries of his imaginary house of feasting, Yorick seems to delineate, by analogy, the boundaries of festive wit. For, though not a house "opened merely for the sale of virtue" (Sermons 23), each sex is drawn together there by consent for "no other pleasures but what custom authorises, and religion does not absolutely forbid" (Sermons 24).

The pilgrim thus prepared, and keeping in mind the analogy between festive wit and the house of feasting, Sterne opens a window to his mind, for

When the gay and smiling aspect of things has begun to leave the passages to a man's heart thus thoughtlessly unguarded--when kind and caressing looks of every object without, that can flatter his senses have conspired with the enemy within, to betray him, and put him off his defence . . . --that moment let us dissect and look into his

heart,--see how vain! how weak! (Sermons 25-26)

Once pleasure takes possession of the heart, levity, indiscretion, folly, and "more impure guests" (Sermons 26) take occasion to enter the pilgrim's unsuspecting mind. He asks, rhetorically, "can the most cautious say--thus far shall my desires go--and no farther?" (Sermons 26). But without dwelling on the worst of what the mind may suffer in the house of feasting, Sterne turns to more favourable possibilities. The "charms and temptations" of pleasure may never awaken "an inclination which virtue need blush at--or which the scrupulous conscience might not support" (Sermons 28). After a series of encounters with the house of feasting, Sterne supposes that we can learn to triumph over its pleasures.

Among the feast of pleasures in Tristram Shandy, Sterne omits the pleasures of wit. Wit as a device, however, is present in the allegory of the pilgrimage and other metaphors. In a metaphor that "awakens" important associations with Toby's military hobbyhorse and Yorick's sermon on conscience, Sterne says we should not assume that the minds of many are so "susceptible to warm impressions, or so badly fortified against them, that pleasure should easily corrupt or soften them" (Sermons 27). Sterne's comparison of the conscience to a fortress under seige by the sensual pleasures alerts us to the broader thematic significance of this conceit in Tristram Shandy. The



coincidence of Toby's preoccupation with fortification and Yorick's use of it as a metaphor in his sermon, in fact, sheds further light on wit's part in the seige of conscience.

The wit in Yorick's sermon arises from the ironic confrontation between two symbolic meanings in Sterne's conceit of the fortress. For Yorick, the fortress symbolizes the conscience, whereas for Toby it symbolizes his ruling passion for war. Tristram has warned that the "unsteady use of words" is a "fertile source of obscurity" (2.2.100), and Toby's blindness to the moral symbol in Yorick's sermon justifies his warning. The "pleasure" Toby takes from the "practical part of fortification" (2.4.105) matches the pleasure Walter takes in eloquence. When Tristram utters the Faustian maxim that "the desire of knowledge, like the thirst of riches, increases ever with the acquisition of it" (2.3.102), he refers to Toby's hobbyhorse, not Walter's. And while Walter, frustrated by Toby's obsession, wishes the "whole science of fortification . . . at the devil" (2.12.130), that science provides the means by which Widow Wadman achieves the goal of her "Love-militancy" (8.14.673). Indeed, the seige of Namur provides the occasion for Tristram's analogy of love and war when he recounts the courtship of Toby and the Widow. Both lovers, for example, adopt a "plan of attack"--Widow Wadman in Toby's "sentry-box" (8.23.704) and

Toby in "scarlet breeches" (8.28.714). Widow Wadman need not outwit Toby into the same passion, for, as Toby declares to Trim, "She has left a ball here . . . --- pointing to his breast---" (8.28.712). Her seige on Toby's heart is already won. The seige laid by sentiment on Toby's conscience moves swiftly, too.

Toby's reaction to the fortress metaphors in Yorick's sermon not only calls attention to their metaphorical status but also reveals his failure of conscience as Yorick defines it. Yorick, for instance, attacks a religious person whose conscience upholds the letter of religious law but fails to uphold its spirit by exhibiting qualities of mercy and charity. Such a conscience feels so "safely entrenched behind the Letter of the Law; sits there invulnerable, fortified with CASES and REPORTS so strongly on all sides;--that it is not preaching can dispossess it of its hold" (2.17.151). Neither can Yorick's preaching dispossess Toby and Trim of their military hobbyhorse. "Safely entrenched" behind the science of fortification, Corporal Trim and Uncle Toby exchange looks with each other, and Toby comments on Yorick's fortress metaphor: "---Aye,---aye, Trim! quoth my uncle Toby, shaking his head,---these are but sorry fortifications, Trim" (2.17.151). Trim agrees. As if to criticize Toby and Trim, Dr. Slop, who will himself soon fall asleep, remarks ironically that a man's conscience "could not possibly

continue so long blinded" (2.17.152). Toby and Trim, however, full of the mercy and charity that Yorick's fictional conscience-bearer lacks, continue blinded for entirely different reasons.

