

**The Monstrous and the Sportive  
Grotesque in the early Eighteenth  
Century.**

**Ian David McCormick.**

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# Abstract

Chapter One explores the classification of the grotesque and its disruptive role in natural and philosophical taxonomic systems. I argue that the grotesque served as a useful repository for the marvellous, the hybrid and the preternatural. Further, as a product of mind., the grotesque had nominalist status which was used to undermine essentialist classification, as well as to disrupt the referential relation between words and things. Moreover, grotesque hybrids, and fantastic beings were characteristic of the plenitude of nature and of the imagination. Chapter Two therefore moves on from spatial considerations of where the grotesque should be placed, to explore how it is generated and where it comes from. The becomingness of the grotesque is explored in relation to notions of chaos and metamorphosis; in a less tangible sense, I argue that the grotesque process can be understood in relation to metempsychosis and incomplete structuring. In this regard I demonstrate the sportive and playful operation of the grotesque within natures as examples of the *lusus naturae*. Chapter Three builds on the preoccupations of the first chapter, exploring how the grotesque manipulated different kinds of inner space; I show that an emphasis on the pictorial is insufficient for a proper understanding of the category; rather, the grotesque plays or *sports* with the underlying concept of representation. Chapter Four moves out from the mental and private spheres of representation to discuss how notions of category and process were brought together in a variety of constructions of the grotesque body. I argue that the body was subject to a *novelization*, a grotesque welding of forces. The fifth chapter explores the public manifestations of the grotesque in pantomime, fairs and masquerade; I argue that these served as sites of exchange and negotiation

and that the grotesque therefore reflects the evolving commercial system. Chapter Six considers the judgment of the grotesque in relation to a range of legalities. The grotesque disrupted notions of legality just as it played within systems. These arguments are tested in the light of Scriblerian satire, with special attention devoted to Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope throughout.

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Of Bodies chang'd to various Forms I sing:  
Ye Gods, from whom these Miracles did spring,  
Inspire my Numbers with Coelestial heat;  
Till I, my long laborious Work compleat.

(Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. John Dryden, 1-4.)

If in a picture (*Piso*) you should see,  
A handsome woman with a fish's tail,  
Or a man's head upon a horse's neck,  
Or limbs of beasts of the most different kinds,  
Cover'd with feathers of all sorts of birds;  
Wou'd you not laugh, and think the Painter mad?  
Trust me, that book is as ridiculous.  
Whose incoherent style (like sick men's dreams)  
Varies all shapes, and mixes all extreams  
Painters and Poets have been still allow'd  
Their pencils, and their fancies, unconfin'd.  
This privilege we freely give and take:  
But nature, and the common laws of sense,  
Forbid to reconcile *Antipathies*,  
Or make a snake ingender with a dove,  
And hungry tigers court the tender lambs.

(Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, trans. The Earl of Roscommon, 1-16.)

It is by studying the deformation of images that we shall find the  
measure of poetic imagination.

(Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*.)

# Introduction

The ambivalence of the grotesque category is manifested in the range of meanings and nuances attached to the word itself. Its semantic development serves to exhibit a range of possibilities for the category which have been synthesised and reworked by modern critics. Many of these connotations were first circulated in renaissance literature. In the course of this thesis I have generally returned to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century usages rather than looking back through Gothic and Romantic terminologies. Having indicated the historical direction of my investigation, I should point out that certain usages such as "trifling" and "sportive" are relatively distinctive in the eighteenth century. Moreover, for a number of critics the search for origins leads back to a pictorial source rather than a linguistic one. Arthur Clayborough, for instance, ties the semantic development of the word "grotesque" to the influence of the mural designs excavated from the Domus Aurea of Nero at the beginning of the sixteenth century; he noted that Cardinal Todeschini Piccolomini instructed Pinturicchio to decorate the ceiling of the Library of the Cathedral of Siena in a style "che oggi chiamano grottesche."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Cotgrave's *Dictionary of the French and English Tongues* (1611) stresses the indulgent visual purposelessness in examples of the grotesque: "Pictures wherein (as please the Painter) all kinds of odde things are represented without anie peculiar sence, or meaning, but only to feede the eye." Modern literary critics have also demonstrated an unwillingness to shake off the pictorial. Neil Rhodes, for

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<sup>1</sup> *The Grotesque in English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 2.

instance, has argued that the grotesque, "being properly a word applied to the visual arts, does not correspond to a literary style."<sup>2</sup>

Symptomatically, Cotgrave's definition of the grotesque, as visual yet non-representational underlies a number of perennial issues that beset any useful claims made in favour of the grotesque as a critical category. Can the grotesque be said properly to represent anything? For a variety of critics, across all periods, there was an inherent danger in the grotesque's refusal of mimetic representation and its accommodation of the playful and the purposeless. From the medieval period when Bernard of Clairvaux complained about the impropriety of grotesque ornamentation and censured its tendency to distract the monastic community from its spiritual devotions,<sup>3</sup> there has been a tradition of anxiety about the tendency of the grotesque to encourage whimsical indulgence and an indifference to meaningfulness; these features undermined central values in a neo-classical tradition that stressed purpose, representation and ideals. At worst, with the breakdown of order and hierarchy, the grotesque was construed as a movement towards chaos. Its values were those of the mob.

Emphasizing play at the expense of totalised meaning, other explorations of the grotesque have nonetheless tended to emphasize its *ludic* possibilities. In *The Stones of Venice*, John Ruskin drew a valuable distinction between the 'noble' and 'ignoble' grotesque. He argued that the former involved a true appreciation of

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<sup>2</sup> Neil Rhodes, *Elizabethan Grotesque* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 7. For other studies of the grotesque in the sixteenth century see G. Wilson Knight, "King Lear and the Comedy of the Grotesque" in *The Wheel of Fire* (Methuen, 1949) and Willard Farnham, *The Shakespearian Grotesque* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> "But in the cloister, in the sight of the reading monks, what is the point of such ridiculous monstrosity, the strange kind of shapely shapelessness ... In short there is such a variety and such a diversity of strange shapes everywhere that we may prefer to read the marbles rather than the books." The passage is translated in Elizabeth G. Holt, *A Documentary History of Art*, 2 vols (New York: Garden City: Doubleday 1957-8), vol. 1, pp. 19-22.

beauty with a degree of horror; whereas the latter did not arouse horror so much as disgust.<sup>4</sup> Although the discrete types of grotesque were the product of a broadly psychological scheme, Ruskin's fundamental distinction was between different kinds of play, "the men who play wisely; who play necessarily; who play inordinately; and who play not at all."<sup>5</sup> Unlike the modern deconstructive critic, Ruskin concluded with emphatic censure of these tendencies: "It is evident that the idea of any kind of play can only be associated with the idea of an imperfect, childish, and fatigable nature." (XXVI). Yet he also made a distinction between the true grotesque ("the expression of the *repose* or play of a *serious* mind") and the false grotesque, ("the result of the *full exertion* of a *frivolous* one").<sup>6</sup> The former - the true grotesque - typifies the *sportive* grotesque of the eighteenth century and its contestation represents a displacement into the false grotesque. But the critic must be cautious of indulging in a retrospective synthesis. The false grotesque has some similarity to Addison's "false Wit," but it would be dangerous to reconstruct a model which is not so clearly demarcated as Ruskin's analysis suggests. The positive role of play in the development of society and culture has been further explored by Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois, opening up the possibility of a more sympathetic account of this component of the grotesque category.<sup>7</sup>

Thomas Wright's historical study of the grotesque (1876) places it not with play but with the category of the comic, and he traces it back to the Egyptians and the unintentional caricature of the Anglo-Saxons. His study has the virtue of

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<sup>4</sup> See *The Stones of Venice*, 3 vols., (1873), p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>7</sup> See Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1958; 1961) and Johan Huizinga, *Homo-Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Proeve

relating the grotesque to social and cultural factors, and not seeing the grotesque as exemplified or monopolised by any one period. His book demonstrates the inclusive range of the grotesque, but without analysing the different characteristics of its components, or properly distinguishing the category from related ones. The kind of antiquarian collection put together by Wright is also to be found in another useful volume, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* (1859) by Henry Morley. The rediscovery and celebration of a festive past represented by this tradition of writing culminated in C.L Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*.<sup>8</sup>

Arthur Clayborough also explores a comprehensive range of grotesque phenomena, but his otherwise excellent study is primarily literary and textual, without any understanding of the wider cultural ramifications of his topic. The linguistic richness of the grotesque category is explored chiefly by tracing the range of definitions listed in *The Oxford English Dictionary*.<sup>9</sup> These serve to link the grotesque with a range of associated themes such as the grotto, extravagance, fantasy, ridicule, distortion, the unnatural, irregularity, mixture, heterogeneity, caricature, burlesque, and the monstrous. The term could also be explored in relation to the arabesque and to the moresque, as well as to bathos and the sublime. As the range of related terms and categories indicates, the grotesque could refer either to the "aesthetic" object in itself, as well as to the formulation of a proper response to it (usually as disapproval or censure). One shortcoming of this study was its failure to explore the possibilities of the *monstrous*, which is not

*eener bepaling van het spelelement der cultur*) trans R.F.C. Hull (Haarlem, 1938; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949).

<sup>8</sup> C.L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to the Social Custom* (Princeton University Press, 1959).

<sup>9</sup> See also Frances Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971); Philip Thomson, *The Grotesque* (Methuen, The Critical Idiom Series, 1972).

*consistently* distinguished from the grotesque. Nonetheless, the *monstrous* serves to import notions of the portentous (*monstrare*) and the preternatural, as well as shifting the grotesque from art or imagination to the sportiveness of Nature - vicious or otherwise in its manufacture of aberrations.

In an article in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Peter Fingesten sets about (as the title of his article serves to explain) "Delimitating the Concept of the Grotesque." His study aims, in the first instance, to restrict the grotesque category in terms of a psychological specification. He suggests that the grotesque was "a symbolic category of art that expresses psychic currents from below the surface of life, such as nameless fears, complexes, nightmares, Angst. It is a dimension of intense and exaggerated emotions and intense and exaggerated forms." Additionally, Fingesten argues that "in genuine grotesques, there must be a congruity between subject matter, mood, and the visual forms in which they are cast."<sup>10</sup> Moreover, he warns about the trap of "taste preferences or of judgmental or pejorative use of this term." Yet there is clearly a danger in restrictive definitions that lead the critic to ignore certain practices in favour of a selective, forced and local coherence. Against Fingesten's line of enquiry one may place Geoffrey Harpham's recognition that "No definition of the grotesque can depend solely upon formal properties."<sup>11</sup> Although Wolfgang Kayser considered that the grotesque had the "makings of a basic aesthetic category", he recognized that the grotesque applied broadly to three different realms, "the creative process, the work of art itself, and its reception."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42 (1984), pp. 419-26, p. 419.

<sup>11</sup> *On the Grotesque*, p. 14.

In the course of this thesis I will argue that the grotesque is not simply an aesthetic category, but a means of expressing taste preferences that are part of larger economic, social and cultural forces. The notion of an unfinished process of structuration is characteristic of the grotesque, and of the way that it mirrors or distorts the *flux* of everyday practice. Indeed the possibility of fully assimilating the grotesque to a purely aesthetic structure has been challenged by critics such as Harpham who argues that the key to the grotesque is that it "denotes the essence of art when art is conceived as a contradiction, operating by laws peculiar to itself, and by laws common in the world."<sup>13</sup> Yet Harpham's own eloquent taxonomies simply divide up the grotesque along opposed generative principles:

if we wanted to construct a system of classification for all grotesqueries, we could do no better than to begin with an elementary distinction between those like cave-art, in which, forms are compressed into meaningful ambivalence; and those in which, as with grottesche, forms are proliferated into meaningless ambivalence.<sup>14</sup>

My own study, however, explores a line of thought suggested but not developed by Harpham. This links the grotesque to the scarcely spoken classifications of language: "The word designates a condition of being just out of focus, just beyond the reach of language. It accommodates the things left over when the categories of language are exhausted, it is a defense against silence, when other words have failed."<sup>15</sup> The classification of the grotesque is not, I argue, a solution, but part of

<sup>12</sup> op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>13</sup> Harpham, p. 178.

<sup>14</sup> Harpham, p. 65.

the problem of definition that strikes at the very core of the organization of knowledge in the early eighteenth century.

In this wider sense, two works in particular have had a decisive impact on the study of the grotesque as an identifiable category that operates as a tool for understanding a variety of cultural phenomena. These are Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his world* and Wolfgang Kayser's *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*.<sup>16</sup> These studies are in crucial respects antithetical, the one looking back elegiacally to the celebration of carnival, the other looking forward with horror to the abnormal psychology of the Gothic. Kayser linked the grotesque to manifestations of madness, sickness and nightmare and showed these to be the product of an alienated inner space. For Bakhtin, in contrast, the grotesque exemplifies openness to the world and the unrestrained enjoyment of freedom. In part, the antagonism between the two critics could be explained by the historical periods chosen for their studies; Kayser's exploration of excessive and unbalanced states of mind tended to represent typical aspects of the grotesque category in "Gothic" and "Romantic" literature. In contrast, Bakhtin's deployment of the grotesque is developed primarily in the context of medieval and Renaissance culture. Thus both critics failed to provide proper accounts of the grotesque in the eighteenth century. For Bakhtin, satire was a merely negative product of the Enlightenment. Moreover, the romantic grotesque was

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<sup>15</sup> Harpham, pp. 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (*Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable*, 1965), trans. Helene Iswolsky (The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1968); Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* (*Das Grotteske; seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung* (Gerhard Stalling Verlag, Oldenburg (Olb) und Hamburg Gesamtherstellung, 1957)), trans Ulrich Weisstein (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1963).

a reaction against the elements of classicism which characterised the self-importance of the Enlightenment. It was a reaction against the cold rationalism, against official, formalistic, and logical authoritarianism; it was a rejection of that which is finished and complete, of the didactic and utilitarian spirit of the Enlighteners with their narrow and artificial optimism.<sup>17</sup>

Given such an uncompromising representation of the eighteenth century, it is not surprising that Bakhtin failed to discover within it even the contested spaces which the grotesque made available. Insofar as Bakhtin's text was a veiled attack on the Enlightenment as a species of Stalinism, it is easier to understand why he defended - and fatally simplified - the democratic legacy of the grotesque. The folk carnival, for instance, was never the coherent oppositional force Bakhtin claimed, nor was authority as uni-vocal and totalised as he imagined. Bakhtin's work emerged from cultural politics, arguing that complete liberty is only possible in a completely fearless world. Moreover, his grounding of radical ideas in popular practice as the contestation of authority, provided the groundwork for a more complex analysis of the social cultural forces that generated and served to contest the grotesque category. Allon White and Peter Stallybrass's *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* and Terry Castle's *Masquerade and Civilization* have reworked Bakhtinian theory with greater subtlety and with closer attention to the eighteenth century; yet neither work is specifically a study of the grotesque category in its own right and on its own terms.

For Kayser, in contrast to Bakhtin, the essential trait of the grotesque was its expression of "something alien, and inhuman."<sup>18</sup> Kayser's study clearly emerged from psychology rather than cultural politics. Bakhtin concluded his attack on the "contradictions" of Kayser's concept, by stating that he had attributed a degree of

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<sup>17</sup> p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> Kayser, op. cit., p. 47.

freeplay to the role of fantasy which contradicted its own terms of reference: "But how is such freedom possible in relation to a world ruled by the alien power of the *id*? Here lies the contradiction of Kayser's concept."<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, the grotesque category has been readily deployed in other psychological studies. The works of Karl Jung, for instance, demonstrate a lifelong fascination with heterogeneity, with the ideas of the grotesque as a symbolic, spiritual, sexual or alchemical union of opposites.<sup>20</sup> Yet another grotesque line of thought emerged in Lacan's *Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual* (1938), which explores the notion of the 'fragmented body' (*corp morçelê*). Malcolm Bowie explains that "The body once seemed dismembered, all over the place, and the anxiety associated with this memory fuels the individual's desire to be the possessor and resident of a secure bodily 'I'."<sup>21</sup> Lacan's imagery played on heterogeneous dolls and mannequins as artificial productions that mirrored the construction of the ego. His enquiry also recalls Freud's discussion of E.T.A Hoffman's *The Sandman* examined in "The "Uncanny"" (1919). Tony Tanner builds on these lines of thought in his perceptive conclusion that "this *motif* of the human body being reduced to a sort of marionette or automaton certainly applies to Pope's world."<sup>22</sup> Again, these discussions of the grotesque may be assimilated to the area of psychological analysis as practised by Wolfgang Kayser.

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<sup>19</sup> p. 49.

<sup>20</sup> See for instance, *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy* (1955/6), trans. R.F.C. Hull (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963); *Psychology and Alchemy* (1944), trans. R.F.C. Hull (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953); *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self* (1951), trans. R.F.C. Hull (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2nd Ed., 1968); *Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia* (1952), trans. R.F.C. Hull (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956).

<sup>21</sup> See Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan* (Fontana Modern Masters, 1991), p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> "Reason and the Grotesque: Pope's *Dunciad*," *Critical Quarterly* VII (1965), pp. 145-60.

Yet the argument between Kayser and Bakhtin is instructive in mapping out the theoretical range inspired by the notion of the grotesque category. The stable categorisation which might be the groundwork for a theoretical approach is clearly undermined by the irregularity and heterogeneity of the items that the category seeks to include, and their manifestations across a range of disciplines. This clearly militates against an unconditional allegiance to either Bakhtin's or Kayser's line.

Any study of eighteenth-century literature must take account of the historical forces that conditioned its writing. Importantly, there was a need for a reorganization of knowledge with the collapse of many of the certainties that had prevailed in the medieval period.<sup>23</sup> As one historian has concluded:

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries ... this almost hysterical demand for order at all costs was caused by a collapse of most of the props of the medieval world picture.<sup>24</sup>

In this context, Stone noted the collapse of the unified dogma of the Catholic Church, the disputes between the Ancients and the Moderns, the rise of science, and the social and geographical mobility of the gentry and professional classes that undermined "kinship" ties. Such forces were crucial for the rediscovery and development of satire, within which the grotesque was also able to evolve. Yet if grotesque satire contested power, it often did so under the protection of another authority. There was a sense in which the grotesque, as an unformulated process, was more radical in its undermining, for it resisted full aesthetic assimilation. If it was the tool of authority, it was also an unsteady reflection of what it feared. In this sense it corresponded to Jonathan Dollimore and Stephen Greenblatt's

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<sup>23</sup> In Michel Foucault's study *The Order of Things*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1970) the historical transition was reworked as a shift in the dominant episteme from a discourse of resemblance to one of differential classification.

<sup>24</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 653.

definition of radical subversiveness as "not merely the attempt to seize existing authority, but as a challenge to the principles upon which authority is based."<sup>25</sup> In this regard, the forces that made up the grotesque category were able to begin the disruption of ideology in the cultural materialist formulation suggested by Dollimore which

traces the cultural connections between signification and legitimation: the way that beliefs, practices and institutions legitimate the dominant social order or *status quo* - the existing relations of domination and subordination. Such legitimation is found (for example) in the representation of sectional interests as universal ones.<sup>26</sup>

The eighteenth century also made extensive and productive use of classical material. The doctrines promoted by these texts have different bearings on the possibility of writing the grotesque, and on the period's own understanding of what it could do with those texts. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be arguing that a large part of grotesque literature in the early eighteenth century took its classical foundation from a dynamic which oscillates between Horatian censure of the grotesque category, and the Ovidian assimilation of it as metamorphosis and change. The issue was less one of imitation and influence from classical sources than of the range of possibilities available within a culture and the dynamics with which they operated. The grotesque category may be understood as a space which permits negotiations between concepts of order and chaos and between particular kinds of text.

Reconstructing the eighteenth-century grotesque, my thesis argues that the grotesque occurs as much within, as against, the neo-classical; it is a sanctioned

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<sup>25</sup> See Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Shakespeare* (Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 13; Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion", *Glyph*, 8 (1981), 40-61, p. 41.

and necessary mutation within one's provisional model of the world and serves to motivate greater inclusiveness and accommodation within systems of thought. Above all it foregrounds what are now very modern debates about the cultural relation between margins and centres. Although the grotesque has been regarded as marginal, there has been insufficient analysis of its contestation of the centre, its capacity to forge new systems and legalities by playfully interrogating their adequacy to a multiple and shifting practice. Allowing texts the full play that they generate can open out a critical awareness of what has been left silent and unformulated in existing criticism, without imposing new totalities on their *sportive* aspirations.

I have examined a variety of texts in order to test the range of investigative models proposed in each chapter. Some texts, such as *The Dunciad* and *Gulliver's Travels* are discussed in more than one chapter, and from different perspectives. I have chosen to focus primarily on Scriblerian satire, but I have incorporated influential source material from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Throughout the thesis I have resisted making distinctions between canonical and non-canonical texts, as well as between the literary and the non-literary. Such an approach can be justified on safer ground than the occupation of a democratically inclusive postmodern position. Rather, such a strategy seeks to reflect the early eighteenth century in its own terms. The disciplinary boundaries that we know today were still in a state of flux, heterogeneous and incompletely structured. Moreover, the distinction between major and minor works (hacks and dunces), for instance, was just beginning to be demarcated in this period. Swift produced texts that were later deemed "canonical", but he also enjoyed riddles, literary trifles, and

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<sup>26</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Shakespeare* (Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 6-7.

the *sport* of wit in its own right. Moreover, the distinction between literary and non-literary productions was also problematic given that rigorous modern distinctions between disciplines were not fully established until the nineteenth century. Thus writers such as John Arbuthnot brought together satire, law, medicine and other heterogeneous material without any anxiety concerning structural or thematic incoherence. The period itself was a promiscuous assembly of the sources that generated it and the forces that played across it. Edward Ward might be considered as an exponent of the "low", popular and market-led, but his output served as source material for Pope, who also played the market - in his own fashion. In this light it is astonishing that no full-scale discussion of the grotesque interactions of texts in this period has been attempted. In this thesis I therefore attempt to show not only that there was a rich range and variety of material available for the study of the grotesque, but that these were the sites for different, and distinctive cultural and ideological struggles.

Chapter One explores the classification of the grotesque in taxonomic systems. The placing of the grotesque, its spatial co-ordinate, will be discussed on a variety of levels throughout the thesis. I argue that the grotesque served as a useful repository for the marvellous, the hybrid and the preternatural. The grotesque therefore contained what would otherwise be disruptive to logical and philosophic systems. Yet this containment was bought at the cost of a nominally defined inclusivity within taxonomic systems. The grotesque nominalist status could therefore be used by writers and philosophers to undermine essentialist classification, as well as to disrupt the referential relation between words and things. Yet the grotesque hybrids, and imaginary beings were characteristic of the plenitude of nature and of the imagination. Chapter Two therefore moves on from spatial considerations of where the grotesque should be placed, to explore how it is generated and where it comes from. The becomingness of the grotesque is

explored in relation to notions of chaos and metamorphosis; in a less tangible sense, I argue that the grotesque process can be understood in relation to metempsychosis and incomplete structuration. Within nature, I emphasize the sportive and playful operation of the grotesque as *lusus naturae*. Chapter Three builds on the preoccupations of the first chapter, to explore how the grotesque manipulated different kinds of inner space; I show that an emphasis on the pictorial is insufficient for a proper understanding of the category; rather, the grotesque plays or *sports* with the underlying concept of representation. Chapter Four moves out from the mental and private spheres of representation to discuss how notions of category and process were brought together in a variety of constructions of the grotesque body. I argue that the body was subject to a *novelization*, a grotesque welding of forces. The fifth chapter explores the public manifestations of the grotesque in pantomime, fairs and masquerade; I argue that these served as sites of exchange and negotiation, and that the grotesque in these terms reflects the evolving commercial system. Moreover, as mixed, 'promiscuous' sites, such exchange also created playful spaces for the grotesque body as discussed in the previous chapter. Chapter Six considers the judgment of the grotesque in relation to a range of legalities. The grotesque disrupted notions of legality just as it played within systems. Finally the grotesque had a crucial role in empowering the transition from natural law to natural rights.

# Chapter One

## The Classification of the Grotesque

The meaning of the grotesque category, insofar as it can be captured at all in language, cannot be grasped simply by means of an inventory of the word's etymologies and range of usages at a particular time or across a period.<sup>1</sup> The category contains a variety of phenomena, each one of which is potentially of mixed form. Additionally, questions of usage cannot be listed as a set of customary variations, without placing these in the context of their construction within or against other structures. Vulgar customs, usages and beliefs, for instance, cannot be understood in isolation from other practices which seek to outlaw or exploit them, and which set up competing conventions that are themselves constitutive of yet another grotesque. Although discussions of the usage of the word "grotesque" are not unhelpful, such an approach is in important respects evasive, because it fails to face up to more fundamental questions about the nature of category, order and classification, that are crucial to the formation of the grotesque. Is there a space beyond these in which the grotesque operates, or is it always already contained? What is the place of imaginative texts and fantastic creations in relation to the taxonomic enterprise?

In the first part of this chapter I look at how shifts in scientific practice led to the identification of correct language usage as the framework for progress within a range of emerging disciplines. The role of the grotesque in these debates complicates the direct and transparent relation between word and

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<sup>1</sup> Such a strategy is pursued by Arthur Clayborough in his *The Grotesque in English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

thing. Some of these issues come out of Baconian science and are developed in novel linguistic systems such as those of John Wilkins. Any systematic ordering of language introduces basic problems of classification. I argue that because natural history was the basis for a universal and philosophical language in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, these projects were in turn problematised by the existence of grotesque phenomena. These hybrid, monstrous or imaginary beings are the product of a belief that nature was plenitudinous, multiple and shifting. The starting point for a number of the discussions in this chapter is scientific, but the direction is classificatory and linguistic, leading in turn to questions about the uniform operation of these mental procedures. At the end of the chapter, I argue that the classificatory project is further problematised on two fronts: an uneasiness about the role of the observer and an undermining of "man" as a privileged category.

For a number of thinkers whose work I will be discussing, the cleared space of classification is typically one in which language loses its slippery metaphoricity in favour of "scientific" precision. If language were capable of simply capturing the essence of an object by expressing its logical structure (type and arrangement of parts) then the fanciful chimaeras of the imagination, and the merely customary accretions and mock-classifications of the vulgar could be avoided. Samuel Parker's note to himself in his *Free and Impartial Censure* was therefore representative of the philosophical reification of language that was to become a common theme in the late seventeenth century:

I took occasion to set it down as a note to myself, that a huge and luscious stile may relish sweet to childish and liquorish Fancies, yet it rather loathes and nauceats it [...] Now to discourse of the Nature of things in Metaphors and Allegories is nothing else but to sport and trifle with empty words, because these schemes do

not express the Nature of Things, but only their Similitudes and Resemblances.<sup>2</sup>

Metaphor was increasingly distrusted as a displacement or deferral of meaning; it lacked a logical essence upon which to ground itself. During the early eighteenth century such sporting and trifling was demonstrably constitutive of the grotesque, but it is important to recognize that science had been trying to rid itself of these features since Bacon wrote his *A Preparation for a Natural and Experimental History*, the second and third aphorisms of which set out clearly that:

The common luxuriancy of *Natural Histories*, running out into numerous Descriptions, Characters, and Figures of *Species*, and their curious Variety, makes little to the purpose; such small variations being but the sport and wantonness of Nature, and near approaches to the Individuals: so that tho' there may be a beautiful and agreeable deviation in the things themselves, yet this affords but a slender and almost needless Information, to the improvement of the *Sciences*.<sup>3</sup>

Bacon objected to making nature more strange than it was in reality. Science must accommodate the general shape of things. Observation was a special kind of scrutiny which should not be disrupted by marginal or incidental factors such as the poetic or spiritual temperament of the observer. As in Parker's comments above, such local variations, so fascinating to the poet or divine were linked to sport and trifling as an indication of their marginality to the central enterprise of the new science. Objects in space were essentially de-contextualised. Vulgar beliefs, in particular, must be eradicated, although, as Bacon parenthetically admitted, nature was often strange, and deviated from its own norms:

All *superstitious Relations*, and the Experiments of ceremonial Magick, are entirely to be dropt; tho' without absolutely

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie* (1666). See Watson, *Literary English Since Shakespeare*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> *Set of Aphorisms for compiling a just history of Nature and Art*, in *Works*, 3 vols. (1733), vol. 3, No III, p. 9.

excluding *Things prodigious*; where the account of them is preferable, and worthy of Credit.<sup>4</sup>

In his *Novum Organum* Bacon proposed the compilation of a particular natural history that would comprise "all prodigies and monstrous births of nature; of everything in short that is in nature new, rare and unusual. This must be done with the strictest scrutiny, that fidelity may be ensured."<sup>5</sup> From this point we see the gradual separation of heterogeneous material from natural histories. Michel Foucault has pointed out how Ulisse Aldrovandi, for instance, had placed the category of serpents within that of dragons, so that there is "an inextricable mixture of exact description, reported quotations, fables without commentary."<sup>6</sup> In subsequent natural histories, however, one can discern an increasingly strenuous effort to fence off the "marvellous," seeking to restrict its interference with the study of nature's more regular productions.

Yet some material remained stubbornly anomalous. The zoophyte, for instance, was a classic case of a border dispute between plant and animal kingdoms. Were such categories not "marvellous"? The period was particularly rich in classificatory disputes that were a forum for the grotesque. The ruling episteme of the period, as Foucault has argued, is taxonomic. The taxonomic episteme occupies a space which is decontextualised in the manner I have outlined. More specifically, such a space served to order mechanically and transparently (in the case of plants) by the arrangement, shape, and number of constituent parts. This scientific space was essentially utilitarian, deprived of speculative whimsy, trifling and sport which were perceived as the proper occupation of poets and divines, and a manifestly different enterprise from science. As Bacon affirmed:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> See *Novum Organum* II.xxix, in *Philosophical Works*, ed. Ellis and Spedding with an introduction by John M. Robertson (Routledge, 1905), II.xxix, p. 336.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 39.

but it must always be remembered, that the Point of View here, is to procure and furnish a *Store-room* or *Repository*; not a house to dwell in for Pleasure; but to enter into upon occasion, as anything is required for Use, in the *business of Interpretation* that is to succeed.<sup>7</sup>

Accordingly, the *Statutes of the Royal Society* set out that "The Curators, at least shall be appointed for the Inspection of those [Experiments] which cannot be perform'd before the Society: by then the bare report of Matter of Fact shall be stated and returned."<sup>8</sup> There was no space here for the erudite trifling that was permitted in the recesses of the text, the prefaces, apologies, footnotes, biographies, index etc that Pope was to exploit in *The Dunciad*, and which were symptomatic both of textual strategies and scholarly techniques that were in part empowered by the possibilities of a typographic culture. Pope's textual excrescences both exploited and parodied these developments. In Linnaean taxonomy, in contrast, print size and page indentations were themselves transparent reflections of the order and priority of natural categories.

At least for the earlier part of the eighteenth century, most schemes of classification which had aspired to a universal or philosophical status had either failed or were inadequate. Such linguistic schemes were, in the eighteenth century, the ready targets of satirists such as Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*, in which there was a scheme for entirely abolishing words:

this was urged as a great advantage in point of health, as well as brevity. For, it is plain, that every word we speak is, in some degree, a diminution of our lungs by corrosion; and consequently contributes to the shortening of our lives. An expedient was therefore offered, that since words are only names for *things*, it would be convenient for all men to carry about them such *things* as were necessary to express a particular business they are to discourse on.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Set of Aphorisms for compiling a just history of Nature and Art*, in *Works*, 3 vols. (1733), vol. 3, No III, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society, For the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (1667), p. 145.

<sup>9</sup> Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, III.v., p. 230.

Such satire emerged from the concept of existing language as a living structure like the body, subject to illnesses and possible extinction, as John Wilkins was at pains to point out in advancing the need for a philosophical language which might be placed beyond the ravages of time:

As to the Quere, whether any of the Ancient Languages be now *quite lost*; it may be answered, That if in some few hundreds of years a Language may be so *changed* as to be scarce intelligible; then, in a much longer tract of time it may be quite *abolished*, none of the most radical and substantial parts remaining: For every *change* is a *gradual corruption*.<sup>10</sup>

Yet the universality and temporal stability of language could be achieved only as a ridiculous reification (as Swift satirically suggested), or by depriving it of its opaque lifeblood by logical exclusion. In *A Tale of a Tub*, a satire on the direct relation between word and thing explains Swift's mock Histori-theo-physico-logical account of Zeal which takes on a monstrous self-projected metamorphosis: "it first proceeded from a *notion* into a *word*, and thence, in a hot summer, ripened into *tangible substance*."<sup>11</sup> Abstractions, for Swift, could only perilously be identified with living matter.

The sheer variety guaranteed by the deviation of nature could not be encompassed in purely logical or essentialist terms, as a philosophical system demanded. Looking at the classifiers, the pattern was often one of adherence to classificatory ideals combined with a resistance to closure; systems occupied space, but they were not insulated from borderline interferences. John Wilkins banished the grotesque from his "Real Character," but as one of his assistants, the botanist and natural historian John Ray, was to recognize, the plenitudinous world and its delightfully sportive anomalies could not be accommodated by a strictly logical classificatory system.

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<sup>10</sup> *An Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Swift, *The Tale of a Tub*, ed. Angus Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 66.

John Ray's shifting and unsteady enthusiasm for different kinds of classification make a valuable case-study, for he occupied an anomalous position within what was to become the discipline of botany. In looking at a range of his work, I will be examining his shifting allegiances to the possibility of a totalizing system. In the course of this discussion I point to the disruptive role of the grotesque, the conceptual rethinking that its availability continuously demanded. As a development from this, I will be showing that the ground was laid for John Locke to employ natural history in order to disrupt and to challenge the possibility of *essential* classification. Again, the impetus for such a sceptical approach to classification was provided by the application of grotesque examples. On another level, the emphasis shifts from classification to questions about our mental processes, leading philosophers such as Locke to provide some explanation for the existence of the grotesque form, and to do this from the point of view of how the mind works.

The possibility of a successful scheme of classification was constructed from the Aristotelian belief in the "essence" of an object which language should embody by an exact match of word to thing; taxonomic names ideally captured the very structure of the life form. On this basis, the grotesque continually maintained an open space by introducing an instability between essence and name. If the grotesque were simply different from other categories, then a new name could be allotted to it and a new category created; but this was not possible because the grotesque was different from itself; troublesome not so much to the categories that it bordered as to the idea of classification itself. Vague words were particularly susceptible to the accommodation of heterogeneous material which shifted them in the direction of grotesque categories.

Drawing for instance on Bacon's *Novum Organum*, it is possible to discern how the new science established itself by seeking to employ an exacting terminology. The new methodology built on a renewal of semantic discipline.

Such a development could be seen clearly in Bacon's discussion of how the word *moist* (humid) was been used. *Moist* serves as an example of "Names of Things that do exist; but Names confused, ill defined, and rashly and irregularly abstracted from Things."<sup>12</sup> Thus *moist* denotes

no other than a confused Mark of different Actions, that are inconstant and irreducible to one another. For *Moisture* signifies (1) that which can easily diffuse itself round another Body; (2) that which...cannot fix; (3) that which easily yields every way; (4) that which really divides, and scatters itself; (5) that which easily unites with itself, and collect together; (6) that which easily flows, and is easily put in Motion.<sup>13</sup>

In our attempts to grasp what grotesque means adjectivally and where *the* grotesque ought to be placed in our mental map-making, we have to challenge neat classifications and fixed circuits (centres) of meaning. Like Bacon's *moist*, the grotesque opened a space for variety, inconstant meaning, indeterminacy, the arbitrary division and addition of qualities. Often figured largely in the mind, the grotesque was characteristically protean, shifting, a non-category. Yet as Bacon pointed out, *moist* was an example of something which exists; it was derived from reality and was not merely the product of an industrious "fancy." If this was the case, then the grotesque issued from a mismatch between a category of the real and our inability to reproduce it in the mind, to capture its essence. In part this is a practical problem of actual language usage, but it was also a philosophical problem. In dealing with either of these - the untidiness that complicated the systematic, and the interference of the vulgar - there were breeding grounds for the grotesque. For Bacon our working language was already corrupted by the market place which enabled "idols" to "insinuate themselves into the mind."<sup>14</sup> He argued that "when a more acute

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<sup>12</sup> *Novum Organon*, in *Works*, (1733), vol. II, p. 358. Cf. *Philosophical Works*, Section II.xxxix, p. 263; in this uses "humid" for "moist". See Section II.lx, p. 269.

<sup>13</sup> *Works* (1733), p. 359.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

Understanding, or more careful Observation, would remove these Lines, to place them according to Nature; Words cry out, and forbid it."<sup>15</sup> Both the problem and the solution were essentially linguistic, that is, they involved bringing language into line with the "true divisions of nature"; far from being sealed off and unknowable, we have access to nature's structures through the "acuteness" of "diligent observation."

Current language was judged to be a major obstacle to scientific progress. Bacon therefore attacked the *vulgar*, what he called the *market place*. The role of the market-place as an exchange for the exotic, its commercialization of wonder, its freak-shows and licensed sports was clearly vital to the continuity of a number of grotesque phenomena and mental formations. I will examine these in more detail in Chapter Five, but they do have a bearing on the classificatory enterprise. In the work of the botanist John Ray, for example, the difference between reasoned observation and the lore of the vulgar was encapsulated by his coining of the word "teratologize" (not recorded in the *O.E.D.*), - to delight in strange things; such was properly the practice of the vulgar:

I think (if you can give me leave to be free with you) that you are a little too inclinable to credit strange relations. I have found men that are not skilful in the history of nature very credulous and apt to impose upon themselves and others, and therefore dare not give a firm assent to any thing they report upon their own authority; but am ever suspicious that they may either be deceived themselves or delight to teratologize (pardon the word) and to make show of knowing strange things.<sup>16</sup>

Natural history should be constructed around first-hand observation, for this gave one the courage to defend one's views. Knowing something already about

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>16</sup> Letter to John Aubrey, 27 October 1691, in Aubrey's *Natural History and Antiquities of Surrey*, V, p. 411; quoted in Charles E. Raven, *John Ray, Naturalist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), p. 70. Similarly, Ray criticized Dr Plot's report that Ophiomorphites of Cainesham "have some of them heads" by remarking "I doubt not but it is a mistake, proceeding from their credulity." See Raven, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

natural history made one less likely to be trapped by new or fantastic reports which ultimately turn out to be false. Much of Ray's information, of course, came to him second-hand, but he had confidence in the methods and experience of his correspondents, skills which it was presumed the vulgar lacked.

Besides the virtuoso-scientist correspondents, a variety of fantastic material (teratologizing accounts) was also already available in Hakluyt's *The Principall Navigations* (1595), Keymis's sequel *A Relation of the Second Voyage to Guiana* (1596) and Samuel Purchas's *Purchas his Pilgrimage* and *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. Many of the grotesque phenomena such as "a Monster of the Sea like a Man" described in Robert Eden's translation of *De Nouo Orbe* were tantalizingly short on strictly observed detail, but while they stifled analysis they stimulated the imaginative embellishment that was symptomatic of the grotesque. The role of such works in scientific and taxonomic discussions was diminishing by the eighteenth century, although in the middle of the century Linnaeus interestingly still preserved categories for monstrous men. Another common source of fantastic material was Pliny and it is interesting to note in this regard that Ray still deemed his work a source of valuable material for the modern scientist. As Lister wrote to Ray in 1669, reminding him, "I remember you once took away the prejudice I had against Pliny, and I have ever since looked upon him as a great treasure of learning."<sup>17</sup> Yet classical writers were understood less as another authority, than as another source of information.

Ray was still keen however to delimit the strangeness of Nature. Although a doctrine of occult resemblances had featured in Pliny, Ray objected to such beliefs as stoutly as to sciences of the preternatural such as astrology or alchemy. Ray therefore made a clear distinction between a discourse of

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<sup>17</sup> 22 December 1669. *Correspondence of Ray* (Ray Society, 1848), p. 48.

resemblance and one of observation.<sup>18</sup> Resemblance theories were a source of the grotesque, insofar as they posited the duplication of (for example) land forms in sea forms, together with parallel hierarchies such as bishop: monk, bishopfish: monkfish. Edward Lhwyd alluded to such beliefs in a letter to Ray in which he recorded that few formed stones "find any resemblance of horns, teeth, or bones of land animals, or of birds, which might be apt to petrify, if we respect their consistence"; he proceeded to state that those that did have some resemblance

appear generally but as mock-shells and counterfeit teeth, differing from them little less than the works of art do from those of nature, which we endeavour to imitate, as if the earth in these productions (to speak vulgarly) should only ape the sea.

Nature's mimicry was reduced to the merely vulgar. For Ray the doctrine of resemblances left too many gaps, it left too much to the grotesque imagination:

Why should not nature as well imitate other natural bodies, or their parts, as the horns and hoofs of land animals, or the nuts and seeds of plants, as the shells and bones only of some sea-fishes.<sup>19</sup>

Related to that of resemblances, was the doctrine of *signatures*. Again such a belief had occult tendencies and therefore belonged properly to the preternatural rather than to natural history. For Ray this was particularly dangerous when dealing with herbals. He was generally suspicious of folkloric readings of nature which transgressively utilized pagan legend, providing plants with superstitious names and properties to match. These were descriptive (in the dubiously imaginative sense, as attacked by Bacon); as Ray wrote in a long note to Sambucus:

signatures are not indications of natural qualities and powers impressed on plants by nature. Of the plants specifically said to be appropriate to a particular portion of the body or to a disease

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<sup>18</sup> See Foucault, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Letter to Dr Robinson, 22 October 1684. *Correspondence of Ray*, p. 154

far the greater have no signature. Different parts of the same plant have signatures not merely different but contradictory. Many plants resemble natural or artificial objects for which they have no affinity as Orchid flowers look like flies, spiders, frogs, bees or butterflies. Parts of the same plants represent parts of the body with which they violently disagree: the juice of the Spurges is like milk, but no one is so imbecile as to give it to nursing-mothers. There is such a vast number of plants that, even if they had come into existence altogether haphazard, any ingenious and imaginative person could have found as many signatures as are known to-day.<sup>20</sup>

Foucault neatly summarised the problem at this period in his argument that a knowledge of signs in their own right (semiology) and knowledge of what signs tell us about the world (hermeneutics) were collapsed onto one another.<sup>21</sup> He concluded,

There is no difference between the visible marks that God has stamped on the surface of the earth, so that we may know its inner secrets, and the legible words that the Scriptures, or the sages of Antiquity, have set down in the books preserved for us by tradition.<sup>22</sup>

Gary Gutting glosses the argument in another way by pointing out that "Whereas commentary 'sacralizes' language by treating it as a fount of wisdom, criticism 'judges ... and profanes' it by treating language as a mere means of expressing truths independent of it."<sup>23</sup> In the tension between the authority of sacralized language exemplified by anecdotal reports of monstrosities and the analytic interrogation of these in the hands of the virtuoso-collector, the grotesque occupied an unsteady space, acting as a mediator between the yet-to-be explained and the inherently mysterious, what was not yet properly excluded from scientific discipline.

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<sup>20</sup> Raven, op. cit., pp. 98-9; John Ray, *Catalogus plantarum circa Cantabrigiam* (1663), pp. 148-50.

<sup>21</sup> Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 142.

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>23</sup> Gutting, op. cit., p. 155.

The project of philosophical classification has to be seen in the light of the empirical pressures that were its foundation. Although Linnaeus claimed that in the regulated language of the botanists and linguists "there is revealed the entire order of nature,"<sup>24</sup> his own work was subject to constant revision and reclassification. In John Ray's botanical work, the tension between observation and classification becomes a mixed desire to delimit the *strangeness* (generated by vulgar opinion, folklore &c) and yet maximize a poetic and spiritual reverence for the *variety* of nature, refusing to reduce it to a decontextualised space. Strangeness and variety must, I argue, become the framework for the grotesque, because it was in these terms that its disruptive potential was most clearly manifested.

John Ray was undoubtedly a botanist of major international standing, yet his refusal to press the classificatory enterprise to its limits resulted in his being overshadowed by figures such as Linnaeus, who in his system of nature was less reluctant to employ rigorous principles of selection and exclusion. Classification that was not essentialist could still be achieved effectively on an *arbitrary* choice of parts as a principle of organization. Subsequently, teleological accounts of natural history have tended to preserve Linnaeus's status and to exclude the views of those who were half-hearted, suspicious or antagonistic to such systematic enterprises. Biographers have therefore tended to apologize for Ray's lack of system, by praising his field-work which (admittedly) was to serve as the basis for subsequent botanists' classificatory enterprises. Yet the problematic of classification, and of the grotesque within it, can be explored more dynamically in the work of John Ray than in that of Linnaeus. Ray cannot be entirely inserted into a classificatory culture; his position was itself increasingly anomalous within a taxonomic enterprise that had regarded him as an ally. In the complexities and contradictions of his work

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<sup>24</sup> Linnaeus, *Systema naturae*, 12th ed. (Holmiae, 1776), p. 13.

it is possible to discern how a space for certain types of grotesque was preserved in early eighteenth-century thought.

Ray's world view was in some respects a totalizing one, that saw an overall theological plan, order and design in the universe. For instance, he had argued in a letter to his friend Robinson in 1685 that there were fixed and physically indivisible principles in nature. It is manifest that there is order in the universe and this can be deduced from its physical properties:

If ... bodies are infinitely divisible, how can there be any constancy in generations or productions? Why are there not infinite new concrete and mixed bodies daily produced, and as many lost?

For if bodies be infinitely divisible, figures being infinite, the particles whereunto they are divided must probably be of infinite figures, and few alike; and why should those of the same figure convene?

... How come there to be such great aggregates of bodies of the same kind, as water, earth, air?

Whereas you say the same particles, by various transpositions, divisions, motions, &c. may put on different faces, and stir up in us various perceptions, I answer, that I cannot imagine any other difference of bodies but what proceeds from the motions of figures of their component particles.

From the motions of them can come nothing but a greater or lesser measure of fluidity; therefore all other varieties must arise from their figures. From figures of homogeneous particles, or such as are of the same shape, no considerable varieties can proceed; ... were bodies infinitely divisible, and consequently of no certain figure (the minima I mean), I do not see how we could ever come to such regular concretions, at least to such multitudes and masses of them, but that the world must have continued, as the poets first fancied it, a chaos. But enough of this.<sup>25</sup>

Ray's manifest impatience with more ample speculation is not difficult to detect; yet throughout his career as a botanist the problem of Nature's "faces" and the observer's "various perceptions" was to confront him as a practical problem of classification. At the end of his career he was resisting the possibility of an artificial and exhaustive classification in favour of the variety of nature. Yet that variety which appeared - in its sheer plenitude - to overwhelm order and design, was nonetheless finally subservient to divine

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<sup>25</sup> 12 May 1685. *Correspondence of Ray*, pp. 168-70.

law. In response to Ray's letter above, Robinson wrote back allowing that there were fixed and certain principles in nature and settled laws of motion; yet,

I have some reason to believe that they are not immutable, but that some outward violence and preternatural causes may alter them, though they are seldom or never mutable in the ordinary course of things.<sup>26</sup>

Robinson's letter shows how middle categories such as the preternatural stubbornly refused to disappear and indeed acted as a useful repository for the many seemingly aberrant phenomena that had not yet shown themselves susceptible to the discipline of scientific explanation.

From the point of view of physical theory, moreover, it is clear that Ray did not see the universe as chaotic; the basic fabric of his world dictated the primacy of order and design, and the progress of the physical sciences must have reinforced such a view. Another factor that ought to have pushed Ray towards a systematic goal can be related to the debate over the number of species. Theologically, Ray was committed to the idea that species could neither be created nor destroyed, the so-called "Conservation of Species" theory. The plenitude of creation was a common theme in eighteenth-century literature and John Ray's *The wisdom of God manifested in the works of creation* (1691) cited Psalm 104, in its first chapter: "How manifold are thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast thou made them all." Yet Ray moved from the idea that the number of species in nature was fixed and determinate, on the authority of God, to a perspective which showed him increasingly sceptical about our actual and possible knowledge of all created species:

1. That though it is absolutely, and physically possible, yet it is highly improbable, that any species should be lost. 2. Though

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<sup>26</sup> 19 May 1685. *Correspondence of Ray*, p. 170.

some Species should be destroyed, yet it is impossible morally that any Man should be sure thereof.<sup>27</sup>

Such a tentative intimation of uncertainty could be explained by the vast increase in the number of known species. Six thousand species were recorded in Caspar Bauhin's *Pinax*. As a manageable enterprise, Olof Rudbeck had planned to provide illustrations for the collection in its entirety. Linnaeus still believed that botanists should at least be able to remember all genera, despite the exponential growth both in the number of known and likely-to-be discovered species in the new world. The totalising methodology of the past had to be placed against the proliferation of newly discovered species. As Ephraim Chambers commented in the Preface to his *Cyclopaedia*, "To have philosophy complete, we should have the order, precision and distinctness of the old; and the matter and *copia* of the new."<sup>28</sup> The sheer variety of the new, like the proliferation of print, was increasingly a problem for modern discourse, insofar as it looked for universals and totalities to maintain its systematic order.

It could also be argued that temperamentally Ray was unsuited to grand projects. As his Preface to his *Cambridge Catalogue* indicated, his more expansive thoughts were rhapsodic rather than speculative and methodologically analytic:

I had been ill, physically and mentally, and had to rest from more serious study and ride or walk. There was leisure to contemplate by the way what lay constantly before the eyes and were so often trodden thoughtlessly under foot, the various beauty of plants, the cunning craftsmanship of nature. First the rich array of spring-time meadows, then the shape, colour and structure of particular plants fascinated and absorbed me: interest in botany became a passion.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> John Ray, *Philosophical Letters between the late learned Mr Ray and several of his ingenious Correspondents*, ed. W. Derham, p. 350. Found among Ray's papers after his death. See Raven, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-91.

<sup>28</sup> Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia* (1728) "Preface," p. xxii.

Nature was a creative force rather than a series of fixed items existing in a decontextualised space, a matter, as Foucault had claimed, merely of "black and white."<sup>30</sup>

Placing Ray within a wider cultural context, it is also worth bearing in mind that there was already an antagonism between the practical-experimental side of the Royal Society, and its more speculative projectors; Ray was clearly more of the former than the latter. Thus, in writing to Oldenburg, the Secretary of the Royal Society, Ray explained, "To speak the truth I have neither ability nor leisure to make experiments in any kind: ability I mean neither of wit nor purse, having no good projecting or inventing faculty."<sup>31</sup> Ray's temporary partnership with John Wilkins who was projecting the creation of a philosophical language that "might be legible by any Nation in their own Tongue,"<sup>32</sup> is therefore instructive from the point of view of the possibility of an exhaustive and universal classification. In contrast with John Wilkins, Ray's enterprise was empirical and local, for he modestly offered "something that I have observed in the history of plants or animals."<sup>33</sup>

While Wilkins was interested in language primarily as a "real character" and as the basis for a truly philosophical language, Ray was fascinated by its manifest lack of practical uniformity, particularly across the country. He had undertaken some pioneering work in this field, collecting examples both of proverbs (showing an interest in practical, customary wisdom) and of non-standard English which he had used in his work on dialects. He collected odd

<sup>29</sup> Preface, *Catalogus Cantabrigiam*, trans. Raven, p. 81.

<sup>30</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>31</sup> *Further Correspondence*, p. 67.

<sup>32</sup> John Wilkins, *An Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668), p. 13.

words as though they were antiquarian artefacts, and he involved others in the projects as well, in a truly collaborative spirit. He produced in 1691 a second enlarged edition of his *Collection of English Words*, in which his interest in folk-speech and dialect was assisted by Francis Brokeby, Rector of Rowley in the East Riding, who supplied a long list of northern words. Ray's concern here was with practice rather than ideals; although his book might assist communication by its incorporation of the vulgar in an erudite culture, the scope of his work illustrates the grotesque divergences from the norm which were a fact of everyday linguistic practice. In addition, it is important to note that Ray included and defended 'slovenly and dirty words' in the second Preface to his *Collection of English Proverbs*.<sup>34</sup> For one who wrote largely in Latin, the 'universal tool of scientists and philosophers, Ray did not insulate himself from the grotesque deviations of which his native language was possible. At the end of a letter to Robinson, the polished language of oratory also comes in for censure as artificiality, as an art it is, "a kind of voluptuary one, like cookery, which sophisticates meats and cheats the palate, spoiling wholesome viands and helping unwholesome."<sup>35</sup> Ray's lively interest both in language and style could be advanced as an explanation for his unwillingness to see language shackled by artificial schemes which, like oratory, merely served to sour the natural product.

John Wilkins, on the other hand, sought not merely to remove the vulgar and strange from language, but also to provide exact, logical and essential

<sup>33</sup> Ray, *Further Correspondence of John Ray*, ed. R. W. T. Gunter (Ray Society, 1928), p. 67.

<sup>34</sup> With regard to his assistants on this project, he noted, for instance, that "These Gentlemen being, I suppose North Country Men, and during their abode in the Universities or elsewhere, not happening to hear those Words used in the South, [they] might suppose them to be proper in the North" sig. A12. See Raven, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>35</sup> 15 December 1690. See *Coorespondence of Ray*, p. 229 and Raven, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

classifications.<sup>36</sup> His proposal began as a wholesale critique of the manner in which we have constructed our language; from the outset he therefore proposed to reform the grotesque disorder of alphabets:

As to the *Order* of them, they are inartificial and *confused*, without any such methodical distribution as were requisite for their particular natures and differences, the *Vowels* and *Consonants* being promiscuously huddled together, without any distinction. Whereas in a regular alphabet, the *Vowels* and *Consonants* should be reduced into classes, according to their several kinds, with such an order of precedence and subsequence as their natures will bear; this being the proper end and design of that which we call *Method*, to separate the Heterogeneous, and put the Homogeneous together, according to some rule of precedency.<sup>37</sup>

In Wilkins's account, language was grotesque in its very building blocks, because these were a grotesque assembly, disordered in space, "promiscuously huddled together without any distinction." Wilkins' scheme consequently proposed an exhaustive system of divisions based on Genus and Species, and was as much concerned with the intricacies of animal and plant taxonomy as the general problems of linguistic organization. Words were to be ordered according to their semantic opposite or affinity, despite the artificial manipulation that this process required. Yet as Wilkins confessed:

it must be acknowledged that these Affinities are sometimes less proper and more remote, there being several things shifted into these places, because I knew not how to provide for them better.<sup>38</sup>

Wilkins' methodology necessarily generated its own anomalies; for as Ray was to find when trying to adapt it to practice, the more artificial and ordered the

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<sup>36</sup> According to Evelyn, Wilkins showed him his interest in artificial curiosities, gadgets and inventions, "transparent apiaries which he had built like castles and palaces ... These were adorned with a variety of dials, like statues, vanes, &c ... He had also contrived a hollow statue, which gave a voice and uttered words by a long concealed pipe that went to its mouth, whilst one speaks through it at a good distance" (13 July 1654). See John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn Esq, F.R.S.*, ed. William Bray (London 1906), vol. I, p. 295.

<sup>37</sup> Wilkins, *An Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668), p. 14.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

system the less likely it was that natural grotesques could be accommodated successfully:

as likewise because of the streightness of that method which I am bound up to by these Tables it will so fall out, that several things cannot be disposed of so accurately as they ought to be.<sup>39</sup>

The possibility of grotesque forms opened up not so much a margin as an infinite region, leading to their exclusion as objects in their own right from Wilkins' system:

As for *fictitious Animals*, as *Syren*, or *Mermaid*, *Phoenix*, *Griffin*, *Harpy*, *Ruck*, *Centaur*, *Satyr* &c there is no provision made for them in these tables, because they may be infinite; and besides, being but bare names, and no more, they may be expressed as *Individuals* are.<sup>40</sup>

Ray was one of a number who worked on Wilkins' project. With the massive increase in the number of known species, the natural taxonomy required the exhaustive labours and co-operation of a number of specialists. In examining Ray's disenchantment with the project we can chart his resistance to what Foucault has called the classificatory enterprises of the early modern period. At the commencement of the project we find Ray writing to Lister:

This next week we expect the Bishop of Chester at Middleton, who desires our assistance in altering his tables of natural history. To make exact philosophical tables, you know, is a matter very difficult, not to say impossible; to make such as are tolerable requires much diligence and experience, and is work enough for one man's whole life, and therefore we had need call in all assistance we can from our friends, especially being not free to follow nature, but forced to the exigency of the character. To what purpose you will say all this. To make excuse for this importunity in begging your table of spiders...<sup>41</sup>

Ray assisted Wilkins in his project, but the experience was a formative one in teaching him the inadequacies of a purely systematic approach to the natural

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 24-5.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 121.

world. The system did not take account of an actual, observed nature but aimed merely to fit a variety of natural objects within preordained logical and philosophical categories. Ray explained the difficulties in a letter to Lister, concluding,

I was constrained in arranging the Tables not to follow the lead of nature, but to accommodate the plants to the author's prescribed system. This demanded that I should divide herbs into three squadrons or kinds as nearly as nearly equal as possible; then that I should split up each squadron into nine 'differences' as he called them, that is subordinate kinds, in such wise that the plants ordered under each 'difference' should not exceed a fixed number; finally that I should join pairs of plants together or arrange them in couples. What possible hope was there that a method of that sort would be satisfactory, and not manifestly imperfect and ridiculous? I frankly and openly admit that it was; for I care for truth more than for my own reputation.<sup>42</sup>

According to Aristotle, we must look at a variety of animal parts in order to classify; we cannot come at essential definition by selection. By the eighteenth century, established practice was in favour of using certain characters as arbitrary principles of natural classification. This at least replaced the logical and essentialist tendencies espoused by Wilkins; he was the last serious projector of a universal language system. But in refusing to give up merely local or accidental factors (those individual variations and deviations that were a feature of the grotesque's abnormality and individuality) Ray was resisting apparent progress, the developmental line which was to culminate in Linnaeus, who chose arbitrarily to make sexual parts the principle of differentiation between species.

A letter to Ray from Dr Preston illustrates further the resistance to a truly decontextualised non-essential universe of taxonomy, the insistence on a dialogism of observation. Continental models were inadequate:

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<sup>41</sup> 28 April 1670. *Correspondence of Ray*, p. 55-6.

Tournefort, indeed, is a most indefatigable and nice observer of nature, but I do not think that either his method is to be accounted the best or only infallible. [...] I confess I judge it a very difficult matter to lay down such principles of method as will comprehend even those species of plants already known, and far less those that are yet undiscovered, or that will be subject to change or admit of alteration; for I find, by the observations that I made this year, that a plant must be viewed in all the seasons of it before one can venture to give a true and exact character of it: and it is not one single observation that is sufficient to constitute the character of a plant, for that may escape our sight or memory at one time which we may discover another.<sup>43</sup>

The uniqueness of the natural object was not merely a case of its difference from other natural objects, but a difference from itself across time. The space of taxonomy (before Charles Darwin) was essentially non-temporal, as Foucault has argued in strong terms, "There is not and cannot be even the suspicion of an evolutionism or a transformism in Classical thought."<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, fossils were less natural historical artefacts than playful mutations and transformations of nature through different materials; they did not point to evolution across time. Clearly for observers such as Preston, the presence of time, particularly that provided by the seasons, could not be excluded.

As far as Ray was concerned, method and system were intended rather as aids to memory than privileged access to the order of nature as Linnaeus or Wilkins had believed them; classifications were merely empirical and could not equal the actual variations and subtlety of movement which was Nature's practice:

The number and variety of plants inevitably produce a sense of confusion in the mind of the student: but nothing is more helpful to clear understanding, prompt recognition and sound memory than a well-ordered arrangement into classes, primary and subordinate. A Method seemed to me useful to botanists,

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<sup>42</sup> Letter to Lister, 7 May 1669; trans. Raven, op. cit., p. 182; see *Correspondence of Ray*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>43</sup> 13 January 1701. *Correspondence of Ray*, p. 382.

especially beginners; I promised long ago to produce and publish one, and have now done so at the request of some friends.<sup>45</sup>

Yet the manifest artificiality of such a system should be borne in mind. Some order and arrangement was of practical efficacy, but nature's actual product is more complex than any of these schemes can realistically hope to contain:

But I would not have my readers expect something perfect or complete; something which would divide all plants so exactly as to include every species without leaving any in positions anomalous or peculiar; something which would so define each genus by its own characteristics that no species be left, so to speak, homeless or be found common to many genera. Nature does not permit anything of the sort. Nature, as the saying goes, makes no jumps and passes from extreme to extreme only through a mean. She always produces species intermediate between higher and lower types, species of doubtful classification linking one type with another and having something in common with both - as for example the so-called zoophytes between plants and animals.<sup>46</sup>

These notions, of course, took their origin primarily from Aristotle.<sup>47</sup> But Ray's remarks have to be seen within their local historical context, and particularly in the context of the massive expansion in the number of known species as well as hypotheses about those that were still to be discovered in unexplored territories. In an interesting twist, the artificiality by which we are forced to order and arrange the variety of nature led Locke to sanction mixed and grotesque forms; the existence of grotesque creatures such as mermaids (crediting the incredible) was valid on the grounds of the completeness of the system:

in all the visible corporeal World, we see no Chasms, or Gaps. All quite down from us, the descent is by easy steps, and a continued

<sup>44</sup> Foucault, op. cit., p. 150.

<sup>45</sup> Ray, *Methodus Plantarum* (1682), trans. Raven, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

series of Things, that in each remove, differ very little from one another. There are Fishes that have Wings and are not strangers to the airy Regions; and there are some Birds, that are inhabitants of the Water; whose Blood is cold as Fishes, and their Flesh so like in taste, that the scrupulous are allow'd them on Fish-days. There are animals so near of kin both to birds and Beasts, that they are in the middle between both: Amphibious Animals like the Terrestrial and Aquative together; Seals live at land and at Sea, and Porpoises have the warm Blood and Entrails of a Hog, not to mention what is confidently reported of Mermaids, or Seamen. There are some Brutes, that seem to have as much Knowledge and Reason, and some that are called Men: and the Animal and Vegetable Kingdoms are so near join'd, that if you take the lowest of one and the highest of the other, there will scarce be perceived any great difference between them; and so on till we come to the lowest and the most inorganic parts of Matter, we shall find every-where, that the several *Species* are linked together, and differ but in almost insensible degrees.<sup>48</sup>

The final note suggests a measure of caution; "almost insensible degrees" sketched in a possible limit to the empirical operation of the mind and projected a degree of scepticism about our ability to comprehend the totality of nature. Gunnar Broberg argues that in time the great chain of being was tentatively displaced by a different kind of systematics; thus, the more Linnaeus "peeped into the secret depths of nature, the more he found intricate connections. He now preferred the concept of *mappa naturae* over the simple hierarchical arrangement of the *scala naturae*."<sup>49</sup>

Yet a scepticism about *any* privileged access to nature was developed at length in Locke's exploration of the impossibility of uncovering or knowing the *essential* properties of objects. Again this was an interest that emerged from Locke's early and continuing interest in botany. Classification may be logically

<sup>47</sup> See Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* 681a 10-15; *Historia Animalium* 588b 4, quoted in M. Slaughter, *Universal Languages and scientific Taxonomy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.35, for background to these views.

<sup>48</sup> *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Niddich (Oxford University Press, 1975), III.vi.12., pp. 446-7.

<sup>49</sup> See Gunnar Broberg, "The Broken Circle" in *The Quantifying Spirit in the Eighteenth Century* eds., Tore Frangmyr, J.L. Heilbron, and Robin E. Rider (California: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 45-71, p. 55.

*convenient* but not natural and therefore was problematic given the desire for a truly transcendental scheme of classification. Categories were arbitrary, merely the product of mind. Accordingly, the third book of Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* showed that a disruption of the essential could be achieved by means of the monstrous, and more importantly - with a degree of audacity - by its application to the natural category "man." At the outset, Locke objected to the division of beings into species according to precise *Essences* and *Forms*. Specifically, Locke queried whether Nature's regularity was a sufficient ground for the argument:

*First*, To be assured, that Nature, in the production of Things, always designs them to partake of certain regulated established *Essences*, which are to be the Models of all Things to be produced. This, in that crude sense, it is usually proposed, would need some better explication, before it can fully be assented to. *Secondly*, It would be necessary to know, whether Nature always attains that *Essence*, it designs in the Production of Things. The irregular and monstrous Births, that in divers sorts of Animals have been observed, will always give us reason to doubt of one, or both of these.

