The Creative Role of Parody
in Eighteenth-Century English Literature
(Alexander Pope, John Gay, Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne)

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Doctoral dissertation
written under the supervision of
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at the Institute of English Studies,
University of Warsaw

Warszawa 2015
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present study has been prepared under the supervision and with an invaluable support and encouragement from Professor Grażyna Bystydzieńska from the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw. I would like to thank Professor Bystydzieńska in particular for her detailed comments and useful suggestions during the writing of the present study. I am also very grateful for being able to participate in numerous inspiring seminars and conferences organized by Professor Bystydzieńska.

I would also like to express my gratitude to different literary scholars and experts in the field of Eighteenth-Century Studies for their helpful comments, suggestions, encouragement and inspiration, in particular to Professor John Barrell from the Queen Mary University of London; Professor Stephen Tapscott from Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Dr. Agnieszka Pantuchowicz from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw; Professor David Malcolm form the University of Gdańsk; Dr. Maria Błaszkiewicz from the University of Warsaw, Professor Adam Potkay from the William and Mary College, Virginia. I wish to warmly thank Professor Emma Harris for encouragement and valuable advice throughout my M.A. and Ph.D. studies at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw. I also want to appreciate the friendly support and insightful remarks I received from all my colleagues at the Ph.D. seminar run by Professor Bystydzieńska at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw.
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Introduction

The thesis focuses on the role of parody in the literary works of four English writers of the eighteenth century: John Gay, Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne. These authors were not selected randomly, but rather on the basis of a conviction that parody played a crucial role in their literary output. The major aim of the present dissertation is to analyze how the technique of parody allowed these authors to critically expose and creatively transgress the boundaries of genres and stylistic modes that they appropriated. Their experimental and innovative approach to literary traditions and conventions finds its expression in their playful literary texts. Instead of politely complying with established poetic formulas and protocols, these authors tended to expose the provisional nature of all ready-made genres and stylistic patterns, to mockingly reshape them and infuse their structures with their own peculiar sense of wit and satire. As a result, they produced a number of tricky, duplicitous, internally hybrid, ambiguous and self-reflexive texts that may today seem surprisingly "(post)modernist" given their extended intertextual and metafictional playfulness.

The importance of parody in comic and satiric English literature of the eighteenth century has already been acknowledged, but the topic has generally received rather cursory treatment. Apart from an excellent study by Robert Phiddian (Swift’s Parody, 1995), the topic of parody has not been the central focus of any study on an eighteenth-century English literary author. Some parodic genres and forms popular in the period (burlesque comedy, mock-heroic poetry) have been studied and discussed extensively, but an emphasis has customarily been put on the history and development of these forms, which have been treated in isolation from other genres. The present study seeks to offer a more comprehensive depiction of the resonating presence of parody in the literature of the period. It discusses parody as a major technique of presentation and organization of artistic material, one that operates in
most diverse genres of poetry, drama and prose, thereby influencing almost the entirety of the literary landscape in the period under discussion.

The role of parody in the evolution of literary forms and styles was emphasized by scholars known collectively as the Russian "Formalists", and later also by Mikhail Bakhtin, who saw in parody one of the major modes of artistic expression and representation, a thoroughly "carnivalesque" mode informed by the general tendency to twist, invert and mockingly distort dominant and official languages and representations. Some literary scholars and historians (Margaret Anne Doody, for instance) have underscored the paramount role of parody in neoclassical literature in general, and in the English "Augustan" literature in particular. The present study takes their theoretical findings (together with more recent scholarly work on parody) as a point of departure. Furthermore, in order to discuss any parodic work in a specific historical context, it is necessary also to briefly outline two intertextual elements that provide sources for parodic activity: the earlier traditions of parody in literature (they furnish a parodist with different tools and methods of parody), and the parodied traditions, genres, styles, or discourses (they provide what may be called the "raw material" for a given parodic text). In short, parody cannot operate in an intertextual vacuum – it rather feeds on the saturation of the cultural sphere with contradictory meanings, texts and styles (both parodic and parodied).

The first section of Chapter I provides the theoretical rudiments for my discussion of literary parody: it starts with an overview of the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, but it also discusses the concept of parody in more recent theoretical and critical discourses. The second section briefly outlines the historical and cultural background of eighteenth-century parodic texts and practices, focusing on the diversity of parodic forms (burlesque, travesty, mock-heroic, mock-pastoral) in neoclassical literature. The last section of the first chapter introduces the authors whose literary works are discussed in the subsequent chapters. It also discusses the complex interrelation between parody and satire, and in this context it briefly analyzes the work written jointly by Jonathan Swift, John Gay, Alexander Pope and John Arbuthnot, Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus. In short, Chapter I provides the reader with the necessary theoretical scaffolding and historical background. It tries to rethink the category of parody and to point to the ways in which it may prove useful and illuminating for a close reading of eighteenth-century literary texts.
Building on the findings presented in the first chapter, Chapter II focuses on poems and plays by John Gay, a member of the Scriblerus Club and a close friend of Alexander Pope, a poet who has not, perhaps, received sufficient scholarly attention so far. The first section of Chapter II discusses Gay’s poem The Fan in the light of the tradition of mock epic and mock-heroic writing. Because of their hybrid, incongruous structure, parodic poems, plays and novels are often ambiguous – they do not altogether reject their parodied genres and discourses, but rather reproduce them in an ironic, conditional way. Neoclassical mock-heroic poems, such as The Fan, are often said to celebrate the style of epic poetry and to undermine it at the same time. A degree of ambivalence in The Fan is also discernible in its mock-heroic portrayal of femininity. The fact that parody tends to be more ambiguous and playful than a direct satire is also visible in The Shepherd’s Week, Gay’s mock-pastoral poem, which is discussed in the second section of Chapter II. The genealogy of this poem involves the quarrel between Alexander Pope and John Phillips and the more general tension between classical poetics and the new forms of modern sentimental and proto-romantic poetry. Gay toys with various stock devices of pastoral poetic tradition by juxtaposing them with elements of crude, comic realism. In effect, the elevated "classical" style becomes confronted with a more naturalistic depiction of rural life, foregrounding a series of ironic inversions that expose the shortcomings of the conventional patterns of pastoral representation. Finally, Chapter II discusses The Beggar’s Opera, Gay’s most influential work, in which parodic technique organizes a complex series of ironic substitutions: posing as a more sober and prosaic “English” version of the then fashionable "Italian" operas, Gay’s play sarcastically "degrades" almost all elements of the operatic convention – the scenery, the costumes, the typical characters, the plot, the singing style. Its heroes are mostly prostitutes and highwayman and its plot replaces romance and heroism with greed, lust and sexual exploitation. The effect is, again, that of a complex incongruous hybrid in which the "high" operatic style becomes inverted by the "low" comic elements. Such a burlesque strategy exposes the wide gap between the flamboyant representations offered by Italian opera and the more immediate reality of contemporary English society. Parodic technique fosters here a particular condensation of comic incongruity between the incorporated but mutually divergent (official and polite vs. satiric and grossly realistic) representations of social, economic and sexual relations.
Chapter III focuses on *The Dunciad* by Alexander Pope – an ultra-parodic literary project that features a grotesque epic poem on the progress of idiocy and ignorance, which is adorned with hundreds of pedantic footnotes and appendices that mock the academic and philological discourses of the period. The first section of the chapter discusses *Peri Bathous* – Pope’s earlier parodic treatise "in praise of" modern poetry that prefigures many of the satiric motifs and techniques employed later in *The Dunciad*. The sections that follow discuss in detail different aspects and dimension of parody in *The Dunciad*, including its use of parodied epic motifs, its playful imitation of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and its parody of academic devices and editing practices. All those dimensions of textual playfulness contribute to the confusing ambiguity of Pope’s satiric *opus magnum*, a work which offers a multi-faceted critique of contemporary culture and literature, but a critique that proves to be teasingly indirect, mischievous and carnivalesque enough to complicate all attempts at its translation into direct, serious academic discourse.

Chapter IV of the present study is perhaps the most “Bakhtinian” of all, for it concentrates on the paramount importance of parody in the eighteenth-century comic novel. In Bakhtin’s view, novelistic discourse is saturated with parodied languages and parodic undertones. Especially in the novels representing what Bakhtin terms "the Second Stylistic Line" of novel development a unified and hermetic "literary" style becomes partly replaced with a vividly accentuated sociolinguistic diversity of voices and discourses interacting with one another. The comic, satiric and picaresque novels of the Second Line thus come nearer to the actual speech diversity (heteroglossia) that characterizes a diversified and stratified society. It is this "linguistic realism", so to speak, that Section I of Chapter IV traces in Henry Fielding’s early novels, which are characterized by a highly parodic attitude towards various literary and non-literary discourses. Fielding parodied Richardson’s melodramatic novel *Pamela* in his short but nuanced polemical work, entitled *Shamela*. Its parodic techniques concentrate on the naiveté and/or hypocrisy detected in Richardson’s sentimental language, for Fielding "lays bare" the conventions of romance and the devices of the epistolary novel employed by Richardson to promote his puritanical views on morality (which are also parodied by Fielding). The second part of this section analyzes Fielding’s own novel, *Joseph Andrews*, which features a panorama of (slightly or grossly) parodied styles and discourses, including the clichés of classical and epic poetry and the language and plot devices typical of romances and
sentimental novels. Moreover, the language of the novel frequently becomes stylized to reproduce various learned, polite, socially typical or class-specific languages, often to satirically expose their tendencies, their hypocritical or narrow-minded character. Polyphony in the novel in general, and polyphony in the comic novel in particular, tends to be organized under the principle of contrast, as Bakhtin has noticed, so that different contradictory voices and accounts of reality mockingly undercut one another. This principle of comic incongruity between the voices in the novel is visible both in the style of narration and in the direct and indirect representation of the speech of characters in *Joseph Andrews*. Furthermore, the grotesque and naturalistic aesthetic of Fielding’s novel emerges clearly from its parody of elevated literary styles and representations.

The second section of Chapter IV examines one of the most intensely metafictional, all-parodying and self-ironic novels in literary history – Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*. The first part of this section discusses the general structure of the novel and points to the enormous diversity of styles, genres and literary conventions playfully distorted in Sterne’s highly eccentric prose. The second part of the analysis of *Tristram Shandy* focuses on the parody of the conventions of sentimentality. The rise in female and middle-class readership in the eighteenth century is often credited with the popularization of sentimental novels and comedies, which contrasted sharply with the more bawdy and indecorous humor of burlesque and satiric literary forms. This contrast is visible in Sterne’s writing, as he often utilizes the emotive and subjective language of sentimental literature only to make it clash with the mocking and playful tonalities of satire. The last part of the analysis of Sterne’s novel aims to show how the parodic treatment of language becomes not only the technique but also a major theme in the novel. It concentrates on the multiple parodies of learned and philosophical discourses and on Sterne’s critique of Locke’s separation of judgment from wit. Sterne’s playful (both affirmative and sceptical) attitude towards language seems to prefigure many later – chiefly deconstructive and psychoanalytical – ideas about meaning, language and ideology.

Parody in the present study is understood as a general mode of the overtly ironic and critical adaptation of literary genres and conventions, a mode that foregrounds incongruity and contrastive duplicity rather than unity and cohesion. In this sense, parody is an overarching artistic technique of playing incongruously with all other artistic modes, materials and techniques, a method of both innovation and critique.
Numerous literary forms and genres rely on parodic effects: the technique often organizes the more playful types of comedy and satire and it was used to orchestrate the neoclassical literary forms of burlesque, travesty and mock-heroic poetry. Parodic treatment of various literary styles, but especially a parodic attitude towards the socio-linguistic variety of the written and spoken language is also a key feature of novelistic polyphony – the novel as Bakhtin sees it is primarily that literary form which is able to satirically render how various people actually speak and think. Many different purposes of parody are noted in the present study, including its comic and critical functions, but emphasis is put on the creative role of parody, which by definition needs to transgress the ossified and conventionalized literary systems and structures. Parody makes it possible to expose the inadequacy and limitations of old-fashioned or fashionable representations, to reinvigorate literary language and intensify its perception by an inclusion of new and contrastive styles and registers.

Neoclassical writers tended to combine parody and satire in order to reshape and "modernize" the canonical and classical genres, to make them reflect the (social, political, ideological) contradictions and tensions of contemporary reality, but also to mock and expose the idealizing, polite forms of "romantic" and sentimental literature. As a critical and creative practice, parody has always challenged and ironically reflected the popular, the respectable and the canonical genres and conventions of representation, and it has sought to redefine the space and the aims of the aesthetic. Parodists play with available artistic techniques and modes to explore the unusual, unorthodox, comic, twisted and grotesque combinations of these modes. While neoclassical literature is often associated with order, unity, rationalism and harmony, the great wits and satirists of the period discussed in the present study (John Gay, Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne) often explored the limits of the ugly, the droll, the grotesque, the insane and the absurd by mocking, distorting, deconstructing and turning "topsy-turvy" multiple discourses, genres and modes of representation.
Chapter I

Parody: Theoretical Aspects and Neoclassical Practices

1.1. Theoretical Approaches to Parody. Bakhtin and Beyond

As a literary term surviving from antiquity, parody has been defined and discussed in various ways that have accentuated its different aspects and functions. In the following paragraphs I briefly present the developments in theoretical approaches to parody that inform my understanding of the term and my analysis of literary texts. In recent literary studies, parody has been linked, for instance, with such notions as intertextuality, metafiction and deconstruction, often to emphasize the complexity and diversity of its rhetorical strategies and effects, thus challenging some earlier, reductive and simplifying accounts of parody. Simon Dentith provides a concise and useful definition of the term: "Parody includes any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice" (9). Parody can be broadly defined as a paradoxical "polemical imitation" because its technique involves an allusive, partial reproduction of the parodied idea, image, motif or style, as well as its playful inversion or critical transformation. Moreover, parody seems to often question the very practice of imitation – the gesture of parody may be contrasted with the artistic practice of "naive" or "uncritical" imitation (Rose 1979: 50). Linda Hutcheon underlines this duplicity by defining parody as "ironic inversion" and "repetition with critical difference" (1985: 20). Still, however, these formal definitions underplay the humorous aspect of parody and its affinity with satire and comic ridicule. Margaret A. Rose defines parody as "the comic 'refunctioning' of preformed linguistic or artistic material" because parodic works usually give "new set of functions to the parodied material", often in a playful and incongruous manner (1995: 52). She also distinguishes between "specific parody" (parody of a specific text or material) and "general parody", which includes comic or metafictional playing with different styles or devices: "not just a specific technique but the 'general' mode of the work itself" (1995: 5).
Dentith supplements his broad definition of parody with the admission that the forms of parody have varied through history. He proposes to see parody as "a range of cultural practices which are all more or less parodic" and thus to employ a pluralist concept of parodic forms instead of "parody" in the singular: "The range of available parodic forms (and the names that they go under) varies drastically from period to period, in a way that challenges any schemata of definitions" (2000: 19). Consequently, parody cannot be confined to one genre or style. It is rather a general technique that allows for a distancing and ironic playing with various stylistic or generic conventions. According to Robert Chambers, parody is a trans-generic meta-technique that allows for playing with all other artistic techniques and semiotic conventions: it marks the general ability of art and discourse to mirror and distort its own structures and practices (227).

Consequently, discussions of parody need to take into account both the historical and formal specificity of the analyzed discourse. Mikhail Bakhtin was one of the first literary scholars to attempt a historical survey and analysis of literary parody. He discusses the widespread use of parody in antiquity, its vital connection with popular culture (especially in different forms and comic performances of carnival festivities), its importance in ancient, medieval and early-modern literature (e.g. the Satyr drama, the parodia sacra, the Baroque comic novel). Bakhtin sees parody, in general terms, as "the creation of decrowning double", an inversion, a debased image: "Everything has its parody, that is, its laughing aspect, for everything is reborn and renewed through death" (1999: 127). Parodic discourse, in turn, is "one of the most ancient and widespread forms of representing the word of another" (Bakhtin 2011: 51, emphasis added). In parodic discourse, therefore, the author does not fully identify with the presented word: "it is not, strictly speaking, I who speak, I, perhaps, would speak differently" (2011: 65). Arguably, since it is not possible to invent a new language, every use of language is, in a sense, already a repetition of "the word of another" that evokes an established

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1 By defining parody as an inter-generic technique and not a single genre, much confusion surrounding the term may be avoided. The distinctions between parody, burlesque, travesty, pastiche, mock-heroic, mock-epic, comic-epic and Hudibrastic offered by such critics as Bond (1932), Jump (1972), Hight (1972), Markiewicz (1979), Balbus (1993), Rose (1995), Genette (1997) and Robertson (2009), though useful in some particular cases, are frequently not possible to sustain and often contradict one another. While those scholars usually recognize that all those forms are parodic, they often distinguish between parody and the "related" forms. Hutcheon complains that dictionary definitions tend to explain one term through another: "burlesque" is defined as "parody", "travesty" as "burlesque" (1985). Bakhtin, for instance, employs his own general term "comic-parodic literature" to various genres and applies the seventeenth-century term "travesty" to both ancient and modern literature.
semitic and cultural code. Parody provides a method for distancing oneself from the presented style or content – its characteristic feature may be located in its double-planed, hybrid construction:

Every type of parody and travesty, every word "with conditions attached", with irony, enclosed within intonational quotation marks, every type of indirect word is in a broad sense an intentional hybrid – but a hybrid compounded of two orders, one linguistic and one stylistic. In actual fact, in parodic discourse two styles, two 'languages' (both intra-lingual) come together and to a certain extent are crossed with each other: the language being parodied (for example, the language of the heroic poem) and the language that parodies. (Bakhtin 2011: 75)

The parodied language becomes mockingly inverted by the presence of another, contradictory perspective: "It is, after all, precisely in the light of another potential language or style that a given straightforward style is parodied, travestied, ridiculed" (2011: 60). Parody is therefore connected to other inter-linguistic and inter-textual hybrids: translation and adaptation. However, both translation and adaptation foreground similarity and continuity, whereas in parody "there is an argument between styles of language" and "a dialogue between points of view, each with its own concrete language that cannot be translated into the other" (2011: 76, emphasis added). As a method of artistic composition and a type of stylization, parody foregrounds discord, incongruity, even untranslatability. Therefore, parodic forms are openly "double-voiced" and dissonant: they juxtapose and merge styles or registers without obliterating or canceling their incongruity, offering a perceptual space for comic dialogic subversion.2

Parodic hybridism is often based on the division between the linguistic (relatively neutral) and the stylistic (marked) order of discourse. Consequently, the sustained incongruity between "language" and "style" is the characteristic feature of many parodic genres and forms. In his monumental study *English Burlesque Poetry 1700-1750*, Richmond P. Bond distinguished between the "high" burlesque, which "utilizes the manner of serious composition for a subject of inferior value" and the "low"

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2 In more general terms, stylization and parody may be said to signal two different possible attitudes towards artistic form, two ways of organizing artistic material. Stylization is a relatively coherent adaptation of genre, artistic model or stylistic convention to the presented material, whereas in parody the structure of genre or convention is both adopted and partly contradicted, introducing a split, a kind of self-contradictory contrastive hybridism. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is thus a stylized (stylistically coherent) epic, but Pope’s *The Dunciad* is a parodic (stylistically incoherent) epic. Parodic forms are thus distinguished by an ironic, incongruous and potentially critical use of stylization. There is a long tradition of seeing parody as a type (or the opposite) of stylization (and hence as a major technique) in Russian and Polish literary criticism, though there is also a tendency to reduce parody to a genre (Markiewicz, much like Genette, distinguishes in this way between parody *sensu largo* and parody *sensu stricto*).
burlesque, which applies "a jocular, familiar or undignified treatment" to a text or theme that is normally treated as serious (1932: 4). As a contrapuntal technique of comic contrast, such parody perhaps utilizes the distinction between the "constative" (semantic-logical) and the "performative" (arbitrary, conventional) level of language. Moreover, such hybrid forms juxtapose, in Bakhtin’s formulation, not only incongruous styles or registers, but also distinct "worldviews", i.e. different socio-ideological perspectives encoded in the substance of the inter-mixed languages:

Thus it is that in parody two languages are crossed with each other, as well as two styles, two linguistic points of view, and in the final analysis two speaking subjects (...) Parody is an intentional hybrid, but usually it is an intra-linguistic one, one that nourishes itself on the stratification of the literary language into generic languages and languages of various specific tendencies. (2011: 76, emphasis added)

Bakhtin emphasizes here the interplay of contrasting idioms (generic and other specific languages) confronted and blended within a parodic hybrid. The English prefix "mock" used in compound names of some parodic styles, such as "mock-epic" or "mock-Gothic", reflects this double-planned and double-planed character of parody. Etymologically, the Greek word paroidia is also a compound of two elements (para meaning "alongside, parallel to" and odos meaning a "song" or "ode"), which suggests certain duplicity inherent in the compound character of parodic forms. Instead of seeing parody only as a mockery of previous text(s), therefore, Bakhtin sees it primarily as "an intentional dialogized hybrid. Within it, languages and styles actively and mutually illuminate one another" (2011: 77, emphasis added).

In early-modern literature, such unconventional dialogic hybrids and juxtapositions were often performed across distinct social registers: "The great parodic genres of early-modern literature – all the mock epics, burlesque tragedies, and satiric romances – worked precisely by transporting the action from castles to inns or hovels and transforming nobles into ordinary folk, who belch, fart, and declare their love in dialect" (Dickie 2011: 112). In such forms, arguably, both terms of contrast were highlighted: the "common folk" being ridiculed as inadequate for the ways and manners of the elevated genres, which, in turn, appeared aloof and pretentious when applied out of context. Many parodic works, such as Samuel Butler's Hudibras or Alexander Pope's The Dunciad, blend together sophisticated classical erudition with scatological humour and vulgar abuse. According to Chambers, parody is one of the major modes of artistic creation, a general technique through which artists contradict existing models by mixing and blending together dissonant registers and contrastive styles, creating
unusual hybrid combinations: "parody, in the Hegelian framework, descends upon arts like some overarching antithesis and becomes the instrument of innovative syntheses" (211). I would argue that parody as an artistic technique usually does not aim at imitation or emulation; it is an inventive (albeit slightly perverse) method of creation that works by crossing any parodied structure with contradictory or seemingly unsuitable parodying elements, constructing in effect a series of vivid contrasts and comic inversions. Parody plays a dialogical game with art, a game of surprising (and often grotesque) mutation, so to speak, giving birth to playful ambiguous forms that are often difficult to categorize. It may take as a starting point a displacing mimicry of a specific motif or text (in travesty, occasional parody, etc.), a genre or a canonical style (mock-epic, mock-pastoral, etc), but parodic works often explore multiple stylistic and textual resources to sustain their joyful games. It is not possible for parody to occur in an isolated, internally coherent "monological" voice; hence, a sustained combination of incongruent, disproportionate or otherwise conventionally discordant levels and elements is a defining feature of all parodic texts.