A conscience aided by the "two tables" of religion and morality, the fear of God and good action toward others, represents, for Yorick, a well-fortified conscience. Quoting the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus, Yorick states that a man with "a good heart" or good conscience will not only rejoice in a "cheerful countenance," but his mind will also tell him "more than seven watch-men that sit above upon a tower on high" (2.17.155). As with the "naked temper of a merry heart" discovered by Yorick's festive wit, the sign of a good conscience is a "cheerful countenance." But the tower of conscience must be fortified by the two principles of religion and morality before a "cheerful countenance" signifies that our conscience is trustworthy. Toby's response to the sermon shows him to be aware of the metaphorical implications in Yorick's tower imagery but not of the moral content: "A tower has no strength, quoth my uncle Toby, unless 'tis flank'd" (2.17.155). As we shall see, Toby's tower is weak on the right flank because of the sentimental morality of his conscience.

Their consciences already blinded by a military hobbyhorse, Toby and Trim become emotionally swept away by

Yorick's fiction concerning the terrors of the Spanish Inquisition. Trim identifies strongly with Yorick's example of religious pride because his brother Tom has been imprisoned by the Inquisition at Lisbon. In fact, Trim, emotionally distraught, cannot finish reading the sermon, despite Walter's reminder that it is a sermon he is reading and "not a history" (2.17.162). Walter's gentle reminder of the sermon's fictionality infuses the scene with a mood of detachment necessary to sustain the humorous effect on the reader. The reader's awareness that Trim's imagination distresses him is crucial to the wit in Yorick's sermon, since Sterne seeks to parody imaginative sympathy as the basis of the sentimental conscience, in the fictional characters and the reader. Sterne's humorous wit detaches us from Trim with greater force when Dr. Slop, a Catholic, also tries to calm him. Sensitive to Yorick's anti-catholic position, and Trim's emotional reaction to the Inquisition, Dr. Slop denies the sermon's historical veracity: "---'Tis only a description, honest man, quoth Slop, there's not a word of truth in it" (2.17.162). Walter's retort to Dr. Slop that the historical accuracy of the question of the Inquisition's evils is "another story" (2.17.162) distances the reader from Dr. Slop, and intensifies the metafictional aspect of Sterne's wit by calling the fictional status of Yorick's entire sermon to the reader's mind.

Sterne's parody, through Trim, of the sentimental conscience reflects the imagination's growing significance in theories of the moral sense. Shaftesbury proposed, as one modern critic points out, that judgments in morality and aesthetics are products of the imagination (Grean 203). Shaftesbury says that "If there be no real amiableness or deformity in moral acts, there is at least an imaginary one of full force. Though perhaps the thing itself should not be allowed in nature, the imagination or fancy of it must be allowed to be from Nature alone" (Characteristics 1: 260; qtd. in Grean 202). But Sterne's parody may be directed more specifically at Adam Smith and his book The Theory of Moral Sentiments, which was published and favourably reviewed at least six months before the first two volumes of Tristram Shandy appeared in December of 1759. Smith avers that sympathy and moral judgments are founded on the self-conscious act of the imagination. Early in his treatise, Smith uses a memorable illustration of imaginative sympathy:

Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations.

(Theory 9)

That Trim imagines his brother "propped up with racks and instruments of torment" (2.7.161) by the Inquisition, rather than with mercy and justice, suggests a striking parallel between Sterne and Smith.

Overwhelmed by his imaginative sympathy for his brother, Trim's conscience fails him, even by sentimental standards. Trim is not alone in his sentimental outburst. Tristram relates, "My father's and my uncle Toby's hearts yearn'd with sympathy for the poor fellow's distress,--- even Slop himself acknowledged pity for him" (2.17.162). Trim's emotions are, however, expressed more violently because Yorick's fictional situation touches his life most directly. If, in Smith's terms, our sentimental conscience forms its moral judgments by endeavouring to "examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it" (Theory 110), Trim's imagination seems too busy distressing him to be judging impartially.