For the grotesque there was no category that could adequately accommodate its irregular deviations from the norm,

*Thirdly*, It ought to be determined, whether those we call *Monsters*, be really a distinct *Species*, according to the scholastick notion of the word *Species*; since it is certain, that every thing that exists, has its particular Constitution: And yet we find, that some of these monstrous Productions, have few or none of these Qualities, which are supposed to result from, and accompany the *Essence* of that *Species*, from whence they derive their Originals, and to which, by their descent, they seem to belong. [...] By all which it is clear, That our *distinguishing substances into Species* by Names, is not at all founded on their real *Essences*; nor can we pretend to range, and determine them exactly into *Species*, according to internal essential differences.<sup>50</sup>

We can agree on the nominal essence of these creatures, but

if the Enquiry be made concerning the supposed real *Essence*; and whether the internal Constitution and Frame of these several Creatures be specifically different, it is wholly impossible for us

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<sup>50</sup> *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, III.vi.15-17, 20. pp. 448-9.

to answer, no part of that going into our specifick *Idea*. [...] Shall the difference of Hair only on the Skin, be a mark of a different internal specifick Constitution between a Changeling and a Drill, when they agree in Shape, and want of Reason, and Speech?

Such distinctions involved the pretence that species were

fixedly established by the real Frame, and secret Constitutions of Things.<sup>51</sup>

Locke proceeded to list a number of examples of women who have conceived by drills, of mules and gimars - mixtures of an ass and a mare and of a bull and a mare, and points to their *frequency*. Other examples were less frequent but were nonetheless judged to be sound for the purposes of refuting the argument for real essences:

I once saw a Creature, that was the issue of a Cat and a Rat, and had the plain Marks of both about it; wherein Nature appear'd to have followed the Pattern of neither sort alone, but to have jumbled them both together. To which, he that shall add monstrous Productions, that are so frequent to be met with in Nature, will find it hard, even in the Race of Animals to determine by the Pedigree of what *Species* every Animal's Issue is; and be at a loss about the real Essence, which he thinks certainly conveyed by Generation, and has alone a right to the specifick name.<sup>52</sup>

It might be proposed that the essential classificatory space was inversely related to the space available to the grotesque. These irregular, mixed and unstable objects could not be categorized and shifted inside the circuits of an ordered system that has any interface with a real world unpurged of native strangeness, variety and irregularities. They were tentative and provisional forms, the "other" of system, they were anomalous or foreign. Yet Locke drew them to the very centre of his argument in order to demonstrate that naming and classification were not essentially grounded. Earlier in the *Essay*, however,

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, III.vi.22, pp. 450-51.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, III.vi.23, pp. 451-52.

Locke had warned about the multiplication of grotesque forms, which were a characteristic product of *Mixed Modes and Relations*:

there is nothing more required to those kind of *Ideas*, to make them *real*, but that they be so framed, that there be a possibility of existing conformable to them. [These] *cannot be chimerical*, unless any one will jumble together in them inconsistent *Ideas*.<sup>53</sup>

For those forms that both existed and were grotesque, there had to be some means of accommodating what could not be classified as a category or a species in its own right. John Parkinson's *Theatrum botanicum* (1640), for instance, had seventeen major classes or "tribes", of which the seventeenth was "Exoticae & Peregrinae Plantae. Strange and Outlandish Plants."<sup>54</sup> Typically the contact of one culture with another led to the establishment of new genera, but initially these were unstable points of change, representing marginal or intermediate forms. Not surprisingly the first plants to be classified tended to be those thought to be of some distinctive use or special value (such as herbs). In this context, Brent Berlin has argued that varietal category tended to make a priority of "highly important groups of cultivated plants" and that it reflected "greater control over the process of domestication."<sup>55</sup> Anomalous categories soaked up grotesque forms, and the category was merely a temporary linguistic marker. John Ray adopted the prudent policy of establishing an anomalous category, for instance, in his arrangement of herbs in his *The History of Plants*:

(III) Monocotyledons ... 47. Anomolae et sui generis, aquatic and terrestrial - such plants as cannot be placed in any previous category.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., II.xxx.4, p. 373.

<sup>54</sup> See Slaughter, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>55</sup> Brent Berlin, "Speculations on the growth of ethnobotanical nomenclature", *Language and Society* 1 (1972), pp. 51-86, p. 72.

Elsewhere in *The History of Plants*, the final Book was entitled "Anomalous and little known trees and parts of trees."<sup>56</sup> Ray, for his part, appeared positively to welcome the inability to produce stable distinctions and fixed categories; it was not simply that he needed to accommodate the unknown, as that he celebrated irregularities, some of which he will seek to clarify. Thus he remarked in his *Catalogus Cantabrigiam*, "Wonderful is the confusion and obscurity of botanists in describing and distinguishing the Willows."<sup>57</sup> Elsewhere he distinguished seven species of sedge, only to conclude, "We have two others which we think have not yet been described; and we have not been able to distinguish accurately enough those whose synonyms we have given. There is a wonderful confusion and discrepancy among authors in their descriptions of this group."<sup>58</sup> Ray resolved such matters not by seeking to perfect new methodologies, but by recommending a direct encounter with Nature:

We would urge men of University standing to spare a brief interval from other pursuits for the study of nature and of the vast library of creation so that they can gain wisdom in it at first hand and learn to read the leaves of plants and the characters impressed on flowers and seeds ... We offer a hundred banquets to the Pythagoreans or rather the true philosophers whose concern is not so much to know what authors think as to gaze with their own eyes on the nature of things, and to listen with their own ears to her voice; who prefer quality to quantity, and usefulness to pretension: to their use, in accordance with God's glory, we dedicate this little book and all our studies.<sup>59</sup>

The encounter with nature was less the product of a systematic outlook than a sense of the speculative wonder which nature made available and to which a spiritual dimension was clearly superadded. It was not surprising, therefore, that in a tribute to Ray that placed him alongside Hippocrates, Geysler, Caesalpino and Fabius Columna, Dr Preston claimed that he had not been

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<sup>56</sup> Raven, op. cit., pp. 198, 240.

<sup>57</sup> Trans. Raven, op. cit., p. 84. See *Catalogus Cantabrigiam* (1660), pp. 141-2.

<sup>58</sup> Trans. Raven, op. cit., p. 84. See *Catalogus Cantabrigiam* (1660), p. 67.

merely a restorer of method but that "[you] ornament botany by your several learned writings."<sup>60</sup>

Locke too demonstrated a sense of wonder at the plenitude of nature. Nature was continuous; "gaps" (if there are such) were overfilled with mixed, monstrous and grotesque forms. His attack on classification was directed not so much at its failure to accommodate these intermediate forms, as to undermine the grounding of our taxonomic divisions in the disputed essential properties of nature. In this sense Locke undermined the project of reason that sought to encompass all in its gaze, to distil order and to annexe the productive power of nature. The discourse of power was central to this phallogentric subjection of nature. Such had been Sprat's project writing in his early history of the Royal Society:

And this is the highest pitch of humane reason; to follow all the links of this chain, till all their secrets are open to our minds; and their works advanc'd, or imitated by our hands. This is truly to command the world; to rank all varieties, and degrees of things, so orderly upon one another .. that standing on the top of them, we may perfectly behold all that are below.<sup>61</sup>

The gaze incorporated everything below it, taking in everything except itself; it was what Jurgen Habermas, following Immanuel Kant, calls "the status of a transcendental subject over against the world as a whole, which it constitutes as the totality of the objects of possible experience." But as Habermas points out, man is also "an empirical subject in the world, where it is available as one object among others."<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Raven, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>60</sup> 13 January 1701. *Correspondence of Ray* p. 381.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society* (1667), p. 110.

Locke continually deployed empirical techniques, and these included problematic representations of the human category which were in important respects a product of his time. Hitherto most examples of the grotesque have been drawn from botanical studies, but it is important to note that the grotesque disruption was manifested also in the category of man, which (theologically) embodied reason, raising man above the level of beasts. For Locke, there were examples of monstrous men to complement those found elsewhere in the animal kingdom. Accordingly, he cited the example of the Abbot of St. Martin, who, when he was born,

*had so little the Figure of a Man, that it bespake him rather a Monster. 'Twas for some time under Deliberation, whether he should be baptized or no. However, he was baptized and declared a Man provisionally [till time should shew what he would prove.] Nature had moulded him so untowardly, that he was called all his Life the Abbot Malotru, i.e. Ill shaped [...] This Child we see was very near being excluded out of the Species of Man, barely by his Shape. He escaped very narrowly as he was, and 'tis certain a Figure a little more odly turn'd had cast him, and he had been executed as a thing not to be allowed to pass for a Man.<sup>63</sup>*

The monstrous birth was a common example of privileging the human category and building on this an expectation of a human lineage that will be its product. Moreover, Nature sometimes fantastically disappointed such expectations, finding her own satirical voice.

The category of man was further problematised by related categories such as those of the primates, about whom only largely unreliable and anecdotal evidence was known. Among the many attempts to establish categories for primates were the following: for the Chimpanzee: Tulp's *Indian satyr* (1641), Tyson's "pygmy" (1699), Edward's "Man of the Woods" (1758), Buffon's "jocko"

<sup>62</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures (Der philosophische Diskursus der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen)* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Polity Press), Lecture IX, p. 262.

<sup>63</sup> *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, III.vi.26. p. 454.

(1766); for the orang-outang: de Bondt's *Homo sylvestris* (1658). Linnaeus additionally supplies the *satyr* or tailed man (1735), *Homo troglodytes* (1758) and Hoppius adds *Homo Lucifer* (1760). It was with such examples no doubt in mind that Locke introduces a series of general remarks on the topic (although it must be remembered that his deployment of monstrous analogies served chiefly for his attack on real essences):

There are Creatures in the World, that have shapes like ours, but are hairy, and want Language, and Reason. There are Naturals amongst us, that have perfectly our shape, but want Reason, and some of them Language too. There are Creatures, as 'tis said ... that with Language, and Reason, and a Shape in other Things agreeing with ours, have hairy Tails; others where the Males have no Beards, and others where all the Females have.<sup>64</sup>

Another way of disputing the category of man was provided less through taxonomic interference than by the imperfect state of comparative biology. In his *Histoire Naturelle*, for example, Buffon was both impressed and troubled by homologies in the structure of the vertebrates: "

When, for example, the parts constituting the body of a horse, which seems to differ so widely from that of man, are compared in detail with the human frame, instead of being struck with the differences, we are astonished at the singular and almost perfect resemblance."<sup>65</sup> Buffon's remarks led him away from the notion of the body as a defining category. Thus he recorded that the orang-outang or *pongo* "is only a brute, but a brute of a kind so singular, that man cannot behold it without contemplating himself, and without being thoroughly convinced that his body is not the most essential part of his nature."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, III.vi.22. p. 450.

<sup>65</sup> *Natural History, General and Particular (Histoire Naturelle)*, 9 vols., trans. with notes and observations by William Smellie (3rd ed. 1791), vol. 3, pp. 400-1. See Bentley Glass., O. Temkin, and W.L. Strauss, *Forerunners of Darwin 1745-1859* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), pp. 96-7, for a further discussion of this passage.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 41.

Yet such encounters with the monstrous could be contained and were indeed policed by classical and theological discourses. Linnaeus, for instance, pointed back to Ennius (240-169 B.C.): "*Simia quam similis turpissima bestia nobis [How much doth the hideous monkey resemble us]*. It is remarkable that the stupidest ape differs so little from the wisest man, that the surveyor of nature has yet to be found who can draw the line between them."<sup>67</sup> Such commentaries introduced a degree of taxonomic disturbance which was largely contained without any major philosophical rupture. Yet the bestiality of man, his descent to the monstrous, was a common feature of eighteenth century satire, particular in the hand of writers such as Jonathan Swift.

For Edward Tyson (1650-1708) in his *Orang-Outang sive Homo Sylvestris ...Or the Anatomy of a Pygmy compared with that of a Monkey, An Ape, and a Man* (1699) the real distinction between man and brute must be sought in the "Nobler Faculties"; in his discussion of the Wild Men, the Little Men, the Black Men, the Men with Dogs' Faces, Satyrs, the Fauni, Aegipan, Nymphae, Tyson explained the category error that led to their placing as both "Men" and also "Wild Beasts". At the outset, he declared that they were no doubt "of the *Quadrumanus* kind; i.e. either *Apes* or *Monkeys*."<sup>68</sup> Tyson's fascination with the primates emerged from his discussion of Pongo and Engeco which he had taken from Battel's account as it appeared in *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, showing the persistence of earlier narratives: "This *Pongo* is in all Proportions like a Man, but that he is like a Giant-Creature, than a Man: For he is very tall, and hath a Man's Face, hollow-eyed, with long Hair upon his brows ... They cannot speak, and have no Understanding no more than a Beast."<sup>69</sup> Clearly, language was to

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<sup>67</sup> John C. Greene, *The Death of Adam: Evolution and its Impact on Western Thought* (Ames: Iowa State University Press), p. 187.

<sup>68</sup> See Preface, A3. The book is as much concerned with untangling linguistic confusion as ascertaining scientific facts.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

be central in seeking to establish a boundary that would serve to contain the grotesque.

Some of the issues that have dominated this chapter can be brought together by looking at the literary criticism on *The Tempest* written in the eighteenth century. Specifically, discussions of Caliban illustrate how the grotesque category was commonly the product of the encounter with alien or other cultures; they show an adherence to the heterogeneous; the exotic disruption and transgression of category rules. The primacy of language and communication were seen as decisively human features. In eighteenth century discussions there was already a keen interest in and interrogation of language usage and its relation to the construction of the savage. Colonial accounts typically refer to the *jabbering* of native savages. In order to reclaim such language, Peter Hulme in his *Colonial Encounters* adopted a method which drew attention to "key locations in a text - *cruces* where the text stutters in its articulation, and which can therefore be used as levers to open out the ideology of colonial discourse."<sup>70</sup> In the accounts that follow I argue that just as botanists found they could not merely impose artificial methods on nature but had to encounter it directly if they were to begin to systemize it, so the authority of the creator replaced that of the coloniser, and increasingly worked within rather than against nature. In Benjamin Heath's discussion of the linguistic status of Caliban in his *A Revisal of Shakespeare's Text* (1765), the perspective was one that was subsequent to the colonial intrusion. It therefore took that event as decisive in the progress of communication, with the result that Heath was incapable of reclaiming Caliban on the monster's own terms:

when Prospero first met with Caliban this latter would gabble out uncouth noises like the jabbering of an ape, destitute of any determinate meaning; and though he had indeed purposes yet he had never adapted any of these noises to a particular expression

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<sup>70</sup> Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the native Carribean 1492-1797* (Methuen, 1986), p. 12.

of them, nor perhaps could signify them twice successively by the same precise sound. So that though he had purposes, and knew the purposes he had, it may very properly and truly be said that he did not know his own meaning, that is, the meaning of that gabble he was perpetually uttering without any certain design or determinate signification.<sup>71</sup>

Heath's account emphasized the centrality of purpose, intention, design, and repetition, qualities that were also supposed to characterize the standard operation of nature. In his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646), Thomas Browne had discounted "natural" grotesque forms altogether, according to the general principle *Natura nihil agit frustra* which was "the onely indisputable axiome in Philosophy; there are no *Grotesques* in nature; nor anything framed to fill up empty cantons, and unnecessary spaces."<sup>72</sup> Nature was essentially purposeful. In producing Caliban, however, Nature clearly manifested a palpable lack of design and of purpose. Caliban is (variously) "a strange fish!" (II.ii.27); "legg'd like a man! and his fins like arms!" (II.ii.34); "no fish" (II.ii.36); "some monster of the isle with four legs" (II.ii.66); "a plain fish" (V.i.266); and a "mis-shapen knave" (V.i.268). For modern critics such as Hulme, Caliban is "a compromise formation, [which] can exist only within discourse: he is fundamentally and essentially beyond the bounds of representation."<sup>73</sup> Yet eighteenth-century critics noted the poetic language with which Shakespeare had endowed a monstrous figure. To them it seemed odd that a creature physically so misshapen should be endowed with poetic language that was (at its best) the epitome of elegance, order and design.

If language was a form of insertion in a shared culture (Prospero's) then the grotesque transgressed the conventional procedures which permitted the communication of meaning. The grotesque in language borders on the meaningless; monstrosity is unique, unrepeatable and seemingly unresolvable

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<sup>71</sup> See *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, vol. IV, p. 553.

<sup>72</sup> *Browne: The Major Works*, ed. C.A. Patrides (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 77.

in its heterogeneity. Discussing the low style in Elizabethan comic prose Neil Rhodes argues that as the grotesque "crosses the boundaries between areas of experience whose imagery we normally keep apart" it encounters "the no man's land of the non-existent."<sup>74</sup> In Locke's thinking about language, this region belonged chiefly to that of the wilfully invented mixed mode:

those are *fantastical*, which are made up of such Collections of simple *Ideas*, as were really never united, never were found together in any Substance; *v.g.* a rational Creature, consisting of a Horse's Head, joined to a body of humane shape, or such as the *Centaur*s are described: Or, a Body, yellow, very malleable, fusible, and fixed; but lighter than common Water: Or, an uniform, unorganized Body, consisting as to Sense, all of similar Parts, with Perception and voluntary Motion joined to it. Whether such Substances, as these, can possibly exist, or no, 'tis probable we do not know: But be that as it will, these *Ideas* of Substances, being made conformable to no Pattern existing, that we know; and consisting of such Collections of *Ideas*, as no Substance ever showed us united together, they ought to pass with us for barely imaginary: But much more are those complex *Ideas* so, which contain in them any Inconsistency or Contradiction of their Parts.<sup>75</sup>

I shall return at the end of the chapter to the mapping of the grotesque body onto the mind and imagination, in order to show that this category increasingly became, through Locke's "fantastic" mode, the literature of the grotesque. But before I proceed it is worth pointing out the means by which Caliban was assimilated by eighteenth-century critics. The picture was not simply one of neo-classical "order" erasing the "other" of monstrous irregularity. Regarding the "grotesque" language which Shakespeare had created for Caliban, Nicholas Rowe, for instance, recorded the observations of Falkland, Vaughan and Selden which were repeated throughout the eighteenth century:

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<sup>73</sup> *Colonial Encounters*, p. 108.

<sup>74</sup> Rhodes, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

The Observation which, I have been inform'd, three very great Men concurr'd in making upon this Part, was extremely just. *That, Shakespeare, had not only found out a new Character in his Caliban but had also devis'd and adapted a new manner or Language for that Character.*<sup>76</sup>

Clearly there was a degree of insecurity in the allusion either to "new manner" or "language", but the main point was one of assimilation by transformation, a movement into the strange - "a new Character" - and back again to the recognizable. Bearing in mind the mimetic tradition which Shakespeare typically exemplifies, William Guthrie came at the assimilation from a more radical perspective in *An Essay upon English Tragedy* (1747) in which he asks,

Is it not Shakespeare who speaks the language of nature, but nature rather speaks the language of Shakespeare. He is not so much her imitator as her master, her director, her moulder. Nature is a stranger to objects which Shakespeare has rendered natural. Nature never created a Caliban till Shakespeare introduced the monster, and we now take him to be nature's composition.<sup>77</sup>

The author reclaims monstrosity by taking over from Nature, establishing another Nature within language. This was not Sprat's exploitative phallogentric subject, for it worked within nature and according to it, it was an addition to Nature, which was accommodated by virtue of nature's plenitude. But that plenitude was also increasingly recognized as product of mind, the multiple mixed modes readily generated by the fecund imagination (as described by Locke). It was no doubt for this reason that John Wilkins banished such fictional creations from his system of language because they might be infinite in number. Yet many of them were also products of imaginative and poetic convention such as the Syren, Mermaid, Phoenix, Griffin, Harpy, Ruck, Centaur, and Satyr. Such items were grotesque yet they have become artificial

<sup>75</sup> *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II.xxx.5. p. 374.

<sup>76</sup> See *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, vol II, p. 197.

species, and each category presupposed and subscribed to a series of classificatory norms, rules, together with a range of conditions for the possible exclusion of competing or bordering forms.

In approaching the problem of classification, our difficulty is not merely to identify the classificatory system that operated in the period under consideration, and then to add or subtract its grotesque components. The grotesque was constituted by the becomingness of classification itself, it was a problem that was rooted in the very signifying process by which the mind forged mixed terms. The potential radicalism of such procedures was hinted at in Locke's finally connecting them to a principle of "Liberty":

Though the Mind be wholly passive, in respect of its simple *Ideas*: Yet, I think, we may say, it is not so, in respect of its complex *Ideas*: For those being Combinations of simple *Ideas*, put together, and united under one general Name; 'tis plain, that the Mind of Man uses some Liberty, in forming those complex *Ideas*.<sup>78</sup>

Examples of fantastic mixed modes set up a permanent power differential across the classificatory grid and across the mind of the observer. They must be compared with reality in order to clarify their existence (others are self-evident anatomical absurdities). Such classificatory exclusion was therefore part of any definition of the grotesque. Yet we must be cautious about any project which sought to come at the grotesque on its own terms and purely from beyond classification. Such a project must increasingly take into account not merely the diversity of natural and cultural products that were brought back from the margins by assimilation. The power differential between margins and centre could be noted, but any imbalance will not lead to the overthrow of system, but merely a new enterprise of classification. The desire to classify appears to be a naturally constituted feature of the mind, a desire to establish a measure

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<sup>77</sup> *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, vol. III, pp. 194-5.

of control and stability within an increasingly multiple and protean culture. The desire to install classification was not merely a response to the external world, it was perhaps also the discovery of (and a resistance to) the remapping of the grotesque "other" within the mind. According to Browne, griffins were "poetical Animals, and things of no existence"<sup>79</sup> yet the strange and fantastic already occupied a place in the mind: "we carry within us the wonders we seek without us: There is all *Africa*, and her prodigies in us."<sup>80</sup> Given the unsettled and undeveloped state of physiology and psychology, together with the lack of modern discipline divisions, it was not difficult to create theories of the grotesque that break down a viable distinction between the grotesque, imagination and one's mental make-up. This leads Blackmore to discuss the "frontier" of judgment and discretion, "a wild uncultivated Region, an intellectual Africa, that abounds with an endless Variety of monstrous and irregular Minds. These absurd Understandings are the Errors and Deviations of Nature in the Formation of the Head, of which thousands are incompleat to one that is brought to Perfection."<sup>81</sup>

The monstrous body was mapped back into language and into the mind. Other typical metaphors that were commonly deployed by the Scriblerians included the representation of the creative process as a form of procreation. Dulness in particular was represented as an unnatural forcing of the natural process, resulting in a monstrous issue. In other instances writing was represented as a bodily excrescence. The grotesque became an inescapable feature of language by its reification and was installed in the creative processes

<sup>78</sup> *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II.xxx.3. p. 373.

<sup>79</sup> *Browne: The Major Works*, p. 209.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

of the mind. Yet it was remarkable how such attempts to keep the grotesque at the margins of the natural culminated in a greater inclusiveness.

Classifications of the grotesque emerge from an understanding of the general problems that belong to the classificatory enterprise. Each period constructs its own grotesque and in the process is constituted by that act, marking a limit to the space of stability and definition within which classification ought to be possible. In the eighteenth century, as I will go on to argue in the next chapter, nature was less a fixed, than an expanding repertoire of possibilities that taxonomy could not entirely contain. The imagination took over the regions that could not be colonised by systematic taxonomies. As Richard Blackmore concluded in *A Treatise of the Spleen*

no mind is endowed with sufficient Sagacity to trace the minutest Recesses of Nature, unravel the odd Complications of disagreeing Principles, and tell where one Species ends, and another Begins. This is the province of the Comick Poet.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Sir Richard Blackmore, *A Treatise of the Spleen* (1725), p. 262

## Chapter Two

### Metamorphosis and Play

The previous chapter explored the problems of classifying monstrous and grotesque phenomena and the objections to systematic approaches. This chapter moves on from disputes about where such objects are to be placed to trying to understand how such items come into being. I will be examining notions of metamorphosis and change in the context of the errors and deviations that are a part of system-building and which, more broadly, proliferated within the taxonomic construction of the world.

Accordingly, the first part of this chapter explores the source of irregularity and of change in the total instability of Chaos, the "other" of Order. Out of this come notions of the configuration of objects, and the role of Nature in shaping them. In this regard I argue that Nature plays in her creation, shrouding herself in aberration, deviation and "unusual" laws. These mutations guarantee the variety of the known natural world through the (re)production of variations and aberrations.

I argue that the literary source for any general study of mutations in the eighteenth century must be located in Ovid, and I therefore look at the influence of *The Metamorphoses* on grotesque narratives and on related aesthetic theory. Coming out of this material, I will be arguing that the assimilation of metamorphosis to broader processes of change is indicative of the need to rethink the grotesque as a shifting force which is always already accommodated in nature. Notions of change crucially disrupted rationalist and essentialist classification.

Looking also at the role of human agency in creating the grotesque, I will also be showing how the accommodation of the grotesque was in other

respects the product of commercial pressures, that sought either to tame the grotesque or manufacture it for financial gain. In this regard the strangeness of the grotesque is marketed as novelty, setting a price upon its wonder-value. In such cases, metamorphosis was the exotic parallel of the purely functional exchange and circulation of money. The final section outlines how the sportiveness of nature mirrored the playfulness of writing, especially satire. In particular, I show how Pope's poetry exemplified a number of the themes that have been the subject of the chapter. I suggest that he metamorphoses the commercial grotesque back into the aesthetic by a tactical use of metamorphic techniques.

## 1. Chaos and Categories

Before Ovid, the most important philosophical source for imaginative accounts of the emergence of the world from chaos was that of Empedocles. According to his "evolutionary" process, bits of organic matter were mixed up and randomly commingled. This process was repeated and eventually resulted in monstrous bodies such as faces without necks and arms without shoulders. According to Empedocles, such misformed parts were then in turn mixed into random combinations or "scrambled animals" such as "ox-kind with human faces." In the Empedoclean analysis the notion of a living being was based chiefly on a ratio, proportion or mixture of parts. For Aristotle, in contrast, structure was a principle of organisation and the terminus of change in any living being. As I will go on to show, the distinction is an important one for the purposes of this thesis, because what is always changing or incomplete is neither structured nor categorizable.

Grotesque objects partly define themselves by never losing the physical marks of their becomingness, of a genesis that is ever incomplete. Rejecting

Empedocles' concept of an unstable assembly of parts merely thrown together by chance, Aristotle declared that such a *teras* was an incomplete production, the issue of a situation in which the female motions were not mastered by those of the male. Importantly, he linked such monstrous productions with the material of satire:

People say that the product "has the head of a ram", or "of an ox", and in other cases likewise, "of some other animal" like "a calf having a child's head", "a sheep that of an ox" [...] hence it is that humourists often compare persons not fair of face to a "fire breathing goat" others to a "butting ram." And there was a physiognomist who reduced all faces to those two or three animals, and often carried people along. However it is impossible that a *teras* of this sort should come to be, i.e. one animal gestating within another.<sup>1</sup>

Such discussions of monstrous births, freaks and wonders were still the subject of lively debate in the early eighteenth century, with considerable continuity in the terms of reference. The Empedoclean monster had been taken up by Horace, who described in his *Ars Poetica* such a randomly assembled being and deployed it as a means of showing the link between representational distortion and derisory laughter. Moreover, the crowd's enjoyment of the grotesque was likely to be the occasion for unsanctioned indecorous laughter. Horace relied on a community of ideal observers. The crowd, in contrast, was constructed as easily pleased, and less anxious about mimetic priorities. As part of the programme for a reformation of manners, essayists such as Addison described and sought to reinforce the link between monstrosity and a crowd that was incapable of discrimination. In his *Spectator* 173, for instance, Addison described a series of grinning matches. Wit played with images just as nature sported in her creation, so that Giles Gorgon wins his contest by the satirist's mental metamorphosing of him through a spout, a

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<sup>1</sup> See Aristotle *Generation of Animals* iv.3.769. trans. Montgomery Furth in *Substance, Form and Psyche: an Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 128-9.

baboon, the head of a base-viol and finally a pair of nut-crackers. Keeping Empedocles random mixtures in mind, it is possible to understand Chaos as the moment and the space in which satire was empowered. Chaos was both a source of monstrous mutations and the model of a destination, the point of return for a society that was perceived by many of its cultural critics to be in decline. To write the becomingness of the grotesque was also to play with the possibility of the emergence of a greater degree of order and structuring, a move away from chaos.

Moreover, the representational instability of the grotesque reinforced the priority of change over categorisation. For Aristotle a monstrous production was never a fully-fledged individual, because its differentiation, relative to the specific norm, has never been completed. In cases contrary to Nature, where the result was not a new species member, this represented "*parekbasis ek tou genous*, deviation from type."<sup>2</sup>

The primary source for the imaginative representation of Chaos was Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>3</sup> Such texts importantly forged a strong framework and source for the depiction of grotesque processes:

Before there was any earth or sea, before the canopy of heaven stretched overhead, Nature presented the same aspect the world over, that to which men have given the name of Chaos. This was a shapeless uncoordinated mass, nothing but a weight of lifeless matter, whose ill assorted elements were indiscriminately heaped together in one place ... Nothing had any lasting shape, but everything got in the way of everything else.<sup>4</sup>

In a general sense, satire typically constructed its authority against the onset of Chaos. But because Chaos was created by order and reason, and additionally

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 128-9.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Hammond has pointed out in his *John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), that Pope found such Ovidian material (for *The Dunciad*) ready-made in John Oldham's poetry.

<sup>4</sup> *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. Mary M. Innes (Penguin, 1955), p. 29.

by the ordering implicit in the poetic endeavour, it could not be understood on its own terms. Reason always obstructed any direct encounter with it. Typically, Chaos was not encountered in itself, but rather as a movement *towards* chaos, as a state of degenerate becoming. In this regard the grotesque functioned most effectively for the purposes of satire. The individual or type therefore regressed to the form of an animal to whom his vice corresponded. In a work to which I shall return, Murtagh McDermot's *A Trip to the Moon* (1728), for instance, cases of corrupt or immoral behaviour were immediately reflected in the transformation of the body; so that inhabitants had "their correspondent Members transform'd into those of the Brute they attended."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, in the Scriblerian pamphlet *The Origine of the Sciences*, the satirical argument was based on a structural opposition of the categories man and ape, and the grotesque emerged from the notion that "our sages were necessitated to mix with beasts."<sup>6</sup> The origin of science was also, for the Scriblerians, the moment of its overcoming: at its inception it was prelogical and bestial, a state of affairs before structuration has begun.

In non-satirical works, the movement is the other way round, shifting progressively to a greater ordering of the world. Grounded in the Old Testament, pre-archaeological narratives of the Flood, tended to be cyclical. An example of this can be taken from Dr Arbuthnot's *Examination of Dr Woodward's Account of the Deluge* which disputed the view that

the whole Terrestrial Globe was taken all to Pieces, and dissolv'd at the Deluge; the Particles of Stone, Marble, and other solid Fossils dissever'd; their constituent Corpuscles all disjoin'd; their cohesion perfectly ceasing; that the said Corpuscles of those solid Fossils, together with the Corpuscles of those which were not before solid, such as Sand, earth and the like; as also all Animal Bodies, and Parts of Animals, Bones, Teeth, Shells, Vegetables, and parts of Vegetables, Trees, Shrubs and Herbs, - I say all these were assum'd up promiscuously into the Water ... that the Water

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<sup>5</sup> McDermot, *A Trip to the Moon* (1728), p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> See *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. Rosemary Cowler, vol. II, p. 290.

and the bodies in it together made up one common confus'd Mass.<sup>7</sup>

Typically, in Woodward's *Account* there was an uneven reliance on biblical exegesis, classical learning, and incomplete scientific developments. From this passage we may work out a typical scheme of ideas, based on a transition from the notion of order and system ("whole Terrestrial Globe") to its obverse ("one common confus'd Mass"). The natural cohesion of parts which made up the world was contrasted with a grotesque process which typically sees them disjointed and "assumed up promiscuously." Essentially, then, the world-view expressed in this passage has its foundation in metamorphosis, understood as a providentially ordered transition from one state of nature to another. Nonetheless the discovery of fossils and monstrous animals seemed increasingly to rule out an uncomplicated chronology such as that demanded by Scripture. Moreover, such incongruities were not unexploited in the contestation of rival (often similar) theories and speculations. Michel Foucault has rightly pointed out that such historiographies were innately satirical. With the introduction of the role of progressive time, Foucault concluded that "against the background of the continuum, the monster provides an account, as though in caricature, of the genesis of differences, and the fossil recalls, in the uncertainty of its resemblances, the first buddings of identity."<sup>8</sup>

These satirical tendencies, emerging from constructions of the grotesque moment of chaos were influential in establishing the rhetorical and imaginative world within which eighteenth century satire was to work. From the outset of his poetic career, for instance, Alexander Pope had been linking the notion of cosmic disorder and the imagery of Chaos with imbalances in the imagination. Thus in *An Essay on Criticism* he spoke of "One glaring Chaos and

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<sup>7</sup> See *The Miscellaneous Works of the Late Dr Arbuthnot* (Glasgow, 1751), vol. II, p. 197.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 157.

*wild Heap of Wit*" (I.292). Accordingly, the sense of a mind under *flood* with an excess of forms, also appeared in *An Essay on Man*,

Wide and more wide, th'o'erflowings of the mind  
Take every creature in, of ev'ry kind. (IV.369)

When he came to write *The Dunciad*, Pope deployed the grotesque drift towards the random processes of formlessness in depicting how Dulness overwhelmed the city, her expanding yawn flowing over it. Yet much of the imaginative strength of the poem emerges from the grotesque's mixed and mingling productions that satirically signal the onset of disorder. The becomingness, in proper grotesque fashion, moves promptly and metamorphically in the direction of the unnatural and the artificial. In *The Dunciad*, Pope's imaginative world is taken out of nature in order properly to compete with it, by outdoing the grotesque on the terms of its own deviant artifice.

Chaos then, is never chaos represented as such, for it had always contained hidden or veiled within it the seeds of Nature and her con-comitant law-making. Both ideologically and poetically, this was a favourite poetic *topos*. Thus in Dryden's "Song for St Cecilia's day" (1687), we are taken back to the time, "When Nature underneath a heap / Of jarring Atomes lay." Similarly, in his poem *Upon the Works of Ben Jonson*, John Oldham understood the rise of Poesie as a shift from a grotesque to an ordered arrangement of parts that had scarcely seemed possible given the original shapeless material: "Only some pre-existing Matter we / Perhaps could see, / That might foretell what was to be." Oldham proceeded to describe that state in a manner that was typical of the shapelessness of the Ovidian grotesque:

A rude and undigested Lump it lay,  
Like the old Chaos, e're the birth of Light, and Day,  
Till thy brave Genius like a new Creator came,  
And undertook the might Frame.

Much of the imagery of this discourse, which I have traced back to Aristotle and Empedocles was revived during the Renaissance. In the

influential case of Edmund Spenser, for instance, the notion of creativity was understood in *The Faerie Queene* to involve a continual negotiation between Chaos and Nature in which one supplied the other reciprocally with its basic materials,

In hatefull darkness and in deep horrore,  
A huge eternall *Chaos*, which supplyes  
The substances of natures fruitfull progenyes.  
III.vi.34-6.

In the seventeenth century, and building on Spenser, Milton constructed his *Limbo* of Vanity as grotesque repository, simply reversing the direction of supply:

All th'unaccomplisht works of Nature's hand,  
Abortive, monstrous, or unkindly mixt,  
Dissolv'd on Earth, fleet hither, and in vain,  
Till final dissolution wander here ...<sup>9</sup>

As these examples serve to demonstrate, Nature was not a uniform totality. Rather, it accommodated internal irregularities, abandoning a providential teleology in favour of the grotesque space in which categories were "unkindly mixt." In a different sense, the underlying unity of metamorphoses coming out of Nature was benignly understood to be cyclical in character. This can be seen in Spenser's representation of the Garden of Adonis, where the cycle of creativity is described in the following manner:

And then of him are clad with other hew  
Or sent into the chaungeful world againe.  
Till thither they returne, where first they grewe:  
So like a wheele around they runne from old to new ...  
Infinite shapes of creatures there are bred,  
And uncouth forms, which none yet ever knew.<sup>10</sup>

This is not modern novelty, always discounting the past, and looking to new wonders in the future, but cyclical transformation. Yet the passage does not lose the sense of play between natural and unnatural and thereby preserves

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<sup>9</sup> *Paradise Lost*, III. 455-8.

<sup>10</sup> III.vi.33.

that strangeness and wonder which the grotesque process typically evoked. Significantly, creativity rooted itself in grotesque soil, no matter how much it might seek to overlay its monstrous origin, the disorder from which it was reclaimed. According to Ovid's account, as translated by Dryden:

The fat manure, with Heav'nly Fire is warm'd;  
 And crusted Creatures, as in Wombs are form'd;  
 These, when they turn the Glebe, the Peasants find;  
 Some rude; and yet unfinish'd in their Kind:  
 Short of their Limbs, a lame imperfect Birth;  
 One half alive; and one of lifeless Earth.

from the slime and mud,

... new creatures did begin:  
 Some were of sev'ral sorts produc'd before,  
 But of new Monsters, Earth created more.

A range of grotesque imagery and associations therefore came down to eighteenth century satirists who were familiar with these traditions. Thus, darkness "buries all" at the end of *The Dunciad*, because Pope followed Milton in representing Chaos as a Womb and a Grave.<sup>11</sup> Preceding that grotesque culmination, Pope was able to play on all the resonances of the monstrous, of abortion, breeding, mixing, darkness, and generation that were shared imaginative tokens in the depiction both of a slippage into chaos and of a world in need of satirical treatment.

## 2. Sports of Nature

Having surveyed the influential range of relevant source-material, it is important to be clear about the capacity of the imagination to exercise itself playfully in such a terrain. The name *sports* or *lusus naturae* designated the class of objects or beings that Milton had assigned to his Limbo and that Pope

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<sup>11</sup> See also Swift's discussion of *imagination* and *memory* in which the "former ... is acknowledged to be the *womb* of things, and the other allowed to be no more than the *grave*." *A Tale of a Tub*, ed., Ross, p. 83.

and other Scriblerians trifled with in their satires on "learning" and Folly. Not just the property of satirists, such *sports* were also particularly valued by collectors, especially the virtuoso-scientists who speculated on the origin and purpose of these phenomena. Beyond the Academy, accounts of Nature's wonderful deviations from the norm were assembled and promoted in popular collections designed both to stimulate and fulfil the needs of the expanding readership for printed books.

Sports of nature are best understood as aberrant phenomena, licensed or privileged by nature. They are, I would argue, (following Spenser) her borrowings from chaos or mutability:

What man that sees the euer-whirling wheele  
Of *Change*, the which all mortall things doth sway,  
But that therby doth find, and plainly feele,  
How *MVTABILITY* in them doth play  
Her cruell sports, to many mens decay.<sup>12</sup>

In neither one category nor another, they were logically consigned to *Limbo*. Their structuration has begun but it cannot be completed. As Spenser indicates, they are "sports" acting within Nature.

With regard to the preoccupations of natural history discussed in the previous chapter, we have noted how systems of classification tended to include provisional categories in which regularity of structure was either absent or slipping between neighbouring categories. Such slippages were often accommodated under the category *lusus naturae*. Examples of the category tended also to include a fanciful element in their constitution, although they were still *probable* given the seemingly infinite variety of species. The Danish physician, Thomas Bartholin, for example, described an example of *Homo*

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<sup>12</sup> *Two Cantos of Mutabilitie: Which, both for Forme and Matter, apperae to be parcell of some following Booke of the FAERIE QVEENE, under the Legend of Constancie, Canto Vi.i.1-5. See The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. with Critical Notes by J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 394.*

*Monocerotus* (half man, half unicorn) as an instance in which *Natura lusit*.<sup>13</sup> Such irregularities were nonetheless part of nature's regularity, they were Nature (as agent) at play.

But the early scientist also played, especially in the desire to find corresponding patterns across a totalised mental map of the works of nature. To the modern mind, many of these products appear entirely fanciful, but they were based upon the principle of homology. A good example is the discussion of the "Scythian Lamb" which straddled animal and plant categories in having the body of lamb, but being rooted to the ground by a stem like a plant was reported to survive by eating the grass around it. It was described by Scaliger as a "true zoophyte" and might genuinely exist. It was observed that if Nature playfully manufactured the monk fish by affecting an imitation in the sea of what could be seen on land, then there could be no theoretical objection to nature's sanctioning of plant-animals such as the birth a lamb in a row of plants.<sup>14</sup> Fanciful homologies could therefore be sanctioned both by known examples of *lusus* (often embellished by travellers), as well as by the thinker's own mental acts of *lusus*, stimulated by the need to complete a systematic scheme of resemblances across nature. The governing episteme in such cases was based on anticipated resemblances, rather than strict botanical observation and differential classification. Such ideas persisted into the eighteenth century, given the enthusiasm for the ideology of the *chain* of being. Leibniz, for instance, concluded that,

there is nothing more monstrous in the existence of zoophytes, or plant-animals, as Budaeus calls them; on the contrary, it is

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<sup>13</sup> See his *De unicornu observationes novae* (1645), quoted in Findlen, op. cit., p. 309.

<sup>14</sup> See Findlen, op. cit., p. 303.

wholly in keeping with the order of nature that they should exist.<sup>15</sup>

As I have pointed out, examples of such *lusus naturae* were especially valued by the virtuoso-collector. Such items were increasingly displayed and featured prominently in the early history and development of museums. Collections of "rarities", such as those of Elias Ashmole, were made available to the general public. Monstrous phenomena not only exemplified an irregularity within the regular and expected proportions of Nature, they were also Nature's means of confounding observers who sought with too much haste or zeal to discover the key to her most secret operations. They were therefore a challenge to the early scientists and natural historians, a puzzle to the onlooker, For the writer, they served as emblems of nature's artistry, subtlety, and mutability.

*Lusus* referred not merely to misformations and slippages between categories, but also to *size*. The *Galleria di Minerva*, for instance, recording the birth of a gigantic cabbage in a hospital garden in Nuremburg in 1697, stated that it "is privileged in the natural order, because it is not according to the usual laws of nature." Similarly, in his *Discourse of Earthquakes* (1705), Hooke wrote that many creatures were formerly ten times their present size, while others have "dwindled and degenerated into dwarfish progeny"; he further grants that "there may have been, by mixture of creatures, produced a sort differing in shape, both from the created forms of the one and other compounders and from the true created shapes of both of them."<sup>16</sup> These ideas found their way into the imaginative literature of the period in order to contrast the present with an heroic past. Thus in *Gulliver's Travels*, for instance,

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<sup>15</sup> See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 145.

<sup>16</sup> See Glass, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

the author of one of the books which Gulliver read in Glumdalclitch's bed-chamber noted that

... Nature was degenerated in these latter declining ages of the world, and could now produce only small abortive births in comparison of those in ancient times. He said it was very reasonable to think, not only that the species of men were originally much larger, but also that there must have been giants in former ages, which, as it is asserted by history and tradition, so it hath been confirmed by huge bones and skulls casually dug up in several parts of the kingdom, far exceeding the common dwindled race of man in our days.<sup>17</sup>

In Book II of *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift draws specifically on the idea of *lusus naturae*:

After much Debate, they concluded unanimously that I was only *Relplum Scalcath*, which is interpreted literally *Lusus Naturae*, a determination exactly agreeable to the Modern Philosophy of Europe: whose Professors disdaining the old evasion of *occult Causes*, whereby the followers of *Aristotle* endeavour in vain to disguise their Ignorance; have invented this wonderful solution of all Difficulties, to the unspeakable advancement of human Knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

The categorisation of Gulliver was, of course, a major concern of the civilization he visits. Significantly, Swift was sufficiently sensitive to contemporary taxonomic disputes to join the Lockean assault on the use of *lusus* which was being deployed to defend the monstrous continuities demanded by Aristotelian essentialism. At another level, of course, *lusus* served as a justification for Swift's use of disproportion, as well as for the wider satirical, humanist *sport* as a manifestation of *lusus*. A number of examples indicate the variety of scientific approaches. The O.E.D records examples from natural history, "They are no shells, but meer Sportings of active Nature" (Woodward, *Natural History of the Earth* (1695)); from physics, "This sportful dance of Atoms" (John Ray, *Creation* (1714)); from studies of

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<sup>17</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, II.vii., p. 178.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, II.iii., p. 143

other cultures, "the surrounding forests, where Nature sports in primaeval rudeness [...] It seems as if Nature sported in variety" (Bancroft, *An Essay on the Natural History of Guiana* (1769)); as well as from teratology, "The birth of Monsters; which I look upon as a piece of Sportfulness in the order of things" (More, *Divine Dialogues* II.xiii (1713)).

Most examples of *sport* recorded in the O.E.D. refer to the category in relation either to the fanciful play of mind, or to Nature. Thus the O.E.D records the example of "Imagination...roaming casually from Object to Object, and sporting itself with Phantoms and Non-entities" (1720) as an example of the former and "These [varieties] may justly be called Sporters or Strollers, so many *Lusus naturae* sporting themselves from more simple colours" (1723), as an example of the latter. The sense of sport usually involved the sense of prescribed licence. Thus the O.E.D records an illustration from Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1760) where it was remarked that "Nature, though she sported, - she sported within a certain circle." It is important to note that sports were neither outside, nor strictly marginal to nature; rather, they were properly a part of Nature's artistic characterisation. Sports were often, nonetheless, insubstantial, almost trivial, because they served no purpose other than indulgence or amusement.

The imaginative and linguistic link is noted by the O.E.D with reference to "The quaintest plays and sportings of wit" and "Metaphors being only the sportings of Fancy" drawn from Samuel Parker's *Free and Impartial Censure* (1667). The satirical link was also available through mimicry; in this case the O.E.D notes that monkeys are "very sportful, and given to imitate the actions of men like apes" in an example taken from Topsell's *Four-footed Beasts*. Moreover, the ability of sport to generate harmless pleasure was noted by Phineas Fletcher, "Here sportfull Laughter dwells. here ever sitting, Defies all

lumpish griefs, and wrinkled care."<sup>19</sup> Swift also noted the non-satirical applicability of sport in his poem "On Dreams: An Imitation of Petronius":

For, when in bed we rest our weary limbs,  
The mind, unburdened, sports in various whims,  
The busy head with mimic arts runs o'er  
The senses and actions of the day before. 7-10.

Moreover, the other, darker, side of sport linked it with the preternatural which, even in a satirical sketch, serves to indicate a possible link between sport and monstrosity as a "showing forth." Swift used these links in *A wonderful Prophecy* (1712) which deployed the grotesque to parody the contemporary taste for the preternatural:

Woe to *London!* Woe to *Westminster!* Woe to *Southwark!*... The Dragon upon *Bow Church*, and the Grasshopper upon the *Royal Exchange*, shall meet together upon *Stocks-market*, and shake hands like brethren... Think not that this baleful Dog-Star only shaketh his Tail at you in *Waggery*; no it shaketh it as a Rod. It is not a sporting Tail, but a fiery Tail, even as the Tail of an Harlot...<sup>20</sup>

Sport as a parody of our expectations of the values that might be supposed to inhabit the high can be seen in Pope's description of Parnassus in *An Essay on Criticism*, where "Contending Wits become the Sport of Fools." Elsewhere, Pope's imagery was derived from the wandering of water, its unpredictable and random movement:

Where Bentley late tempestuous wont to sport  
In troubled Waters.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Phineas Fletcher, *The Purple Island, or the Isle of Man; together with piscatorie eclogs and other poetical Miscellanies* (1633) IV.xiii. See O.E.D, "Sport".

<sup>20</sup> Attributed to Swift in *Works* (1808), pp. 432-5. Text here from John Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, 2 vols., ed. Vinton A. Dearing and Charles E. Beckwith (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), vol. 2, pp. 457-8.

<sup>21</sup> *The Dunciad* B.IV.201-2. The lines recall Belial's speech to the fallen angels: "Caught in a fiery Tempest shall be hurl'd/ Each on his rock transfixed, the sport and prey/ Of racking whirlwinds." See *Paradise Lost*, II.181.

Other elements, such as air, were also appropriate, provided that the implied movement was random or chaotic. Thus in *The Dunciad* (1728) Pope records that "His papers all, the sportive winds uplift" (109).<sup>22</sup>

*Sport* and *sportive* were more commonly used than the more technical *lusus*. There were a variety of connotations, some of which I will be investigating in greater detail in later chapters of this thesis. In *Windsor Forest*, for instance, Pope noted the "sportive Tyrants" where the use of power is arbitrary, lacking proper ethical direction and purpose. In Chapter Six, I will therefore demonstrate that sportfulness was not just the activity of Nature playfully interrogating her own creativity, but also a characteristic of authority. In the next section, however, I will be showing that *sport* was linked with other important cultural categories, such as trifling.

### 3. "Trifling Transactions" and "Wonder"

Texts such as *A Key, being observations and explanatory notes, upon the travels of Lemuel Gulliver* (1726), satirized "the trifling Transactions of the present English Royal Society."<sup>23</sup> But such matters were not merely the obsession of the Royal Society. There was a widespread popular fascination with such sportful matters and occurrences, the interest and taste for which publishers were not slow to exploited. Bacon had tried to draw a line between the popular and scientific domains of monstrosity, but the market was less concerned to maintain such discriminations. Increasingly, commercial collections were published for what was becoming a mass market that operated interactively. In his *History of Remarkable Providences*, for instance,

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<sup>22</sup> This may be a borrowing from Dryden, "But, oh! commit not thy prophetic mind/ To flitting leaves, the sport of ev'ry wind." Dryden, *Aeneid*, VI.117.

<sup>23</sup> Reprinted in *Gulliveriana VI: Critiques of Gulliver's Travels and Allusions thereto*, ed. J.K. Welcher and G.E. Bush Jr. (Delmar, New York: Scholars Facsimiles, 1976) Part I, p. 11.

Dunton invited the reader "to send us *accounts* of as many of them as fall under his *own proper Experience and Knowledge*, directed to *John Dunton*, at the *Raven* in *Jewen-street* ... But always remember, that what you send be circumstantiated with the *Name of the Country, Town and Place* ... and of particular persons concern'd ... for we shall not take notice of any things that is *trifling* or *uncertain*."<sup>24</sup> Aware of the possibility of being unmasked, there was a constant anxiety about sportive "trifling," that must be set off against the pretensions of science. For Pope, trifling footnotes epitomized modern scholarship, indicative of its inability to gaze at phenomena in terms of their true size and importance. They were as monstrous as the trifling objects - fossils, mummies, butterflies and other curiosities - that were deemed to be of value by virtuoso-collectors and members of the Royal Society. Pope's notes to *The Dunciad* therefore attacked such enthusiasms with their own weapon, textually manufacturing their own expansive grotesque excrescences from their satirical source.

There was also a religious side to many of the "Wonder" pamphlets, that recalled the adoption of monstrous productions as portents, common before the eighteenth century, but surviving primarily in the popular imagination afterwards. Coming from another direction, the relation between nature and divine providence in guaranteeing the plenitude of creation by the manufacture of new forms was also the common subject of meditations such as those of Addison:

I could not but look upon my self with secret Horror, as a Being, that was not worth the smallest Regard of one who had so great a Work under his Care and Superintendency. I was afraid of being overlooked amidst the Immensity of Nature, and lost among that

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<sup>24</sup> "A Further Specimen of the History of *Remarkable Providences*: with Proposals ... For Printing the said WORK By Way of SUBSCRIPTION," in William Turner, *An Essay upon the Works of Creation and Providence: being an Introductory Discourse to the History of Remarkable Providences, Now preparing for the Press* (1695), p. [169]. As in J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels* (London and New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), p. 219.

infinite Variety of Creatures, which in all Probability swarm through all these immeasurable Regions of Matter.<sup>25</sup>

There was, however, a measure of concern about such panegyrics upon nature. Attacking such "inspired" literature, Robert Boyle had argued in 1686 that "instead of a True God, they have substituted a kind of goddess, with the Title of Nature."<sup>26</sup> For Boyle, this poetic Nature obstructed the proper scientific investigation of phenomena, inculcating a sense of helplessness and subsequent religious consolation. Nonetheless, technological advances such as the microscope merely complicated the known world through the expansion of the range of known phenomena. In another *Spectator* paper, it is interesting to see how the development of the microscope has served to enhance Addison's sense of wonder at the variety and strangeness of the universe:

it is amazing to consider the Infinity of Animals with which it [the world] is stocked. Every part of Matter is peopled: Every green Leaf swarms with Inhabitants. There is scarce a single Humour in the Body of a Man, or any other Animal in which our Glasses do not discover Myriads of living Creatures [...] On the other hand, if we look into the more bulky parts of Nature, we see the Seas, Lakes and Rivers teeming with numberless Kinds of living Creatures.<sup>27</sup>

One could multiply examples of such prose meditations. Dryden's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for example, emphasized the natural abundance and fertility of the world, an dpointed back to the most influential source for such passages:

The rest of Animals, from teeming Earth  
Produc'd in various forms receiv'd their birth.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, in *An Essay on Man* Pope echoed these sentiments, presenting nature as endlessly and energetically regenerative:

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<sup>25</sup> *The Spectator* 565, 9 July 1714. Bond, vol. 4, p. 530.

<sup>26</sup> *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Receiv'd Notion of Nature* (1686), pp. 133-34.

<sup>27</sup> *The Spectator* 519, 25 October 1712. Bond, vol. 4, p. 346.

See, thro' this air, this ocean, and this earth,  
All matter quick, and bursting into birth.<sup>29</sup>

Although Pope also noted that "Middle natures ... Never pass th'insuperable line" he nonetheless perceived "how they long to join."<sup>30</sup> He also cleared a space for a distinction between partial and general laws that allowed for a degree of aberration from the origin:

Th'exceptions few; some change since all began  
And what created perfect?<sup>31</sup>

Typically, a sense of wonder at the size and extent of the created world as immense, infinite, immeasurable, existed side by side with a sense of the fulness of life - swarming and teeming. Yet as I have pointed out there were reactions to the speculative freedom towards which these descriptions of nature leaned. It was important to remember that the poetry of nature was intended as a praise of the *plenum* of creation which was, in turn, sanctioned by God's Providential Will. Yet at the beginning of the eighteenth century that essentialist, taxonomic purity aligned to natural law was, as Pope's example tentatively suggested, gradually being undermined.

Moreover, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century it was increasingly recognized that Nature's aberrations could be marketed. In fairs and markets, such monstrosities occupied the centre of the stage.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, literary texts also promoted and embellished the grotesque strangeness of such occurrences. "Wonder" was manufactured, for profit. Many popular "Wonder" books written in the late seventeenth century were rewritten or reprinted throughout the early eighteenth century. Examples are Nathaniel Wanley's *The*

<sup>28</sup> I. 558-9.

<sup>29</sup> I. 233-4.

<sup>30</sup> I.227-8.

<sup>31</sup> *An Essay on Man* I. 147-8.

*Wonders of the Little World: Or, a General History of Man* (1678) and Nathaniel Crouch's *Unparalleld Varieties: Or, the Matchless Actions and Passions of Mankind. Displayed in near Four Hundred Notable Instances and Examples* (1683). In *Surprising Miracles of Art and Nature* (1708), we learn how "Strange and wonderful have been the Miraculous Productions of Nature in all Ages" and the author proceeds "to give an Account of the most surprizing Signs and Wonders which I find recorded in History."<sup>33</sup>

Many of the grotesque phenomena belonged to the category of monstrous births. Dunton included in one of his periodicals "A strange and surprizing Account ... Of Mrs. Emma Topliss, who was bury'd alive, and deliver'd of two Children in her Coffin." Thomas Welde also has a story of a woman who "brought forth not one ... but (which was more strange to amazement) thirty monstrous births or thereabouts, at once; some of then bigger, some lesser, some of one shape, some of another; few of any perfect shape, none at all of them ( as far as I could ever learn) of human shape."<sup>34</sup> Comparable in popularity to the texts cited above, *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (ostensibly an early sex-guide), contained long sections on monstrous births. Chapter Five explained that "By the ancients, monsters are ascribed to depraved conceptions, and are designated as being excursions of Nature, which are vicious in one of these four ways; either in figure, magnitude, situation or number." Their cause is either "divine or natural." In the case of the divine,

<sup>32</sup> These issues are treated fully in Chapter Five.

<sup>33</sup> *Surpizing Miracles of Art and Nature* (1708), pp. 1, 2. As J. Paul Hunter points out in *Before Novels* (p. 385), this is a fourth edition of the 1678 volume, *Miracles of Art and Nature*. Hunter provides a number of examples of the subject matter of such works (op. cit., pp. 208-17).

<sup>34</sup> *The Christian's Gazette* (London, no date, [1713]), pp. 16-19; *A Short Story Of the Rise, Reign, and Ruin of the Antinomians, Familists, and Libertines That Infected the Churches of New-England* (1692), fol. B3v. Reprinted in J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels*, p. 215.

abominations were produced for "filthy and corrupt affections."<sup>35</sup> Monsters "by virtue of nature" were usually ascribed to problems with the womb, but additionally there was "the imaginative power at the time of conception; which is of such a force that it stamps the character of the thing imagined on the child."<sup>36</sup> As the fierceness and range of debate on this topic in the eighteenth century amply demonstrated, the basic modern distinction between mind and body had not yet been properly established.<sup>37</sup>

Monster-mongering developed as a form of commercial entertainment in the eighteenth century. In the light of popular "Wonder" literature, Scriblerian texts such as *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* could be understood as parodies of the kind of promotional techniques used in passages such as the following from the "Preface" to *The Second Spira* (1693):

That whereas in *dreadful surprizing Relations*, the *Bookseller*, *Author*, or both together, do usually clog the Matter of Fact with long and tedious observations, impertinent Reflections & such like *Stuff*, only to make the Volume swell; here he will find no needless trifling Digressions, but *unmixt Relation*, barely and *purely* deliver'd, so that the Reader all the while he reads, will be upon his Subject, and not perplex'd with an Expectation of it.<sup>38</sup>

In many respects *The Memoirs* was representative of Scriblerian satire in its insistence on confronting the seemingly grave and serious with its satirical reflection. Such passages were exposed as precisely the kind of ludicrous and trifling material that they disavowed. Appropriately, the monstrous imagination was represented as a procreative power that inescapably generated an ambivalent curiosity and desire for similar phenomena.

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<sup>35</sup> *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, pp. 30-1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32-3.

<sup>37</sup> See for instance, Paul-Gabriel Boucé, "Imagination, pregnant women, and monsters, in eighteenth-century England and France," in G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 86-100.

<sup>38</sup> Preface, p. i.

Describing how a lady's right thigh "blossom'd and, as it were, seem'd to ripen in due season" it is noted in the *Memoirs* that Martinus was forthwith "possessed with an insatiable curiosity to view this wonderful Phaenomenon."<sup>39</sup> His interest in the grotesque is doubled by his own near-miss as a grotesque himself - his aborted sister is stored up as a vial and kept "among the curiosities of the family." In Scriblerian satire, the rhetorical attack shifted from "grand phaenomenon of nature" to the lifestyle of the "youthful Virtuoso, who was in daily pursuit of the Curiosities of Nature." Yet the advancement of science was satirically reduced to its petty, commercial drives. The virtuoso's needs were not satisfied by experiment, observation and speculation, but rather, it turns out, "seem'd to open themselves at his producing a silver six-pence." In this financial context, Martinus gained admission to the "Scene of Wonders" where "with infinite pleasure [he] heard the History of the several Monsters, which was courteously open'd to him by a Person of a grave and earnest mien."<sup>40</sup> Other targets, such as the attempts to totalize and contain nature, were attacked in Mr Randal's boast that

the whole world cannot match these prodigies; twice have I sail'd round the Globe, these feet have travers'd the most remote and barbarous nations; and can with conscience affirm, that not all the Deserts of the four Quarters of the Earth furnish out a more complete set of Animals than what are contain'd within these walls.<sup>41</sup>

The main emphasis running through the passage is totality: the whole world, the globe, the four quarters of the Earth, and "a more complete set." Each of these is effectively undermined by the emptiness of "Desert." The prodigious and marginal masquerade as the centre and generate a private and self-

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<sup>39</sup> *The Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus* ed., Charles Kerby Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 93.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

contained discourse of the infinite, complete, systematic mock-orders and mock-hierarchies such that Mr Randal can point to his monsters "in order" with his rod:

Mr Randal made no satisfactory answer to these demands, but harangued chiefly upon modern Monsters, and seem'd willing to confine his instances to the Animals of his own collection, pointing to each of them in order with his Rod.<sup>42</sup>

Mr Randal therefore becomes the victim of his own project for containment. Importantly, such texts undermined the authority of their victims by stressing their marginality, as well as exploiting those margins, making deviation and expansion the norm, deconstructing their texts in a fashion that Vincent Leitch has summarized as characteristic of deconstructive practice:

Instead of restricted play and filled spaces, deconstruction desires radical free play and exorbitantly overfilled spaces, aiming to subvert regulated and filtered interpretations. While traditional interpretation tries to check or hide the inescapable errors at the edge, Derridean reading attempts to draw out and cash in on this potential proliferation (*dissemination*). It wants to keep the interpretive crisis at the edge continuously on the edge.<sup>43</sup>

There is a manifest delight in the proliferation of organizing concepts which are not so much collapsed as ludicrously interrogated and exposed. Typically, as in the following passage from the *Memoirs*, the defining category seeks to compose and order an increasingly disparate range of material:

At length he grew fond of the *Glandula Pinealis*, dissecting many Subjects to find out the different Figure of this Gland, from whence he might discover the cause of the different Tempers in Mankind. [...] He was confirm'd in this by observing, that Calves and Philosophers, Tygers and Statesmen, Foxes and Sharpers, Peacocks and Fops, Cock-sparrows and Coquets, Monkeys and

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 146-7.

<sup>43</sup> Vincent B. Leitch, *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction* (Hutchinson, 1983), pp. 237-8.

Players, Courtiers and Spaniels, Moles and Misers, exactly resemble one another in the conformation of the *Pineal Gland*.<sup>44</sup>

Although the list appears grotesquely mixed and heterogeneous, symptomatic of the pre-taxonomic episteme, it is in fact more logical internally than it first appears. Each of the pairs is held together by a satirical link - an analogy which is the basis, on each occasion, of a caricature. Thus a Peacock is to a Fop, as a Monkey is to a Player. Clearly, there was a satirical logic in such parallels with which the rigid differential categories of taxonomy could not cope. That the Pineal Gland was the same in all beings pointed to man's failure to rise above all animals in the chain of being, reducing to any one of them, according to his specific vice; allegorically, man could be read off the co-ordinated animal into which his vice or ruling passion was metamorphosing him. As the possibilities of grotesque transformation were expanded under the influence of grotesque fancy and sport, so the moral allegory from which they were drawn receded. Playful, shifting, ungraspable, monstrosity had charms that were independent of its placing within a shared moral or even satirical framework.

#### 4. Metamorphosis and Metempsychosis

Metamorphosis concerns the movement through a variety of forms, tending to be violent, non-linear and chaotic.<sup>45</sup> Its natural home is the playful, plenitudinous universe that always escapes systematic classification. Yet metamorphosis need not lack an underlying unity of purpose, which is usually supplied by the doctrine of metempsychosis. Pythagorean philosophy

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<sup>44</sup> Op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>45</sup> In the Preface to his *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearian Comedy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) William C. Carroll points out that the word *metamorphosis* "constantly breaks free, sheds its old skin, and emerges in contexts having little to do with butterflies. It can refer to a physical shifting of shape, an internal transformation, or simply to change itself" (p. 3).

therefore provide a (retrospective) groundwork for the unstable play of mutations. Significantly, an important source for such ideas was Ovid, who had used metempsychosis in the fifteenth book of his *Metamorphoses*. A number of renaissance poems had taken up such ideas. In John Donne's *The Progress of the Soul*, (subtitled "Metempsychosis, Poema Satyricon"), for example, the poem concluded with the recognition that through all change, the soul was "keeping some quality / Of every past shape" (506-7).<sup>46</sup> In his prefatory "Epistle" to *The Progress of the Soul*, Donne played humorously on the disruption of social as well as natural boundaries:

you must not grudge to find the same soul in an emperor, in a post-horse, and in a mush-room, since no unreadiness in the soul, but an indisposition in the organs works this. And therefore though this soul could not move when it was a melon, yet it may now remember, and tell them at what lascivious banquet it was served. And though it could not speak, when it was a spider, yet it can remember and now tell me, who used it for poison to attain dignity.