Bakhtin also sees parody predominantly as a kind of synthesis (a "dialogized hybrid" of styles/languages, a "double-voiced" discourse) and situates parodic literature in opposition to stylistically consistent forms. Unlike the "high genres" of classical literature (tragedy, epic, ode, elegy), characterized by pathos, internal cohesion and strict stylistic purity, the heteroglot comic-parodic writing introduces discord between styles and a comic clash between different socio-linguistic points of view:

Parodic-travestying literature introduces the permanent corrective of laughter, of a critique on the one-sided seriousness of the lofty direct word, the corrective of reality that is always richer, more fundamental and most importantly too contradictory and heteroglot to be fit into a high and straightforward genre. The high genres are monotonous, while the "forth drama" (the satyr play) and genres akin to it retain the ancient binary tone of the word. (Bakhtin 2011: 55)

Parodic stylistic dialogue subverts the coherence and the "monologic" orientation of the parodied style and forces it to answer before the court of another language or another context. Parodic art embodies the subversive potential of laughter, for it introduces the distorting presence of an alien perspective, a second reality and a second, dissonant voice that enters and transgresses the boundaries of the parodied genre, style or discourse.³

³ Even a simple type of parody – repeating someone’s words in a mocking or exaggerated intonation – creates a hybrid of incompatible elements that "mutually illuminate one another". In ironic statements, there is usually a stable contrast between (incorrect) "words" and (correct) "intention". In parody, however, the intention may be blurred and the contrast more complex and confusing because parody
In his influential studies on Rabelais, Dostoyevsky, Dickens and other authors, Bakhtin narrates also the history of European comic-parodic literature as a rich, half-canonized and half-obliterated tradition opposed to all the noble and serious genres predominant in the official literary culture. This literature is difficult to neatly classify and Bakthin enumerates at least several major types of parody: parodies of literary genres (mock-epic, mock-tragedy, mock-ode, etc.), separate genres and half-defined forms based on parody (satyr-drama, humorous dialogues, Menippean satire, improvised comedy), travesties, parodic skaz (stylized speech), the parodia sacra (parodic sermons, liturgies, prayers), etc. In ancient, medieval and early-modern literature a plethora of such humorous double-voiced forms provided "the corrective of laughter and criticism to all existing straightforward genres, languages, styles, voices" (2011: 59).

These forms, Bakhtin claims, directly influenced the modern novel, especially the comic-parodic line of its development, represented in England by Fielding, Smollett, Goldsmith, Sterne, Dickens, Thackeray and other writers. In their playful, humorous and often sharply satiric novels, these authors parodied the most varied types of discourse: "the eloquence of the court, or the dealings of the speculators, or the pedantic speech of scholars, or the high epic style, or Biblical style, or the style of the hypocritical moral sermon or finally the way one or another concrete and socially determined personality, the subject of the story, happens to speak" (2011: 301). Parodic representation of language becomes possible only within the conditions of what Bakthin calls "polyglossia", i.e. the cultural coexistence of different worldviews and ideologies – different perceptions of the same object – expressed through different styles and registers. This polyglot variety can find its expression, in turn, in the "heteroglossia" of the literary work, i.e. a vivid accentuation of diverse discourses within one literary work. As Bakhtin insists, heteroglossia finds its apogee in novelistic discourse, where multiple sociolects, dialects, samples of formal jargon, literary styles blends incongruous (inter)textual elements (e.g. "comic/epic", "philosophical/absurd") and allows these to coexist in a sustained, dialogized relation. As Chambers concludes, irony and parody are usually interdependent because irony in literary texts often emerges from the underlying parody of discourses, literary motifs or rhetorical conventions (129-131).

Bakhtin's view of parody is closer to the ancient uses of the term. In his often quoted study Lelievre (1954) discusses the ancient definitions of para-odos as applied to reproductions of passages from concrete authors, to ironic uses of literary devices (e.g. parodic prologues and epilogues in Aristophanes), to mock-epic poems and to comic epics (Hipponax, Matron, pseudo-Homeric Margites and Cercopes), and to the uses of inappropriate or exaggerated style in general (68-9). The term was applied to poetic, dramatic and philosophical texts. Moreover, parody was typically seen as humorous, but not necessarily as critical towards its source or target (74).
and genres are juxtaposed exactly as heterogeneous, and hence contrasted as more or less contradictory, enabling the complex parodic inter-illumination of languages. Bakhtin discusses Dickens’s *Little Dorrit* in this respect (2011: 303-8), though any novel by Dickens provides numerous apt examples:

Mr Gradgrind walked homeward from the school, in a state of considerable satisfaction. It was his school, and he intended it to be a model. He intended every child in it to be a model - just as the young Gradrinds were all models.

There were five young Gradgrinds, and they were models every one. They had been lectured at, from their tenderest years; coursed like little hares. Almost as soon as they could run alone, they had been made to run to the lecture room. The first object with which they had an association, or of which they had remembrance, was a large black board with a dry Ogre chalking ghastly white figures on it.

Not that they knew, by name or nature, anything about an Ogre. Fact forbid! I only use the word to express a monster in a lecturing castle, with Heaven knows how many heads manipulated into one, taking childhood captive, and dragging it into gloomy statistical dens by hair. (*Hard Times*, 1996: 12)

Language not only represents here but itself is represented in a negative, ironic light, for its tendencies contrast with the author's intention encoded in the parodic presentation of this language. There is a brilliant crossing of two perspectives, two stylistic orders in this passage. One is Gradgrind’s dry, calculating worldview; the other is a fanciful vision of an Ogre capturing children. In some expressions both orders are clearly visible (e.g. "statistical dens", "lecturing castle"). The rigid, factual discourse of the cold-hearted utilitarian excludes all manifestations of imagination or fancy. The narrator momentarily identifies with this voice, even mockingly strengthens it (e.g. "Fact forbid!", the repetitive "they were models every one", etc.), but also highlights it by contrast with a contradictory style and lexicon, mostly that of the world of fairy-tales, which transforms the description into a kind of mock-Gothic vision of utilitarian order. The language of Gradgrind is thus modulated and critically presented from the parodying counter-perspective, a perspective provided partly by the children's point of view (e.g. their perception of the "ghastly figure"). This is not a mere mixing of styles or tones: for parodic effect to occur, there must be a sense of dialogic relation and mutual subversion, so that the juxtaposed discourses or stylistic planes become formal elements bound together into parodic contrast, often resulting in an ironic, problematic exposure of the parodied discourses.5

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5 Many of the eighteenth-century parodic modes are reflected in Dickensian novel: the mock-epic style of narration, the “comic-grotesque” realism, the mockeries of scientific and political theories, the grossly parodic stylization of the speech of characters that often unmasks their greed, hypocrisy, ignorance, affectation or lack of compassion. Bakhtin perceives in the comic novel “the general trend toward relativity, objectification and the parodying of literary forms and genres” and underscores the role of “parodic stylization” of professional, official and everyday language in the novels by Fielding, Smollett, Sterne and Dickens (2011: 308-12).
In parody, language is treated as discourse, i.e. as an effect of the operation of different conventionalized micro-linguistic practices and different points of view, not as a neutral and monolithic system detached from social reality. The inner diversity of language reflects the diversity of speaking persons and the socio-cultural relations they find themselves in. The discursive practices construct a galaxy of stylistic variants of language, constituted in a net of dialogical but also hierarchical relations with each other. While Bakhtin appreciated the structuralist conceptions of language as a unified, abstract system, he was not particularly interested in such a view. As Terry Eagleton has pointed out, language for Bakhtin was a field of ideological contention, not a monolithic system; indeed, signs were the very material medium of ideology, since without them no values or ideas could exist. Bakhtin respected what might be called the 'relative autonomy' of language, the fact that it could not be reduced to mere reflex of social interests; but he insisted that there was no language which was not caught up in definite social relationships, and that these social relationships were in turn part of a broader political, ideological and economic systems. (1985: 117)

Language is a kind of unalienable, commonly shared property that cannot be fully appropriated by one "interest group". Consequently, because language is commonly shared, it is always fragmented, "stratified" into different styles and registers, it is a plurivocal collection and cacophony of the "languages of various specific tendencies", to use Bakhtin's phrase. Parody as a discursive practice is possible only because language does not comprise a monolithic, ideal and transcendental system, but rather stands for a plurality of discourses and styles, conventionalized through social practices. The parodic accentuation of heteroglossia reclams language from conventional use, from ossified literary structures, from dogmatic and monologic orientation: it plays with its limits, satirizes its abuse, ridicules its eccentricities and tests its value and adequacy against other styles, other contexts. Not only is the relation between signifier and signified a matter of convention, but also the very act of using language is always already conventionalized, every utterance being a quotation, a repetition of a coded structure. Robert Phiddian provides an eloquent explanation of the role of parody that corresponds to Bakhtin's notion of fragmented and stratified language:

Parody is language after Babel, and it insists that all other languages which attempt to obscure their fellowship in this linguistic fall be exposed as artificial constructions of validity rather than its natural emanations. It is the distorted image of imitation, for it enacts the activation, frustration, fracture, and the entanglement of attempts to return to authentic origins. (109)
Parody testifies to the unrecoverable "linguistic fall" that marks the relativity of all discursive practices, and what Simon Dentith calls the "cultural politics of parody" seems to concentrate on a performative questioning of the authority and coherence of the parodied language (2000: 22-4). When a given language authoritatively claims its hegemony, when it pretends to be monolithic, universal, when it appears one-sided, exceedingly inflated and ornate, abstract or monotonous, it always invites parody. The abstract, idealist, pathetic, pedantic, or sentimental word becomes the most frequent target for parody. It is a recurrent target for Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad*, in which the pedantic Westminster scholar and headmaster declares:

> . . . Since Man from beast by Words is known,  
> Words are Man's province, Words we teach alone.  
> (Book IV, ll. 149-150)

In a similar vein, Tristram Shandy explains the cause of Uncle Toby's "perplexities": "It was not by ideas, by Heaven; his life was put in jeopardy by words" (59). Parody brings language "closer" to the world so that it may ridicule either the abuse of language or the reality that fails to correspond to it, or both terms of contrast. Parody engages a range of techniques, ironies, stylistic caricatures and juxtapositions that seek to problematize, decentralize and relativize the presented discourse.

Bakthin is well-known also for his discussions of parody as the major element in the folk cultures of the ancient, medieval and early-modern periods – it was for him a crucial mode of the popular carnival and its festive laughter, which challenged the narrow canons of beauty, rationality and harmony found in the classical culture and its elevated literary genres. What Bakhtin sees as the "complex carnival experience of the people" engaged in a peculiar clash and contrast between the official and the unofficial:

> This experience, opposed to all that was ready-made and completed, to all pretence and immutability, sought a dynamic expression; it demanded ever changing, playful, undefined forms. All the symbols of the carnival are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities. We find here a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of the "inside-out", of the "turnabout", of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings. A second life, a second world of folk culture is thus constructed, it is to a certain extent a parody of the extracarnival life, a "world inside out". (1984: 11)

Carnival becomes thus a parody of the "normal" life, i.e. of the dominant symbolic-ideological perception or construction of reality. In the carnivalesque idiom the official worldview becomes cheerfully decomposed, presented as defective, unfinished and thus replaceable. The "topsy-turvy" reversal of cultural imagery in carnival festivities results in its peculiar *grotesque* aesthetic that inverts the classical ideals of proportion, balance,
harmony, rationality and order. Consequently, "carnivalized" forms and performances tend to reject the pomposity, idealism, strict but narrowly-conceived morality and the canons of taste and beauty found in "official serious culture". Moreover, all major carnivalesque motifs (madness, folly, masquerade, degradation, the grotesque body and gesture) have a tendency to expose the relativity and provisional character of all values, categories and hierarchies, affirming the ambiguous experience of life. In Bakhtin's analysis, carnival surfaces as a cultural reality in which a one-sided, serious categorization or pathetic, sentimental praise become simply impossible. In carnivalesque mockery, the world is joyfully presented as corrupt, degraded and defective – but this jovial critique is universal, and hence directed also at "the carnival's participants" (Bakhtin 1986: 11).

By linking parody with the popular forms of festive entertainment, Bakhtin identified the important role of parody as a common cultural technique of familiarization; a widespread socio-linguistic practice through which the wider populace merrily "mock" pompous or abstract discourses and deride the values of the dominant official culture. Billingsgate, comic ballads and bawdy songs, humorous and vulgar greetings as common parodic-travestying practices illustrate parody's important role in building informal language and popular culture. Pierre Bourdieu, when commenting on Bakhtin, identifies the use of comic debasement and offensive language with a counter-cultural symbolic inversion of dominant values and authoritative discourses often performed by the underprivileged strata of society:

the popular imagination can only invert the relationship which is the basis of aesthetic sociodicy: responding to sublimation by a strategy of reduction or degradation, as in slang, parody, burlesque or caricature, using obscenity or scatology to turn arsy-versy, head over heals, all the 'values' in which the dominant groups project and recognize their sublimity, it rides roughshod over difference, flouts distinction, and, like the Carnival games, reduces the distinctive pleasures of the soul to the common satisfaction of food and sex. (Bourdieu 493)

Classical literary parody, though usually less abusive, was also based to some extent on hyperbolic or degrading inversion of the pompous rhetorical genres and official forms of speech. But the "carnivalesque" mode is for Bakhtin not only a concrete cultural practice; it is rather a kind of universal propensity, an "irrepressible linguistic vitality"

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6 Stephen Greenblatt vividly depicts the Elizabethan folk carnival connected with seasonal festivities in his study on Shakespeare. The "May Day" games would include, for instance, a "coarse Robin Hood show, with a drunken Friar Tuck and a lascivious Maid Marion," a "torchlight processions featuring men dressed as fantastic animals" as well as numerous "drinking contests, eating contests and singing contests," while the celebration was governed by the cheerful spirit of the "belching, farting Lord of Misrule" (39).
forever inherent in humanity: "the popular-festive carnival principle is indestructible" Bakhtin claims, and though "narrowed and weakened" in the neoclassical period, it "continues to fertilize various areas of life and culture" (1984: 33-4). This parodic drive, or "the will to laughter" (to paraphrase Nietzsche), reverses the general cultural tendency towards unification, rationalism, seriousness and pathos – it joyfully debases and "desublimates" the grave, tragic and solemn vision of the world. Behind the carnivalesque operations of parody and travesty Bakhtin discovers the profound role of "ambivalent laughter":

True ambivalent and universal laughter does not deny seriousness but purifies and completes it. Laughter purifies from dogmatism, from the intolerant and the petrified; it liberates from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naivety and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality. Laughter does not permit seriousness to atrophy and to be torn away from the one being, forever incomplete. (Bakhtin 1984: 122-3)

The stable, ossified and dogmatic representations of reality are false because they fail to grasp the ever-changing and contradictory character of lived experience. Parodic creativity destroys the schematic and predictable models of representation, introducing dissonance into the superficial coherence of the parodied patterns. It is important to note, however, that Bakhtin's strong emphasis on the liberating and regenerating aspect of carnival festivities and practices has been frequently questioned and criticized (White 237-8). While festive laughter may have been ambivalent and culturally invigorating, the common carnival practices in the early-modern period included performances or festive games in which "weaker social groups such as prostitutes, ethnic and religious minorities, strangers to the locality, and indeed animals were often violently abused and demonized" (White 238). Carnival involved popular superstitions that stigmatized "the Other" as well as excessive drinking, violence, abusive language and behaviour, aspects which are cursorily mentioned by Bakhtin, but are discussed extensively by Peter Burke, for instance, in his study on the early-modern carnival (255-289). The theory of "ambivalent laughter" seems more useful when applied to the literary contexts of parodies, travesties, satires and other "carnivalized" forms of literature. While parodic practices are not ideologically neutral, the distorting and demystifying exposure of convention and the foregrounding of incongruity and contradiction in parody make its aesthetic irreducible to any positive, narrow ideological content. It is definitely accurate to claim that writers such as Cervantes, Rabelais or Swift employed parody in their performative unmasking of various forms of dogmatism, hypocrisy, naivety and intellectual abuse.
The effect of parody may be gross and grotesque, as in the comic forms of the carnival, but parodic stylizations may also be only slightly accentuated and hence difficult to register: "We often lose the sense of parody and would doubtless have to reread many a text of world literature to hear its tone in another key" (Bakhtin 1986: 136). In the "Author's Apology" prefixed to A Tale of a Tub, for instance, Jonathan Swift admits to having parodied other writers:

There is one Thing which the judicious Reader cannot but have observed, that some of those Passages in this Discourse which appear most liable to Objection, are what they call Parodies, where the Author personates the Style and Manner of other Writers, whom he has a mind to expose. (1963: 13-14)

Swift's parody produces the language that is "liable to Objection" but only for an attentive and "judicious" reader. Through polemical imitation of the "Style and Manner" of the discourses that Swift wants to "expose" – and Swift exposes the rhetoric of both freethinkers and puritans, libertines and mystics, travelers and pedantic scholars – he creates his own medley of arguments and theories that may always be taken, by mistake, seriously. As Robert Phiddian observed, Swift's parody in A Tale of a Tub "disfigures its pre-texts" by "a deconstruction of verbal, mental, ideological and typographical patterns" (1995: 13-14). Phiddian's idea of parody as a kind of primordial practice of deconstruction is attractive for it points to the fact that both deconstruction and parody generally seek to question the validity, transparency and coherence of the discourses that they animate. What is presented in parodic writing is always based on a degree of exaggeration and stylization, on a discursive convention being "laid bare" as a cultural construct. Likewise, in deconstructive writing, the logical and conceptual structure of a philosophical or literary text is usually performatively exposed as inseparably linked with its textuality, its figurative and rhetorical tropes, and with the potentially subversive play of differences and deferrals in language. Phiddian's comparison accentuates the fact that both parody and deconstruction foreground the conventionality and "constructedness" of the discourses they examine; both partially reconstruct and reiterate a conceptual or rhetorical architecture that they seek to dismantle:

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7 According to Claude Rawson, Swift was "[the] most parodically minded of eighteenth-century writers" (2000:74). His writings are replete with parodies of almost all types of prose and poetry current at his time, and can be variously described as mock-philosophical, mock-scientific, mock-moralistic, mock-heroic, mock-pastoral, mock-romantic, etc. The types and techniques of parody in Swift's prose have been the subject of a recent study by Robert Phiddian (1995) as well as by other scholars (e.g. Price 1953, Davis 1963). Because of the enormous scope and range of parody in Swift’s writing, he is not directly discussed in the present study.
parody is always an ironic and critical strategy which explores the cultural and textual terms of construction of discourses. Like deconstruction as a hermeneutic strategy, parody does not repudiate the texts on which it operates, but rather animates them in order to distort them, point out their limitations, and divide them against themselves. (Phiddian 1995: 2)

Linking parody with the type of performative textual critique practised by Derrida and his followers seems valid especially for more philosophically-minded parodists, such as Swift and Sterne. While equating parody with deconstruction may seem unorthodox (not to say heretical), there seems to be indeed some sort of deconstructive process at work in parodic textuality. To claim that "parodic language is doubled and differentiated" and that parody involves "an anomalous spacing of discourses" (Phiddian 1997: 686) perhaps echoes Bakhtin's claim that parody fosters the sense of "distance between language and reality" that complicates and decentres the coherence of the "direct word" (2011: 61). It should also be noted that the affinity between parodic and satiric mockery and philosophy dates back at least to the Greek Cynics, who (like Rabelais) identified Socrates as their patron – an archetypal jester, ironist and polemicist. Parody may not only comically disfigure but also intimately problematize and relativize the discourses it inhabits.8

Parody and parodic textuality have also been frequently linked with metafiction understood as an openly "self-reflexive" fiction that plays with the cultural frames and definitions of fictionality. Patricia Waugh examines the crucial interrelatedness of metafiction and parody: "Metafictional parody reveals how a particular set of contents was expressed in a particular set of conventions recognized as 'literature' (…) The use of parody and the assimilation of popular and non-literary languages in metafiction thus help to break both the aesthetic and extra-aesthetic norms" (67). Although the term "metafiction" has been predominantly applied to experimental modernist and postmodernist novels by Joyce, Nabokov, Fowles, Pynchon, Calvino and others, ironic games with novelistic conventions have germinated in the novel already at its ancient beginnings. Furthermore, metafictional exposing of the frames and illusions of

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8 It is worth noting that different literary scholars tend to emphasize different aspects and functions of parody in literature. Highet (1972) sees parody as a major form of satire, while Waugh (1984) and Renfrew (2012) as a method of critical and creative transformation; Hannosh (1989) underlines the playful and self-reflexive aspect of parody, while Rose (1979) sees it as a form of metafiction or indirect "meta-literary" criticism. Genette (1997) ascribes three major functions to parody: ludic (degrading), satiric (polemical) and comic (playful). The possible independence of parody from its "original" context or "model" is another problem: both Rose (1995) and Chambers (2010) emphasize that parody is above all a method of presentation which tends to at least partly reproduce that which it parodies – in this sense the parodic character of the work (distortion, incongruity, play of contrasts) may be retained even when its "model" or "target" is no longer familiar or easily identifiable.
"fictionality" is not necessarily limited to the novel. Margaret A. Rose even claims that parody often functions as "meta-literary criticism", i.e. as a "performative" literary criticism presented within the confines of literary discourse or as a part of fictional plot (1979: 107). Postmodernist novelists, for instance, in their distrust of "naive concepts of art as mirror to the world" tend to deploy "metafictional parodies" either to argue "for more self-conscious use of art as fiction, or for a more absurdist picture of the world as stage, where reality had been totally fictionalized" (Rose 1979: 74). Both Rose and Waugh link parody and metafiction as two interrelated concepts that refer to the *continuous process* of contestation of established intertextual norms and generic frames.⁹

Since parody is based on playing with various generic and conventional frames, it is inherently intertextual in many senses of the word. When discussing the notion of intertextuality, Michael Riffaterre introduces the notion of "an intertext" as "one or more texts which the reader must know in order to understand a work of literature in terms of its overall significance" – intertextual correspondences in a literary work may thus be opposed to "the discrete meanings of its successive words, phrases, and sentences" (1990: 56). Intertextuality, it seems, evokes the very ontological dilemma of hermeneutics regarding the identity and limits of the text, since meaning is understood to be produced through a juxtaposition and comparison of texts rather than within a single and independent text. Intertextual approaches inevitably focus also on formal requisitions in literature, on the history of genres and conventions that predetermine what counts as the "literariness" of the verbal work of art (Riffaterre 1990: 56-7). Parody as a cultural practice seems to exploit the fact that artistic production always relies on a set of preprogrammed conventions, which may, however, be contradicted or playfully distorted: "works of literature are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature" (Allen 1). It is at this level of *meta-linguistic* conventions that parody typically operates, playing with myths, archetypes, plot and narrative devices, iconic images, genres, stylistic patterns, clichés and philosophical platitudes. Presumably, every *artistic* work or text relies on such conventions, which it partly copies and partly transforms, and every artistic work also

⁹ The notion of the "frame" (generic, stylistic, conventional) is important in Waugh's understanding of parody and metafiction: "One method of showing the function of literary conventions, of revealing their provisional nature, is to show what happens when they malfunction. Parody and inversion are two strategies which operate in this way as frame-breaks. The alternation of frame and frame-break (or the construction of an illusion through the imperceptibility of the frame and the shattering of illusion through the constant exposure of the frame) provides the essential deconstructive method of metafiction" (31).
adds some new conventions to the archival cultural stock. In parodic production, however, this "normal" process of adaptation or reformulation of convention becomes distorted and inverted as the semiotic and stylistic patterns are applied incongruously, joyfully mismatched or grossly contradicted. Thus, operating as a technique of displacement and dissonance, parody may be seen as "an agent of change that violates literary norms and exposes stereotyped procedures and themes" (Baguley 95).