Moral self-consciousness in the sentimental conscience requires a detached judgment. But if the imagination is engaged with the passions it cannot support the conscience, or what Smith calls "the supposed impartial and well-informed spectator, to that of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of conduct" (Theory 130). History has ignored Sterne's recommendation of festive wit as a more reliable "impartial spectator." Tuveson's

history of the imagination's rapidly expanding moral authority after Locke and Shaftesbury may explain why Smith's conscience appears as "this demigod within the breast, like the demigods of the poets, though partly of immortal, yet partly too of mortal extraction" (Theory 131). Since Locke's assertion that the essence of things is unknowable and that "Truth" signifies "the joining and separating of Signs, as the things signified by them, do agree or disagree one with another" (Essay 574), the subjective, imaginative experience has become what Tuveson calls the "means of grace." Focussing on the mind's activities does not mean, as Tuveson aptly states, "a flight from reality, but rather . . . the locus of reality" (26). But the "British judge" in Yorick's version of the conscience uses external and internal moral standards, the "two tables" of religion and morality, to reach moral decisions. Yorick's judge avoids deciding "according to the ebbs and flows of his own passions" (2.17.164), as it seems the sentimental conscience tries, in vain, to do. For an internal faculty that can assist the judgment by providing another means of conscious detachment of self-consciousness, Sterne looks toward wit rather than the imagination.

Since wit displays the conflict of motives in Sterne's characters and his readers, Sterne can make moral self-consciousness the moral and aesthetic aim of Tristram

Shandy. Traugott well observes that Sterne wanted "self-consciousness from the reader," but he confines his observation to the "province of rhetoric" (109). Wit, not just rhetoric, helps make the mind "conscious of the web she has wove" by joining and separating the signs of her textual weave into surprising patterns. Wit helps the mind to be conscious of the "texture and fineness" of its web, "and the exact share which every passion has had in working upon several designs which virtue and vice had plann'd before her" (2.17.146). For wit's fine conceits detach. Wit's paradoxes "elucidate." As a contemporary of Sterne and theorist of wit, Corbyn Morris, states, "Wit is the LUSTRE resulting from the quick ELUCIDATION of one Subject, by a just and unexpected ARRANGEMENT of it with another subject." (1). Morris's metaphors of light indicate an accommodation in theories of wit to Locke's influential paradigm of the understanding and the light metaphors associated with it. However, in terms of M. H. Abrams' dichotomy, wit, anticipating the romantic imagination, is more of a lamp than a mirror. But brilliant "flashes of wit" (Charleton, Two Discourses 60) are irregular and cannot always be controlled by the conscious will. Consequently, wit, by itself, cannot form the basis of a moral system.

Sterne knows that wit's moral victories are ironic because its effects are temporary and often only point to



the contradictions in our motives and behaviour.

Associated with the sense and fancy, wit possesses an unreliability that makes it the very antithesis of reason, the moral sense, or any faculty which might offer moral guidance and form the basis of an idealized ethical system. Tristram, complaining about his ungovernable pen, finds wit no more reliable in aesthetic matters: "FANCY is capricious--WIT must not be searched for--and PLEASANTRY (good-natured slut as she is) will not come in at a call, was an empire to be laid at her feet" (9.12.761). Wit is the Menippean satirist's weapon against all "systematick reasoners" who, like Walter, "twist and torture every thing in nature" to support their hypotheses (1.19.61). But nature delights in variety, and wit speaks on her behalf.

Sterne's poetics of wit defines at once Menippean satire's skeptical attitude toward philosophical systems and its playful approach toward them. Sterne's wit parodies Lockean rationalism and sentimental theories of the moral sense while establishing its own playful exuberance through puns, paradoxes, and conceits. Shaftesbury sums up Sterne's Menippean poetics of wit when he says, "The reason, perhaps, why men of wit delight so much to espouse these paradoxical systems, is not in truth that they are so fully satisfied with them, but in a view the better to oppose some other systems, which by their fair appearance have helped, they think, to bring mankind under subjection"

(Characteristics 1: 65). Sterne's theory of wit hopes to free some of his readers from the subjection of ethical systems which deceive them, if not by their complexity, then by their gravity. If Sterne's readers have "wit enough to be honest," they will discover a "naked temper" not through some philosophical or theological dogma, but through a "merry heart." Tristram Shandy is a "flap upon the heart," a reminder that festive wit discovers moral honesty. This makes for Sterne's hypothesis of wit and judgment.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Tuveson gives one of the best contexts for this issue in his book The Imagination as a Means of Grace (5-41).