Metempsychosis was a humane play of mind, but it was also a comic and fanciful tour through the heterogeneous, a witty indulgence of variety. Such comic transformations were not uncommon in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts.<sup>47</sup> In *Volpone*, for example, Ben Jonson attached a comic and harmless character both to the Pythagorean doctrine and the final metamorphosed state. Appropriately, he chose Androgyno as the ambiguous site for metempsychosis, as Nano points out, "here is enclosed the Soul of Pythagoras / The juggler divine." In Androgyno, Pythagoras became a "creature of delight"; and the fool was "the only one creature, that I can call

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<sup>46</sup> William C. Carroll has pointed to how the pious soul is lifted out of a mutable world in many of Vaughan's poems: "Here change is prized because it leads to the Unchanging, whereas change within the wheel of earthly life amounts to no more than the repetition of shifting appearances and unstable shapes" (op. cit., p. 15).

<sup>47</sup> One needs only to consider the range of transformation in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* in order to see the rich source material available to eighteenth century writers.

blessed."<sup>48</sup> The spiritual message in these instances was altogether less important than the satirical fun to be had from fooling with "consciousness", shifting and metamorphosing "man" through a grotesque variety of forms. It must be noted that as a spiritual rationalization, metempsychosis was often at odds with the imaginative power of metamorphosis. The reduction of such material to a neat allegorical plan was largely avoided by treating Pythagorean ideas in a satirical manner.

Swift characteristically dealt with Pythagorean doctrine in a way that was reminiscent of his satirical attack on the veiled language and mock terminologies of astrology and alchemy. In the introduction to *A Tale of a Tub*, for instance, he noted, "The first Piece I have handled is that of *Tom Thumb*, whose Author was a *Pythagorean* Philosopher. This dark Treatise contains the whole scheme of the *Metempsychosis*, deducing the Progress of the Soul thro' all her Stages."<sup>49</sup> Swift pointed back to the long tradition of seeking to find systematic moral readings of texts such as *The Metamorphoses*. Garth, for instance, had referred to the poem as "an excellent System of Morality" and had praised the "excellent Lessons of Morality *Ovid* has given us in the course of his Fables."<sup>50</sup> Despite the efforts of commentators, Ovid's text could not in reality be reduced to a neat plan exactly suited to each incident. As far as the Scriblerians were concerned, such systematic readings were redundant, no matter what their level of scholarship. The material was, in their view, designed from the outset to obfuscate and hinder the very possibility of its unravelling. In this context, James King and Bernadette Lynn have pointed out that "Whimsical allegories, like those which Swift satirises in his explanation of

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<sup>48</sup> I.ii.

<sup>49</sup> *A Tale of a Tub*, ed. Ross, pp. 31-2..

"Merlin's Prophecy" in the *Bickerstaff papers*, elicit eccentric interpretations."<sup>51</sup> Drawing a modern analogy from Pythagoras, Aesop, and Socrates, Swift affirmed in *A Tale of A Tub*, for instance, that "the Grubaeon Sages have always chosen to convey their precepts and their arts, shut up within the vehicles of types and fables."<sup>52</sup> The classical writers were not the straightforward models of order and simplicity that subsequent moral enthusiasts claimed them to be. Nonetheless, an effort to find a consistent moral line in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was still being attempted towards the end of eighteenth century. As Jacob Bryant pointed out,

The mythology of Greece is a vast assemblage of obscure traditions, which have been transmitted from the earliest times. They were described in hieroglyphics, and have been veiled in allegory: and the same history is often renewed under a different system, and arrangement. A great part of this intelligence has been derived to us from the Poets; by which means it has been rendered still more extravagant, and strange. We find the whole, like a grotesque picture, blazoned high, and glaring with colours, and filled with groups of fantastic imagery, such as we see upon an Indian screen: where the eye is painfully amused; but whence little can be obtained, which is satisfactory and of service. We must however make this distinction, that in the allegorical representations of Greece there was always a covert meaning, though it may have escaped our discernment. In short we must look upon ancient history as being yet in a chaotic state: where the mind of man has been wearied with roaming over the crude consistence without ever finding out one spot, where it could repose in safety.<sup>53</sup>

The species of slippery assemblage, put together without an underlying purpose recalls Empedocles account of early evolutionary development.

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<sup>50</sup> Preface to *Metamorphoses*, p.xv, p.xvi.

<sup>51</sup> James King and Bernadette Lynn, "The *Metamorphoses* in English eighteenth century mythological handbooks and translations with an exemplum, Pope's *The Rape of the lock*." *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 185, (1980), pp. 131-179.

<sup>52</sup> *A Tale of a Tub*, ed. Ross, p. 31.

<sup>53</sup> Jacob Bryant, *A new system, or an analysis of ancient mythology: where an attempt is made to divest tradition of fable; and to reduce the truth to its original purity*, 3 vols., (1774-76), i.XVII.

Moreover the passage serves to link the grotesque with several component activities. The grotesque is at once an improper pictorial representation and a version of masquerade. In Bryant's view such representations exemplify the otherness both of the past and the exotic. The allegory proper (waiting to be revealed by modern sense) is hidden beneath a series of cognitive masks that veil an underlying structure. Importantly, the passage also polarises notions of change and stability which were constitutive of the grotesque. The lack of stability is emphasized in different degrees and types of transmission - in words such as renewed, arranged, derived, and rendered, as well as in the complex doubleness of response, "painfully amused." The grotesque sets up a momentum which is always driving towards greater extravagance and strangeness, to the point of sensory overload. Moreover, the past is self-consciously constructed by Bryant as a version of chaos, so that the task of ordering it - moving out of it - may begin.

Pope's deployment of such ideas can be seen from the entries in the *Index to the Dunciad*, in which he identifies the unstable and shifting form of Dulness with the Pythagorean genesis of her followers; he notes, therefore, "The Souls of her sons dipt in Lethe. Ibid. How brought into this world? ... their transfiguration and metempsychosis..." In Pope's terms, the Pythagorean process was automated, circular, and repetitive rather than regenerative and fanciful:

What mortal knows his pre-existent state?  
 Who knows how long thy transmigrating soul  
 Did from the Boeotian to Boeotian roll?  
 How many Dutchmen she vouchsaf'd to thrid?  
 How many stages thro' old Monks she rid?  
 And all who since, in mild benighted days,  
 Mix'd the Owl's ivy with the Poet's bays?  
 As man's Maeanders to the vital spring  
 Roll all their tydes, then back their circles bring;  
 Or whirligigs, twirl'd round by skilful swain,  
 Suck the thread in, then yield it out again:  
 All nonsense thus, of old or modern date,

Shall in thee centre, from thee circulate.<sup>54</sup>

The dunces are show to be cut off from a stable ordered origin upon which they might anchor themselves, or use as a co-ordinate to measure subsequent progress. This inability to find a settled direction results in the characteristically purposeless movement that parallels the grotesque and playfully purposeless "assemblage" of parts. Interestingly, the grotesque (at its most dangerous) is constructed not as marginal (like the comic monsters in medieval manuscripts) but as a masquerade of the centre, the other, or satirical reflection, of sanctioned order and authority.

Such speculations on metempsychotic revolutions and circulations through heterogeneous material provided a rich source of satirical material for imaginative writing. From an eighteenth century point of view, one of the best read science books of the period was Fontenelle's *Plurality of Worlds*. In a *Guardian* paper Addison stated that the act of reading the book as one which requires a Pythagorean method, leaping heterogeneously from one object of attention to another: "It was very entertaining to me to see them dividing their speculations between Jellies and Stars, and making a sudden Transition from the Sun to an Apricot, or from the Copernican system to the figure of a Cheese-cake. [...] THERE have been famous Female *Pythagoreans*, notwithstanding most of the Philosophy consisted in keeping a Secret."<sup>55</sup> Such passages typify the cognitive violence of the grotesque, its disrespect for categories and boundaries, mapped onto the female mind that is constructed as sanctioning such chaotic tendencies.

Pythagorean ideas were given full rein in Murtagh McDermot's *A Trip to the Moon* which is otherwise based on the fantastic journey, and influenced both by Lucian's *True History* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in particular. The

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<sup>54</sup> B.III.48-60.

<sup>55</sup> *The Guardian* 155, 8 September 1713.

text works primarily by playfully expanding extravagance and strangeness, sporting with rational categories and conventions. The religion of the inhabitants of the Moon (another version of the female) is Pythagorean, as the narrator explains:

it will be found, that the first body which he [Pythagoras] animated was in the *Moon*, and was the Body of a Corn-Cutter; ... He served an Apprenticeship of five Years immediately after in the Shape of a Coach-Horse to a Lady of Quality, who kill'd him with going a-Visiting. He was then transform'd into a Spider, a Bailiff, an Whore, an Emperor, an Hangman, a Greyhound, a Kitchen-Wench, a Lawyer, a Fox and a Mad-Man. In this last Station he set up for a Philosopher, and call'd himself *Pythagoras*. He was not always stark mad, but had his Intervals of right Reason; in which he gain'd so much upon his Hearers, that at length they took his mad Fits for nothing but surprising Flights of his Imagination. He gain'd so much Credit in a little time, that the greatest Absurdities confirmed by an *Ipse Dixit*, were thought to be sufficiently demonstrated.<sup>56</sup>

The passage recalls the Scriblerian distinction between sense and nonsense which is veiled by a show of dark and erudite learning. The notion of authority is also important, for despite the heterogenous transformations, the social progress is one from corn-cutter to the philosopher "who gain'd so much Credit in a little time."

Pope's suggestion in *The Rape of the Lock*, that Belinda's lock may have mounted to the lunar sphere,<sup>57</sup> "Since all things lost on Earth, are tresur'd there" (V.113-14), looked back to Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. In Canto 34 Astolfo journeyed to the moon in search of Orlando's lost wits. Symptomatically, the perceived character of the lunar sphere is grotesque:

Whate'er was wasted in our earthly state

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<sup>56</sup> Murtagh McDermot, *A Trip to the Moon* (1728), pp. 38-9. This text is also available in a reprint in *Gulliveriana I* ed. J.K. Welcher and G.E. Bush Jr. (Delmar, New York: Scholars Facsimiles, 1970).

<sup>57</sup> Marjorie Nicolson has written extensively on fantastic and lunar literature. See *Voyages to the Moon* (New York: Macmillan, 1960).

Here safely tresur'd: each neglected good;<sup>58</sup>

Pope's playful account of the metamorphosed forms in "The Cave of Spleen", is well-known, but he had already been working on Ovid and on metamorphosis. His translations from Ovid were among his first poetic endeavours. In poems such as "Polyphemus and Acis," a number of ideas exemplify features of the grotesque that I have been discussing. Pope's interest in metamorphosis is perhaps foreshadowed in the case of Acis who, "now transform'd became / A crystal fountain, and preserv'd the name" (163-4). The critical deployment of the Harlequin figure (the basis for a number of passages in *Peri Bathous*) emerges too in the portrait of Polyphemus, who becomes a kind of Harlequin figure in his practice of comically disproportionate actions:

He vainly studies every art to please:  
To trim his beard, th'unwieldy scythe prepares;  
And combs with rakes, his rough, disorder'd hairs. (23-5)

He argues himself out of his own monstrosity by deploying ridiculously apt metaphors, such as that in which "The sun all objects views beneath the sky, / And yet, like me, has but a single eye" (110-11). In the violent language which Pope is able to write for him, Polyphemus cries,

I'll from his bleeding breast his entrails tear,  
And hurl his mangled carcass in the air;  
Or cast his limbs into thy guilty flood,  
And mix thy waters with his reeking blood! (126-9)

The passage exhibits that indelicate sentiment found in the language of that other monstrous figure, Caliban, whose grotesqueness fascinated so many eighteenth century critics, because it existed side by side with a sensitivity to nature which found expression in poetic language. Thus we might compare Pope's violence of language with that which Shakespeare devises for Caliban, "thou mayst brain him ... or with a log / Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake, / Or cut his wezand with thy knife."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, 5 vols, trans. John Hoole (1783), vol. 4, Canto 34, p. 211, ll.565-6. John Hoole also noted Milton's borrowings (th'unaccomplish'd works of Nature's

In McDermot's *A Trip to the Moon* there is a less violent but nonetheless more radical breakdown of human form than that suggested by the aggression of Polyphemus. This is represented in the stock figure of the patron, in whom no body part finds its correct place, "a very uncommon Figure, and very strangely dress'd." As the description proceeds he becomes altogether more "uncommon" (again a discourse of the novel/new); neither belonging to one element or another, his mantle exemplifies his grotesque constitution:

His Nose was plac'd in his Forehead, and his Mouth was below his Chin; his Eyes, Ears, Legs and Arms, had chang'd their Places, and his Gate was between Walking and Flying. He wore a Mantle artfully wrought with many Figures, of Cupids, Monsters, green Fields, Caves, Armour, Gods and Castles, with here and there a Battle and a Wedding.<sup>60</sup>

The breakdown of the natural composition of objects is such that the narrator is taught how "to make Clocks of Radishes, and Buff-Belts of Nut-Shells ... In short, I was taught to act Impossibilities, and find out Things that never had a Being."<sup>61</sup> Such playful decompositions and recycling of the practical usages of objects into ridiculous situations was also a common feature of Lucianic narratives, for which his *True History* was an important model. Again the emphasis is on making familiar objects from the unfamiliar, trifling with words and things, playfully shifting them away from the categories proper to them.

In the light of McDermot's *A Trip to the Moon* it is interesting to bear in mind John Locke's discussion of the opinion that men may "for their Miscarriages, be detrued into the Bodies of Beasts, as fit Habitations, with

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hand) and Addison's comments thereon.

<sup>59</sup> *The Tempest*, III.ii.86-9.

<sup>60</sup> McDermot, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>61</sup> McDermot, op. cit., p. 71.

Organs suited to the satisfaction of their Brutal Inclinations. But yet I think no body, could he be sure that the Soul of *Heliogabalus* were in one of his hogs, would yet say that Hog were a *Man* or *Heliogabalus*." Locke disputed the idea that the identity of the soul alone makes the man; it is a very "strange use of the Word *Man*, applied to an *Idea*, out of which Body and Shape is excluded."<sup>62</sup> The importance of such an issues is indicated by Locke's placing of this passage in the Chapter "Of Identity and Diversity"<sup>63</sup> Clearly, a prerequisite of categorisation and of system-building was identity. In a modern view, the psychoanalyst Heinz Liechtenstein has argued that "identity is change arrested"<sup>64</sup> thereby linking the interest in identity with a recognition of the force of change. It was perhaps apposite that after Locke, Leibniz introduced the concept of metempsychosis into his own philosophy as an expression of his recognition of the diversity and plenitude of the universe.

*A Trip to the Moon* also included a discussion about secondary qualities (developed from Locke's *Essay* II.viii) which subsist "without a Body." Bearing in the mind the tendency of the public to be the victim of grotesque hoaxes, it is pointed out that philosophers choose to find out Qualities unknown to the "vulgar" in the commonest Bodies: "They will transform a Body (as they say) by deceiving the Sight, or substituting another in the Room of it. [This may be done] by the help of some Effluvia which they transmit to the Eyes of their

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<sup>62</sup> Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, II.xxvii.6, p. 332.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. the explicit morality in Sir John Hayward's anticipation of man's bestial transformations in *David's Tears* (1623): "And as every kind of beast is principally inclined to one sensualitie more than to any other; so man transformeth himselfe into that beast, to whose sensualitie he principally declines ... This did the ancient wisemen shadow foorth by their fables of certiane persons changed into such beasts, whose crueltie, or sotterie, or other brutish nature they did express." See William C. Carroll, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> Heinz Lichtenstein, "Identity and Sexuality: A Study of their Relationship in Man," *JAPA* 9 (1961), p. 188.

Spectators."<sup>65</sup> To exemplify this, Sactuff "produc'd the Colour subsisting without a Body: It was pale Red, suspended, I know not how, in a little Box; it touched no Part of the Box, neither could it be felt, or easily removed."<sup>66</sup> Thus colour itself is reified in a discourse of things (the solid objects of learning and scientific enquiry) so that it may become a curiosity and therefore be enclosed in a box, as in a category and therefore classified, putting an end to metamorphosis. McDermot's use of philosophy and the discourse of science points to other emerging disciplines where the role of the grotesque had to be sorted out. The idea of transmutation, for instance, fascinated the early scientist. Again, it was not uncommon to find speculations concerning the nature of solidity. Thus, in the introduction to Volume II of his *Lexicon Technicum: or a Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1708-10) John Harris recorded three areas in which new material had appeared. One of these was "the Transmutation of Bodies into one another." Under the entry in the dictionary TRANSMUTATION, we find the speculation "Now under all these many various and wonderful Transmutations, why should not Nature turn *Light* into Bodies, and *vice versa*?"

Metamorphosis, transformation, and transmutation point to the need to recognize that change was a major preoccupation of eighteenth century thought. Although the world was in many respects much more stable in the eighteenth than in the seventeenth century, a popular "philosophy" of instability could not be eradicated easily. The first page of Crouch's, *Extraordinary Adventures*, for instance, points out that "The Surprising Adventures and Events that daily assail Mankind are so Numerous and Extraordinary, that nothing seems more inseparable to our Mortal state, than

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<sup>65</sup> McDermot, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>66</sup> McDermot, op. cit., p. 73.

constant and continual Vicissitudes, Changes and Alterations."<sup>67</sup> Notions of change therefore found a variety of outlets in a range of interdisciplinary literatures. In the "medical" field, for instance, texts such as Blackmore's *A Treatise of the Spleen* (1725) deployed grotesque transformations to typify the condition; the grotesque was ideally suited for understanding such a disorder, because it broke down the division between mind and body. The popular currency of such ideas could also be seen in Ann Finch's poem "The Spleen: A Pindaric Ode":

What art thou, SPLEEN, which ev'rything dost ape,  
 Thou *Proteus* to abus'd Mankind,  
 Who never yet thy real Cause cou'd find,  
 Or fix thee to remain in one continued Shape.<sup>68</sup>

Pope of course, suggests the teeming grotesque figures in the Cave of Spleen:

Unnumber'd throngs on ev'ry side are seen  
 Of Bodies chang'd to various Forms by Spleen.<sup>69</sup>

It is not difficult here to sense an Ovidian echo, especially in the first line of Dryden's translation, "Of Bodies chang'd to various Forms I sing." The adaptation of Ovid sometimes consisted merely in the addition of a new name for an old, so that the petrification of Niobe was rewritten as that of Mother Osborne "stupify'd to stone!" in *The Dunciad*.<sup>70</sup> Other adaptations such as Ambrose Philips' *The Tea-Pot; or a Lady's Transformation*, were liberally fanciful, flirting with the erotic energies of the original material, albeit on a somewhat more domesticated scale:

But what was chang'd in to the Spout

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<sup>67</sup> Nathaniel Crouch, *The Extraordinary Adventures and Discoveries of several famous Men* (1683), p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> [Countess of Winchilsea], *Miscellany Poems on Several Occasions written by a Lady* (1733), p. 88.

<sup>69</sup> *The Rape of the Lock*, IV.47-8.

<sup>70</sup> B.II.312.

The cautious Muse reserves with Doubt. (61-2)

More generally however, metamorphosis is a defining characteristic of an unstable mind falling into a state of madness. In his poem *Bedlam* (1723, 1735) Hildebrand Jacob (1693-1739) provided an example of the dangerous effects of a mind that is unable to find a proper measure of stability:

You who, like *Proteus*, in all Shapes appear,  
And every Hue, like the Camelion wear,  
Phantasia, airy Pow'r!<sup>71</sup>

In the idea of metamorphosis as it continues into the eighteenth century, the genuine Pythagorean side was broadly comic in spirit and satirical in form. Metempsychosis lost its moral groundwork and became increasingly fanciful. Addison, for instance entertained discussion of Pythagoras and "The Transmigration of Souls" in *The Spectator*, including a letter signed PUGG, listing a variety of transmigrations through an Indian Tax-gatherer, a Flying Fish, a Shark, an eminent Banker in *Lombard-Street*, a Bee, a Town-Rake, a Taylor, a Shrimp and a Tom-tit. He makes love to a Lady as a Beau and returns to her as a Monkey in chains, still desiring her favours.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, the direction of a grotesque object in metamorphosis is not always down the

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<sup>71</sup> See *The Works of Hildebrand Jacob, Esq; Containing Poems on Various Subjects, and Occasions; with Fatal Constancy, a Tragedy, and several Pieces in Prose* (1735), p. 211.

<sup>72</sup> *The Spectator* 343, 3 April 1712. Bond, 3.272-6. A more systematic plan of transmigratory rewards can be taken from Plato's *Timaeus*, as Henry Morley noted in his edition of *The Spectator*: "Plato derives woman and all the animals from man, by successive degradations. Cowardly or unjust men are born again as women. Light, airy and superficial men, who carried their minds aloft without the use of reason, are the materials for making birds, the hair being transmuted into feathers and wings. From men wholly without philosophy, who never looked heavenward, the more brutal land animals are derived, losing the round form of the cranium by the slackening and stopping of the rotations of the encephalic soul. Feet are given to those according to the degree of their stupidity, to multiply approximations to the earth; and the dullest become reptiles who drag the whole length of their bodies on the ground. Out of the very stupidest of men come those animals which are not judged worthy to live at all upon earth and breathe this air, these men become fishes, and the creatures who breathe nothing but turbid water, fixed at the lowest depths and almost motionless, among the mud. By such transitions, he says, the different races of animals passed originally and still pass into each other" *The Spectator* 211, 1 November 1711 ed. Henry Morley, 3 vols, (Routledge, 1883), vol. 2, p. 29.

"chain of being." Often the pattern is one of a movement out of change into stability. This final state could be spiritual, as in Spenser:

For all that moveth, doth in *Change* delight  
But thence-forth all shall rest eternally (VIII.2)

or an imaginative apotheosis such as we find at the end of *The Rape of the Lock*:

When those fair Suns shall sett, as sett they must.  
An all those Tresses shall be laid in Dust;  
*This Lock*, the Muse shall consecrate to Fame.<sup>73</sup>

Coming from a different angle, the notion of continual change and alteration increasingly became the basis for an aesthetic of "novelty" in Nature. Moreover, such "novelty" could not erase the shifting montrosities which were a part of its definition, especially in popular accounts of such phenomena. Natural novelty, the continuous production of change, was available in Spenser's depiction of "Mutabilitie" which had led to the marshalling of the seasons, months planets &c in defence of her argument. Such a line empowered the concept of natural, non-violent transformations which were cyclical and evolving across a range of emerging imaginative possibilities. The protean character of the grotesque problematises the possibility of structuring what was always, on close and sensitive observation, still in a state of change or mutation.

## 5. An aesthetics of metamorphosis

In his papers on "The Pleasures of the Imagination", Addison attempted to establish an aesthetic of the individual and the unique, that would take account of a direct and personal encounter with nature (such as that demonstrated by John Ray):

Groves, Fields, and Meadows, are at any Season of the Year  
pleasant to look upon, but never so much as in the opening of the

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<sup>73</sup> V.147-9.

Spring, when they are all new and fresh, with their first Gloss upon them, and not yet too much accustomed and familiar to the Eye. For this reason there is nothing that more enlivens a Prospect than Rivers, Jetteaus, or Falls of Water, where the Scene is perpetually shifting, and entertaining the Sight every Moment with something that is new. We are quickly tired with looking upon Hills and Valleys, where every thing continues fixt and settled in the same Place and Posture, but find our Thoughts a little agitated and relieved at the sight of such Objects as are ever in Motion, and sliding away from beneath the Eye of the Beholder.<sup>74</sup>

The sense of an origin is clarified in such a passage in relation to its newness, its natural novelty ("first Gloss"). Again there is the emphasis on the need for change that is aesthetically tamed in Addison's constitution of it as an alternation of agitation and relief. Philosophically the concept of continual mutation was to find expression in George Berkeley's *New Theory of Vision* (1709) in which the observer witnesses continual changes in the relative position, size and shape of all that he turns his eye upon, "the perpetual mutability and fleetingness of these immediate objects of sight render them incapable of being managed after the manner of geometric figures."<sup>75</sup>

Ovid's text in particular was a repository of the surprising, the novel and the anarchic. George Sewell's remarks in the Dedication to his edition of *Metamorphoses* (1717), underlined the assimilation of grotesque instabilities into the main stream of the native tradition:

The *shadowy Beings*, as they have lately been very properly term'd, which abound in *Spenser*, Milton, (and I might go back to *Chaucer*) are mostly owing to *Ovid*. *Spenser* in particular, is remarkable for imitating the Exuberance of our Poet in all his *Creatures of Fancy*.

Addison perhaps best expresses the official sanction for the grotesque in his own meditations on Ovid:

But when we are in the *Metamorphosis*, we are walking on enchanted Ground, and see nothing but Scenes of Magick lying

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<sup>74</sup> *The Spectator* 412, 23 June 1712. Bond, vol. 3, p.542.

<sup>75</sup> In *Philosophical Works*, ed. M.R. Ayers (J.M. Dent: Everyman's Library, 1992), p. 54.

round us [...] *Ovid*, in his *Metamorphosis* has shewn us how the Imagination may be affected by what is Strange. He describes a Miracle in every Story, and always gives us the Sight of some new Creature at the end of it. His Art consists chiefly in well-timing his Description, before the first Shape is quite worn off, and the new one perfectly finish'd; so that he every where entertains us with something we never saw before and shews Monster after Monster, to the end of the *Metamorphosis*.<sup>76</sup>

Such an enchanted ground, that science increasingly confined to the category of the preternatural with its characteristic miracles and prodigies could be revived under the banner of an aesthetics that welcomed fancy and novelty as natural products of the grotesque imagination. Although "Novelty" was a problematic concept because of its usage in promoting a populist discourse of "wonder", it was nevertheless partially assimilated under the "Uncommon". Yet both were potentially major breeding grounds for the grotesque whose manifest abnormality was a part of its "novelty":

Every thing that is *new* or *uncommon* raises a Pleasure in the Imagination, because it fills the Soul with an agreeable Surprise, gratifies its Curiosity, and gives it an Idea of which it was not before possest. We are, indeed, so often conversant with one Sett of Objects, and tired out with so many repeated Shows of the same Things, that whatever is *new* or *uncommon* contributes a little to vary Human Life, and to divert our Minds, for a while, with the Strangeness of its Appearance: It serves us for a kind of Refreshment, and takes off from that Satiety we are apt to complain of in our usual and ordinary Entertainments. It is this that bestows Charms on a Monster, and makes even the Imperfections of Nature please us. It is this that recommends Variety, where the Mind is every Instant called off to something new, and the Attention not suffered to dwell too long, and waste it self on any particular Object.<sup>77</sup>

The violent shifts of the grotesque were replaced with the notion of "agreeable surprise" as a characteristic of art as a form of renewal both at the point of creation and reception. In Addison's terms, high and low were differentiated respectively by the notion of "refreshment" and "satiety." Putting these concepts in the context of Scriblerian satire it may be recalled that in the

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<sup>76</sup> *The Spectator* 417, 28 June 1712. Bond, vol. 3, pp. 564, 565-6.

<sup>77</sup> *The Spectator* 412, 23 June 1712. Bond, vol. 3, p. 541.

"Double Mistress" episode of *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, Martin fell in love with the Siamese twins and "not only the Fire of Youth, but the unquenchable Curiosity of a Philosopher pitch'd upon the same object! For how much soever our Martin was enamour'd on her as a beautiful Woman, he was infinitely more ravish'd with her as a charming Monster."<sup>78</sup> Similarly, in Gay's *Three Hours After Marriage*, Fossile sublimated his attraction to Townley by looking at her in one of his museum cabinets and referring to her as "thou best of my Curiosities" (I.26). The possibility of finding the monstrous *charming*, on account of its Novelty or Curiosity, was not merely a satirical twist, but bound up with a newly emerging set of aesthetic categories and boundaries in which the strange was given its rightful place alongside the beautiful.

Addison practically continued Bacon's earlier programme for the study of everything that is unusual, monstrous and out of the common road of nature when he claimed that such a project was a central "Pleasure of the Imagination." Thus he points out in *The Spectator* that "the first Contriver" has "annexed a secret Pleasure to the Idea of anything that is *new* or *uncommon*, that he might encourage us in the Pursuit of Knowledge, and engage us to search into the Wonders of his Creation."<sup>79</sup> While Bacon's programme was intended to be progressive and utilitarian, Addison's project is finally spiritual and revelatory in temper.

## 6. Observation and Representation

Our depths who fathoms, or our shallows finds  
Quick whirls, and shifting eddies of our minds?

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<sup>78</sup> Op. cit., pp. 146-7.

<sup>79</sup> 24 June 1712. Bond, vol. 3, p. 545.

Life's stream for Observation will not stay,  
It hurries all too fast to mark their way.<sup>80</sup>

Pope claimed that Homer mirrored Nature's variety; he had written that the *Iliad* was a "wild Paradise, where if we cannot see all the Beauties so distinctly as in an order'd Garden, it is only because the Number of them is infinitely greater."<sup>81</sup> Following Pope's comments on the seemingly fantastic and monstrous episodes in Homer, it can be seen that they based themselves on epochal shifts. The following section therefore looks at Pope's management of empirical and poetic forces that worked for and against an aesthetic built around novelty, strangeness and wonder.

The notion of an antecedent age, perceived differentially is noted in *The Iliad* XIX.450 (Pope's translation) where we find the footnote:

But methinks the Commentators are too much at pains to discharge the Poet from the Imputation of extravagant Fiction, by accounting for Wonders of this kind: I am afraid, that next to the Extravagance of inventing them, is that of endeavouring to reconcile such Fictions to Probability. Would not one general Answer do better, to say once for all, that the above cited Authors liv'd in the *Age of Wonders*: The Taste of the World has been generally turn'd to the Miraculous; Wonders were what the People would have, and what not only the Poets, but the Priests, gave 'em.<sup>82</sup>

Again the opposite which are playfully bonded in the grotesque are a major preoccupation, and their harmonious relation is signalled by the emphasis on reconciliation both with fancy and with sense. More generally Pope's line of thinking bears the accommodation of Foucault's later distinction between a shift from a discourse of mere resemblances, to one founded on strict observation.<sup>83</sup> Following this line, Pope concluded that the monstrosity of the Cyclops was to be explained by the fact that

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<sup>80</sup> *Epistle to Cobham*, 29-32.

<sup>81</sup> See *Works*, ed. Maynard Mack, vol. vii, p.3.

<sup>82</sup> *The Iliad*, in *Works*, ed. Maynard Mack, vol. viii. 390-91 n.

The vulgar form their judgments from appearances; and a mariner who pass'd these coasts at a distance [seeing only] the resemblance of a broad eye in the forehead of one of the *Cyclops*, might relate it accordingly, and impose it as a truth upon the credulity of the ignorant: it is notorious that things equally monstrous have found belief in all ages.<sup>84</sup>

Yet as it develops Pope's distinction is less one between vulgar and refined observation than a statement about what modes of perception are appropriate to different discourses. Foucault cites Tournefort's *Isagoge in rem herbarium* (1719) to explain how seeing was a matter of seeing a few things systematically; in order to gain a knowledge of plants, "rather than scrutinize each of the variations with a religious scruple," it was better to analyse them "as they fall beneath the gaze."<sup>85</sup> Pope appears in some degree to follow the line suggested by Foucault, arguing in *An Essay on Man*:

It is therefore in the Anatomy of the Mind as in that of the Body; more good will accrue to mankind by attending to the large, open, and perceptible parts, than by studying too much such finer nerves and vessels, the conformations and uses of which will for ever escape our observation ... What is now published, is only to be considered as a *general Map* of MAN, marking out no more than the *greater parts*, their *extent*, their *limits*, and their *connection*, but leaving the particular to be more fully delineated in the charts which are to follow. ("The Design")

It appears, however, that aesthetic discourse need not follow such a line. For Pope the botanical virtue is strictly analogous to a poetic vice:

*Homer* is like those Painters of whom *Apelles* used to complain, that they left nothing to be imagined by the spectator, and made too accurate representations.<sup>86</sup>

In another passage, Pope indulges a discussion of the Gorgon drawing on Alexander the Mydian's *History of Animals* and Pliny's *Catoblepas*, only to

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<sup>83</sup> See *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970).

<sup>84</sup> See *The Odyssey* IX, 199 n., in *Works*, vol ix, p. 309.

<sup>85</sup> Foucault, op. cit., p. 134.

conclude: "Howsoever little truth there be in this story, it is a sufficient ground for poetical fictions, and all the fables that are ascrib'd to the Gorgon."<sup>87</sup> Implicit in these remarks is Pope's hostility to the Moderns' elimination of the marvellous through deadening scholarly interrogation. More generally the world turns out to be more varied and colourful under the poet's eye than Foucault's theory of eighteenth century representation would permit. Foucault's black and white world of botany<sup>88</sup> (already problematised in Ray) becomes in Pope a multiplication of colour, endless change and transformation as in the *Epistle to Cobham*.

### 7. *Lusus* and Literature

Another way of subverting the "scientific" enthusiasms of his contemporaries was through the humanist tradition of learned satire. As it had been used in the hands of Erasmus and More, this pivoted on the exercise of *lusus*, namely joking in an erudite manner. In the eighteenth century, "trifling" has a similar sense, as it is used by Pope in his discussion of Lucian's attribution of "The Battle of the Frogs and Mice" to Homer:

It is indeed a beautiful Piece of Raillery, in which a great Writer might delight to unbend himself; an Instance of that *agreeable Trifling*, which has been at some time or other indulg'd by the *finest Genius's*, and the Offspring of that amusing and chearful Humour, which generally accompanies the Character of a rich Imagination, like a Vein of *Mercury* running mingled with a Mine of *Gold*.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Pope's Introductory Note, *The Odyssey* XIX, in *Works*, ed. Maynard Mack, vol. x, p. 192.

<sup>87</sup> Notes, *The Odyssey* XI.777., *Works* ed. Maynard Mack, vol. ix, p. 425.

<sup>88</sup> See Foucault, op. cit., p. 133.

In their portraits of Dulness, the Scriblerians typically represented writing as an involuntary discharge rather than the natural "Offspring of that amusing and cheerful Humour" which Pope's poetry implicitly sets up as a standard in *The Dunciad*. Unravelling Dulness simultaneously unbended the poet's mind in a harmless act of indulgence: the spirit was more one of lively and delightful sport than vicious invective. The mercurial image was therefore symbolically central. In the course of this discussion, I seek to draw together notions of sport with different levels of metamorphosis that continually oscillated between primal matter and transcendent art, in a necessary act of mutuality.

In his trifling, Pope goes beyond *lusus*, to undermine basic notions of explanation through commentary and footnote. Seemingly explanatory commentary requires further unravelling and is more a continuation of the satirical game at another level, than its termination. The play of reason has fixed boundaries established by the totality of reason that sanctions it in the first place as an acceptable unbending of mind. Sport, moreover, relishes its hard-won redundancy, its masquerade of autonomy.

In order to understand the grotesque processes operating in *The Dunciad*, we need to examine the poem's negotiation of "sportiveness." Sporting permits both participation in (and separation from) the material of Dulness. Sportiveness manifests a self-contained energy, which issues naturally as a harmless play of distortion making for a greater variety of available forms that a comprehensive art will seek to encompass. The darker side of sportiveness springs from the association of creative zeal with uncontainable sexual energies repetitiously labouring for a birth. Moreover, the play of irregularity that Nature in its creative cycles was believed occasionally to practise becomes, in *The Dunciad*, the rule, a masquerade centre and a mock-legality. Art which

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was supposed to mirror nature, is replaced by Dulness which disrupts established structures by de-centring, setting up a masquerade monarchy which labours for legitimacy. In *An Essay on Man*, the formal aesthetic encouraged a mediation between the discordant strife of the periphery and the sameness of the centre:

See Matter next, with various life endu'd  
Press to one centre still, the gen'ral Good.<sup>90</sup>

And in proportion as it blesses blest.  
Draw to one point, and to one centre bring  
Beast, man, or Angel, Servant, Lord or King.<sup>91</sup>

In *The Dunciad*, however, these mediations were displayed in a state of disjunction and breakdown, and the movement to the centre took the form of assault, its order destroyed by a proliferation of illegitimately mingling, merging, mixing forms; as though suddenly nature had given up regularity in favour of the wholesale sport of deviation.

That *The Dunciad* should be approached in the manner of sportiveness may be understood contextually as a forced negotiation of the monstrosity with which Pope himself was branded in a series of invectives which were crudely grotesque. Such for instance was that of Jonathan Smedley (1671-1729) in his attack on Pope in *Gulliveriana: Or, a Fourth Volume of Miscellanies*:

crooked, minute, and deform'd people, are peevish, quarrelsome, waspish, and ill-natur'd; and the Reason is, the *Soul* has not Room enough to pervade and expand itself thro' all their nibbed, tiney Parts, and this makes it press sorely on the Brain, which is of a yielding Substance; and this *Pressure* again causes frequent Irritations and *Twinges on the Nerves*.<sup>92</sup>

Smedley concluded that such a state resulted in "sudden *Starts* and *Fits*." Pope had returned fire on his enemies, in particular Dennis, in the pamphlet "Concerning the Strange and Deplorable Frenzy of Mr. John Dennis" as well as

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<sup>90</sup> *An Essay on Man*, III.13-14.

<sup>91</sup> *An Essay on Man*, III.299-302.

in the set-piece passages such as that on Sporus used in *An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*. But in *The Dunciad*, the programme was to be wider than the grotesque rhetoric of the prose pamphlets. Pope had moved away from *satyrus* which was essentially "girding, biting, snarling, scourging, jerking, lashing, smoting, sharp, tart, rough"<sup>93</sup> for the transformation implied here is all one way, towards degeneration and further, until we come to a truly grotesque derivation of the word as "an hairy monster, like a horned man with goat's feet ... [hence] *satyre* a kind of sharp and invective poem." In contrast to *The Female Dunciad* which advertised in its sub-title "the Metamorphosis of P- into a stinging nettle. The Metamorphosis of *Scriblerus* into *Snarleus*,"<sup>94</sup> Pope chose rather to make his attack the obliteration of any underlying mental condition rather than corporeal transformation:

But, sad example! never to escape  
Their Infamy, still keep the human shape.<sup>95</sup>

In this context, Pope appended the note, "The effects of the Magus' Cup are just contrary to that of Circe. Hers took away the shape, and left the human mind: This takes away the mind, and leaves the human shape." Dryden's account of his satirical practice may be contrasted here; in the "Account" prefixed to his *Annus Mirabilis* Dryden had written of a burlesque of a fair woman which "shows her deformed, as in that of a lazar, or of a fool with distorted face and antic gestures, at which we cannot forbear to laugh, because it is a deviation from nature." Pope plays up deviation but he plays down *specific* deformity, replacing it with more sinister and sublime elements which at every moment threaten to melt into bathos; the deviations from nature,

<sup>92</sup> Preface, pp. xi-xii.

<sup>93</sup> Poole, *The English Parnassus* (1657).

<sup>94</sup> Reprinted in Guerinot, *Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope 1711-44* (1969).

moreover, are less instances of deformity (except as self-willed distortion) than the fanciful sport of an insistently metamorphosing imagination typified by Dulness who,

Sees momentary monsters rise and fall  
And with her own fools-colours gilds them all.<sup>96</sup>

Distancing oneself effectively from the material, but not evading it was essential to the sport of devising a broad, all-encompassing representation of Dulness. The satirical distance enforced a presentation of the material as a falling away from the ideal, the abortion of categories half-made or unfinished. In *The Dunciad*, variety is to be linked with a frenetic cultivation of the uncommon, it is as though the poem is exotically fulfilling the programme for culture, that Francis Bacon had left as an injunction to science, to make a compilation of everything new, rare, and unusual in nature.

In the course of arguing for the centrality of sport as a benign manifestation of the grotesque in satire, I have indicated the relevance of Proteus and transformation. This has entailed moving away from the monstrosity of *satyrus* with a view to considering how this was replaced by that part of the satirical programme which concerns *satura* or mixture. For Dryden, *satura* suggested variety "a tasty dish to suit all palates, a sophisticated confection of sweet and sour." In *The Dunciad*, variety shaded into mixture which was soon endemic; it is social in "a motley mixture" (B.II.21); formal in the embrace of tragedy and comedy (B.I.69); images are "motley" (B.I.65) and style abandons distinctions between prose and verse; approximations replace categories ("Something betwixt a Heideggre and

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<sup>95</sup> *The Dunciad*, B.IV.528-9.

owl").<sup>97</sup> Eventually the "mingled wave"<sup>98</sup> serves to intoxicate and lull, reducing everything to one anaemic, indiscreet level.

Pope's image of a vein of mercury in a mine of gold turns out to be more complicated than it first appears, for it brings in the notion of volatility with particular reference to moral substance. In *An Essay on Man*, the "Mercury of Man" is that which needs to be fixed, "The dross cements what else were too refin'd" (II.177-9). In *The Dunciad*, the moral chasms are filled with lead. Mercury's volatile energy, such as it is, metaphorically dissipates:

Nonsense precipitate, like running lead,  
That slipp'd thro' Cracks and Zig-zags of the Head.<sup>99</sup>

The footnote on authority finally exhausts any notion of energy or variety, "the universal *Cement*, which fills in all the cracks and chasms of *lifeless* matter, shuts up all the pores of *living* substance, and brings all human minds to *one dead level*."<sup>100</sup> Thus the variety which mercury traverses in its natural volatility is utterly reduced. *The Dunciad* draws together the untranscended mock-energy of the subject matter and allows us to see a mercurial transformation of it in the ordering and structure, the genuine glitter of Pope's couplets.

In *The Dunciad* Pope shows writing to be a forced production, corresponding to Bacon's second category, resulting in monsters.<sup>101</sup> But the

<sup>96</sup> B.I.83-4.

<sup>97</sup> B.I.290.

<sup>98</sup> B.II.343-4.

<sup>99</sup> B.I.123-4.

<sup>100</sup> B.IV.266-8, p. 369.

<sup>101</sup> In his *A Preparation for a Natural and Experimental History*, Bacon introduces a number of "Aphorisms on the formation of the first History". He concludes that Nature is placed in three situations according to three "governments": "For she is either free, and left to unfold herself in a regular course, or she is driven from her position by the obstinacy and resistance of matter, and the violence of obstacles, or she is constrained and moulded by human art and labour. The first state applies to the specific nature of

Dunces also partake of Bacon's third category, establishing an artificial world, "To Nature's laws unknown." The dunces, according to the Argument at the outset of Book IV are served with a particular caution, not to proceed "beyond Trifles, to any useful or extensive views of Nature, or of the Author of Nature."<sup>102</sup> Sport is what the dunces do, but it is also what Pope does with them. He takes a more expansive view of nature, but keeping a sense of the correct proportions of matter, of nature and of her laws, his natural artifice enables him to yoke his victims. More generally, it is as though the epic is spawning a looming *lusus naturae* in the form of the mock-heroic poem.

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bodies; the second to monsters; the third to artificial productions, in which she submits to the yoke imposed on her by man, for without the hand of man they would not have been produced." See *Philosophical Works*, 3 vols, trans. Peter Shaw, vol. 3, p. 147.

<sup>102</sup> *Works*, vol. v, p. 338.

## Chapter Three

### Representing the grotesque

#### 1. Introduction

The becomingness and pressing multiplicity of form that leads to the monstrous and sportive grotesque presents a considerable challenge to normative aesthetics. It must be granted that problems of definition occur in relation to the grotesque in all periods, not merely in the eighteenth century. Approaching grotesque representations from a sense of how space is to be used, enables us to collate a variety of strategies, approaches and techniques that many of the existing models fail to tackle. Building on my discussion of systematically fixed taxonomic categories in the first chapter, I will be investigating disruptions of the location, ordering and number of such categories in the space of representation.<sup>1</sup> I argue that the grotesque transgresses official space in a variety of ways. In different degrees, the grotesque overfills, overlaps, joins and separates categories, empowering them to deviate fancifully from their "correct" location in space.

Such transgressions of convention are achieved by the construction of a privileged free space in which the mind is set at liberty from its customary practices. Moreover, many of these binding conventions are engendered largely in opposition to that free space in which the combinatory imagination operates. For this reason, a central model of the grotesque aesthetic can be taken from the ban imposed on the kind of mixed form with which Horace, for

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Varey's *Space and the Eighteenth Century English Novel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) explores the topic primarily in terms of architecture and town planning. John Sallis's *Spacing - of Reason and Imagination in texts of Kant, Fichte, Hegel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) is more speculative, but as the title indicates, its preoccupations are with *later* philosophical developments.

example, had satirically invested the beginning of his *Ars Poetica*, the influences of which I will be discussing in relation to a number of writers.

The mental space of the grotesque is inherently social, it is essentially the site of formal exchange and negotiation, operating in the manner of a market. Such a market with its overcrowding, its momentary needs and its ready supply of toys and trifles, provides a suitable metaphor, for it is one that eighteenth century writers themselves deploy. More generally it assists in exploring the combined dynamics and division that economic and social forces imposed on the cultural domain. The space of representation is not merely given, it is produced.

The most common spatial model of representation is that of margin and centre. Looking at medieval illuminated manuscripts, for instance, it could be argued that the monstrous flourished in the margins of such texts, as moments of indulgence and excess. As though fretting under the burden of the official main text, the grotesque spontaneously emerges as a compensatory energy. This species of argument provides a simple spatial model which is in turn readily mapped onto an ideological plan of the forces playing against each other in society; the model sets off the authority, order and control at the centre against the fanciful liberation of the margins. Such a model has some obvious flaws, springing largely from the simple binary arrangement of forces. Other variations are the antithesis of "High" and "Low" in which the latter tends to typify the body, or the carnivalesque. Other models take as their starting point more aesthetic cultural labels. It has been suggested by E.H. Gombrich, for example, that the non-classical could be divided into two parts, "Gothic being increasingly used as a label for the not-yet-classical, the barbaric, and the barocco for the no-longer-classical, the degenerate."<sup>2</sup> Gombrich's definition is

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<sup>2</sup> E.H. Gombrich, *Norm and Form: Studies in Art of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1985), pp. 84-5.

primarily based here on time and period, and on decisions about which category ought to be in the ascendant in any period. Like "Gothic," *grotesque* is applied adjectivally in many aesthetic discussions to indicate censure, and as the opposite of "Grecian" or "Classic." Yet such terms have a broader range of usage and more specific applications available to them than is commonly realized. More seriously, such "binary" models fail to take full account of the pressing negotiations between and *within* perceived oppositions. In short, they stress transgression, but oversimplify it, underestimating the sheer range of possible sanctions for grotesque play that were available to the eighteenth century mind.

An important component of thinking about the grotesque involves the maintenance of order and space between parts and objects that are discrete units. This can be seen as a defence against the danger of undifferentiated, mixed spaces, that "heaping" of components which is a product of, or a move towards, chaos, and the opening out of the eighteenth-century grotesque. Dryden's influential translation of *De Arte Graphica* supplies the official neo-classical ruling on the use of space:

Let the Members be combin'd in the same manner as the Figures are, that is to say, coupled and knit together. And let the Groupes be separated by a void space, to avoid a confus'd heap; which proceeding from parts that are dispers'd without any regularity, and entangled one within another, divides the Sight into many Rays, and causes a disagreeable Confusion.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dryden, *De Arte Graphica*, pp. 89-90. Cf John Evelyn on the "meanness and impertinence of our modern compositions" in *A Parallel of the Antient Architecture with the Modern* (1680): "these wretched and trifling spirits indigent in the midst of so great abundance, depart from the right way which these great *Masters* have opened them, taking a devious path to pursue an abortive *Architecture*, or the evil *Genius* of the Art rather, which has introduc'd it self amongst amongst the *Orders* under the Title of *Composita*, the favour of mens ignorance, and the indiscreet presumption of I know not what pitiful new *Architects*, who have made it their *Fools-bauble*, and clad it in so many *apish* and capricious modes, that 'tis now become a ridiculous *Chimaera*, and like a *Proteus* not to be fixed to any constant form." p. 100.

There is no space in such representation for the sportive use of light; vision is channelled along rigid and unwavering lines. There is none of the delight that Hogarth will find in the wanton serpentine line, none of the pleasure of intricacy. Confusion is simply disagreeable.

Proceeding further still than this, Dryden's *A Parallel betwixt Painting and Poetry* sought to erase all the grotesque blemishes and morbidities of nature; nothing foreign should pollute the pure source of art; in the space of ideal representation all excrescences were strictly to be excluded:

As in the Composition of a Picture, the Painter is to take care that nothing enter into it, which is not proper, or convenient to the Subject; so likewise is the Poet to reject all incidents which are foreign to his Poem, and are naturally no parts of it: they are the Wens and other Excrescences, which belong not to the Body, but deform it; no person, no incident in the Piece, or in the Play, but must be of some use to carry out the main Design. All things else are like six fingers to the hand; when Nature which is superfluous in nothing, can do her work with five. A painter must reject all trifling ornaments; so must a poet refuse all tedious and unnecessary ornaments.<sup>4</sup>

As my study is showing, however, Nature clearly was sometimes superfluous as well as playful in her creations. The six-fingered hand was less a monstrosity than a case of *lusus naturae*, something *contained* within Nature's playfulness. Comparing these ideal aesthetic rulings with Swift's practice, numerous examples of degenerate Nature can be found which are central to the "main Design" of the work. As the narrator remarks in *Gulliver's Travels*, for instance, "There was a Woman with a cancer in her Breast, swelled to a monstrous size, full of Holes, in two or three of which I could have easily crept, and covered my whole Body. There was a fellow with a wen in his Neck, larger than five Woolpacks."<sup>5</sup> Rather than improving on nature, by drawing from the best parts of nature only, Swift typically debases and devalues by

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<sup>4</sup> Dryden, *A Parallel*, in *Essays of John Dryden* 2 vols., selected and edited by W. P. Ker (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1900), vol. 1, p. 139.

<sup>5</sup> Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, II.iv., p. 151.

excess. In a text such as *A Tale of a Tub*, these disruptions occur at the formal level too, in digressions, reversals and plays of erudition. For Swift such redundancy is the source of pressing truths about human nature and the human condition. Our vision is always already uneven and corrupted and this necessarily militates against a clear and ordered space of representation. For Dryden, in contrast, such excess and proliferation merely calls forth a surgical metaphor: "When there are more Figures in a Picture than are necessary, or at least ornamental, our Author calls them *Figures to be lett*: because the Picture has no use of them," echoing his own translation of *De Arte Graphica*.<sup>6</sup>

The relation between the grotesque and the spaces of representation has not been adequately discussed in relation to the eighteenth century. Taking full account of the use of ideas drawn from the renaissance, I will be arguing that the mind does not need to wait for *Nature* to produce novel or unusual deviations from her normal practice, for they can be manufactured at will and perhaps even in competition with Nature's creativity. Renaissance painters termed such a faculty *inventione*, or *fantasia* and these categories provided a groundwork for the operation of fancy and the extensive philosophical exploration of this feature of mind in Locke and his followers. It has to be admitted that such a category is perceived as inherently dangerous, particularly in its reduction to the furious Fancy which as Dryden points out, tends to produce monsters. Dionysius Longinus is quoted in this regard, "*That some men imagining themselves to be possess'd with a divine Fury; far from being carry'd into the rage of the Bacchanalians, often fall into toys and trifles which are only puerilities.*"<sup>7</sup> Moreover, such triviality was an important characteristic of the sportive grotesque.

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<sup>6</sup> Dryden, *A Parallel*, ed. W. P. Ker, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Dryden, *De Arte Graphica*, p. 124.

The tendency of eighteenth century writers and philosophers to construct the mind in terms of space provides a further avenue for the exploration of grotesque representation. In an image that looked back to Plato's cave, Locke had described the "*dark Room*" (*camera obscura*) of the understanding, "wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external Resemblances, or *Ideas* of things without."<sup>8</sup> A number of questions arise from this model and these in turn provide some crucial insights into the construction of the grotesque. For example, we need to ask how this mental space was cleared and how it was ordered. Following this line of enquiry, we need to scrutinize what strategies were available for the management and exclusion of the grotesque. To what extent could the mind abandon normal representation and sanction the filling of its space with the mixed, distorted and fanciful representations that belong to the grotesque category?

The consideration of space is therefore important on a number of counts. First, an understanding of how space is being *constructed* permits us to understand what kinds of grotesque are generated: on a formal level, the prevalence of the grotesque can be seen in the intolerance of gaps. In line with a plenitudinous concept of nature, spaces are fancifully overfilled and the number of mixed modes and compounded terms is infinite. An excellent example of this was the fashion for purposeless designs such as those of the moresque and the arabesque which I will be discussing below, placing them in the context of the social and competitive use of space.

A second consideration of space relates to location. Many examples of the grotesque are cases of mixture, in which the space of one species has invaded that of another. If spatial designations are systematically maintained then such monstrous unions are avoidable. Moreover, my exploration of eighteenth century systems in the first chapter of this thesis pointed to special or marginal

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<sup>8</sup> *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch, II.xi.17, p. 163

notions of space in which middle or aberrant categories were placed. These overfilled or irregular spaces were increasingly treated with suspicion when they became socialised spaces in which not merely representation but social action and re-construction might occur. I reserve some of the discussion of this matter until the next chapter, but I will introduce the issue here solely as it relates to the aesthetics of representation. I will be arguing that the insistence on spatial divisions and boundaries draws on social discriminations, with the result that one notion of space is projected onto another. Disruptions of such logical mappings (such as masquerade, fairs and shows) were perceived as inherently dangerous.

Building on these insights into the use of space, mind and representation, the following sections seek to show the many ways in which high mimesis and conventional neo-classical groupings were disrupted, to the extent that such labels need to be superseded. In order to show how the private space is metaphorically mapped onto a public space, I will begin by looking at the idea of a grotto and its grotesque characteristics.

## 2. The Grotto

The popularity and importance of grottos in the eighteenth century is well documented particularly in relation to Pope's grotto at Twickenham. I do not wish to rehearse this material,<sup>9</sup> but I do want to make some points about how space is being defined in terms of mind and its negotiation with the grotesque. One of Pope's letters to Bolingbroke concerning the grotto is a suitable starting point for understanding that even at its most secluded and solitary, the space

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<sup>9</sup> See Maynard Mack, "The Shadowy Cave: Some Speculations on a Twickenham Grotto," in *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Literature: Essays in honor of Alan Dugald McKillop*, ed. Carroll Camden (University of Chicago, 1963). He provides a short bibliography on p. 72.

of the grotto establishes a model of the mind that playfully revels in its own movements and instabilities:

Next to patching up my Constitution, my great Business has been to patch up a Grotto (the same you have so often sate in the Sunny part of under my house,) with all the Varieties of Natures works under the ground - Spars Minerals & Marbles. I hope yet to live with You in this Musaeum, which is now a Study for Virtuosi, & a Scene for contemplation.<sup>10</sup>

The virtuosi, whom Pope satirized elsewhere, are redeemed here by a healthy engagement in suitable study and contemplation. Judging by what we know about Pope's grotto, however, this was not in any sense an evacuated space in which the mind settled down to a moribund stability; nor is this a place in which one is likely to find fixed categories, or the source of a law-abiding aesthetic. Rather, the emphasis is continually on activity and flow. Recording a visit to this grotto, the *Newcastle General Magazine* noted that "the Caverns of the Grot incessantly echos with a soothing Murmur of aquatick Sounds."<sup>11</sup> This shifting instability is a common feature of such underground spaces. In another example, drawn from Shaftesbury's *The Moralists*, there occurs a grand tour of earth and cosmos, and in imagination Philocles enters the earth's entrails, "seeking out imaginary Wealth." Emerging from this description there is clearly a transition from fluidity and movement to a radical conception of metamorphic possibility:

Here, led by curiosity, we find Minerals of different Natures which, by their Simplicity, discover no less of the Divine Art than the most compounded of Nature's Works. Some are found capable of surprising Changes; others are durable, and hard to be destroy'd or chang'd by Fire, or utmost Art. So various are the Subjects of our Contemplation, that even the study of these inglorious Parts of Nature in the nether world is able it self to yield large Matter and Employment for the busiest Spirits of

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<sup>10</sup> 3 September 1740, in *Correspondence*, ed. Sherburn, pp. 261-2.

<sup>11</sup> "To Mr. P-- T--, in Newcastle," *The Newcastle General Magazine, or Monthly Intelligencer*, I (January 1748). The letter is dated 18 March 1746-7. Reprinted in Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope 1731-43* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Buffalo Press, 1969), Appendix A, p.239.

Men, who in the Labour of these Experiments can willingly consume their Lives.<sup>12</sup>

This is, moreover, a privileged space of contemplation, unlike the aerial view of the bustling market, it is devoid of people. The observer's busy spirit teeters perilously on the edge of self-absorption; the enthusiasm for the divine arts is as much a contemplative attraction as a delusive outlet for the alchymical ambitions that the gentle satire of the passage points to in its warning that "these experiments can willingly consume their lives."<sup>13</sup>

But if the grotto begins as a private space, it ends as a public one. Pope's underground spaces play an important part in indulging the mind's spontaneous manufacture of grotesque forms. Thus Pope had introduced the Cave of Spleen in *The Rape of the Lock* as a potent symbol of collective illness, frustration and excess. In fact, there is a double metamorphosis effected both by splenetic disorder and the cave itself as a shifting representation of the mind in motion, teeming with fantastic forms derived from mixed modes. Developing such images in *The Dunciad*, Pope created a Cave of Poetry and a Cave of Truth. "Sculking Truth" returns to her old cavern, which Pope glosses with the note that this "Alludes to the saying of *Democritus*, that truth lay at the

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<sup>12</sup> *The Moralists* (1709). In *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), Shaftesbury fights a number of battles against the grotesque. He warned against the *Idol-notions* (looking back to Francis Bacon) "which we will never suffer to be unveil'd, or seen in open light. They may perhaps be Monsters, and not Divinitys, or sacred Truths, which are kept thus choicely, in some dark corner of our Minds" vol. 1, p. 60. He proceeded to attack stylistic tendencies such as those who since Milton "aiming at a falso *Sublime*, with crowd'd *Simile*, and *mix'd Metaphor* (the Hobby-Horse, and rattle of the MUSES) entertain our raw Fancy, and unpractised Ear" vol. 1, p. 217. Elsewhere the grotesque became an enthusiasm for the "*Moorish Fancy*" with its "Monsters and Monster-Lands" vol. 1, p. 350.

<sup>13</sup> The notion of bottomless or ungrounded discourse as the enabling of endless and joyous (mis)interpretation is not uncommon in deconstruction. See Vincent B. Leitch, for example, "Unable to get beyond signs, locked in language (*écriture*), the interpreter confronts the irreducible free-play of difference and figure. Since there is neither an undifferentiated nor a literal bottom or ground, the activity of interpretation is endless" (*Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction*), p. 250.

bottom of a deep well."<sup>14</sup> In his letter to Bolingbroke, Pope had linked his "Constitution" with the Grotto, the private space of the self, the reassuring if besieged source of wisdom, of which the larger symbol of Twickenham is another threatened extension:

What Wall can guard me, or what Shades can hide?  
They pierce my Thickets, thro' my Grot they glide.<sup>15</sup>

The Cave of Truth similarly sought to be a refuge that was both constructed and enforced by the invasive world of the dull society; trying to be a safe space, it serves to remind us of a pressing social space that was in competition with it. Such deepness, as in Democritus' Well provided Pope with another satirical model that was based on a parody of that downward movement of Dulness, so that the Bard, in a resonant parallel with Milton's Satan, was subject to a moral and an imaginative fall:

Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound!  
Plung'd for his sense, but found no bottom there.<sup>16</sup>

The link between the grotto as a species of creative source and its infiltration by broader social forces can be seen in another subterranean cavern that appears in *A Trip to the Moon*, where the youths are engaged "spinning Sonnets, Odes, Epigrams, and all the easier Kinds of Poetry." Others are employed at anvils, "making Epick Poems."<sup>17</sup> Dulness, however, is a collective enterprise, a form of *craft*, and this low labour is appropriate to dark underground spaces. It is important also to note that there is a necessary division of labour, so that no one sees the whole pattern. In *Peri Bathous*, Pope had illustrated this by linking it to the observation that "the vast improvement of modern manufactures ariseth from their being divided into several

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<sup>14</sup> *The Dunciad*, A.III.347.

<sup>15</sup> Pope, "Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot," 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> *The Dunciad*, B.I.118-19.

branches, and parcel'd out to several trades." His example is clock-making, where "one artist makes the balance, another the spring, another the crown-wheels, a fourth the case, and the principal workman puts all together." Pope observed that the several parts of modern poetry and rhetoric have "branched out in the like manner."<sup>18</sup> Considering the genius for the profound "and by what it is constituted" Pope suggests that the grotesque is typified by a radical failure to place parts in their correct spaces; in this process of manufacture, the role of the principal workman had been abandoned:

He is to consider himself as a grotesque painter, whose works would be spoil'd by an imitation of nature, or uniformity of design. He is to mingle bits of the most various, or discordant kinds, landscape, history, portraits, animals, and connect them with a great deal of flourishing, by head or tail, as it shall please his imagination, and contribute to his principal end, which is to glare by strong oppositions of colours, and surprize by contrariety of images.<sup>19</sup>

Parts are simply thrown together without any overall design and all of this occurs within the space of painting. One feature of the grotesque that must be emphasized in this example is the concentration on light. Dryden, it will be recalled, had prohibited the confusion of rays of light. In the grotesque, however, our expectation is that there will be a disorienting "glare" ("by strong

<sup>17</sup> *A Trip to the Moon*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>18</sup> *Peri Bathous* in *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, in *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, Volume II: The Major Works 1725-1744* ed. Rosemary Cowler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, The Shakespeare Head Press), p. 224.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-2. The link between spontaneity of writing and grotesque painting could have been derived from Montaigne's "Of Friendship": "As I was considering the way a painter went about his work, I had a mind to imitate him. He chooses the best spot, the middle of each wall, to put a picture laboured over with all his skill, and the empty space all around it he fills with grotesques, which are fantastic paintings whose only charm lies in their variety and strangeness. And what are these things of mine, in truth but grotesque and monstrous bodies, pieced together of diverse members, without definite shape, having no order, sequence or proportion other than accidental" (Quoted in Harpham, *On the Grotesque*, pp. 27-8). A more direct source, as I will go on to argue, however, is Horace's *Ars Poetica*, which provides a basic model for the transgression of convention.

opposition of colours") and "surprise" ("by contrariety of images"). For the grotto, like the creative mind and the grotesque painting, seeks to improve upon nature chiefly by abandoning imitative imperatives. The effect is to enhance the disorienting effect of the grotto. As the *Newcastle General Magazine* correspondent notes:

To multiply this Diversity, and still more increase the Delight, Mr *Pope's* poetick Genius has introduced a kind of Machinery, which performs the same part in the Grotto that supernal Powers and incorporeal Beings act in the heroick Species of Poetry: This is effected by disposing Plates of Looking glass in the obscure Parts of the Roof and the Sides of the Cave, where sufficient Force of Light is wanting to discover the Deception ... Thus by a fine Taste and happy Management of Nature, you are presented with an indistinguishable Mixture of Realities and Imagery.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the characteristic artificiality of the grotto provides us with another model for looking at the writing of dulness as a mere craft and as a grotesque practice. The flight to fantasy through deception and unreality, abandoning solid virtue for effects of surface is what we have come to expect from Pope's satirical representation of the world. In the passage above, however, there is no indication of irony, for the narrator's tone is clearly one of fascination rather than scorn; the happy management of nature is an achievement. In *The Dunciad* the grotesque lights are not an improvement of nature, but decidedly out of nature, they belong to Pope's broader vision of nature in distress.

The idea of *natura pictrix* expressed nature's ability to diversify; in this fashion she added colour and shape to the world given in outline by God's plan. The sportiveness of light was built into the grotesque portrait of Dulness, but it clearly fascinated Pope in its own right, as the following lines from *The Rape of the Lock* illustrate

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<sup>20</sup> Reprinted in Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope 1731-43* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1969), Appendix A, p. 239.