In its vibrant play of juxtaposed codes, semiotic traces and cultural echoes, parody can be located, in general terms, in between what Roland Barthes has identified as two distinct notions: work and text. As Jonathan Culler observes:

People used to treat Madame Bovary as an oeuvre, product of an authorial intention, with a meaning that had to be sought, an aesthetic unity to be valued, and so forth. But we now see that such things can and perhaps should be treated as texts, which means: as products of sign-systems and intertextuality, instances of the indeterminate functioning of language, products of historical processes of production and reception. Thus work and text would be two different concepts of the object of study. (2007: 107)

At least since the Russian "Formalists" focused on how literariness is based on various "devices" that pass from one work to the next, and since structuralist scholars studied the recurring "underlying" patterns in various literary and mythic narratives, intertextuality has decentred the position of the author as the sovereign and conscious constructor of literary work in its artful and hermeneutically independent unity. Parodic literary works seem, however, to suggest a playfully manipulated intertextual determinacy, and the effects of incongruity and grotesque hyperbolism in parody may be perceived as a distortion of the intertextual system of cultural (aesthetic, mimetic) conventions. Discussions of parody seem, thus, to require a negotiation between the notion of a "literary work" as an artistic unity – certain specifically structured artistic and representational effort – and of "text" as a web of effects resulting from various semiotic, cultural and historical forces and dependencies. One of the major proponents of (inter)textuality, Roland Barthes, in his influential essay The Death of the Author, postulated the following:

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10 Intertextuality often becomes posited as a general paradigm in contemporary literary theory. As Vincent B. Leitch writes, "the sign, as such, is constituted asoriginarily intertextual. Because prior texts reside in present texts – that is, in their signifiers – no text is ever fully self-present, self-contained, or self-sufficient. (...) Just as a barrier separates the signifier from the signified, so the intertext divides the text from itself" (98-9). Balbus (90-94) identifies stylization as a major manifestation of intertextuality in literature and distinguishes 25 (!) main types of stylization (or "intertextual strategies"), many of which may surely be qualified as parodic or related to parody: polemical imitation (polemical pastiche), polemical-distancing reminiscence of style, hidden stylistic polemic (intertextual irony), oxymoronic stylization, caricatured-parodic stylization, travesty, low burlesque, hoax stylization, formal low burlesque, high burlesque (formal parody) and mock-heroic.
We know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the ‘message’ from the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. Thus is revealed the total existence of writing: a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation. (146-8)

The "single theological meaning" is what Bakhtin would perhaps call monoglossia, and the fact that Barthes speaks here in a manner closely resembling Bakhtin’s emphasis on dialogism and heteroglossia is not an accident. Julia Kristeva presented her early text on Bakhtin, *Word, Dialogue and Novel*, at Barthes’ seminar in 1966, so around the time when *La mort de l'auteur* was written. The lesson of *The Death of the Author* seems to be that parody and intertextuality are encoded in the plurivocality of language and the resulting polyvalence of the text. Parody, in fact, tends to make the authorial intention behind the text often divided and problematic; Swift’s *Modest Proposal*, for instance, requires a reading attendant to both the surface "literal" (and monstrous) intention of the foregrounded-parodied text and to the "rhetorical" intention of the ironic subtext (as far as it can be recovered). Parodic textuality does not erase the concept of authorial intention, but often problematically decentres it by activating a contradiction and cooperation between different codes, intentions and levels included in the maze of the text.

The specificity of parody has often been defined in terms of its communicative operation on the author-text-reader trajectory. Stuart Hall’s influential distinction between *encoding* and *decoding* refers to cultural codes that rely on complicated, multi-level communication (Turner 83-8), and can prove useful in this context. Parody is, admittedly, based on manipulating certain codes shared by both the encoder and decoder (Rose 1979: 108). The encoding/decoding framework, however, emphasizes activity rather than structural stability (Turner 83). Therefore, parody can be seen as a process, a type of "double-coded" writing and reading that also demands extra-textual knowledge as it points to the broader cultural and linguistic competence of both the author and the recipient. It also underlines the fact that parody cannot be read literally (cf. Don Quixote as the symbolic figure of a naïve reader) but rather through a specific decoding of textual strategies, so that the reader/decoder must "construct a second meaning through interferences about surface statements and supplement the foreground with acknowledgment and knowledge of a background context" (Hutcheon 1985: 33-4).

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11 Kristeva is often accredited with introducing Bakhtin's theories to the West, and the term "intertextuality" comes, in fact, from her early essay "Problèmes de la structuration du texte" (the history of the term is discussed by Worton and Still 1990: 1-33).
However, perhaps the most sweeping statement connected with the postmodernist awareness of (inter)textuality is Derrida’s famous "there is nothing outside the text" (1976: 158), meaning that everything is subject to reading and interpretation, and that the "context" does not precede the text as its "origin" but may only be read on par with the text, according to the text, etc. The "author's intention", for instance, may thus be understood as a semiotic trace inscribed within the text of culture, as something that is accessible (or inaccessible) only through the web of textuality, not as an objective "outside" measure of hermeneutic accuracy; it can neither fully regulate nor limit the signifying horizon of the text. Derrida’s work inspires also Phiddian's description of parody as writing under erasure, a concept which highlights "the impossibility of doing without the very words one recognizes as inadequate" (Dentith 15-16). Such writing "performs" its text while undermining its logic; it simultaneously offers and withdraws, accepts and refuses the words used. If deconstruction as a textual performance seeks to reveal as well as disturb the construction of the analyzed philosophical or literary "text" (in the broad sense) by evoking and manipulating the very terms and logic of this "text", such a performance seems analogous to how parody often operates. According to Phiddian, deconstruction and parody run on "hardly distinguishable" principles and are "secretly the same" because both "play with the conventions of authenticity (which make language as representation work)" (1997: 680).

The parodic manipulation of artistic and discursive convention may be seen merely as an instrument for repetitive mockery, but also as a move towards aesthetic innovation. In his attempt to discard the terms "form" and "content", which he sees as scholastic categories, Vladimir Novikov describes parody as an "energetic breakthrough, hyperbolic in its character", which produces a "comic image of genre or style" (303). Yury Tynyakov understands parody as a "dialectic play with the device" (because the parodied device is both evoked and contradicted), while the term "device"

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12 More literally "there is no before-text" or "there is no beyond-text": il n’y a pas de hors-texte.
13 A number of concepts developed within Derrida's practice and theory of textuality seem particularly suitable for a critical description of parodic writing, notably "iterability", "différance", "free-play" and "dangerous supplement". Some of the most parodic/performative of Derrida's texts are collected in Writing Performances. The Derrida Reader (1998). The editor, Julian Wolfreys, sees Derrida as a "radical rhetoretician, complicating our understanding of rhetoric by showing and performing the resistances of rhetoric and troping to acts of interpretation and reading, conventionally understood" (10). Instead of discussing texts from the secure "outside" of critical gaze, Derrida is performing his (parodic) deconstructions as procedures "that cannot be reduced to a restricted economy of interpretative functionality (...) and predictable consistency" (11). Deconstruction, like parody, introduces certain "literariness" and performative exposure into the seemingly direct "constative" word (of philosophical or theoretical discourse). The analysis of the role of performativity and literariness in deconstruction can be found also in Loesberg (1991), Rachwał (1987, 1992b) and Burzyńska (2013).
may refer to any artistic norm, genre, style, motif or technique – Shklovsky and Tynyanov sometimes suggest even that art in general may be seen as an overarching "device" (Chambers 2010: 65; cf. Shklovsky 1995). Tynyanov's work comprises perhaps the most positive account of parody's role in the dialectic of "literary evolution": since parody typically involves (1) the mechanization of the old device and (2) the use of the mechanized device or convention for new material, the parodied convention may become displaced, reworked, rearranged and applied to a new purpose.\textsuperscript{14} The critics that follow Russian "Formalists" (e.g. Waugh, Chambers) tend to see parody as an artistic method that polemically reshapes the existing artistic conventions; for such theorists, parody is the \textit{élan vital} of art, an intellectual game and artistic dialogue with art (much alive in modernist experimentation and postmodernist playfulness) that often seeks to \textit{defamiliarize} and hence transcend the technical and ideological conventionality of art and literature. Parody, as it operates in arts, is often both deconstructive and constructive; it is a mode of "stylistic confrontation" and a method of "ironic playing with multiple conventions" (Hutcheon 1985: 6-8). As I will attempt to show, parodic texts indeed often engage in sustained games with "devices" and "conventions" borrowed from \textit{multiple} styles, traditions and aesthetic modes.

While parody may approach a sophisticated metafictional game with discursive forms and frames, it has always been, paradoxically, a mode characteristic also of popular "unofficial" culture. It is, indeed, one of the paradoxes of parody that it tends to be identified with the works of erudite and "sophisticated" authors, who are able to play complex intellectual games with various traditions and rhetorical conventions, as much as it is linked with the crude humour and vulgar abuse often found in informal culture. Interestingly, the hybridism of parodic forms often stems from the intersection of an erudite, philosophical culture with the artistic forms of popular entertainment. Writers using such hybrids, from Shakespeare and Cervantes to Gay and Fielding, playfully traversed the rigid boundaries of classical poetics and social decorum, perhaps also to cater for the sensibilities of both the sophisticated elite and general public. Hence, parody needs to be understood broadly, as a possibility inherent in all semiotic (artistic, linguistic) systems, as the general artistic ability of copying and inverting patterns, hence as a method of \textit{incongruous structuring}, a drive towards \textit{playful ironic inversion}.

\textsuperscript{14} The theories of parody in the works of Victor Shklovsky, Boris Tomachevsky, Yury Tynyanov and other Russian "Formalists" are discussed, among others, by Erlich (192-7, 258-9), Hutcheon (1985: 35-6), Rose (1995: 103-125), Chambers (218-20) and Renfrew (301-7). An interesting critique of Russian "Formalism" is offered by Frederic Jameson (1974: 41-88).
Parody, as it emerges from Bakhtin’s work, marks also a certain rich, multifarious and historically influential literary tradition; even if it must be a very "strange" tradition of disruption and discontinuity (we normally associate tradition with stability, coherence, seriousness and continuity). This parodic "tradition" overlaps perhaps partly with satiric writing (especially of the Menippean kind) and partly with comedy; it definitely embraces travesty, the mock-epic and comic-epic poetry (which flourished in antiquity and the Renaissance, and was revived in the Romantic period), and numerous other "carnivalized" forms. The fact that parodists tend to follow earlier parodists should not be ignored (e.g. the obvious lines of influence: Rabelais-Swift-Sterne, Cervantes-Fielding, Dryden-Pope). However, at the same time, the role of parody as a technique in journalistic writing, in film, architecture, performance, painting and possibly all other arts infinitely complicates the attempts at seeing parody as a unified form or a *single* tradition.

Parody is a powerful vehicle for mockery, literary criticism and ideological critique, but there is also something narcissistic about parody – its dualistic and self-reflexive character posits a mirror that allows art to lovingly examine itself and explore its own structural possibilities. Those artists and scholars who prefer traditional and reliable art with its stable illusions of coherence and its conventional beauty often see parodic games and inversions as a nuisance.\(^{15}\) Various burlesque-grotesque writings were often criticized by neoclassical poets and critics, though there were also opinions voicing almost unrestrained admiration. Joseph Warton, for instance, in No. 133 of the *Adventurer*, from February 12, 1754, saw the wit of modern burlesque as excelling "the wittiest of the ancients":

> The burlesque of *Lucian* principally consists in making his gods and philosophers speak and act like the meanest of the people; that of *Cervantes* arises from the solemn and important air with which the most idle and ridiculous actions are related; and is, therefore, much more striking and forcible. In a word, *Don Quixote* and its copy *Hudibras*, the *Splendid Shilling*, the *Adventures of Gil Blas*, the *Tale of a Tub*, and the *Rehearsal*, are pieces of humour which antiquity cannot equal, much less excel. (quoted in Bond 56-7)

Bakhtin often suggests that modern parody became reductive and unproductive once it had lost its vital link with a carnivalesque sense of the world: "the purely formalist

\(^{15}\) While it is tempting to see parody as a "dangerous supplement" of art, it is in many ways central to artistic production and creation; many parodic works enter the mainstream, albeit usually after losing something of their disruptive edge. Joyce's bitterly ironic "mock-epic" novel *Ulysses*, Dadaism, Surrealism, crude Pop-Art as represented by Warhol or Koons – all played with the conventional boundaries of art and parodied its iconic images, to the dismay of both critics and the public, though they are now all considered part and parcel of the respectable artistic canon.
literary parody of modern times (...) has solely negative character and is deprived of regenerating ambivalence" (1984: 21). At the same time, however, he perceives late Renaissance culture as characterized by the cross-breeding of the popular humour and travesty with erudite literary culture, which secured a particularly fertile ground for numerous parodic masterpieces, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by Rabelais and *Don Quixote* by Cervantes among them. Moreover, Bakhtin often praises the parodic writings of the Enlightenment period (Swift, Voltaire, Sterne). In light of these remarks, Bakhtin's observation could perhaps be reversed to a degree: by freeing itself from the vulgarizing travesties of carnival festivities, parodic technique may reach its highpoint and become engaged in erudite and multi-dimensional textual games while retaining much of its disruptive comic energy.

1.2. The Uses of Parody in English Neoclassical Literature

In seventeenth-century Europe, ecclesiastic and feudal culture gradually dissipated, making space for a new official culture of rationalism and neoclassicism, a culture which was "also authoritarian and serious, though less dogmatic" (Bakhtin 1984: 101-2). The period of the Enlightenment becomes marked by a faith in rationalism and empiricism, and by the growth of science as institutionalized practice. Renaissance cosmology gives way to a rationalistic vision of the world as a mechanism governed by physical laws and logical principles. This tendency towards endorsing a more prosaic and empirical vision of the world was famously accounted for by Michael Foucault, in his influential distinction between the "Renaissance" and the "Classical" *episteme* (1966). Renaissance humanism was still largely defined by scholastic thinking and based on the principles of resemblance, the *figura* of analogy, typology, correspondence and allegory, with its poetics based on acrostics, anagrams and conceits. In the subsequent "Classical" episteme, which in Foucault's account is said to have emerged at some time in the seventeenth century, the epistemological value assigned to language drastically changed. Classical learning was no longer interpreted strictly within the terms of Christian exegesis and typology, these were gradually replaced by the new "classical discourse": literal, empirical and descriptive, valuing clarity, judgment, wit, harmony and elegance of expression. Neoclassical discourse
reflected the general shift from scholasticism towards rationalism and empiricism, purging itself of "Neoplatonism, medievalism, typology and allegory" (Parker 62).

These broad tendencies corresponded in England with the cultural politics of the time, inasmuch as mystic and allegorical representations were either rejected as symptoms of Catholicism, or perceived as culturally and politically perilous manifestations of religious "enthusiasm" and Protestant dissent (cf. Butler's *Hudibras*). The neoclassical age was increasingly the age of logic and reason: "the order of things," to use Foucault's phrase, was to be discovered through reasoning and observation, described through anatomical dissection and named through categorization and taxonomy. Language became a tool for naming, classifying and distinguishing but, as an imperfect medium of representation, it could easily slip into an abyss of delusion, error and madness. Foucault sees the playfulness of *Don Quixote* as vividly marking the transition from Renaissance principles of analogy and resemblance towards the classical episteme of language as a system based on identities and differences, in which the sign represents accurately only as a part of an ordered system of classification and representation:

*Don Quixote* is a negative of the Renaissance world; writing has ceased to be the prose of the world; resemblances and signs have dissolved their former alliance; similitudes have become deceptive and verge upon the visionary and madness (...) *Don Quixote* is the first modern work of literature, because in it we see the cruel reason of identities and differences make endless sport of signs and similitudes; because in it language breaks off its old kinship with things and enters into that lonely sovereignty from which it will reappear, in its separated state, only as literature (Foucault 1966: 47-9).

The Renaissance episteme was based on a strict analogy and correspondence between the microcosm and macrocosm, the worldly and the divine. In contrast, for the age of science language was an imprecise and corrupted medium. The mystic grammar of

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16 When analyzing this epistemic shift in Restoration and Augustan poetry, Blanford Parker observes that "the French Neoclassical and the British Augustan take as their starting point the excess, the abuse, of figuration in the Baroque (...)" The *Raison* of Boileau, or judgment of Dryden, were created expressly to curb the excess of the poetry of the earlier seventeenth century" (2). While much of the Renaissance and Baroque poetry was still immersed in conceits, medieval allegories and mysticism, neoclassical poetry tended to aim at becoming "a social discourse, not a divine madness" (62).

17 Protestant scholars reject the Scholastic exegesis but formulate their own complex understanding of allegory, based less on "iconic resemblance" and more on the rhetorical trope: "The protestants reject the realist implications inherent in the scholastic treatment of allegory (...) Treated as 'figure' of speech, allegory loses its 'natural' radiance and becomes a literary trope" (Grzegorzewska 2001: 16).

18 Parody in *Don Quixote* is not limited to the specific parody of the chivalric romances composed by such writers as Felician de Silva or Don Louis de Avila; it is a complex, general parody of the fundamental conventions of literary representation that is self-reflexive and metafictional. The novel was translated into English as early as 1611 by Thomas Shelton with generally acknowledged skill and eloquence. The influence of Quixotic motifs and themes on English literature of the eighteenth century was enormous. Nowicki (2008) discusses, for instance, their direct and open assimilation in such works as Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* as well as their broader influence on eighteenth-century culture (e.g. religious "enthusiasm" satirized as Quixotic).
resemblance, iconography, analogy and allegory becomes a false theology and is replaced with the logic of identity and difference that allows systematic and taxonomic ordering. For this purpose, language needs to be made lucid, transparent, systematic and thus purified of all unnecessary depth and ornamentation. It must simply record the divine logic of the mechanical and mathematical order of nature. These ideas were advocated already by The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, formally founded in 1660 by Charles II, and the clarity of language was of prime importance for Dryden, Locke and Addison. In the "Epistle to the Reader" that prefaces the Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke castigates the "vague and insignificant Forms of Speech, and Abuse of Language", which are "the Covers of Ignorance and hindrance of true Knowledge" (quoted in Uzgalis 11). This purification extended also to the sphere of literature. In the essays contained in No. 58-62 of The Spectator, Addison disqualifies as "false wit" the arranging of poems in the shape of physical objects, the use of anagrams and acrostics, the bouts rimes, and, above all, the use of the pun (words with the same sound but different meaning). Resemblance as physical analogy is banned, language can only represent (but not resemble) thought (Addison and Steele, Vol. I: 215-237). Consequently, allegory and metaphor, excluded from the sphere of epistemology, become reduced to the sphere of pure rhetoric.

In this strident age, the ideal of coherent and lucid prose invites a mocking rejection of the excessively figurative diction: Swift and Pope, for instance, often parodically employ an old-fashioned mystical and allegorical style. At the same time, however, "Scriblerian" writers distrust and reject the unproblematic and transparent "middle prose" of Enlightenment scholars and realist novelists, and present instead a discourse that is almost always mediated by varying degrees of irony and parody. The satire of the Enlightenment period continues and even expands the Renaissance tradition of the travesty of learned discourses, philosophical debates and preposterous theories. In the Praise of Folly (1509), as Foucault notices:

Erasmus, in his dance of fools, reserves a large place for scholars: after the Grammarians, the Poets, Rhetoricians, and Writers, come the Jurists, after them, the 'Philosophers respectable in beard and mantle', finally the numberless troop of the Theologians (…) If madness is the truth of knowledge, it is because knowledge is absurd, and instead of addressing itself to the great book of experience, loses its way in the dust of books and in idle debate; learning becomes madness through the very excess of false learning. (1988: 25)

The madness of learning becomes an especially important motif in the Enlightenment period: excessive learning, obscure jargon, the labyrinths of theology and science and
the delusive "dust of books" become crucial motifs in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Butler's *Hudibras*, Swift's *A Tale of the Tub*, Pope's *The Dunciad*, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and in countless other parodic texts. Moreover, the age of reason needs to be seen also as the age of print: "the eighteenth-century saw a massive expansion of the print trade; it was first time in British history that the technology of print was harnessed for the purposes of regular, mass communication" (Goring 2008: 3). It is hardly surprising that the proliferation of print prompted a flourishing of parody: a wider range of texts and discourses become available to wider audience and the competing and contradictory discourses had to polemically subvert one another. Moreover, the saturation of the expanding print market with stories, romances, accounts, travelogues and confessions created "conditions for experimentation with readers’ expectations about the truth-value of the narrative, experimentation that can result in pushing the limits of the established genres and creating new hybrid forms of fictions" (Zunshine 230). The theme of the confusing and corrupting excess of writing was already prominent in *Don Quixote*, where it becomes associated with madness and delusion, which are confronted with reality in a series of gross, picaresque adventures.

In the "folk grotesque" forms of the carnival, Bakhtin maintains, various images and impersonations of madness set out "a gay parody of official reason, of the narrow seriousness of the official 'truth'. It is a 'festive' madness. In Romantic grotesque, on the other hand, madness acquires a somber, tragic aspect of individual isolation." (1986: 39). In the age of reason, however, madness acquires a more negative character: it is often linked with unnatural excess, folly, corruption, mental and bodily indolence or idleness:

Crime and madness go hand in hand with bodily distortion (see Hogarth, for instance) while reason and harmony dwell in a regular, regulated body. Madness and crime are but mutations of harmony and these spheres of transgression are explored by the Classical gaze disinterestedly, that is to say, as the spheres which ideally should not exist, which should be only detected and cut off from the healthy body of society. (Rachwal 1992: 82)

In the age of Enlightenment, according to Michael Foucault, madness operated as a broad signifier for unreason, i.e. the dark "other" of the productive, sensible and trustworthy reason. Unlike in the popular carnival folklore, madness and the grotesque

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19 The project of constructing more precise language is severely ridiculed by Swift in his grotesque vision of the Academy of Lagado in Book III of *Gulliver's Travels*. Sterne mocks many mechanistic conceptions and logical principles in *Tristram Shandy*, notably Locke's concept of the association of ideas and his distinction between wit and judgment. The concept of mathesis as a synthesis of natural history and mathematics is ridiculed in Book IV of Pope's *The Dunciad*. 

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body acquire in modern period a negative, stigmatizing and criminalizing character within an official culture increasingly preoccupied with rationalization, codification, social norm and legal control. While in Renaissance iconography madness still had its own symbolic place, in the neoclassical period it begins to mark criminality and corruption that need to be confined in Newgate or Bedlam and thus ejected from the symbolic space of the healthy society. The increase and consolidation of social and legal control in the seventeenth and eighteenth century inaugurated the "Great Confinement" project, within a paradigm shift that identified madness with indolence, depravity and crime, which must be either forcibly disciplined (and hence "reformed") or securely confined (Foucault 1988: 70). 20

The signifier of madness is a very paradoxical one, because it is posited almost outside signification, beyond the coherence of language and culture forming a meaningful system. The vivid imagery of disorder, delusion, folly, corruption and idiocy in the works of Pope, Swift, Fielding, and even Sterne, allowed them to escape the confines of narrow rationalism, predictability and formalism, of which they often accused scholars, critics and other writers. In this sense, they posited themselves within a certain carnivalesque and Renaissance affirmation of madness. At the same time, however, they tended to use madness as a stigma for moral hypocrisy, mawkish bourgeois culture and political corruption; their parodic texts explore the traces of madness in almost all discourses, but especially in the corrupted, delusional or affected style of pseudo-scientific rhetoric, religious fanaticism, pretentious poetry and dull sentimentality. Swift's A Tale of a Tub, Pope's Peri Bathous and The Dunciad, Fielding's Shamela and Sterne's Tristram Shandy all target the corrupt discourses that have drifted away from the healthy registers of reasonable and "natural" language.