<sup>2</sup>Bernstein's use of this phrase reflects Stanley Grean's seminal work on Shaftesbury cited below. The phrase aptly describes Locke's definition of identity and the concept of conscience in the sentimental school.

<sup>3</sup>L. A. Selby-Bigge's introduction to British Moralists gives a general summation of the moral position in sentimentalism: "Virtue is natural, urges the sentimentalist, because it is an expression of the uncorrupted nature of man, of his nature regarded in all its relations and as part of a system, of his nature as distinguished by self-consciousness and reflection and 'affection toward affections' from that of animals, of his whole nature as comprising a peculiar moral sense, of his nature as an organic whole organized under authoritative and reflective principles, conscience and self-love" (xlii).

<sup>4</sup>John W. Yolton's Locke (28-32) supports Behan's arguments.

<sup>5</sup>"To Michael Ainsworth," June 3, 1709, Unpublished Letters, Rand 403.

<sup>6</sup>See also Yolton's discussion of Thomas Nabbes (32).

<sup>7</sup>For a study of the structure of the parable as a reversal of expectation, see Crossan 66.

<sup>8</sup>In Charleton, festive wit ought not "be condemned as a vice of the Mind, but allowed as a Quality consistent with Honesty and good Manners, as denoting the Alacrity of his Disposition, and Tranquillity of his Spirit (both signs of Virtue) and often also the Dexterity of his Wit, in that he is able to give a delightful and new colour to the absurdity at which he moves his company to smile. Nor is it disingenuous to laugh, when we hear the Jests of others: nay some jests are so facete and abstracted from Persons, that it would savour of too much dullness or Morosity, not to be affected with their elegancy" (Two Discourses 133-34).

## Conclusion

The Baroque and the Augustan were not the only periods that devoted attention to the traditions of learned wit and Menippean satire. By the time of the Romantic period, however, a further "dissociation of sensibility" had intensified the association of wit with the intellect and the lower genres of comedy and satire. Forced to margins of learned discourse, wit disappears as a theme in Menippean satire because it no longer appeals to satirists as a worthy object of attack. And yet, despite its decaying authority in poetics, self-conscious wit continues as a conventional feature of Menippean style. My conclusion argues that self-consciousness, expressed through digressive and metaphorical wit, must be added to the conventions of Menippean satire. Indeed, as I will further suggest, Menippean self-consciousness and the poetics of wit that supports it have pregnant implications for studies of twentieth-century metafiction. But first, a short outline of the Romantic and, to a lesser extent, the Victorian eras demonstrates the continuing presence of wit's self-conscious devices during a time of wit's decadence in poetics.

Wit's association with the intellect and linguistic artificiality is not new, but philosophical and cultural acceptance of the association is. Robert B. Martin in his

book The Triumph of Wit proves that Victorian comic theory held wit to be a Hobbesian "sudden glory" of the intellect, often at the expense of another's feelings. An 1872 reviewer characterizes the marked change of emphasis in critical attitudes toward wit after Sterne when he says that "'wit is wisdom at play'" (qtd. in Martin 43). John Dennis's remark that wit "speaks to the head alone" foreshadows the separation of wit from the warmer feelings of humour that is evident in Corbyn Morris and other mid-eighteenth-century critics. Adam Smith in 1755 helps to explain the emotional detachment in wit, as opposed to humour, when he states that "'Wit expresses something that is more designed, concerted, regular, and artificial'" (qtd. in Tave 114). Wit, in other words, signals a greater sense of conscious design in the literary work than humour. The literary practice of wit is often at variance with theoretical statements, especially for Menippean satirists, who prefer "false wit" over the conventionally "true" forms. As we shall see, however, Sterne's work brings the theory and practice of wit closer together.