Dipt in the richest Tincture of the Skies,  
Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies;  
While ev'ry Beam new transient Colours flings,  
Colours that change whene'er they wave their Wings.<sup>21</sup>

With an emphasis on the notion of nature's superfluity, one might see these lines as Hogarth's starting point. Writing on "variety" in the second chapter of *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753) he noted the importance of this concept in the beauty of the "ornamental parts of nature":

The Shapes and colours of plants, flowers, leaves, the paintings  
in butterflies wings, shells &c seem of little other intended use,  
than that of entertaining the eye with the pleasure of variety ...

But just as Pope had qualified his Twickenham grotto with an emphasis on it as a site of contemplation, so Hogarth stressed the centrality of *Composure* in art: "I mean here, and every where indeed, a composed variety; for variety uncomposed, and without design, is confusion and deformity."<sup>22</sup>

In *The Dunciad*, lights and colour attract and confuse, they mislead or simply dance to their own sportive and playful motions. In a postlapsarian world we cannot be sure which are the true, guiding lights. In his "Ode to Dr William Sancroft", Swift delineated the transgressive sportiveness of light I am describing:

For this inferior world is but Heaven's dusky shade,  
By dark reverted rays from its reflection made;  
Whence the weak shapes wild and imperfect pass,  
Like sun-beams shot at too far distance from a glass;  
Which all the mimic forms express,  
Tho' in strange uncouth postures, and uncomely dress.<sup>23</sup>

The disorienting effects of light belonged specifically to the description of the moral universe and the human condition. In this sense, they were *given* rather than made. But there was yet another level of sportiveness in which light and colour are manipulated and displaced artificially. The operation of such

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<sup>21</sup> Canto II. 65-8.

<sup>22</sup> pp. 16-17.

artificiality is best illustrated in an example from Swift's "The Progress of Beauty":

Three Colours, Black, and Red, and White,  
So gracefull in their proper Place,  
Remove them to a diff'rent Light  
They form a frightfull hideous Face,

For instance; when the Lily skips  
Into the Precincts of the Rose,  
And takes Possession of the Lips,  
Leaving the Purple to the Nose.

So Celia went entire to bed,  
All her Complexions safe and sound,  
But when she rose, White, Black and Red  
Though still in sight, had chang'd their Ground.

The Black, which would not be confin'd  
A more inferior Station seeks  
Leaving the fiery red behind,  
And mingles in her muddy Cheeks.

At the outset it looks as though this grotesque account belongs to caricature, given its distortion of the graceful into the frightful hideous face. Nonetheless the displacements that uncover and recover the human category belong primarily to the sportive grotesque, to which we are alerted by the playful emphasis that falls on "skip." Again the grotesque is achieved largely in specific spatial terms, as Swift insists, the colours simply shift their ground. These are also, it must be noted, implicitly social spaces, and the grotesque processes are partly sanctioned by manoeuvres that belong to the "inferior" station in life. A further level of grotesque outlandishness emerges from the sense that colours have a life of their own, almost independent of the human component of which they are merely surface effects. Moreover, the play of colours is part of a wider aesthetic play, showing how close beauty is to its obverse, how easily the object is interpretatively displaced by minor spatial

modifications. Harmony is "restored" by the renewed imposition of the artificial; by the use of pencil, paint and brush, colours are returned to their correct places and uses and Celia teaches her cheeks to blush again. Such sportiveness can therefore be distinguished from the satire or caricature of which it was often a component.

### 3. Caricature

These acts of artificial transformation and relocation of categories, parts or qualities belonging to specific spaces bring me to the discussion of caricature. Clearly there is much more at stake in the playful grotesqueness of Swift's poem than can be defined in terms of caricature alone. Wolfgang Kayser's scheme of caricature divided caricature into three types. In the first, "the painter reproduces natural distortions as he finds them." Kayser's second category was "exaggerated" caricature, in which the caricaturist "enhances the monstrosity of the subject without destroying its similarity to the model." In a third category, Kayser defined caricature as the fantastic, "or grotesque in the proper sense, where the painter, disregarding verisimilitude, gives rein to an unchecked fancy (like the so-called Hell Bruegel) with the sole intention of provoking laughter, disgust, and surprise about the daring of his monstrous creations by the unnatural and absurd products of his imagination."<sup>24</sup> But are these categories ones that we can really work with in relation to eighteenth-century literature? One example that was common in eighteenth century painting and literature that cannot be brought into Kayser's scheme was mimicry. In partly, the satire achieved by, for example, not only dressing a monkey like a fop, but also standing such an animal *next to* a fop, was that this involved a spatial displacement; this called for a playful remapping of

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<sup>24</sup> Kayser, op. cit., p. 30.

categories *within* each figure and *across* the two figures, which nevertheless remain discretely *apart* in space. Often the grotesque emerges from an enforced doubleness, in which we are made to see two objects simultaneously. This compels us to compare them, and, as in the following example, to effect a monstrous transformation:

I mean by them this picture doth resemble  
 Who preach not half so fine as they dissemble  
 Of Heterogeneous parts as opposite  
 Composed, as darkness to Meridian Light  
 Made up of halves that can no more agree,  
 Than Royal Pow'r and Independency  
 A British Janus with a double Face  
 A Monster of a strange gigantick Race.<sup>25</sup>

The passage alludes to versions of the reversible head or *physionomie a double visage* which appeared during the reformation and showed the Pope, for example, doubled as a Devil, or as a Cardinal and a Fool.

The tendency to caricature and generally distort tended to proliferate beyond figures which might legitimately suffer a monstrous representation. In the vault of the Scrovegni Chapel, for instance, Giotto had daringly depicted an unattractive, buck-toothed St Luke.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, in his *A Burlesque on Kent's Altarpiece at St. Clement Danes* (1725), Hogarth used shapeless figures and a cherub placed in a disorienting position. In such cases, the infringement of space enabled and empowered caricature, it was sanctioned as the product of a trifling frame of mind which forged a sport of representation against high mimesis.

More generally, Kayser's first definition fails to take proper account of the variety of natural distortions, monsters and grotesque phenomena that exist before caricature is brought to bear on them; these in turn are already subject

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<sup>25</sup> "A British Janus, Anglice a Time Server". See M. Dorothy George, *English Political Caricature: A Study of Opinion and Propaganda*, vol. I, Plate 18. This is an example of High/Low Church propaganda. George notes its date as c. 1690-1710, p. x.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Barolsky provides an extensive catalogue of such examples in his *Infinite Jest: Wit and Humour in Italian Renaissance Art* (The University of Missouri Press, 1978), p. 10.

to popular embellishment and folkloric reproduction as "wonder" or travel narratives; these in turn may be satirized in texts such as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. As the latter illustrates most effectively, the human category is already magnified or diminished, it is already a *lusus naturae* before caricature begins - this is simply a fact about Nature's secret and aberrant operations, as well as a fact about the variety of ways of seeing things available to us at any one time. If there were just one common and shared way of seeing things, human society would be on the path to harmony. Caricature is never merely a case of reproducing with exaggeration; rather, it is also a *kind* of vision, that builds from a scepticism concerning man's aspiration to nobility; it tends to chart the detours and deviations of the human category, emphasizing its multiple slippages into the bestial.

In caricature, the fact of corporeal becomingness is more manifest than the sportive plays of light and colour discussed above. Lines which had defined the person and were a full representation of that person begin to be destabilized, such that only *part* of the person is represented and that part is already becoming something else. This served a satirical purpose, and involves a moral linkage of associations that Kayser does not seem enthusiastic about acknowledging, but which was centrally important in humanist and eighteenth century satire. In other instances such distortion was simply "vicious" - as defined by contemporaries - a playful or fanciful corruption of the norm in parallel or mirroring the monstrous mutations occasionally practised by Nature.

Hogarth's and Fielding's objections to caricature are well known. The latter had said that Comic History painting consists in "the exactest copying of Nature; insomuch that a judicious Eye instantly rejects any thing *outré*; any Liberty which the Painter hath taken with the Features of that *Alma Mater*." In contrast, the aim of caricature is "to exhibit Monsters, not men; and all Distortions and Exaggerations whatever are within its proper Province." But

the objections to which we are alerted here are not those of Dryden. It seems that caricature is too readily capable of being produced. As Fielding observes, "it is much easier, much less the Subject of Admiration, to paint a Man with a Nose, or any other feature of preposterous Size, or to expose him in some absurd or monstrous Attitude, than to express the Affections of Men on Canvass."<sup>27</sup> Hogarth also draws a defensive distinction between character and caricature in the passage attached to *The Bench* (1758):

When a character is strongly marked in the living face, it may be considered as an index to the mind, to express which, with any degree of justness in painting requires the utmost effort of a great master. Caricature ... may be said to be a species of lines that are produced rather by the hand of chance than of skill.

Mechanical and automatic, the art of caricature undermined the individual stamp and originality of the artist.

In important respects, the work of Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1527-93) introduced the realization in pictorial art that a figure is, or can be, assembled from parts, any one of which can be rationally organized, displaced or distorted. Distortion is a case of what Hogarth calls the *outré* and he gives as examples a Giant and a Dwarf. Caricature, on the other hand, depended on "the surprize we are under at finding ourselves with any sort of Similitude in objects absolutely remote in their kind. Let it be observ'd the more remote in their Nature the greater is the excellence of these pieces."<sup>28</sup>

In examples by Arcimboldo, either the face or the whole figure might be broken up into unreal particles of animals and plants. In his *Wasser* (in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), for instance, we see various fish, including lobsters and crabs, if we attend to the individual parts of the representation. Yet taken as a whole, or seen from a distance they made up a

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<sup>27</sup> Henry Fielding, Preface to *Joseph Andrews* (Penguin, 1977), p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> See his engraving *The Bench* (1758) reproduced in Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: His Life, Art and Times*, vol 2, p. 289.

face, as if by collage. Such mixed, shifting representations, in which a part was in an unstable relation to whole, were fashionable for a period in courtly art. Moreover, there existed simultaneously a popular tradition, exemplified in the woodcuts of Jobias Stimmer, who had constructed a caricature of the Pope built out of clocks, candles, and bells. Here there was a logical arrangement and act of choice in the substitution of objects each of which was designed to be kept together as part of the satirical scheme. These pieces looked forward to the grotesque example in Hogarth "Royalty, Episcopacy and Law" (1724) in which a face was made up of symbolically arranged pieces of keys, mallets, money &c. Moreover, such disintegration was more than a visual game, for it served to undermine the authority of the figures as they are grotesquely reformed according to the artist's whim. He produced them to his own ends. In conjunction with these formal characteristics, such entangled images, as we shall see, were particularly common in representations of the lower orders assembled in public places.

Before the eighteenth century "hieroglyphical" or "cryptic" prints had demanded a similar degree of verbal explanation. But these overdetailed images gave way to "caricature." Yet according to M. Dorothy George, they retained much of the old symbolism, yet they had "an immediate appeal to the eye."<sup>29</sup> For critics such as Jonathan Richardson, the integrity of art depended partly on its social status and exclusivity, "Painting is but another Sort of Writing, but like the Hieroglyphicks anciently 'tis a Character not for the Vulgar." Not to be able to read a Picture, Richardson claims, "is a sort of Illiterature, and Unpoliteness."<sup>30</sup> The control which should be brought to bear on the liberties we give to our inventions narrows to the issue of "Shew", to a

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<sup>29</sup> *English Political Caricature: A Study of Opinion and Propaganda*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), vol 1, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

commercialisation of the aesthetic, to a principle of pleasure decided by the marketplace:

The opera has carried this matter still farther, but so far as that being beyond Probability it touches not as the Tragedy does, it ceases to be Poetry, and degenerates into mere Shew, and Sound.<sup>31</sup>

Yet the complexities of caricature still need some analysis. The key term in the concept, and the most difficult, is transformation. The following example is drawn from a *Spectator* paper by John Hughes:

... the Art consists in preserving, amidst distorted Proportions and aggravated Features, some distinguishing Likeness of the Person, but in such a Manner as to transform the most agreeable Beauty into the most odious Monster ... There are surprizing Mixtures of Beauty and Deformity, of Wisdom and Folly, Virtue and Vice, in the human Make; such a Disparity is found ... every Individual, in some Instance or at some Times, is so unequal to himself, that *Man* seems to be the most wavering and inconsistent Being in the whole Creation..<sup>32</sup>

Hughes's definition draws a more subtle line than Dryden's ontological opposition between mimesis and fantasy. It is as much concerned with a problematic moral mapping that generates an uneasy relationship within the space of representation. For although the process begins to "transform ... into" this is in fact a process without any terminus; in this respect it is necessarily what I have called (Empedoclean) mixture rather than (Aristotelean) structure; it leaves the author stumbling over the grotesque moral paradox so vividly embodied in the slippery conclusion that man "is so unequal to himself." Hughes proceeds to quote Pascal on the dangerous consequences of representing man's closeness to the beast, without also showing his greatness; imperfections of nature need to be rectified by the force of religion and virtue. Hughes finally retreats from caricature, but in the process he had uncovered

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<sup>31</sup> Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>32</sup> John Hughes, *Spectator* 537, 15 November 1712. Bond, vol. 4, p. 417.

the inherent grotesqueness of man's condition that such representations are parasitic upon: man is "unequal to himself."

It is important to note that the grotesque could be produced from within imitation, where imitation is not so much the outer show, the varnish and glitter of civilization's surface, but a privileged access to the inner nature, that is, what we see after we have stripped off society's masks and layers. In this respect satire projects a moral masquerade to which it supplies a key. A preoccupation with imitation as the factor which excludes the grotesque is turned on its head by Swift when he points out that the subject matter of art may in itself be monstrous. To describe or paint the world as it actually is leads to the manufacture of monstrous forms:

How I want thee, humorous Hogarth,  
Thou, I hear, a pleasant Rogue art;  
Were but you and I acquainted,  
Every Monster should be painted;  
You should try your graving Tools  
On this odious group of Fools;  
Draw the Beasts as I describe 'em,  
From their Features while I gibe them;  
Draw them like, for I assure you,  
You will need no *Car'atura*;  
Draw them so that we may trace  
All the Soul in every Face.<sup>33</sup>

In the case of grotesque distortion, there is a postponement of mimetic priorities. But in allegory and fable the outer "show" has *already* come to represent the inner nature, the bestial is already projected as a swine. In such cases the grotesque is an example of parallel construction, an overlaying of one set of values upon categories already charged with moral associations. Visually, one category becomes another, and the becomingness is maintained chiefly by the awareness that the mapping is being achieved by the mind's consent to the rhetorical conventions of the genre.

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<sup>33</sup> Swift, "The Legion Club", 219-30.

#### 4. The Allegoresque

The most manifest shift of categories occurs in allegory and fable. Full-scale extended allegory in the manner of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is less my concern than allegorical *moments* and manoeuvres in texts which result in a grotesque slippage of categories. In the eighteenth century, despite the enthusiasm for taxonomic systems, large scale allegory was absent. In part, this was because language had lost its "sacralizing power." As Maureen Quilligan argues, "it is possible to write and read allegory intelligently in those cultural contexts which grant to language a significance beyond that belonging to a merely arbitrary system of signs."<sup>34</sup> Given the increasing suspicion of language, particularly poetic language, on the part of bodies such as the Royal Society, these terms for reading allegory were weakened. It would perhaps be more accurate to coin the term *allegoresque* as a species of imaginative embellishment that is characteristic of eighteenth century literature. This category serves to express a *different* kind of allegorical function in the eighteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Such *allegoresque* moments were pictorial and descriptive in the first instance, laying claim to mimetic principles before pronouncing the more vicious shapes into which persons, beast and objects have been jumbled. The *allegoresque* temporarily licensed the playful breakdown or mismapping within systems and totalities. For the purpose of this discussion I will take a paper which appeared in the *Guardian*:

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<sup>34</sup> Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p. 156.

<sup>35</sup> I consider that Gay Clifford has chosen the correct strategy for looking at allegory in the eighteenth century, in her judgment that "works of an allegorical nature from the late seventeenth century onwards ... are conceived in a spirit hostile (sometimes violently so) to any attempted systemization of life." She also regards Swift as "a crucial transitional figure in the development of allegory." see *The Transformations of Allegory* (Routledge and Kegan Paul), p. 110.

I had my eyes purified by a Water which made me see extremely clear ... I was then admitted to the Upper Chamber of Prospect, which was called *the Knowledge of Mankind*; here the Window was no sooner opened but I perceived the Clouds to roll off and part before me, and a Scene of all the Variety of the World presented itself ...<sup>36</sup>

The allegoresque was primarily encountered through a safeguard device such as the dream or fantastic journey which liberated the potential both to shift and mix categories. At the same time, it was remarkably a known world, in which the observer's distance from objects allowed the narrator to return them to their correct proportions. The "whole Variety of the World" motif was of course a common one in humanist writings which would depict the petty buying and selling of the fair and market as an overcrowded public space in which the dimensions and importance of individuals were reduced to those of an insect, as seen from the distant, sealed off vantage point of the observer. In cases where the distance between observer and observed was reduced, a different kind of satiric distance was achieved in what I am calling the allegoresque representation by means of imaginative estrangement. As the passage proceeds, therefore, body parts are increasingly transferred from one category to another:

Methought the very shape of most of them was lost; some had the Heads of Dogs, others of Apes or Parrots ... the change of ... Soul became visible in his Countenance.<sup>37</sup>

Pride is represented by a horse, talkativeness by assemblies of geese; the envious and malicious by serpents; hypocritical oppressors by crocodiles, the covetous acquire the claws of harpies; sharpers are chameleons; a bully is a dunghill cock; critics are cats; fops are apes; flatterers are spaniels; crafty people become foxes; the slothful are asses; the cruel are wolves; the ill-bred

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<sup>36</sup> *Guardian* 56, 15 May 1713. (Ed.) John Calhoun Stephens (Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1982), p. 218.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218-19.

are bears; lechers are goats and the gluttonous are swine. Drunkenness does not effect a change "because it deforms them of itself, and because none of the lower Rank of Beings is guilty of so foolish an Intemperance." The general tendency to make use of animals shows the relation of these grotesque schemes to the conventions of fable. Indeed, the article points back to Aesop's treatment of animals in recognizing that he "took them out of their Mute Condition, and taught them to speak for themselves with relation to the Actions of Mankind."<sup>38</sup> More important for this study is the systematic mapping of specific animal categories onto specific vices by means of conventional associations. Sharing these associations clearly makes satire a joint enterprise in which expectations are likely to be satisfied by familiar representations. Such conventions can be systemised as in the list above, although individual writers may introduce minor modifications. The Pythagorean system is generally used as a framework for the downward, bestial transmigration of the soul. As *The Political Padlock* notes, it was

The Samian Sage, who first maintained  
That transmigrated Nature reign'd,  
Dismiss'd his Souls, from human Breasts  
To do vile Penance in brute Beasts

A footnote explains that the "Samian Sage" is Pythagoras, who held the Transmigration of Souls. The footnote proceeds to explain:

This and the following Line, at the same time that they are a Banter upon that ridiculous Notion, figuratively express to us the more absurd Changes that have happened in *Europe* for some Years past, so monstrous, that the Author seems to think *Man* could never be capable of them, but that they have inverted the aforesaid System of the Philosopher, and have acted more like Beasts than rational Creatures.

Although transmigration is a "ridiculous Notion" it serves as a model for a grotesque reordering of nature along the lines ordained by shared satirical

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

associations. Nature, seeing that man was grown degenerate and that "Brute Instinct" was to be preferred to reasoning,

She thought it best to change her System;  
For which the Species to amend,  
She diff'rent acts to the same End;  
And, *vice versa*, turns to the Beast  
To animate the human Breast.  
Hence, in the Face you may discover,  
What *Brute* within, is the Man's *Mover*.<sup>39</sup>

Such direct mappings of morality from beast to vice follows the comparison which Swift had drawn with Hogarth in "The Legion Club" discussed above.<sup>40</sup> Importantly, the reversal of Nature's normal path simply recreates a different *kind* of system which always contains the bestial within it.

According to *Spectator* 35, wits and humorists need to learn that the production of monstrous conceits almost qualifies them for Bedlam. The paper concluded that "Humour should always lie under the Check of Reason."<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the hegemony of the rational is not so much a matter of fact as a matter of preference, the way things ought to be. As *A Trip to the Moon* points out,

When the Rational governs, all Things are well, and we live as we ought to do: But, from the Moment that the sensitive gets the upper Hand, we commence Brutes.<sup>42</sup>

As this study is outlining, however, reason sanctioned its own moments of trifling, drawing on nature's aberrations to justify such transgressions. In *A Trip to the Moon*, a gentleman with the head of an ass is appointed to instruct the narrator, as though to suggest that there is a foolishness both at the source

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<sup>39</sup> Father M-R, S-----ini, *The Political Padlock and the English Key, A Fable* (1742).

<sup>40</sup> This is an extreme case of the judgment which Peter Steele attaches, that Swift controls his enemies and victims by producing them to his own taste. See his *Jonathan Swift: Preacher and Jester* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

<sup>41</sup> *Spectator* 35, 10 April, 1711. Bond, vol. 1, p. 146.

<sup>42</sup> *A Trip to the Moon*, p. 57.

and in the transmission of knowledge. By the same token, the figure of the ass allows the text to play off and indulge its own mixture of the foolish and the fantastic.<sup>43</sup> Following a different line, the clear demarcation of the rational and the sensitive into different spaces began to break down as it was realized that reasoned moral exhortation is not the most direct route into the sensitive.

What tends to begin as a linkage of categories from the space of specific vices onto specific individuals through a shared rhetoric of bestial categories culminates in a territory which is not so readily capable of being mapped; the neat conventional associations of allegorical depiction give way to the overfilled spaces of the *allegoresque*. In such instance, "otherness" was deployed, as suggested by Blackmore's "intellectual Africa" which was described as teeming with monsters and mixed modes of being; yet all of this still belongs to an overriding moral and rational purpose which has, nevertheless, become rather undifferentiated:

The Assembly was made up of Brutes and half Brutes, that were Bears, Wolves, Tygers, Foxes, Monkeys, Cats and Dogs, &c and those of several Kinds, with certain other Animals, very like the Pictures which I have seen of Beasts in the *East* and *West-Indies*; others had only one or more Members of Beasts.<sup>44</sup>

As the account develops we encounter that familiar territory of the de-structured and monstrously mixed that borders on chaos. As the narrator proceeds to inform us, "We met with a Company of Beasts, among whom we could not discover the least Remains of Humanity, except one, who had preserv'd his Nose."<sup>45</sup> The map of humanity finds only one recognizable feature in its landscape; representations collapse from the effort involved in depicting vices in a state of the most extreme depravity. Many artists simply enjoyed the comic effects that any distortion of figure was likely to produce.

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<sup>43</sup> *A Trip to the Moon*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> *A Trip to the Moon*, p. 12.

Giotto had exploited the comic possibilities of ugliness in his allegories of the Vices; his grotesque *Invidia* or *Envy* is portrayed as a monstrous hag with a poisonous serpent emerging from her mouth and with a gigantic, deformed left ear; his *Stultitia* is a bloated, comical oaf with a club in his hand. For all this, there was a more radical realization that there were no limits to the absences, excesses and mixtures that might be the proper subject-matter for such representations. I will return to the fantastic space of the grotesque, but before I proceed, it is worth taking a look at the conventions through which the grotesque was managed.

### 5. Horace's *Ars Poetica*

Emerging from an aesthetic of imitation, Dryden's *Examen Poeticum* placed caricature alongside the wild imagination and superficially this duplicated Kayser's third definition of the category that was based on fantasy. But Dryden was much more conscious of the need to enforce an ontological ban, as the last words of his outburst underline:

When they describe the Writers of this Age, they draw such monstrous figures of them, as resemble none of us: Our pretended Pictures are so unlike, that 'tis evident we never sate to them. They are all Grotesque; the Products of their wild Imaginations, things out of Nature, so far from being Copy'd from us, that they resemble nothing that ever was, or ever can be.<sup>46</sup>

Behind the ontological ban, I will be arguing, there is a conventional one, drawn from Horace's *Ars Poetica*, that calls for a public censure of such forms through ridicule. Dryden's allegiance to Horace can be shown from *A Parallel*

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<sup>45</sup> *A Trip to the Moon*, p. 36.

where an injunction to maintain artistic control emerges from a discussion of *Ars Poetica*:

There is yet a lower sort of Poetry and Painting, which is out of Nature: For a Farce is that in Poetry, which Grotesque is in a Picture. The Persons, and action of a Farce are all unnatural, and the manners false, that is, inconsisting with the Characters of Mankind. Grotesque-painting is the just resemblance of this; and *Horace* begins his *Art of Poetry* by describing such a Figure, with a man's Head, a Horse's Neck, the Wings of a bird, and a Fishes Tail; parts of a different species jumbled together, according to the mad imagination of the Dawber.<sup>47</sup>

As if he had not made his point sufficiently clear, Dryden runs through the arguments again, now with a translation from Horace to bring home his point:

And though *Horace* gives permission to Painters and Poets to dare every thing, yet he encourages neither of them, to make things out of nature or verisimilitude; for he adds immediately after,

But let the bounds of Licences be fix'd,  
Not things of disagreeing Nature's mix'd;  
Not Sweet with Sowre, not Birds with Serpents joyn'd,  
Nor the fierce Lyon with the fearfull Hind.

The Thoughts of a Man endued with good Sence are not of kin to visionary madness; Men in Feavers are onely capable of such Dreams. Treat then the Subjects of your Pictures with all possible faithfulness, and use your Licences with a becoming boldness, provided they be ingenious, and not immoderate and extravagant.<sup>48</sup>

Perceived as a category of censure in aesthetic criticism, the grotesque served to contract the space of the imaginative field; just as soon as the tendency to rebel seemed to threaten the stable framework within which one is expected to work, Horace's standard was invoked. The allegiance to probability serves to frame this discourse within empirical expectations. Horace's statements on the grotesque at the beginning of *Ars Poetica* were given a wider currency through

<sup>46</sup> The Dedication (1693), A8.

<sup>47</sup> Dryden, *A Parallel*, p. 55.

Vitruvius' *De Architectura* and Leon Battista Alberti's commentary on this work. Such texts may be considered part of a neo-classical tradition which stresses pure, ideal forms at the expense of the playful and metamorphic; they are suspicious of the variety of nature; of the grotesque's purposeless creativity and its accommodation of indulgence and improbability. Indictments of the grotesque such as the following are therefore not uncommon:

On the stucco are monsters rather than definite representations taken from definite things. Instead of columns there rise up stalks; instead of gables, striped panels with curved leaves and volutes. Candelabra uphold pictured shrines and above the summits of these, clusters of thin stalks rise from their roots in tendrils with little figures seated upon them at random. Again, slender stalks with heads of men and of animals attached to half the body./ Such things neither are, nor can be, nor have been. On these lines the new fashions compel bad judges to condemn good craftsmanship for dullness. For how can a reed actually sustain a roof, or a candelabrum the ornaments of a gable? or a soft and slender stalk a seated statue? or how can flowers and half-statues rise alternately from roots and stalks? Yet when people view these falsehoods, they approve rather than condemn, minds darkened by imperfect standards of taste cannot discern the combination of impressiveness with a reasoned scheme of decoration. For Pictures cannot be approved which do not resemble reality.<sup>49</sup>

In their censure of the grotesque, subsequent authors follow the dictates of both Vitruvius and Horace, in the form set out at the beginning of *Ars Poetica*. Many versions echoed the title and enjoyed giving the grotesque shape a contemporary context. An example is *The Art of Beauing* (1730)

Suppose *Belinda* painted to a Hair,  
 With her own Face, but with a Neck of Mare,  
 With wings of ----,\* and with a Tail of Ling,  
 Who could help smiling at so odd a Thing?  
 Such is, my Lord, the figure of a *Beau*,  
 Tost out by Fancy, and Valet, for Shew;  
 Which were it not for powder, his Grimace

<sup>48</sup> *De Arte Graphica*. See *The Works of John Dryden: Prose 1691-8*, (California: University of California, 1989), vol. 20 p. 133.

<sup>49</sup> Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, tr. and ed. Frank Granger (Cambridge, Mass.: The Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1934), vol. 2, Book 7, p. 105.

May well resemble, faith, a sick-Man's Case;  
 Where Incoherence crowding thro' the Brain,  
 Declare to all Men that the Man's in Pain.  
 \* *Nymphae*

Hogarth is possibly included within this scheme, with its combination of opposites, so closely following Horace and guiding us to the correct response - the genteel smile that policed the subject matter:

Should Hogarth, with extravagant Conceit,  
 Make a strange Group of contrast Figures meet,  
 Beneath a plume that nods with Tragic Grace  
 Limn the quaint drollery of H-psl-y's Face;  
 Then to that Face add *Chloe's* Neck and Breast,  
 Beauteous as Thought e'er form'd, or Tongue exprest ...  
 Who could restrain a Smile at Sight so odd?<sup>50</sup>

James Miller's *Harlequin Horace* (1731) was another fine example of this grotesque play with Horace's conventions that moves us into other social spaces still, such as the pantomime.<sup>51</sup>

Many of the indictments of the grotesque that crop up throughout the early eighteenth century can be taken back to these sources. In the main, there were fears about the abandonment of nature as the foundation and subject matter of representation. This led to ontological anxieties about the enthusiasm for a playful randomness that evaded questions of intention, authority, tradition and creative process. Coupled with this, such criticism usually imposes an emphatic social component; building on a disorderly use of space, the image is characteristically one of overcrowding. This is the social equivalent of the morbid reproducibility of the arabesque, that led commentators such as Wolfgang Kayser to see it as more a fear of life than a fear of death. Building on the mixture or breakdown of categories critics lead us to a vision of the collapse of hierarchies and the invasion of discrete, fenced off social spaces. Such representations increasingly belong to sickness, madness and dreams (or

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<sup>50</sup> *Harleian Miscellany*, V (1745), p. 544.

<sup>51</sup> I will be discussing pantomime as a version of the grotesque in Chapter Five.

combinations of these). In most cases they are policed by Horatian laughter and ridicule. Thus Pope concludes his portrait of Addison with the question, "Who but must laugh, if such a man there be"<sup>52</sup> and his indictment of Timon's Villa similarly has its roots in the public ridicule required in the face of its Brobdingnagian (dis)proportions:

Who but must laugh, the Master when he sees  
A puny insect, shiv'ring at a breeze!

Building on a sense of disbelief at the credibility of such monstrous conceptions - whether real or merely fanciful - the required response was ridicule as expressed by the indictment of laughter and according to the standards transmitted by Horace.

## 6. Invention and Fantasy

To be sure, the deployment of the grotesque had long been accepted as proper to the depiction of vice and this was one way of incorporating the grotesque, and in turn being liberated by it without incurring the censure of Horatian ridicule and laughter. Burke, it is true, was to claim that "I have been at a loss in all the pictures I have seen of hell, whether the painter did not intend something ludicrous,"<sup>53</sup> but his perspective is a later one, and emerged from a discussion of the sublime and a preference for verbal over pictorial representation. Importantly, it was in the grotesque representation of transgressive moments that the artist most mimics nature's aberrant creative agency. Leonardo da Vinci, for instance, had remarked on the imaginative liberation which such subject-matter permitted: "If the painter wishes to form images of animals or devils in the inferno, with what abundance of *inventione*

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<sup>52</sup> *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* l.213.

<sup>53</sup> *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757-9), ed. J.T. Boulton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), pp. 62-3.

his mind teems."<sup>54</sup> *Inventione* projects an infinite space in which to work because it is unbounded by the mimetic pressures. It corresponds best to the grotesque as pure fantasy, as suggested by Kayser's third category of caricature, although it is not clear why we should consider this inventiveness part of caricature rather than a category in its own right. The deployment of the fantastic in these terms undoubtedly had its roots in Italian painting, as can be seen from the description of an art gallery in *Spectator* 83: Addison nominates a French painter named Vanity who paints all his faces with smirks, glaring colours, and fluttering garments. Already we are beginning a Grotesques' Progress: Stupidity is represented by a German who copies him and a Venetian called "Fantasque" produces "agreeable Monsters," pictures full of "Distortions and Grimaces" like those to be found in contemporary stage techniques of Italian opera. Another readily available source - and importantly it returns us to representation in unambiguously spatial terms - was Spenser's chamber of *Phantastes* peopled with "Hags, Centaurs, feendes, Hippodames, Apes, Lions, AEGles, Owles, fooles, louers, children, Dames" in *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>55</sup>

These psychological and aesthetic issues find a common source in the difference between notions of *fantasia* and of *mimesis*. This "dichotomy" was particularly important in the work of Leonardo da Vinci, who self-consciously revised the medieval anatomy of the brain. His chief innovation was to insist on the *shared* habitation of *fantasia* and *intellecto* in the central chamber of the brain. As Martin Kemp concludes, "In terms of the medieval psychology of the inner senses which he adopted and adapted, this is the realm of *fantasia* - active, combinatory imagination - which continually recombines sensory

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<sup>54</sup> See Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man* (J.M. Dent, 1981), p. 161.

<sup>55</sup> II.ix.50.

impressions, visualizing new compounds in unending abundance ... he transferred the faculty of *fantasia* from the first to the second of the brain's ventricles, where it was able to act in concert with the rational faculties."<sup>56</sup>

Increasingly in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, there was a rhetorical divide between invention as the product of scientific methodologies and the resort to Fancy as the source of mystical non-rational solutions. Pope's observation in the *Epistle to Cobham* that "Nature well known, no prodigies remain / Comets are regular, and Wharton plain," (208-9), assumed both that such knowledge has been obtained and that it was available to all of those with an interest in science. Technological developments such as the microscope had shown that there was a whole new world of nature, previously unknown to us. For Swift, in his satire on the Royal Society or Academy of Lagado in *Gulliver's Travels*, much of the science that was practised was still fanciful and impractical - a misdirected energy. Yet in terms of the rhetoric of the Royal Society, Sprat had censured the poets who,

to make all things look more venerable than they were, devis'd a thousand false *Chimaeras*; on every *Field, River, Grove* and *Cave*, they bestow'd a *Fantasm* of their own making. With these they amaz'd the World; these they cloth'd with what shapes they pleased.<sup>57</sup>

Likewise, Richardson condemns on historical grounds, the poets who have

peopled the Air, Earth, and Waters with Angels, Flying Boys, Nymphs and Satyrs ... they have Imagin'd what is done in Heaven, Earth and Hell, as well as on this Globe, and which could never be known historically.<sup>58</sup>

Yet the combinatory power of *fantasia* reconciled it with reason's inevitable formation of grotesque shapes (Locke's mixed modes), as the programme suggested earlier by da Vinci clearly indicates: "If you wish to make an animal

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<sup>56</sup> Op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>57</sup> Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society* (1667), p. 340.

invented by you appear natural, let us say a dragon, take for the head that of the mastif or hound, for the eyes a cat, and for the ears a porcupine, and the brows of a lion, the temple of an old cock, the neck of a terrapin."<sup>59</sup> As I have been arguing, imagining the inferno led Leonardo da Vinci's mind to teem with images, through the exercise of *inventione*. Thus he defines a painting as "a subtle *inventione* which with philosophy and subtle speculation considers the natures of all form." He proceeds to argue that *inventione*, or composition, is the "culmination of this science":

If the painter wishes to see beauties which will enamour him, he is the lord of their production, and if he wishes to see monstrous things which frighten or those which are buffoonish and laughable or truly compassionate, he is their lord and god [...] And, in effect, that which is in the universe by essence, presence or imagination he has it first in his mind and then in his hands, and these are of such excellence that in a given time they will generate a proportional harmony in a single glance.<sup>60</sup>

Dangerously, these aesthetic categories point to political and religious usurpation. Moreover, given this excess of fantasy, its exorbitance, and its deception, invention is importantly at odds with the progressive and utilitarian ethos of the new science, typified by plainness, shared method and a commitment to "Things as they are." Yet a closer reading of Richardson illustrates the tendency to admit a greater measure of freedom than might at first be granted, given the comprehensive body of rules and conventions within which the artist was expected to work. The censure of fantasy, "As the Poets, so the Painters have stor'd our Imaginations with Beings; and Actions

<sup>58</sup> Richardson, *Two Discourses* (1719), pp. 21-2.

<sup>59</sup> Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man* (J.M. Dent, 1981), p. 161.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

that never were,"<sup>61</sup> has to be seen in the light of his recognition that "Our Ideas even of Fruits, Flowers, Insects, Draperies, and indeed of all Visible things, and of some that are Invisible, or Creatures of the Imagination are Rais'd, and Improv'd in the hands of a good Painter."<sup>62</sup> The competition between art and nature was part of the scientific tradition running from Bacon to Sprat and part of that tradition was, after all, the harnessing, control and perfection of nature by artificial means.

## 7. Competing for Space

Fantasia and invention had also to compete with what we might think of as the enhanced high mimeticism that was being achieved in the arts. As one commentator concludes for this period, "The body was given breathtaking verisimilitude in oil and watercolours; it was said of portraits that "if we credit our own Eyes, they live."<sup>63</sup> Despite these achievements, "conversation pieces," - portraits of recreational gatherings - tended to be rather static in character.<sup>64</sup> "Verbal portraits," similarly, according to Jean Hagstrum, "are bounded in space; one moves clearly from one single individual to another; and they resemble a framed, not a flowing, art."<sup>65</sup> Hagstrum goes on to conclude, however, that Dryden and Pope give us "not transcriptions of reality but

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<sup>61</sup> Richardson, *Two Discourses* (1719), pp. 22-3.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>63</sup> Hagstrum, *op. cit.*, (quoting Nahum Tate), p. 40.

<sup>64</sup> Mario Praz has described them in the following manner: "Barely more animated are the English conversation pieces where, if the adults have the stylized hauteur of fish in brilliant livery, the little ones of the family, arrested by the painter in playful or light-hearted moments, suggest the image of darting minnows among the motionless intent, mature fish. And these aquariums are lighted by the eighteenth century sun which seemed fated never to set." See *An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration from Pompei to Art Nouveau* trans. William Weaver (Thames and Hudson, 1964), p. 148.

revealing distortions based on an appearance of reality, an appearance that is never destroyed."<sup>66</sup> The tendency to depict the individual as bounded in private space, a discrete and self-sufficient unit, was increasingly disrupted by history and narrative painting. These encouraged a free-flowing metamorphic style that allowed signs to mix, interfere and distort. Space is once more without boundaries, objects break in on each other, with an emphasis on competition and exchange.

Artists were, of course, trained in copying the Old Masters, timeless models that had become stereotypes. In this regard, Hogarth satirized the reproducibility of such pictures in *The Battle of the Pictures* which reversed Swift's allegiance to the ancients as set out in *Battle of the Books*. Hogarth, however, caught momentary actions, processes and movement, progress and tradition, catapulting modern and ancient trajectories into one. At this juncture, it must be emphasized that the "low" style was constructed with the lower orders in mind. The hierarchy of genres that placed comedy at the bottom was commonly duplicated by aerial observation, placing the observer safely above the heterogeneous, sporting mixture which he views below him. In Hogarth, moreover, the aesthetic distance was reduced and the sense was commonly more one of parallel engagement with the material.

Accordingly, Ronald Paulson calls Hogarth's frontispiece to Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* "a grotesque history painting" in which the "conventional putti and satyrs are the fully realized figures, moving about in the picture space."<sup>67</sup> According to Paulson, "The history painting composition serves as a psychological referent, while at the same time helping to define the kind of

<sup>65</sup> Hagstrum, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

picture Hogarth has produced. He is criticizing the baroque profusion and operatic quality by associating them with Hudibras's distorting imagination, as they psychologically define Hudibras. Far from a norm, the baroque shapes represent delusion, pretension, perhaps hypocrisy."<sup>68</sup> The heroic world encounters the merely local and customary in early plates such as *Hudibras and the Skimmington*. But such grotesque overcrowding was not simply or even largely a fact of psychology, rather, it emerged from social referents that defined spaces in specific ways.

Potent symbols of mechanical and purposeless overcrowding were the fashions for the Moresque and Arabesque which were highly censured by critics of the Horatian school. The most influential grotesque murals of this kind were those excavated from the Domus Aurea of Nero and the Palace of Titus. Following these discoveries, the ceiling vaults of the library of the Cathedral of Siena were decorated in 1502 in a grotesque style.<sup>69</sup> In Kayser's definition, the Moresque was "a kind of two-dimensional ornament exclusively composed of rigidly stylized leaves and tendrils painted over a uniform background which is preferably kept in black and white." He contrasts this with the related ornament of the arabesque, which entails the use of perspective, "unlike the moresque it is tectonic (that is distinguishes between above and below); it is more profuse, so the background is often completely hidden."<sup>70</sup> Kayser's definition usefully underlines my emphasis on space and competition within the filling of it - *the background is often completely hidden* - the grotesque space was never an empty one. The purposelessness of such designs,

<sup>67</sup> Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: The Modern Moral Subject 1697-1732* (Lutt. Press, 1992), p. 143.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>69</sup> See Clayborough, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3, Kayser, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3.

combined with their fertile reproducibility led Kayser to conclude that the grotesque "instils fear of life rather than fear of death."<sup>71</sup> The psychology of this is attractive, but Kayser does not explain how this relates to the role of space in the play of mind, or its application to space not merely as that of representation, but something shared, co-habited, and competed for. The grotesque imagination typically teems with life, shapes and fanciful inventions. In *The Hind and the Panther*, for instance, Dryden had shown a "Grotesque design" in which the line, looks, shades and colours were all false; moreover, the Gods and Deities are "More thick than *Ptolemy* has stuck the Skies." Yet it becomes a public attraction, a crowd-puller:

Yet still the daubing pleas'd, and great and Small  
To view the Monster crowded Pigeon-hall.

Many examples of such overcrowding appear in the grotesque context of the breakdown of hierarchies. Some of the most recurring are those which describe Dulness in *The Dunciad*:

Millions and millions on these banks he views,  
Thick as the stars of night, or morning dews,  
As thick as bees o'er vernal blossoms fly,<sup>72</sup>  
....  
They summon all her Race: An endless band  
Pours forth, and leaves unpeopled half the land.  
A motley mixture!<sup>73</sup>

The motley mixture precisely described that characteristic coalescing of great and small identified by Dryden. More generally, we are concerned not merely with the multiplicity of forms but their inflation or expansion. On an abstract level this is what happens to Dulness; as Pope tells us, "Her ample presence

<sup>70</sup> Kayser, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>72</sup> *The Dunciad* B.III.31-3.

fills up all the space."<sup>74</sup> Because space is occupied in its entirety there is effectively no distance, either between objects, literary genre or points of view; dulness destroys perspective, reducing all minds "to one dead level." Moreover this critique of an unbounded and undifferentiated space calls implicitly for a remapping of social spaces and an insistence on cartographic realities. Fleet Street and Grub Street should not share co-ordinates with the centre of power. How these issues were developed imaginatively, remapping and including the low will be explored in the next chapter, particularly as they bear on a poem such as *The Dunciad*.

## 8. The Regions of False Wit

In *The Dunciad*, secondary qualities undergo a metamorphosis to primary status, leading Pope to create "solid darkness" and images formed from "well-body'd air."<sup>75</sup> In a different context, Swift had imagined replacing words with things, so that we have to carry them around with us, a heavy communicative baggage. Addison had taken these matters a step further: building on Locke's *Essay*, he had extended the operation of wit to a particular kind of space. Treating wit as something more than an operation, Addison showed how it functioned from its own mental (and social) space; it is filled with objects that are appropriately located there and we may travel or journey through it. Again some of the social implications whose resonances I have been exploring were also part of the definition of this space. In this section I argue that wit is spatially mapped in order to locate it within a scheme of social representation.

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<sup>73</sup> B.II.19-21.

<sup>74</sup> B.I.261.

In this regard, one of Addison's *Spectator* papers is an excellent example of how a number of culturally charged signs are brought together within one space:

Methoughts I was transported into a Country that was filled with Prodigies and Enchantments, Governed by the Goddess of FALSEHOOD, and entitled the *Region of False Wit*. ... I discovered in the Center of a very dark Grove a Monstrous Fabrick built after the *Gothick* manner, and covered with innumerable Devices in that barbarous kind of Sculpture. I immediately went up to it, and found it to be a kind of Heathen Temple consecrated to the God of Dullness.<sup>76</sup>

Clearly the passage prepares the way for Pope's *Dunciad*, with its vision of the North that, "by myriads pours her mighty sons,/Great nurse of Goths, of Alans, and of Huns."<sup>77</sup> Again this plays on a cartographic "other," in order to provide a metaphor for the operations of the mind. According to Steele, images of truth, zeal, faith and humanity are replaced with "Satyrs, Furies, and Monsters."<sup>78</sup> Addison, moreover, follows Dryden's authority in saying "That the Taste of most of our *English* Poets, as well as Readers, is extremely *Gothick*." Addison comments, "I look upon these writers as *Goths* in Poetry, who, like those in Architecture, not being able to come up to the beautiful Simplicity of the Old *Greeks* and *Romans*, have endeavoured to supply its place with all the Extravagancies of an irregular Fancy."<sup>79</sup> This was both a spatial and temporal judgment. First, Addison was establishing a tradition (hinged on time) that supplied eternal critical and aesthetic values; second, he provided a proper spatial specification for such values. Slippage from accepted norms of representation could therefore be illustrated by the invasion or conquest by the

<sup>75</sup> B.III.226, B.II.42.

<sup>76</sup> *Spectator* 63, 12 May 1711. Bond, vol. 1, p. 271.

<sup>77</sup> *The Dunciad* B.III.89-90.

<sup>78</sup> *Spectator* 172, 17 September 1711. Bond, vol 2, pp. 179-80.

Gothic "other," and by the importation of grotesque baggage into that space. Following Dryden's example, or perhaps looking back to Spenser,<sup>80</sup> the barbarous ornament served to disband hierarchical distinctions and defining classifications that Grecian traditions embodied.

Addison quoted Jean Regnaud de Segrais (d. 1701) in order to single out readers who, liking "nothing but the Husk and Rind of Wit, prefer a Quibble, a Conceit, an Epigram, before solid Sense and elegant Expression." He concluded, immediately afterward, "These are Mob Readers."<sup>81</sup> These were the crowds, switched on more by grinning than civilized mirth who were the target of Horace's laughter, those who took themselves to Bartholomew Fair in search of momentary pleasures and the indulgence of wonder. Again, a particular state of mind and its linguistic manifestation were united in a social category.

Another feature of the region of false wit, was its assembly of random objects. It is important to note that the narrator found "several things of the most different Natures tied up in Bundles, and thrown upon one another in heaps like Faggots. You might behold an Anchor, a Night-rail, and a Hobby-

<sup>79</sup> *Spectator* 62, 11 May 1711. Bond, vol. 1, p. 269.

<sup>80</sup> Spenser was sensitive to the political ramifications of grotesque decoration as symptomatic of a world in which the ordered, hierarchical scheme is being eroded in his description of the "entrayled" border of a tapestry panel:

Kings Queenes, Lords Ladies, Knights and Damzels gent  
Were heap'd together with the vulgar sort.  
And mingled with the raskall rablement,  
Without respect of persons or of port,  
To show Dan *Cupids* powre and great effort. III.xi.46.

...

A thousand monstrous formes therein were made  
Such as false loue doth oft upon him weare,  
For love in thousand mounstrous formes doth oft appeare.  
(*The Faerie Qveene*, III.xi.51).

<sup>81</sup> *Spectator* 62, 11 May 1711. Bond, vol. 1, p. 269.

horse bound up together," as though to emphasize the heterogeneous nature of the mind occupied by false wit. In the enchanted region of mixed wit, "It would be endless to describe several Monsters of the like Nature that composed this great Army."<sup>82</sup> Again, following Locke, the number of mixed modes was infinite.<sup>83</sup> Giving such lines of thought a modern interpretation, E.H. Gombrich has concluded that "We are one step closer to the condensation of images which Freud has analysed as belonging to the wit as it belongs to the dream. As with a dream any fragment can stand for the whole."<sup>84</sup>

Yet the exercise of wit in itself was important for the generation of grotesque images and objects. Many of these grotesques took their origin from puns. One example was in the heads in the capitals in the Medici Chapel which pun *caput* (head) and *Capitello* capital. Da Vinci similarly used puns such as the illustration of *di bene in meglio* (from good to better) shown as an image of *megliorana* (marjoram) grafted onto *bene* (shown as a bean-plant).<sup>85</sup> Such visual wit was explored by Addison in *Spectator* 59 which also comes out of a discussion of false wit. Addison explains how Mr Newberry represented his name:

by a Picture, hung up at his Door the Sign of a Yew-Tree, that had several Berries upon it, and in the midst of them a great golden N hung upon a Bough of the Tree, which by the help of a little false Spelling made up the Word *N-ew-berry*.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Spectator* 63, 12 May 1711. Bond, vol. 1, pp. 272, 273.

<sup>83</sup> There are more serious problems for simple ideas if we accept John Richetti's argument that language "cannot represent the simple ideas by which it is initially constituted; and so it cannot know itself, has no control over its origins and is radically dependent on experiences to which it has only the misleading relationship natural to metaphors and other tropes." See *Philosophical Writing: Locke, Berkeley, Hume* (Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 46.

<sup>84</sup> E.H. Gombrich, *Meditations upon a Hobby Horse and other Essays on the Theory of Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1965), p. 137.

<sup>85</sup> Kemp., op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>86</sup> *Spectator* 59, 8 May 1711. Bond, vol. 1, p. 251.

Other popular representations were the memorable but fanciful street signs "flying Pigs and Hogs in Armour, with many other Creatures more extraordinary than any in the Desarts of Africk." Addison points to the need to clear away these fabrications that were cluttering up public spaces. But the mixture and proliferation of forms is social as well as aesthetic, threatening to break down society's subtle distinctions and hierarchies (upon which order rests):

My first Task, therefore, should be, like that of *Hercules*, to clear the City from Monsters. In the second Place, I would forbid, that creatures of jarring and incongruous Natures should be joined together in the same Sign; such as the Bell and Neats-tongue, the Dog and Gridiron. The Fox and the Goose may be supposed to have met, but what has the Fox and the Seven Stars to do together? ... I would therefore establish certain Rules, for the determining how far one Tradesman may *give* the Sign of another, and in what Cases he may be allowed to quarter it with his own.<sup>87</sup>

For Addison, *true Wit* "consists in the Resemblance of Ideas, and *false Wit* in the Resemblance of Words." In *The Dunciad*, Pope built on the disjunction between signifiers and signified to show dulness's absolute play with words for their own sake. The Dunces' philosophy emerged from the notion that "Words are Man's Province, Words we teach alone" and that there was no route back to Things or referents ("And keep them in the pale of Words till death").<sup>88</sup> These for Pope were all part of a "trifling head" and Addison also spoke of the "Elaborate Trifles which have been the Inventions of such Authors as were often Masters of Great Learning but no Genius."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Spectator* 28, 2 April 1711. Bond, vol. 1, pp. 116-17.

<sup>88</sup> *The Dunciad*, B.IV.150, 160.

<sup>89</sup> *Spectator* 59, 8 May 1711. Bond, vol. 1, p. 249. Addison's motto appropriately exploits Seneca's *de Brevitate Vitae* 13.1, *Operose Nihil agunt* ("They Laboriously do nothing"). According to Warburton's note on "trifling head", this typifies modern education, "which confines Youth to the study of *Words* only in schools, subjects them to the authority of *Systems* in the Universities, and deludes them with the names of *Party-distinctions* in the World."

## 9. Remapping

Following Horace, representation hinged on mimetic probability, regulated and structured by a proper system of agreed rules and conventions. Yet many of these improbable combinations, dependent upon the common associations of words themselves became embedded in the representational spaces that generated them. In this regard, Hogarth's aesthetics provided a fully tolerant account of the wayward, of the heterogeneous and sportful. At the conclusion of the chapter I point to his retrospective defence of what he identifies as the serpentine line and a species of noble grotesque which had been unfolded and finally liberated from Horatian conventions.

Hogarth began with a formal principle; his response was benign and also less socially exclusive than many of the critical perspectives which took Horace as their source. Accordingly, Hogarth preserved a sense of disproportion which was essentially comic:

When improper, or *incompatible* excesses meet, they always excite laughter; more especially when the forms of those excesses are inelegant, that is, when they are composed of unvaried lines.<sup>90</sup>

Excess is clearly central to our understanding of the grotesque. Yet Hogarth relished this for its own sake, and therefore did not full partake of the standard responses of ridicule and censure: depicting a fat grown face of a man, wearing an infant's cap, Hogarth concluded

This is a contrivance I have seen at Bartholomew-fair, and always occasion'd a roar of laughter. [...] In these you see the ideas of youth and age jumbled together, in forms without beauty.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753), p.31.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

This may well be "out of Nature" but it is based upon Hogarth's own observation of the living worlds around him, it is not simply a copy of a copy of an Old Master. Hogarth continued:

So a Roman general, dres'd by a modern tailor and peruke maker, for tragedy, is a comic figure.----The dresses of the times are mix'd, and the lines which compose them are straight or only round.

Dancing masters, representing deities, in their grand ballets on the stage, are no less ridiculous. See the Jupiter.

Nevertheless custom and fashion will, in length of time, reconcile almost every absurdity whatever, to the eye, or make it over-look'd.<sup>92</sup>

Artists such as Michelangelo had argued that the grotesque has a legitimate presence and utility within art, concluding that "One may rightly decorate better when one places in a painting some monstrosity (for the diversion and relaxation of the sense and attention of mortal eyes, which at times desire to see what they have never seen before or what appears to them just cannot be) rather than the customary figures of men or animals, however admirable these may be."<sup>93</sup> It is from this observation that we find a source for the apes and monkeys that appear in satirical prints and comment on the central action by their marginal mimicry. As Ronald Paulson has commented, "peripheral emblems ... inform the central action."<sup>94</sup>

In another passage, Hogarth noted an example of the beautiful as exemplified by a *lusus naturae*; the idea of excrescence was purged of any sense of its more grotesque connotations. Looking at a figure shaped like a leaf taken from an ash-tree, he therefore described it as "a sort of *Lusus naturae*":

growing only like an excrescence, but so beautiful in the lines of its shell-like windings, as would have been above the power of a Gibbons to have equalled, even in its own materials; nor could the graver of Edlinck, or Drevet, have done it justice on copper. ...

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Harpham, *On the Grotesque*, p. 33.

Note, the present taste of ornaments seems to have been partly taken from productions of this sort.<sup>95</sup>

Shells were themselves anomalous; having been found inland, mysteriously transported from their proper location, they bore a special fascination for collectors and natural historians. For his part, Hogarth was attracted to their natural fancifulness, their "shell-like windings" and the reconstruction of such playfulness and deviation as ornament. More generally, these observations recall Pope's censure of the landscape in which "No pleasing Intricacies intervene,/Nor artful wildness to perplex the scene."<sup>96</sup> Just as it has subverted the systematic with respect to classification, so the grotesque disrupts the linear and regulated ordering of space. In this regard, Hogarth devoted a whole chapter to intricacy. Interestingly, he linked it with a sportiveness, or teasing of the mind which was innately pleasurable:

Wherein would consist the joys of hunting, shooting, fishing, and many other favourite diversions, without the frequent turns and difficulties, and disappointments, that are daily met with in the pursuit? ...

This love of pursuit, merely as pursuit, is implanted in our natures, and design'd no doubt, for necessary, and useful purposes ... It is a pleasing labour of the mind to solve the most difficult problems; allegories and riddles, trifling as they are, afford the mind amusement: and with what delight does it follow the well-connected thread of a play, or novel, which ever increases as the plot thickens, and ends most pleas'd when that is most distinctly unravell'd?

The eye hath this sort of enjoyment in winding walks, and serpentine rivers, and all sorts of objects, whose forms, as we shall see hereafter, are composed principally of what, I call the *waving* and *serpentine* lines.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: High Art and Low* (Lutt. Press, 1992), p. 233.

<sup>95</sup> Hogarth, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>96</sup> *Epistle To Burlington*, ll. 115-16.

<sup>97</sup> Richard Woodfield points out in his introductory *Note* to Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* that the "serpentine line was part of studio practice, and that Gerhard van Lairese's *Het Groot Schilderboek* (published in English in 1738) contains an introduction to the

Intricacy in form, therefore I shall define to be that peculiarity in the lines, which compose it, that *leads the eye a wanton kind of chace*, and from the pleasure that gives the mind, intitles it to the name of beautiful.<sup>98</sup>

Hogarth referred to Michaelangelo's delphic comment that "winding lines are as often the cause of deformity as of grace." He argued that Raphael was so fond of the serpentine line "that he carried it into a ridiculous excess, particularly in his draperies."<sup>99</sup> Behind these comments is a consciousness that the serpentine is a dangerous deviation, like sin. He had quoted Milton's line on Satan's serpentine temptation of Eve,<sup>100</sup> but he must have been aware of the greater imaginative freedoms of the inferno that I have already alluded to.

Hogarth's analysis of beauty also extended to the expansion of objects in space; they are not yet quite the sublime objects that they were to become for Burke and the Romantics. Rather, I would argue, they took their beauty from a grotesque excess that, in Hogarth's argument, could be considered as noble in itself, irrespective of the taste of the beholder:

Forms of magnitude, although ill-shaped, will however, on account of their vastness, draw our attention and raise our admiration. ... Huge shapeless rocks have a pleasing kind of horror in them, and the wide ocean awes us with its vast contents.<sup>101</sup>

Building on this growing radicalism, Hogarth's late works such as *False Perspective* (1753), *Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism* (1762), *The Weighing House* (1763) and *The Bathos* (1764) took their force from a deliberate subversion

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qualities of contour. Another anticipation of his views is to be found in Antoine Parent's *Journal des Sçavants* (15 and 22 November, 1700).

<sup>98</sup> Hogarth, op. cit., pp. 24-5.

<sup>99</sup> Hogarth, op. cit., Preface, pp. viii-ix.

<sup>100</sup> "So vary'd he, and of his tortuous train/Curl'd many a wanton wreath, in sight of Eve, To lure her eye. --"

of the neo-classical virtues embodied in Dryden and Horace. Hogarth espoused what Dryden, in his criticism had outlawed:

To avoid absurdities and incongruities, is the same Law established for both arts. The painter is not to paint a Cloud at the Bottom of a Picture, but in the uppermost parts: nor the Poet to place what is proper to the end of the middle in the beginning of a poem.<sup>102</sup>

Friedrich Antal comments that Hogarth "would certainly not have used such irrational, abstract motives in his average works or for scenes of real events. But when it comes to details, however empirical or, better said, the more empirical their starting point, such as physiognomic studies, his inclination for the expressive and the biting effects may quite frequently have led him in an unempirical direction."<sup>103</sup>

Where parts of objects are to be combined then this was, according to the most influential neo-classical theorists, to be done in an ideal manner; yet the constructive principle, attaching one part to another, was essentially combinatory, whether it was expressed as in ideal or grotesque form. Following the 7th Dissertation of Maximus Tyrus, Dryden had pointed out that sculptors,

with admirable Artifice chose out of many Bodies those parts which appear'd to them the most beautiful, and out of that diversity made but one Statue: but this mixture is made with so much prudence and propriety, that they seem to have taken but onely perfect Beauty. And let us not imagine that we can ever find one natural Beauty which can dispute with Statues, that Art which has always somewhat more perfect than Nature.

But in the course of the eighteenth century this "mutual harmony of the Members" was eroded. Blackmore, in his *Treatise of the Spleen* stated that men

<sup>101</sup> Hogarth, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>102</sup> Dryden, *A Parallel*. See Ker, op. cit., p. 145.

of wit might "infer from the numerous Diseases and monstrous Deformities which are found among Mankind, that there is no healthful Constitution, or beautiful Frame of Body in the whole Species."<sup>104</sup> But to return to Hogarth, it might be pointed out that he recognized in the course of his enquiry that the combinatory view of the ideal was one which did not effectively differentiate between official culture and the grotesque distortion of it:

For when the forms, thus join'd together, are each of them elegant, and composed of agreeable lines, they will be so far from making us laugh, that they will become entertaining to the imagination, as well as pleasing to the eye.<sup>105</sup>

Contemporaries were not all in agreement about such matters, certainly earlier in Hogarth's career. Steele, for instance, had asked, "Who is the better Man for beholding the most beautiful *Venus*, the best wrought *Bacchanal*, the Images of sleeping Cupids, Languishing Nymphs, or any of the Representations of Gods, Goddesses, Demy-gods, Satyrs, *Polyphemes*, Sphinxes or Fauns?" Against these Steele set up the need for "the Characters of real Life."<sup>106</sup> In *Spectator* 172 Steele pointed to Hogarth's "Monsters of Heraldry", representative of the "satyrs, Furies, and Monsters" which have overwhelmed English painting.<sup>107</sup>

For Hogarth, moreover, these combinations were part of a noble grotesque. He argued that the sphinx and the siren made graceful ornaments, while the griffin, uniting the two noble forms of the lion and the eagle "is a grand object":

So the antique centaur has a savage greatness as well as beauty ...  
These may be said to be monsters, it's true, but then they convey

<sup>103</sup> Friedrich Antal, *Hogarth and his Place in European Art* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 138.

<sup>104</sup> *A Treatise of the Spleen*, p. 263.

<sup>105</sup> Hogarth, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>106</sup> *Spectator* 226, 19 November 1711. Bond, vol. 2, p 379.

<sup>107</sup> 17 September 1711. Bond, vol. 2, pp. 178-81.

such noble ideas, and have such elegance in their forms as greatly compensates for their being unnaturally joined together ... I shall mention but one more instance of this sort, and that the most extraordinary of all, which is an infant's head of about two years old, with a pair of duck's wings placed under its chin, supposed always to be flying about, or perching on the clouds; and yet there is something so agreeable in their form, that the eye is reconciled and overlooks the absurdity, and we find them in the carving and painting of almost every church. St Paul's is full of them.<sup>108</sup>

Far from being confused, convention allowed the eye to accept such shapes, making them a central part of its mental furniture. The infantile playfulness that was part of the sportive grotesque combined with that characteristic overcrowding or proliferation in space that has been the subject of this chapter.

## 10. Conclusion

The previous chapter explored theories of change and metamorphosis, disruptions or mutations of the rigidly systematic and how - at the extreme - these take the form of a return to a chaotic origin. At this source, natural divisions were jumbled up and the capacity to discriminate was undermined. As I argued in the previous chapter, eighteenth-century writers did not experience chaos in its own right, even if the memory of civil and social disorder in the seventeenth century was imaginatively available to them. The sensation of a *total* loss of control was uncommon or short-lived. It was one thing to *represent* a move *towards* chaos, but was quite a different matter actually to embrace it, which would demand an abdication of aesthetic authority, timeless rules and mimetic priorities. Such a law-bound aesthetics depended on stable representation, a cleared space in which to operate, and conventional or customary standards by which to judge.

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<sup>108</sup> Hogarth, op. cit., pp. 32-3.

Nonetheless, the cleared space in which representation was to take place was problematic, for most thinkers wrestled with a sense of space that was already overfilled or overcrowded. Locke noted that "twould be as absurd to demand, whether there were Space without Body, as whether there were Space without Space, or Body without Body."<sup>109</sup> Crucially, it was part of any definition of space that there was something filling it.<sup>110</sup> Like chaos, space as such was unknowable, ungraspable. If the grotesque was often part of the movement *towards* chaos, part of that was a movement *away* from space.

The contest over the space of representation was increasingly a social contest over the use of public spaces. Space was the means of cultural production, but it was also importantly a product of cultural divisions. The largely mental and aesthetic remappings that the grotesque underwent in the eighteenth century mirrored the social and cartographic shifts of power that were occurring elsewhere as boundaries and margins were tested. The grotesque insisted on mutability with respect to time, and movement with respect to space, shifting, transferring and relocating objects from their "proper" co-ordinates within totalities or systems. The mixed parts that were fancifully reformed in grotesque shapes were but the nostalgic memory of a sense of wholeness that was increasingly unavailable.

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<sup>109</sup> *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, II.xiii.23, p. 178.