The cultural tendency towards rationalism and empiricism was directly related to a veneration for classical literature and learning in the period. More specifically, the translations and imitations of Virgil, Horace and Juvenal, and the careful philological study of ancient texts in general, replaced the scholastic (Aristotle) and the mystic (Plato) appropriations of the classics (extensively practised in Medieval and

20 Early eighteenth-century London was crammed with places of confinement and correction: there were approximately 120 privately-run sponging houses, prisons and debtor’s prisons, alongside 27 public prisons (Varey 146). Foucault claims that the new "Classical" notion of madness directly linked it with idleness, which was perceived as the primary threat to the "moral order" of "bourgeois ethics" and mobilized its project of the Great Confinement: "In the classical age, for the first time, madness was perceived through a condemnation of idleness and in a social immanence guaranteed by the community of labor. This community acquired an ethical power of segregation, which permitted it to eject, as into another world, all forms of social uselessness" (1988: 58).
Renaissance cultures). Neoclassical writers and critics often attempted, both in France and in England, to strictly define the major classical literary genres (epic, tragedy, pastoral poetry) and to "restore" them in their formal and stylistic unity. However, this reconstructive urge to preserve ancient forms was accompanied and counterbalanced in the period by a much more deconstructive, relaxed, experimental, witty and open-ended approach to classical genres. As Ronald Paulson demonstrates, the practice and vocabulary of parody in England "absorbed the fashionable neoclassical theory imported from France with the Restoration", in which the term *parody* was limited to poetry and was considered, because of its Greek etymological origin, to be an old, classical form, but the more widely used terms *burlesque* and *travesty* referred to a plethora of new modern forms rewriting classical texts or motifs, and adapting them to the vernacular and contemporary national contexts in a comic, playful or satiric way. The French Academy *Dictionnaire* from 1776 defined the verb *travestir*, for instance as "to make a sort of free translation of a serious work, to make it comic, burlesque" (Paulson 19-22).

In neoclassical literary theory, parodic technique was usually identified with the inversion of the rules of poetic decorum, i.e. the rules that matched every genre with its appropriate style, tone and subject-matter. The imported term "burlesque" (from Italian *burla*, meaning "a trick" or "a joke") was often applied as a uniform and general name for all playful and comic forms that blended different tonalities and modes and violated strict literary conventions. As Roger D. Lund notices, the authors of such "burlesques" often boastfully advertised the originality of their writing:

For a small number of Augustan poets, the term 'burlesque' was reserved for parodies in octosyllabic couplets, but for most Augustan critics, 'burlesque' was a category loosely applied to a whole constellation of related forms, including such works as Boileau's *Le Lutrin*, Tassoni’s *La Secchia Rapita*, Butler’s *Hudibras*, and, of course, Pope’s *Dunciad*. All of them rely upon parody to some degree, all depend upon classical models, and, perhaps most importantly, all insist that they are absolutely new. (90)

Some of the most ingenious and memorable works of the period (*Hudibras* and *The Dunciad*, *The Beggar's Opera* and *Tom Thumb*, *Joseph Andrews* and *Tristram Shandy*, to name but a few) definitely count as such burlesque versions – or rather playful inversions – of the genres and traditions they appropriate. According to Margaret A. Doody, the Restoration and Augustan periods in English literature should be seen as "the great age of parody" that witnessed unrelenting attempts at "destroying the holiness or purity of style and genre" (1985: 49-56). In Bakhtin’s view, the burlesque
and grotesque imagery in Swift and Sterne had several functions: "to consecrate inventive freedom, to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted" (1984: 340). The "lower" genres of comedy, satire, and burlesque became in the period the main vehicles for challenging the strictly serious and often narrowly optimistic rationalism of the Enlightenment. It is not surprising, therefore, that the rational age perceived burlesque, and laughter in general, with a degree of both suspicion and fascination. In no. 249 of The Spectator (December 15, 1711), Joseph Addison discussed laughter in both its philosophical and philological dimension: after pointing to the highly ambivalent character of laughter and ridicule (it may be used didactically to "Laugh Men out of Folly and Vice," but may also corrupt and "Laugh Men out of Virtue and Good Sense"), Addison proceeds in his essay to the discussion of the use of ridicule in writing:

The two great Branches of Ridicule in Writing are Comedy and Burlesque. The first ridicules Persons by drawing them in their proper Characters, the other by drawing them quite unlike themselves. Burlesque is therefore of two kinds; the first represents mean Persons in the Accoutrements of Heroes, the other describes great Persons acting and speaking like the basest among the People. Don Quixote is an Instance of the first, and Lucian's Gods of the second. It is a Dispute among the Criticks, whether Burlesque Poetry runs best in Heroick Verse, like that of the Dispensary; or in Doggerel, like that of Hudibras. I think where the low Character is to be raised, the Heroick is the proper Measure; but when an Hero is to be pulled down and degraded, it is done best in Doggerel. (299-300)

In his influential essay Addison considers mostly one aspect of burlesque parody: its use of stylistic masquerade, which he sees in clear opposition to comedy, which ridicules persons "in their proper Characters" (burlesque is "drawing them quite unlike themselves"). Burlesque was divided into the "high burlesque" and "low burlesque" types, and Addison considers which style would be proper for these, despite the fact that burlesque as such is based on stylistic incongruity and impropriety. In a similar vein, Henry Fielding introduces the distinction between the comic and the burlesque in the Preface to his first full-fledged novel, Joseph Andrews:

Indeed, no two species of writing can differ more widely than the comic and the burlesque; for as the latter is ever the exhibition of what is monstrous and unnatural, and where our delight, if we examine it, arises from the surprising absurdity, as in appropriating the manners of the highest to the lowest, or é converso; so in the former we should ever confine ourselves strictly to nature, from the just imitation of which will flow all the pleasure we can this way convey to the sensible reader. (Fielding 1996: 48)
A "just imitation" of nature characterizes "the comic", while a "surprising absurdity" defines "the burlesque." Fielding admits that the elements of the burlesque will appear in his novel, but "those Parodies or Burlesque Imitations," which are to entertain "the Classical Reader," will be admitted chiefly "in diction" rather than in the plot or in the characters (these are professed to be purely comic). Fielding asserts that he writes in a "properly" comic style, and this assertion seems to be motivated by his wish to dissociate his name from the bawdier and more politically controversial "burlesque plays" he published before the 1737 Licensing Act. Nevertheless, despite its didactic and sentimental elements, *Joseph Andrews* is indeed written "in a manner of Cervantes", hence most of its humour and irony arises from the constantly fluctuating burlesque contrast between the elevated style of narration and the "mean" or "vulgar" events narrated. Fielding perhaps invented a universal definition of parody when he described his novel as a paradoxical "comic epic poem in prose", a lighthearted blend of incongruous styles and elements.

As Childs and Fowler claim, the neoclassical distinction between low burlesque (travesty) and high burlesque (mock-heroic) often proves reductive and misleading:

> 'burlesque' was said to be the kind where some new 'low' subject was treated incongruously in an old 'high' style, and 'travesty' the opposite (with Juno using the language of a fishwife). Such distinctions can seldom in practice be sustained, since one parodic work habitually exploits a whole range of incongruous juxtapositions, and the categories obscure the complex intermingling of parodic effects. (167)

The distinctions between "high" and "low" types of parody may be seen as its "decorum-based formulations", a neoclassical method to account for parodic effects (Chambers 60-61). Perhaps they reflect to an extent what Bakhtin discusses as the different levels of its intensity: he distinguishes between "external and crude" literary parody, in which the attack on the target and its rejection or degradation dominate, and a parody marked by a relative "solidarity with the parodied discourse" (Rose 1995: 139). The pragmatic range of parody is underlined also by Hutcheon, who claims that parody may produce a "ridiculous effect", but also a more ambiguous sense of "complicity and accord" (1985: 54). As Bond observes when discussing the Renaissance Italian mock-romance epic:

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21 Bakhtin underlines that parodies were often based on the strict "stratification" of "styles": especially in the early-modern period language was stratified by well-fortified distinctions between social ranks and did not form a democratized plurality. The neoclassical definitions of burlesque reflect the fact that parody often crossed the borders separating the courtly, official and poetic registers from the speech of the streets and taverns, breaching both the social decorum and the hierarchy of literary genres.
Form and substance were both full of the low and the high. The flexible *ottava rima*, with its "home-striking" final couplet standing ready for medley poetry; epigrams, quick bathos, bizarre rhymes, ludicrous figures of speech, dialect, and Billingsgate were tricks of the style. In the *Orlando innamorato* of Boiardo much irony appeared, and this was refined in its continuation, the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto. Berni's *Rifacimento* was more polished and sophisticated than the work of Boiardo and emphasized the air of frivolity. (189)

Different tonalities and different levels of contrast and tension are possible in parodic forms. Parodic texts usually elaborate complex webs of incongruities and ironies, and their stylistic variety cannot be reduced to simple binary contrast, even if they tend to bind and merge opposite extremes. In short, I would claim that what is often crucial in "burlesque" forms is not so much the polemical mockery of previous texts or styles (which may be minimal or ambiguous), but the more fundamental *perceptual* technique of presenting together unexpected or conventionally incongruous elements: parodic (inter)textuality creates a vivid game of contrasts, comic disparities and paradoxes "inside" the parodic text.

Like Italian Renaissance poets, who popularized the burlesqued verse, French neoclassical and the English "Augustan" writers also recycled and restored diverse traditions in a mocking, ironic and conditional way. The burlesque incongruity between "style" and "subject" was usually complicated by the inclusion of multiple or more specific parodies. John Phillips' *The Splendid Shilling* (1701), for instance, combines parodic mimicry of Milton's style from *Paradise Lost* with the contrast between this style and the "low" content, and with an implicit satire on contemporary society. Phillips imitated numerous stylistic features of Miltonic epic, such as the frequent inversion, introduction of numerous proper names, stately diction and sonorous epithets (Bond 102). The debtor's prison, for instance, is depicted through unmistakably Miltonic diction and versification:

A Catchpole, whose polluted hands by gods,  
With force incredible and magic charms  
Erst have endued: if he his ample palm  
Should haply on ill-fated shoulder lay  
Of debtor, straight his body, to the touch  
Obsequious (as whilom knights were wont)  
To some enchanted castle is conveyed,  
Where gates impregnable and coercive chains  
In durance strict contain him, till, in form  
Of money, Pallas sets the captive free. (Lonsdale 7-8)

One possible strategy of reading parodic literature may be to see a serious topic beneath the mask of comic playfulness. *The Splendid Shilling* talks about money, debt, corruption and material deprivation, and its use of the Miltonic sublime, though
incongruous on the surface, perhaps also ironically suggests the significance of its topic. Such a burlesque formula is typical of the Restoration/Augustan literary form, which is usually multi-styled and parodic as well as satiric. The upheaval of grand monolithic styles and genres in the period made parodic games one of the key ingredients of "Augustan" literary "wit". In sharp contrast with Metaphysical poetry, where in each poem there is usually "a single topic, treated with concentration", in "Augustan" poetry "the topic chosen is customarily a large one, capable of almost infinite extension to include all sorts of other topics, and an expanding number of styles and tones" (Doody 27). Arguably, many "long poems" of the eighteenth century, such as Blackmore's *Creation*, Pope's *Essay on Man* or Thomson's *The Seasons*, expansive, panoramic and multi-generic as they are, seem to rather mark a wish to dissociate themselves from the parodic excess of humorous literature and to elaborate a calm, descriptive and meditative tone. Still, however, the thesis on the parodic, digressive and experimenting character of Restoration and Augustan poetry is accurate, and it also points directly to the development of the novel in the period as an open-ended, expansive and polyphonic form. The reasons behind this inner diversity of neoclassical form are themselves varied: a distrust towards a uniform and orthodox style (or even towards "literary style" as such, especially in the "formal realism" that Ian Watt identifies in Defoe and Richardson), the gradual dissolution of rigid classical forms, and changing patterns in the consumption of literature, with authors and booksellers seeking to satisfy the modern reader's appetite for variety, novelty and expansiveness: one of the traits of parodic forms that should not be ignored is that they tend to be thoroughly entertaining, presumably for both writers and readers.  

The epic poems of Homer and Virgil – still considered by neoclassical theory to be the greatest of poetic achievements – were no longer, after Milton, imitated with any success, but became instead a source for innumerable travesties and parodic adaptations. Charles Cotton's *Scarronides, or Virgil Travestie. A Mock Poem on the*

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22 In the changing patterns of literacy and consumption of literary texts, parody played a role similar (if less profound) to translation (the two forms often still converged in the Restoration period) in the adaptation and popularization of classical texts. The proliferation of translation and print "helped to bring what had been a canon of literature reserved for the elite to a broader reading public. Once exclusively the domain of the aristocratic or wealthy men to whom classical education was available, much of the literature of antiquity could now be read by all the merchants, women and others who could read only English" (Sussman 17). The expensive (six guineas the set) folio edition of Pope's *Iliad*, for instance, was soon followed by a cheaper, pirated Dutch duodecimo version (Watt 45). Playhouses had a comparable popularizing function, as the classical sources were often adapted or parodied for the audiences comprising also of the middle and lower ranks of society (Frank 38-9).
First and Fourth Books of Virgil's Aeneid, In English Burlesque (1664-70), is an example of a popular seventeenth-century travesty of the epic. Written in pointed octosyllabic couplets, it is saturated with bawdy humour and vulgar diction typical of the comic poetry of the Restoration period:

His arrow in the string he nocks  
And shoots among the harmless Flocks  
These prov'd at chance to be the fairest  
But he still shot at that was nearest  
Seven Lordly Tups he wounded mortal  
The other shots he made were short all  
These to his hungry men he lurries  
(Pray, what's his due that Mutton worries?)  
Here Lads, (quoth he) here's Sides and Haunches  
Fall to, and fill your empty Paunches.  
Scarce had he made an end of Boasting  
But some to Boyling fell, some to Roasting:  
'Twas soon enough, and to't they fall  
They eat up Mutton, Guts and all;  
Yet scarce could satisfy their Hungers,  
These Trojans were such Mutton-mongers (Book I, ll. 281-297)

The laughter in Cotton's travesty stems largely from the striking debasing of the heroic qualities of Aeneas (his shooting skills, his tendency to boast and the appetite of his comrades are ridiculed in the passage quoted). At the level of poetic diction, the short, overly humorous line replaces the heroic couplets, and Cotton's parodying voice dominates over the high heroic style. The poem is written in imitation of similar French works: Jean Baptiste Lalli's Eneide Travestita (1634) and especially Paul Scarron's popular Vergile Travesty (1648-53), which started the vogue for travestying versions of classical authors in both France and England. Cotton inverted the elevated, idealist perspective that defines the epic idiom and infused it with joyful, bodily mockery, presenting Virgil's celebrated heroes as common rouges, with all their vanity, indolence and gluttony. This comic "uncrowning" of the heroic word appears to be highly ambiguous, since it is difficult to determine whether the crude parodies of classical texts questioned their value in any culturally significant way. Robert D. Lund quotes Mathew Prior's "Preface" to his travesty of Dryden's The Hind and the Panther, in which Prior claims that "Homer was Burlesque'd and Virgil Travestied without suffering any thing in their Reputation from that Buffoonry". This, however, as Prior observes, is not true for the parodies of modern authors, which seek to expose what is "monstrous and unnatural" already "in the Original" (Lund 99). Parody typically questions the validity of the parodied style in an indirect manner, without resorting to any objective criteria of formal criticism (Rose 1979: 107). For Hutcheon, parody may
well work without criticizing its model, since a comic "inversion" may be achieved "not necessarily at the expense of the parodied text" (1985: 6).

Epic poems have been parodied since antiquity, notwithstanding the fact that epic poetry continued to be highly regarded. Cotton's debasing parody, as Wolfgang Karrer points out, is perhaps more telling about the contemporary social framing of parodic practices and the ways in which these may distort both literary and social conventions:

Cotton is royalist and anti-Puritan, he imitates Hudibras to please the London court. In other words, the incongruity depends much on the social frame (...) A Puritan or middle-class reader will not react the same way the courtier or Charles II would. The reader educated in Latin classics will draw an experience from travesty that is very different from the one for readers without Latin. Cotton obviously wants to reach readers who do not know their Virgil by heart, but enough Latin to appreciate the mistranslations. But a reader with little education can still enjoy the debunking of heroes or use the style himself to debunk other authorities. (96)

Inevitably, therefore, some readers will appreciate the nuanced interplay between translation and travesty in Cotton's text; others will see it as a reductive "Buffoonry", while others still will simply enjoy its joyful spirit, explosive humour and debasing mockery.

Immediately after the Restoration, a counter-Puritan impulse mobilized many authors of bawdy and comic literary texts; the playwrights and poets who gathered around the court of Charles II were invited to freely practice all sorts of mockery and burlesque, in a cultural atmosphere of relaxed, tolerant and free-spirited humanism. As Ronald Paulson demonstrates in his study Sacred Parody in Enlightenment England, apart from the ironic treatment of classical sources, the tradition known as parodia sacra was still much alive in eighteenth-century comedy and satire. In Restoration comedy, for instance, there was "the constant play of wit in similes relating love and religious devotion. In Etherege's Man of Mode (1676), the rake associates heaven with free sexual play, and hell with marriage" (Paulson 103). Sexual passion and pious devotion were provocatively linked together also by Swift, an Anglican clergyman, in A Tale of a Tub, a satire on all kinds of sectarianism and religious fanaticism. There is, indeed, a sense of cultural dualism in the period when the beau monde of courtly poetry and urban pleasures sharply contrasted with "a stricter bourgeois conscience that could not reconcile the frivolous with the economical or the eternal" (Bond 230).

23 According to Hutcheon, ironic inversion is a major formal element of any parodic text: "ironic inversion is characteristic of all parody: think of Don Juan’s reversal of the legend (the women here chase after him), and of the conventions of the epic" (1985: 6). She concludes that parody is not simply a "mockery", but rather a method of "recoding" that reinvents the meaning and the value of the parodied "code", often by playfully transposing it into a different context or aesthetic register (1985: 8).
Furthermore, authors valuing wit and satire, such as Butler, Rochester, Swift and Pope, had to learn the lesson of the Civil War popular burlesque:

The flowering of ballad literature and popular poetry, poetry cast for the street and the ale-house, meant an upheaval of form and style (…) Civil war poetry, ventriloquial and parodic (or burlesque) meant that poetically nothing was safe any more. There was no voice that could not be mimicked. No style was sacrosanct, no subject off-limits to abusive treatment. A drinking-song could turn into Puritan curse, an apparently pious hymn into bawdy announcement of vulgar ambition. All styles could be used for hostile, or at least quite alien, purposes. (Doody 55)

The parodic excess of the Civil War period destroyed faith in any grand poetic narration or sacred canonical style, so that only an ironic, provisional and self-conscious use of style became possible (Doody 55-6). After the religious conflicts and political turbulence of the seventeenth century, however, neoclassicism of the eighteenth century, which based itself on the promotion of moderation, urban elegance, classical erudition and refinement, increasingly viewed the bawdiness of travesty and "low" burlesque with suspicion. Its often coarse diction, packed in short double-rhyming verse, as in Butler's *Hudibras*, is condemned in John Dryden's influential essay *A Discourse on the Original and Progress of Satire* (1692), where the poet describes it as "debasing the dignity of style" and procuring "a boyish kind of pleasure", even if Butler has much "good sense" that is "perpetually shining through all he writes" (2007: 55).  

The transition towards more elegant diction and more restrained tonality is visible in Dryden's own burlesque poem, *Mac Flecknoe; or, A satyr upon the True-Blew-Protestant Poet, T.S.* (1682). Dryden targets in his mock-epic verse his foe, the English poet and playwright Thomas Shadwell, who is to become heir to the Irish poet Richard Flecknoe in the Empire of Dulness. Dryden created one of the earliest English "high burlesque" poems, employing the elevated epic style for purposes of mockery, but retaining its elegance and pathos:

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All human things are subject to decay,
And, when Fate summons, Monarchs must obey:
This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
Was call'd to Empire, and govern'd long:
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24 Nevertheless, the "Hudibrastic" style of parody was frequently imitated throughout the eighteenth century. Characteristic of Butler's *Hudibras* was an elaborate mixture of pretentious and pedantic diction with sharp wit and grotesque imagery; the later "Hudibrastic" poems usually also applied "low" style, bawdy rhymes and satiric description to a relatively serious (religious, political, moral, social) topic. Some included mock-heroic elements (cf. Daiches 583-5, Bond 145-154). A few of the more influential examples are: Ward's *The Dissenting Hypocrirte* (1704), Hickeringill's *A Burlesque Poem in Praise of Ignorance* (1708), Cook's *The Sot-weed Factor; Or, a Voyage to Maryland. A Satyr* (1708), Finch's *Free-Thinkers, A Poem in Dialogue* (1711), Prior's *Alma: or, the Progress of the Mind* (1718), Meston's *The Knight* (1723) and King's *The Toast* (1732).
In Prose and Verse, was own'd without dispute,
Through all the Realms of Non-sense, absolute. (ll. 1-6, 270)

Parody is based here on what Bakhtin sees as the dialogic hybridization (the stylistic and semantic orders are at variance; the sustained epic style contrasts with satiric purposes and elements). Dryden’s poem is important in the evolution of English mock-heroic poetry "because of the particular chemistry of its application of Virgilian and Miltonic style to low matter, and also because it contributed to Pope’s Dunciad the idea of a literary culture assaulted by an immense noxious Dulness" (Rawson 2010: 174). Shadwell epitomizes the old and fading poetic style which was characteristic of Renaissance and Baroque culture. He is thus described as Flecknoe's ideal resemblance, his "perfect image":

Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender years.
Shadwell alone, of all my Sons, is he
Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
Some Beams of Wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through and make a lucid interval;
But Shadwell’s genuine night admits no ray
His rising Fogs prevail upon the Day:
Besides his goodly Fabrick fills the eye,
And seems design'd for thoughtless Majesty (ll. 15-26, 271)

Shadwell is to "wage immortal War with Wit", he is also the "last great Prophet of Tautology", his task is "New Humours to invent for each new Play", to write "mild Anagram" and rule in "Acrostic Land" (the technicalities typical of Baroque poetry). Dryden employs carnivalesque motifs (the praise of folly, the mock-coronation of a mad or mean person) to ridicule Shadwell's outdated and pretentious poetics. The poem incorporates epic motifs (especially the vision of future empire) and toys with the typical epic way of introduction of the hero as distinguished by one major quality (Shadwell's trait is dullness). The poem degrades the heroic ambitions of mediocre poets and exposes the deceptive force of rhetorical excess. Most of its elegantly insulting verse consists of impersonated delusional speech by Flecknoe, an idiotic monarch who praises the unwholesome delusional speech by Flecknoe, an idiotic monarch who praises the unwholesome qualities of his heir. It points, ultimately, to the motif of poetic madness ("His Brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace, / And lambent dulness plaid around his face"). The allusions to Aeneas and Ascanius, to John the Baptist and Christ and to the epic topos of founding an Empire underline the parodic resemblance between the devious pair Flecknoe/Shadwell and the noble epic and biblical figures.
In the light of these examples and earlier theoretical considerations, it may be stated that the role of parody in neoclassical discourse was complex and ambivalent: it was certainly a tool for satiric ridicule of unreasonable, vain or corrupting abuses of language, but also for a temporary suspension of the logic of decorum for the purposes of comedy and amusement (perhaps a major component of the Augustan "wit"). Importantly, parody allowed writers to creatively traverse the rigid canons of classical genres and mock their detached and exalted style in order to invite a fresh, more heterogeneous vision of the world. Pope, for instance, was aware of the incongruity between lofty classical forms and the growing need to reflect in literature the complexity of a mundane reality: "The use of pompous expression for low actions or thoughts is the true Sublime of Don Quixote. How far unfit it is for Epic Poetry, appears in its being the perfection of the Mock-Epick" (quoted in Fanning 656). Pope could locate in parody a possible way to resuscitate the "Sublime" character of the detached classical forms; located in the Postscript to his translation of Homer's Odyssey, the statement suggests that the serious, unmediated imitation of elevated classical models may result in the "bathos" of artistic failure.