Sterne's reputation for self-consciousness in Tristram Shandy is inseparable from his reputation as a wit. Thackeray in his lectures The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century (1854) disapproves of Sterne's self-conscious sensibility and his efforts to "pass for a wit" (233). In 1815, Hazlitt refers to Sterne's "mannerism and

affectation" and adds, "His wit is poignant, though artificial" (120, 121). Hazlitt's seminal lecture "On Wit and Humour" anticipates many Victorian critical attitudes on the subject, making his comments on Sterne's wit especially important for understanding later critical assessments of either Sterne or wit. But, while critics stress the intellectual coldness of wit in contrast to the amiable warmth of humour (and use Sterne as an example of both), wit's transgression of mimetic decorum remains a constant theme. Martin cites one critic, for instance, who says that "'Wit is more artificial, and a thing of culture; humour lies nearer to nature'" (Massey, qtd. in Martin 36). Wit's artificiality detaches readers of Menippean satire by making them aware of the satirists' fictions. Yet, paradoxically, Menippean satirists absorb their readers again when they follow the learned wit, beyond mimesis, into the fiction-making process.

The Romantic writer and critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge gives a reading of Sterne's work that appreciates its moral purpose as well as its self-conscious wit. Martin does not mention Coleridge's analysis of Sterne in the passage below, but it supports Martin's argument concerning the intellectual arrogance implied in a triumph of wit. Coleridge describes the moral effects of Sterne's self-conscious wit as

A sort of knowingness, the wit of which depends,

first on the modesty it gives pain to; or secondly, the innocence and innocent ignorance over which it triumphs; or thirdly, on a certain oscillation in the individual's own mind between the remaining good and the encroaching wit of his nature, a sort of dallying with the devil

(Howe, Critical Heritage 354).

Coleridge censures Sterne's wit as a "dallying with the devil," but playing with moral decorum occurs in all satire. Coleridge's analysis reveals a theoretical interest, albeit negatively, in the moral purpose of Sterne's festive wit. Sterne's many imitators prove that the practice of festive wit flourishes, too.

Although Tristram Shandy often overshadows other Menippean authors like Dunton, Sterne represents an ideal introduction to the genre for modern readers. Sterne's text typifies Menippean satire's metafictional approach to language or, as Hutcheon puts it, language as "enonciation, involving . . . the contextualized production and reception of meaning" (cxv). Sterne's influence on literature goes far beyond the genre of satire. But his value to genre critics revolves around his influence on Menippean satirists, an influence equal to that of Swift and even to that of the guardian of the genre, Burton. I will give a brief survey of those imitators of Sterne who have received little notice in criticism. Thomas Love Peacock has



received some recognition as a Menippean satirist from Marilyn Butler and James Mulvihill. Peacock has also gained attention for "his fine wit" from Percy Bysshe Shelley and, more recently, from Carl Dawson, who uses Shelley's phrase as the title to his book on Peacock (59). A fuller knowledge of the genre will, however, enhance our understanding of wits like Sterne and Peacock. And if the style of the survey shows me, to quote Southey, "a quotationipotent and a poet" (Doctor 249), it is only in keeping with the spirit of my subject.

Detailing the legacy of Sterne's wit is one way to concentrate critical attention on this essential quality of Menippean satire. One Menippean satire in the eighteenth century that displays Sterne's self-conscious style is Thomas Cogan's John Buncle, Junior, Gentleman (1776). A Unitarian, like Thomas Amory, Cogan borrows only the name and advocacy of a rational Christianity from his predecessor. Cogan begins the book metafictionally with Buncle Jr. enduring a bookseller's lecture on the importance of fashionable writing and printing for selling his book. The Bookseller arrogantly states, "the choicest ideas of the greatest Wits, huddled together in narrow lines, with a misty letter-press, and on spongy paper, lose all their brilliancy, and absolutely sink with the ink" (1,21). Like Sterne, Buncle writes sentimental love letters to a woman named Maria. A fantastic voyage (a

common Menippean narrative device) around the sun, with toll gates on the moon and planets, is proposed to raise money for the government in a chapter entitled "The Planetarium Politicum." And finally, a lengthy theological history explains the providential rise of a sentimental system of ethics.

John Wilson, as Christopher North, writes one of the longest Menippean satires in the genre, Noctes Ambrosianae (1822-1835). Wilson's Noctes, initially a periodical, takes up four volumes covering diverse topics from ghosts to politics and literary reviews. Because Wilson employs a symposium setting, usually over dinner, Noctes closely resembles the classical author Athanaeus and his Deipnosophists, or Sophists at Dinner. Wilson even represents a table on the printed page as an oval and marks out the dishes eaten at dinner. Most of the humour in the learned conversation comes from James Hogg, "The Ettrick Shepherd," whose heavy Scottish brogue is almost unreadable to the inexperienced eye. Wilson's self-conscious wit displays itself best when he parodies his own fictional representation of the symposium. Conversing in the symbolically named "Paper parlour" of the Ambrose hotel, the Ettrick Shepherd hears a noise coming from a printing press in the room. The Shepherd "Opens the press, and out steps a person, shabby genteel, in black or brown apparel" (Noctes 1,333). The person in the press, named Gurney, is

a short-hand writer who has been recording the Noctes gatherings. Wilson writes virtually all the Noctes, but the improbabilities surrounding his fictional amanuensis who is often found hiding in walls for whole evenings foreground the printed nature of his text.