<sup>110</sup> For a speculative synthesis of space and representation see the opening of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*: "Space is not an empirical concept that has been derived from outer experiences. For in order that certain sensations be referred to something outside me (i.e., to something in another region of space from that in which I find myself), and similarly in order that I may be able to represent them as outside and alongside one another, hence as not merely different but as in different places the representation of space must be presupposed. Therefore, the representation of space cannot be obtained by experience from the relations of outer appearances, but this outer experience is itself possible at all only through that representation." Quoted in Sallis, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

# Chapter Four

## The Grotesque Body

### 1. Introduction

A dominant concern of this thesis has been the exploration of the grotesque as a benign aberration of the natural which remains part of (inside) a plenitudinous notion of the universe. In this light I have demonstrated that nature was seen as *sportive*, mixing, shifting and playing with natural categories, as though deliberately to confound the taxonomic enterprise. In one of its traditional senses, "Sport" described a range of sexual dynamics. In this instance, the grotesque recycling, mixing and interference can be seen as a series of bodily processes and drives such as the libidinous exchange of sexual energies. These deserve special consideration if we are to understand their grotesque dynamics in early eighteenth-century culture and society. The celebration of the sexual, of procreation and of fertility was, of course, a primary component in Bakhtin's influential model of the grotesque. Such an analysis is persuasive in terms of the material that was central to his thesis, namely the work of Rabelais, but it is less successful as a means of understanding and accurately describing the nature of the grotesque in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

In this chapter I will therefore be discussing constructions of sexuality that were differentiated by means of the grotesque category. I argue that in the first instance this was a matter of classification, of how we deal with the anomalous, the hermaphroditic and homosexual. Starting with an anomalous identity, it was possible to construct a sexually aberrant subculture that was at once a

drive towards - and a failure of - categorisation. Roy Porter and G.S. Rousseau have suggested that sexuality undertook a central role in, for example, Linnaeus's principles of taxonomy, and that eighteenth-century biology "came to recognize the fundamental sexuality of all living beings."<sup>1</sup> Given also the grotesque ambivalence of the categorisation that has been a part of this study, it is not surprising that the wide discourse of sexuality has also necessarily invoked the hybrid and the monstrous. As the chapter proceeds, I will be exploring how the problematic enterprise of establishing categories has dramatic consequences for understanding how the grotesque body was reconstructed from heterogeneous materials; it was, in an important sense, hybrid and mongrelised before it became "perverse."

Moreover, issues of behaviour and identity were, in the first instance, primarily ones of representation, of constructions that served to empower, control, or disempower through the medium of the body. Bakhtin's model of the "classical" body, adopted by some continental feminists such as Luce Irigaray, served as an initial model for such representations and their transgression. In these respects the totalising enterprise of the classical episteme and the phallogocentric can be seen to be an integral part of the same project. Thus Bakhtin saw the emergence from classical cultures of "a tendency toward the stability and completion of being, toward one single meaning, one single tone of seriousness." For Foucault, the notion of the classical episteme was one in which natural history, for example, "is nothing more than the nomination of the visible ...a visibility freed from all other sensory burdens moreover, to black and white."<sup>2</sup> The insistence on variety and diversity has, subsequently taken up a central position in feminist criticism that stresses the otherness of the female, seeing it as multiple, di-formed, and dialogical. At the

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<sup>1</sup> *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p.1.

<sup>2</sup> *The Order of Things*, pp. 132-33.

same time, such thought points to the need to reconstruct the "other" body which had been culturally constructed chiefly in terms of its monstrosity.<sup>3</sup> Clearly we have to deal with a double movement in which "otherness" is both a complex reconstruction and a reclaiming of monstrous representations that had served chiefly to oppress women. While a number of feminist accounts have examined the monstrous representation of women, it is important to note that such monstrosity has been reinscribed as a grotesque celebration of difference, heterogeneity, and the decentred. One obvious problem with such a binary model of sex and its cultural inscriptions is that it appears to hold in place much more than it really designates. Many aspects of the grotesque arise from heterogeneity, but these do not find a uniform monological source in the female sex. In the case of the "perfect" hermaphrodite, for instance, the gender difference was never purely established, because there was an innate and undifferentiated "spiritual" harmony of these parts, therefore problematizing from the outset the construction of sexuality and gender from sex.

Considering contradictions and hierarchies other than those constructed by and through gender, I have undertaken to explore the interaction of popular "low" and "high" cultural forms, how these seemingly distinct spheres necessarily metamorphosed by means of a grotesque *process* of recycling each other. This approach opens the way for the study of other forms of conditioning: as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick concluded in her book *The Epistemology of the Closet*, "some dimensions of sexuality might be tied, not to gender, but *instead* to differences or similarities of race or class."<sup>4</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>3</sup> Susan Gubar has written about the female monster, while Pollack links Swift's "studied refusal in his texts to establish reliable centres of authority or voice." See "The Female Monster in Augustan Satire," *Signs* 3 (1977), pp. 380-94. Ellen Pollack links this to Bakhtin's study of Rabelais, and concludes: "Like Rabelais, Swift lived and wrote at the historic intersection of two cultures, "on the confines" of two competing languages, and it is precisely on those borders that he situates his texts" (*Poetics*, p. 17).

<sup>4</sup> Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1990), p. 31.

taking other factors such as these into account, it is important to move away from fixed binary models which see the "other" solely in terms of disgust or desire. By building a model of the grotesque that takes account of process and becomingness, we avoid seeing sexuality as rigidly fixed in terms of an essentialist or constructivist model. Instead of taking the *sexuality* of the body as the departure for my argument, I shall be exploring the *novelization* of the body and, therefore, behaviour in the specific sense (a) that this involved the construction of individuality and identity, in line with other cultural and epistemological ruptures; (b) that it operated as a discourse by welding together, mongrel-like, a variety of discourses.

In the first part of this chapter I therefore discuss a number of texts that explore the subject of monstrous births, in order to demonstrate how a whole range of explanatory mechanisms were assembled around a variety of anatomical differences. I then proceed to discuss one specific monstrosity, the hermaphrodite. This lays the foundations for a consideration of the notion of a third category, disrupting the normal practice of self-definition based on the force of a binary anatomical difference. This line of enquiry leads me to question how far sexuality can be constructed solely on the basis of difference. I therefore find it instructive to follow through Sedgwick's conclusion that an explanatory model based on an identification between a given sex and subsequent gender construction only delineates "a problematical *space* rather than a crisp distinction."<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, these accounts usefully introduce wider questions of nature and aberration as well as behaviour. In later sections of this chapter, I will be demonstrating how the constructive movement works *back* to an anomalous anatomy in order to explain the characteristic behaviour of fops and the exhibition of effeminate traits. In the last section of this chapter I will therefore

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

explore how the fear of sodomy as a repository of the heterogeneous, an exorbitant enormity which, like the novel, transvalued and absorbed a variety of other discourses, paving the way for a new identity-consciousness - the transition to "molly" or homosexual.

## 2. Monstrous Births

There is a wide literature on monstrous births from erudite and speculative pamphlets to popular broadsheets which served to disseminate political and moral matter under cover of the monstrous and marvellous. Using such pamphlets to understand the grotesque body, this literature clearly demonstrates that experiencing the grotesque body was not simply a fact of external construction (in a social and cultural sense) that took sex as its sole starting point. Accordingly, a number of heterogeneous factors - the validity of which modern rationality would not accept - went into its construction. In varying degrees, these served to delimit desire, disgust and the ratio of empowerment. In this regard, I consider that Stallybrass and White were sufficiently cautious in their judgement that "The body is neither a purely natural given nor is it merely a textual metaphor."<sup>6</sup> Yet elsewhere in their study they reterritorialize the grotesque discourse of the body by insisting on its Bakhtinian celebration, on its interpretation via a model of desire and disgust. There were a number of other non-rational factors that were nevertheless considered explanatory in cases where the grotesque took the form of a monstrous birth. Although the supernatural, for instance, was being reconstituted in the early modern period as the natural and the preternatural (a category of the yet-to-be-rationalized), astrological factors, together with their

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<sup>6</sup> *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Methuen, 1986), p. 192.

use as portents,<sup>7</sup> were still influential in popular eighteenth-century consciousness. These were therefore manipulative mechanisms of power, for there was a distinctive range rather than a monopoly of interpretations of monstrous births. Astrology and the portentous introduced different kinds of discourse, as well as grotesque counter-discourses, which were parasitic upon a readily exploited credulity that was as common at the court as in the country. Counter-discourses included such satirical attacks as the Scriblerian pamphlets *A Wonderful Prophecy* (1712) and *It cannot rains but it pours, or London strewed with Rarities* (1726). The prophetic tone of the first of these pamphlets can sensibly be used to understand the satiric force of the prophetic tone which was to appear in *The Dunciad*. The discourse of the monstrous therefore imprinted the later text, adding to the more manifest and readily identified grotesque dynamics of the poem. The notion of creativity as a series of misdirected, hindered or forced conceptions served as an ideological bedrock for the poem's portentous message. But these pamphlets began as satires on the credulity of those who ought to have known better.

There was, of course, a long tradition of interpreting monstrous births as portents. From the time of the reformation, interpretation became more systematic, and was tied up with satire because monstrous occurrences could also be exploited as such by political and religious propagandists. Fashioning these phenomena to their own ends, they nevertheless exploited the convenient belief that God intervened in the natural world by "writing" His wrath on the monstrous child, as though treating its body like a text. Building on this, political and religious positions could be either legitimated or attacked. In an excellent collection of such pamphlets from the early modern period, Simon McKeown points out that "reports of monstrous births began to be seen as

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<sup>7</sup> The link between the monstrous and portents is clear from the word's etymology: *L. monstrum* - a divine portent or warning, *monstrare* - to show, and *monere* - to warn. See O.E.D.

useful vehicles for religious propaganda."<sup>8</sup> In *The Ranter's Monster*, for instance, Mary Adams's deformed offspring was to be understood as God's judgment on such sects. In other pamphlets, monstrous births were merely the reflection of our fallen condition. "Most swinish are our lives," one pamphlet concluded in its exhortation to all men to amend their lives.<sup>9</sup> In another example, God's indignation was visited "for our monstrous living."<sup>10</sup> Yet this culminated in a greater implication of the ethico-political, another stage in the imprinting and grotesque textualising of the body.

As in previous chapters of this thesis, I have observed a need to demonstrate the validity of identifying a continuity of thinking on the grotesque from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century. In this regard I will be undertaking some important modifications of McKeown's emphasis on the monopoly of a theocratic model of explanation which he judges to be distinctive of early pamphlets on the grotesque body and monstrous births. This model cannot be discounted, but it is clearly one of many available. Other discourses effectively served to undermine and interfere with the monological theocratic line, finding authority for different views in both classical and early humanist writings. The variety of disparate perspectives amounts to what I will be calling a monstrous novelization in accounts of monstrous births. This has, as I will be arguing, important consequences both for the construction of aberrant identities and for their contribution to literary texts in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>8</sup> Simon McKeown diminishes the endemic variety of explanations in his conclusion that monstrosities are chiefly the instruments of God's judgment and that "the modern reader can detect a concern to square the anomalous, incongruous phenomena to the neatly ordered theocratic view of the universe." *Monstrous Births* (Indelible Inc, 1991), p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> *A marvellous strange deformed swine*, see McKeown, op.cit., p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> *The Description of a monstrous pig...* (1562); see McKeown, op.cit., p. 21.

The odd relation between God and Nature, for instance, is apparent in the seventh stanza of *The true description of a monstrous child born in the Isle of Wight* (1564). This stated that,

Where nature's art doth not her part  
In working of her skill  
To shape aright each lively wight,  
Behold, it is God's will.<sup>11</sup>

Looking at these lines closely, it can be observed that such a view oddly grants God a monstrous monopoly, intervening *only* when the semi-autonomous generative force of Nature *fails* properly to fashion her productions.

In *A marvellous strange deformed swine*, the author had pointed out the necessity of finding meaning in these productions, warning the reader that, "His wondrous works we ought not judge/ As toys and trifles vain."<sup>12</sup> The playful, trifling grotesque which I have identified in a range of eighteenth-century writing must be invested with meaning; this calls at once for a notion of divinity that is ordered and systematic, but which also mirrors the increasingly explanatory project of reason, later to be incorporated in the enterprise of Baconian science and in the philosophy of the Royal Society. Nevertheless, it was peculiarly typical that there was from the outset an innate conflict in such an enterprise, for the normal was to be understood through the monstrous, as Bacon's proposed collection and catalogue of the monstrous proposed. This was the route through which the *regular* operations of nature were to be best understood. Looking at the scientific moment psychologically, one can see that this epistemological origin was that of the infant, where monstrous perversion is the norm, and the ground upon which "civilization" (prescribed forms of desire/ knowledge) was to be constructed. In modern readings of Freud, the infant is polymorphously perverse, and as Dollimore

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<sup>11</sup> McKeown, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>12</sup> McKeown, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

has cogently argued, "Repressed and sublimated perversions help to form, and are intrinsic to, normality ... It is sexual perversion, not sexual 'normality', which is the given in human nature."<sup>13</sup> The relationship between the normal and the perverse is clearly expressed in Freud's statement that in the case of perversions, "it is as though no one could forget that they are not only something disgusting but also something monstrous and dangerous - as though people felt them as seductive, and had at bottom to fight down a secret envy of those who were enjoying them."<sup>14</sup>

Yet many of these investigative pamphlets foregrounded their own self-questioning. In *The true description of a child with ruffs born in the parish of Micheham* (1566) it was decided initially that the baby's monstrous form was to be explained "by nature's spite," but this led to a significant correction,

By nature's spite? What do I say?  
Doth Nature rule the roost?  
Nay, God it is, say well I may,  
By whom nature is tossed....

Nature, verging like Milton's *Eden* on autonomy, was finally subjected to divine rule. Nevertheless, these lines admit questions only to reject them, as though the reasonable, god-fearing narrator had caught himself slipping back into the pagan wisdom of folk-lore. The uncertainty fissures and taints a monological discourse, forcing an opening for the interference of competing discourses, such as that of the poetic imagination, manufacturing forms in competition with God's creations. Importantly for this study, these early pamphlets demonstrate that the poet who was most obviously the source of monstrosity, understood as a violent or metamorphic process of becomingness, was identified as Ovid:

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<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 176.

<sup>14</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lecture on Psychoanalysis* (Harmonds-worth: Penguin, 1974), vol. i, p. 363.

The poet telleth how Daphne was  
 Transformed into a tree,  
 And Io to a cow did pass:  
 A strange thing for to see.

Such examples must be demoted, and this was achieved by placing them firmly within the category of the trifling grotesque, "But poets tales may pass and go/ as trifles and untruth."<sup>15</sup> Although this grotesque operated under a prohibition, it must be introduced into the discourse, if only for the sake of dismissing it. A playful, trifling grotesque of the body was available, but was not sufficiently licensed to dominate. The theocratic line of interpretation served to control, but it was not - especially in more whimsical speculations - exclusive. There was also, of course, a tradition of reading Ovid allegorically which served to subsume the erotic under a system of morality.<sup>16</sup>

Providence acts in such discourses as a marvellous and mystic totalising concept, writing its own grand narrative. Accordingly, the works of providence are most remarkable when "the course of nature is hindered."<sup>17</sup> Later in the pamphlet "it is the finger of God that hath been here and manifested his presence by hindering the common and ordinary course of nature in the birth of the womb. As in hindering, so also in altering and changing the course of nature, doth God call man to an observation of his providence, nay, hee more than anything else doth show his works of

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<sup>15</sup> McKeown, op.cit., pp. 27-8

<sup>16</sup> Allegorical readings "provided the key to the serious meaning which the witty Ovidian verse conceals, and by doing so, they raised the *Metamorphoses* from a single history of pagan debauchery and from an exercise in verbal promiscuity to a delightful poem replete with moral, historical and natural wisdom." See James King and Bernadette Lynn, "The *Metamorphoses* in English eighteenth-century mythological handbooks and translations with an *exemplum*, Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*," *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 185, 1980, p. 144. An excellent example of the tendency to moralize is provided by *The Pantheon*, "See how many several Beasts a person resembles, who have once put off his Modesty! And by how many various Fables is this one Truth represented, that the very Gods, by practices of impure Lust, become Brutes," Andrew Tooke, *The Pantheon* (First Ed. 1694; 1698), p. 19. This was reprinted thirty times during the eighteenth century. See King and Lynn, op.cit., p. 133.

<sup>17</sup> *A true and certain relation of a strange birth which was born at Stonehouse in the parish of Plymouth* (1635), McKeown, p. 40.

wonder."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, we cannot verify or interrogate Providence's manifestations because we do not have access to its reasoning and cannot predict its outcomes.

Yet monstrous births were also ascribed to seminal and menstrual causes as well as to the effect of mental impressions. Other speculations suggested that they were *lusus naturae* which Nature created to amuse herself.<sup>19</sup> Given such a multiplicity of explanations it is dangerous to privilege any one cause or factor. We must take account of period, the purpose of the account and its intended readership. It is inadequate, even in such early pamphlets, to grant priority *and* monopoly to a theocratic line of interpretation. Moreover, many of the texts that I have analysed sought to maintain a broad conception of nature which could include the miraculous, the monstrous, or the strange, without abolishing nature's usefulness as a working category; wonder, after all, was the correct spiritual and poetic response to God's creation, understood and appreciated primarily as the plenitude of the natural world.

In other pamphlets the grotesque birth was used to define the essential moral sanctity of the English nation, in contrast to other cultures. Again, this position hinged on a theocratic line of interpretation, but it was parasitic, as we shall see in later accounts, on the construction of a discourse which took its origin from the racism that was a product of the nation state's self-fashioning. An excellent example of this occurs in *The true description of two monstrous children lawfully begotten between George Stevens and Marjory his wife...*(1566):

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* p. 41

<sup>19</sup> See T.W. Glenister, "Fantasies, Facts and Foetuses: The Interplay of Fantasy and Reason in Teratology," *Medical History*, 8 (1964), pp. 15-30; Annemarie de Waal Malefijt, "Homo Monstrosus," *Scientific American* 219 (1968), pp. 113-18; Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago, 1982); Katharine Park, Lorraine J. Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England and France," *Past & Present*, 92 (1981), pp. 20-54; C.J.S. Thompson, *The Mystery and Lore of Monsters - with accounts of some Giants, Dwarfs and Prodigies* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1930).

I read how Afric land was fraught  
 For their most filthy life  
 With monstrous shapes confusedly  
 That therein were full rife.<sup>20</sup>

In later sections of this chapter I will return to the importance of the construction of nationhood against the background of the continent's production of monsters.<sup>21</sup> Another pamphlet, however, taking what would later have been identified as a Swiftian tone, deployed the strategy of turning censure back on the beholder, concluding that "our own native soil and these our modern times, have produced the like brutish monsters, publicly to be seen in all parts of the city and suburb."<sup>22</sup> This is, more generally, typical of a later tendency in Scriblerian satire to see the monstrous as basically the product of urban novelty and artificiality. By the same logic, "unnatural" acts (such as sodomy), are also likely to result in monstrous births. Thus the disruption of the natural order of reproduction in *The form and shape of a monstrous child, born at Maidstone in Kent* (1568) appeared to be a punishment for sodomy: "This monstrous shape to thee, England,/Plain shows thy monstrous vice." The mouth appeared like the rectum; in the back there was a hole: "The hinder part doth show us plain/Our close and hidden vice."<sup>23</sup> Again, the category of sodomy, like that of the unnatural, was incorporated with an explicit discourse of nationhood. Beyond these pamphlets, one need only examine Shakespeare's use of Caliban's grotesque body as a monstrous colonial "other," discussed earlier in this thesis. Again, these examples run counter to McKeown's prioritizing of the theocratic monopoly of interpretation.

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<sup>20</sup> McKeown, op.cit, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> An excellent survey of the links between monstrosity and cartography can be found in John Block Friedman's *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>22</sup> *A certain relation of the hog's-face gentlewoman, called Tannakin Skinker*, McKeown, op.cit., pp. 50-1.

<sup>23</sup> McKeown, op.cit, pp. 34-6.

Another pamphlet described "two complete and perfect bodies, but congregate and joined together from breast to belly, two in one."<sup>24</sup> This served as a departure for a moral discussion on the nature of fraternal love. This type of monstrosity was also later deployed in the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*. In this extended satirical narrative, the virtuoso's mixed curiosity and desire for knowledge and sex were portrayed as Martinus' marriage to the monstrous Siamese sisters, Indamora and Lindamira. Yet the earlier pamphlet already demonstrated the learned wit, imagination and play (*lusus*) which were so successfully brought together in the later satire, and which characterized Scriblerian satire taken as a whole.

The *Memoirs*, in common with much Scriblerian writing, also drew together the innate relationship between money and novelty, which Pope was to explore in a variety of ways in *The Dunciad*. But this was also to be identified in the traditions of writing about the monstrous. In the earlier pamphlets there was a palpable uneasiness concerning the exploitation of the misfortunes of the misshapen. One pamphlet touched upon this from the point of view of conscience, debating "Whether monsters and misshapen births may lawfully be carried up and down the country for sights to make a gain by them." I will explore this commercialisation in fairs and freakshows at greater length in the next chapter, but it is worth noting here that individuals increasingly came to realize that what was novel could be sold. Shakespeare had picked up on this in *The Tempest* at the point in the Act II where Trinculo came upon Caliban and reflected on how he might exploit the monster:

Were I but in England now, as once I was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver: there would this monster make a man; any strange beast there

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<sup>24</sup> *A true and certain relation of a strange birth which was born at Stonehouse* (1635), See McKeown, *op.cit.*, pp. 37-48.

makes a man: when they will give not a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian.<sup>25</sup>

The dehumanizing tendency of a market economy became more evident with the rise of capitalism, yet as this quotation indicates, the ethics of exploiting the individual as a grotesque "merchandise" was already being explored in the early modern period. Considering the exploitability of the monstrous, it is not surprising that such occurrences tended to be concealed from the wider community.<sup>26</sup>

An anxiety concerning these matters, which I feel should be applied to the intrusive and desire-driven project of science was the statement that, "Our delight is to be measured by our desires, nor do I see it lawful to delight in what may not be desired."<sup>27</sup> The author criticized philosophers for ascribing secondary causes "as the defectiveness or excess of seminal materials, or external, as in the dullness of the formative faculty, or in the indisposedness of the vessels, or strength of conceit or imagination." Monstrosity would be the norm, if it were not for God's active and constant intervention:

Now then, is God so tied to his materials that if there be too much for one, or too little for two complete and perfect features, he can either detract or multiply? Must his work be cut off with what the philosopher saith of nature, *lavendit quod optimum facit tamen id quod pot est*, that is, nature intendeth perfection, but being hindered doth what she can ... [T]his, and all monstrous and misfeatured births speak this: that it is a singular mercy of God when the births of the womb are not misformed, when they receive their fair and perfect feature. ... In which respect, who can deny but God might justly blast the body with deformity? Which

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<sup>25</sup> *The Tempest*, ed. Frank Kermode (Methuen, 1980), IV.ii.28-34, p. 62.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. "This prodigious birth, though it was known to some few, yet was it not made popular and spoken of by all ... but veiled and covered, and so brought up in a private chamber, both fed and taught by the parents, and her deformity scarce known to any of the servants." See *A certain relation of the hog's-face gentlewoman, called Tannakin Skinker*, McKeown, op.cit., p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> McKeown, op.cit, p. 41.

if he do not when he might, is it not a favour, and so to be acknowledged.<sup>28</sup>

One of the most interesting theories devised for monstrous births was that concerning the force of imagination in pregnant mothers. One example was provided by the case recorded in *Treatise of Hermaphrodites* (1718) in which a woman, "beholding the Picture of a Blackamoor, produc'd a Child resembling an Aethiopian."<sup>29</sup> In an age in which the nature of physical matter and mental structures was dimly understood, it did not seem impossible that the mind should exercise a force on physical matter. The theory had a bout of popularity in the eighteenth century, but goes back to Pliny's *Natural History*:

For the nimble motions of the spirit, the quicke thoughts, and the agilitie of the mind, the variety of discourse in our wits, imprinteth diverse formes, and many markes of sundrie cogitations; whereas the imagine facultie of other living creatures is unmoveable, and always continueth in one, in all it is alike and the same still in everyone, which causeth them alwaies to engender like to themselves, each one in their several kind.<sup>30</sup>

The other major popular source for the investigation of the monstrous birth and the power of the imagination was Ambroise Pare's *Des Monstres et Prodiges* (1573) which picked up the theory in Chapter Eleven. Another common sourcebook for the theory was *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, which went through numerous editions. Paul Gabriel Bouce has pointed out that there are "a few venerable stereotypes: the child with a cat's or frog's head, the black offspring of white parents, the hairy child and the infant born with broken or crucified

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<sup>28</sup> *A true and certain relation of a strange birth which was born at Stonehouse* (1635), See McKeown, op.cit., pp. 43-4.

<sup>29</sup> *Treatise of hermaphrodites* (1718), p. 71.

<sup>30</sup> *The Historie of the World, commonly called the Naturall Historie of C. Plinius secundus* (1601), trans. P. Holland, vol I, p. 157.

limbs," and most of these were described and illustrated in *Aristotle's Masterpiece*.<sup>31</sup>

The theory concerning the force of the imagination in pregnant mothers became part of a lively debate in the eighteenth century, with the publication of a book by John Maubray which deemed the imagination to have the most prevalent *power* in Conception; this must be granted, he argued, if we consider,

how common a Thing it is, for the *Mother* to mark her child with *Pears, Plums, Milk, Wine*, or any *thing else*, upon the least trifling *Accident* happening to her from thence; and *that* even in the latter ripening *Months*, after the Infant is entirely formed, by the *Strength of her Imagination* only, as has been already manifestly set forth at large.<sup>32</sup>

From the grotesque model I have been outlining in this study, it is not surprising that minor slippages of form - marks and blemishes - took their origin from what was "trifling", as this itself was in part constitutive of the model of the grotesque which obtained during this period. Although Maubray argued that men could distort conception by an indulgence in perverted thoughts, and that acts of imagination could produce monstrous offspring in other species such as sheep, his main censure was directed towards the absurd imaginations of mothers and the danger of failing to suppress this faculty. My own hypothesis concerning these theories is that they were primarily driven by a need to construct women in terms of their dangerous faculties; the issue of the power of a women's imagination was really indicative of a wider restraining and silencing of the female voice: there was a transgressive danger in the subjective application of individual observation and experience. It was

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<sup>31</sup> Paul Gabriel Boucé, "Imagination, pregnant women, and monsters, in eighteenth-century England and France," in G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 94.

<sup>32</sup> John Maubray, *The Female Physician, Containing all the Diseases Incident to that Sex, in Virgins, Wives and Widows* (1724), p. 368.

on the same basis that the "fancy" was often deprecated as a dangerous wandering of the mind, a sinful *ignis fatuus*.

The most celebrated case of a series of monstrous births in the eighteenth century was that of Mary Toft of Godalming.<sup>33</sup> The case is interesting because it displays both the danger of the female imagination and the tendency to deceive. Those who believed her story, as the account will show, were as much victims of a deception as of their own oppressive will to construct the female as an innately fanciful and monstrous construct. At the outset, Mary Toft claimed that she had encountered a hare during pregnancy and that this made an undue impression on her mind. Entering labour, she was delivered first of what was taken to be the guts of a pig; but when her labour began in earnest, it was found that she was apparently producing rabbits at an astonishing rate. In a short time, news of the marvellous events at Godalming began to reach London. The surgeon dealing with the case invited anyone to verify the evidence by attending a delivery. Meanwhile, nine rabbits were delivered and Mary was moved to Guildford. Mr St Andre accepted a surgeon's invitation to observe the case, and he verified the monstrous birth. Upon inspection, further evidence of the authenticity of the case was volunteered by Cyriacus Ahlers, Surgeon to His Majesty's German Household. Yet after a number of repeated

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<sup>33</sup> The contemporary pamphlets indicate the range both of serious, satirical and exculpatory pamphlets: C. Ahlers, *Some Observations concerning the Woman of Godlyman In Surrey...Tending to prove her extraordinary Deliveries to be a Cheat and Imposture* (1726); St Andre, *A short Narrative of an extraordinary Delivery of Rabbets perform'd by Mr. John Howard, Surgeon at Guilford* (1726); L. Gulliver, *The Anatomist Dissected, or the Man-Midwife finally brought to Bed. Being and Examination of the Conduct of Mr. St Andre Touching the late pretended Rabbet-bearer; as its appears from his own Narrative* (1727); J. Douglas, *An Advertisement Occasion'd by Some Passages in Sir R. Manningham's Diary Lately Publish'd* (1727); Sir R. Manningham, *An exact Diary of what was observ'd during a close Attendance upon Mary Toft, The pretended Rabbet Breeder of Godalming in Surrey, From Monday November 28, to Wednesday December 7 following. Together with an Account of her Confession of the Fraud* (1727); Anon, *Much ado about Nothing. Or a plain refutation of all that has been written or said concerning the rabbit woman of Godalming. Being a full and impartial confession from her own mouth and her own hand, of the whole affair from the beginning to the end* (1727). For a modern account see S.A. Seligman, "Mary Toft - The Rabbit Breeder", *Medical History*, 5 (1961), pp. 349-60.

examinations (and threats) Mary Toft eventually revealed that she had been put up to the deception. She was prosecuted as a vile cheat and impostor. She was subsequently detained in another incident for receiving stolen goods (in 1740).

Nonetheless, Mary Toft's monstrous births supplied wonderful subject matter for a variety of satirical works. The rabbit-breeder featured, for example, in Hogarth's *Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism*. We also find Alexander Pope writing to John Caryll on 5 December 1726 asking for more information on the case: "I want to know what faith you have in the miracle at Guildford; not doubting but as you past thro' that town, you went as a philosopher to investigate, if not as a curious anatomist to inspect, that wonderful phenomenon."<sup>34</sup> Pope also wrote a ballad on the topic called *The Discovery: or, The Squire turn'd Ferret*, where the satirical aspects of grotesque fertility were not missed:

At Godliman, hard by the Bull,  
A Woman, long thought barren,  
Bears *Rabbits*, - Gad! so plentiful,  
You'd take her for a Warren.<sup>35</sup>

The uncertain status of reason and science was no more evident than in the validity, for some observers, of astrological proofs for such monstrous occurrences. William Whiston, who had served as Professor of Anatomy at Cambridge, for instance, attributed the Toft case to a prophecy in the apocryphal book of Esdras.<sup>36</sup> It was, of course, considered dangerous to conceive under the sign of Cancer:

Author of monstrous shapes! uneven set,

<sup>34</sup> *Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford, 1956), vol. II, pp. 418-19.

<sup>35</sup> *Works*, vol. vi, *The Minor Poems*, p. 259, 9-13.

<sup>36</sup> See his tract *The Opinion of Rev'd Mr William Whiston concerning the Affair of Mary Toft, ascribing it to a Prophecy of Esdras* referred to in G.S. Rousseau, "Smollett's Wit and Traditions of Learning in Medicine" in *Tobias Smollet: Essays of Two Decades* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1982), p. 166.

Of tumours, wens and members incomplete!  
Hence apish forms, and ugly births began,  
And gibbous dwarfs, beneath the strain of man.

Capricorn, meanwhile, "Deforms the face, and blisters all the skin."<sup>37</sup>

At this stage in the discussion, building more generally on the Mary Toft case, it is worth considering how far the notion of literary creativity was constructed on a model of female fertility. This, it will be argued, was crucial for a reading of *The Dunciad* as it is for *A Tale of a Tub*. Swift, for instance, argued that interpretations of obscure texts were infinite, with the result that the reader's mind is overwhelmed by the fertility of thought:

For, *night* being the universal mother of things, wise philosophers hold all writings to be *fruitful*, in the proportion they are *dark*; and therefore, the *true illuminated* (that is to say, the *darkest* of all) have met with such numberless commentators, whose *scholiastic* midwifery hath deliver'd them of meanings that the authors themselves perhaps never conceived, and yet may very justly be allowed the lawful parents of them; the words of such writers being like seed,\* which, however scattered at random, when they light upon a fruitful ground, will multiply far beyond either the hopes or imagination of the sower.<sup>38</sup>

Yet Swift's comments also seek to enforce a legality of interpretation within an implicit model of conception and birth as natural archetypes of the creative process. Natural motions should not be forced, leading to Swift's crucial distinction between delivery and invention. According to the Hack, in "A Digression concerning Critics," the Moderns,

have proved beyond contradiction that the very finest things delivered of old, have been long since invented, and brought to light by much later pens; and that the noblest discoveries those *ancients* ever made, of art or of nature, have all been produced by the transcending genius of the present age.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Anon, *The Joys of Hymen* (1768), pp. 45, 47.

<sup>38</sup> The footnote reads "Nothing is more frequent than for Commentators to force Interpretation, which the Author never meant" *A Tale of a Tub*, ed. Ross, p. 90.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

The quotation illustrates well the Scriblerian cynicism about progress - for the modern period, monstrosity was increasingly advanced as the norm, "man" was a diminutive insect compared with the giants of the past - ideas which Swift explored more fully and most famously in *Gulliver's Travels*. Moreover, the assimilation of bodily process to issues of invention and creativity was decisively brought together in the Conclusion of *A Tale of a Tub*: "GOING *too long* is a Cause of Abortion as effectual, 'tho not so frequent, as *Going too short*; and holds true especially in the *Labours* of the Brain."<sup>40</sup> In the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, such imagery corporealized reason at its deepest logical core, in a satire on the teaching of the Schools (and specifically Crambe's System of logic):

from whence he said one might see the propriety of the expression *such a one has a barren imagination*; and how common it is for such people to *adopt* conclusions that are not the issue of their premisses: Therefore as an Absurdity is a *Monster*, a Falsity is a *Bastard*; and the true conclusion that followeth not from the premisses, may properly be said to be *adopted*.<sup>41</sup>

The link between processes of monstrous generation and the spontaneous creativity of the hacks was also used effectively by Pope in his construction of Dulness:

How hints, like spawn, scarce quick in embryo lie,  
How new-born nonsense first is taught to cry,  
Maggots half-form'd in rhyme exactly meet,  
And learn to crawl upon poetic feet.<sup>42</sup>

Round him much Embryo, much Abortion lay,  
Much future Ode, and abdicated Play ...  
All that on Folly, Frenzy could beget,  
Fruits of dull Heat, and Sooterkins of Wit.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100. It is also worth noting Swift's parallel between bodily process and text.

<sup>41</sup> *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, ed. Miller, p. 122.

<sup>42</sup> *The Dunciad* B.I.59-62.

The "dull Heat," echoed Edmund's critique, in *King Lear*, of the "whole tribe of fops/ Got 'tween asleep and wake? I.ii.14-15). The image also featured in Ned Ward's definition of the fop in his *The Modern World Disrob'd* as the issue of "a half-witted Father, who drowsily begot him, betwixt sleeping and waking."<sup>44</sup> More generally, Dulness' "ample presence"<sup>45</sup> was itself a grotesque "enormity" or monstrosity, in the original sense of that word.

Parallel with the discussion of monstrous births was another dispute concerning monstrosity which concerned the possibility of procreation without union, the so-called cases of *spontaneous* generation. This was yet another species of grotesque discourse, and one much deployed in eighteenth-century satirical writing. Swift, for instance, importantly used the notion in reflections on the supposed origin of the Yahoos in the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*, "whether produced by the Heat of the Sun upon corrupted Mud and Slime, or from the Ooze and Froth of the sea, was never known."<sup>46</sup> The explicit monstrosity of spontaneous generation was reinforced by the designation of the *Yahoos* as "the most filthy, noisome and deformed Animal which Nature ever produced."

Finally it is important to consider some general observations on the differences and continuity in constructions of the grotesque up to the eighteenth century. In one interpretation, Park and Daston argue that monsters shift from being prodigies and wonders in the sixteenth and seventeenth

<sup>43</sup> *The Dunciad* B.I.121-2, 125-6.

<sup>44</sup> *The Modern World Disrob'd*, p. 210.

<sup>45</sup> *The Dunciad* B.I.261.

century to examples of medical pathology.<sup>47</sup> They conclude that an interest in the strange necessarily introduced a category of the spurious or fake; that science's involvement with the monstrous was essentially exclusive; the extraordinary was banished because it threatened the possibility of unconditional scientific generalisation.<sup>48</sup> In my next section, dealing with the construction and reconstruction of the hermaphrodite, I will be contesting their view by arguing that the "exclusion" of the monstrous was much less advanced (and more *taxonomically* problematic) than Park and Daston suggest. Developing this thesis, I will be arguing that greater attention needs to be devoted both to the playfulness of the grotesque category, as well as to its novelizing tendencies, which increasingly evolved in terms of behaviour and a self-constituting identity.

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<sup>46</sup> IV.ix.

<sup>47</sup> Katharine Park and Lorraine J. Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century France and England", *Past and Present* 92 (August 1981), pp. 20-54.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*: "Account of a monstrous boy" XLI (1740), p. 137; "Account of a monstrous child born of a woman under sentence of transportation," XLI (1741), p. 341; "An Account of a monstrous foetus resembling an hooded monkey," XLI (1741), p. 764; "Case of a child turned upside down," XLI (1741), p. 776; "A remarkable conformation, or *lusus naturae* in a child," XLII (1742), p. 152; "Part of a letter concerning a child of monstrous size," XLII (1743), p. 627; "Account of a child's being taken out of the abdomen after having lain there upwards of 16 years," XLIV (1747), p. 617; "A Letter concerning a child born with an extraordinary tumour near the anus, containing some rudiments of an embryo in it," XLV (1748), p. 325; "Part of a letter concerning a child born with the jaundice upon it, received from its father's imagination, and of the mother taking the same distemper from her husband the next time of being with child," XLVI (1749), p. 205; "An Account of a monstrous foetus without any mark of sex," XLVII (1750), p. 360.

### 3. Defining the hermaphrodite.

As we move from the various phenomena and discourses subsumed under the literature of monstrous births, we travel one step nearer to that dynamic openness to interpretation, and inclusiveness, which ties in with the range of material that went into the novelization of consciousness. There was a considerable variety in the range of approaches to the issue of hermaphroditism in the eighteenth century, although much of this literature reproduced earlier traditions of thought, chiefly by patching them together, anthologising them, with little attention to internal conflicts and contradictions in the material assembled. Although the pattern of borrowing was much the same as for pamphlets on monstrous births, the marvellous nature of the subject matter was heightened and reinforced by the sheer range of possible explanations, many of them self-consciously more mysteriously "othering" than what they sought to explain. In 1718, for example, Giles Jacob produced a translation of the "Tractatus de hermaphroditis" which had been added to Meibom's *A Treatise on the use of flogging in venereal diseases*.<sup>49</sup> One explanation offered was that "Nature having always a particular care of the Propagation of Mankind, endeavours for the most part to produce Females." The statement led to further, increasingly curious speculations. This bias on the part of nature emerged from the empirical observation that the number of male hermaphrodites exceeded the female ones, "Nature having chalk'd out to the first the Lines of a Woman's privy Parts."<sup>50</sup> Immediately afterwards, and on different grounds, a contrary line was suggested. Since Nature was "nothing

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<sup>49</sup> Meibom, Johann Heinrich (1590-1655), *De flagrorum usu in re medica et venerea: A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs: also of the Office of the Loins and Reins Made English from the Latin original by a Physician (= George Sewell). By John Henry Meibomius, M.D. To which is added, a Treatise of hermaphrodites* (1718) Printed for E. Curll.

<sup>50</sup> *Treatise of hermaphrodites* (1718), p. 58.

but the Power of God in the Production of Creatures, it never works but according to his Orders upon the Matter that is given to the Female."<sup>51</sup> The pamphlet proceeded to deconstruct the otherness of its own arguments by explaining that heathen philosophers say that Nature always aims to produce men because "they look'd upon Woman as a Monster in Nature."<sup>52</sup> The case studies discussed by Giles Jacob, such as that of Margaret Matthieu, a Cloth-worker's Wife in Toulouse (1653),<sup>53</sup> lead to judgements that are temporary, local or provisional; they do not hold everything in place in the manner of totalising discourses.

Giles Jacob's discussion extends to androgyny, but he has little to say about this, merely pointing out that the Platonic view of scriptural androgyny was condemned by Pope Innocent III. More exotic theories are explained at length. In some instances, a theory of planetary conjunctions was explored according to a range of detrimental combinations such as Mercury and Venus, Mercury and Luna, Mars and Venus. He concluded this discussion by stating that planets are "too remote from us to be the proximate Causes."<sup>54</sup> In line with the undeveloped state of medical knowledge Jacob also allotted time to the consideration of the effect of humours and the consequence of "Heat and Cold," during conception.<sup>55</sup> As with the pamphlets on monstrous births, other reasons for anatomical defects are given as the excess of seed, the woman's imagination, divine Punishment, the health or shape of the womb, melancholy, and lechery. Other discussions of hermaphroditism were parasitic upon alchemy. Thus Gideon Harvey, a member of the College of Physicians, had

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 78-83.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

proposed during the Restoration that a cure could be effected by the deployment of "Heterogeneous minerals."<sup>56</sup> But two other investigations were still trying to clear the matter up some thirty years later. James Parsons' *A Mechanical and Critical Enquiry into the Nature of hermaphrodites* appeared in 1741 and George Arnaud's *A Dissertation on hermaphrodites* in 1750. James Parsons argued against the possibility of miraculous alchemical combinations: "if there was not so absolute a law with respect to the being of only one sex in one body, we might then indeed expect to find every day many preposterous digressions from our present standard."<sup>57</sup> Other theorists claimed that diet or climate was responsible for the aberration. In the 1740s Johan Wolfart argued that "any anatomical variations evident in the sodomites were irrelevant; genital activity - penetration - was what counted, and this bore no relation to the size or texture of genitals."<sup>58</sup> Clearly, the grotesque category promoted a multi-layered, multi-voiced debate by interrogating all neighbouring categories and systems. Like the early novel it constructed its own tenuous foundations and genealogy, fully aware of its pervasively mongrelised status.

Bearing in mind Sedgwick's judgement that "biologically based explanations for deviant behaviour [...] are absolutely invariably couched in terms of 'excess,' 'deficiency,' or 'imbalance' - whether in the hormones, in the genetic material, or, as is currently fashionable, in the fetal endocrine

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>56</sup> Pope's use of alchemy as been explored by Douglas Brooks-Davies in his *Pope's Dunciad and the Queen of the Night* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), and *The Mercurial Monarch: Magical Politics from Spenser to Pope* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).

<sup>57</sup> *A Mechanical and Critical Enquiry*, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> G. S. Rousseau, in Robert Purks Maccubbin, *'Tis Nature's Fault: Unauthorised Sexuality during the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 141.

environment"<sup>59</sup> it is crucial to see how these modern starting points were crucially implicated in the early discourse of monstrous sexuality. Giles Jacob, for instance, concluded that

Monsters are deprav'd Conceptions, defin'd by the Ancients to be excursions of Nature, and are always Vicious, either in Figure, Situation, Magnitude, or Number.<sup>60</sup>

This is part, of course, of a more general literature concerning monstrous births. "Figure" refers to general properties taken together, such as the monstrosity expressed in the word "beast"; "Magnitude" refers to disproportion; "Situation" produces a grotesque when parts which properly belong in one place migrate to another - an example of this would be the growth of eyes on the Breast. "Number" refers to an excess or lack of parts as in the case of a person born with a third leg or with a missing finger. A discourse based on excess and lack was, in many respects, the most common as it was best able to encompass a range of phenomena; crucially, it also served as the framework for later taxonomies of sexuality.

Moreover, there was a heightened interest in, and openness about anatomy at the end of the eighteenth century, which was intrusive almost to the point of violence; in the enterprise of science, it was not uncommon to write about Nature as a female whose clothes must be torn away in order to uncover the most secret operations. Pamphlets on monstrous births, and Jacobs most especially, sought to provide as much anatomical detail and illustration as possible, because the erotic nature of the material could be exploited and marketed.

Novelty, improbability and surprise could be included within a discourse that espoused, or was parasitic upon tradition, order and probability. J. Paul

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<sup>59</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1990), p. 43.

<sup>60</sup> *Treatise of hermaphrodites* (1718), p. 67.

Hunter has argued that Henry Fielding's defence of his novelistic practice is "a version of the providential explanation of how unlikely events may be made to seem probable within a system that orders even the miscellaneous, offers a logic for the intricacies of his plot without diminishing our sense of surprise at how full of unforeseen happenings and of unperceived wonders life is."<sup>61</sup> I would argue that a parallel model for the grotesque turns the monstrosity into a charming digression of nature, a surprise in the narrative of creation. This was all part of the project of novelty and progress which increasingly constituted both the construction of nature and of art. Dunton, for instance, argued that all his projects were new, hazardously sailing towards a *terra incognita*. In his *Life and Errors* (1705) he stated that unless "a Man can either think or perform something out of the old beaten Road, he'll find nothing but what his Forefathers have found before him."<sup>62</sup> Taking these statements as a model, it will be seen that "Nature" contained the same elements.

The grotesque generated and reflected similar imbalances through excess and lack, which appear in moments of "sportiveness" in Nature, resulting in the addition or subtraction of body-parts between the sexes, especially when this is the product of deviation from the *normal* path. This point was wonderfully exemplified in the general case of the hermaphrodite as described on the first page of George Arnaud de Ronsil's influential *A Dissertation on Hermaphrodites* (1750):

Whatever degree of accuracy and wisdom nature employs in the composition and frame of the human body, we have oftener than once seen her swerve from these, and, as it were, forget herself; oftener than once, instead of regarding that construction, that order, those proportions of the organs, whence results that perfect harmony, which forms the object of our admiration, she has exhibited irregular, vicious, and unseemly conformations of parts. It should seem, to speak the language of a certain author,

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<sup>61</sup> J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth Century English Fiction* (Norton, 1990), p. 31.

<sup>62</sup> p. 247.

that this common parent, tired out and spent with producing every day the same things, over and over, in the same order, did now and then quit that uniformity, and throw into her productions a variety but little conformable to her laws. Sometimes she with-holds from a body the parts the most necessary; in another subject, she is pleased to multiply them, often allots them situations, connections, and dimensions, the most extraordinary and fantastical; she separates what, according to her own laws, should be joined, and joins what ought to remain separate: hence arise those deformities in the strokes or features, those members ill-articulated, those disproportions, those imperfections of organical parts, and those combinations, so monstrous and out of the common road, that it is with difficulty we discover nature even in nature herself. Among the *lusus naturae*, which are exhibited to us under different forms, some are of a peculiar species, which cannot fail of exhibiting our curiosity or compassion, and which art can never pretend to correct. There are others, on the contrary, which call for all the attention of the surgeon, and in which his understanding and dexterity become of extraordinary use; who leaving to the bare speculative physician, the painful but honourable province of finding out the mysterious causes, his principal concern is to lend a helping-hand to those who are thus disfigured by nature.<sup>63</sup>

Important here was the notion of nature's boredom with the rigidities of the systematically worked out creations, there merely to be replicated. Such boredom was relieved by fantastic invention which was the source of variety. But the value of nature as a normative system was in danger of invalidating itself by abdicating its own laws, running the risk of inconsistency. Arnaud demonstrated a profound respect for the authority of nature, yet there was a sense of awe at nature's capacity to move outside herself, contradicting her self-constituted identity by excursions into the unnatural. Another important point was that these monstrous disfigurements were enforced, they were not an act of choice or conscious self-fashioning. The proper response to them was therefore compassionate but also remedial, calling for correction and

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<sup>63</sup> pp. 433-35. The *Dissertation* is subjoined to Jourdain de Pellerin, *A Treatise on venereal maladies* (Traité sur les maladies veneriennes). Available on microfilm. See Woodbridge, CT: Microfilm Research Publications, Inc., 1986 (The Eighteenth Century; reel 2194, no. 12). The Advertisement (p. 427) informs us that the *Dissertation* was first read at a public meeting of the Academy of Surgery (1733). Arnaud is aware of Parsons' earlier work (see p. 428).

introducing (*naturalising*) the professional duties of the surgeon who will restore that "perfect harmony, which forms the object of our admiration."

Despite being, in these terms, sports of nature, hermaphrodites were still part of the broader category of nature and must act according to her laws. Moreover, Nature's laws were but the reflection of civil law which permitted "copulation" as an innately natural activity. But there was a warning: "if the Hermaphrodite does not perform his part agreeable to Nature, the same Law inflicts the Punishment due to sodomy, because he has abus'd one Part, contrary to Nature's Laws."<sup>64</sup> Nature can be imported for the purposes of toleration, but at another level merely served to increase the need to punish transgressions of its own rules. Such were the contradictions of grotesque legality.

Moreover the question of legality was increasingly brought to bear on the anomaly of hermaphroditism; having looked at how hermaphroditism may be considered as a deviation or excursion within nature, according it a natural if somewhat autonomous legality, we need now to look at the issue of *civil* legality.<sup>65</sup> As Arnaud pointed out in his *Dissertation on Hermaphrodites*, Nature throws into her productions "a variety but little conformable to her laws." Arnaud approached the issue from the point of view of history and relativism. Again this was typical of the multi-layered discourse of literature dealing with monstrous phenomena. Casting his eye on other cultures he concluded, that there was, "even in the Talmud, a law for them, comprising several articles, and from which lawyers have taken their authority to restrain these people."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Treatise of hermaphrodites* (1718), p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> My discussion of Arnaud contradicts Foucault's generalization that "For a long time hermaphrodites were criminals, or crime's offspring, since their anatomical disposition, their very being, confounded the law that distinguished the sexes and prescribed their union." *The History of Sexuality*, vol 1, p. 38.

<sup>66</sup> Arnaud, p.445

Historically his chief concern was the process of transition from barbarity to tolerance (one wonders how far this indicates an oblique criticism of earlier *English* sodomy trials and punishments):

Every body knows the horror wherewith superstition had inspired the Romans against these sort of persons, who, by the law of the Aruspices were condemned to be drowned some years after their birth, because they were considered as monsters by the decree of Romulus; but in the time of Pliny they laid aside that unjust prejudice...<sup>67</sup>

Legally the chief issue was less one of aberration than of deception (this was a major problem with the slippery bawd who deceives men under the cover of darkness); given a double sexuality one must make a choice with regard to sex; thus the Romans made a law

by which those who united in themselves both sexes, had the liberty of chusing their sexes; but if after having made this choice, they came to be convicted of having made use of the other sex, they were punished with great rigour and severity.<sup>68</sup>

As far as practical issues, such as inheritance, affected the legality of hermaphroditism, it was similarly obligatory to make a choice of one's sex. As Coke's commentary on Littleton set out "Every heire is either a male, or female, or an hermaphrodite, that is both male and female. And an hermaphrodite shall be heir, either as male or female, according to that kind of sexe which does prevail."<sup>69</sup>

Arnaud comprehensively explored the possibility of sex between hermaphrodites; pointing out that there were many hermaphrodites among the Nasamonians and Machlyans of Africa ("who had mutually carnal knowledge

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.445-46

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.446

<sup>69</sup> Edward Coke, *A Commentarie upon Littleton* (1628), quoted in Lynne Friedli "Passing Women' - A study of gender boundaries in the eighteenth century," in G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 246.

of each other"), he also discussed the marriage of two hermaphrodites in Valentia (c.1650) who were saved from being condemned to be burnt because of the opinion of a lawyer, Lawrence Matthieu:

My opinion, is that there is no crime punishable by law in these hermaphrodites; and as to the court of conscience, I hold they may lawfully make use of either sex, in virtue of the power acquired over each other's body by the rights of marriage, being become but one flesh, for the purposes of generation, and for remedying the vice of incontinence.<sup>70</sup>

Throughout his argument one senses that he is distancing such exchanges from the prohibited category of sodomy, which he elsewhere condemns. Anatomical variety was one thing, "unnatural" behavioural matters quite another.

Another strategy in the direction of tolerance was to transfer the grotesque metaphor away from the matter being litigated to the law itself; the law had become a grotesque body that society had engendered through over-expansion and corruption. Accordingly, in the *Memoirs of Scriblerus*, the Master of Ceremonies "resolved to open all the Sluices of the *Law* upon Martin."<sup>71</sup> Elsewhere, in *The History of John Bull*, we read that "*Law is a Bottomless Pit, it is a Cormorant, a Harpy that devours every thing; ... ten long Years did Hocus steer his Cause through all Meanders of the Law, and all the Courts.*"<sup>72</sup>

Desire was heightened in pamphlets on sexuality by building on secrecy, curiosity and the promise of shared revelation. Thus at the outset of a *Treatise of Hermaphrodites*, the author tells us, "my Design in the following Sheets is merely as an innocent Entertainment for all curious Persons"<sup>73</sup> This was significantly different from the secrecy of monstrous births. The sheets of

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<sup>70</sup> Arnaud, pp. 450-51.

<sup>71</sup> See Chapter XV: Of the strange and never to be parallel'd Process at Law upon the Marriage of Scriblerus, and the Pleadings of the Advocates.

<sup>72</sup> *The History of John Bull*, ed. Alan W. Bower and Robert A. Erickson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> *Treatise of hermaphrodites* (1718)

paper of which the book was made duplicated the bedsheets underneath which the monstrous sex has been covered.<sup>74</sup> The tearing away of the veil of disguise (with an undercurrent of violent unmasking) was projected only to be resisted: thereby insulating the novelty of the matter and protecting the author's validity as privileged narrator:

IT may be expected by some faithless Persons, that I should produce an HERMAPHRODITE to publick View, as an incontestable Justification of there being humane Creatures of this kind; but as I have no Authority to take up the Petticoats of any Female without her Consent, I hope to be excused from making such demonstrable Proofs.<sup>75</sup>

Meanwhile the reader is promised further titillation with the author's statement that "THE Intrigues of my HERMAPHRODITES are indeed very amazing, and as monstrous as their Natures."<sup>76</sup> Such "Intrigues" emphasized social activity rather than a merely logical or taxonomic category. The classificatory problems have become a social problem and, more importantly, the author was empowered to speak of them because he can distance himself from taboo activities (such as sodomy) that border on his material. Yet there was a crucial tension between the creative dynamics of playful nature and notion of one's self-construction. In nature, the category of the hermaphrodite was validated by a broader, self evident and self-validating category of nature as a whole system. Self-construction, moreover, emerges from desire and behaviour, it was a self-generated excess, led by the "vicious Inclinations" of which the author speaks:

I fear not the Censure of Hermaphrodites, nor of those that would be such to satisfy their vicious Inclinations; neither am I

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<sup>74</sup> Foucault argues that secrecy is in this respect constitutive of discourse: "What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it ad infinitum, while exploiting it as the secret." *The History of Sexuality*, I, (1979), p. 35.

<sup>75</sup> *Treatise of hermaphrodites* (1718), p. iii.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii.

under any Apprehensions from the censure of reforming Zealots.<sup>77</sup>

The author stands out on his own, self-constituted by a discourse of factuality. The anticipation of possible censure partly served as a device to advertise the erotic material by pointing to its possible prohibition, but such censure also alludes specifically to the more direct interventions of groups such as the *Society for the Reformation of Manners*, who were very successful in the early eighteenth century, rooting out the first members of the homosexual sub-culture. More generally, the notion was one of a concealed category which called for, excited and sanctioned the need to unmask. In this regard, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has noted that, "same-sex desire is still structured by its distinctive public/private status, at once marginal and central, as *the* open secret."<sup>78</sup> Such concealment was returned to in Jacob's discussion of the marriage of hermaphrodites which "would prevent an agreeable Consummation in the amorous Embrace, (however they may sport and dally with each other)" because it "must inevitably tend to their being expos'd to the World, as Prodigies and Monsters."<sup>79</sup>

Writing in his *Review*, Daniel Defoe devoted one of his issues to a brief but fascinating discussion of recent cases of sodomy and arson. His remarks on sodomy and secrecy can be compared with Jacob's discussion of the hermaphrodites' need for concealment. Faced with the excitement and curiosity aroused by open trials and executions, Defoe found himself divided between the need to make such a crime public and the need to keep it private.

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. v.

<sup>78</sup> *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press), p. 22. Roy Porter has a stimulating discussion of concealing and revealing in his "A touch of danger: The man-midwife as sexual predator," in G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 206-232.

<sup>79</sup> *Treatise of hermaphrodites* (1718), pp. 4-5.

Although both are specifically considered as new crimes, there is a marked contrast in Defoe's reaction to them. Arson requires a "large Description" but Defoe wishes that in the case of sodomy the English would follow the Dutch, "who in such Cases make both the Trials and Punishments of such Sort of Criminals, to be done with all the Privacy possible."<sup>80</sup> Like many of his contemporaries, he was anxious about the effect of the circulation of criminal narratives which served to embellish crime, exploiting novelty and surprise, scandalizing the reader. Defoe stated, therefore, that in the case of the crime of *sodomy*:

I think 'tis in its Nature pernicious many Ways, to have this Crime so much as named among us; the very Discourse of it is vicious in its Nature, abominable to modest Ears, and really ought not to be entertain'd, far less should be so openly discuss'd, so publickly try'd in the Courts of Justice, and the Accounts of it exposed as a subject to the vulgar Discourse of the People.<sup>81</sup>

Defoe had of course addressed the problem of criminal narratives in *Moll Flanders*, but importantly here it is constitutive of early homosexuality for it constructed a dangerous mixture of desire, curiosity and secrecy which the novel was to exploit.

Although published in English nine years before George Arnaud's treatise, in some respects the most advanced (sceptical) view of hermaphroditism was that of James Parsons in arguing that the matter was more a product of the distorting imagination than a genuine aberration of nature.<sup>82</sup> Such anatomical distortions were not a major *moral* problem in the eighteenth century. The more

<sup>80</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the State of the British Nation*, 27 November 1717. Vol. iv, no. 124, p. 495.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 496.

<sup>82</sup> See G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 12. The crucial sentence in Parson's *Enquiry* occurs in the Preface where he stated refers to "those Women that happen to be *Macroclitorideae* ... as if poor Women could exercise the Part of any other Sex but their own" (p. xvii). He also (more generally) blames "Ignorance of the Fabrick of the Body" (p. xvi) for the widespread belief in the existence of hermaphrodites.

controversial debate concerns behaviour. The molly, in contrast, did not desire such reform, his aberrant personality and lifestyle was self-constituted. The idea that this involved a choice emerges most strongly from the construction of such individuals in terms of mimicry and affectation; they are deprived of essentialist categorisation, and the benefit of inclusion in an increasingly plenitudinous system. Before proceeding to discuss how mollies and sodomites were constructed around the grotesque category and its novelizing tendencies, I will investigate how behaviour was increasingly observed and regimented according to increasingly specific and normative archetypes.

#### 4. Behaviour and Identity

A recurring figure in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century was the emergence of the "effeminate" man who was not definable merely by his foppishness; he was increasingly ambiguous and transgressive; he displayed, paraded, or flaunted his colourful dress and exotic behaviour. Increasingly, foppishness came to include proscribed sexual practices. Such a disempowering sexuality was increasingly foregrounded as a means of undermining presumptuous status. There was much more at stake than the former folly of affectation.

In the course of the eighteenth century it was possible to discern an increasing consciousness of the need to define sexual difference. Anatomical differences were not sufficient now, because transgression of sexual roles was duplicated by the affectation of behaviour, mannerisms, and dress which "properly" belonged to the other sex. The need for strict enforcement of boundaries can be seen in the diatribes against groups of men who constructed themselves as both misogynistic and effeminate, as in the following example:

The Men, they are grown full as Effeminate as the Women: we are rivall'd by them even in the Fooleries peculiar to our Sex: They dress like Anticks and Stage- Players, and are as ridiculous

as Monxies; they sit in monstrous long Perukies ... and esteem themselves more upon the Reputation of being a Beau, than on the substantial Qualifications of Honour, Courage, Learning, and Judgment ...<sup>83</sup>

The town/ country debate had typically located decadence in the urban setting, and the fop within the court. Yet the range of references to the effeminate suggests that the issue was now much wider than that suggested by the foppishness perceived chiefly as an excess of affectation that was tolerated within defined limits, and self contained within the satirical sketch. In his *The Modern world Disrob'd*, Ned Ward has a portrait of "Sir Narcissus Foplin: Or, the Self-Admirer," which clearly went further than mere foppishness. The sketch follows Aristotle's line on the grotesque, that the monstrous occurs when the sexual motions of the female are not mastered by those of the male; it outlines also a behavioural pattern clearly conditioned by the manner of one's upbringing:

He is the Spindle-shank'd Progeny of a half-witted Father, who drowsily begot him, betwixt sleeping and waking, to pleasure his Lady, much rather than himself; and dying, left the Fruits of his nuptial Drudgery to the Mother's Care, who, by effeminate Fondness has made him all Woman, except the masculine Peg, which is hung on by Nature for the Distinction of the Sexes.<sup>84</sup>

Inevitably the passage comes to the deviancy of sexual *practice*, although it interestingly mixes these with a traditional outrage at foppish ostentation; the duplicity, however, was not so much hypocrisy, rather it was a form of cheating on what the fop naturally had available to him: his manhood, which he maintained only for the sake of respectability:

he has so cool a sense of Female Favours, that he has less respect for the charms of a Petticoat, than for the loathsome condescensions of a fricatizing *Catamite*, who is Beast enough to ease his Sodomitical Desires with anti-venereal Exercise. Yet, after all, the squeaking *Homunculus*, with his Capon's Voice, who,

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<sup>83</sup> *The Levellers* (1745), p. 419. This is in the *Harleian Miscellany*, vol. 5. See also Augustan Reprint Society, No. 248 (Bound with *Mundus Foppensis* (1691)), with an introduction by Michael S. Kimmel.

in contempt of the fair sex, can be manual operator of his own Lust, can loll in his gilt Chariot, and keep his brawny Slaves to bow down and worship him, must set himself up, forsooth, for a Man of Honour, a Gentleman of Worth.<sup>85</sup>

In large part the description still worked through anatomy and sex, with the emphasis on Peg (Pego/Penis) and the comparison with the Capon, a castrated cock or eunuch. Yet the passage moves towards an *ars erotica*, beginning to serve as a manual of homosexual roles and typologies. More seriously, however, desire is self-constituted and autonomous and subverts the power structures that govern and order society. The fop rejected women but he was one, yet he set himself up as *gentleman* in the social world, with all the benefits and rights of service (such as slavery); yet slavery was not useful work but simply the indulgence of desire. At every stage the fop transgressed categories and abused power: he set up a different order of power, a paradox of power. In his *History of Sexuality* Foucault stated that "Where there is desire, the power relation is already present" and proceeded to conclude that "there is no escaping from power...it is always-already present, constituting that very thing that one attempts to counter it with."<sup>86</sup> Yet this third-person description of the fop most interestingly shows an outrage at a subversion and deflation of power and male authority, reconstituting and defining it along different lines. Finally, it is essential to recall (as a caveat) that these indictments are in the third person and therefore lack the self-validation of confession, what Foucault has called "one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth."<sup>87</sup>

The difference between the Fop and the Sodomite can be clarified by means of a contrast to the book *HELL upon EARTH: or the Town in an Uproar*.

<sup>84</sup> *The Modern World Disrob'd*, p.210.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p.213.

<sup>86</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I, pp. 81-2.

*Occasion'd by the late horrible Scenes of Forgery, Perjury, Street-Robbery, Murder, Sodomy, and other shocking Impieties* (1729):

to anatomize these Animals, and shew them in their proper Colours, may possibly afford some Diversion; for when a Fool sets up for a Fop he is no more the Subject of a wise Man's Esteem, than a Caterpillar after it is transform'd to a Butterfly.<sup>88</sup>

The passage continues with the set-piece *The Character of a FOP*: "HE is the Superficies of a Man, and the Magazine of Superfluities, and consults his Taylor with as much care as the ancient *Greeks* did the Oracle at *Delphos*."<sup>89</sup> Some of the defining traits of monstrosity (and of novelization) were clearly exemplified in the *excess* of "superfluity" and the *mixture* of "magazine"; importantly, they were now less facts of anatomy than pointers to characteristic behaviour. The fop's social vices were chiefly affectation, excessive sensitivity to his health and exotic (i.e imported) dress: "His Habiliments are mostly Foreign, and nothing is admirable but what is done by an outlandish Artificer."<sup>90</sup> Subsequently, and with a keen satirical edge, we are told that he is "the only person that rejoiceth at *Adam's* Fall, otherwise he must have gone naked."<sup>91</sup>

I will be arguing that in fact these cultural markers were self-consciously explored and contested with a view to transformation and that this manifested itself in the self-constituted behaviour of the fop which led to the typological *identity* of the molly. In the next chapter, I explore how society licensed

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, *The History of Sexuality*, I, p. 58.

<sup>88</sup> *Hell upon Earth*, p. 32.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

(despite many protests) the temporary renegotiation of encodings through dress in masquerade.