The growing appreciation of burlesque permitted a less strict approach to the problem of genre and composition. One example in particular, though perhaps not obvious, seems to be also of interest here. Shakespeare was, according to Dryden's Essay on Dramatic Poesy, the one who "needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards and found it there" (1943: 149). Shakespeare did not have to "observe the dramatic laws" because he possessed, according to Dryden (speaking as Neander), "the largest and most comprehensive soul" – he could understand nature without the guidance from the Ancients as his sensitivity and inborn talent enabled him to see nature through naked eye. Shakespearian "nature" is remote from the Aristotelian unities – his "spontaneous" sensitivity, it seems, also made it difficult for critics to account for his art within the tight box of ancient dramatic formulas: "Shakespeare’s mingling of genres thus produced problems for Neo-classical editors and critics" (Widdowson 64). In consequence, Ben Johnson is judged by Dryden to be "the more correct poet", while Shakespeare is seen as "the greater wit". As Hutcheon remarks, in England after the Restoration "the valuing of wit and the predominance of satire brought parody to the forefront as a major literary mode" (1985: 36).

The eighteenth-century practices of parody may be identified primarily with the ironic and subversive reshaping of the ancient-old forms of poetry, epic, tragedy and
The formally experimental and playful works of the "Scriblerians" (Jonathan Swift, John Gay, Alexander Pope, later also Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne) engage in an ironic re-appropriation of various "elevated" classical genres, but these authors parodied intensely also numerous other (ancient and modern) styles and discourses. Scriblerian parody correlates especially with their criticism of the proud, self-appointed "Moderns": pedantic critics, Grub-street poets, mad ideologues, misguided philosophers and corrupt politicians. It also signals their determined search for fresh and flexible channels for literary expression, in a constant critical dialogue with established discursive forms.

1.3. Scriblerian Textuality: The Relation between Parody and Satire.

The Scriblerian practice of parody appears to be a logical consequence of the clash and confrontation of erudite and ambitious classicist poets with the social, political and cultural transformations they witnessed in early eighteenth-century London. Scribblerian parody (the major ingredient of Scriblerian satire) testifies to the correlation between criticism and creativity – it is full of deconstructive energies; it is driven by the scornful, Menippean laughter; it borrows from the parodies of Erasmus, Cervantes, Rabelais and Boileau; yet it remains original, insightful and thoroughly critical in its parodic forays. It is less bawdy and vulgar than carnivalesque parody, more satirically focused, typically directed against rhetorical madness and abuse of the literary word, against the trifles of pedantic science and criticism, political corruption and cultural decline, and it often mirrors these tendencies in the parodic-performative virtual space of its discursive constructions: mock-epic, mock-pastoral, mock-academic, mock-romantic, mock-prophetic and mock-sentimental. Moreover, this eccentric habit of parodying spreads over the poetic, dramatic, journalistic and novelistic works of the Scriblerians. The Tory satirists grouped in the Scriblerus Club (Gay, Pope, Arbuthnot, Parnell and Swift) form the first generation, Fielding (H. Scriblerus Secundus) is their direct heir, while Sterne's parody, though deriving from a different position, is largely guided by the same textual inspirations (Cervantes, Rabelais) and, although extravagantly original, follows many of the Scriblerian themes and motifs.25

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25 As Brean Hammond points out, the actual meetings of the Scriblerus Club in St James's Palace lasted only few months, till the death of Queen Anne in 1714 (Dr Arbuthnot was her physician), but they
Scriblerian authors could hardly inhabit any genre without parodying it and infusing its structures with irony and satire. Whether the mode is traditional (epic, tragedy, elegy, pastoral poetry) or modern (opera, sentimental novel), their deconstructive distrust towards any enclosed and defined form is also a mark of their innovative potential, an ability to offer new stylistic combinations that refresh ossified or ideologically suspect genres. Scriblerians often combine sophisticated ironies, vulgar travesties and ridiculing satires within the limits of one work. Their hybrid, playful texts benefit from the cross-fertilizing of the Classical humanist tradition with "popular" literary forms, a hybridism that brings vitality and formal inventiveness to their writings. Within the complex nexuses of ideological, religious or cultural disputes of the Enlightenment, parody, in its critical/creative appropriation of different stylistic norms and discursive practices, reflects the cultural politics of the time perhaps more palpably and vividly than more unified, non-parodic discursive formations. The names of Swift, Pope, Gay, Fielding and Sterne mark texts of a strikingly (post)modern kind: experimental, playful, self-reflexive and deeply ambiguous, but also actively engaged in various political and cultural debates of their time. These texts fascinated and inspired later readers and writers perhaps more with their form than with their content, so to speak; and to classify them unequivocally as "satires" may inadvertently suggest the limited ambition or occasional character of these works.

Nevertheless, these authors are also commonly referred to as satirists, and the correlation between parody and satire requires perhaps a brief explanation. Bakhtin argued that most parodies are satiric, while most satires employ elements of parody, either of poetic diction or of specific jargon, in their ridiculing representation of various attitudes, ideas and discourses (2009: 354-5). Historically, both terms were closely connected: the Greek Satyr-drama was essentially a parodic inversion of tragic plays into satiric farce, while so-called "Menippean satires" were typically based on sophisticated parodies of philosophical dialogues (Lucian) or on outlandish mock-epic and mock-romance plots (Petronius). Aristotle's comment about parody and comedy in his Poetics (they "present people worse than they are") may suggest that a majority of comic forms tend to be satiric (Rose 1995: 66). Moreover, parodists often challenge both artistic and social conventions, for instance be presenting vulgar, obscene or

provided the impetus for many of the most playfully satiric works of its members, including *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Beggar's Opera*. Furthermore, the persona of the pedantic and misguided scholar Martinus Scriblerus was directly a product of the club's meetings and discussions (Hammond 1986: 109-12).
politically sensitive content, thereby foregrounding the interplay between "literary norms" and "those of the public sphere" (Rose 1979: 109). Like parody, satire is often seen not as a single genre, but a general mode present in various generic guises. In his classic study on the subject, Gilbert Highet enumerates three major forms of satire: (1) diatribes, or satiric monologues, popularized especially by Horace and Juvenal, (2) parody and (3) satiric narratives (13-14). He admits, however, that satiric monologues and narratives may also be parodic (14). The interrelation between parody and satire is thus a complex and intimate one.26 As a technique of mimicry-with-incongruity, parody is a frequent vehicle for exposure and ridicule of the parodied discourse. However, the same technique is often applied to the ironic transformation of the parodied style, idea, genre or discourse, a transformation that does not always aim to ridicule them.27 In various mock-epic and burlesque genres, the parody of literary form or convention is often linked with a satire on contemporary society or politics, with ridicule of some contemporary authors, or with a broader parody of contemporary intellectual or literary trends. As Margaret A. Rose contends, "parody is not indifferent to the extra-literary (social, religious, philosophical) norms essential to satire" (1995: 82). Hence, parody does not imply that "there is nothing outside the text" but rather illustrates that it is the complexity and the dynamic of social and historical reality that invites parodists to expose the conventional modes of representation as provisional and subject to critical and playful transformation.

There are numerous literary works traditionally identified as satires that would perhaps be better classified as parodies. Nevertheless, it seems that to neatly separate parody from satire is not only difficult but also undesirable, and would probably result in a reduction of parody to a purely formal procedure, thus underplaying the symbolic

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26 In classical genre nomenclature (e.g. Quintilian), satire was usually defined narrowly, as the poetry in dactylic hexameter, typically featuring a first-person speaker mockingly describing some aspects of contemporary morality, manners and political life. Other mocking and comic forms (iambic poetry, comic drama, mixed verse-and-prose "Menippean" works) were only later described as satiric (Keane 31-2). The satires of Horace and Juvenal contained elements travestying "serious" genres intermixed with a predominantly familiar, conversational style and tone (Keane 47-9).

27 The reduction of parody to satire has often been criticized (Rose 1995: 82-3). Parody that lacks a critical agenda is sometimes referred to as "pastiche" (Rose 1995: 68-71). In such cases, a text or a work of art "reworks" a certain style or motif, but without humorous inversion or critical contestation. Frederic Jameson, in his much-debated article for the New Left Review, saw pastiche as a negative trait of postmodernist architecture, film and literature, linking it with the reduced awareness of tradition and naïve historicism of postmodernism: "a cannibalization of all styles of the past, a random play of stylistic allusions" and "heterogeneity without a norm" (Jameson 1991: 16-53). Linda Hutcheon strongly disagreed and for some time debated with Jameson, pointing out that parodies do not need to be sharply satiric to engage critical perception or historical awareness: "through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive both from continuity and difference" (Hutcheon 2002: 89).
inversion and ideological contestation often involved in various parodic texts and practices. The frequent use of parody in satire, and of satire in parody, seems to draw attention (much like deconstruction) to the important correlation between social critique, symbolic inversion and linguistic play. As Robert Phiddian argues, parody makes satire not only artistically complex, playful and indirect, but also markedly less naive, since parodic textuality is "logically and philosophically opposed to the absolutist claims and mimetic frauds" (1997: 692). Parodic satires, for instance of the Menippean or Scriblerian type, are usually more immersed in textuality than, say, Horatian satire, and their authors notice the extent to which discursive practices construct, influence and legitimize the social and symbolic (dis)order.

Furthermore, an important distinction should be made between the type of crude and critical laughter characteristic of satire and burlesque and the mild, benevolent laughter characteristic of sentimental comedy, which flourished in the early eighteenth century. Numerous scholars have discussed the gradual transition from the "culture of wit" towards the "culture of politeness" in the public sphere of the eighteenth century, pointing to the attendant decline of satire and the rise of a sentimental type of comedy. In Judith Frank's formulation, the idea of "benevolent humour" gradually separated the harsh "satiric" wit from the "comic" laughter:

Under the impetus of the sentimental ideology, which regarded men as benevolent and good-natured (...) there was during the eighteenth-century an effort to redefine laughter, and to demarcate the boundaries of appropriate laughter (...) Indeed, in separating it [comedy] from satire, theorists of benevolent humor represented it as the more democratic of the genres, a genre more tolerant and accommodating of difference and individuality (Frank 19-22).

Satiric laughter, and especially harsh, misanthropic and pessimistic laughter of the Menippean kind, contrasted with the paradigm of sensibility. The idealizing, benevolent humour of sentimental comedy in the manner of Steele's The Conscious Lovers (1722) was, therefore, to prevail over the satiric-burlesque ridicule, which became almost extinct in the later part of the century.28 The decline of satire in the second half of the eighteenth century corresponded with the rise of the middle class and the political dominance of the Whigs, with their ideals of benevolence, progress

28 Henry Fielding's Preface to Joseph Andrews is symptomatic: it admits the frequent use of burlesque in diction for the "Entertainment" of "the Classical Reader," but professes that in sentiments and characters it will be mostly comic, to convey "Pleasure" to the "sensible Reader" (Fielding 2008: 4). Fielding aimed at combining together classical "wit" with modern "sense"; the oppositions Entertainment/Pleasure and Classical/sensible reflect also an ideological shift in the perception of the cultural role of literature, which was to entertain and instruct the growing reading public, a public not necessarily familiar with classical literature.
and propriety forming a new, optimistic view of God and man. The sentimentalist beliefs "in the goodness of human emotion, and in moral sense of the individual, are the fundamental cause of the decline of Satire" (Wilkinson 228). These ideals, of course, were also severely parodied, as is clearly visible in Gay's mock-sentimental plots in *The Beggar's Opera* and *Achilles*, or in Fielding's travesty of Richardson in *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews*. Nevertheless, the society of burgeoning capitalism, after being shattered by religious radicalisms, desperately searched in the eighteenth century for a unifying harmony and stability to oil its rusty social wheels. The decorum of polite manners put a coarse bourgeois empiricism and individualism into a more subtle frame of sociability: "delicacy and sensibility manifested an alternative hierarchy of values to those of inheritance and birth, one based on morality" (Barker-Benfield 289).

In the Augustan battle of Ancient and Modern books, Scriblerian satire manifested not only a classicist poetics, but also a generally hierarchic, conservative and predominantly Tory worldview: "it is not without significance that the greater Augustan satirists, Dryden, Swift, Pope, and Johnson, were all Tories", since their concern with tradition, stability and moral outlook provided a better ground for a satiric ridicule than that of the commercially-minded Whigs (Wilkinson 231). Their satiric and parodic wit castigated the tendencies (the abuse of aristocratic privilege, corruption and abuse of power by Walpole's government, artistic populism and sentimentalism, censorship, narrowness of scientific pursuits and pedantic philology, colonialism, religious intolerance and fanaticism) that continued to challenge the idyllic optimism of the enlightened, bourgeois reason. Swift's *A Modest Proposal* is perhaps an extreme model of how compassion can be expressed in a gesture that is also a harsh parody of the language of mawkish benevolence and cold rationalism. "Ancients not moderns, militantly impolite, satirists rather than cultivators of the easy style, sensing oppression rather than liberty – the so-called Scriblerians are profoundly counter-cultural figures" (Hammond 2005: 222).

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29 Stallybras and White (1986) point out that new forms (journals, periodicals) and sites (clubs, coffeehouses) of the circulation of bourgeois discourse were concomitant with the attempts, in the eighteenth century, to limit and control the sites and forms of unruly behavior and language, festive gatherings and entertainments of the lower ranks of society. The early coffeehouses, for instance, "sold no alcoholic beverages and indeed they were initially defined in clear opposition to the taverns. Every coffee-house had a list of rules posted and under the strong protestant influence the rules (of which copies survive) included no swearing, no profane scripture, no cards, dice or gaming, no wagers over five shillings, no drinking of health. (...) [T]he coffee-house synthesized aspects of both an upper-class and protestant morality with respect to clean living and refinement" (96).
A good example of the complicated and intimate relation between parody and satire is provided by the *Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus*, composed jointly by Alexander Pope, John Arbuthnot and Jonathan Swift, and later edited by Pope. Written in markedly preposterous diction, the text abounds in misguided sophistry, pedantic learning and grossly absurd theories. It is written in a literary form that negotiates between hoax biography and burlesque romance, as it "praises" the various "achievements" and narrates the numerous "adventures" of the self-involved, pedantic and misguided scholar, Martinus Scriblerus.30 Behind the presented intellectual abuse, the reader perceives the Augustan wit that animates various theories and discourses only to mockingly reveal their absurdity. The quixotic persona of Scriblerus, a debased image of the Enlightenment scholar, became an itinerant literary figure, featuring prominently also in Pope's *Peri Bathous* (a hoax manual on how to write bad poetry) and *The Dunciad* (Scriblerus is the assumed author of the Preface and the numerous tedious footnotes attached to the poem). Martinus personifies the general attitude on the part of the Scriblerians towards the despised "Moderns" of various intellectual currents and casts, for he is said to be a scholar, but also "a poet" writing and publishing "under a hundred different names, of which we may one day give a Catalogue" (124), as well as being a critic, editor, painter, physiologist, musician, architect, and politician, indeed "something of a Frankenstein monster of the intellect, constructed from the verbal detritus of diverging conceptions of philosophy" (Condren 82).

Compositionally, *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* fits well the description of Menippean satire provided by Eugene P. Kirk: "a jumble of flagrantly digressive narrative" and "a potpourri of tales, songs, dialogues, orations, letters, lists, and other brief forms mixed together" which typically included "extreme distortions of argument" and a "ridicule or caricature of some sham-intellectual or theological fraud" (quoted in Rose 1995: 85). Menippus of Gadara, a Cynic writing in the mid-third century BC, is believed to have initiated this tradition and "to parody the established

30 The exact authorship of the piece continues to be a matter of contention among scholars: "It has not been possible for critics to agree about which portions may have been contributed by Pope, which by Swift, and which by other Scriblerians, notably Arbuthnot, who is usually credited with the portions having to do with natural philosophy and medicine (...) Pope (unlike Swift) was never to produce much narrative prose satire, or to evince much taste for Cervantesque and Rabelaisian narrative. However, (...) Pope had been experimenting with prose satire in his mock-journalistic reports on the misfortunes that had allegedly befallen both Dennis and Curll, and went on to write much of Martinus' commentary and notes on the *Dunciad*, and thus may have had more of a hand in the story of Martin than he is given credit for" (Griffin 2010: 68).
genres of the philosophic discourse – the dialogue, symposium, epistle, treatise, testament and cosmography – by exaggerating their fictions and arguments, and pushing their logic to an absurd extreme" (Rose 1995: 85). Varro, Petronius, Lucian, Seneca, Erasmus, Rabelais, Cervantes, as well as Swift, Fielding and Sterne are often regarded as continuators of the tradition. *Menippea* consisted thus essentially of varied and mixed parodies and travestying renderings of different fashionable theories or intellectual traditions, parodying both their arguments and style, blending high-brow diction, neologisms and protracted sentences with satiric descriptions, coarse vulgarity and outlandish narratives.

A very brief discussion of several motifs and passages from the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* should suffice to illustrate how the textual mechanism and artistic logic of parody underlie most of its satiric rhetoric. Book I of the *Memoirs* opens with a mock-genealogy of Scriblerus, whose father, Cornelius, a renowned German antiquary obsessed with ancient writing and philosophy, "traced the ancient Pedigree of *Scribleri*, with all their Alliances and collateral Relations (among which were reckoned Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus Bombastus, and the famous Scaligers in old time Princes of Verona) and deduced [it] even from the times of the Elder Pliny", while Mrs. Scriblerus was "an undoubted daughter either of the great Scriverius or of Gaspar Barthius" (68).

What follows is a humorous and slightly absurd story of the conception of Martinus: after a long period during which "Heaven had not blessed them with any issue", Dr Cornelius Scriblerus and his Wife try various methods prescribed by the Ancients (for instance, "confining himself and his wife for almost the whole first year to Goat's Milk and Honey"). After numerous disappointments (e.g. a miscarriage of a female fetus), Dr Scriblerus "betook himself to Aristotle" in order to conceive male offspring:

Accordingly, he with-held the nuptial embrace when the wind was in any point of the South; this Author asserting that the grossness and moisture of the southerly winds occasion the procreation of females, and not of males. But he redoubled his diligence when the wind was at West, a wind on which that great philosopher bestowed the Encomiums of Fat her of the earth, Breath of Elysian Fields, and other glorious Elogies. For our learned man was clearly of opinion, that the Semina out of which animals are produced, are Animalcula ready formed, and received in with the Air (69).

31 A more extensive parody of the somewhat pretentious genealogies typical of contemporary biographical writings can be found in Henry Fielding's mock-heroic biography *The History of the Life of the Late Jonathan Wild the Great*. The notorious highwayman is granted there an ancient pedigree worthy of a most prominent figure (Fielding 1982: 41-44).
The initial parts of the text are interesting in that they contain ridiculing parodies of outdated and useless ancient wisdom and learning, questioning the view that Swift and Pope had only praise for the ancients, even if these passages primarily ridicule "the Moderns" for their literal and uncritical assimilation of ancient texts. The passage also brings to mind the theory of Homunculus discussed in *Tristram Shandy* and clearly points to Sterne's indebtedness to the Scriblerian exposure of various preposterous and antiquated theories. This obsessive fascination with everything that is archaic and obsolescent is expressed in Cornelius’ mock-eulogy delivered after the uninformed house-maid has cleansed his relic shield of all its "Rust of Antiquity".32

The subsequent description of Martinus' birth carefully accounts the numerous "Prodigies" and mysterious signs that predated this event, building thus into an ironic parody of all kinds of superstition and gravely mystical interpretations of dreams and occurrences. Especially comic is the description of the "monstrous Fowl", which dropt near the apartment where Lady Scriblerus resided. Though initially it was thought to be a Swan (hence a prognostic that a poet is to be born), on a closer examination it was discovered to be a "Paper-kite":

His back was armed with Art Military, his belly was filled with Physic, his wings were the wings of Quarrels and Withers, the several Nodes of his voluminous tail were diversified with several branches of Science; where the Doctor beheld with great joy a knot of Logick, a knot of Metaphysick, a knot of Casuistry, a knot of Polemical Divinity, and a knot of Common-Law, with a Lanthorn of Jacob Behmen. (72)

The pseudo-allegorical symbol reveals the future misguided pursuits of the scholarly hero. The mention is made of Jacob Behmen (currently spelled *Boehme* in English), a German mystic, visionary and theologian, who is considered to be a great influence not only on Behmenists but also on Quakers, Methodists, Evangelicals, millenarians, and other groups and movements of the eighteenth-century religious revival.33 The use of crude or offensive allegory is a trademark of both Rabelais and Swift, who often parody the allegorical or "mystical" style of writing, and such mock-allegorical style

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32 “O Woman; Woman! he cried, (and snatched it violently from her) was it to thy ignorance that this Relick owes its ruin? Where, where is the beautiful crust that covered thee so long? Where those Traces of Time and *Fingers* as it were of Antiquity? Where all those beautiful obscurities, the cause of much delight disputation, where doubt and curiosity went hand in hand, and eternally exercised the speculations of the Learned? And this rude Touch of an ignorant Woman hath done away? The curious *Prominence* of the belly of that figure, which some taking for the Cusps of a sword, denominated a Roman Soldier; others accounting the Insignia Virilia pronounced to be one of the *Dii Termini*; behold she hath cleaned it in like shameful sort, and shown by the head of a Nail. O my Shield! my Shield! well may I say with Horace, *non bene relicta Parmula.*” (77-8).

33 Well-known eighteenth-century Behmenists include George Cheyne, a Scottish Newtonian physician and mathematician, and William Law, an Anglican curate and religious writer. Isaac Newton and Samuel Richardson are sometimes said to have been influenced by some of Boehme's ideas (Joling 142-163).
also features prominently in Pope's *The Dunciad*. Further, the infant Scriblerus is reported, in this fashion, to have "cried like a Calf, bleated like a Sheep, chattered like a Mag-pye, grunted like a Hog, neigh'd like a Foal, croaked like a Raven, mewed like a Cat, gabbed like a Goose, and brayed like an Ass" (72). The reference to nine animals suggests the Nine Muses, while the sign is interpreted as a token of "the variety of his Eloquence and the Extent of his Learning" (73).