Despite being a Menippean satirist himself, Wilson censures Sterne's immorality and the self-consciousness of his sentimentality. Wilson conveys his criticism in the Scottish dialect of the Shepherd:

As shallow a sentimentalist as ever grat--or  
rather tried to greet. O, sir! but it's a  
degrawdin sicht to humanity, yon--to see the  
shufflin sinner tryin to bring the tears intil  
his een, by rubbin the lids wi' the pint o' his  
pen, or wi' the feathers on the shank, and when  
it a' winna do, takin refuge in a blank sea---,  
or hidin his head amang a set o' asterisks, sae  
\* \* \* \*; or boltin aff the printed page  
a'thegither, and disappearin in ae black blotch!

(Noctes 3,119)

The Shepherd's criticism of Sterne hiding behind a witty printing device belies Wilson's own self-consciousness regarding his printed medium. Wilson represents his own opinion of Sterne through Christopher North, who responds to the Shepherd by saying, "Sterne had genius, James" (Noctes 3, 119). Censured or not, Wilson remembers Sterne

for his self-conscious wit.

The last in our brief survey of Menippean satirists to imitate Sterne is Robert Southey in his book The Doctor & c (1834-37). Southey's fictional biography tells the story of Dr. Daniel Dove of Doncaster. The uneventful narrative, however, gets lost in an overwhelming number of self-conscious, digressive interruptions. But where Wilson's digressive discontinuity adapts well to what Southey calls "the Golden age of Magazines" (Doctor 269), Southey's pedantic persona uses digression to display his erudition, sometimes to the point of tedium. Among the many authors he alludes to in his digression, Sterne's Tristram Shandy figures prominently. Southey also records one of the earliest versions of the children's story "The Three Bears," another example of the genre's mixture of learned and playful discourse. Southey's Doctor is so allusive that only the word "cento," or "patchwork," describes the book. One of Southey's favourite authors, Burton, provides a Menippean model. Defending digressive and allusive habits of his wit, Burton states: "I have laboriously collected this Cento out of divers Writers and that sine injura, I have wronged no authors, but given every man his own" (Anatomy 1,22). Like Burton's Anatomy, Southey's cento displays the copia of his wit.

Southey's encyclopedic wit includes every device of wit imaginable. His emphasis on a festive wit rather than

satirically malignant wit captures the playful humour of Tristram Shandy. Southey expresses an attitude of comic satire similar to Sterne when he objects to personal attack which serve "like many satires of the present age, to show the malice and not the wit of the satirist" (Doctor 465-66). But Southey's wit exploits the visual conceits and emblems, characteristic of Sterne, to excess. Anagrams, riddles, asterisks, lacunae, pattern poems and puns number among the devices of visual wit that Southey inserts on almost every page. Southey never tires of playing, in particular, with the emblem of the pyramid, the symbol for the Greek letter "delta." He explicitly states that transliterating the Greek letter to the English letter "d" ties Dr. Daniel Dove to the "mystic triangle." Meditating on the mysterious riddles conveyed by the emblem, Southey notes that "the Hebrews call it Daleth, the door, as though it were the door of speech . . . the sage Egyptians are thought to have emblemized the soul of man" with the shape (Doctor 460). Printed triangles, in various sizes, appear throughout The Doctor and further emphasize the witty emblem as a literal symbol or metafictional device which calls attention to the materiality of the signifier.