In line with process of sexual *novelization*, it was essential for the fop-sodomite to cultivate his novelty, writing himself in the very moment of his self-exhibition; the fop melted everything down into one, self-made shape, just as the novel collapsed a variety of earlier texts and genre: "His wit is like his Habit, of the newest Fashion ... he affects unintelligible Terms of Speech, and, like an apothecary, will reduce a whole Sentence into a Monosyllable." Language was collapsed (along with the primacy of the nation-state) into the great undifferentiated; the fop can only therefore display himself "in a compound of *French, Italian, and broken Latin*, to adorn his Peacock's Feathers with a little Pedantry."<sup>92</sup> Side by side with the lack of sexual differentiation was a parallel deconstruction of the category of national identity.

Unlike the sodomite above, who had "so cool a sense of female favours", the fop's footman was "hurried off his Feet with carrying *Billet Doux* to the Ladies."<sup>93</sup> Yet he does not strictly speaking belong to male company, for "Men of Sense withdraw from him as from a pestilential Infection."<sup>94</sup> Finally there was a degree of ambivalence in the conclusion of the diatribe, for the fop suffered the fate which was normally attributed to mollies or homosexuals: "Thus a supercilious Life brings an ignominious Death, and for want of Reason to guide his Passions, Sir Foppington falls into Despair, and dies in Suicide."<sup>95</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

In the next section, I argue that sex was increasingly separated from procreation and that the discourses that emerged from that separation built on process and artificiality.

## 5. Natural Sports and Civil Sports

Returning to Arnaud on Nature's sportiveness I want now to illustrate how Pope adapted the swerving away from Nature as a version of the artificial that partook of the ambiguity of the effeminate and mock-creativity. In large part he followed Arnaud's line, one that we find reiterated in this period:

Nature does nothing in vain; the Creator of the Universe has appointed every thing to a certain Use and Purpose, and determined it to a settled Course and Sphere of Action, from which, if it in the least deviates, it becomes unfit to answer those Ends for which it was designed.<sup>96</sup>

For Pope this became a model of society, through the link/chain metaphor; it was also a model for correct upbringing, whereby the Infant, if it submits to Nature's Guardianship "can hardly miscarry: Nature makes good her Engagements." For Pope, however, Nature was commonly set off course in the civil world which tended to deviate from the natural as in the case of the coxcomb:

Nature in her whole Drama never drew such a Part; she has sometimes made a Fool, but a Coxcomb is always of a Man's own making, by applying his talents otherwise than Nature designed, who ever bears an high Resentment for being put out of her Course, and never fails of taking her Revenge on those that do so. Opposing her Tendency in the Application of a Man's Parts, has the same Success as declining from her Course in the Production of Vegetables; by the Assistance of Art and an hot Bed, we may

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>96</sup> *The Spectator* 404, 13 June 1712. Bond, vol 3, p. 510. Sometimes attributed to Budgell, but the echo of *Essay on Criticism*, suggests Pope's authorship: "Some are bewildered in the maze of schools/ And some made coxcombs nature meant but fools" (26-7).

possibly extort an unwilling Plant, or an untimely Sallad; but how weak, how tasteless and insipid? ... Wherever Nature designs a Production, she always disposes Seeds proper for it, which are as absolutely necessary to the Formation of any moral or intellectual Excellence, as they are to the Being and Growth of Plants.<sup>97</sup>

Pope's metaphor was distinctly changing from a mutation within nature to one brought about by art in civil society; Ward's "Spindle-shank'd Progeny" found its counterpart in seeds that produced something "tasteless and insipid". Similarly, looking at sexuality in society, Gulliver in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* commented, "I expected at every moment that my master would accuse the Yahoos of those unnatural appetites in both sexes, so common among us. But Nature, it seems, hath not been so expert a schoolmistress; and these politer pleasures are entirely the productions of art and reason on our side of the globe."<sup>98</sup> Introducing sodomy from a different point of view, Daniel Defoe argued that when the sensual directs the rational, the "Order of Things is inverted; Nature is set with her Bottom upward; Heaven is out of the Mind, and Hell seems to have taken possession."<sup>99</sup>

Before I proceed to discuss the grotesque mutation of the "molly", we need to take a look at the notion of sexuality as itself essentially a "sport", a sinful vehicle for transforming oneself. The sportiveness intrinsic in sex, and which in part enabled the construction of homosexuality was already present within a variety of contemporary writings on the subject of sex. The power to transform belonged, after all, to nature in her manufacture and renewal of a plenitudinous universe, but it also had its artificial and sinful counterpart in the bawd-whore often called "Mother Midnight", where midnight signified a time of transition or transformation. Thus Swift's beautiful young nymph

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 511, 512.

<sup>98</sup> *Gulliver's Travels* IV.vii.

turned back into her syphilitic self at the midnight hour. Similarly, in popular lore, the bawd had the art of "transforming persons":

A BAWD is the Refuse of an Old Whore ... She is one of Nature's Errata's and a true daughter of *Eve*, who having first undone herself, tempts others to the same Destruction ... She is the very magazine of Taciturnity; for whatever she sees, she says nothing: it being a standard Maxim with her, *That they that cannot make Sport, should spoil none*. She has learnt so much philosophy to know that the Moon is a dark Body, which makes her like it much more than the Sun, being more suitable for her Business. Besides she's still *changing Quarters*, now Waxing now Waning, like her ... She has an excellent art in transforming Persons, and can easily turn a Sempstress into a waiting Gentlewoman.<sup>100</sup>

The metamorphic recycling of sexual energies under different (dis)guises also had its counterpart in Dulness' movements in *The Dunciad*:

As you must not be stiff nor starched in your conversation, so neither in the ordering of your Body; remembering that *Venus* transformed herself once into an Eel, to leave a precedent for Young Ladies, not to degenerate from the first principles of this science, to be ambitious of perfection in the methods of dispensing pleasure. By this model you are taught to circulate, to wind, to turn, to wriggle.<sup>101</sup>

While many of the contemporary pamphlets reinforcing sexual roles and stereotypes were conservative by the standards of the time, they were often complicated by an internal ambivalence. Thus women, for example, were attacked paradoxically both for frigidity and insatiability, an excess or a lack of sexual energy. Dulness' sexual-imaginative energy was characterised by a similar purposeless excess that threatened to overtake the entire city, just as pamphlets see London being overrun by bawds and sodomites, possibly

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<sup>99</sup> Daniel Defoe, *Conjugal Lewdness: Or, Matrimonial Whoredom...* (1727), p. 271.

<sup>100</sup> *The London Bawd: with her character and life. Discovering the various and subtle Intrigues of Lewd Women*, (4th ed., 1711).

<sup>101</sup> *The Whore's Rhetorick*, p.215.

imported by gentlemen who had completed the Grand Tour of erotic Europe as noted by Pope in *The Dunciad*:

But chief her shrine where naked Venus keeps,  
And Cupids ride the Lyons of the Deeps:  
Where, eas'd of Fleets, the Adriatic main  
Wafts the smooth Eunuch and enamour'd swain.  
Led by my hand, he saunter'd Europe round,  
And gather'd ev'ry Vice on Christian ground.<sup>102</sup>

Moreover, Dulness' foppish sexuality was signalled both by her incapacity to reproduce properly, and by her fairy queen, exotic dress "tinsel'd o'er in robes of varying hues."<sup>103</sup> Whether understood as a Bawd, or proto-sodomite, Pope's Dulness was a modern product of the constructive power which sexual discourse empowered.

## 6. Sodomy as Inclusiveness

The category of the "Molly" avoided the judgmental inclusiveness of sodomy, modernizing the grotesqueness of its self-definition by building on more modern anxieties about mixture, the shifting and the unstable. The new crime of the sodomite, like that of the arsonist called for different responses, but they still demanded exemplary prosecutions.<sup>104</sup> According to Michel Foucault, "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species."<sup>105</sup> Although the theory is superficially

<sup>102</sup> B.IV.307-12.

<sup>103</sup> B.I.81.

<sup>104</sup> According to Gaston Bachelard, "Modern psychology has made clear the psychology of pyromaniacs. It has shown the sexual nature of his tendencies." See *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 13.

<sup>105</sup> *The History of Sexuality*, I, p. 43.

attractive, it takes little account of the heterogeneous explanatory discourses which went into the construction of the hermaphrodite. Near the truth, G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter conclude that "official attitudes to homo-eroticism hardened, turning the occasional sin of buggery into the more terrifying stereotype of the sodomite."<sup>106</sup> But the most basic grotesque, spanning the category of the male and female, consisted in gender hybridization. How could this shifting category be described in such a way as to identify, control and prohibit it? The homosexual as sodomite belonged to a model of the grotesque that was increasingly outdated and outmoded; yet the older form persisted throughout the period. A 1699 pamphlet described how a group of sodomites who were taken up at Windsor and committed to Newgate, "were engaged in a more than beast-like confederacy among themselves for exercising this unnatural offence."<sup>107</sup> Sodomy surpassed all other crimes; in its sinfulness it also included all of them, blasphemy, sedition, witchcraft, the demonic: "it is yet without a Name: What shall it then be called? There are not Words in our Language expressive enough of the Horror of it."<sup>108</sup> The foregoing suggests, however, a degree of insecurity about the range of the activity, and what it ought to be called. What was changing was that a specific kind of portrait of an individual was taking over from an indiscriminating generalization. The mixture of elements was evident in *Satans Harvest Home* (1749) which described sodomites as "enervated effeminate Animals"; the writer asked,

What Can We Hope From So Crazy A *Constitution*? But a feeble Unhealthy Infant, Scarce Worth The Rearing; whilst the Father, instead of being the Head of the Family, make it seem as if it were govern'd by two Women: For he has sucked in the Spirit of *Cotqueanism*<sup>109</sup> from his Infancy.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> *Trial and Condemnation of the ... Earl of Castlehaven*, sig. A3.

<sup>108</sup> *Old England: or, the Broadbottom journal* 2 June 1750; Maccubbin, p.136.

Sedgwick has argued that "the differences between the homosexuality 'we know today' and previous arrangements of same-sex relations may be so profound and so integrally rooted in other cultural differences that there may be no continuous defining essence of 'homosexuality' to be known."<sup>111</sup> To a certain extent this warning is a useful one, for many texts which appear to be primarily about one vice, seem to lose themselves in a rainbow alliance of others. This tendency was nowhere more clear than in *Hell upon Earth* (1729). The long preamble continued a seemingly inexhaustible list with items such as *Of the Encrease of the Hempen Manufactory and the Decrease of the Woollen Manufactory*. The list begins again on the first page, with 41 crimes beginning with the letter A, from *Absurdities* and *Abuses* to *Audacities* and *Aversions*. We are then taken through a typical Sabbath, listing the many and various sins hour by hour; a detailed proposal for a system of fines; an inventory of the goods to be seen near the opera house in the Hay-Market. There is a tirade against "the present luxurious and fantastical manner of Eating."<sup>112</sup> The author concludes that "these Sort of *Epicures* do not consult so much their Health or their Palate in their Dishes, as they do the Uncommonness of them" and illustrates the point by the example of an extraordinary occasion on which a Nobleman "resolved to fetch his Dinner out of the Hedges and Ditches"; finally a diagram appears of the *Viper Soup, Stew'd Snails, Couple of Roast Hedge Hogs, Fricasee of Frogs and Badger's Ham and Colliflowers*. It would be difficult to find a text more playful in its exercise of grotesque heterogeneity. In this light it is important to

<sup>109</sup> The *O.E.D* notes, "Cotquean: 2: A man that acts the housewife."

<sup>110</sup> *Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy*, p. 49.

<sup>111</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1990), p. 44.

<sup>112</sup> *Hell upon Earth*, pp. 28-32

note that homosexualization was a novelization of a particular consciousness. It was partly patched together and parasitic, yet for others it seemed self-constructed and therefore artificial. It also worked through mimicry, as the following example demonstrates:

I found between 40 and 50 Men making love to one another, as they call'd it. Sometimes they would sit on one another's Laps, kissing in a lewd Manner, and using their Hands indecently. They would get up, Dance and make Curtsies, and mimick the voices of Women.<sup>113</sup>

Yet in an important sense, mimicry was concerned with the transgression of categories and was therefore the proper terrain of the grotesque. The dangers of mimicry were manifest in the satirical literature of the period, which showed, as in the following example, how sexual partners could be made redundant through the artifice of mimicry; in *Adollizing: or, A Lively Picture of Adoll-Worship. A Poem in Five Cantos* (1748), Clodius complained to the indifferent Clarabella,

Woman, cries he, when man's neglect denies,  
With mimic art the real thing supplies:  
When of dear copulation she despairs,  
At once a dildo softens all her cares.<sup>114</sup>

This has a traditional satirical side too, as exemplified in Moll, the "monstrous" and "unnatural" transvestite heroine of Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*, who was described as "a creature ... nature hath brought forth to mock the sex of woman", just as Hervey seems to mock the regular, natural gender make-up in the later period.<sup>115</sup> The popular mimic monkeys or "Wild Boy" at

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<sup>113</sup> Samuel Stevens, a Reforming constable, reporting on Thomas Wright, Sunday, 14 November 1725. See *Select Trials for Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds, and Other Offences at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey* (1742); quoted in Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830*, (London: Gay Men's Press, 1992), p. 55.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted in Peter Wagner, *Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America* (London: Grafton, 1990).

<sup>115</sup> I.II.125-34. Noted by Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.115.

court should be recalled here, for they doubly undermined and reinforced notions of the human and of civilization. In a parallel fashion, the molly, through mimicry, constructed himself as a grotesque, placed between gender polarities. Moreover, because the area was uncolonised (an "intellectual Africa") it was a space in which desire could be pluralised.

Just as the monstrous imagination teemed with forms, so society's abandonment of nature resulted in the proliferation of sodomites, as well as almost any other vice one might care to include. Evidence that the Town "abounds plentifully with a sect of brutish Creatures called SODOMITES" was taken from "late proceedings in our Courts of Law":

They exceed the worst Beasts of the Field in the Filthiness of their Abominations. The birds of the Air couple Male and Female to propagate Generation, and every Animal moves by a natural Instinct; but Man, exclusive of all others, forms Ideas destructive to himself, and grows fond of new Inventions which are repugnant to divine Institution and the fundamental Laws of Nature...<sup>116</sup>

Yet as this study is arguing, the Laws of Nature were by no means as fixed as this writer would like to think; in addition, the cult of novelty and invention, which sodomy is here shown to be parasitic upon, was clearly one of *the* most important developments in early eighteenth-century culture.

To accept the hermaphrodite as a "sport of nature" was a tentative gesture of tolerance in the context of a society that displayed an authoritarian reaction to the liberalisation of sexual practices, particularly with regard to increasingly public relations between men. Despite the acceptance of hermaphrodites and of androgyny as aberrant but fundamentally natural categories, it was not permitted to adapt such anomalous states to a correspondingly anomalous activity. As I argued above, hermaphroditic copulation was one thing, sodomy another. Condemnation in these cases joins sodomy with monstrosity

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<sup>116</sup> *Hell upon Earth*, p. 41.

irretrievably supplemented by the demonic and apocalyptic ("Hell upon Earth"), - features which had been largely purged from the grotesque category by the early eighteenth century. During the Restoration, it must be conceded, the ultimate sign of the debauchery of the libertine was his practice of sodomy, although this was not seen to threaten, so much as curiously to enhance, his categorisation as (demonic) heterosexual.

Yet it is important to realize that the construction of the category of the homosexual was a brutal matter. The category of the "molly" was not merely anomalous, it was an outrageous and offensive departure from official norms, undermining the "characteristic" manliness of the nation. Moreover, the sodomy associated with being a "molly" led to the organized action of the *Society for the Reformation of Manners* (according to Ned Ward in his *History of the London Clubs*).<sup>117</sup>

Writers often delineated the grotesque as a violent yoking of heterogeneous parts, and it is clear that in the civil world, this violence was returned as oppression. For example, one writer noted how the mollies go to their executions, "unpitied and unlamented, loaded with the highest guilt ... The greatest Criminal has some people that may drop some pitying Expressions for his unhappy and untimely Fate and condole his dismal Circumstances; while those Persons who fall by the Laws of *Sodomy*, can expect neither Pity nor Compassion."<sup>118</sup> Similarly, Daniel Defoe offers very little in the way of toleration:

As for the Persons, I leave them to Justice. I believe, every good Man loaths and pities them at the same time; and as they are Monuments of what human Nature abandon'd of Divine Grace may be left to do - So in their Crime they ought to be abhorr'd of their Neighbours, spued out of Society, and sent expressly out of

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<sup>117</sup> (London, 1709). A reissue by F[red] M[archmont] of 100 copies, no date. See "Of the Mollies Club".

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

the World, as secretly and privately, as may consist with Justice  
and the Laws.<sup>119</sup>

Although sexual relations were still mediated to a certain degree by ecclesiastical language and authority, "sodomite" was losing its biblical sense of a divine prohibition and new words such as "molly" were increasingly common.<sup>120</sup> Lady Mary Wortley Montagu commented that there are men, women and "Herveys", as though there actually existed a third (hermaphroditic) sex that constituted an individual hybrid category.<sup>121</sup> More broadly the word was used as a common label for foreigners, an expression of xenophobia. Yet "molly" was richer and much more subtle as a portrait of the hermaphroditic individual, who possessed a variety of describable characteristics, verging sometimes on a typology. Thus in Pope's "Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot", Hervey was finally subsumed under the (logical) category "Antithesis", but Pope called (rhetorically) on a variety of features: anatomical irregularity, behaviour, demeanour, manner of dress and psychological make-up. Textually, it is crucial to observe that Pope's self-validation, as person and as critic hinged on what he called, toward the end of the poem, his "manly ways", and these, it could be argued, find their most powerful assertion in the *difference* which the homosexual and ambiguous portrait of Hervey has supplied. The name Sporus was of course derived from the youth that Nero ordered to be castrated and whom he later married, treating him as a woman. These can be contrasted with the portrait of Atticus vacillating, unsteady and uncommitted, setting out to

Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,

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<sup>119</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the State of the British Nation*, vol. iv, no. 124, p. 496.

<sup>120</sup> In his *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830* (GMP, 1992), Rictor Norton lists sixty-nine gay slang terms, as well as familiar code names or "Maiden names" (pp. 300-1, p. 298).

<sup>121</sup> *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis, vol. 17, p. 274; (see also G.S. Rousseau in Maccubbin, op. cit., pp. 140, 165 n.40)

And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;  
 Willing to wound and yet afraid to strike,  
 Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike;  
 Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend,  
 A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend,  
 Dreading ev'n fools, by Flatterers besieg'd,  
 And so obliging that he ne'er oblig'd;  
 Like *Cato* give his little Senate laws,  
 And sitt attentive to his own applause...(201-4)

Like the effeminate fop, Atticus "sits attentive to his own applause" in the middle of a sycophantic private circle. Bufo was similarly "flatter'd ev'ry day" (240). Finally Pope looked to his father as *vir bonus* for virtue, yet there was another moral centre, defined by Pope's mothering of his mother,

Me let the tender Office long engage  
 To rock the Cradle of reposing Age. (408-9)

In line with the shifting and unstable sexual identities and discourse that have been the subject of this chapter, it is fascinating to discern with what dexterity Pope succeeded in guiding himself between masculine and feminine qualities which his society increasingly sought to separate by prohibiting mixed, middle or shifting categories of duty, emotion and identity.<sup>122</sup>

To conclude, the "molly" can in many respects be considered the product of a natural and inevitable mutation within the prevailing culture. If identity and behaviour could be fashioned or constructed and then naturalized (as in *homo economicus*) then it followed that other reconstructions, at the fringes, might also seek to naturalize themselves. For his part, Swift suggested in *Gulliver's Travels* that homosexuality was "entirely the production of art and reason."<sup>123</sup> Sexuality was increasingly constructed not on the basis of sex but on the ground of self-legitimation and the pluralising of desire. William

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<sup>122</sup> In his *Reading Deconstruction/ Deconstructive Reading* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1983) G. Douglas Atkins incorrectly suggests that Sporus should be linked with 'Spore.' Although there are earlier links through *speirein* (Greek)= to sow and *spora* (Latin), the O.E.D. does not refer to any usage before 1836. A better, and more interesting link with Sporus' instability can be achieved through *sporadic* (1689) and *sporadical* (1654).

<sup>123</sup> IV.vii., p. 312.

Brown, for example, charged with sodomy, was not ashamed to answer, "*I think there is no Crime in making what use I please of my own Body.*"<sup>124</sup> When such first person accounts are available they are especially valuable for they challenge the politics of the third-person constructions of many of the pamphlets I have analysed; importantly they allow us to strip back the role of satire, fancy and moral paranoia. As Sedgwick concludes, "The safer proceeding would seem to be to give as much credence as one finds it conceivable to give to self reports of sexual difference."<sup>125</sup> Sedgwick also argues, psychoanalytic theory, through the "lush plurality of its overlapping taxonomies of physical zones, developmental stages, representational mechanisms, and levels of consciousness, seemed to promise to introduce a certain becoming amplitude into discussions of what different people are like,"<sup>126</sup> Yet this situation was rarely exhibited in civil society, where the ability to define sexual orientation was the precondition of its simultaneous exclusion. The anus, it could be argued was a grotesque vanishing point, the end and the denial of vision. Ned Ward unmasked the mollies, just as Giles Jacob lifted the petticoats of the hermaphrodites, delighting in the invasion of their secrecy; yet when they have stripped all away, if we deconstruct these strategic manoeuvres, it is clear that there was a deep anxiety that sexuality and identity might not be as fixed as one had believed. As a "molly", the early eighteenth-century homosexual rendered himself monstrous by importing qualities that "properly" belonged to the other sex; either he monstrously erased his sexual organ, making it redundant to his preferences, giving up his

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<sup>124</sup> *Select Trials for Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy .. To which are added, Genuine Accounts of the Lives ... of the most eminent Convicts*, (London, 1742 2nd ed.), 4 vols, vol. 3, pp. 39-40.

<sup>125</sup> Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press), p. 26.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4.

manhood and turning to foppish effeminacy; or, in using his orifice "improperly" he became more monstrous still, as a sodomite.

## 7. The Space of Deviation

Moving into the *public* sphere of sexuality, the available literature indicates that a diversity of sexual practices was available. Sodomy, prostitution and sado-masochism were all brought together, for instance, in an episode in Ned Ward's monthly *London Spy* concerning an elderly man's visit to a "Widow's Coffee-House" or bordello where rods are to be used upon him. As the narrator explains, this man is of

the Black School of *Sodomy*, who are call'd by Learned Students in the Science of Debauchery, *Flogging Cullies*. This unnatural Beast gives Money to those Strumpets which you see, and they down with his Breeches and Scourge his Privities till they have laid his Leachery. He all the time begs their Mercy, like an offender at a *Whipping-Post*, and beseeches their forbearance; but the more importunate he seems for their favourable usage, the severer Vapulation they are to exercise upon him, till they find by his Beastlie Extasie, when to withhold their Weapons.<sup>127</sup>

Yet the mutation of new sexual identities was central to the grotesque sexual dynamic that playfully subverted categories, confronting the dull standard with the exciting hybrid. In Alan Bray's analysis of homosexuality at the beginning of the eighteenth century, "There was now a continuing culture to be fixed on and an extension of the area in which homosexuality could be expressed and therefore recognised; clothes, gestures, language, particular buildings and particular public places."<sup>128</sup>

Looking at the public spaces that were increasingly colonized by the margins, it can be seen that there were special meeting places for mollies such

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<sup>127</sup> Edward Ward, *The London-Spy Compleat, in Eighteen Parts* (1704); pp. 32-3.

<sup>128</sup> Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (Gay Men's Press, 1982), p.92.

as the masquerade. There is, for instance, a secret homosexual masquerade party in one of the original histories of Jonathan Wild, at which a group of "He-Whores" were "rigg'd in Gowns, Petticoats, Head cloths, fine lac'd Shoes, Furbelow scarves, and Masks." They incriminate themselves by much "tickling and feeling each other, as if they were a mixture of wanton Males and Females."<sup>129</sup> Masquerade, which I will be discussing in greater detail in the next chapter, served to licence such activities under cover of disguise.

Numerous pamphlets such as *A Hell upon Earth* (1729) and *A Ramble through London* (1739) explored the production of sexually aberrant spaces within the city, itself a grotesque (and non-natural) amalgamation of people.<sup>130</sup> G. S. Rousseau has pointed to this expansion within the city, concluding that "Earlier the outcry had been directed at the stage as a spawning ground for this detestable breed, but in the 1720s, the fields for breeding had diversified."<sup>131</sup> Early homosexuality constructed itself by means of a defined spacing, an indulgence in play that effected a masquerade like transformation of qualities between categories. Jan Kott sees disguise generally as a masquerade both erotic and metaphysical, with the hermaphrodite as the anatomical counterpart of disguise and the androgyne as its metaphorical counterpart.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, some of the first recordings of ambiguous sexual encounters find their source in the masquerade. These figures are tinselled over with a sensuous variety of hues and proportions. The transition to a sensual excess can be seen in the context of common motifs such as the butterfly in the *Guardian* paper, in which the

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<sup>129</sup> *Select Trials for Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds, and Other Offences at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey* (1742), II, pp. 257-8.

<sup>130</sup> Rictor Norton sets out to reclaim the extent of cruising grounds such as Sodomites Walk, Moorfields, op. cit., p. 294.

<sup>131</sup> Maccubbin, op. cit., p.143

<sup>132</sup> See his *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, trans. Boleslaw Taborski, preface by Peter Brook (Methuen, 1967).

narrator records seeing "a *Chimney-Sweeper* made up of black Crêpe and Velvet, (with a huge Diamond in his Mouth) making love to a Butterfly."<sup>133</sup> Moreover, the "molly" went beyond mere transvestism or cross-dressing: he courted the excessive and the exotic. Yet Pope's Dulness, in her variety of superficial self-created colours, threatening to take over the city, served as a metaphor of the hysteria which greeted the rise of a lush multiplicity of sexualities. The grotesque body was symbolically central in *The Dunciad* because Pope's satire on novelty and artificiality was also a fascination with, and repudiation of, the novelization of sexuality.

The early eighteenth-century homosexual subculture drew together a number of characteristics that typified the grotesque's relation of heterogeneity to the main or "official" culture; the grotesque and ridiculous dress of dance and pantomime; the definition of spaces and subsequent encroachments upon them; Grub Street threatened official literary culture in a way that the "molly houses" threatened traditional sexual *mores*. The city, itself often characterised as a grotesque, provided a site for these exchanges.

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<sup>133</sup> *Guardian* 154, 7 September 1713.

# Chapter Five

## The Public Space

The taxonomic enterprise had begun with a confident determination to clear up categories by means of logical division of the natural world into *genus* and *species*. As I have demonstrated, such systems could succeed only by setting up provisional categories for species which straddled classifications, or for new ones which could not yet be placed within the existing taxonomy. Such new forms acted as an implicit critique of systematic classification and as a satire on its proud ambitions. The desire for a cleared space, devoid of monstrous mixtures has also been explored in terms of general issues of representation and the construction of inner or mental space. In this chapter, I show how the taxonomic problems that are the foundation of this thesis are crucial to the understanding of three specific kinds of *public* space: pantomime theatre, the masquerade and the fair. These were all grotesque places of assembly where space was overfilled; meetings and encounters were shifting and momentary. I will be arguing that out of such public spaces emerged the reconstruction of the grotesque body and that this fed back into the private world and the imaginative field.

Although the grotesque public space was in important respects a site of experiment and innovation, it was as much a containment of the grotesque as a space for its cultivation. From one angle it was dependent on convention, on long-standing traditions and customs many of which had begun (and would remain) marginal until the Romantic period. Masquerade, for instance, pointed back to rural festivals and more distantly to the Saturnalia, sportively and playfully absorbing the motifs of one or the other. Pantomime was defended as

the ancient art of mime and metamorphic dancing derived from the Ovidian literary repertoire. The fair self-validated its origins, for it had enjoyed a customary licence "beyond living memory," and its survival was further assisted by economic and commercial developments which were difficult to suppress. The content of such entertainment was largely derived from a stock of grotesque transformations, a series of conventions which were simply linked up with contemporary topics.

Such a grotesque grafting of seemingly incompatible elements can also be discerned in other forms of coming together, yoking and bonding. It is important to recognize that the public space was specifically contested as a site of exchange and negotiation. This is most obvious in the case of the fair, with its material exchanges. These tended to branch out from the local, however, to take in the exotic, which the gaze could not fully exchange or assimilate without a willingness to embrace cultural rupture. More generally, eighteenth century commentators specifically censured the grotesque nature of such forms of assembly by drawing attention to their mixing of people - they are denounced as *promiscuous*. In part, the term described the kind of formal mixture I have examined in relation to "becomingness" - that moment which is emerging from chaos, and which belongs properly with the grotesque process. It will be recalled that for Aristotle, mixture had to be distinguished from structure as a genuine principle of bodies. More specifically, the promiscuity of popular entertainment served to enable the crossing and breaking down of neatly constructed categories and hierarchies. The duke and the cobbler might come together at a masquerade in a partial exchange that formed a multiple grotesque, a yoking and a transgression of boundaries such as class, age and sexuality.

In the first part of this chapter I argue that the features that typify these public spaces are founded upon the commercial exchange, on bodily processes and sexual drives. These were part of a public grotesque which united items

on the basis of a nominal, rather than an essential value. In later sections I show how Pope combined these foundations of the public grotesque in *The Dunciad*. Dulness characteristically shifts between private and public spaces; overfilling and evacuating alternately, it is a metaphor of both the commercial and the corporeal. Pope's intervention was not, of course, the only one to challenge features of the grotesque that were emerging as popular forms and sites of entertainment in the eighteenth century. I shall also be scrutinising some of the defences of these public sites in order to show that they had available their own partially articulated aesthetic of surprise, novelty, taxonomic confusion, and metamorphic play.

### 1. The Grotesque Public Body

In an important sense, the grotesque body was constructed in terms of the public sites in which it was placed. These served to link bodily processes and sex with the sites in which they proliferated: the filthiness of the city, the licence of the fair or pantomime, and the liberality of the masquerade. Since the Restoration, the theatre had, according to its critics, a reputation for the corrupting of youth with incontinence, lewdness and debauchery. The theatre, for its critics, served primarily to deform morality: plays were grotesque in the sense that they were mere tinsel and trifles foolishly wasting the time and destroying the thrift of poor people. This kind of criticism was also deployed against the market, and indeed the fair and theatre could not properly be entirely distinguished, in that puppet theatres, farces and other kinds of shows and performances took place at Bartholomew Fair.

While most of these spaces were open, they were also contained. They also operated along different lines. While the theatre was concerned with the nature of public display (itself a problematic exposure to the gaze of onlookers), the masquerade was constructed around concealment and a deliberate confusion,

mixing and opposition of public signs. As Terry Castle notes, "The conventional relationship between costume and wearer was ironic, one that replicated a conceptual scandal."<sup>1</sup> Satires and diatribes, of course, served to return sex to the surface. Pope had noted in *The Rape of the Lock* that the masquerade was a time at which a nymph could "break *Diana's Law*" (II, 105). Edward Ward was more explicit in *The Ball, or un Passo-Tempo: A Poem* (1723):

Here Maids, Wives, Widows, all may go,  
And learn to Ease their Pains below.

Concealment was central in arousing sexual desire. In *The Country Wife*, for example, Pinchwife had remarked that a "Woman mask'd, like a cover'd Dish, gives a Man curiosity, and appetite, when, it may be, uncover'd, 'twou'd turn his stomach."<sup>2</sup> Moreover there were a number of traditional sources for the masquerade-as-temptation. Milton typified post-lapsarian sexuality as "court amours, / Mixed Dance, or wanton mask, or midnight ball."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Steele had reminded his readers in *Guardian* 142 that "the devil first addressed himself to Eve in a mask," concluding "...we owe the loss of our first happy state to a masquerade, which that sly intriguer made in a garden, where he seduced her." Many of the sexual aspects of masquerade were concerned primarily with grotesque ambiguity, and many can be related back to the grotesque traditions of festive sport. Terry Castle has explored the presence of the "she-male", a man who dressed in women's clothes as a participant in festivities connected with the hobby-horse or hoodening game.<sup>4</sup> Following these traditional lines, Hogarth, for instance, depicted Heidegger as Lord of Misrule and as a comic satyr. His monstrously large nose was also

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<sup>1</sup> Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* (Methuen, 1986), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *The Plays of William Wycherley*, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), III.i.101-3.

<sup>3</sup> *Paradise Lost*, IV. 767-8. The *O.E.D* defines "mixed" in this example as meaning "of both sexes."

<sup>4</sup> Terry Castle, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

exaggerated to suggest the liberation of the sexual drive. In *The Dunciad*, Pope diminished the sexual connotation of this impresario of masquerade, portraying him rather differently as Dulness's grotesque bird "a monster of a fowl,/ Something betwixt a Heideggre and owl."

With careful excavation, it is possible to establish the different zones and spaces which produced the grotesque from specific sites. Some of Swift's best-known poems turned the city into a grotesque body with its filth of all hues and odours, its heterogeneous collection of objects, as in 'A Description of a City Shower':

Sweepings from Butchers Stalls, Dung, Guts, and Blood,  
Drown'd Puppies, stinking Sprats, all drench'd in Mud,  
Dead Cats and Turnip-Tops come tumbling down the Flood. (61-3)

The link between the creativity of the grotesque and its filthy urban sites was made explicit in another work attributed to Swift:

When writers of all Sizes, like Freemen of the City, are at liberty to throw out their Filth and excrementious Productions in every Street as they please, what can the Consequence be, but that the Town must be poyson'd, and become such another Jakes, as by the report of our great Travellers, Edinburgh is at Night, a thing well to be consider'd in these pestilential Times.<sup>5</sup>

This is the grotesque as bodily product, threatening the city with the spectre of pestilence. In *The Dunciad* the City of London is similarly strewn with the productions of Dulness, and the process is one which is linked with bodily fluids and streams, from the urination contests to the muddiness and filth of the river with its nymphs of grotesque cloacal beauty such as "Nigrina black, and Merdamante brown" (B.II.334). Similarly, the games that occur in the second book of *The Dunciad* are a dirty sport "obscene with filth" (B.II.75), inspired both by "ordure's sympathetic force" and the "effluvia strong" (B.II.105), concluded finally in the "brown dishonours" of Curl's face (B.II.108). Elsewhere, the dunces let "the fresh vomit run for ever green" (B.II.156). Much

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<sup>5</sup> *Letter to a Young Poet* (attributed to Swift), quoted in Pat Rogers, *Grub-Street: Studies in a Subculture* (Methuen, 1972), p. 261.

of the imagery used by Pope is of liquid, indicative of the fluidity of dulness; for the reader, the transition was one from the grotesque body, commencing in Osborne's "wild Meander" (B.II.176) of urine, to a grotesque map of the city, culminating in Fleet ditch which, in a Swiftian image, with "disemboguing streams/ Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames" (B.II.271-2). Such liquid imagery enabled Pope to exploit the imagery of sinking, which he had already explored in his work on bathos, as well as the inherent instability of dulness, its "whirlpools and storms." (B.II.317) and its "mingled wave" (B.II.343) that suggest the loss of a grounding solidity as objects lose themselves in one another, resulting in the breakdown of fixed boundaries between categories .

In pantomime, the art was also primarily that of the body with its metamorphic mimicry of other objects. More generally, the bodily aspect of pantomime concerned sex. Pantomimes were not infrequently referred to as "night-pieces" often with underlying sexual connotations and ambiguities. A number of performances licensed a libidinous and playful excess, often resulting in monstrous births such as that recorded in the following account:

What a rout here was with a Night piece of *Harlequin* and *Scaramouch*? With the Guittar and the Bladder! What jumping over Tables and Joint-Stools! What ridiculous Posturs and Grimaces! and what an exquisite Trick 'twas to straddle before the Audience, making a thousand damn'd *French Faces*, and seeming in labour with a monstrous Birth, at last my counterfeit Male Lady is delivered of her two Puppies *Harlequin* and *Scaramouch*.<sup>6</sup>

Such births were of course picked up in *The Dunciad*, where the new world to Nature's laws unknown" culminated in an allusion to Rich's acclaimed metamorphoses, expanded by Pope in his conclusion that "one vast Egg produces human race" (B.III.248).

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<sup>6</sup> *A Comparison between the Two Stages* p. 47; Quoted in Shirley Strum Kenny, *British Theatre and Other Arts 1660-1800* (Washington: Associated University Press, 1984), p. 140.

Within pantomime, the ambiguity of Harlequin's characterisation should be understood in the light of his potentially more subversive counterpart, the fool or court-jester. In her *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology*, Kristina Straub has extended the notion of the actor's ambiguous social status to his sexuality. Her book explores the tension between what she calls "feminizing the actor as an eroticized object of spectacle and masculinizing him as a 'professional.'"<sup>7</sup> Making oneself the willing object of ridicule was a species of self-exposure. Actors such as Colley Cibber therefore adopted a rhetorical strategy that took the form of what Straub has termed "an aggressive denial of control over his audience that amounts to a sort of literary self-castration."<sup>8</sup> She cites a number of documents which show that man was "unmanned" on the stage.<sup>9</sup> Although Pope was not primarily interested in deploying the issue of Cibber's sexuality, it is worth noting that his prominent placing within the grotesque discourse of *The Dunciad* reinforces Straub's remarks about the ambiguous category of the entertainer. A degree of public ambiguity was foreshadowed by the perceived collapse of discrete categories: an topic central to the argument of *The Dunciad*. Moreover, the evidence appears to bear out some aspects of Straub's argument. The closeness of pantomime to issues of ambiguous sexuality is indicated by the following example of a primarily anti-sodomite diatribe in *Satan's Harvest Home*:

Our *Players* are now turn'd *Ballad-singers*; our *Theatres* are transform'd to *Puppet-shews*, improperly call'd *Pantomimes*; for the *Pantomimes* of the *Antients* were clever *Fellows*, that would exactly mimic, or imitate, the *Voice* and *Gesture* of any *Man* they had an intent to *ridicule*. But in these *Pantomime Entertainments*, there is neither *Head* or *Tail*, or *Meaning* or *Connection*: *Gods*, *Harlequins*, *Priests* and *Sailors*, are all jumbled together, even in *Temples*, in the most incoherent

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<sup>7</sup> Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1982), p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Manner, ten times more extravagant than than the most extravagant Dream that ever yet was dreamt.<sup>10</sup>

Modern entertainment has abandoned proper ("exact") representation in favour of an incoherence which abuses categories of objects by displacing them to unfamiliar or reserved spaces such as a temple. The promiscuity (mixture) of such entertainment was reinforced by the ambiguity and "perversity" of its practitioners. Elsewhere the pamphlet selected more obvious targets such as the opera with its well-known castrati, who seemed to symbolise the corruption of the entire genre. Just as new species of sexuality or an ambiguous anatomy (explored in the previous chapter) endangered gender boundaries, so pantomime was also a misshapen product that collapsed generic boundaries. Each of these public spaces - the theatre, the pantomime, the opera, the masquerade, and the fair - served as a repertoire of models for the grotesque body, scatological and sexually ambiguous. Unstable and metamorphic, they forged an easy alliance with the insidiously shifting pressures and processes of the commercial world that was already undermining the construction of a settled and stable culture.

## 2. Commerce and Culture

In his *Apology*, Colley Cibber explains how "Expence" was introduced into the theatre and began to corrupt it. Cibber's discussion of this issue serves as an introduction to the unity of the commercial and the bodily as grotesque processes that undermined essentialist values. The force of money stimulated a proliferation of 'low' entertainment, typified by what Cibber (commenting on John Weaver's *The Loves of Mars and Venus*, 1717) called "the succession of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> *Satan's Harvest Home*, p. 57.

monstrous Medlies that have so long infested the Stage." Using a civil analogy, he explained that this was caused by the theatres' "outvying, in Expence, like contending Bribes on both sides at an Election, to secure a majority of the Multitude."<sup>11</sup> In Chapter Thirteen of his autobiography, Cibber proceeded to exploit the traditional analogy between the theatre and the world by means of another civil analogy in his account of the rebuilding of the theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields:

As coarse Mothers may have comely Children, so Anarchy has been the Parent of many a good Government; and by a Parity of possible Consequences we shall find, that from the frequent Convulsions of the Stage, arose, at last, its longest Settlement, and Prosperity ...<sup>12</sup>

Cibber's language returns us to the physicality of a theatre as the violent competition for space; the stage is itself a grotesque body convulsed by the strain of conception. Moreover, the continuity of tradition is disrupted by the recognition that something beautiful may come out of something monstrous. The new economics forces its way onto the world stage, ushering in new audiences with a demand for mixed entertainment suitable to the widening range of spectators. The settlement of the stage, as Cibber recognized, was one step away from anarchy, but in a crucial sense it was a step back to the arbitrary sway and tyranny of the market, whose unstable methods of selection were not entirely superior (at least for the loser) to the former 'safety' of patronage. Yet Cibber has to admit that the aesthetic judgment of the multitude can in principle be corrupted by the force of money. Cibber introduced the problem but ended by collaborating with it, as Pope's satire never fails to remind us.

Success was less the product of natural value than of economic or political nurture. Cibber's comments were representative of the recognition that

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<sup>11</sup> *Apology*, ed. John Maurice Evans (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 299.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

commercial factors supplied a strong foundation for grotesque entertainment in the public spaces of the town. Moreover, it was financial success, rather than 'objective' aesthetic judgement, that increasingly served as the criterion of evaluation. How could the spectator be isolated from contending bribes, or a settled state of affairs such as that exemplified by Cibber's stage, which, as his imagery suggests, was the product of monstrosity? For Cibber's greatest critic, Alexander Pope, the market and commercial exchange need to be shown in a monstrous light, as a dull process of petty buying and selling, acts of exchange vitiated by triviality and degeneracy; often the products are merchandised as the uncommon, the scarce and the exotic. Under Dulness such products are mere "show" or "Novelty". Whether the products of Dulness are leaden in their gravity or merely gilded effects of surface, they are artificial metamorphoses of the trivial into the strange. Despite the benefits derived from his own self-promotion in the market, Pope linked dulness and poverty in *The Dunciad* through his notion of the slavery to "this sad and sorry merchandize."<sup>13</sup> The capitalist process rationally metamorphosed the commodity from raw product (savage) to finished luxury (civilization). This was unmasked by reversal, represented as an underlying grotesque process of accretion that distorted and deformed value at every stage of production. As society was debased by the 'low', or by the failure of authority and leadership from the centre, the metamorphosis, in the Scriblerian vision is commonly one that shifts back from civilization to savagery; the Moderns' merely artificial productions are capable of nothing more than a mimicry of the natural; they are the new grotesque in all its ludicrous, trifling novelty.

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<sup>13</sup> "Martinus Scriblerus of the Poem," *Twickenham Edition*, vol. 5, p. 50.

This economic and commercial situation demanded a different way of seeing. For the eighteenth century observer, the fair was symptomatic of a new market economy which was no longer a relatively stable and ordered object of vision interrupted only by seasonal change; the market economy built itself around the shifting, novel and surprising. Moreover, it had to be set apart from just those qualities it lacked in order for them to retain their utility for a properly "high" art. The spectator's gaze had to operate, therefore, in such a fashion that it took in the grotesque multitude without becoming part of it, without blunting the senses, or unbalancing the mind. Such a gaze was an important weapon, because it was intended to reconstruct essential boundaries - it was a strategy of containment. In lines reprinted in the *Muses Mercury* (1707), for example, John Dryden was observed to have operated as an exemplary observer in locating the centrality of spectacle as a matter of how we are to see others, and how this is affected by economic forces, dangerously coming into their own and depleting value:

WHAT *Nostradame*, with all his Art can guess  
 The Fate of our approaching *Prophetess*?  
 A Play which like a Prospective set right,  
 Presents our vast Expences close to sight;  
 But turn the Tube, and there we sadly view  
 Our distant gains; and those uncertain too.  
 A sweeping Tax, which on ourselves we raise;  
 And all like you, in hopes of better days.  
 When will our Losses warn us to be wise!  
 Our Wealth decreases, and our Charges rise:  
 Money the sweet Allurer of our hopes,  
 Ebbs out in Oceans, and comes in by Drops.  
 We raise new Objects to provoke Delight;  
 But you grow sated e're the second sight.<sup>14</sup>

The play is a species of perspective glass indulgently regarding its own expence and its own momentary survival, given the tyranny of the market, with its exorbitant taste for novelty, its indifference to the muse and its

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<sup>14</sup> The text used here is that from the Prologue to *The Prophetess* (1690) ... Spoken by Mr Betterton. See *The Poems and Fables of John Dryden*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 439-40, ll. 1-14.

rejection of close attention: what Dryden specifies as the refusal of a "second sight." Delight is less a natural and well-deserved response to the creative process than something hunted out, manufactured in order to "provoke" delight. It seizes the onlooker in a violent act, soliciting the spectacle of its expence. Dryden draws attention to the demise of due reward, based on the essential value of the entertainment. Noting the *deferral* of gains, Dryden outlines the precariousness of artistic life under the new system; it is as unpredictable as the preternatural forces of nature. With the decline of patronage, all that was left was the new slavery of the market and a shifting series of conventions.

It was not simply that these spaces were unstable in themselves, they were prone to spill into each other and across society. There was a grotesque disrespect for discrete spaces that was typified by proliferation, contagious mixing and overflowing. For Pope, for instance, Smithfield

is the place where Bartholomew Fair was kept, whose Shews, Machines, and Dramatical Entertainments, formerly agreeable only to the Taste of the Rabble, were, by the Hero of this Poem and others of equal Genius, brought to the Theatres of Covent-Garden, Lincolns-inn-Fields, and the Hay-market, to be the reigning pleasures of the Court and Town. This happened in the Year 1725, and continued to the Year 1728.<sup>15</sup>

Although for rhetorical purposes Pope saw the invasion of space as an eighteenth century development, the fair and the theatre had already been linked in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). Jonson had played on associations between fair and theatre, and had approached the matter with a degree of anxiety. He foresaw the objection to his omission of a juggler and a "well-educated ape"<sup>16</sup> from his drama, acknowledging his selective viewing and presentation of the fair. Yet he was also, as he recognized, bringing to the market his "ware" - participating in the very commercial processes from which

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<sup>15</sup> *The Dunciad* A.I.note 2. *Twickenham Edition*, vol. 5, p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> *Ben Jonson: Complete Plays*, 4 vols., ed G.A Wilkes; based on the edition by C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, vol. iv, p. 7.

he was distancing himself. As the Hope Theatre was "as dirty as Smithfield, and as stinking every whit,"<sup>17</sup> he concluded that he had maintained a 'special decorum' in his unity of place. He maps different grotesque sites, yet his art belongs to a higher species of theatre and seeks to maintain boundaries between spaces. Jonson set the fair off against the deeper pressures of neo-classical framing; he did not celebrate the folly and festival disorder that were still living features of the fair; nor did he nostalgically evoke the link with rural sports, where work and play (at least mythically) were in equilibrium. Yet for Jonson, the fair served to notate emerging tensions in society. Within the city it was one thing to be an industrious apprentice, another to become a nascent consumer with desires which the market, rather than an essential scheme of values, claimed to satisfy.

In a text written later in the seventeenth century, and recalling Jonson's play, these tensions concerning the role of the multitude and the ideological state of society were brilliantly exemplified. In Robert Southwell's letter to his son, the writer recorded a personal reaction to the grotesque forces of the popular fair. Advising his son that he could convert the tumult "into a profitable book," he proceeded to recommend that he

take pattern of the observations which a man of sense may raise out of matters that seem even ridiculous. Take then with you the impressions of that play, and in addition thereunto, I should think it not amiss if you then got up into some high window, in order to survey the whole pit at once. I fancy that you will say - *Totus mundus agit histrionem*, and you wou'd note into how many various shapes humane nature throws itself, in order to buy cheap, and sell dear, for all is but traffick and comerce, some to give, some to take, and all is by exchange, to make the entertainment compleat.

The main importance of this fair is not so much for merchandize, and the supplying of what people really want; but as a sort of Bacchanalia, to gratifie the multitude in their wandering and irregular thoughts.

Here you see the rope-dancers gett their living meerly by hazarding of their lives, and why men will pay money and take

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11. Jonson notes that he is "loth to make Nature afriad in his plays, like those that beget Tales, Tempests, and such like drolleries..." *ibid.*, p. 10.

pleasure to see such dangers, is of separate and philosophical consideration.

You have others who are acting fools, drunkards and madmen, but for the same wages which they might get by honest labour, and live with credit besides.

Others, if born in any monstrous shape, or have children that are such, here they celebrate their misery, and by getting of money forget how odious they are made. When you see the toy-shops, and the strange variety of things, much more impertinent than hobby-horses or gloves of gingerbread, you must know there are customers for all these matters, and it would be a pleasing sight cou'd you see painted a true figure of all these impertinent minds and their fantastick passions, who come trudging hither, only for such things. 'Tis out of this credulous croud that the ballad singers attract an assembly, who listen and admire, while their considerate pickpockets are diving and fishing for their prey.<sup>18</sup>

The grotesque scene is surveyed from a calculated distance, so that the whole canvas may be taken in, folded within, rather than placed uncomfortably beyond the spectator's reason. The key word that organizes the passage is "pattern." It is not merely a device for seeing in the sense of a "matrix," but also a shaping, like a "mould" or "model" and a recommendation, in the sense that a pattern may be imitated. Thus the impressions of the play (*Bartholomew Fair*) are not simply free-flowing observations but something to which a firm sense is to be attached, like the "impression" of an image on a coin. Because the multitude are lost in "wandring and irregular thoughts" they are cut off from the possibility of fixed, essential values. For this reason they participate in an imaginary commerce. Southwell's observation leads back neatly and directly, through interiorisation to a mental picture of a grotesque inner world. Yet this proves to be a complex manoeuvre. It is difficult anywhere to find a stable point of entry in his text. There is a confusion of internal and external, of commercial and mental /bodily processes. Moreover, Southwell's letter forces the opening of a crucial question: are the multitude the product of the market or its cause? Human nature is degraded through commercial drives that manufacture an artificial variety ("to gratifie"), yet this is also projected as a

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<sup>18</sup> Henry Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair*, pp. 288-90.

degradation that has already occurred through the necessary gratification of an already internalised Bacchanalian spirit. This evolves as a circular process of change and exchange through an infinite variety of forms, binding together the private and the public, the pulse of the body and the pulse of the market. Moreover, amidst all this frenetic and irregular movement, Southwell's ironic line of observation composes what he sees into a "pleasing sight," a superior form of gratification in which the exercise of "sense" reflects back on its capacity to differentiate between one form and another, and to judge between them. In translating the "low" material supplied by the senses, there occurs a recycling of the ridiculous. This is rather like Jonson's "special decorum" - a device for composing the low, translating it *for* the high, which Pope was brilliantly to exploit in *The Dunciad*. Simultaneously, Southwell seeks to unmask the grotesque, desiring somehow to externalize the grotesque inner life. Yet the manufactured external scene is already a manifestation of a grotesque space within, and within limits, that now threatens rebelliously to break its proper boundaries, themselves the artificial construct of synthesising discourse.

Southwell proceeds to argue that human nature is a great volume in which all things differ, though some fall under the same chapter:

I have told you also, how that in some leaves, and indeed whole chapters of this volume, there is many times so little sense or matter for imitation, that those leaves are to be turned over very fast, and yet the variety and very deformity of shapes they contain, do all help to illustrate nature, and put you into admiration to see other leaves and chapters how they are replenished, and seem to be the epitome of all that was good and valuable in the rest.<sup>19</sup>

What is again crucial in the passage is the incorporation of the grotesque in a subordinate role, serving as the means by which we are able to see what counts - the beautiful. There is a continual exchange between social construction and

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

aesthetic enterprise, exploiting and reinforcing difference. Such a differentiation of categories is a necessary enterprise in the context of the "strange variety of things." The notion of transgressed boundaries is made socially explicit in Southwell's remark that

you may also observe, that some grave men who think they have nothing to doe with the fair, do yet find imployment by it. There is the judge, the divine, the physitian, who all have work by consequences of this unruly assembly.<sup>20</sup>

The anxiety concerning deviations from one's proper or settled station in life is also reflected in the activities, mental processes, and favoured objects of the multitude, nicely brought together in the repetition of "impertinent." The allusion to "hobby-horses" and "gingerbread" suggests the trifles and triviality of festive sport, but with reference to one's social inferiors there is a more pressing sense of hierarchical boundaries under threat.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 290-1.

### 3. Remapping the Grotesque

Despite the apparent emphasis on spectacle and show, entry prices for such entertainments were such that those lower down the social scale were increasingly able to invade spaces that would have been inaccessible in the seventeenth century. In the case of masquerade, the *Weekly Journal* noted that with admission prices at between three and five shillings, "inferior" persons and "Common Women of the Town" were not excluded. The numerous tirades against grotesque entertainment - from pantomime to opera and masquerade - were not unjustified in warning society of the explosive potency of their cultural antagonists. The letter usefully underlines how the economic and structural evolution of society was reflected in all its enormity by the grotesque mirror of popular entertainment.

It will be recalled, of course, that the whole 'theatrical' scene, in common with the long tradition of humane satire, was viewed from above.<sup>21</sup> Yet the division is more markedly an economic and social one that is becoming pervasively a cultural formation.<sup>22</sup> The ridiculous is a serious subject when a lesson may be drawn from it. Clearly this had important implications for Swift, who commented on such situations satirically in a mock-apology for the introduction of the low in *Gulliver's Travels*. Gulliver, explaining how he urinated in Brobdingnag, had remarked that, "however insignificant they may appear to grovelling Minds, [they] will certainly help a Philosopher to enlarge

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<sup>21</sup> See Lucian's *Icaromenippus: or, A Voyage to Heaven*, trans. Thomas Brown (in *The Works of Lucian*, 3 vols, 1711) for a representative aerial account (vol. 1, pp 304-26). Compare Erasmus, "suppose someone could look down on the life of man from a great height, as the poets say Jove does..." Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. Betty Radice (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 107.

<sup>22</sup> My argument here disputes Pat Rogers' view that "The phrase 'cultural life' was perhaps ill-considered. It is doubtful whether the eighteenth century mind truly recognised such a category at large." See *Grub-Street: Studies in a Subculture*, Methuen, 1972, p. 114.

his Thoughts and Imagination."<sup>23</sup> This was also, of course, a device for the control and containment of low material. Yet the statement was not just a rhetorical gesture; rather it was indicative of a tendency to serve up low matter for the delectation of a middle class readership. Within such a situation polite values were simply reinforced by the playful importation of grotesque moments. Paradoxically, as much as the low was opened out to the polite gaze, there was a parallel act of closure. In a more general fashion, *Gulliver's Travels* played on the yoking of insignificance and enlargement. The perspectival principle of the first two books of *Gulliver's Travels* therefore primarily served a rhetorical function that took its foundation from responses to the grotesque, expanding and distorting the gaze in order to diminish it; moral values, like commercial ones, may be inflated or deflated at will.

Studies of Swift's use of the grotesque have tended to emphasize his treatment of the bodily functions. Yet much of the grotesque emerges from the disruption of customary categories, forcing one to see oneself from an unusual perspective, inflating or deflating proportions. Another area of the grotesque that has also been generally neglected is Swift's treatment of the market as a forum for the grotesque. In Brobdingnag Gulliver is shown "as a Sight upon a Market-Day in the next Town." The offence is in being made the object of fun rather than respect, and in that one's spectators are of a lower rank. It reverses the proper, hierarchical direction of the gaze. Gulliver therefore considers it an "indignity" that he should be "exposed for Money as a publick Spectacle to the meanest People," and "ignominy" that he should be "carried about for a Monster." Such exploitation is shown to have a deleterious effect on the body, as Gulliver complained: "I was that day shown to twelve sets of company; and

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<sup>23</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. P. Dixon, II.i., p. 133.

as often forced to go over again with the same fopperies, till I was half dead with weariness and vexation."<sup>24</sup>

The competition for space led to the desire for a clearer division of boundaries and hierarchies, particularly social ones. This had its effect on the allotting of space and led to the insistence on a mapping between "low" genre and the characteristic activities of the "lower orders." These points arise, for instance in Dryden's comments on Comedy:

*Comedy* is a Representation of humane Life, in inferior Persons, and low Subjects, and by that means creeps into the Nature of Poetry, and is a kind of *Juniper*, a Shrub belonging to the Species of Cedar, so is the Painting of *Clowns*, the representation of Dutch *Kermis*, the brutal Sport of *Snick* or *Snee*, and a thousand other Things of this mean Invention, a kind of *Picture*, which belongs to *Nature*, but of the lowest *Form*.<sup>25</sup>

The "low" botanical metaphor was echoed in Vertue's comment on Hogarth (written immediately after the auction for which the subscription ticket *The Battle of the Pictures* was announced) to the effect that he had begun with "littel and low-shrubb instructions." As the image demonstrates, conservative critics attempted to maintain the mapping from taxonomic categories to essential moral values. Hogarth has been inflated beyond his original station because he was formerly "an apprentice to a mean sort of Engraver of coats of arms."<sup>26</sup> Hogarth was himself conscious of the emerging distinctions between painting as craft and painting as art; he had criticized Correggio as inferior to a sign painter. Dryden similarly resorted to movements down the social scale as a way of defining low art. A state of mind ("mad Imagination of the Dawber") is imprinted on a social category: "and the end of all this, as he [Horace] tells you afterward, is to cause Laughter: A very Monster in a *Bartholomew Fair* for the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> Dryden, *A Parallel of Poetry and Painting* ed., W. P. Ker (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1900), p. 132.

Mob to gape at for their two-pence."<sup>27</sup> Difference was essential here in discriminating the capacity to represent the world truly to oneself. How was the artist to represent the fair differently from its reception by the rabble, without debasing his own mind? Horace served critics well in their diatribes against the low and the public spaces it inhabited.

Crucially, it is important to note that the transvaluation was built around categories and representation. Sight was once again foremost. Another example from Dryden serves to clarify the importance of a gaze built on taxonomic differentiation:

Laughter is indeed the propriety of man, but just enough to distinguish him from his elder brother with four legs. 'Tis a kind of bastard pleasure too, taken in at the eyes of vulgar gazers, and at the ears of the beastly audience.<sup>28</sup>

Representation was much more than a copy of the original. Dryden considered that in *Bartholomew Fair*, for instance, Jonson "does so raise his matter ... as to render it delightful." Jonson has made "an excellent lazar of the fair" and "the copy is of price, though the original be vile." Visiting the fair was like a visit to Bedlam, it served to reinforce fundamental differences and to reconstruct boundaries.

The fair was a commercial space that propagated the grotesque and provided in miniature a satirical model for a depraved world. The masquerade was another public site that usefully defined the low, for it increasingly served to bring people together, with a licence for dangerous meetings and exchanges. As Fielding used the image of the masquerade, it was exploited as a satirical model of society. Describing human society as "a vast Masquerade, where the

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: High Art and Low*, Vol II, p. 235.

<sup>27</sup> Dryden, *A Parallel*, pp. 132-3.

<sup>28</sup> Dryden, *A Parallel*, p. 133.

greatest Part appear disguised under false Vizors and Habits,"<sup>29</sup> Fielding turned the object of the gaze back on his own society, finding, like Dryden, the momentary effects of surface have replaced essential value. The signifying process of masquerade, like that of the market and the body, was unstable, ambiguous, and a perpetrator of shifting ironies. Certain fixed mappings were therefore forced upon it by satirists. In the sections that follow I examine the different ways in which energy and meaning circulated and metamorphosed. I will be arguing that the organization of movement within these spaces is a key to understanding the attempt to maintain social boundaries, and the construction of the grotesque out of them.

#### 4. New Formations

In *The Dunciad*, Pope began where Southwell left off. Pope was able to see "into how many various shapes humane nature throws itself." He ventured beneath the surface spectacle, and like Southwell, he desired to paint "a true figure of all these impertinent minds and their fantastick passions." Yet Pope's engagement is altogether more thorough. Pope sports himself in the metaphors and aesthetic of popular entertainment, linking them to the dull recycling of energies and manufacture for which the market was the final symbol. He wallowed in the low material in order to transform it. The first half of this section deals with the attraction of masquerade and pantomime for satirical purposes. The second half explores how Pope used the ductility and malleability of the popular "form" as potent constituents of a grotesque art. Early in his career, in *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope had linked different kinds of metamorphosis with entertainment such as the masquerade. Other evolving species of entertainment, such as pantomime, served in *The Dunciad* as the

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<sup>29</sup> "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men" (1743), p. 184.

justification for a darker exploration of these themes. For many writers and critics, pantomime was indicative of the breakdown of genre and of standards because it resisted classification, indeed such resistance was part of its definition.

At the outset it is therefore important to realize that, although titles such as that of Theobald's *Harlequin Doctor Faustus with the Masque of the Deities* (1724) appear to refer directly to a connection with the masque, and thereby aimed to achieve a degree of generic respectability, nevertheless pantomime should be differentiated from masque insofar as it was not consistently allegorical; it emphasised the visual over the aural message. In a broader context, Terry Castle has noted that

The elaborate allegorical productions of Inigo Jones and others probably had little direct impact on the popular resurgence of carnivalesque behaviour in the eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

Pantomimes were initially afterpieces, but they tended to continue after the main piece had been replaced, due to their astonishing popularity. The initial uneasiness concerning pantomime concerned this movement from the cultural margins to the centre. Not only did pantomime seek to dominate the centre, it was parasitic on other genres, threatening by its dominance in the market to overwhelm them. A variety of sources was plundered to produce pantomime. Some of the first influential performances such as those in 1717, *The Loves of Mars and Venus* and *The Shipwreck; or, Perseus and Andromeda* (produced by John Weaver at Drury Lane), grew out of the classics. Although the other main source for the stock figures of pantomime was the *commedia dell'arte*, it would be tempting to exaggerate the conventional and conservative nature of such traditions. It may be admitted that these stock figures acted in specific ways with easily recognizable attributes; that they manifested identifiable mannerisms and dress, and that they were to that extent designed more to

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<sup>30</sup> Terry Castle, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

reassure (if somewhat exotically) rather than to shock. Yet the range of subjects to which these types could be *applied* was infinite. In the case of the harlequin, the traditional stock-figure was metamorphosed into every conceivable alliance. Examples include Harlequin-Hydaspes (1719), -Cato (1723), -Sorcerer (1725), -Mercury (1725), -Dr Faustus (1724, 1727), -pick-pocket (1736), -student (1741), -incendiary (1746), -methodist (1750), even -cherokee (1772). Harlequin was constructed around the inventive pillage of traditions which were parodied by their surprising application to modern subject matter. Pantomime was constantly in a state of reconstruction and rebuilding. One result of this, which I will go on to discuss, was that the notion of novelty as the product of grotesque combinations permeated every aspect of the pantomime. As a patchwork grotesque in his own person, Harlequin served in this sense as a playful exercise in new notions of a bourgeois identity, merely stitched together but able to traverse all the hierarchies and cross the divisions which his society had established.

In order to unstitch this ungrounded identity, Pope began by scutinizing the underlying state of mind represented by Dulness's engagement in low entertainment. This investigation led Pope, in *The Dunciad*, to develop the notion of a dangerous malleability, picking up on ductility as a precarious wandering of the mind, characteristic of dulness and leading to the demise of literary categorization:

Here one poor word an hundred clenches makes,  
And ductile dulness new meanders takes;  
There motley Images her fancy strike,  
Figures ill pair'd, and Similes unlike.<sup>31</sup>

The passage begins with the basic unit of classification, the word, which is shifted into a hundred alien positions, punned into meaninglessness. Further monstrous constructions are patched together from these unsteady building

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<sup>31</sup> B.I.63-6.

blocks until we reach genre, the literary equivalent of the taxonomist's *genus*. This is accompanied by the spectre of social danger suggested by the "mob" in which people come together without any sense of purpose and as a danger to order. The monstrous play of mind finally explodes into the public domain:

She sees a Mob of Metaphors advance,  
Pleas'd with the madness of the mazy dance:  
How Tragedy and Comedy embrace;  
How Farce and Epic get a jumbled race;

As Pat Rogers notes, "The vocabulary of Augustan satire ... carries within itself a buried layer of allusion to civil unrest."<sup>32</sup> Importantly, Pope's understanding of the relation between ductility and classification operated as a manifesto for the attack on all aspects of culture, class and society that were considered to be degenerate. Part of the problem here was clearly taxonomic; but there were other issues such as the value of tradition in supplying "correct" categories that might serve as a secure foundation for imitation, independent of fashionable shifts and eddies in the economic and cultural markets. Yet Pope's satire exploited classical source material, adapting it to his own ends by reworking established genres without undermining their moral and ideological foundations. His own poem was itself a novelty, a grotesque oddity that has in turn resisted classification by subsequent critics. It marketed itself radically against the market, a reaction to, and also a part of, the proliferation of print culture and the multiplication of authorship. Pope was clearly fascinated with the breakdown of categories that was set slowly in motion with that first meander of ductile dulness, signalling from the outset the consequences of deviation. He followed through all these metamorphic and monstrous possibilities, seeing them exemplified in his society's taste for popular entertainment. David Fairer has written that it is the "Settle-Theobald tradition of visual spectacle which Pope regards as so destructive of art and morality."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Pat Rogers, *Grub-Street: Studies in a Subculture* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 114.