The subsequent chapters give a humorous description of the upbringing and education of Martinus (or Martin) Scriblerus under the auspices of his fanatical and overambitious father, Cornelius, who wants his son to excel in all ancient arts: "He was infinitely pleased to find, that the child had the Wart of Cicero, the wry neck of Alexander, knot upon his legs like Marius, and one of them shorter than the other, like Agesilaus. The good Cornelius also hoped he would come to stammer like Demosthenes, in order to be as eloquent" (73). Consequently, Cornelius’ pedagogical methods are often unorthodox, to say the least – he insists, for instance, that his son should never wear shoes and stockings in order not to loose the agility with which "he spreadeth his Toes" (73); he further insists he should never wear a cup that would make his ears "for ever lie flat and immovable" (74). He also wants Scriblerus to travel extensively, not only to "perambulate this terraqueous Globe" but also to "make the Tour of the whole system of the Sun" (74). In Chapter IV, *Of the Suction and Nutrition of the Great Scriblerus in his Infancy, and of the first Rudiments of his Learning*, Cornelius goes on to elaborate his obsessive theories concerning diet and exercise, and their influence upon various "Passions" and "Vices". All this eccentricity brings much distress to Lady Scriblerus, who implores her husband thus: "We have but one child and cannot afford to throw him away upon experiments" (74).34

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34 Cornelius’ extreme partiality for ancient theories leads also to his quarrels with the Nurse, who takes care of infant Scriblerus, for instance a quarrel over beef: "The poor woman never dined but he denied her some dish or other, which he judged prejudicial to her milk. One day she had a longing desire to a piece of beef, and as she stretched her hand towards it, the old gentleman drew it away, and spoke to this effect: 'Hadst thou read the Ancients, O Nurse, thou would'st prefer the welfare of the Infant which thou nourishest, to the indulging of an irregular and voracious appetite, Beef, it is true, may confer a Robustness on the limbs of my son, but will hebetate and clog his intellectuals'. While he spoke this, the Nurse looked upon him with much anger, and now and then cast a wishful eye upon the beef. – 'Passion,' (continued the Doctor, still holding the dish) 'throws the mind into too violent a fermentation, it is a kind of fever of the soul, or as Homer expresses it, a short Madness. Consider, woman, that this day's Suction of my son may cause him to imbibe many ungovernable Passions, and in a manner spoil him for the temper of a Philosopher, Romulus by sucking a Wolf, became of a fierce and savage disposition (…) – 'What,' interrupted the Nurse, 'Beef spoil the understanding? That's fine indeed — how then could our Parson preach as he does upon Beef, and Pudding too, if you go to that? Don’t tell me of your Ancients, had not you killed the poor babe with a Dish of Daemonial black Broth?' – 'Lacedemonian black Broth,
The detailed and humorous account of Scriblerus’ education provides opportunities for a parodic analysis and exposure of various intellectual currents and learned discourses of the epoch.\textsuperscript{35} These are usually reflected in the numerous pompous orations given by his father, as well as in the frequent disputes between Cornelius, Martinus’ uncle (Albertus) and the ignorant teacher (Conradus Crambe), who was hired to assist in teaching "Logick and Metaphysics" and other "Polemical Arts" to young Scriblerus (93). Cornelius and Crambe seem to represent two different sorts of intellectual lunacy, which are reflected in their reasoning. Chapter VII introduces Cramble as a scholar immersed entirely in words but lacking in judgment, which gives rise to numerous comic misunderstandings, since "Martin’s understanding was so totally immersed in \textit{sensible objects}, that he demanded examples from Material things of the abstracted Ideas of Logick" (94). In a vaguely Rabelaisian tone, the humorous parody of the scholastic, Latinate vocabulary and various logical principles is based largely on the ensuing contrast between the preposterous formulas and the examples taken from prosaic reality. The notions of individuality, substance, accident, relation, universals, premise and syllogism are explained with the air of gravity by Cornelius and Crambe, who devise a set of more or less ludicrous metaphors or similes to render abstract notions more digestible for Martin, who (being a child) nonetheless remains often confused, despite Cornelius’ strict warning that "what he now \textit{learned} as a Logician, he must \textit{forget} as a natural Philosopher" (96):

\begin{quote}
Cornelius told Martin that a shoulder of mutton was an individual, which Cramble denied, for he had seen it cut into commons; That’s true (quoth the Tutor) but you never saw it cut into shoulders of mutton: If it could (quoth Crambe) it would be the most lovely individual of the University. When he was told, a \textit{substance} was that which was \textit{subject to accidents}; then Soldiers (quoth Crambe) are the most substantial people in the world. Neither would he allow it to be a good definition of accident, that it could be \textit{present} or \textit{absent} \textit{without} the destruction of the subject; since there are a great many accidents that destroy the subject, as burning does a house, and death a man. (94-5)
\end{quote}

It is difficult to determine to what extent the text revels in constructing its mazes of absurdity simply for the sake of humour, for much of its verbal gaming does not seem to have a specific satiric target (there are some passages referring, for instance, to Locke’s ideas on the individuality of the subject (94) or universality (96), but these

\begin{footnote}
thou would’st say (replied Cornelius) but I cannot allow the surfeit to have been occasioned by that diet, since it was recommended by the Divine Lycurgus” (79-80).
\textsuperscript{35} The general context for the work needs to be seen in the neoclassical \textit{Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes}; the widespread division between scholars and poets claiming the superiority of the Ancients and those valuing modern achievements in poetry and learning. The quarrel is satirized and alluded to in numerous Scriblerian texts, notably in Swift’s \textit{The Battle of the Books}. Since Cornelius is so blindly devoted to praising the Ancients, his son Martinus becomes an ardent enthusiast of all things modern.
seem to be based on a deliberate misapplication of Locke’s ideas rather than impelled by their satiric critique). In other words, what predominates in the text is a "general" rather than an "individual" satire, to use the distinction developed by neoclassical writers (and sometimes applied by Pope), but this "general satire" is made effective predominantly by means of parody of the verbal, logical and rhetorical patterns of various scholarly discourses and abstract theories – mixed together almost randomly, perhaps to suggest that all foolish writing is similar. The parodic exposure (and perhaps "deconstruction") of these discourses takes place by means of exaggeration, distortion of logic, *reductio ad absurdum*, or by a burlesque incongruity between the lofty style and the gross misadventures of the lunatic scholarly "heroes".

The Menippean/Scriblerian rhetoric thereby concentrates on a sustained parodic-travestying "degradation" of the language of intellectual pretence, often exposing dilettantism or dogmatism. While the cohorts of the overzealous Enlightenment scholars and virtuosos may be identified as its implicit target, the textual mechanisms of *Memoirs* locate the text in the tradition of *serio-ludere* ("serio-comical" or "mock-serious") writing, a particularly ironic and confusing blend of serious argument and humorous lampoon. Bakhtin locates in the ancient types of *serio-ludere* writing (including "Socratic dialogues" (as a genre), fables, bucolic poems, Menippean and Roman satire, etc.) "the first authentic and essential step in the evolution of the novel as the genre of becoming" (2011: 22):

> It is precisely here that a fundamentally new attitude toward language and toward the word is generated. Alongside direct representation – laughing at living reality – there flourish parody and travesty of all high genres and of all lofty models embodied in national myth. (...) It is precisely laughter that destroys the epic, and in general destroys any hierarchical (distancing and valorized) distance (...) Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus cleansing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it. (2011: 21-3)

Bakhtin concludes that without such fearless, playful and experimenting laughter of satiric and parodic forms "it would be impossible to approach the world realistically" (25). The problem of realism is, of course, a complex one, but what can be admitted is that the "carnivalized" literary forms do allow for a flexible experimentation with various discourses, ideologies and concepts – instead of direct and somber polemic, the "serio-comical" forms engage in a parodic displacement and exposure of the abstract and lofty (literary or philosophical) word.

What links Menippean satires and the novels by Rabelais, Cervantes, Fielding, Dostoyevsky and others is the highly carnivalized, parodic attitude towards literary
forms and languages: Menippean genres and novels are unruly and polyphonic, "built on oxymoronic combinations and carnivalistic mésalliances", and their typical theme is "the relativity and ambivalence of reason and madness, intelligence and stupidity" (Bakhtin 1984:138).³⁶ Such texts elaborate, in a sense, a discursive space that is an equivalent to the technology of "virtual" space – alternatively constructed, provisional and unbound by conventional requirements – in which discourses and literary conventions may be simulated, placed out of context and exaggerated; where cultural hierarchies may be distorted and lofty ideals cynically inverted. In the proto-novelistic "virtual space" of Memoirs, for instance, traditional forms (biography, poetic declamation, philosophical treatise, pedagogical instruction, etc.) become displaced and debased: "Menippean satire is dialogic, full of parodies and travesties, multi-styled, and does not fear the elements of bilingualism" (Bakhtin 2011: 26). Likewise, Scriblerian wit tends to breed a lusciously parodic, highly performative and "virtual" textuality – it almost always speaks indirectly, mirrors various styles, disfigures and reconfigures textual and rhetorical devices. Moreover, as Chambers notices, the confusing textuality of Menippea is often intensified by the intimate incorporation and impersonation of the rhetoric of "madness" in its various forms and guises (psychotic, foolish, obsessive):

Parodic blends in (and outside) the Menippean tradition have been exceedingly effective in conveying a sense, even a facsimile, of mental disorders, especially obsession and schizophrenia, and of co-opting readers, taking them at least partially along for the ride. Thus Swift presents us with a probably crazy and certainly obsessed Gulliver in Book IV of the voyages, but the reader is left to sort things out or to become confused and left behind. And, with less malevolence, the wild digressive ride in Tristram Shandy is a lighthearted, seductive invitation to try on an insane worldview. (151)

The confusing, ironic and unreliable textuality of such half-insane masquerades further complicates Scriblerian (and later Shandean) rhetorical mazes. The incorporation of various subtle degrees of the "rhetoric of madness" allows these authors to liberate themselves from the conventional logic and rhetoric, but also to animate various naive, dogmatic, pedantic or outwardly foolish discourses. The incorporation of multiple lunatic or slightly misguided discourses in the polyphony of the Menippea is often highly ambiguous, for it may offer both an alluring, fascinated glimpse into a deranged consciousness and its sharply critical exposure (this ambiguity is important also in Dostoyevsky). Parody complicates the textual dimension of satire – by impersonating

the very madness and transgression it should presumably expose it often subverts and
decenters "the voice of satiric authority" (Phiddian 1995: 2-3).37 The frequent use of
parody in Scriblerian satire thus draws attention to its performative and textually dense
color, but it also points to the historical link between satiric imagination and the
"ambivalent laughter" of the carnival (satire and parody both embody the paradox of
joyful criticism). When harnessed for typically satiric ends, parody usually elaborates a
kind of ambiguous, wittingly deconstructive mockery; its criticism is performed rather
than directly stated, which requires an attentive navigation in the virtual space of its
textuality.

1.4. Conclusion
Though it is difficult to offer a universal, trans-historical definition of parody, most
scholars cited in the present study underline that parody involves an element of
imitation, stylistic mimicry or structural analogy as well as comic degradation or other
type of ironic or polemical transformation of the parodied style, pattern or material. In
this sense, parody is a protean, flexible technique (not a single genre), as it may be
applied to virtually every genre or discourse. Traditionally, parody's basic role was
perhaps that of a tireless purveyor of entertainment: in playful versions of myths and
legends, in mockeries of learned authorities, in imitations of the jargon and manner of
various social groups from the highest to the lowest strata of society – in various comic
shows and improvised performances, during merry festivities and celebrations. The
structure of any parodic act is inherently hybrid and "double-voiced" – while
 provisionally imitating certain codes and manners they also manoeuvre them into alien
contexts and contradictory functions: the parodied voice and the voice of the parodist
enter into a subtle dialectic of imitation and contradiction. The spirit of grotesque

37 As Keane observes, it was predominantly in the later times that the Menippean comic writings were
defined as "satire" (31). Much Menippean literature does not, in fact, contain any directly didactic
elements and does not suggest any ways for moral or other improvement. As Howard D. Weinbrot
reminds us, "Lucian was central to the development of Menippean satire and of attitudes towards
Menippus. Unlike Varro, Lucian was widely read, translated, imitated and discussed in England and on
the continent" (62). However, what concerned many neoclassical critics was "Lucian's mocking, cynical,
normless Menippean world" and "his often bawdy prose and subjects" that could not be easily
accommodated to any didactic purpose (63). Predominant in Menippean texts seems to be the kind of all-
compassing, joyfully degrading parody that perhaps does not always translate into the more utilitarian,
neoclassical concept of satire. As Bakhtin points out, "the narrow modern interpretation of satire as a
negation of separate individual phenomena" cannot alone explain the exuberance, grotesqueness and
ambivalence of parodic and satiric forms, which often elaborate a complex critique of "the entire order of
"degradation" that rules in carnivalesque parody is certainly one side of parodic technique, which may also thrive in more posh and sanitary conditions, producing delicate ironies and playful incongruities, for instance in erudite courtly poetry. The key role of parodic games and discourses in literature was underlined by Russian "Formalists", but it was only after Bakhtin’s work became widely acknowledged in the West that parody gradually became a more frequent subject of critical and historical inquiry. More recently, literary scholars connected parody with such terms as intertextuality, metafiction and deconstruction, further illuminating different possible roles and methods of parody in literary discourse. Indeed, the term "parody" seems to be worth preserving and rethinking also because of its long and rich history in literary studies.

Seen in contradistinction with such notions as conventionality, seriousness, unity, finality and coherence, parody and parodic laughter may be linked with playfulness, dispersal, incongruity and comic relativity, which become injected into the serious, "direct" or "abstract", word. Such was the role of parodic forms in antiquity and the Middle Ages, Bakhtin maintains – to function as the semi-legalized and half-tolerated bridge between the registers of the sacred and the profane, the official and the informal, the sublime and the vulgar. Parody may be conceived solely negatively – as a satiric mockery of the cliché phrase or tired artistic convention – but seen as a dialectic game with existing styles and conventions, it also serves as a principle of playful dialogue that refreshes the conventional modes and methods of artistic representation. As Robert Phiddian puts it, parody may be used "playfully and experimentally to try on a variety of disguises" as well as "instrumentally to invade the discourses of others and destroy them" (1995: 199). The playful aim of parodic discourse may be to infuse wit and irony into incorporated genre or style, while the critical aim of parodic discourse may be to caricaturize a suspect literary style, to expose mischievous rhetoric, faulty logic or common misperception embodied in the substance of the animated language. Bakhtin’s insistence on the ambivalence of parody in carnival stresses both aspects: the destructive mockery of "the old" provides a platform for the joyful birth of "the new".

Bakhtin’s theory of the carnival and the carnivalesque invites us to appreciate the less gentrified and respectful registers of culture, including a rich – erudite but often frivolous – parodic and travestying tradition in European literature. In the early modern period, Bakhtin claims, the diversity of parody and travesty contributed
enormously to the development of the modern novel – especially in its more picaresque and satiric variants. But parody also had a great impact on the poetry of the eighteenth century – in England after the Restoration, "neoclassical" poets were particularly adept at mocking past and current genres, satirically transforming "serious" models and canonical poetic styles. In the neoclassical literary culture of early eighteenth-century England, burlesque and travesty were practised widely both in verse and prose. As I have already argued, parody encompasses a range of forms and formats, and the technique was applied especially in theatrical burlesque comedies, in mock-epic and mock-pastoral poems, in playful and polemical prose, in satiric and occasional verse. Alongside the crude laughter of burlesque and satire, however, a trend towards sentimentality and proto-Romantic sensibility is also visible in the period. In this context, Swift, Pope, Gay, Fielding and Sterne are often discussed as the champions of wit and satire, writing frequently to tease the popular urban taste, which was becoming increasingly sensitive and sentimental. Indeed, the rise of the middle-class and the growth of literacy in the period provide an important background for understanding many "Scriblerian" literary jokes and mockeries.

The English "Scriblerian" tradition of playful satiric parody needs to be seen, in fact, in the wider historical context of that ephemeral sphere of the "culture of laughter" and the ways in which laughter functions in the public and the informal sphere. Various forms of parody and satire were crucial in the literary culture of the Enlightenment period. Their authors were largely inspired by the surviving pieces of the comic literature of antiquity (Menippean satires, Aristophanic comedies, mock-epic poetry, Lucian's dialogues), but even more so by the humorous and "carnivalized" literature of the Renaissance and Baroque periods (e.g. Erasmus, Ariosto, Rabelais, Cervantes, Scarron). These shared intertextual inspirations as well as their mutual friendship and/or influence make it justified to group together Alexander Pope, John Gay, Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne (while keeping Jonathan Swift also in mind), and to try to see a continuity and similarity in the techniques and purposes of parody in their writings. Moreover, what links these writers together is also their highly sceptical, satiric, and distancing attitude towards the trends and fashions of London life and literary culture, towards other contemporary writers and towards the establishment in general. Posing as brilliantly erudite outsiders, Scriblerians tended to see themselves in opposition especially to dull scholars, pedantic critics, corrupt politicians, moral agitators and second-rate writers. This attitude is visible in the Memoirs of Martinus
*Scriblerus*, a work which humorously pretends to be a biography of a famous critic and accomplished scholar, but which in fact animates and parodies diverse misconceptions, orthodoxies, hollow theories and intellectual frauds.
Chapter II

Playing with Literary Conventions: Parodic Ambiguity in John Gay's
*The Fan, The Shepherd's Week* and *The Beggar's Opera*

We might well call this short Mock-play of ours
A Poesy made of Weeds instead of Flowers;
Yet such have been presented to your noses,
And there are such, I fear, who thought them Roses.

George Villiers (Duke of Buckingham), *The Rehearsal*

2.1. Introduction

In *The Lives of the English Poets*, Samuel Johnson takes the liberty to speak rather condescendingly of John Gay: "As a poet, he cannot be rated very high. He was, as I once heard a female critick remark, *of a lower order*. He had not in any great degree the *mens divinor*, the dignity of genius." (13). This opinion was virtually consecrated by critical tradition, though many critics and scholars have attempted to vindicate Gay's poetic talent. Johnson's view that Gay lacked "dignity" may stem from the fact that he was, above all, a prolific practitioner of parodic playfulness, while his literary output confirms that parody must be understood broadly, as a technique that may survey both the microscopic (particular words, phrases, texts) and the general (genres and stylistic conventions, common motifs, literary traditions). His first poem of consequence, *Wine* (1708) applies epic grandiloquence and Miltonic blank verse to an "unheroic" subject, whereas his popular *Trivia, or The Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716) is often regarded to be a paradoxical "urban pastoral", a poem composed as "a full-scale mock-georgic. In the four books of the *Georgics*, Virgil applies a high style to a low subject, diversifying extensive practical advice about farming with moral, mythological and historical digressions (...) In its claim to offer instruction, its elevated expression, its digressions and divisions into books, *Trivia* is a georgic" (Walsh 2003: 11-12). His

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38 The history of the critical reception of John Gay's work is discussed extensively by Diane Dugaw (2001: 52-74). According to the scholar, this reception often reflects changing aesthetic fashions and ideological views in eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary criticism.
early burlesque play *The What D'ye Call It* (1715) is tellingly subtitled "A Tragi-Comi-Pastoral Farce", overtly testifying to Gay's unrelenting parodic exercises in crossing together dissonant aesthetic registers and conventions. In *The Preface* attached to the edition of the play printed by Bernard Linton, Gay observes that in all the earlier "Tragi-Comedies" the tragic and comic elements "are in distinct Scenes" and "may be easily separated", whereas the peculiarity of his invention "lies in interweaving the several kinds of the Drama with each other, so that they cannot be distinguished or separated" (1926: 336, emphasis added). Gay offers here the theoretical rudiments of parodic technique – the hallmark of his most successful poetic ventures.

As a poet, playwright and satirist, he was a rightful member of the Scriblerus Club and throughout his poetic and dramatic career displayed much of the Club's penchant for parodic textuality, engaging in playful and satiric deconstructions of poetic and theatrical genres, plots and conventions: "Gay thrives on the tension of paradox and ambiguity, the linguistic uncertainties and reversals of irony, the interfaces where contraries meet (town eclogues, beggar's opera, a tragi-comical farce)" (Lewis 1988: 233). He probably first met Alexander Pope in 1712, and from then became his close friend and collaborator. Together with Dr. John Arbuthnot they wrote a burlesque farce *Three Hours After Marriage* (1717), containing numerous satiric caricatures of their shared enemies. Gay's parodic vigour may be situated between Swift's sense of absurdity and monstrosity, and the subtle preciseness of Pope's wit and mockery. Most of his major works hybridize enormous classical erudition with elements of folk and popular urban culture. As Faber notices, Gay systematically rejects the pathos and sublimity of a "counterfeit Olympus" and chooses to inhabit, instead, "the lower slopes of a friendly Parnassus, where his playful ironic fancy breathes a congenial air" (XII). Consequently, as with other "Scriblerian" poets, much of the artistic and intellectual weight of his work may only be accessed indirectly, as it requires a careful decoding of their elaborate parodic-ironic dimension.

2.2. The Poetics of Graceful Parody in *The Fan*

The Augustan age in English poetry exhibited a particular predilection for the so-called "high" burlesque, usually of the mock-heroic variety, based on a parodic contrastive blending of the elevated and erudite classical style with a light, contemporary and often petty or ridiculous subject-matter. Mock-heroic poems typically "praised" their
subject by the use of epic devices and motifs, such as invocation, Homeric simile, catalogue, prophecy, council of gods and epic battle, yet applied those to the overtly anti-heroic qualities, mean persons, or to some contemporary trivial events. Many mock-epic poems focused on conspicuously insignificant or small objects (petticoat, thimble, kite, tea, louse-trap, etc.). Other described minor political quarrels, social events or amorous conquests. Epic stylization with its rich ornamentation, numerous classical references and characteristic epic pathos was in this manner playfully contradicted by the subject-matter to which it was applied. At the level of versification, the decasyllabic couplet (iambic pentameter) was preferred.  