The spirit of Sterne's festive wit in the three satires I have mentioned shows that more than a mere aggregate of Menippean conventions unites these texts. But the presence of Sterne's wit in later Menippists only

proves that "Great wits jump," or, in other words, that wit is essential to satiric technique. Whether Menippean satirists in the twentieth century employ wit in a way comparable to Dunton and Sterne is difficult to establish, since only a few critics are working in the genre. However, Roberta Tovey argues that James Joyce and Vladimir Nabakov are Menippean satirists who have inherited the tradition of learned wit from Sterne and others. Tovey's use of Freud's book on wit, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (1905), suggests that there may be a modern tradition of learned wit. T. S. Eliot's essay "The Metaphysical Poets" also revives wit in literary criticism through his theory of the "dissociation of sensibility." The strong influence of Samuel Johnson in Eliot's essay (which includes a definition of wit from Johnson's essay on the metaphysical poets) makes it clear that "sensibility" is really wit. We cannot speak of a modern poetics of wit until Frye's Anatomy. Eliot, Freud, and especially Frye have served as lenses through which my study has viewed the Baroque and Augustan satiric wit. Perhaps if we assess our achievement with the same lenses, we can look at the twentieth century and discover in Johnson's words "occult resemblances in things apparently unlike" (Lives 14).

Using Frye's and Kirk's descriptions of the genre, we established that self-conscious techniques flourish as wit in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Menippean satire,

particularly in the works of Dunton and Sterne. But where Dunton simply parodies the Baroque poetics, inherited primarily from Hobbes, Sterne explicitly defends wit against Locke and others by developing his own alternative poetics. Menippean satire attacks prevailing philosophical and literary decorum, its conventional targets, through wit's paradoxes. Ironically, the chief instrument of attack in this genre of intellectual satire is the ridicule of the learned wit or philosophus gloriosus. The gloriosi dramatize the paradox that, despite their self-consciousness, they cannot fulfill the Delphic command of self-knowledge. Their digressive habit symbolizes the absence of self-control which results from their failure to know themselves, their failure to balance their wit and judgment.

Wit's wild lawlessness as a mental faculty, combined with its corresponding tendency to go beyond mimetic decorum as a rhetorical product, makes it an ideal weapon for satirists. Wit foregrounds the metaphorical process by discovering surprising resemblances between disparate, even opposite, things. The discordia concors of metaphorical wit exposes the artificiality of literary language and reminds readers that they are reading a book. Puns, wordplays, emblems, and conceits represent just a few of the rhetorical devices which prominent critics condemn as false wit, but which Menippean satirists honour to

undermine mimetic decorum. Frye calls these rhetorical devices literal symbols that call attention to themselves as units in a verbal structure, as words on a page. The satirist matches anti-mimetic, metaphorical wit with a self-conscious wit at the narrative level. The self-referentiality and antimimetic nature of digressive and metaphorical wit correspond to the same narrative and linguistic metafictional techniques which, Linda Hutcheon argues, form the basis of a twentieth-century postmodern poetics.

Recovering Menippean satire and the poetics of wit suggests that what Hutcheon calls postmodern poetics may have precursors. A historical comparison, however, also accentuates the differences between a poetics founded on metafictional paradox and a poetics founded on witty paradox. A postmodern poetic, as Hutcheon explains, accepts language as constitutive, rather than simply reflective, of reality (xiv). Relegated to non-serious discourse, wit's history in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literary poetics records the dominance of a mimetic attitude that makes even fictional language representational. Ridicule of the philosophus gloriosus traditionally relies on the failure of his language to fulfill mimetic demands and represent reality. However, the playfulness of learned wit has recently gained a new kind of joco-seriousness. Geoffrey Hartman in Saving the



Text writes a chapter on "The Philosopher as Wit," linking Derridean deconstruction to the "resurgence of wit ('esprit') in philosophy" (35). Hartman shows that Derrida marks a new cultural attitude to wit and its play with language. A postmodern poetics may mark the threshold of a new cultural attitude to Menippean satire.

Throughout my thesis, I have used the word "self-consciousness" to represent the psychologically divided subjects of both author and narrator, and the word "wit" to represent the "presence of mind in words" (Hartman 135). If the term "self-consciousness" implies the outmoded concept of a unitary, psychological subject, which died, Barthes tells us, with the "Death of the Author," the philosophus gloriosus might respond by saying that the rumours of the author's death have been greatly exaggerated. For the learned wit, the real psychological subject has always been Narcissus Alter, an effect of language, the presence of mind in words. Derrida's philosophy of language as the play of signification may in fact renew interest in the mad figure of the philosophus gloriosus who plays with ideas in writing about them and never reaches his wit's end.

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## Appendix

Frontispiece to John Dunton's A Voyage Round the World,  
1691 (Courtesy of the Bodleian Library. 8 C.270 Linc).