<sup>33</sup> David Fairer, *Pope's Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 115.

He also shows how importantly a variety of traditional metaphors were deployed in order to lead and direct the poem's anatomy of early eighteenth century society; dulness's creatures "spontaneously stir out of the primal matter and a panorama of ancient Chaos is surreptitiously transformed to a modern theatrical spectacular."<sup>34</sup> Pope produced society in terms both of its own metaphors and metamorphic manoeuvres, turning them all back to their cultural sources in filthy public sites and the greedy gaze of social inferiors. In an aesthetic which I will be outlining, he *reversed* the dynamics of these low public spaces. Pope's interest moved from the natural categories and classifications that formed a convenient chain in *An Essay on Man*, to the grotesque and artificial species of mixed entertainment which proliferated across the popular cultural space. Pope cast a taxonomic eye over the spectacle. If he saw categories in disintegration he also enjoyed the imaginative process by which this could be represented as delightful metamorphosis, and deformity was curiously turned to beauty.

Naturally, there were pressing philosophical anxieties about the types of activity promoted by the public sites of the grotesque. Most seriously, it was recognized by critics that instead of representing the world according to the tradition of mimesis, the popular aesthetic was one of surprise, novelty and metamorphosis. For many contemporaries, moreover, it is important to realize that neither popular nor traditionally spectacular forms of entertainment were sanctioned as products of, or material for, sense. Thus James Miller noted how pantomimes "... give us *Sound*, and *Show*, instead of *sense*"; they deploy "unknown Tongues" and "mysterious Dullness chant."<sup>35</sup> Like a linguistic or infantile, sub-rational "other," they were incommunicable and resistant to

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>35</sup> *Harlequin Horace*, 357-8. See Facsimile: Augustan Reprint Society, No. 178, intro. Antony Coleman (Los Angeles: University of California; William and Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1976).

translation. Similarly, Terry Castle has observed how descriptions of masquerades refer to "caterwauling" and "cat-calling." The *Weekly Journal*, for instance, noted that "The first Noise which stikes your Ears upon your entering the Room is a loud confused Squeak, like a *Consort of Catcals*." The company "affect this unnatural Tone," it turns out, "to diguise their Voices."<sup>36</sup> Enslaved simply to words in their own right, Pope's dunces lose any useful consciousness of things. Pope reduced their language to the barely articulate cries of animals as part of a wider allegoresque reduction of their essential value and categorization as human. James Miller's *Harlequin Horace* commented on a reversal of our customary expectation when "When *Eagles* are to talk, or *Asses* sing" (96). His note to this line added:

Birds, Beasts, and Animals of all kinds have of late been frequently introduc'd on the several Stages of this Metropolis, and perform'd their parts with incredible Success: so that I have known an Eagle speak a Speech with more Applause than was ever paid to Booth; and an Ass bray forth a Piece of Recitativo more to the Satisfaction of the Audience than the best Performance of a Faronello or a Cuzzoni would have been.

According to another commentator, such a metamorphic danger, signalled by the allusions to opera (also the object of diatribes) was exemplified primarily in the music of opera and masquerade because,

MUSICK has something so peculiar in it, that it exerts a willing Tyranny over the Mind, and forms the ductil Soul into whatever Shape the Melody directs.<sup>37</sup>

Again, ductility signals a shift towards shapelessness. In a crucial sense, pantomime served as a metaphor of the collapsed category: it defied rational classification because it had no substantial form. Despite the capacity to wander, the freedom was illusory, for politically, ductility was allied to gullibility, a failure to recognize or resist tyranny. *The Craftsman* also noted,

we have, for some Years past, seen the greatest Encouragement given to Sound only, the Shadow and the Echo of them. What

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<sup>36</sup> 25 January 1724. See Castle, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> *The Craftsman* 29, 17 March 1727, p. 176.

squeezing and crouching have there been at the Raree-Shows of *Harlequin and Scaramouch*.<sup>38</sup>

As the second part of the quotation shows, the failure of real substance is readily tied up with the untidy and disordered space of the observers: "squeezing and crouching", they are pushed together in an indiscriminate mass, they infringe one another's private space, exceeding their natural boundaries. Because Sound and Shadow were regarded in these critiques as shapeless and substanceless, their effect on the observer was likely to be disorienting, shifting him out of his natural or essential shape. Again there was an implicit spectre of social insurrection.

The most influential classical warning about the aesthetic dangers of ductility was the *Ars Poetica* of Horace. The poem had been reworked by James Miller, who was able to apply to pantomime Horace's attack on the incoherent style that "varies all shapes and mixes all extremes":

Painters and poets have been still allow'd  
Their pencils, and their fancies, unconfined.  
This privilege we freely give and take:  
But nature, and the common laws of sense  
Forbid to reconcile *Antipathies*,  
Or make a snake ingender with a dove,  
And hungry tigers court the tender lambs.<sup>39</sup>

I have discussed the centrality of this quotation elsewhere in the course of my thesis. For the purposes of this chapter, Horace's statement functioned as a grotesque manifesto for a theory of the ridiculous and of aberration from the "common laws of sense." For James Miller, all the Horatian prohibitions were lifted in the practice of pantomime. Variety was merely the excuse for novelty and surprise; common, shared experience, the basic placing and categorization of "Connexion, Time or Place," were all abandoned, as Miller noted:

A Thousand jarring things together we yoke,  
The *dog*, The *dome*, the *Temple*, and the *Joke*,  
Consult no Order, nor pursue no end,  
But Rant and farce, the Sock and Buskin blend;

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<sup>38</sup> *The Craftsman* 20, 13 February 1727, p. 119.

<sup>39</sup> Horace, *The Art of Poetry* trans. Earl of Roscommon, 10-16.

Now make us dance, then doze, now weep, then smile,  
It suits the *various* Temper of our *Isle*. (25-30)

As in masquerade, an important part of the experience of pantomime was the sense both of pleasure and release at finding oneself on unfamiliar ground, off the "common road" of normal or customary practice. This species of deviation should now be familiar as characteristically grotesque. For Pope also, this deviation was a transgression of all that gave the world its accustomed stability:

Thence a new world to Nature's laws unknown,  
Breaks out refulgent, with a heav'n its own:  
Another Cynthia on her new journey runs,  
And other planets circle other suns.  
The forests dance, and rivers upward rise,  
Whales sport in woods, and dolphins in the skies;  
And last, to give the whole creation grace,  
Lo! one vast Egg produces human race.<sup>40</sup>

The breakdown of a systematically ordered legal framework (which I will discuss further in Chapter Six) created a fertile ground for the grotesque. The artificiality of the new world was an extension of grotesque *lusus* in which categories were rendered unstable and unfixed. In *The Dunciad*, dance was debased, shifted to a lower order as in pantomime farce; in Pope's allusion to the "madness of the mazy dance," it was equated with dissipation and loss of location; elsewhere it was agile and unreliable as wit ("Wit's wild dancing light").<sup>41</sup> In this instance, "dance" was part of a wider disruption of mimetic relations. The "dance" initiated a liberation of movement which operated wildly without respect for the most conventional expectations. Pope saw contemporary pantomime-dancing as typified by an excess of chaotic sensory burdens. The normal direction of movement, signified by "rivers," was reversed. Moreover, what is proper to water (dolphin) finds itself in air; what belongs in the sea (whale) is transposed to land. The metamorphic displacements find their most succinct expression in Pope's deployment of

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<sup>40</sup> B.III.241-8.

<sup>41</sup> *The Dunciad* B.I.68, B.I.175.

'sport.'<sup>42</sup> But in this instance, 'sport' is not the recreation of plenitudinous Nature, but the artifice of a monstrously over-productive imagination.

Related to the notion of ductility was reverie, as a playful and indulgent recreation of the mind. In the case of masquerade, Terry Castle has concluded that it is "a subject for reverie and fantasia, a utopian image, the set piece of an age."<sup>43</sup> The work of fancy, as empirical philosophy recognized, typically combined images without regard to any sense of the natural order of things, and this was certainly the practice of masquerade in its playful indulgence in a radical re-combination of public signs that ought, in the view of many censorious commentators, to have remained private.

The notion of deviation from existing norms, which other genres such as the novel were self-consciously exploring, emerges from what we know about the practice of those involved in writing pantomime. They were acquainted with existing genres, but were also aware of the novelty of their creations. In his *Scaramouch, a Philosopher; Harlequin as Schoolboy, Bravo, Merchant and Magician, after the Italian Manner* (1667), for example, Ravenscroft added lines to his prologue in order to point out that in the course of this drama,

The poet does a dangerous trial make  
And all the common roads of plays forsake;<sup>44</sup>

Just as Nature swerved to produce monsters and hermaphrodites, so there were also bastardized sub-literary genres and cultural phenomena which could not be classified within dominant conventions. Pantomime, similarly, was understood as a deviation, the issue of a monstrous mixture, and the

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<sup>42</sup> In his *Harlequin Horace*, Miller does not place the same emphasis on 'sport' or achieve Pope's intensity of category confusion:

Vary one Thing a thousand pleasant Ways,  
Shew Whales in Woods, and Dragons in the Seas. 65-6

<sup>43</sup> Terry Castle, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

<sup>44</sup> Thelma Niklaus, *Harlequin Phoenix: or, The Rise and Fall of a Bergamask Rogue* (Bodley Head, 1956), p. 131.

artificial production of the writer. The "novelty" consisted less in originality (Ravenscroft had plundered Otway's version of *Les Fourbieres de Scapin*),<sup>45</sup> than in the contrast with existing traditional dramatic genres. This was clearly what Pope had in mind when he wrote about pantomime spectacle in *The Dunciad*. It was a grotesque representation of generic collapse. More generally, critics of pantomime chiefly focussed on either the unnaturalness and artificiality of the theatrical spectacle, or on its blatant novelty, the rejection of tradition and the dismissal of any sense of a foundation.

Much of pantomime was unscripted and therefore able to respond to contemporary events with a degree of spontaneity. Perhaps recalling the success of individuals such as Tiberio Fiorelli, who had acted as Scaramouch (in 1663), Ravenscroft had to admit that the success of his play would ultimately not be dependent on him because "Upon the actors it depends too much."<sup>46</sup> Like the novel, for all its traditional pedigree, much of its source material was plundered; authors could not be assured of historic authority. The pantomime was insistently contemporary, but masquerade was of the moment in a different way. For although past ages and other cultures might be exploited for costume, the part enacted was for that evening only. Terry Castle has pointed out that like other public events, the masquerade was news.<sup>47</sup> It was therefore part of the pressure to report the momentary which was influential in the rise of the novel.

Many pantomimes were satirical - Walpole being one of the most common targets. The satire was all the stronger for its topicality; there was a tendency to interpolate ad-lib commentaries of a coarse nature. Sometimes the pantomime was satirical of its own genre, as in *Harlequin Necromancer and Doctor Faustus*,

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>47</sup> Terry Castle, op. cit., p. 3.

staged by John Rich in 1723, which included an account of how it might be received; the account pinpointed the awkward relation of pleasure to the automatic, merely bestial "grinning." If Horace had set out, under the cover of censure, a manifesto for the grotesque, he had combated it with the necessity of laughter. Moreover, the spectator was finally metamorphosed in line with the subject matter, suggesting that this was not necessarily a sufficient defence. The commentator saw a performance of the popular *Harlequin Dr Faustus* which at first he found not to his taste:

notwithstanding there was a crowded audience each night when I was present, and the whole company distributed applauses, they were so far from giving me any real pleasure that I frequently bit my lips whilst other were laughing, and often laughed when others were silent.

I could not forebear grinning and extorting my muscles at a sight which indeed excited my surprise; a representation of Puppets I did not expect, nor a Windmill, nor a Dragon, on our polite stages; but such I found there, and to the Immortal Honour of this Age be it recorded that they were represented a month together, and met with far greater applause than the politest and most elegant play that ever appeared upon the British Theatre.<sup>48</sup>

To be sure, a satirical enthusiasm for the contemporary and for generic innovation permeated all levels of "neo-classical" eighteenth-century culture. Thus in Gay's *The What D'Ye Call It*, for instance, a Christmas entertainment is provided by Sir Roger to educate his fellow justices; this was designed to show them "all sorts of plays under one" - tragedy, comedy, pastoral, farce, "with a Spice of your Opera."<sup>49</sup> Generic variety was crucially foregrounded, as in the title of Motteux's *Novelty: or Every Act a Play* (1697); this consisted of a pastoral drama, a comedy, a masque, a tragedy, and a farce in the Italian manner. Clearly, pantomime was crucially parasitic upon other forms, which it lumped together in a grotesque manner, delighting in the mechanical repetition and

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<sup>48</sup> *The British Stage: or, the Exploits of Harlequin: A Farce* (1723). See Niklaus, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>49</sup> Introductory Scene, 53-8. See *John Gay: Dramatic Works*, ed. John Fuller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) vol. I, p. 180.

mimicry of actions, routines, and mannerisms operating outside their customary contexts.

In his *Harlequin Horace*, James Miller summed up these tendencies as characteristic of the taste of the modern age:

*Old* things must yield to *New*, *Common* to *Strange*,  
Perpetual Motion brings perpetual Change. (115-16)

If there was an odd kind of physical necessity in this state of affairs, it was also something which Miller, with a heavy irony assigned to Nature:

For wanton Nature forms the human Mind,  
Still fond of *Wonders*, and to *change* inclin'd;  
*Plain* Sense we fly, *strange* Nonsense to pursue,  
And leave *old Follies*, but to grasp at *New*; (190-93)

James Miller and Alexander Pope were alike in denigrating the new genre from an empirical point of view. The pantomime spectacle was after all premised largely on the notion that what comes slowly, with effort and subtlety to the senses was not proper to the province of popular entertainment. It sought to undermine sense by a playful interrogation of probability and by forcing us to break down our neat and fenced-off categories.

Moreover the task of unravelling Dulness and unmasking her "offspring" is one which cannot be completed, for Dulness, like Sin, is always with us. The commercial and the sexual come together in repetitious production. Dulness undergoes a series of mock-transformations, undertakes a journey through a variety of forms, but is revealed as no more than a repetitive, mechanized recycling such as might be achieved by automata. But against the downward, bestial metamorphosis that keeps the cultural antagonist ever other and beyond, Pope envisaged a transformation out of and beyond the restless energy of the mazy dance and its directionless ductility to a purposeful art which sanctions a natural accommodation of stasis and change.

## 5. Defending the grotesque

It would be a mistake to understand spaces of cultural performance such as pantomime, the fair and the masquerade as inherently and exclusively radical. For just as "high" culture enjoyed a measure of (for example) Ovidian indulgence, manifested as an enthusiasm for process and change, so the popular or mixed forms of "entertainment" were parasitic upon conservative practices. These enjoyed their own classical precedents, offering their own *apologia* and defence, as well as subscribing to autonomous sets of rules and conventions. Weaver's defence placed a premium on the use of the classics with an aesthetic of metamorphosis self-consciously worked through. Clearly such an aesthetic was important also for Pope and it was therefore important for him to naturalize his own practice, in contrast to artificiality and novelty. These were therefore subsumed under Pope's notion of ductility, the wandering imaginative energies of the fairground crowd, the shifting scene of masquerade, the violent metamorphoses and unstable form of pantomime. Despite the virulent attacks on such events, and the lack of celebratory analyses, it is possible to find common ground between these different spaces of broad cultural practice. This allows us to understand the transgressive nature of such events, the product, as this chapter will argue, of their shared grotesque lineage.

John Weaver's *History of the Mimes and Pantomimes* (1728) provided a proper classical lineage for the entertainment. In his account of the second part, he defined the "grotesque" dancing. This, in contrast with classical mime, was a product of the *commedia dell'arte*:

I think it will not be improper before we conclude, to give our Explanation and Sense of the Words *Serious* and *Grotesque*, made use of in this List ... By *Grotesque Dancing*, I mean only such Characters as are quite out of Nature; as *Harlequin*, *Scaramouch*, *Pierrot*, &c. tho' in the natural Sense of the Word, *Grotesque* among Masters of our Profession, takes in all *comic* Dancing whatever: But here I have confined this Name only to such Characters where, in lieu of regulated Gesture, you meet with distorted and ridiculous

*Actions*, and Grin and Grimace take up entirely that Countenance where the *Passions* and *Affections* of the Mind should be expressed.<sup>50</sup>

The notion of transformation, for Weaver, might lead one down the scale of Being, typically to the monstrous "Grin and Grimace", the coarse bestial humour that recalls the so-called Grinning Matches that were the subject of a *Spectator* paper, or the greedy rabble-gazers invoked by Dryden. The grotesque dancer of the contemporary pantomime, in opposition to a society increasingly sanitized and falling into line with decorous manners, abandoned regulated gesture - yet he must also avoid the demise of ridiculous grimace. Yet Weaver equivocates over the precise illusiveness of the grotesque, though he is less anxious about the artificiality of such figures, their being "out of nature."

The framing or position of the pantomime within the wider entertainment was itself a product of a heterogeneous yoking. *Harlequin Sorcerer* (1717) was a typical pantomime piece consisting of two parts, one serious, the other comic (almost like a masque and anti-masque). Between the acts of the serious part, Rich wove scenes of a comical story about Harlequin's courtship of Columbine and Harlequin's famous wand was used extensively in the sportive transformation scenes. Rich's pantomimes tended to be divided into two parts; the shorter was "serious", insofar as it was taken from Greek or Roman mythology; the second usually Harlequin's courtship of Columbine, and rivalries such as those with Pantaloon. This division of the material was described by Fielding in *Tom Jones*:

This entertainment consisted of two parts, which the inventor distinguished by the names of *the serious* and *the comic*. The serious exhibited a certain number of heathen gods and heroes, who were certainly the worst and dullest company into which an audience was ever introduced; and (which was a secret known to the few) were actually intended so to be, in order to contrast the *comic* part of the entertainment, and to display the tricks of Harlequin to better advantage.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> pp. 55-6.

<sup>51</sup> Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, ed., R. P. C. Mutter (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1982), V.i., pp. 201-2.

The "high" was reversed because it had a subordinate function, simply to set off the delight of the comic, against the traditional hierarchy of genres. Moreover both serious and comic belonged to dulness, for as Fielding also remarked "the *comic* was certainly duller than anything before shewn on the stage, and could only be set off by that superlative degree of dulness, which composed the serious."<sup>52</sup> Again, comedy and the serious were not true oppositions in popular terms; their boundaries were unenforceable, so that different categories became alike, part of the same vein.

Coming out of the division of pantomime into two parts, there emerged an autonomous aesthetic. Fielding concluded his discussion of the topic with the remark that, "Judicious writers have always practised this art of contrast, with great success. I have been surprized that Horace should cavil at this art in Homer; but indeed he contradicts himself in the very next line:

Indignor quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus,  
Verum operi longo fas est obripere somnum.

I grieve if e'er great Homer chance to sleep,  
Yet slumbers on long works have right to creep.<sup>53</sup>

The epic had its recesses, in which the expected standards and regularity of performance were allowed to slip, much as nature sometimes produced monsters through boredom or inattention.

Nonetheless, even Weaver's defence perpetuated a distinction between higher and lower functions; emotions were genuinely ductile, while physical distortions are innately grotesque. Moreover, citing classical authority, Weaver noted that transformation scenes were essential for all performers, and this was the most memorable part of the performance for most spectators:

LUCIAN seems to think the Fable of *Proteus* means no more than that he was an accomplished *Pantomime*, and *capable* of transforming himself into all Shapes; now representing the Fluidness of *Water*, then the pyramidal and sloping Pointing of

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., V.i., p. 202.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., V.i., p. 202.

*Fire; now the Fierceness of a Lyon, and Fury of a Leopard, then the Motion and Trembling of Boughs and Leaves of a Tree, caused by the Wind: In a word, whatsoever he had a mind to; whence the Fable feigned him to be turned into those very things he acted.*<sup>54</sup>

The passage works from an opposition of the elements Water and Fire to a parallel clash of passions or emotions, such as fierceness and fury compared with the trembling of leaves. This violent opposition and movement between categories exactly defined the liberating energy of pantomime, which worked between extremes, while keeping them in place, exploiting and harnessing the energy between categories chosen for their polar opposition. The elements were captured by Pope's evocation of such scenes:

In yonder cloud, behold!  
Whose sarsenet skirts are edg'd with flamy gold,  
A matchless Youth! His nod these worlds controuls,  
Wings the red lightning, and the thunder rolls.  
Angel of Dulness, sent to scatter round  
Her magic charms o'er all unclassic ground:  
Yon stars, yon suns, he rears at pleasure higher,  
Illumes their light, and sets their flames on fire.<sup>55</sup>

Again these are heavy sensory burdens and everything is on a cosmic, apocalyptic scale. The magic is not that of the preternatural but of artifice.

Although less violently elemental, masquerade couplings were also based on antagonistic properties or opposite qualities. The masquerade spy in *Weekly Journal* for instance, noted assignations between a lion and a shepherdess, and a butterfly and a prizefighter.<sup>56</sup> Christopher Pitt's verse satire "On the Masquerades" also drew on material from the same source as Weaver's, but he

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<sup>54</sup> Weaver, op. cit., p. 8. The passage was drawn directly from Lucian's *Of Dancing*, trans. Savage: "Proteus seems to me to have been nothing else but an Excellent Dancer, a Man greatly skill'd in Imitation, and who had the Art to transform himself into various Shapes and Figures, insomuch that the moisture of Water, the swiftness and vehemency of the Motion of Fire, the Fancy of a Lyon, the fierceness of a Leopard, the shaking of an Oak and in a word, whatever he wou'd he could imitate" vol. 3, p. 412). Weaver also quotes from Thomas Elyot's *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531), where Proteus was described as "a Deliuier, and crafty daunser" (Book I, Chapter 20, p. 88). See Weaver op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> B.III.253-260

<sup>56</sup> 18 April 1724.

noted that these examples exceeded even metamorphic probability and decorum:

So many various changes to impart,  
Would tire an Ovid's or a Proteus' art,  
Where lost in one promiscuous whim, we see  
Sex, age, condition, quality, degree. (25-8)

Contemporary reports of pantomime indicate that Weaver's defence was not entirely a distortion of practice. It was recorded, for instance that John Riner performed "his new and diverting Entertainments in Metamorphosis, in changing his Body into divers Shapes. First, a Pigmy Dance, he appearing to be two Foot and a half High .... and a pleasant Entertainment of an Italian Scaramouch, with two Heads and four Legs."<sup>57</sup> For the satirist such an ability to shift one's identity was the dangerous disguise of the petty criminal or the prostitute.

In a more sympathetic sense, such transformations allowed one to overcome one's own deficiencies. John Rich was essentially a failed actor, his coarse voice reportedly incapable of the rhetorical flourishes that conventional drama required. As Harlequin, however, his body took over from his voice; in the famous scene in which Harlequin was hatched from an egg, the "monstrous" birth also enacted a representational transition from the merely physical to the rational:

From his first chipping of the egg, his receiving motion, his feeling the ground, his standing upright, to his quick Harlequin trip round the empty shell, through the whole progression, every limb had its tongue, and every motion a voice, which spoke with most miraculous organ to the understanding and sensation of the observers.<sup>58</sup>

Thelma Niklaus has concluded that in his use of his body, Rich became a superman, overcoming his inferiority and gaining thereby an "absolute power

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<sup>57</sup> 29 December, 1721; from the Burney Collection (The British Library).

<sup>58</sup> Jackson's account, see Niklaus op. cit., p. 140.

over all the elements."<sup>59</sup> Yet the control that was possible over an anarchic and hostile world characterised the overall attraction of Harlequin, and the resonance he created in the minds of his spectators. The Harlequin deliberately made a spectacle of himself, a butt, refusing the possible censure of the spectator's gaze. Garrick wrote after Rich's death:

When Lun appeared with faultless art and whim  
He gave the power of speech to every limb.  
Though masked and mute, conveyed his quick intent  
And told in frolic gestures all he meant;  
But now the motley coat and sword of wood  
Require a tongue to make them understood.<sup>60</sup>

For Garrick, the "faultless art" enfranchised the body and, at the same time liberated it through the mobility and flexibility of the mind, as expressed by the fanciful "whim". Weaver's notion of "serious" dancing, which he contrasts with the "grotesque" variety, partakes of this metamorphic quality, the dancer being Proteus who can take all shapes so that he becomes finally the abstract of all disciplines; thus the serious portion of the dancing takes on a privileged communicative status: "In short, it is a Science Imitative and Demonstrative, an Interpreter of all things Aenigmatical, and Explainer of Ambiguities."<sup>61</sup> The low was effectively enfranchised and semantically empowered, in a way that was at least the equal of 'higher' discourses.

## 6. Sense and Probability

In his *Harlequin-Horace* James Miller had adhered to the Horatian analysis of the grotesque in his view that judgment in pantomime must have been infected by the palsy or the St Vitus's Dance. Despite the application of quack remedies such as anodynes and volatiles, Miller (like Pope) discerned that

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<sup>59</sup> Niklaus, op. cit., p. 142.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>61</sup> *History of the Mimes and Pantomimes* (1728), p. 412.

popular taste had been infected in such a way that formlessness had taken over the mind:

'tis the *Aegri Somnia* now must please;  
 Things without Head, or Tail, or Form, or Grace,  
 A wild, forc'd, glaring, unconnected Mass. (18-20)

Although Miller's comments are again derived from the judgment of a critically aloof observer, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that it is the *object* exposed to public view which is grotesque; yet the movement is not merely one away from the diseased mind of the creator to the manner in which the object is received. Later in the eighteenth century there evolved a less pressing need to mount a defence based on a dichotomy which privileged reason, and an ordered mind at the point of creation, over the individual subject's report of his aesthetic experience. Thus a writer in *The Adventurer* commented,

The entertainment was not adapted to my understanding, but to my senses; and my senses were indeed captivated with every object of delight.<sup>62</sup>

Many of the statements about the operation of drama on the mind were disrupted by pantomime simply because to enjoy it required a different kind of mind. Defending it, rather than just enjoying it as something harmlessly trivial, called for a redefinition of terms, a reconstruction of sense and probability. Moreover, other categories such as the marvellous were readily colonized and cultivated by the new genre. The radicalism of the new genre could be seen in the contrast with existing notions of the reception of art. Davenant, for instance, in his Preface to *Gondibert*, had started from a rhetoric of persuasive reception, arguing that

the Minde can never be constrain'd, though it can be gain'd by perswasion: and since Perswasion is the principle instrument which can bring to fashion the brittle and misshapen Mettal of the Minde, none are so fit in aids to this important work as the

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<sup>62</sup> No. 24, 27 January 1753.

poets ... whose operations are as resistless, secret, easie, and subtle as the influence of the Planets.<sup>63</sup>

Davenant's imagery is (politically) one of liberty and liberal compromise; the aesthetic enterprise, moreover, is concerned with another kind of constructive union, a fashioning that replaces deformity with beauty. Significantly, the sources of these political and aesthetic processes were covert, anachronistically hinged on the notion of planetary influence, one of the last vestiges of the preternatural. Yet an important distinction needs to be made between the resistless, secret, easy and subtle operation of poetry or 'noble' drama, and what was perceived as the dangerously liberal openness of pantomime. Davenant's ideal spoke to the passions and affections, moulding them in contrast to the violent - and merely physical - combinations of "grin and grimace." The charm of pantomime was not the magic of the preternatural but the artifice of machinery. It must be admitted that eighteenth-century pantomime, in contrast to Weaver's noble aspirations for it, operated largely by means of the special effects, achieved not by Davenant's notion of persuasion but by shock, the surprise of the spectacular, for the more violent the transformation, the more likely it was to impress. Persuasion was already in parenthesis before the performance began. Persuasion for Davenant was a mental process, rhetorical and in some degree covert; in pantomime the only correlate of the covert was the machinery which served to generate spectacular effects from above, below or beyond the visible scene. It was the marvellous not of Nature, of compromise and harmony, but of art and artifice forging dangerous new worlds, "to nature's laws unknown."

Pantomime positively insisted on illusion, and the technological development of machinery in the eighteenth century enabled producers to maximize such effects. If the neo-classical rule had been *ars est celare artem* the

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<sup>63</sup> See *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. J. E. Spingarn (1907; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 44-5.

virtuosity of artifice was now central. While singing served often chiefly to conceal the complex mechanical manoeuvres, pantomime otherwise called attention to its spectacular effects as its *raison d'être*.

Approaching the aesthetic of pantomime from another angle, there was the problem of probability. According to René Le Bossu, for instance, in his influential *Treatise of the Epick Poem* (1684; 1695), "the principal sort of Probability ... is the Probability according to the common-received Opinion."<sup>64</sup> Similarly, in *The Whole Art of the Stage*, d'Aubignac argued that "'tis not enough that the Cause of some extraordinary Motion of the Mind be true, but it must also (to be agreeably represented upon the Stage) be reasonable and probable, according to the receiv'd Opinion of Mankind."<sup>65</sup> Yet he also pointed out that "we are not to make Laws to ourselves from Custome and Example, but from Reason."<sup>66</sup> These issues will be explored more fully in Chapter Six, but for the moment it should be noted that this was an ideological enterprise in which the totalising procedure of reason proceeded to rule out the relativity of value and the possibility of local variations. As Thomas Rymer noted in this regard:

many are apt to mistake *use* for *nature*, but a Poet is no an Historiographer, but a Philosopher, he is not to take Nature at second hand, soyl'd and deform'd as it passes in the customs of the unthinking vulgar.<sup>67</sup>

The recognition that theatre's imitation of the natural object was not innate and universal, but something recognizable only subsequent to the cultivation of taste, entailed forging a conception of an ideal mind upon which to ground the

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<sup>64</sup> Trans W.J., p. 135.

<sup>65</sup> *The Whole Art of the Stage* (1684), III, pp. 42-43.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Rymer, *The Tragedies of the Last Age* (1678), pp. 109-10. He later warns against the representations of characters that are "Monsters enough for one *Bartholomew-Fair*" p. 142. The fair, of course, relied on a customary licence rather than rational approval. The rational is specifically united with the natural in the process of excluding the grotesque: "In framing a Character for Tragedy, a Poet is not to leave his reason, and blindly abandon himself to follow fancy; for then his fancy might be monstrous, might be singular and please no body's *maggot* but his own, but his reason is common to all people, and can never carry him from what is natural" p. 109.

aesthetic. Yet what was reasonable or natural hinged on the premise that there was a community that desired and recognised these very standards of imitation and the shared expectations of probability.

In part, one could evade the drive to probability by emphasizing the subject matter, as in Dryden's allusion to opera in the preface to *Albion and Albanius*. This was a play in whose third act the "Cave of *Proteus*" rose out of the sea. According to the stage direction, Proteus "changes himself into a Lyon, a Crocodile, a Dragon, and then to his own shape again." Afterwards he "comes toward the front of the Stage, and Sings."<sup>68</sup> Dryden concluded, however, that "The Subject therefore being extended beyond the Limits of Human Nature, admits of that sort of marvellous and surprizing conduct, which is rejected in other Plays."<sup>69</sup> There was, within the higher reaches of dramatic art, a proper space for grotesque metamorphosis. These were the visual equivalent of gigantic witticisms: they never ceased to be improbable: pantomime had little use for the notion of probability.

In part, the pleasure of such violent, protean shifts was a product of the marvellous which had belonged to the category of the preternatural - uncovering the link with Davenant. As my thesis has advanced, I have shown how scientific discourse had largely collapsed the category of the supernatural into the natural and the preternatural. The latter was primarily the space of what remained partially unexplained, but it was also (given the *provisional* and uncertain nature of scientific discourse) the space of the marvellous. The public spaces I have been scrutinizing cultivated the grotesque by incorporating it, in terms of the desire for wonder and as the expectation of novelty. Importantly, however, the marvellous now operated not from a shared discourse of science, but from the increasingly debased metaphor of pantomime:

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<sup>68</sup> *Albion and Albanius* (1685), p. 25.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. i.

In the very Manners he will affect the *Marvellous*; he will draw Achilles with the Patience of Job; a Prince talking like a Jack-Pudding; a Maid of Honour selling bargains; a footman speaking like a philosopher; and a fine gentleman like a scholar. Whoever is conversant in modern Plays, may make a most noble collection of this kind, and at the same time, form a complete body of *modern Ethics and Morality*.

Nothing seem'd more plain to our great authors, than that the world had long been weary of *natural things*. How much the contrary are form'd to please, is evident from the universal applause daily given to the admirable entertainments of Harlequins and Magicians on our stage. When an audience behold a coach turn'd into a wheelbarrow, a conjurer into an old woman, or a man's head where his heels should be; how are they struck with transport and delight? Which can only be imputed to this cause, that each object is chang'd into that which hath been suggested to them by their own low ideas before.<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, the marvellous was to entertainment what the preternatural was to science. Pope introduced the marvellous into the Argument to the third book of *The Dunciad* noting that "a vast number of miracles and prodigies appear, utterly surprising and unknown to the King himself, 'till they are explained to be the wonders of his own reign now commencing."<sup>71</sup> It was a zone of provisionality, of shifting and protean self-knowledge. Increasingly, however, the marvellous was replicated less as a product of nature (manifesting God) than the effect obtained by an indulgence in the artificial. It exploited and fed its own open-ended provisionality. Bacon had hoped to convert a knowledge of nature's monstrous productions to useful manufacture, seeking to find essential truths in deviation and aberration; by the eighteenth century quite a different form of utility had been discovered, and the higher art of science was fully displaced by the curiosity and desire of the popular marketplace.

In Chapter Four I argued that an important feature of the early eighteenth-century grotesque was its interaction with a discourse of novelty. Yet novelty often remained parasitic on what it seemed to replace, simply reversing its terms. One criterion of novelty therefore was the notion of surprise, achieved by forcing - or willing - oneself to undertake a violent tour through opposite or

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<sup>70</sup> Alexander Pope, *Peri Bathous*, Chapter V, p. 41.

<sup>71</sup> *Works*, vol. v, p. 319.

heterogeneous categories. This was the practice of pantomime, which self-consciously denied probability, yet paradoxically, and in very structured ways, also satisfied the expectations of the spectator.

A paradox of surprise was also evident in masquerade. Again surprise was contained by the form of the entertainment. The concealment of identity was achieved by a subjection to the metamorphic moment, the donning of a grotesque disguise. The liberation of a concealed role simultaneously enforced a heightened danger of unmasking and a higher ratio of surprise. Yet, this was all finally contained, for the framework was convention-bound and the natural, unmasked face was a return to the familiar.

The skill was to hide the natural by means of a delightful indulgence of the unnatural; the natural portion of a pantomime such as the expression of love was uninteresting until it was metamorphosed into comic protestations of affection and unlikely or extravagant complications of plot. This quality of pantomime was clearly displayed in Fielding's *Tumble-Down Dick* (1736) and in a passage in *Joseph Andrews* which was a satire on Rich:

Not the Great *Rich* who turns Men into Monkeys, Wheelbarrows, and whatever else best humours his Fancy, hath so strangely metamorphosed the human Shape; nor the great Cibber, who confounds all number, gender, and breaks through every rule of grammar at his will, hath so distorted the English language, as thou dost metamorphose and distort the human senses. ... Again, when thou pleasest, thou can'st make a mole-hill appear as a mountain; a jew's-harp sound like a trumpet; and a dazy smell like a violet ... In short thou turnest the heart of man inside out, as a juggler doth a petticoat, and bringest whatsoever pleaseth thee out from it. If there be any who doubts all this, let him read the next chapter.<sup>72</sup>

The delight of pantomime was not in the imitation of nature as a stable category, but in its shocking diversity; its elements were thrown together. Typically, there was a *conventional* but violent yoking or swift alternation of

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<sup>72</sup> *Joseph Andrews*, ed. R. F. Brissenden, I.vii., p. 55.

opposites, such as light and dark, flight and descent, heaven and hell. The universe through which Harlequin walked was unstable, shifting, chaotic.

## 7. The Reversal of Carnival

My argument in this section introduces a critique of the centrality which has been attached to carnival, and specifically the tendency to include masquerade, along with other kinds of grotesque as a sub-category of the carnivalesque. The most important project of this kind began with Bakhtin and explains the tendency to forge a category of the grotesque in the eighteenth century which is narrow, reductive and negative. This outlook sees the communality of carnival displaced by the competitiveness of bourgeois individualism. Despite noting the "intensely elegiac Bakhtinian myth,"<sup>73</sup> Terry Castle, for instance, has stated that she includes the masquerade "under the general rubric of the carnivalesque."<sup>74</sup> She admits that C.L. Barber, working chiefly on Shakespeare, was the first to draw attention to the importance of ritual festivity from morris dancing through to mummings and masques, together with a general enthusiasm for sports and games. More seriously, however, neither critic attended to the full dimensions of sport. There is no indication that it was also a version of *lusus*, that it operated not only in rural recesses, but across society and in different kinds of mind. In addition to the fair and pantomime, Pope had used sport as a central motif in *The Dunciad*, pointing out in the argument to the second book that "*The King being proclaimed, the solemnity is graced with public Games and sports of various kinds.*" The Goddess is said to "disport" herself. Sport, as this study has illustrated, worked to produce other the kinds of deviation and generic confusion with which *The*

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<sup>73</sup> Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 105.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ix.

*Dunciad* was primarily concerned. Castle also falls into simple binary oppositions, indicated by her thematic emphasis on "the experience of doubleness, the alienation of inner from outer."<sup>75</sup> Such issues, as this study has been outlining, also need to be understood in terms of the demise of an essential taxonomy based on real essences and their logical or systematic arrangement. The process of undermining certainties was much more thoroughgoing than Castle has suggested.

Reworking Bakhtinian carnival, Castle begins - in a variety of decisive statements - to project the private space onto the public one. She argues, for instance, that masquerade was "a kind of collective meditation on self and other, and an exploration of their mysterious dialectic." She proceeds to claim that "masqueraders developed scenes of vertiginous existential recombination." She also posits a true self which "remained elusive and inaccessible-illegible-within its fantastical encasements."<sup>76</sup> Such comments aim to pull together philosophical problems that empirical philosophy from Locke to Hume was beginning to unravel. But Castle's exploration of subjectivity does not, in my reading, sufficiently take account of private reverie and the work of fancy as a common feature of the mind's capacity to deviate grotesquely from its own norms, rules and laws. Masquerade was in many respects just the desire to project the grotesque frame of mind. It will suffice to consider an account of a masquerade in order to show how the experience properly belongs to the grotesque which has been the subject of this study, rather than to the model of the carnival espoused by Castle and Bakhtin. The observer introduces his description with an epigraph from Virgil's *Georgics*, "They turn themselves in to all the Prodigies of Nature" (IV.441), and proceeds to narrate what he saw:

I repaired to the Place appointed about ten at Night, where I  
found Nature turned top-side turvy, Women changed into Men,

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

and Men into Women, Children in Leading-strings seven Foot high, Courtiers transformed into Clowns, Ladies of the Night into Saints, People of the first Quality into Beasts or Birds, Gods or Goddesses; I fancied I had all *Ovid's Metamorphoses* before me. Among these were several Monsters to which I did not know how to give a Name;

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Than Fables yet have feigned, or fear conceived,  
Gorgons and Hydra's, and Chimeras dire.

[...] The next Object I saw was a *Chimney-Sweeper* made up of black Crape and Velvet, (with a huge Diamond in his Mouth) making love to a Butterfly. On a sudden I found myself among a Flock of *Batts, Owls, and Lawyers*.<sup>77</sup>

The first point to note is that the carnival takes its origin, not from fifteenth or sixteenth century Rabelaisian carnival, but from a reading of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The experience was also rooted in native traditions too, such as Milton and the infernal monstrosities of *Paradise Lost*. The world is primarily one of fancy, and although there is a degree of binary reversal at the outset, the account moves radically beyond these. In part the problem is one of classification, which begins with the fatal desire to *name*, an impossible act given the rich imaginative and shifting context of the scene. It is at this point of helplessness that the account becomes seriously ambiguous. The marvellous is not that of the strictly preternatural, but that of artificial prodigy. Again many of the aesthetic qualities of new entertainment discussed above are evident - features such as the observer's distant gaze that curiously finds itself absorbed by the strange scene, effects of wandering without a proper map of expectation, the excitement of novelty and surprise.

The practice of shocking reversals was important in carnival, but I consider that its deployment was richer and more perceptively worked out in eighteenth century writing than the carnival would permit. Much of the existing debate concerned the question of reversal's radical credentials. Stallybrass and White have noted, for instance, that inversion "addresses the

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<sup>77</sup> *Guardian* 154, 7 September 1713, ed John Calhoun Stephens, pp. 502-3. The quotation is from Milton, *Paradise Lost*, II.626-8.

social classification of values, distinctions and judgements which underpin practical reason and systematically inverts the relations of subject and object, agent and instrument, husband and wife, old and young, animal and human, master and slave."<sup>78</sup> Similarly Terry Castle has commented that

If the masked ball was a kind of anarchy, it was paradoxically a systematic anarchy, a *discordia concors*. "Everyone here wears a Habit which speaks him the Reverse of what he is", wrote the author of the *Universal Spectator* after a masquerade in 1729.<sup>79</sup>

The source for such inversions was less a last vestige of carnival than the product of the Horatian prescription for the production of the grotesque. In his *Harlequin -Horace*, for instance, James Miller concluded that the rules now followed "are in all Respects exactly the *Reverse* of those which were observ'd by the Authors of *Antiquity*, and which were set forth of old by *Horace* in his *Epistle de Arte Poetica*. In a word, Sir, it is *Horace* turn'd *Harlequin*, with his Head where his Heels should be."<sup>80</sup> This reversal, programmed by Horace, became the basis for aesthetic discussion under other working categories such as contrast - what Pope and Horace together called the art of glaring by the strong opposition of colours. As Fielding noted:

And here we shall of necessity be led to open a new vein of knowledge, which, if it hath been discovered, hath not, to our remembrance, been wrought on by any antient or modern writer. This vein is no other than that of contrast, which runs through all the works of the creation, and may, probably, have a large share in constituting in us the idea of all beauty, as well natural as artificial: for what demonstrates the beauty and excellence of anything, but its reverse? Thus the beauty of day, and that of summer, is set off by the horrors of night and winter. And, I believe, if it was impossible for a man to have seen only the two former, he would have a very imperfect idea of their beauty.<sup>81</sup>

He insists on the novelty of this tendency to reverse. The examples from nature serve to indicate how the plenitude and harmony of nature is displaced by the

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<sup>78</sup> Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. p. 56.

<sup>79</sup> Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Preface, sig. C3-4.

<sup>81</sup> Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, V.i., p. 201.

deliberate antagonism of its elements; such grotesque confusion obliges the mind to make a detour, it is forced from its logical path by contradictory signs; the blending of opposites typically culminated in an opposition that was inherently grotesque, as in the following example of "Confounding" under which are ranked,

### 1. THE MIXTURE OF FIGURES

which raises so many images, as to give you no Image at all. But its principal Beauty is when it gives an idea just *opposite* to what it seem'd meant to describe. Thus an ingenious Artist painting the Spring, talks of a *Snow of Blossoms*, and thereby raises an unexpected Picture of Winter. Of this sort is the following:

*The gaping clouds pour lakes of sulphur down,  
Whose livid flashes sickning Sunbeams drown.*

What a noble Confusion? clouds, lakes, brimstone, flames, sun-beams, gaping, pouring, sickning, drowning! all in two lines.<sup>82</sup>

Reversal was a reduction of variety (in terms of colour it developed no subtle hues) that militated radically against the mind's steady and unstrained observation. The notion of reversal came, even for critics, to define one of the guiding aesthetic criteria of new forms of dulness.

## 8. Pope's Pantomime Style

Pope had had some experience in the low style in *Three Hours after Marriage* (a collaboration with Gay and Arbuthnot).<sup>83</sup> This had many of the elements of farce, such as exotic disguise and ridiculous concealment (Plotwell as a Polish scientist, confined in a large chest, concealed beneath Townley's petticoats). In the play, the final museum scene liberated the grotesque low style in a decisive fashion; giving up human form, the emphasis was on metamorphosis. The two

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<sup>82</sup> See *Peri Bathos* in *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, Volume II: The Major Works 1725-44*, ed. Rosemary Cowler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, The Shakespeare Head Press), pp. 208-9.

<sup>83</sup> See *John Gay: Dramatic Works*, ed. John Fuller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

lovers, having delivered themselves to Fossile's house as specimens for his private museum (Plotwell as an Egyptian mummy and Underplot as alligator/crocodile) were then forced to participate in an absurd love scene; the mummy inviting Townley to consider "how I am embroider'd with Hieroglyphicks ... My balmy breath ... My erect Stature" (III. 89, 93) and the alligator Underplot advertising its "beautiful Row of Teeth ... The strong Joints of my Back ... My long Tail" (III, 90, 94).<sup>84</sup> The link with other entertainments was re-enforced by the device that permitted the rescue of the two monsters, claiming that they were really actors from the masquerade. The intrigue plot shows elements of *commedia dell'arte*, but it was also an exercise in personal invective and bathos. The play prepared the way for the satire on collectors and virtuosi in the fourth book of *The Dunciad*, but it was also an indulgence in the transformation and exotic metamorphosis of pantomime. Yet the pantomime style was to be developed in a rich vein.

As I have argued, stunning transformations were typically associated with the shews and pantomimes and in particular with the comic metamorphoses effected by Harlequin's wand. It is worth examining in greater detail what was at stake in those diatribes concerning pantomime, dancing and the theatre which served as potent metaphors of Dulness in *The Dunciad*. Lucian had argued that dance was a diversion in which

your Soul shall be so Transported, and you shall be so delighted with this sweet Poison that you won't care to have do with any other: And instead of transforming you into a Beast it will render you more Elevate, for like *Mercury's Rod*, it awakens all that sleep.<sup>85</sup>

A footnote Pope liked very much in *The Dunciad* neatly dispensed with the positive deployment of Proteus as a figure of transformation by adding a sharply contemporary slant to its interpretation of the lines:

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<sup>84</sup> *John Gay: Dramatic Works*, ed. John Fuller (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1983), vol. i, p. 248.

<sup>85</sup> Lucian, "Of Dancing", in *The Works of Lucian, translated from the Greek by several ancient hands*, 4 vols, trans. Roger Savage, vol. 3, p. 432.

Hence Bards, like Proteus long in vain ty'd down,  
Escape in Monsters, and amaze the town.<sup>86</sup>

Note] by *Proteus* must certainly be meant a hacknied Town scribler; and by his Transformations the various disguises such a one assumes, to elude the pursuit of his irreconcilable enemy, the Bailiff. Proteus is represented as one bred of the mud and slime of AEgypt, the original soil of Art and Letters: And what is a Town-scribler, but a creature made up of the excrements of luxurious Science.<sup>87</sup>

As the note continues we are told of the scribler's metamorphosis through a Boar, a Snake, the Horns of a Bull, "and when he has completed his circle, he sinks back again, as the last change into a *Stone* denotes, into his natural state of immoveable Stupidity." Thus the cycle of exchange in reality winds down to nothing, rather than winding upwards and transcending its material. The motions of Dulness tend to be circular, petering out into nothing like the diminishing ripple of a wave, or terminating in fossil state through petrification at the lower end of the natural order. Matter is conserved, but the dull material is never transcended, it is simply recycled in a process which has stages but no conclusion. The application of this notion of mutability to broader issues is essential to an understanding of grotesque sport in *The Dunciad*. According to the testimony of Mr Leonard Welsted, the moderns "do but *hackney the same thoughts over again*, making then still more *trite*. Most of their pieces are but a pert, insipid heap of *common place*."<sup>88</sup> In the course of the poem, mutability becomes a dull recycling; thus the medievalist "Wormius" is "on parchment scraps y-fed" (B.III.188), and Aristarchus makes this vow,

In Ancient Sense if any needs must deal  
Be sure I give them Fragments, not a Meal,  
What Gellius or Stobaeus hash'd before  
Or chew'd by old blind Scholiasts o'er and o'er.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *The Dunciad*, B.I.37-8.

<sup>87</sup> *Works*, vol. v, p. 272.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>89</sup> B.IV.229-232.

The intersection of the physiological and the psychological provides a grotesque twist to this debate as the dunces continue to "eat, in dreams, the custard of the day."<sup>90</sup> The only way out of this cycle is mock-abstention from material circumstances, "I am so far of opinion that our common dreams proceed from Repletion and indigestion, that, to prevent this fantastic disturbance of my slumbers, I have for some years accustomed myself to go supperless to Bed."<sup>91</sup> For Aristotle, structure was the terminus of change; in *The Dunciad*, Dulness revolves because it is incapable of successful structuring, it is ever incomplete, premature, aborted. The movement is that described by Hezekiah Burton in *Several Discourses* (1684), "if anything lose its own Substance by communication, yet it's found in something else; and by such mutations the world continues."<sup>92</sup> In *The Dunciad*, such change leads always to mixture rather than to structure.

Previous discussions of the grotesque have looked at its formation as the product of a satirical play between notions of stability perceived as the relatively fixed standpoint from which satire is delivered, and the teeming, shifting, diversified world which is its subject matter. For Laura Brown, "motley" describes "the effect of randomness, illogic and raw accumulation" which she associates with the "imperialist catalogues" of Pope's earlier works.<sup>93</sup> But if my argument holds, such mixing is characteristic of grotesque *satura* as a description of method, and as a determination of the material under attack, with its grotesque preference for merger. Pope has a wider programme in mind than Brown's political reading suggests, finding an analogy with (for instance) the problems of metaphysics "a kind of *Middle nature* between words and things: communicating, in its obscurity with *Substance*, and its emptiness

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<sup>90</sup> B.I.92.

<sup>91</sup> *Works*, vol. v, p. 77.

<sup>92</sup> The quotation is taken from a footnote to *Essay On Man*, III.17-26, *Works*, vol. iii, p. 94.

<sup>93</sup> *Alexander Pope*, p. 132.

with *Names*."<sup>94</sup> Colley Cibber admits that in his autobiography "thro' every Page there runs a Vein of Vanity and Impertinence," but his metaphors turn to the theatrical:

that my Style is unequal, pert, and frothy, patch'd and party colour'd, like the Coat of a *Harlequin*; low and pompous, cramm'd with Epithets, shrew'd with Scraps of second-hand *Latin* from common Quotations; frequently aiming at Wit, without ever hitting the Mark; a mere Ragoust, toss'd up from the Offals of other Authors. (28-9)

For Pope, as for many eighteenth century cultural critics, public manifestations of such monstrous pillage and forced assembly of bits and pieces were indicative of the worst excesses of dulness and of the popular. Yet Pope creatively transmuted these energies, finding in them a source for his most imaginative and adventurous treatment of the age. Pope sometimes wrote about the "Age" of dulness, describing a temporal fear that primarily concerns novelty, spontaneity and surprise. Yet a great and more pressing fear on his part, at the time of writing *The Dunciad* concerned the competition for space; it was preoccupied as much with the invasion of space as the onset of a new era; it yearned to partition spaces and defend cultural and hierarchical boundaries in order to protect a humane culture that was politely self-regulated and self-constructed.<sup>95</sup> Yet it also enjoyed the disintegration of categories, taking its energy from their disruption; the poetry that emerged from chaos offered far greater imaginative opportunities, for it was as much an end as a beginning, it was an aggressive participation in the cyclical nature of life. The grotesque body therefore flourished, proliferated and procreated. The "carnavalesque" which carved out a *temporal* license like the Saturnalian festival, overcame time with the result that it was now also defined *spatially*.

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<sup>94</sup> B.IV.248 See *Works*, vol. v, p. 368.

<sup>95</sup> On Pope's *Dunciad* as "an intervention against the various forms of cultural seepage and transgressive mingling of social strata", see Brean S. Hammond, "'Guard the sure barrier' Pope and the partitioning of culture," in *Pope: New Contexts*, ed. David Fairer (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990).

The public spaces of the grotesque were used to practise the dismemberment of those categories which have so often been used to define the centrally approved, totalising tendencies of eighteenth century discourse. Nature, order, stability, and tradition were set aside, or at best granted only a provisional status in the disorienting world of pantomime, masquerade and the fair. It was in this space that Pope staged his own theatrical event, self-consciously novel and momentary. Yet the space was no sooner opened than Pope drew the curtain on it, finally enclosing it in the dark undercurrents of his own art.

The spaces of pantomime and the masquerade specialised in turning the monstrous into entertainment rather than "useful" manufacture. Wonder and novelty became primary constituents of a grotesque commercial entertainment that insistently de-essentialised values and knowledge. For the rising middle classes there was a contradiction in the existence of such public spaces, for they militated against industry in their celebration of pleasure while being products of civilization, the artificial luxuries of a nascent consumer society. Trifles and triviality were cultivated, they were marketable and could be set at a premium to their actual worth. The concept of excess served permanently to undermine the notion of essential value, just as the plenitude of playful Nature had undermined fixed and essential classification.

Although such an aesthetic was not culturally dominant, it was in important respects symbolically central, for it pointed to the inner motors of innovation and instability that increasingly served to question the settled assumptions of eighteenth century culture. Crucially, the uses of the public space, and the spectacle of new cultural protagonists, called for the redefinition of internal spaces, for the production of new categories and systematic realignments. Yet this was not entirely a dialectical or even oppositional conflict of values; in its grotesque process, it was achieved in sportive moments.

# Chapter Six

## Grotesque Legalities

### 1. Introduction

In the early eighteenth century, the concept of legality, like that of system, was subject to sportive deviation under the disruptive influence of internal instabilities. Moreover, the desired transition, from stable systems to regular laws, hinged on the essentialist nature of categories. One effect of Locke's epistemological definition of categories as nominal and dependent constructs, was that the natural laws derived from categorisation were prone to deviation because they were finally dependent on the operation of the mind. Although eighteenth-century writers increasingly subscribed to notions of legality, a multiplicity of competing perspectives was available. There is a need therefore to pluralize our understanding of legality in order to understand how the grotesque rupture was incorporated in the legalities of discourse. The role of the grotesque cannot be understood in isolation, merely on its own terms; an enhanced and extended understanding of the operations of authority is a prerequisite for understanding the category. In this light, it can be shown that the grotesque category was opened out in order to place in the public domain what needed to be controlled. Such an opening therefore permitted a self-conscious reconstruction of legality as a variety of individual repressive forces. Legality and authority were multiple and should not, therefore, be simplified along the lines of a binary, oppositional model. What rules, norms and conventions were understood to supply - and in what ways they were already loaded with paradox, self-contradiction and instability - has not been explored.

Closer analysis, for example, will show that the grotesque had a creative function that operated within legalities and altered decisively the distributions of power across them. This line of enquiry therefore disputes the traditional model that embraces cultural productions such as carnival as multiple, dialogical and disruptive, but refuses to see authority as anything but a homogeneous and univocal exercise. Such models characteristically eulogize the capacity of the "low" to subvert the "high". More generally, the notion of carnival has served as a cultural category to describe a range of ritual forms of rebellion. For many critics, the grotesque's radical credentials emerged from its challenge to a single legality that flowed from a single authority. Barbara Babcock has argued, for instance, that the grotesque category should include:

any act of expressive behaviour which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms, be they linguistic, literary, artistic, religious, or social and political.<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere she states that "the breaking of rules and the inverting of order implies that there *is* a rule to break and an order to invert."<sup>2</sup> Such accounts have served to underline the problematic manner in which carnival reinforces the values it reverses, making them all the clearer to our understanding, according to the space of difference they establish. Ritual denotes a specific range of practices and the repetition of them, rather than the radical and permanent transformation of society. The problem of representing carnival in critical discourse arises from an unresolved contradiction that sees it as at once outside and other to its binary opposite, yet admitting that it is, for all its radical energy, parasitic and dependent on its binary partner. Against this model, my study has argued that the eighteenth-century grotesque operates as a category always-already *within* the total, systematic construction of the world. Moreover, some of the forms which are most illustrative of the noble

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara A. Babcock, introduction to *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara A. Babcock, "The Novel and the Carnival World," *MLN* 89 (1974), p. 920.

grotesque, such as the griffin, harpy and sphinx (which Hogarth admired) are *customary* productions that have achieved a certain stability in their representation. They cannot be subsumed under the carnivalesque, under notions of licence, ritual and rebellion; they masquerade as natural categories and therefore observe their own legality. My previous chapter argued that the role of licence, carnival and reversal-devices in eighteenth century literature has been exaggerated. Such terms fail to encapsulate precisely the transgressiveness of the grotesque in the early eighteenth century. In this regard, I must emphasize that this chapter is not primarily concerned with the practical operation of criminality, nor with the project of exploring crime in terms of other grotesque and carnivalesque rituals as suggested by Terry Castle in her recognition of

The celebratory behaviour and atavistic magical beliefs surrounding public hangings in eighteenth-century London; the popular treatment of famous criminals, such as Wild and Shepherd, as traditional Lords of Misrule; the many processions, effigy-burnings, mock trials and rituals of the London mob throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

In order to make sense of these disparate cultural phenomena, I will be arguing in this chapter that we need to explore the underlying multi-vocal application of legalities; in order to understand the systematic role of the grotesque we must attend to the conditions for the *possibility* of a single and dominant legality in the early modern period. From the perspective of practice, an adherence to the rationale of legality must, of course, comprehend a knowledge of the monstrous contradictions and injustices that were a fact of everyday life for the majority of the population, who could not place themselves beyond the arbitrary, and often inequitable, exercise of the law. When Blackstone, for instance, wrote his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1758), it was an impossible task merely to fit the punishment to the crime - he had to admit that "outrageous penalties, being seldom or never inflicted, are hardly known to be law by the public: but that rather aggravates the mischief,

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<sup>3</sup> Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* (Methuen, 1986), p. 18.

by laying a snare to the unwary."<sup>4</sup> For Pope, in his famous passage in *An Essay on Criticism*, rules were discovered not devised. For Blackstone, it was better that some laws should not be discovered at all. In this instance, it might be objected that different kinds of laws were being compared. Yet early eighteenth century criticism and literature conflated notions of legality across a whole range of phenomena, from the criminal through to those governing the aesthetic.<sup>5</sup> Monstrous cultural productions were, after all, the emblem of the mob. From the perspective of jurisprudence, a number of distinctions between rules, norms, customs, conventions and laws are available, but these were generally blurred in practice. The area of legality was nonetheless shifting and unstable. Any discovery of legality in, or promoted by a text, is always already in part devised as an ideal reconstruction. Pope's formulaic "discovered not devised" marked an ideological commitment in his *Essay*. There were, of course, a range of approaches to legality within any category and between different texts. There is a clear difference, for example, between the broadly rule-based, law-abiding orbit of the *An Essay on Criticism* and the satirical pillory of *The Dunciad* which (as well as exposing the breaches of manners and decorum of Pope's antagonists) publicized crimes and moral offences. The former expounded a theory that urgently foregrounded an adherence to legality, the latter replaced civil legality with a personal remedy through satirical devices. In this context Ian Bell has argued, in *Literature and Crime in Augustan England*, that there was a link between the inadequacy of the law and the need for personal satire, and he points to Swift's remarks in *The Examiner*:

many great abuses may be visibly committed, which cannot be legally Punish'd [...] I am apt to think, it was to supply such Defects as these, that Satyr was first introduc'd into the World ...<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Often the title of texts such as Charles Gildon's *Laws of Poetry* (1721) are sufficient to indicate the omni-presence of legality.

<sup>6</sup> *The Examiner*, 39, 26 April 1711. Quoted in Ian A. Bell, *Literature and Crime in Augustan England* (Routledge, 1991), p. 178.

Monstrous satire served in writing as a means of punishing monstrous vice; the grotesque category is therefore deployed for normative purposes, it is implicated in the programme for a reformation of manners. Moreover, I will be arguing that Bell's discussion does not sufficiently scrutinize different notions of legality, and their problematic relations to the practice of writing. We need to examine how far texts were themselves modified by prescription, what kinds of legality they admitted in order to sanction their existence in relation to existing conventions. In part, the problem of lawlessness in its broadest sense was produced and constructed, and was brought into the field of vision, by a heightened awareness of the role of legality in all cultural spheres. In criticism, for instance, legality was central to the dominant terminology:

But tho' the *Ancients* thus their *Rules* invade  
 (As *Kings* dispense with *Laws* Themselves have made)  
*Moderns*, beware! Or if you must offend  
 Against the *Precept*, ne'er transgress its *End*,  
 Let it be *seldom*, and *compell'd by Need*,  
 And have, at least, *Their Precedent* to plead.<sup>7</sup>

In a literary context, deviation is either a special dispensation for originality or an act which is precariously transgressive. Importantly it approximates to a sovereign act, for the writer adopts, or stands in for, author(ity) in literary productions. In opposition to such discourse, critics like Dennis attacked the freedom to deviate, calling on an absolute transvaluation of discursive realms, placing Pope's aesthetic laws alongside the dictates of the theological domain. Commenting on Pope's lines regarding Aristotle, "Not only Nature did his Laws obey / But Fancy's boundless Empire own'd his Sway", Dennis therefore proceeded to argue:

The Expression in the first Verse is not only absurd, but blasphemous. The Laws of Nature are unalterable and indispensable but by god himself; and the greatest Excellence to which the wisest Philosopher can attain, is not to controul, but to obey Nature.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *An Essay on Criticism*, 161-6.

<sup>8</sup> See *Reflections Critical and Satyrical, Upon a Late Rhapsody, call'd, An Essay upon Criticism* (1711) in *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, 2 vols., ed. Edward Niles Hooker (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939), vol. i, p. 412.

Dennis failed to understand that even in texts such as *An Essay on Criticism* the notion of legality was multiple, prescriptive and paradoxically self-transgressive in reaching out beyond an order of legality based on logic, reason, or theological absolute. For Dennis, even to praise Aristotle's *Physics* was sufficiently blasphemous to be accorded censure; philosophy must be ranked below divinity.

Disputes about legality also raged over the nature of genre. This part of my discussion serves to illustrate the foundational role of classification explored in the first chapter of this thesis. Moreover, the notion that there is a link between genera and genre which could serve to forge a scientific enterprise capable of forming objective laws has been redeployed in the modern period by Northrop Frye in his claim that

Aristotle seems to me to approach poetry as a biologist would approach a system of organisms, picking out its genera and species, formulating the broad laws of literary experience, and in short writing as though he believed that there is a totally intelligible structure of knowledge attainable about poetry which is not poetry itself, or the experience of it, but poetics.<sup>9</sup>

For in order to place something in its proper category in relation to other categories it was necessary that its inherent or essential qualities could be grasped. Such qualities are not only descriptive, but prescriptive, denoting the nature and position of future items. As this thesis has proposed, categorisation was increasingly understood not as essentialist, but as part of an arbitrary and differential project. It was cognitively dependent on the perspective of the observer. Given the expanding variety and evolving range of natural species, the possibility of deriving invariable prescriptive laws to describe such phenomena was decisively undermined. The characteristic disputes concerning genre were also those of the taxonomist's genera, and such stable categorisation was the foundation for the inculcation of an objective universal legality. Moreover, it is worth bearing in mind that the essentialist values that had belonged to the classificatory enterprise were inscribed across the cultural,

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<sup>9</sup> Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 14.

moral and political space, and that the grotesque was at every level undermining such stable categories and distinctions. In seeking "a coordinating principle, a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology, will see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole", Northrop Frye proceeded to claim that, "The first postulate of this inductive leap is the same as that of any science: the assumption of total coherence."<sup>10</sup> In the light of these remarks, I will argue in the first section of this chapter that the desire for a total, universal legality was already being undermined at the end of the seventeenth century. Frye's objective is as impossible today as it was in the earlier period, and this can be demonstrated from a proper understanding of the nominal and arbitrary components from which classification was constructed. Subsequent sections will examine the role of custom and convention as grotesquely disruptive terms, enforcing local units of order which are, nonetheless, antagonistic to logical, essentialist or systematic understanding.