The mock-heroic tradition is believed to have originated in a Greek poem written in hexameter, *Batrachomyomachia*, the oldest surviving parody of epic poetry. According to some scholars, it may date back even to the fifth century B.C. and was often attributed to Homer, though its authorship remains uncertain (Broich 1990: 77). The poem consists largely of an ironically epic account of a battle between packs of small animals (frogs and mice) assisted by Zeus (Jove) and other deities. Because of its cultural significance and influence on neoclassical parodic forms, it deserves at least a brief discussion. It was available in two major translations, an earlier one by William Fowldes (*The Wonderfull and Bloudy Battell Betweene Frogs and Mice*, 1603) and a later one by George Chapman (*Batrachomyomachia*, 1624). Possibly a translation by Thomas Purfoote (1579) was also available, and the poem was "widely read in the seventeenth century in translation or in the original" (Frederick and Clark 1925: 152). Later translators of the poem include Samuel Parker (1700) and Thomas Parnell (1711), the latter being a close friend of Pope and member of the Scriblerus Club (Broich 1990: 79). Parnell attributed the poem to Homer in the title of his translation *Homer's Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, and his translation allows one to observe that *Batrachomyomachia* contained many stylistic components typical for Homeric epic. The poem begins with the Invocation to the Muse, which proclaims the heroic subject of the poem ("The dreadful Toils of raging Mars I write / The Springs of Contests and Fields of Fight", ll. 5-6). The heroes on both sides of the conflict have their respective

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39 Rhyming iambic pentameter was commonly referred to in the Augustan period as the "heroic couplet" due to the fact that "it was the main form of Restoration 'heroic' tragedies", though it gradually became a frequent medium for "unheroic" subjects in various mock-epic poems, satires, and meditative poems, e.g. Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*, Pope's *Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*, Johnson's *Vanity of the Human Wishes*, Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, and others (Humphreys 68). The heroic couplet was an apt vehicle for parodic play, with the second line (or its ending) often paradoxically contrasting the style (or inverting the sense) of the entire couplet, and with its humorous rhyme often suggesting the affinity between contradictory notions or registers (Doody 232-37).
worthy genealogies (e.g. "The Soul of Great Psycarpax lives in me / Of brave Troxartes' Line", ll. 42-3); they speak in an elevated tone and boast of their courage, there is also a "machinery" of intervening gods, etc. However, the predominantly grave and solemn tone of the poem contrasts with its comic elements. The names of the heroes are humorous (aptly translated by Parnell, e.g. "Bacon-gnawer," "Cheese-miner," "A Licker of Dishes," etc.). Their weapons are made of bulrushes (used as spears) and cockleshells (used for shields), and their deeds are often not very heroic. In short, the poem is based on a hybridization of two styles and perspectives; the parodied perspective (the grand-scale heroic) is distorted by a "parodying" perspective (the small-scale comic), creating a medley of contrasts, inversions and incongruities. In effect, the epic traits become miniaturized, rendered trivial and laughable.

The neoclassical vogue for humorous poems written in high epic style was triggered primarily by two influential and popular modern texts. In 1622, Alessandro Tassoni’s La Secchia Rapita (“The Rape of the Bucket”) was published in Paris. Tassoni’s poem relates "the seizure of a wooden bucket from a Bolognese well by the vanguard of a Modenese army during the war between the two cities. Like the Helen of the Iliad, the bucket is the prize for which the combatants struggle" (Jump 1972: 37).

The poem was subtitled poema heroicomico, included over six thousand lines and is often considered to be the first mock-heroic poem in modern European literature. Tassoni’s poem influenced, in turn, the French neoclassical poet and critic Nicolas Boileau, who composed a mildly satiric and elegantly written poem Le Lutrin ("The Lectern", Books 1-4 published in 1672), narrating in overtly epic terms not a grand battle, but a trivial quarrel between two obstinate ecclesiastical officials at the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris (Dąbrowski 2004: 42-5). In short, characteristic of this variant of parody was a conspicuously elevated "classical" literary style, with all its flourish and pathos, contrasting at different levels with a trivial, mundane or frivolous subject-matter. Apart from mock-heroic poems, some prose works are often classified as high burlesque, notably Don Quixote by Cervantes, The Battle of The Books by Swift and Joseph Andrews by Fielding. In the first decades of the eighteenth century, dozens of mock-heroic poems were written by English poets, many of which follow Boileau's example in their rich epic stylization, humorous content and mild satire on contemporary society or manners.40

40 The selected examples of English mock-heroic poems influential and popular in the eighteenth century include: Dryden's MacFlecknoe (1682), Garth's The Dispensary (1699), Tate's Panacea, a Poem upon
John Gay's youthful poem *The Fan* (first printed by Jacob Tonson in December 1713) may serve as a good example of the light, courtly parody based on classical sources. Gay composed the poem a year after the publication of the first version of Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) and it was largely influenced by Pope's light and witty mock-epic style, but thematically it was inspired more by a short poem written by Pope, entitled *On the Fan* and published in *The Spectator* (4 November 1712). The poem begins in compliance with the principles of epic composition: the subject and the scope of the poem are gloriously announced and the poet turns his Invocation to the Muses:

I sing that graceful toy, whose waving play,  
With gentle gales relieves the sultry day.  
(...)

Assist, ye Nine, your loftiest notes employ,  
Say what celestial skill contriv'd the toy;  
Say how this instrument of love began,  
And in immortal strains display the Fan. (Book I, 1-37, p. 10)

The presented events are framed within the love story of Strephon and Corinna; both names were widely used in the poetry of the period: the female name Corinna was traditionally used as an allusion to either prostitutes or women of high social position but with a preference for a liberal way of conduct (an allusion to the ancient city of Corinth), for instance in the poetry of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, or in Jonathan Swift's *A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed* (1734). Strephon, on the other hand, was commonly used to refer to a young, amorous swain in pastoral poetry, but also in other poems, e.g. Swift’s *The Lady’s Dressing Room* (1737), and later in Lord Byron’s *To A Sighing Strephon* (1807). Such names circulated in the literature of the period and were employed as recognizable cultural emblems in neoclassical poetry. Therefore, already the names taken from pastoral tradition have a tint of irony in them, and the elements of mock-pastoral are also visible throughout the poem. One couplet proves sufficient for Gay to evoke the comic properties of this pastoral cliché of Strephon’s good-hearted but very amorous nature contrasted with Corinna’s cold pride and shrewdness:

*Strephon* had long confess’d his am’rous pains  
Which gay *Corinna* rally’d with disdain (Book I, 39-40, p. 10)

*Tea* (1700), Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* (1712, 1714), Gay’s *The Fan* (1713), Bacon’s *The Kite* (1722), Barford’s *The Assembly* (1726), Pope’s *The Dunciad* (1728, 1729, 1742), Whitehead’s *The Gymnasiad* (1744), Cambridge’s *The Scribleriad* (1751), Smart’s *The Hilliad* (1753), Churchill’s *The Rosciad* (1761) and Hayley’s *The Triumphs of Temper* (1781). The English mock-heroic poem has been discussed in numerous studies, for instance by Bond (1937), Bystydzieńska (1982), Colomb (1992), Robertson (2006) and Broich (2010).
The obstinacy on the part of Corinna requires divine intervention. The unsuccessful suitor addresses his laments to Venus, who is asked to provide a gift that would "humble into love Corinna's heart". In the following stanza, the reader is transported to Venus' grotto, in which cupids contrive all the accessories indispensable for amorous conquests and intrigues. Apart from their bows and arrows (the "fatal darts"), they produce all the "female toys" necessary for flirting and seducing (the "glitt'ring implements of pride"): the "polished crystal bottle" which "with quick scents revives the modish spleen", the "di'mond crosslet", the stationery for "future records of the lover's flames," and "The patch, the powder-box, pulvilve, perfumes /Pins, paint, a flatt'ring glass, and black-lead combs". Most of the objects manufactured there are thus light and decorative, but the cupids' workshop is described in terms ironically resembling the Vulcan's underground factory of heavy weaponry and armoury:

Here the loud hammer fashions female toys,
Hence is the fair with ornament supply'd (Book I, 111-12, p. 12)

After few lines, this parody continues:

The toilsome hours in different labour slide
Some work the file, and some the graver guide
From the loud anvil the quick blow rebounds
And their rais'd arms descend in tuneful sounds. (Book I, 131-34, p. 12)

Apart from the allusive, travestying parody of Homeric description of Vulcan's cave, a soft, mild parody of exalted amorous language is visible in the scene. Venus arrives at the grotto to declare her wish: she describes the design of the fan, which is to be modelled on the peacock's tail. The description of the new "machine" is particularly detailed but also very articulate and poetic, which may testify to the period's fascination with extended anatomical and mechanistic descriptions:

Thin taper sticks must from one center part:
Let these into the quadrant's form divide,
The spreading ribs with snowy paper hide,
Here shall the pencil bid its colours flow,
And make a miniature creation grow.
Let the machine in equal foldings close
And now its plaited surface wide dispose.
So shall the fair her idle hand employ
And grace each motion with the restless toy (Book I, 155-172, p. 13)

The poem builds into something that could be identified as a parodic reiteration of cosmogony, or a travesty of the myth of origin – instead of a history of some great consequence for humanity, the poem presents the mythical origin of the fan, surely a
somewhat trifle object for the epic story, which hints also at the trivial pursuits of the polite society.\footnote{As Douglas Allen notes in his book on Eliade, myths do not only provide the origins of the world \textit{sensu largo}, but are replete with mythical origins and explanatory genealogies for most diverse "desires, needs, crises, rites and activities" (200). Myths of origin also have an eschatological function, i.e. the origin often predetermines the fate or the final end of its object (203-4). Gay's parody perhaps exploits also the fact that classical mythology provides complex origins for objects or phenomena that may appear insignificant from the modern perspective.} Furthermore, the mock-heroic style is visible in references to the fan, which is to serve women as a war instrument or a kind of weapon ("these new arms", "machine", "new-found snares", "from fan's ambush she directs the dart", etc.). Elegant coquettes are ironically represented as female versions of valiant epic heroes.\footnote{In No. 102 of \textit{The Spectator} (1711) Addison quotes a letter to the editor which proposes a similar militaristic metaphor for the fans: "Women are armed with Fans as Men with Swords, and sometimes do more Executions with them. To the End therefore that Ladies may be entire Mistresses of the Weapon which they bear, I have erected an Academy for the training up of young Women in the Exercise of the Fan, according to the most fashionable Airs and Motions that are now practised at Court" (1921: 76). The letter may have also provided a hint for Gay's poem.}

Gay's poem is said, in fact, to have inaugurated the "invention" type of the English mock-heroic poem, in which a trivial or everyday object is given an exalted mythological genealogy, often in the form of a humorous history. Among the mock-heroic invention poems popular in the period, one should mention \textit{The Petticoat} (1716, by Francis Chute or John D. Breval), \textit{The Bottle-Scrue. A Tale} (1720, by Nicholas Amhurst), \textit{The Kite} (1722, by Phanuel Bacon), \textit{The Louse-Trap} (1723, anonymous), \textit{The Cudgel} (1729, by Joseph Mitchell) and \textit{The Thimble, an Heroi-comical Poem} (1744, by William Hawkins). As Ulrich Broich observes, this class of eighteenth-century comic poetry "has its ancestry in the serious and comic epics of the past" (83-4). Unlike the more common battle poems, which parodied descriptions of the Trojan War in the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Aeneid}, invention poems built on the elaborate descriptions of the making of the shield of Achilles in the \textit{Iliad} or Aeneas' shield in Virgil's epic (Broich 84). Moreover, the epic motif of invention was also applied in Latin poems of the Renaissance, such as \textit{Syphilis} (1530) or \textit{Hymnum Tabacci} (1628) and in the comic epic by Vida \textit{Scacchia Ludus} (1527). In the age of science and rationalism, however, the use of mythological explanation to account for various everyday objects or phenomena appears to have been a particularly ironic endeavour.

The next two books of the poem focus on the council of Olympian gods deliberating on what kind of painting should adorn the newly invented toy. Here, the parody of the epic is continued as the narrative style echoes the councils of gods in
Homer. The parody of epic language is visible in exalted and "wonderful" descriptions of the gods and the style of their speech. Venus addresses the council in a manner emphasizing the greatness and potency of the gods and goddesses, in contrast with the trivial subject of their later disputes:

Assembled Powers, who fickle mortals guide,  
Who o'er the sea, the skies and earth preside,  
Ye fountains whence all human blessings flow,  
Who pour your bounties on the world below (Book II, 15-18, p. 16).

The gods are characterized with a tint of caricature through the intensified stylization of their orations. Diana (Artemis), the goddess traditionally viewed as a patron of women and their chastity, is presented as despising all men and seeing only their worst traits. She wants to embellish the fan with different horrid scenes that would document the deeds of treacherous men and thus warn innocent maids:

Paint Dido there amidst her last distress,  
Pale cheeks and blood-shot eyes her grief express:  
Deep in her breast the reeking sword is drown'd,  
And gushing blood streams purple from the wound:  
Her sister Anna hov'ring o'er her stands,  
Accuses heav'n with lifted eyes and hands,  
Upbraids the Trojan with repeated cries,  
And mixes curses with her broken sighs.  
View this, ye maids; and then each swain believe;  
They're Trojans all, and vow but to deceive. (Book II, 95-105, pp. 17-18)

Diana's long tirade against men is contradicted by the speech of Momus, the god of jest and satire, speaking with "noisie laugh" (l.129). Momus provides abundant counter-examples of the stories of unfaithful and pleasure-seeking goddesses (including Diana herself, Aurora, Venus, Leda, Danae, etc.), who appease their sexual appetite often by seducing young men. The god is thus ridiculing and undermining the one-sided view of women as innocent and chaste. Momus' humorous speech explores also the fact that there are rich erotic undertones present in numerous mythological stories.

In Book III the voice is given to Minerva, who decides that the fan shall be adorned with scenes exemplifying the weaknesses and vanities of female nature ("the follies of the female kind"), thus giving profitable instruction to "fair maids". With the design accepted by the "Celestial Synod," Venus departs to submit the fan to amorous Strephon, who is found in a somewhat wretched condition:

To the low world she bends her steepy way

The council of war on Olympus is presented at the end of Book VI and the beginning of Book VII of The Iliad. In a parodic analogy, the account of the council in Gay's poem is also broken by the division into books, so that Book III starts with the words "thus Momus spoke" ("so spoke the guardian of the Trojan state" in Pope's translation of The Iliad).
Where Strephon pass'd the solitary day;
She found him in a melancholy grove,
His down-cast eyes betray'd desponding love
The wounded bark confess'd his slighted flame
and ev'ry tree bore false Corinna's name (Book III, 139-144, p. 24)

His melancholy state is presented in ironically polite, mock-pastoral terms, with an element of humour (the "wounded" tree bark). The instructive paintings on the fan which Strephon receives from Venus, depending on the version of the poem, have different levels of success. In the later 1720 version, they succeed in changing Corinna's heart; Strephon is accepted and the marriage ceremony follows. In the early 1713 version, however, Corinna simply snatches the fan from Strephon's hand and continues to ignore him, flirting with another swain, Leander.

The playful dialogic "hybridization" (to evoke Bakhtin's terminology) of epic style with light, humorous tone and a trivial subject-matter activates an ambiguous, dialogic exchange of perspectives. Unhappy infatuation and unrequited amorous advances are magnified to epic proportions (they demand divine help as much as the war between Greeks and Trojans). On the other hand, this epic magnification is also deeply ironic: love is presented as a sort of folly, a spell cast by gods (Cupid's arrows); it is also linked to a miniaturized battlefield (the tricks and artifacts used by women described in Book I). The eponymous fan is suggested to be a dangerous weapon; hence the instructive paintings to warn its female users. But such ennoblement further underlines the trivial character of the fan and of the entire story: the grotto, cupids and decorative products make "an obvious contrast with the imposing cave of Vulcan" (Fuchs 45). It seems that the female characters and "female nature" in general are ambiguously celebrated as well as satirized in the poem. The amorous swain wants to seduce Corinna with the "eloquence of love", but it seems that only some "golden present" or "bright toy" may have the power to "humble into love Corinna's heart" (Book I, ll. 66-92). According to Jacob Fuchs, Gay's The Fan portrays different attitudes to women and their sexuality without giving a clear priority to any of them. Women are not necessarily passive and virtuous; they may also actively pursue sensual pleasures, and the poem does not seem to condemn characters such as Leda or Venus, who remain unfaithful (45-6). Also the fact that the poem has two different endings may suggest that Gay could devise Corinna as a stubborn coquette (first version), or a coquette who might be reformed into a good-hearted wife (second version).
The parodic concept that Gay seems to elaborate in this "little epic" is similar to that in *The Rape of the Lock*, where the lofty language magnifies and ennobles the trivial quarrels of fashionable circles, but, at the same time, also mocks them through such elevation. Comic deflation and epic inflation enter in both poems into a kind of dialectic perceptual game. Robert Chambers defines this feature as "parodic multistability", i.e. the effect of parodic distortion and juxtaposition that modifies the parodied genre or style into "a binding of reversible radical alternatives" and claims that "all parody generates multistability" because it "contains at least two alternative ways of looking at the material" (36-8). Parodic works are often half serious and half mocking, elevating and degrading their objects, frequently adopting a problematic, ambiguous stance towards the parodied ideas or themes. As Laura Brown notices à propos the representation of Belinda in Pope's mock-heroic, many critics "find a preponderance of satire and see the poem as an ironic critique of Belinda" but, at the same time, "many readers see the work, at least in part, as a flattering fascinated appreciation" (1985: 18). Parodic contrastive combinations thus tend to be elusive and ambiguous, capable of involving ironic mockery alongside celebration. The treatment of the epic in mock-epic parodies is, in fact, often said to be highly ambiguous. According to Ritchie Robertson, mock-heroic poetry "implies first and foremost a homage paid to serious epic" (2009: 55), but Simon Dentith appreciates, in turn, its critical edge, arguing that it signals the "recognition of the unsustainability of the undiluted heroics in the contemporary world" (109). Parodic ambiguity is therefore confusing but not pointless: it rather demands an appreciation of shifting perspectives, mounting ironies and contradictions. John Gay seems to be fully aware of parodic multistability, and he utilizes its confusing propensity in almost all his major works.

In elegant Rococo parodies, the intimate world of boudoirs and salons is ironically blended with a style imitating epic councils, wars and heroic contests. The Rococo features of Gay's *The Fan* are visible in the emphasis on decorative details, its focus on the visual and the painterly, frequent erotic allusions and elegant poetic diction. These are typical features of courtly mock-heroic poems written mostly in the first decades of the eighteenth century. These parodies are not sharply critical and address light and trivial topics of courtly or everyday life. The epic "machinery" is also trivialized as the mythological gods or nymphs assist beautiful ladies or engage in petty quarrels (Bystydzieńska 1982: 46-9). Ronald Paulson even suggests that Rococo as an aesthetic modality is "essentially mock-heroic" because it is very much "a style of pure
form, graceful, serpentine and asymmetrical" and hence it playfully reduces "the grandiose Baroque forms of the seventeenth-century" (2011: 306). It is not surprising, therefore, that Susan Sontag, in her much discussed essay Notes on "Camp", identifies the sources of camp – an intensely modern aesthetic, and "a sensibility that, among other things, converts the serious into the frivolous" – exactly in the eighteenth-century art and poetry. Camp and parody are quite intimately linked, since both foreground artifice, theatricality and doubleness, yet camp, according to Sontag, tends to be also naive, unintentional, sentimental and self-involved. Parody may turn into camp when it approaches narcissistic stylization, so to speak, and becomes a celebration of the texture of style for its own sake, though such parody can still be multistable – celebrating and also silently ridiculing or undermining the adopted stylistics. Arguably, elements of camp feature in Gay's works more visibly than in the writings of other Scriblerians.

The parodic use of epic motifs in The Fan only very indirectly translates into a satire on polite society, insofar as the values of heroism, valiance and honour are replaced here with trifling intrigues, leisurely pastimes and amorous conquests. Likewise, swords and shields are replaced by cosmetics and decorative products. The epic style and perspective, because displaced and applied to a relatively trivial subject, are also slightly mocked and appear exalted, artificial and even pretentious. But such poems promoted, it seems, the poetry of rich classical erudition and allusion in its light, urban and thoroughly ironic form, though they also mildly satirized the fashions and customs of the day. The courtly "refinement" of the mock-heroic distanced it from earlier popular and vulgarizing travesties of classical authors and epic motifs, in which bawdy jokes and elements of obscenity were common. As in Boileau's poem, crude vocabulary is avoided and the satiric ridicule, even if quite poignant, is implied rather than directly expressed. While The Fan does not match the parodic brilliance of its sister poem, Pope's The Rape of the Lock, both mock-heroic poems aptly illustrate the neoclassical emphasis on technical skill and parodic manipulation of stylistic nuances and classical poetic motifs.

44 “[T]he soundest starting point seems to be the late 17th and early 18th century, because of that period's extraordinary feeling for artifice, for surface, for symmetry; its taste for the picturesque and the thrilling, its elegant conventions for representing instant feeling and the total presence of character – the epigram and the rhymed couplet (in words), the flourish (in gesture and in music). The late 17th and early 18th century is the great period of Camp: Pope, Congreve, Walpole, etc, but not Swift; les précieux in France; the rococo churches of Munich; Pergolesi.” (Susan Sontag, Notes on "Camp". 1964. Georgetown University: http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Sontag-NotesOnCamp-1964.html).
2.3. The "Rustic Muse": Mock-Pastoral in *The Shepherd's Week*

The Scriblerian mocking and parodying impulse is visible in their treatment of canonical literary styles, especially the epic and pastoral conventions. Pastoral tradition is usually identified with the *Idylls* of the Greek poet Theocritus and with Virgil’s *Eclogues* and *Georgics*. These latter poems represent two major variants of the pastoral; the *Eclogues* are characterized by the motif of Arcadia and an idyllic portraiture of a state of natural harmony, while the *Georgics* present a more detailed account of rural life and labour with some practical guidelines for different agricultural chores. The focus on the idealized portraiture of the country often incorporated some indirect criticism of the havoc and disharmony of urban life. The form was revived in the neoclassical period, while the idyllic and pastoral imagery influenced various literary genres. Hegel, among others, criticized the pastoral in his *Aesthetics*, stating that the pastoral idyll "disregards all the deeper general interests of the spiritual or moral life" in favor of the descriptions of "eating and drinking" or "tending the beloved flock" (quoted in Robertson 2009: 210). The classical pastoral tradition was among the most popular (but also frequently parodied) modes in the Restoration/Augustan period. Dryden praised and translated Virgil’s pastoral poems, including the somewhat controversial Second Eclogue, in which Corydon sings of his unhappy love for a beautiful, younger man, Alexis. Pope wrote his *Pastorals* in 1709, which were published together with the pastoral poems of Ambrose Phillips in Tonson’s sixth volume of the *Miscellany* (Sussman 2012: 100). Popular pastoral and semi-pastoral poems of the period include William Diaper’s *Nereides, or Sea-Eclogues* of 1712, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *Town Eclogues* of 1717 (published in 1747), Thomas Purney’s *The Bashful Swain* of 1717 and William Collins’ *Persian Eclogues* of 1742.

As John Barrell observes, it was especially the georgic type of the pastoral that influenced the later nature and landscape poetry, whereas the eclogue pastoral with its aristocratic "ideal of idleness" realized in "unproblematic harmony with nature" was largely abandoned after the first decades of the eighteenth century (1988: 114-16).