The law itself was, of course, a traditional target of satire. Yet those who wrote on the subject in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries promiscuously combined attacks on the corrupt practice of the law with an enhanced awareness of the range and relevance of law-making as an ideal, particularly following the examples of Newton in science or Boileau in the arts. The period saw a significant shift in the basic assumptions of its thinking about legality. This was achieved in a variety of ways, but the role of the grotesque category in empowering such a shift has not been fully explored. Usually understood as part of a neo-classical programme, an important tendency in the early eighteenth century was to expand the domain of legality. Rules, norms, and conventions were drawn together as part of the reformation of manners and the construction of a polite society. Although the enterprise demonstrated these broad goals and ideals, the process of describing, prescribing and enforcing rarely proceeded uncontested. In order to pursue such a discussion, it is important to realize that there is a transition in the eighteenth century from

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

natural law to a discourse of rights. The notion of natural rights was, of course, developed radically in the American and French revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century; an extended discussion of the theory of natural rights therefore falls outside the period of this thesis. But the notion of natural law served as a site of struggle that emerged after the demise of logical and essentialist classification. Countering the unpredictable development of local (often folkloric) customs, the possibility of a logically ordered system of law had been urged since the foundation of Roman law. I will be arguing that because custom was the distinct space of local, fractured, individual outcomes which undermined systematic organization, it was the natural space of the grotesque. In particular I will be looking at "natural law" and at "custom", which in different ways sport with the uniformity and fixity of law. Moreover, the relativity of custom could be turned back against the claim that there are natural constants and regularities in human behaviour. Such issues, I will argue, began to worry John Locke and became a major issue in *Gulliver's Travels* as Swift attempted to explore the nature and properties of a universal legality in the context of the *habitual* grotesque practices that appeared to typify human life. How could the legal system be placed on a rationally ordered footing if human beings were defined only as *rationis capax*?<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Natural Law

Notions of law and nature were rationally united in the theory of natural law. At this juncture, however, the terms were highly problematic in ways that Locke was eager to resolve. "Law" must be reconstructed as legality, but in the process the cultural critic needs to uncover the grotesque contradictions that are inescapably a part of the totalising enterprise. Moreover, these contradictions serve to reproduce the underlying tensions between ideals and practice, between neo-classical and grotesque.

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<sup>11</sup> Letter, Swift-Pope, 29 September 1725.

I begin with a quotation from John Locke's *Essays on the Laws of Nature* in which he states that:

the binding force of the law of nature is permanent, that is to say, there is no time when it would be lawful for a man to act against the precepts of this law; no interregnum is provided here, in this realm there are no Saturnalian holidays given to either freedom or licence. ... We can sometimes stop acting according to the law, but act against the law we cannot. In this life's journey rest is sometimes allowed, but straying at no time.<sup>12</sup>

Locke neatly set off the natural, self-validating authority of the law and juxtaposes the "misrule" of everyday practices. The imagery is spatial, from the traditional "travel" metaphor of life as a journey, to the notion of "straying" from one's proper road. Yet such deviations have been common in relation to the playful self-contradictions of the discourse of legality. Conceived as an ideal, the effective operation of the law was contingent on its isolation from the transgressive realm of festive, saturnalian holiday. Mirroring the exclusion of spatial manoeuvres was a unity of time, proscribing moments that did not meet its total purpose. We know that in the eighteenth century fairs, markets, shows, masquerades and the like were inherently transgressive public events. As I have argued, they were sites of excess, of the exotic, the marginal and the grotesque; censured but on the whole sanctioned by the law, they enjoyed a privileged status within it. Locke's remarks are representative of a self-constituted authority and are not therefore unusual in their sentiment. What is puzzling in Locke's remarks, however, is the exclusion of the very possibility of transgression,

... We can sometimes stop acting according to the law, but act against the law we cannot.

In this context, the direct derivation of natural law from God's law functioned as a foundation for such immutability. In a moral or ethical context, the possibility of deviation was characteristic of sin, and therefore contrary to the rules of reason divinely implanted in us. As Dennis was to state,

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<sup>12</sup> Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, ed. von Leyden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 203.

Whatever God created, he designed it Regular, and as the rest of the Creatures, cannot swerve in the least from the Eternal Laws pre-ordain'd for them, without becoming fearful or odious to us; so Man, whose Mind is a Law to itself, can never in the least transgress that Law, without lessening his Reason, and debasing his Nature.<sup>13</sup>

To abandon reason was to abandon one's essential categorisation based upon reason. Yet in this context it is remarkable that law was perceived as an individual species of autonomy in the mind, operating as a kind of anti-law. Swift, as I noted, suggested that man was not *animal rationale* but *rationis capax*. In a different way, Pope also abandoned essentialist rational categorisation by ironically preserving the notion of the *rule* of reason in his extended note on the definition of dulness. Although presented imaginatively, as a fecund grotesque nature, dulness also sprang from a perilous moment of unreason. Hobbes had linked natural wit with "celerity of imagining" and had equated it with fancy.<sup>14</sup> For Pope, dulness was the other side of wit, it was to be taken "in the enlarged sense of the word, for all Slowness of Apprehension, Shortness of Sight, or imperfect Sense of Things." Yet paradoxically, he introduced law-like qualities for dulness, describing it as "a ruling principle not inert, but turning topsy-turvy the Understanding, and inducing an Anarchy or confused State of Mind."<sup>15</sup> Yet he refused a proper encounter with chaos, describing instead the moment before reason:

*The Native Anarchy of the mind* is that state which precedes the time of Reason's assuming the rule of the Passions. But in that state, the uncontrolled violence of the Passions would soon bring things to confusion, were it not for the intervention of Dulness in this absence of Reason; who though she cannot regulate them like Reason, yet blunts and deadens their Vigour, and, indeed produces some of the good effects of it: Hence it is that Dulness often has the appearance of Reason.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *The Advancement and Reformation of Poetry* (1701), in *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, 2 vols., ed. Edward Niles Hooker (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939), vol. i, p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), I.viii., pp. 134-5.

<sup>15</sup> B.I.15.n.

Dulness had a proto-regulatory function from which it was possible to build a series of mock-orders and hierarchies. Such blunting and deadening belong to notions of habituation and the customary. "Nature", of course, provided for the early modern period a regulatory marker in a variety of debates, and accordingly it was common to invest it with transcendent value. As I have illustrated elsewhere, however, it was also a source of playful mutations within itself; Nature was perceived as abundantly fertile, but not all her productions were regular or in line with existing norms. Legality, like Nature, therefore operated as a totalising concept, transvaluing all other cultural phenomena and reducing everything to the terms of its own value-domain, yet not without internal deviations and irregularities.

Given such a tendency to deviate, it is important to note that natural laws were not generally observed to be fixed immutably. For eighteenth-century thinkers, this was not an inadequacy on God's part, but an indication of the autonomy of Nature, whose primary operation tended not to be vicious. In practice, civil laws were also subject to change; in relation to time and circumstance, for instance, they were often arbitrary, operating counter to the "common good." Yet how could the law reflect stable moral absolutes, if it was altered according to time or place? The law might also contradict itself, for, as Locke noted, interpretations cannot be systemized, since judges come to different conclusions, and although precedents may be of assistance they may also contradict each other.

One way of isolating legality from its grotesque distortions in everyday practice, was to prescribe "natural law" as the criterion or ground for the civil law and the evolved state of society. In the case of "Nature," one can achieve some degree of semantic stability by the recognition that the category is the constructed product of humanity ("nature methodized"), yet as one plays out

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the full range of the natural, shifting through cultivation to wildness, we find that "Nature" encompasses more than it can safely contain. The category "law" is also characterised by sportiveness; as an occasional product of the natural also characterises the category "law", the two terms infect each other's totalising tendencies, obstructing the possibility of any coherent ideological formation. Legality deviates from itself in sportive moments. In previous critical discussions, "sport" has been deployed as a category of aberration, or the dissipation of unlicensed (often sexual) energies. Its most benign usage was as a kind of humane unbending, a release from the heavy pressures and burdens of one's occupation.<sup>17</sup> From another point of view, the "legality" of sport was associated with the activity of Gods or tyrants, who could manipulate the fate of people without fear of challenge. In this sense "sport" was the product of *unbounded* authority, gods could be careless of what happens to mere mortals. A pair of examples from Pope and Locke will serve to illustrate the relation between customary law and sport. In *Windsor Forest* Pope describes a period when the land was

A dreary Desart and a gloomy Waste  
To Savage Beasts and Savage Laws a Prey. (44-5)

As a note to these lines emphasizes, the context is not the natural law but specifically the forest laws, and more broadly, the tyrannies exercised by the Norman Kings in replacing native customary regulations with imported, alien practices. A further note points to the relevance of customary law for providing a living and flexible framework against which savage and grotesque distortions of it might be measured:

With the Norman Conquest, the forest law and the forest courts  
of Normandy were introduced into England, and they resulted in

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<sup>17</sup> As E. P. Thompson remarks in *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act*, this function was celebrated in literary tradition. He cites John Denham's "Cooper's Hill":

Here I have seen the King, when great affairs  
Give leave to slacken, and unbend his cares,  
Attended to the Chase by all the flower / Of youth...

*The Poetical Works of Sir John Denham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 81.

a rapid and violent extension of 'forest' land - that is, land outside (*foris*) the common law and subject to a special law, whose object was the preservation of the king's hunting.<sup>18</sup>

Marginality is presented here not so much as a challenge to the centre but a product of a tyrannical centre that forges its own aberrant laws. Savagery is the rule rather than the exception in this grotesque economy. Much of the portrait also concerns aborted natural energies, the combined *excess* and *waste* of nature uncultivated (looking forward to Pope's later sense of the misdirection of dulness.) The context for such depletion is the demise of a valid central authority, replaced by the raw, uninhibited exercise of power, in which the right to life is merely part of a grotesque game:

What wonder then, a Beast or Subject slain  
Were equal Crimes in a Despotick Reign;  
Both doom'd alike for sportive Tyrants bled,  
But while the subject starv'd, the Beast was fed. (57-60)

A little further on, Pope again stresses the arbitrary, lawless exercise of power with reference to "Sport":

Th'Oppressor rul'd Tyrannick where he *durst* ...  
Whom ev'n the *Saxon* spar'd, and bloody *Dane*,  
The wanton Victims of his *Sport* remain. (74, 77-8)

Locke's deployment of "sport" was taken from the language and imagery of warfare. "Sport" was less an act of illegality within the framework of the legal, than those actions that occur when legality is suspended in special circumstances; the sense is that the *normal* boundaries of civil behaviour have collapsed:

9. *Instances of Enormities practised.* View but an Army at the sacking of a Town, and see what Observation, or sense of Moral Principles, or what touch of Conscience, for all the Outrages they do. *Robberies, Murders, Rapes*, are the Sports of Men set at Liberty from Punishment and Censure.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Works*, vol. i, *Pastoral Poetry and an Essay on Criticism*, ed. E. Audra and Aubrey Williams, p. 153. For more information on this issue see *An Historical Geography of England Before A.D. 1800* (1936), ed. H. C. Darby; E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975).

<sup>19</sup> Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975), I.iii.9, p. 70.

Yet most actions depend on norms that have only the authority of *custom*. How is it that we do not all descend to violent, unlicensed, unbounded sport? Locke pointed out that most individuals are content with what he calls the "second-hand"<sup>20</sup> rules of conduct and then build up their morals after the manner and belief of those among whom they are born and educated; they have no other rule for what is right or good than the customs of their society and the common opinion of the people with whom they live.

A law of nature must, however, be placed beyond mere tradition and customs, for that would deprive it of absolute authority and render it open to contradictions that could be readily discerned from a comparative point of view. To ground legal theory in everyday practice was a dangerous move:

in the presence of so much variety among conflicting traditions it would be impossible to determine what the law of nature is. [...] if the law of nature could be learnt from tradition, it would be a matter of trust rather than of knowledge, since it would depend more on the authority of the giver of information than on the evidence of things themselves.

The individual, accordingly, "will either have found the law of nature inscribed within his heart or come to know it by reasoning from the facts perceived by the senses."<sup>21</sup> From a comparative perspective it can be seen that nations develop along different lines and that this is reflected in the sheer variety of evolving customs. Moreover, this situation betrays the need for an underlying rational principle that would rise above local historical and geographical factors. Locke points out that what signifies monstrous savagery to his own culture, is elsewhere merely the product of custom and he proceeds to list unnatural practices as part of a general discussion of the relativity of customs:

(a) It is familiar amongst the *Mengrelians*, a People professing Christianity, to bury their children alive without scruple. (b) There are places where they eat their own Children. (c) The

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<sup>20</sup> Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, ed. von Leyden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 135.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129-31.

*Caribes* were wont to geld their Children, on purpose to fat and eat them.<sup>22</sup>

The stress on the variety of practice together with greater cultural relativism had profound implications for the possibility of a coherent theory of natural law. With the expansion of trade, commerce, travel, and exploration, the relativity of practice was increasingly evident. John Donne, for instance, had argued that if human laws were necessary consequences from the law of nature, "they could not be contrary in divers places and times, as we see lawes to be."<sup>23</sup> Radically, Donne observes the manner in which law has constructed itself by a species of duplicity; its essentialist claims are merely an effect of surface. Following Bracton, he points out that English law "hath not bene long in practise ... but having by Custome onely put on the nature of a Law, as most of our Law hath."<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, individual freedom must be asserted against the uniform and systematic outlook that natural law appears to propose:

*Some things are Naturall to the Species, and other things to the perticular person, and ... the latter may correct the first.*<sup>25</sup>

Repeatedly, and with some radical potential Donne draws crucial distinctions between the totality of theory and the fractured individual outcomes that are constitutive of everyday practice. Faced with the perplexing variety of contesting opinions, Donne returns to a basic moral axiom that we must avoid evil and seek goodness. Clearly, this was a broad moral imperative, rather than a product of - or a framework for - practical law-making. Given the variety of available theories of natural law, both Locke and Donne had to face up to the existing genealogy of natural law - its grounding in theological absolutes - and

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<sup>22</sup> Locke *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975), I.iii.9, p. 71. John Dunn comments that Locke's use of history is "expository and polemical, rather than logically essential. The history of society is material for expounding a theological argument. It can never be a substitute for the argument itself." See *The Political Thought of John Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 106.

<sup>23</sup> *Biathanatos*, ed. J. William Hebel (New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930), p. 77.

<sup>24</sup> Part 2. Dist: 3. Sect: 1., pp. 72-73.

<sup>25</sup> John Donne, *Biathanatos*, p. 45.

play this off against the (in)capacity of reason to uncover what was natural, despite the corruption into which practice or custom might have shifted it. As Locke admits, men

follow the herd in the manner of brute beasts, since they do not allow themselves the use of their reason, but give way to appetite.<sup>26</sup>

This was a common moral observation, but it was also typical of a slippage down the scale of being that satirical texts exploited, and which was the first stage of grotesque representation. Yet the rational distinction between the categories of human and beast was also the foundation for natural law, and it is precisely this underlying legality that must be uncovered in eighteenth century texts. Subsequent analysis will therefore attempt to demonstrate how Swift explores moral and aesthetic legalities in *Gulliver's Travels*. Reason was not a safe means of achieving a proper judgment on a matter, for as Swift noted, "Men can argue with plausibility on both sides of a question."<sup>27</sup> Before proceeding to Swift, and in order to contextualise the issue of legality, it will be necessary to show that the monstrosity of the body also served as a grotesque disruption of systematic ordering, and that the realities of common law also blocked the notion of a uniform and stable legality.

### 3. Systems and Bodies

By grounding the civil law in the *lex naturalis*, setting a minimum and standard series of requirements, it is not difficult to consider a rational and *systematic* solution to the inadequacies which are in large part the product of custom and therefore "blind" in their evolution; traditionally, however, such a task is insurmountable. Thus Thomas Starkey had pointed out in his *Dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Thomas Lupset* (1535) that

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<sup>26</sup> *Essays on the Laws of Nature*, p. 203.

<sup>27</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, IV.viii., p. 315.

our law and order thereof is over-confuse. Hyt is infynyte and wythout ordur or end. There ys no stabyl grounde therin, no sure stay.<sup>28</sup>

The most common solution before Locke's time was the Roman Law, promoted for its apparent provision of "rulys more convenyent to the order of nature"; the remedy advanced by a variety of renaissance commentators was therefore "to have the cyvyle law of the Romanys to be the commyn law here of England."<sup>29</sup> If it is based upon practice, legality is shifting and protean, lacking any fundamental anchorage. Many reformers therefore called for the eradication of haphazard laws and their replacement by systematic roman law. This would clean up a culture which, it was claimed, had been mongrelised and mixed up beyond any hope of rational organization. The inter-cultural disruption of the possibility of a stable natural law was signalled from the renaissance:

Trafficke and trauell hath wouen the nature of all Nations into ours, and made this land like Arras, full of deuse ... If wee present a mingle-mangle, our fault is to be excused, because the whole worlde is become an Hodge-Podge.<sup>30</sup>

Hobbes cited the rational conformity of Roman Law with natural law as a means of imposing order, yet his own language in discussing systems was significantly corporeal. In this context he distinguished between the natural and the unnatural. Those features that are harmful to the system are presented as grotesque excrescences, and are compared to

Wens, Biles, and Apostemes, engendered by the unnatural conflux of evill humours.<sup>31</sup>

When the Treasure of the Common-wealth is "gathered together in too much abundance" it is like a "pleurisie [which] getting into the membrane of the breast, breedeth there an Inflammation, accompanied with a Fever, and

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Thomas Lupset*, ed. J . M. Cowper (Early English Texts Society, 1878), p. 192.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>30</sup> John Lyly, Prologue to *Mydas*. See *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, 3 vols., ed. R. Warwick Bond (1902; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), vol. iii, p. 115.

<sup>31</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 288.

painfull stitches"<sup>32</sup> Those who meddle with the fundamental laws cause a "molestation ... like the little Wormes, which the Physicians call *Ascarides*":

We may further adde, the insatiable appetite, or *Bulimia*, of enlarging Dominion; with the incurable *Wounds* thereby many times received from the enemy; And the *Wens*, of ununited conquests, which are many times a burthen, and with lesse danger lost, than kept; As also the *Lethargy* of Ease, and *Consumption* of Riot and Vain Expencc.<sup>33</sup>

Such examples show how the body must be cleaned up and sanitized to serve as a proper example of the natural upon which the model state can be founded. The grotesque body traditionally served to specify a civil society whose operation was subject to disruption. Anything that might harm the commonwealth therefore provokes anatomical analysis, finding corporeal metaphors to match each variety of civil disorder. Swift had parodied such a practice in *Gulliver's Travels*:

It is allowed, that senates and great councils are often troubled with redundant, ebullient, and other peccant humours; with many diseases of the head, and more of the heart; with strong convulsions, with grievous contractions of the nerves and sinews in both hands, but especially the right: with spleen, flatus, vertigos and deliriums; with scrofulous tumours full of fetid purulent matter; with sour frothy ructations, with canine appetites and crudeness of digestions, besides many others needless to mention.<sup>34</sup>

Such analogies spring from notions of the customary, of convenient associations. Moreover, the dexterity with which Swift deployed them nonetheless discloses an allegorical paradigm of the system under disintegration, subject to grotesque change. Such analogies are little more than cases of arbitrary convenience, by which the diseased, grotesque body figures civil disorders.

Hobbes concluded his representation of "Mixt" Government, for instance, with an anecdote drawn from the kind of monstrous birth that was often illustrated in pamphlets:

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 374.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 375.

I have seen a man, that had another man growing out of his side, with an head, armes, breast, and stomach, of his own: If he had another man growing out of his other side, the comparison would have been exact.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover the whole enterprise that likened the system of state with that of the body was complicated by the fact that Hobbes introduced a further category, the "irregular," in Chapter XXIII of *Leviathan*, entitled "Of SYSTEMES Subject, Politicall, and Private". It is worth looking at this in more detail:

*Lawfull*, are those which are allowed by the Common-wealth: all other are *Unlawfull*. *Irregular Systemes*, are those which having no Representative, consist only in concourse of People; which if not forbidden by the Common-wealth, nor made on evill designe, (such as are conflux of People to markets, or shews, or any other harmlesse end,) are Lawfull.<sup>36</sup>

The "conflux" becomes unnatural if the numbers are extraordinarily great and the occasion not evident:

and consequently he that cannot render a particular and good account of his being amongst them, is to be judged conscious of an unlawfull, and tumultuous designe.<sup>37</sup>

Fairs, shews and the like were of course "customary" and therefore irregular. There was a widespread fear of any gathering where large and mixed company came together. In 1697 the Lord Mayor called for "the suppression of vicious practices in Bartholomew Fair, as obscene, lascivious, and scandalous plays, comedies and farces, unlawful games and interludes, drunkenness etc., strictly charging all constables and other officers to use their utmost diligence in prosecuting the same."<sup>38</sup> A petition by London citizens claimed in 1711 that at Bartholomew Fair a "lewd and ravenous Crew ... become an open and daring Enemy to good Government, are able to make a stand against Authority, and are evidently an Overmatch to inferior

<sup>34</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, III.vi., p. 233.

<sup>35</sup> *Leviathan*, p. 373.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

Officers."<sup>39</sup> The only irregularity Hobbes tolerated was that of fairs, shows and the like which were of course "customary". Moreover, as I indicated at the outset, there was a widespread anxiety about any gathering where large and mixed company came together. The association of the grotesque with certain natural phenomena as privileged manifestations of excess, and as a special case, was reflected in the civil sphere in relation to the legal definition of the fair. In Giles Jacob's *New Law Dictionary* (1739), for instance, the role of privilege and excess are central; thus a fair is defined as:

A Solemn or greater Sort of Market, granted to any Town by Privilege ... both our English and the French Word seems to come from *Feriae*, because it is incident to a Fair that Persons shall be privileged from being molested or arrested in it.

In his *Leviathan* Hobbes compiles a list dividing the law into seven categories, the final one of which is termed "Unwritten Customes". He assimilates these on three conditions: that they are imitations of written laws, that they have been granted by higher authority, and by the underlying Law of Nature. Yet they are still irregular and fundamentally products of privilege within the total system. Customary law was particularly problematic insofar as it represented both a settled state of local affairs (at odds with national traditions) or alternatively had evolved in its own ways, dealing with a variety of changing circumstances to which the inert state had failed to adapt.

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<sup>38</sup> Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* (1859), p. 380.

#### 4. Custom

In his book, *Convention 1500-1750*, Lawrence Manley provides an interesting historical context for the study of custom, by examining its role in relation to the upholding of ecclesiastical ceremony, regulation, and polity. He argues that these "sought to reconcile the two dimensions of human experience - stasis and flux, continuity and change - in the single normative principle of customary practice."<sup>40</sup> Laws are not fixed immutably, because they must adapt to time and circumstance and according to the people within a society as a living group. In his *De Republica Anglorum*, for example, Sir Thomas Smith therefore argued for the ultimate sovereignty of the commonwealth. Such a view corresponded to the humane mutability increasingly assimilated in renaissance thinking, creating conceptually (at least) a space for diversity upon which change may operate:

for all chaungeth to more or less, and still to diverse and diverse orders, as the diversity of times do present occasion, and the mutability of mens wittes doth invent and assay new wayes, to reforme and amende that wherein they do finde fault.<sup>41</sup>

This kind of collective and humanely teleological model clearly demonstrates the importance of introducing notions both of time and mental process to create a fluid and protean space for the grotesque category. These characteristics were discussed in detail in terms of the emphasis which the grotesque category placed on metamorphosis, and how it served to liberate the mind. Manley concludes that the Anglican view emphasized "accommodation and adjustment to the detriment of continuity."<sup>42</sup> Even texts which appeared

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 336.

<sup>40</sup> Manley, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>41</sup> Ed. L. Alston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), p. 33.

on the surface to manifest the rebellious energy of the carnivalesque could be subjected to authoritarian appropriation. It was not merely a case of uncovering "legalisms"; rather, there was a need to analyse legality from the competing points of view that were available or emerging in the historical context. The disruptive force of competing legalities could be analysed in the light of Hooker's *Laws*, looking forward to the fractured, multi-vocal practice that was to be increasingly evident in later periods. Hooker pointed out, for instance, that once we descend to convenience, judgments tend to be arbitrary; in the light of the evolution of law it could be seen that laws arose as adjustments to contingent matters, and that their rationale may therefore lie buried in time or circumstance. Yet this opened up the question about whether custom is open and progressive, let alone a repository of the radical; its credentials had to be in doubt if it enshrined the unthinking and unenlightened past. There was clearly a danger that the naturalisation of custom and the attribution of a special authority might go too far. Lodowick Bryskett, for instance, stated in his *A Discourse of Civill Life*:

if it happen that any abuse do grow and shrowd it selfe under the name of custome, the same ought to be taken away and abolished ... For good customes are agreeable to Nature, in which respect it is said, that custome is another nature. But that which is contrary to nature ... ought not to be named a custome, but a vile abuse, be it never so much cloked with the name of custome.<sup>43</sup>

Bryskett's imagery suggests that custom, in common with other conventional practices, such as the wearing of clothes, may conceal a rotten core. Moreover, custom as convention can in itself become an oppressive force and is prone in turn to a variety of disruptive actions. In this context, Terry Castle has noted that sartorial language "can be manipulated by its speakers, and made to serve other than referential functions. Because the meanings we read into clothing are always conventional - cultural rather than natural inscriptions - the system

<sup>42</sup> Manley, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>43</sup> Lodowick Bryskett, *A Discourse of Civill Life*, ed. Thomas E. Wright (Northridge, California: San Fernando State College, 1970), p. 64. Quoted in Manley, op. cit., p. 111.

itself can be exploited."<sup>44</sup> Although Castle does not explore legality in its own right, she notes that masquerade was a "poetic, revelatory scrambling of the sartorial vocabulary."<sup>45</sup> Castle also sensibly defines this disruption as a "pseudo-taxonomy"<sup>46</sup> Such a conclusion works well in the light of my own detailed exploration of the relation between systematic classification and legality. While Castle argues that such an unscrambling of conventions liberated the mind, permitting the masquerader to experience "scenes of vertiginous existential recombination."<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, I have argued that this process has less to do with subjectivity, than with a series of ongoing epistemic disruptions, initiated by the undermining of logical and essential taxonomy.

A recurring issue in cases of the "customary" was the grotesque dialectic between notions of change and the desire for a universal, constant category of legality. Robert Brady, in his *A Compleat History of England* (1685), for example, observed the implications for the law of a discontinuous perception of time and history, arguing that "It hath been and ever was an Act of some Men, to interpret and confound New Laws by old Practice, and Usage; and Old Laws by late Usage, and Modern Practice. When perhaps if they would endeavour to find out the History of those Laws ... there would be found no congruity between them."<sup>48</sup> Such issues surfaced in eighteenth-century debates between the Ancient and Modern views of culture. It was argued that the past had a different voice, and different traditions, from those that obtained in the modern period. Although much of the battle was fought over the classics and the sciences as espoused by the Royal Society, some aspects of the dispute had already emerged in legal thinking. Such relativism increasingly forged a boundary between the polished behaviour of the present, and the occasional

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<sup>44</sup> Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 56.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

"savagery" of the past. The critic, John Dennis, for instance, was sensitive to the implications of such relativism on manners:

By reason of the vastly different Circumstances of Times, Places, Persons, Customs, and common received Opinions ... several things which were graceful and decent, must seem ridiculous and absurd to us, as several things which wou'd have appear'd highly extravagant to them, must look proper and becoming to us.<sup>49</sup>

Dennis emphasized accommodation, explaining away different perspectives in the light of context; at its worst the problem was one of erudition rather than cultural rupture. Yet other commentators were less inclined to maintain a faith in such continuities. Rigid categories of the local and momentary grotesquely militated against equal cultural exchange.

Moreover, the naturalisation of custom was exemplified in the tradition summed up by Erasmus in his *Adagia*: "Use is another Nature." In this sense custom was based upon nature, but was not reliant on, and did not find its source in, independent moral absolutes. A different starting point was therefore provided by "Usage" - practices which had become customary and therefore exhibited their own self-sufficient authority. This in turn created anxieties over the "unwritten" formation of usage, focussing on the extent to which usage was accommodating and compromising (did it evade principle?) and on disputes concerning temporal shifts of fashion. Customary law after all depended chiefly for its existence on living memory.

One of the explanations for the hostility to the customary, both from the perspective of classification and legality, was that it was unwritten. As I argued at the outset, a philosophical language aimed to stabilise language by attending to its logical and essential classification. Yet such stability was impossible in the merely conventional space of the "customary". The legal historian Bracton had observed at the outset of his influential legal

<sup>48</sup> See James Levine, *The Battle of the Books* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 324.

<sup>49</sup> *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939), vol. i, p. 11.

compendium, that England alone used unwritten law and custom, the law "derives from nothing written but from what usage has approved."<sup>50</sup> Another way in which Hobbes endeavoured to provide a degree of anchorage for the customary laws was to claim a written authority for them, which in turn was brought within the legitimating authority of sovereignty, leading to the claim that

they were antiently Lawes written, or otherwise made known, for the Constitutions, and Statutes of their Sovereigns; and are now Lawes, not by virtue of the Praescription of time, but by the Constitutions of their present Sovereigns.<sup>51</sup>

The time prescribed by legality was eternal, but that of Custom (as most legal guides and compendia of the period pointed out) tended to be within living memory and this in turn added to its arbitrary nature. Hobbes therefore granted authority to custom as derivative less from the authority of time than from a kind of disengaged licence:

When long Use obtaineth the authority of a Law, it is not Length of Time that maketh the Authority, but the Will of the Sovereign signified by his silence.

The discourse of legality, having established the conditions for its universal application, ends either by admitting or explaining away the existence of irregularities that are a feature of practical situations. Typically, such discourse comes round to the notion of *privilege* - not all items have the same status, or rights within a seemingly universal system. Individual construction of meaning was understood to be destructive of the collective rational unity supposed to be enshrined in law.

## 5. Gulliver's Travels

*Gulliver's Travels* exhibits many of the incidental aspects of legality that have been considered in connection with the grotesque category in the course

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<sup>50</sup> Henry de Bracton, *On the Laws and Customs of England*, trans. Samuel E. Thorne (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), II, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 315.

of this thesis. The legal profession, like the medical, was an obvious departure-point for an attack on corruption, yet the significance of legality is more deep-seated than the traditional "stock" of satirical targets might suggest. Moreover, Swift's satirical analysis presents some deeper misgivings about the general and underlying features of the legal system. Drawing on an important distinction between the need for incentives, rather than retribution, as a guiding principle of the practical operation of the law, the Lilliputians "thought it a prodigious defect of policy among us, when I told them that our laws were enforced only by penalties without any mention of reward."<sup>52</sup> More importantly for the underlying discourse, legality is also inserted as a means of exploring how civil order, and the order of perception are manipulated and distorted. The licence as a means of dispensation and control, for instance, was used as a device to limit the number of sightseers desiring to see Gulliver in Lilliput.<sup>53</sup> Such examples exert a cumulative effective on the reader, showing how much of life has been legislatively constructed along unquestioned lines. Accordingly, the following section proceeds beyond incidental details, to examine how the text exposes the divergence between natural law and laws of nature. I argue that Swift permitted these concepts to be disrupted through his double critique of the customary and the conventional on the one hand, and the prodigious and shocking on the other. The text, I argue, is constructed upon a discourse of grotesque legalities that served to scrutinize, even to undermine, civilization's ability to form "proportionate" judgments.

Because natural law was considered to transcend national boundaries, a crucial procedure for disputing its validity was to cite the authority of travellers' reports of other cultures.<sup>54</sup> Parasitic upon travel, the critique of

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<sup>52</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, I.vi., p. 95.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, I.ii., p. 67.

<sup>54</sup> A preference for the fictive and fraudulent merely exacerbated the disruptiveness of such narratives. See Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); Philip B. Gove, *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction: A History of its criticism and a guide for its study, with an annotated checklist of 215 imaginary voyages from 1700 to 1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941); Arthur Sherbo, "Swift and Travel Literature", *Modern Language Studies* 9, no. 3 (1979).

natural law insisted on the relativity of cultural practice rather than a uniformity of moral principle. A major component of each of the voyages is therefore concerned with outlining, "the Manners and Disposition of the People."<sup>55</sup> This procedure was in itself a convention of travel writing. At the outset, Gulliver explained how he was urged to publish his narrative, but he conceded, "my story could contain little besides common Events, without those ornamental Descriptions of strange Plants, Trees, Birds, and other Animals; or the barbarous Customs and Idolatry of savage People, with which most Writers abound."<sup>56</sup> Natural history is important here as a reminder of the "natural" classificatory project by which other cultures were to be assimilated. The passage operated partly as a satirical pointer, problematizing the reader's expectation of, and desire for, an exotic otherness and showing that these are not ends in themselves. Moreover, the strangeness of the "natural" categories reflected the impossibility of holding to natural law as a means of uniformly bonding systematic categories. Cultural otherness was, of course, constructed as the outside and beyond of native classification. Swift typically introduces civil categories exotically different from the reader's customary world, in order to demonstrate the ruptures and incoherencies of moral systems that evacuate reason from any encounter with everyday life.<sup>57</sup> As a satirical and rhetorical narrative, the text seeks not merely to duplicate a popular taste for the marvellous and exotic; rather, it functions as a grotesque mirror held up to its own local culture, recovering its dialectic of "otherness" and "the same". As Gulliver noted in the fourth voyage, "the reflection from a troubled Stream

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<sup>55</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, I.i., p. 54.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, II.viii., p. 189.

<sup>57</sup> Noting the "confident authorial presence" of Augustan satire, Claude Rawson (1970) has shown that "categorisations point to a kind of vicious closed system." Nonetheless, he concludes that such passages "create little 'anti-systems', absurdly self-consistent worlds of perverse motivation, whose complete disconnection from humane and rational purposes gives them an air of unreality, of disembodied vacancy." My notion of custom attends to the closure of system, within which power can be redistributed, rather than the notion of something anti- "or outside" system which Rawson finally favours. See "Order and Cruelty: A Reading of Swift", reprinted in *Swift, Gulliver's Travels: A Casebook*, ed. Richard Gravil (Macmillan, 1974), pp. 223-247, pp. 235, 236.

returns the Image of an ill-shapen Body, not only *larger*, but more *distorted*."<sup>58</sup> The narrative undermines the reader's ability to judge objects in their true proportions, for everything is diminished (Lilliput) or enlarged (Brobdingnag) in such a remorseless fashion that perception is playfully forced to acknowledge its custom-based foundations. A comparative calculation of size is merely the departure for the discovery of a range of ethical and moral disparities; competing customs serve to generate mutually exclusive legalities. The "common Events" of Gulliver's narrative are therefore constituted by the mind's grotesque inability to form judgments about the essential nature of the world; the mind's knowledge is at best nominal and provisional. In the third voyage, the loss of proportionate judgment is amplified and elaborated with the introduction of the fantastic schemes of the projectors who entirely abandon the practical assimilation of a real world. Gulliver classifies other cultures, but they also seek to categorize him. Yet the kind of human being represented by Gulliver cannot be judged properly as a fixed and stable classification. The most successful grotesque classification, emphasizing the essential sportiveness of humanity, is that proposed by the Brobdingnagians who name Gulliver a *lusus naturae*. Yet this is achieved by an abdication of coherence, for it is a category of the non-category. More seriously, in the fourth voyage Gulliver is expelled from Houyhnhnmland because he does not fit neatly into the classifications which his host culture has become accustomed. Yet on his own estimation, and resisting classificatory slippage, Gulliver is manifestly not a Yahoo. Reason is fundamentally unhelpful in its enforcement of dubious categories: in the fourth voyage, grotesque artificial categories are rhetorically enhanced, allowing them to masquerade viciously in both cases as natural ones, serving radically to undermine the authority of the narrator whose judgment seems to be irretrievably impaired.

Gulliver may appear to assimilate other cultures, but the reader is faced with the recognition either that "alien" customs satirically mimic the narrator's own, or, at the most extreme, that they are cast as entirely "other". The closest

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<sup>58</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, IV.v., p. 295.

*Gulliver's Travels* comes to a shared principle of natural law is in the laws of hospitality that Gulliver mentioned in the first chapter of "A Voyage to Lilliput." Yet Gulliver was, somewhat ridiculously, also a prisoner at the mercy of his intrepid but diminutive captors. The *first words* Gulliver learnt in Lilliput "were to express my Desire, that he would please to give me my Liberty; which I every day repeated on my Knees."<sup>59</sup> Legality is, in an important sense, always already built into the conventional closure of language. From the point of view of the subject, Gulliver was, of course, an object whose legal status was uncertain and he therefore has to be publicly located within the legal discourse of the host culture. Legal rituals, such as Gulliver's swearing a Peace are therefore not uncommon. Nonetheless, the uncertain effect of different cultural practices and linguistic interference is exhibited in the fact that Gulliver has to swear "first in the Manner of my own Country, and afterwards in the Method prescribed by their Laws."<sup>60</sup> His conduct is also regulated by articles which are as much concerned with Gulliver as a nuisance and danger (he is not to enter the metropolis without permission; he is to take the utmost care not to trample on inhabitants) as on his exploitation for practical purposes (he is to serve as an ally against enemies, to engage in public works and "deliver an exact survey of the Circumference of our Dominions"). The ironic repetition of words such as "exact" merely serves to reinforce the impossibility of objective and stable measurement.

Despite the text's insistence on rules, norms, and conventions, most of which Gulliver adopts without question, the legal narrative that served to ground Gulliver's presence in Lilliput is undermined and finally reversed. The grotesque comedy consists in the construction of rules that could never properly be enforced given Gulliver's enormous bulk. There is therefore no more than a grotesque convention of legality, a pretence of rule and order. Thus Gulliver is searched "By the laws of the kingdom", yet this cannot be

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., I.ii., p. 68.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., I.iii., p. 78.

done "without my consent and assistance."<sup>61</sup> The discourse of legality is ironic for what matters finally is arbitrary, even if this amounts to a grotesque aberration from customary practice. The law has its own kind of ductility; its extreme rigour bends according to special needs, as when the Lilliputian ministers, "in their own Consciences," decided Gulliver's guilt, "which was a sufficient Argument to condemn you to death, without the *formal Proofs required by the strict letter of the law*."<sup>62</sup> The judgment reminds us of the *sportive* exercise of power as well as the specification of the customary as typically "unwritten". But it has to be admitted that even a written law was not capable of providing a systematic and univocal basis for use. There is still a problem with the written, for as Hobbes admitted, it is subject to a variety of interpretations which therefore entails that these must be the product of an appointed authority; a multiplicity of interpreters is like a multiplicity of legislators, a grotesque excess that would disrupt the ordered body of the state symbolised by the sovereign authority:

For else, by the craft of an Interpreter, the Law may be made to beare a sense, contrary to that of the Sovereign; by which means the Interpreter becomes the Legislator.<sup>63</sup>

The ability of the law to deviate from its proper operation is therefore a chief target of satire in the Brobdingnag voyage. In challenging Gulliver's defensive claims for his native system, the Brobdingnagian King's uncomfortable lines of enquiry lead him to question, "whether those pleading Orators were Persons educated in the general knowledge of Equity; or only in provincial, national, and other local Customs ... Whether they had ever at different Times pleaded for and against the same Cause, and cited Precedents to prove contrary Opinions."<sup>64</sup> In the fourth voyage, Gulliver's account of the English legal system shows that precedents serve, not to refine and improve over time, but to corrupt, in a progressive abandonment of the role of reason:

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., I.ii., p. 68.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., I.vii., p. 108.

<sup>63</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 322.

It is a maxim among these lawyers, that whatever hath been done before, may legally be done again: And therefore they take special Care to record all the decisions formerly made against common Justice and the general reason of mankind. These, under the name of *precedents*, they produce as authorities to justify the most iniquitous opinions; and the judges never fail of directing accordingly.<sup>65</sup>

For the King, such spatial discontinuities between what is customary, and therefore local, and the general principles of equity are linked to the capacity of rhetoric to undermine the proper direction of the law. Yet the text importantly sets out to test the notion of natural law's claim to build on a universal principle, questioning whether it is possible to learn from other cultures. In one example, Gulliver relates to the Brobdingnagian King the splendid inventiveness of his own race in their discovery of the efficacy of gunpowder. Among the text's own strategies of semantic control, such as the reduction of word and thing, is the simplification of the legal system:

No law of that country must exceed in words the number of letters in their alphabet; which consists only of two and twenty. But indeed, few of them extend even to that length. They are expressed in the most plain and simple terms, wherein those people are not mercurial enough to discover above one interpretation. And, to write a comment upon any law, is a capital crime.<sup>66</sup>

The plain and simple reductiveness is undoubtedly attractive at first sight, but it is not clear that such logical restriction is practicable in terms of its displacement to other cultures.<sup>67</sup> The crucial word is, of course, "mercurial" - that sense of shifting allegiances, prejudices and points of view that characterises humanity. It is this quality precisely that has been forced out. At

<sup>64</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, II.vi., p. 170.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.v., p. 296.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, II.vii., p. 176.

<sup>67</sup> Michael McKeon has stated that, "Ironically it is Houyhnhnm speech that approximates most closely, in *Gulliver's Travels*, a universal language." In the fourth voyage, contractions such as "the Thing which was not" (IV.iv) serve to parody the claims of universal language. Nonetheless I concur with his judgment that "what they lack is ... the superfluity of vicious desires that make language obscure and complicated and

another level, the mercurial embodies the unstable ground of Swift's own rhetorical strategies; uninformed by ethical and rational notions, rhetoric has a capacity to corrupt. The text frequently returns to the notion of reduction. Gulliver's own paucity of judgment is reflected in the irony of his general statements about the nature of a "confined Education":

great allowances should be given to a King who lives wholly secluded from the rest of the world, and must therefore be altogether unacquainted with the manners and customs that most prevail in other nations: the want of which knowledge will ever produce many *prejudices*, and a certain *narrowness of thinking*, from which we in the politer countries of Europe are wholly exempted.<sup>68</sup>

Elsewhere, such relativity serves not to enhance the moral scheme, but cynically to show how it excuses any species of deviation from one's own customary practice, as Gulliver remarks: "I had little to say in Return, farther than the common Answer, that different Nations had different Customs."<sup>69</sup> In the third voyage, Gulliver censures Balnibarbi, but is told "that I had not been long enough among them to form a Judgment; and that the different Nations of the World had different Customs."<sup>70</sup> Following the account of his native country to the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver asks, "who is there alive that will not be swayed by his bias and partiality to the place of his birth?"<sup>71</sup> Yet, as the fourth voyage most clearly shows, it is the process of becoming *accustomed* to one world that governs the mind. The reader can recognize the way in which Gulliver is distorted and grotesquely reconstructed by cultural immersion. At the same time, deprived of such a floating capacity to rethink oneself, it is

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that are symbolized in the confusion of the Tower of Babel." See *The Origins of the English Novel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 350.

<sup>68</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, II.vii., p. 174.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, I.vi., p. 95.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, III.iv., p. 220.

worth noting that the Houyhnhnms are "naturally disposed to every virtue, wholly governed by reason, and cut off from all commerce with other nations."<sup>72</sup> Appropriately, the mercurial subjectivity, figured in desire for travel and the prospect of advantage, is linked with the rise of commerce.<sup>73</sup> The text interposes incidental aspects of legality such as the breach of trust, and commercial laws against fraud,<sup>74</sup> but more generally there is a pressing sense that "it is necessary that there should be a perpetual Intercourse of buying and selling, and dealing upon Credit."<sup>75</sup> Commerce should be understood in the sense listed by the *O.E.D* as "Intercourse in the affairs of life; dealings" (1537) as well as, "Intercourse of the sexes; *esp.* in a bad sense" (1624). Such definitions serve to reinforce the grotesque parallels between commerce and the body, placing them in an influential position with regard to the study of other cultures, and to the possibility of deriving the common norms and practices (rather than universal absolutes) around which natural law must be organized.

Categorisation is further problematized by conventional practices such as the wearing of clothes. These conceal the grotesqueness of the body as well as pointing to the necessity of conventional structures and devices for assimilation in opposition to the naked otherness of savagery. Accordingly, clothes are specially made for Gulliver, both in Lilliput and Laputa, with

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.vii., p. 306.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.ix., p. 321.

<sup>73</sup> Pat Rogers has argued convincingly that *Gulliver's Travels* "was written at a time of exuberant commercial expansion and fertile practical invention. Its cultural matrix can be defined as the Age of Projectors - a bustling, uncerebral world of entrepreneurs and inventors." He concludes with the statement that Swift "meant to site Lagado nearer Exchange Alley than Gresham College." See *Eighteenth-Century Encounters: Studies in Literature and Society in the Age of Walpole* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1985), p. 12.

<sup>74</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*, I.vi., p. 94.

contrasting degrees of success. In the fourth voyage, the abolition of clothes as a convention is characteristic of Houyhnhnm society's non-recognition of legality, even at the level of the customary, as a concept. Symptomatically, at the outset, Gulliver's Houyhnhnm master "could not understand why Nature should teach us to conceal what Nature had given." Gulliver is at pains to conceal his physical nature (and his essential Categorisation), begging his master that "my having a false Covering to my Body might be known to none but himself." Yet he finds himself subject to a female *Yahoo* who is "inflamed by Desire" at seeing him naked. His mortification, in this context, results from the fact that he could "no longer deny, that I was a real *Yahoo*, in every limb and Feature."

Gulliver's grotesqueness, moreover, arises from customary or habitual expectations. These are provisionally reconstructed, yet they nonetheless finally serve to introduce a renewal of the grotesque which is inextricably linked to the notion of habitual associations. Leaving Brobdingnag, Gulliver is symptomatically "confounded at the Sight of so many Pigmies; for such I took them to be, after having so long accustomed my Eyes to the monstrous Objects I had left."<sup>76</sup> A major burden of the text is to show that familiarity serves to disrupt the ability to form proper judgments at an ordinary, everyday level. Everyone appears minute on Gulliver's return, and it is this recognition of difference that enables Swift to explain the role of such intrinsic perceptual legality in modern life: "This I mention as an instance of the great power of habit and prejudice."<sup>77</sup> Gulliver is himself the object of these perceptual shifts as well as their observer. The violence of these shifts does not go unnoticed. For instance, Gulliver is picked up as though he is a small and dangerous animal, like a weasel; again, he fears in Brobdingnag that the reaper "would dash me against the ground, as we usually do any little hateful animal which

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, I.vi., p. 94.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, II.viii., p. 185.

we have a mind to destroy."<sup>78</sup> Conventional expectations are continually undermined or challenged; Gulliver's pretensions to nobility and dignity are shown in the light of the normative reaction of the farmer's wife: "she screamed and ran back as Women in *England* do at the Sight of a Toad or a Spider."<sup>79</sup> The conclusion does not so much place Gulliver beyond the laws of nature, as make him an aberration within it: "They all agreed that I could not be produced according to the regular Laws of Nature."<sup>80</sup> The most serious case of customary distortion occurs, not surprisingly, at the end of the text, where the perceptual violence finally turn to grotesque mimicry:

By conversing with the Houyhnhnms, and looking upon them with delight, I fell to imitate their gait and gesture, which is now grown into a habit; and my friends often tell me in a blunt way, that *I trot like a Horse*.<sup>81</sup>

The grotesqueness that emerges from different perspectives serves as one line of attack on the stability of taxonomies. But merely habitual continuities are also explored along temporal lines, pointing to disintegration and deviation, the impossibility of universal totalities. From the point of view of legality, the account of the Struldbruggs is a multiple grotesque that operates on several levels. The senile amnesia of these aged individuals is deployed to debunk the notion that customary law can survive simply in terms of recollection. As Gulliver noted, "for the truth or particulars of any fact, it is safer to depend on common traditions than upon their best recollections."<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the Struldbruggs are essentially outside law because they do not fit many of its common areas of operation such as the legal transfer of property after death. But the law has its own artifice for coping with this, noting that

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., II.viii., p. 191.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., II.i., p. 126.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., II.i., p. 127.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., II.iii., p. 142.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., IV.x., p. 327.

"As soon as they have completed the term of eighty years, they are looked on as dead in law."<sup>83</sup> The episode itself is a grotesque addition to the main narrative, it is an act of *lusus*, a playful deviation from Swift's main purpose; Swift admits that it is designed as an entertainment to the reader "because it seems to be a little out of the common way."<sup>84</sup>

The grotesque serves to exacerbate such degenerative pressures, creating a space for mercurial and metamorphic processes. We are reminded for instance, that "systems of nature were but new fashions, which would vary in every age."<sup>85</sup> Such observations, as I have argued throughout this thesis, operate as a framework within which the attack on essential classification could be fought. Moreover, the modern period is to be understood in terms of decline. Thus, Gulliver learns in Brobdingnag that "the very Laws of Nature absolutely required we should have been made, in the beginning, of a size more large and robust."<sup>86</sup> Recalling the notion that laws are not fixed immutably, but evolve in time, Gulliver grounds his narrative outside current practice, advising the reader that in relating the scheme of Lilliputian law, "I would only be understood to mean the original institutions, and not the most scandalous corruptions into which these people are fallen by the degenerate nature of man."<sup>87</sup> There is also a note informing us that the Prince's customs were "very different, as I have been assured, from the practices of former times."<sup>88</sup> Civil life mirrors the natural in its ongoing grotesque slippage.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, III.ix., p. 257.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, III.ix., p. 258.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, III.xi., p. 260.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, III.viii., p. 243.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, II.vii., p. 178.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, I.vi., p. 96.

The importance of custom in relation to classification, and the ethical issues which attach to such a project, are centrally explored in *Gulliver's Travels* through the notion of unstable legalities and the narrator's inability to maintain essential judgments. Exploring the diversity of customary practices, Swift demonstrates that local, often blinkered rules, are founded on unquestioned norms and conventions whose motivation is often trivial. The comparative perspectives of *Gulliver's Travels* are constructed from a lively interest in the way classifications govern perceptions. The disruption of habitual classificatory properties reaches its extreme form in the fourth book. Gulliver's moral categorisation is disrupted in order to produce a naturalisation of the grotesque that is achieved by habituating the reader and accustoming the narrator to a new order of perception.

## 6. Custom and Representation

Notions of legality played a crucial role in constructing the grotesque category in relation to the aesthetic definition of general properties. Moreover, as the faculty of judgment shifted from a collective to an individual response to aesthetic objects, there was a parallel complication in the role of the customary. Horace's indictment of the grotesque in *Ars Poetica* was not a personal, individual response but the subjection of irregularity and a dismembering imagination to universal standards of form, structure and organization. Commenting on the critical deployment of Horace in the early eighteenth century, Howard Caygill has argued that the social control achieved by the familiar blend of instruction and delight, promoted by critics such as Dennis, was progressively superseded by the theory of taste. He proceeds to note that Dennis "identified natural law with providential design" and that this design "was mediated through the rules of art or the direct agency of the state."<sup>89</sup> Yet

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, I.vii., p. 109.

the transition from a universal and systematic legality to the concept of taste glosses over intervening legalities. Custom had a formative role in laying the foundations for taste, but it also created tensions in the distribution of power across legal, aesthetic and cultural fields. Because custom was a product of ordinary practice, rather than a series of rules created and enforced systematically and hierarchically, its status within polite society was problematic. Such a radical potential should not be exaggerated, for there was also a counter tendency to define proper notions of habitual practice, deploying the force of decorum and the reformation of manners. Custom, rather than taste, allowed a neat transition from universal laws to individual judgment by multiplying the range of available practices, pluralizing legality in order to strengthen it. While Caygill has defined taste as "an intangible medium of exchange between the rational will of providence and the irrational individual sentiment"<sup>90</sup> that function initially cohered around custom as a form of mediation, for it had the virtues of a powerful and practical efficacy. As *The Tatler* noted " ... Custom is the most powerful of all Laws."<sup>91</sup> Moreover, an essayist such as Addison approached custom with a measure of caution that was also typical of the polite censure of fairs and public festivities: maintaining such boundaries was part of a long tradition of withdrawal from the trivial transactions of the multitude.<sup>92</sup> Many customs, after all, could not be placed within any programme for a reformed polite society; to allow that customs might be declared natural granted them a validity that was not instantly

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<sup>89</sup> Caygill, *The Art of Judgement* (Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 42.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>91</sup> No. 56, 18 August 1709. Bond, vol. 1, p. 390.

<sup>92</sup> Guillaume du Vair, for example, writes in *The Morall Philosophie of the Stoicks*, that "Because a mans wordes and gestures are framed by long custome and imitation of others ... we should not sort ourselves too much with the common sort of people, or haunt the

justifiable. Moreover, in a *Spectator* paper on the subject of custom, Addison restored Erasmus' *Adagia* in reclaiming the notion of customary practice:

There is not a Common-Saying which has a better turn of Sense in it, than what we often hear in the Mouths of the Vulgar, that Custom is a second Nature. It is indeed able to form the Man anew, and to give him Inclinations and Capacities altogether different from those he was born with.<sup>93</sup>

Yet the doubleness of custom, its resistance to neat classification, can be shown in its contribution to the discussion of taste, where it served to accustom one to the unnatural. After all, many of our tastes emerge from being accustomed to things that once disgusted us. Accordingly, Addison understood that custom brings about additions to and transformations of our original sense of taste,

Not only such Actions as were at first Indifferent to us, but even such as were Painful, will by Custom and Practice become pleasant. Sir *Francis Bacon* observes in his *Natural Philosophy*, that our Taste is never pleased better than with those things which at first created a Disgust in it. He gives particular Instances of Claret, Coffee, and other Liquors, which the Palate seldom approves upon the first Taste; but when it has once got a Relish of them, generally retains it for Life. The Mind is constituted after the same manner, and after having habituated her self to any particular Exercise or Employment, not only loses her first Aversion towards it, but conceives a certain Fondness and Affection for it.<sup>94</sup>

Taste may be expanded, therefore, by accustoming oneself to those things that it would tend in the first instance to reject. According to Addison, Custom has a "Wonderful Efficacy in making every thing pleasant to us" which indicates that its effects were chiefly positive. But as my discussion of *Gulliver's Travels* has demonstrated, custom also served as a mechanical, unthinking means of control, a discipline of the mind far more insidious than the direct, unmediated intervention of the state apparatus. In this regard, Addison noted

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theatres and common places of assemblie." Trans. Thomas James, ed. Rudolf Kirk (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1962); quoted in Manley, *op.cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>93</sup> *Spectator* 447, 2 August 1712. Bond, vol. 4, p. 69.

it is very certain that Custom has a Mechanical Effect upon the Body, and at the same time that it has a very extraordinary Influence upon the Mind.<sup>95</sup>

Yet the transition from mind to morality was also efficiently achieved by means of custom, as Addison argues that as one becomes accustomed to virtue one is less likely to stray into vice, as the mind "grows fond of those actions she is accustomed to, and is drawn with Reluctancy from those Paths in which she had been used to walk." Yet the benefits of custom to moral discipline was not universally accepted; according to *The Tatler*, for instance, human nature "is distorted from its natural Make, by Affectation, Humour, Custom, Misfortune, or Vice."<sup>96</sup> Addison also admitted the dangers of becoming accustomed to vice.

From an aesthetic point of view, the disciplinary and mechanical operation of custom was understood to have some benefits, but these were also undermined by their habitual and passive components. In his *Enquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, for example, Francis Hutcheson recognized that custom "enables us to perform those actions which have been frequently repeated, but never leads us to apprehend them under any other view than what we are capable of apprehending them under at first, nor gives us any new power of perception about them." Custom did not amend or improve the material upon which the mind worked; it failed to provide any distinctly new perception about objects. While he admitted that custom was of assistance, insofar as it could "increase our power of receiving or comprehending complex ideas, yet it seems rather to weaken than strengthen

<sup>94</sup> *Spectator* 447, 2 August 1712. Bond, vol. 4, pp. 70-1.

<sup>95</sup> *Spectator* 447, 2 August 1712. Bond, vol. 4, p. 70. Addison noted the example of the "Ideot" affected by customarily hearing and mimicking a church clock, such that when it ceased to sound, he repeated its routine, becoming a kind of grotesque automaton. The anecdote was taken from Robert Plot, *Natural History of Stafford-shire* (Oxford, 1686), p. 303. The motto, taken from Evenus Parius (trans. Winterton) appropriately read, "For Custom of some date, my friend, foregoes / Its proper Shape, and second Nature grows."

<sup>96</sup> *The Tatler* 29, 16 June 1709. Bond, vol. 1, p. 216.

the ideas of beauty or the impressions of pleasure from regular objects."<sup>97</sup> The displacement of custom was finally achieved by its failure to provide an objective ground for the aesthetic response; as Hutcheson noted, "Custom makes us more capable of retaining and comparing complex ideas so as to discern more complicated uniformity, which escapes the observation of novices in any art, but all this presupposes a natural sense of beauty in uniformity."<sup>98</sup>

In the moral sphere, the value of custom consisted in keeping us in the right path. In the aesthetic, novelty and strangeness had an important impact, operating in dynamic and parasitic relation to the deadening habituation of custom. While art is parasitic upon a variety of conventions, it must also disrupt them, finding new complexities and modes of organization. Within a wider discourse of legality, Thomas Blackwell remarks in his *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer*, that the civil virtues of "Peace, Harmony, and good Order" are socially desirable because they "make the happiness of a People," but they are at the same time "the Bane of a Poem that subsists by Wonder and Surprise"<sup>99</sup> We are drawn away from the customary to a new order that is always both within and against the totalising enterprise of legality. Clearly these oppositions spark off one another, just as Bacon's preternatural monsters, deviating at the margins, served to illuminate the regularity of the centre. For Bacon, deviation was a means of better understanding and describing nature's regularities; he worked from the belief that laws could be recovered from an understanding of nature's instabilities. Nature's surprises, like those of art, could be assimilated to a rational model. Yet such a project was undermined,

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<sup>97</sup> Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725). See Scott Elledge, p. 373.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, Section VI: "Of the Power of Custom, Education, and Example, as to our internal Senses."

<sup>99</sup> Thomas Blackwell, *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735), p. 27.

from the perspective of the grotesque, by Locke's recognition of the mind's instabilities. This was not simply the chameleon mind of humanism, for in an important respect the space of the grotesque was assured by Locke's incorporation of customary legality into the very fabric of the mind. In Locke's philosophy of mind, some of our ideas "have a natural correspondence and connexion one with another." For Locke, the maintenance of this relation was intrinsic to the operation of reason:

it is the office and excellency of our reason to trace these, and hold them together in that union and correspondance which is founded in their peculiar beings.

However, according to Locke, there was also "another connexion of ideas owing wholly to *chance* or *custom*." The customary association of ideas dominated the "habits of thinking in the understanding," but they were also constitutive of a living sense of value:

to this, perhaps, might be justly attributed most of the sympathies and antipathies observable in men, which work as strongly, and produce as regular effects as if they were natural; and are therefore called so, though they at first had not other original but the accidental connexion of two ideas, which either the strength of the first impression, or future indulgence so united, that they always afterward keep company together in that man's mind.<sup>100</sup>

In the play of mind, freely uniting and metamorphosing images, custom was imaginatively renewing itself as an already assimilated version of the grotesque tradition. Such playful distortions did not lack a radical potential to naturalize themselves at a level beyond nature's mimetic bondage. As Sir Philip Sidney claimed, poetry can forge and re-order its own conventions:

Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted upon with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect, another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chymeras, Furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed

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<sup>100</sup> *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II.xxxiii.7.

within the narrow want of her gifts, but freely ranging only  
within the zodiac of his own wit.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> *A Defence of Poetry* (1595), ed J. van Dorsten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 23-4.

## Afterword

As this study has taken the early eighteenth century for its study of the grotesque, and has demonstrated the *period* differences between the approaches represented by the work of Wolfgang Kayser and Mikhail Bakhtin, it would be appropriate to consider what happened to the monstrous and the sportive grotesque. Did the category maintain its distinctive character or simply become the tributary of new cultural formations? In the course of these final remarks, I do not propose to map out the subsequent evolution of the grotesque. Such a progressive teleology is inappropriate: irrespective of time, the grotesque conditions the construction of systems, the discourse of legality and the possibility of transgression. Yet its later manifestations were not always those which seem most obvious. The grotesque did not, for instance, simply forge the Gothic, the genre had its own genealogy and different preoccupations. Yet many of the terms of reference explored in the course of this thesis were being deployed later in the century. Johnson, for instance, exploited grotesque discourse in his discussion of metaphysical wit:

But Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together...<sup>1</sup>

Johnson's selection of "violence" reminds us that the lack of natural cohesiveness was a social as well as stylistic matter. Moving from poetry to the novel, it could also be seen that Smollett exploited the grotesque in such a fashion, as a way of

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<sup>1</sup> *Prefaces to the Works of the English Poets* (1779-81), 10 vols., "Cowley", vol. i, pp. 42-3.

characterising the unstable assembly of urban people. In *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, for instance, he concluded: "the mob is a monster I never could abide, either in its head, tail, midriff, or members; I detest the whole of it."<sup>2</sup> Bath looked "as if some Gothic devil had stuffed them altogether in a bag, and left them to stand higgledy piggledy, just as chance directed. What sort of a monster Bath will become in a few years, with those growing excrescences may be easily conceived."<sup>3</sup>

Looking ahead to the Romantics, it may be observed that despite his indictment of the city, Wordsworth captured a number of the issues that have been the subject of this study. In the seventh book of *The Prelude*, describing his residence in London, he noted that the spectacle of the market was typified (like the imaginative world of Pope's *Dunciad*) by "the quick dance / Of colours, lights and forms" (154-5). Moreover, it served to collect the "birds and beasts / Of every nature, and strange plants convened / From every clime" together with "all specimens of man, / Through all the colours which the mind bestows (221-2). In line with my discussion of grotesque representation and the public space, Wordsworth also recorded "allegoric shapes, female or male, / Or physionomies of real men" and the "shifting pantomimic scenes" (163-4).

The containment of the (urban) masses was supported by a discourse of monstrosity that was developed by critics such as Edmund Burke. Such censure reached its climax in relation to the French Revolution, because radicals were considered to have constructed an entire system that was artificial and out of

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<sup>2</sup> *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, ed. with an introduction by Lewis M. Knapp; revised by Paul Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

nature. The construction of the new republic was in itself out of nature.<sup>4</sup> For conservative critics, the exotic otherness of the grotesque threatened to return home, to take revenge on the arbitrary imposition of order and authority. The imaginative culmination of these social and cultural revolutions was Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Yet the grotesque also had a decisive impact on the notion of sensibility. Laurence Sterne, for instance, in his praise of sensibility and the "great, great SENSORIUM of the world" concluded the passage with an the image of a cottage and its swain "with the lambs which sport about you." Sport increasingly became material for Romantic poetry, as an emblem of Nature's fragment margins. The notion of a border that could scarcely be maintained was therefore reclaimed by Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey" (15-16) where he noted

These hedgerows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild.

Nature's production of monsters was an excursion, a deviation from her normal course. This spatial preoccupation also had an appropriate impact on travel literature, especially when this was expressed in terms of the imagination's freedom of movement. In important respects set the tone for future thinking with his recognition that "Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discover, into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence ..."5 In his desire to explore the

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<sup>4</sup> See Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution 1789-1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) and Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity and Nineteenth Century writing* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1987).

"winding alley"<sup>6</sup> Sterne became an exponent of narrative sportiveness, relishing the "the sport of contingencies"<sup>7</sup>

Taking the grotesque category on its own terms, it would be indecorous to attempt to *conclude* a study of its manifestations, interventions and contestations across a range of cultural phenomena. As much as it was parasitic upon the desire for enclosure, so the grotesque also resisted it. At best, the study of the grotesque is a radical containment; either it precedes proliferation, metamorphosis, and instability, or it seeks to overcome them. Analytic containment in such a study is a mimicry of system and legality that symptomatically undermines totalities. Yet my thesis has established a double boundary, with system featuring at the beginning and legality at the end. Appropriately, Terminus was a monster of myth, the marking out of a margin.

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<sup>5</sup> *Prefaces to the Works of the English Poets* (1779-81), 10 vols., "Milton", vol. ii, p. 188.

<sup>6</sup> *A Sentimental Journey*, p. 71.

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