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45 This propensity of the pastoral was evoked by Jonathan Swift in such poems as "A Description of the Morning" (1709) and "A Description of a City Shower" (1710), and by John Gay in his "Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London" (1716). The frequent allusions to the changing weather conditions and natural phenomena that continue to govern human behaviour even in the city emphasize the ironic correspondence between rural and city life. However, the pastoral stylization in both poems is used with incongruity to depict the chaos and cacophony of London life, as opposed to the peacefulness of the countryside.
The characteristic feature of pastoral poetry could be located in its combination of relatively sophisticated literary form with lyrical descriptions of the simplicity and charms of rural life. Theocritus, for instance, used iambic hexameter in his Idylls, "a grand metre for a low subject, producing a calculated incongruity" (Boardman et al. 1988: 356). When Ambrose Phillips introduced English country names instead of the classical ones (e.g. Lobbin, Cuddy, Colin Clout) and employed descriptions that were to serve as a realistic representation of the English village, Pope criticized him, and his associate, John Gay, parodied this literary project in The Shepherd’s Week (1714). Gay’s parody is not, however, based on the imitation of Philips and the preceding literary quarrel seems to be merely a starting point for his mock-pastoral exercise, which alludes to a much broader textual range: Theocritus, Virgil, Spenser’s The Shepheardes Calender, Blackmore’s Creation, Pope’s pastorals and Thomas D’Urfey’s songs. The pastoral mode, popularized by Dryden’s translations of Virgil, was applied by Queen Anne’s poets widely, though often in an ironic way, resembling their mock-versions of the epic. Still, however, "it is curious that the [pastoral] form should have existed at all in so strident and realistic an age, in a society which tended to become urban – it was written by the most urban of poets" (Dobrée 133). Indeed, the application of the idyllic pastoral convention by socialite Londoners was a ready target for satiric mockery. What Gay aimed at in his parody, among other things, was the seemingly serious and somewhat naive treatment of the pastoral as a serious and realistic form by writers such as Philips and D’Urfey.46

The Shepherd’s Week is prefaced with "The Proeme to the Courteous READER”, a brilliant parodic mock-preface written in a pseudo-archaic English, exaggeratedly stylized, pompous and almost absurd (it abounds in phrases such as "the Rout and Rabblemment of Critical Gallimawfry"). The author ironically professes to "describe aright the Manners of our own honest and laborious Plough-men, in no wise sure more unworthy a British Poet’s imitation, than those of Sicily or Arcadie" (Gay 1929: 28). The Proeme anticipates the pedantic, mock-academic prefaces that Pope attached to The Dunciad and Fielding to Tom Thumb. Gay discusses major principles of pastoral poetry with reference to his own production: for instance, he refuses the concept of the

46 Richmond P. Bond classifies The Shepherd's Week as a mock-eclogue, and observes that "the original intent was to ridicule the realism affected by Phillips, but Gay did not imitate Phillips closely" and focused instead on "the delicate ridicule of the eclogue type as practised by English poets and even somewhat by Virgil himself" (110-11). The poem is thus a general parody of the pastoral mode rather than a specific parody of Phillips.
"Golden Age, and other outrageous conceits, to which they would confine Pastoral", since he is aware of "no age so justly to be instilled Golden, as this of our Sovereign Lady Queen ANNE" (1929: 28).

The poem itself is divided into six pastorals, referring to six days of the week, all composed in a form of monologues by or dialogues between country labourers. The first pastoral, "Monday, or the Squabble" contains a singing contest between Lobbin Clout and Cuddy, in which the two exchange songs in praise of their lovers, Blouzelinda and Buxoma respectively. The parodic stylization of their poetic diction transforms it into a mixture of naturalistic country dialect and poetic pomposity, while the songs produced by the protagonists seem to offer a poetic style of excessive simplicity and naiveté. Lobin Clout, for instance, enumerates flowers that appear "fair" to him, yet concludes by stating that Blouzelinda exceeds them all in "fairness":

My Blouzelinda is the blithest Lass
Than Primrose sweeter, or the Clover-Grass.
Fair is the King-Cup that in the Meadow blows,
Fair is the Daisie that beside her grows,
Fair is the Gillyflow'r, of Gardens sweet,
Fair is the Mary-Gold, for Pottage meet.
But Blouzelind's than Gillyflow'r more fair,
Than Daisie, Mary-Gold, or King-Cup rare. (Gay 1929: 33)

The descriptions of the charms of the two females that the protagonists exchange are ridiculous, since Gay exaggerates the simplicity and innocence of the characters: the real swains produce genuinely amateurish pastoral verse. Both the language employed and the content of the dialogues parody the pastoral mode in general, but contain references to specific texts as well (especially Virgil and Spencer). The effect is vividly comic as Gay juxtaposes the erudition and elegant pretence of the pastoral with elements of crude realism, as in the following remark made by Cuddy in a reply to his friend Lobbin's assertion that the breath of Blouzelinda is "sweeter than the ripen'd Hay":

As my Buxoma in a Morning fair,
With gentle Finger stroak'd her milky Care,
I quiently stole a Kiss; at first, 'tis true
She frown'd, yet after granted one or two.
Lobbin, I swear, believe who may will my Vows,
Her Breath by far excell'd the breathing Cows. (Gay 1979: 34)

The absurdity that the parodic project presented in *The Shepherd's Week* enacts rests on the fundamental discord between classical poetic decorum and the sentimental pseudo-realism presented by Ambrose Philips. Gay's mock-pastoral incorporates an epistemological as well as an aesthetic critique, elaborating what Margaret A. Rose
terms as the "implied meta-literary criticism" that is often contained in parodic forms.\footnote{According to Foucault, neoclassical age marks a general epistemic shift from commentary to criticism (1994: 78-81). The birth of modern literary criticism in the period (Dryden, Boileau, Pope, Young, Johnson, etc.) reflects the change in the self-referential function of language: in the Renaissance, the commentary explicated and reformulated the meaning of texts, while in the neoclassical age language became the object of systematic study, of the classification of rhetorical figures and of an anatomic description. Neoclassical poetic criticism becomes thus more preoccupied with the question of genre, with outlining its "appropriate" scope and function. Consequently, it seems, the practice of parody becomes more concerned with ridiculing various idiosyncrasies of individual style that contradict the norms of correctness. Scriblerian writers, however, tend also to mock and intentionally invert various pedantic distinctions and principles devised by modern critics.}

This performatively implied critique exceeds the mere burlesque formula of comic incongruity between styles: Gay's poem clashes together the classical pastoral and the emerging conventions of literary "realism" and "sentimental authenticity" practised by popular pastoral poets and balladeers, especially Ambrose Phillips and Thomas D'Urfey, whose literary achievement is questioned and deemed naive.\footnote{When discussing the quarrel between Pope and Phillips, William D. Ellis points out that Ambrose Phillips and Thomas D'Urfey were considered by the Scriblerians as "two of a kind": both were authors of popular rustic ballads and catches, and the talent of both was questioned by Pope in his paraphrases of Horace dedicated to Richards Steele and published in the Guardian in 1713 (206-7). Gay refers explicitly to "D'Urfey's lyrics" in the sub-poem Wednesday, or the Dumps, line 16 (39).} The pastoral does not rely on a true representation of the life of shepherds, and modern sentimental pastorals, while pretending to naturalistically portray the English countryside, in fact give as much a sentimental and unrealistic picture of the rural life as Virgil's poems did. It seems fair to say that a similar urge to expose modern sentimentality prompted Fielding to unmask the illusion of authenticity in Richardson's epistolary novel.

Gay comically radicalizes the idea that a pastoral poem could be thoroughly realistic, and systematically inverts the sentimental pretence into ridicule. The laughter of parody, however, is usually infused with carnivalesque ambiguity and relativity, and it is not an easily manageable instrument of didactic correction. The straightforward satiric purpose may always give way in parody to an excessive comic \emph{jouissance}, the surplus enjoyment found in the frivolous and endless mockery done for its own, transgressive sake. Instead of writing a serious critical essay on Phillips, as Pope did, Gay joyfully revels in the endless and spiteful mockery of the poor, illiterate ploughmen or milkmaids, experimenting with the awkward verses they would "realistically" produce. Parody becomes here a joyful exercise in logical and artistic inversion, not simply a critical satire.\footnote{The concept of \emph{jouissance} as elaborated by such French theorists as Jacques Lacan and Roland Barthes points to an excess of pleasure, a compulsive and automatized enjoyment. The endless automatic repetition of comic mistake or error and a sustained incongruity reflect in comedy and parody exactly this automatic dimension of enjoyment: liberated from conventional restrictions of law and reality, the carnivalesque laughter goes beyond the pleasure principle and becomes "the ‘undead’ eternal life, the}
At the same time, however, Gay does come significantly "closer" to the folk culture of the villages; his poem incorporates and reflects many authentic rural customs, sayings, riddles and songs. *Hobnelia*, for example, in "The Thursday; or, the Spell" sings her "piteous tale" of love and loneliness which ends with a spell, a superstitious practice very common in rural areas:

I rue the day, a rueful day, I trow,
The woful day, the day indeed I woe!
When Lubberkin to town his cattle drove
A maiden fine bedight his love retains
And for the village he forsakes the plains.
Return my Lubberkin, these ditties hear;
Spells will I try, and spells shall ease my care.
*With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.* (1929: 43)

The presentation of the field labourers in the poem is ridiculing, but also somewhat affectionate (the pastoral and satiric voices are confused). At times, Gay's laughter may seem insensitive and shrewdly satiric, but it is also too playful to be read as a criticism directed against the English swains. In "Tuesday, or the Ditty", the country-maid Marian, for instance, neglects all her duties because she occupies herself with "sighs" and "plaining song":

*Marian*, that soft could stroke the udder'd cow,
Or lessen with her sieve the barley mow;
Marbled with sage the hard'n'ing cheese she press'd
And yellow butter Marian's skill confess'd;
But *Marian* now devoid of country cares,
Nor yellow butter nor sage cheese prepares.
For yearning love the witless maid employs,
And *Love*, say swains, all busie heed destroys. (1929: 36)

Marian wastes her time in idleness, charmed by Colin's "carolls sweet", by his dancing, singing and his "nimble feats" in country games and wakes. The charming pastorals of Ambrose Phillips and Thomas D'Urfey, like Colin's singing, corrupt the innocent country maids, who begin to yearn for sentimental love instead of focusing on disciplined labour. The polemical realism of *The Shepherd's Week* lies precisely in this parodic comparison of romantic fancy with the prosaic chores and duties of the countryside life. The classical concept of the pastoral rests on a romantic idealization of the country life and in *The Fan* pastoral conventions are used alongside epic conventions as an elegant and ironic metaphor for courtly love. Unlike sentimental texts, the classical pastoral is conscious of its own arbitrariness. Since in *The*

horrible fate of being caught in the endless repetitive cycle of *jouissance* (Žižek 2008: 481). In other words, liberated from conventional restrictions, enjoyment in comic forms is not so much an absolute freedom but rather a circular logic of automatic repetition: a paradoxical law of constant transgression.

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Shepherd's Week naturalistic country dialect and rustic simplicity are exaggerated and contrasted with the refined pastoral tradition, it can be said, paraphrasing Victor Shklovsky’s famous observation, that The Shepherd's Week is the most typical pastoral poem.50 A courtly, elegantly polished poem about composts or ploughs can seem absurd only from the perspective of the modern literary conventions of realism and sentimentalism, the devices of which are dialectically imitated and inverted here. The pastoral mode in its classical conception is by definition incongruous and "unrealistic", as Pope would readily admit in his "Discourse on Pastoral Poetry":

If we would copy Nature, it may be useful to take this Idea along with us, that pastoral is an image of what they call the Golden age: so that we are not to describe our shepherds as shepherds at this day really are, but as they may be conceived to have been, when the best of men followed the employment. (Pope 1963: 120)

Pope advocates retaining the "delicacy" of the pastoral genre and openly declares that poets "must therefore use some illusion to render a pastoral delightful; and this consists in exposing the best side only of a shepherd's life, and in concealing its miseries" (120). Gay's satiric poem parodically reverts this principle of decorum as it concentrates on rustic life that is far from idyllic, though by no means less charming or interesting for that.

Furthermore, Gay exposes the pastoral as a form that constructs an egalitarian illusion and idealization camouflaging the radical social and linguistic distance between courtly poets and peasants. The inclusion of authentic speech variety (heteroglossia) destroys here the illusion of the courtly masquerade convention, in which urban poets speak through the lips of the shepherds. Gay purports to give voice to the ploughmen and country-maids themselves, though his mockery of rustic simpletons betrays a detached, urban point of view. The resulting incongruity comments perhaps on a historical shift in English society: the courtly pastoral tradition tailored to the "classical" taste was gradually giving place to proto-romantic, meditative or religious poems on countryside and nature, such as Thomson’s The Seasons (1730), which perhaps better suited the sensibility of the growing modern readership, which increasingly involved also countryside tenants and labourers.51

50 I refer here to Shklovsky’s essay "A Parodying Novel: Sterne’s Tristram Shandy" (published in 1929), in which he provocatively claimed that because of its exposure of the major novelistic conventions, Sterne’s work may be seen as the most typical example of the novel despite the impression it gives of being a highly unconventional and eccentric work.

Gay’s parody exposes, therefore, the ironic gaps between pastoral convention, modern sensibilities and social realities.

Bakhtin saw the "popular-festive carnival principle" as an indestructible, transhistorical human feature, in which a "purifying" laughter degrades and de-sublimes all stale and dogmatic forms of seriousness. The element of purification of culture from pomposity, rigid formalism and ossified convention is definitely visible in the Scriblerian mocking writings, but these usually have also more particular agendas. Directed against the so-called Moderns in general, they often targeted popular culture and Whig politics in particular. Especially after the Tory Scriblerians moved unequivocally to the Opposition, their parodic and satiric works reflect their contempt for the artistic and political achievements of their opponents. The death of Queen Anne in 1714 and the quickly following political upheaval marked a transitional point for the Scriblerian circle:

The unsuccessful Jacobite rising of 1715/16 involved a number of Pope's friends and co-religionists. When the dust settled, Oxford found himself in the Tower of London on charges amounting to treason, while Bolingbroke was exiled in France and stripped of his honours. Swift, too, went into a kind of exile as Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, safely remote from the day-to-day battles of party politics at Westminster. Meanwhile Pope's own family was hounded by the measures taken against Catholics as a result of the Jacobite scare, and they had to leave their cherished home at Binfield for the more humdrum (if not yet suburban) surroundings of Chiswick, to the west of London (Rogers 4).

In the public sphere of Georgian England, Scriblerians wrote from the self-avowed position of a displaced and decentred cultural elite, giving voice to a culture based on wit and "classical" erudition, whose hegemonic status had become frustrated by the emergence of more heterogeneous bourgeois culture, the spreading of literacy and the mass-scale print trade. As Pope, Swift, Gay and later Fielding increasingly focus on Walpole's reign and Whig domination in the political and cultural life of Britain, they also criticize the emerging "popular" culture and the moral and artistic degeneracy it brings. Though Swift, Gay and Pope were neither orthodox classicists nor upper-class aristocrats, they tended to endorse a cultural politics that was conservative in the sense that they ridiculed the social changes and modern fashions of various sorts. The conflict is visible already in the Pope-Phillips quarrel and in Gay's The Shepherd's Week. Parody becomes for the Scriblerians a key strategy of ridicule and polemic as they ironically appropriate the genres popular in the period: opera, romance, epic poetry, literary criticism, scientific treatise, travel account and pastoral ballad. While the popular festive-carnival parodies and travesties, according to Bakhtin’s account,
usually mocked the hegemonic "official" culture, Scriblerian parody often mocks what it identifies as the expanding "commercial" and "popular" culture.

The complex relation between the Scriblerian "elitist" parody and the popular carnival festivities is thematized, in fact, in the last pastoral of *The Shepherd's Week*. In "Saturday, or the Flights," the reader is instructed about the possible consequences of the village festivities. During the harvest, when "the reapers toil"Bowzybeus, who was drinking at "the Fair" the night before "till the morning light," is found sleeping in the field by other "swains" and "damsels," who try to wake him up. They succeed, but then, after producing few songs on nature and on "Fairs and shows," and few ballads such as "The Children in the Wood", "All in the Land of Essex" and "Lilly-bullero",

His carols ceas'd: the list'ning maids and swains
Seem still to hear some soft imperfect strains.
Sudden he rose; and as he reels along
Swears kisses sweet should well reward his song.
The damsels laughing fly: the giddy clown
Again upon a wheat-sheaf drops adown;
The pow'r that guards the drunk, his sleep attends,
'Till, ruddy, like his face, the sun descends. (1929: 54)

*Bowzybeus* can be seen as yet another peasant caricature of the pastoral poets, since he is also an artist of sorts; he "could sweetly sing" and "torment the string", had a "jocond tongue" and was fond of singing "Ballads and roundelays and catches". But he is also presented as a drunkard who, at harvest time, wastes an entire day sleeping. In her study on the elements of popular folklore in Gay's poetry, Diane Dugaw points out that Gay, like Shakespeare before him, utilizes the elements of "low" folk culture (ballads, songs, superstitions, sayings, riddles, curses, etc.) in a "detached, ironic, sometimes even mocking" way when addressing the sophisticated urban audiences, but also with an element of complicated sympathy, since the folklore and festive laughter is employed partly to charm and partly to mock the "sophisticated urban point of view" (1991: 519).

One possible interpretation, which Dugaw elaborates and supports, is that Gay identifies himself with *Bowzybeus*, who is presented in a more sympathetic light than other characters. His drinking, singing and sleeping till late afternoon, it seems, indeed make him an ironic mirror of the urban literati. Again, since parody confuses the voices of sentimentalism, satire and classical pastoral, it may be said that *Bowzybeus* functions as a very ambivalent figure, both as a lazy village drunkard (satiric voice) and an almost proto-romantic rustic poet (sentimental voice), not only as a swain who is a mask for the courtly poet (classical pastoral). In this nexus of contrastive
aesthetics, Gay offers "his own searching re-assessment of the genre" in the form of "comic realism" that parodies not only the sentimentalized style of Phillips but also the classical pastoral tradition in all its breadth, from Theocritus and Virgil to Spenser and Pope (Walsh 9-10). Diane Dugaw claims that Gay offers in his works a "parodic satire of a world divided by class", and that Bowzybeus is a figure marking the sympathy on the part of the Scriblerian towards the lower classes of society, which is also visible, she claims, in The Beggar's Opera. Nevertheless, the ambiguous discourse of parody makes it impossible to say with certainty whether readers are to laugh at Bowzybeus with scorn or with sympathy. Though the text is light and comic, it testifies to Gay's classical erudition, which contrasts sharply with the presentation of the country labourers as awkward, simple-minded and superstitious. Bearing in mind "Gay's own provincial background", his west Devonshire upbringing and his later London life and career that supplied him with "keen awareness of the rural-urban opposition", Diane Dugaw sees in his poetry "a demystifying perspective on pastoral forms and politics" (2001: 92-3) – a perspective that is attainable perhaps only to a poet who is both an outsider and an insider to the countryside.

The carnivalesque transgression of decorum and social rank in Gay's burlesque exposes class divisions as cultural conventions, but by imagining an absurd and ridiculous world without them, it perhaps fortifies these conventions and validates them as indispensable. Simon Dickie, referring partly also to Gay's Beggar's Opera, identifies in parodic games a possible symbolic conflict that remains, however, comically contained: "Unlike more idealized representations, however, burlesque images by definition engage with reality; their humour consists precisely in the contrast between high iconography and a base reality. As such they reflect an enduring elite confidence, a sense that rank may be challenged but is not yet in danger" (2011: 129). Seen from this angle, parody plays the role of the guardian of a hegemonic literary discourse, being also, nonetheless, a vehicle for its ironic self-criticism and self-refashioning. However, despite their Tory allegiance, and even despite their "Augustan" pretence, Scriblerians are keen on exposing patrician culture with its abuse of aristocratic privilege or financial advantage (a tendency visible also in The Dunciad). Satiric and parodic mockeries often aim at destroying the illusion of distinction and

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52 Dugaw sees Gay's parodic style as less hostile towards the lower classes it portrays than the usual view of Augustan burlesque, as it is often animated from the perspective closer to the lower orders of society, but without idealizing or sentimentalizing them (1991: 519-21).
respectability that constitute what Bourdieu calls "the symbolic capital". As Diane Dugaw sees it, Gay is "decentering the classical view to take up less-than-ideal experience of the 'rustic' (...) which shifts our vantage to that of the usually unvoiced, disempowered figure" (2001: 94). While the emerging novelistic and sentimental literature also gave voices to marginalized groups (women, servants, children, the poor, criminals), in its promise of individual improvement, social mobility and redemption, the sentimental mode was often less capable of critically exposing the tight grip of the mechanics of social injustice. The blending/crossing of mockery and sentimentalism in Gay's work often "interjects into its literary parody the bite of economic socioppolitics"; in *The Shepherd's Week*, for instance, the rural "Clowns" are also described as "Tenants" and beheld by the rich and idle aristocrats, who are linked with Satan gazing upon Eve in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Gay quotes the lines in the Proeme to his mock-pastoral) (Dugaw 2001: 104).

By means of rich and varied classical allusion and the incorporation of actual folk customs, proverbs, riddles and elements of popular countryside balladry, Gay's parody modifies flat pastoral convention into a multi-dimensional and problematic sphere where contrasting representations of rural life ironically clash: "Parody is for Gay a profound stance, a design more far-reaching and complex than a simple critical targeting of a particular author or form" (Dugaw 2001: 94). Gay is surveying and reassessing in *The Shepherd's Week* not only the pastoral mode but the very concept of poetic language, situating its mockery within wider neoclassical debates about the cultural and aesthetic validity of "modern" and "classical" poetry. The poem is mock-pastoral precisely in the sense that it exposes the artificiality of pastoral methods of representation by a parodic radicalization of its inherent cultural incongruity, that is, its idealization of countryside simplicity from the point of view of the urban elite. William Empson remarked in *Some Versions of Pastoral* that "clowns have a mock-pastoral tradition" (161), and the statement might be read in the light of Bakhtin's notion of "the carnivalesque" as referring to the tradition of festive laughter deriving partly from vivid and complex rural folk traditions. While the urban literariness of the classical pastoral usually moulds a cleansed, idealized and grossly simplified view of the countryside,

53 Pierre Bourdieu defines *symbolic capital*, in opposition to the purely monetary capital, as "the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability" which may also "be convertible into political positions as a local or national notable" (285–288). Arguably, parodic degradation and ridicule often served Scriblerian poets in their battles against their opponents (poets, scholars, politicians), as they attempt to dismantle their claims to respectability, cultural influence and political power.
Gay rejects an easy and flat sentimentality, but instead engages in perhaps a more problematic sympathy towards the rustics. He becomes himself, in a way, an ironically self-fashioned "rustic clown" that moves from Devonshire to London: "I sold my sheep and lambkins too, /For silver loops and garment blue" (ll. 39-40, 1929: 30), he writes humorously in the Prologue to *The Shepherd's Week*, dedicating the poem to the influential aristocrat, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke. In effect, the laughter of Gay/Bowzybeus echoes the voices of both the urban and the rural cultural perspectives.

2.4. "Better Company": Mock-Sentimental Politics in *The Beggar's Opera*

Burlesque is therefore of two kinds; the first represents mean Persons in the Accoutrements of Heroes, the other describes great Persons acting and speaking like the basest among the People.

*Joseph Addison, The Spectator, No. 249*

The parodic mode is characterized by an ironic distance towards the cultural or literary convention it partly reproduces and distorts. This element of ironic distance in parody is ambiguous insofar as parody both negates its model structure and remains complicit with it. John Gay's parody of the popular Italian romantic opera exposes the limitations and the conventionality of the genre, questions its representational and aesthetic value, but, at the very same time, seems also to celebrate it and pay playful heed to its aesthetics by underlying its various stylistic nuances. The same ambiguous stance seems to be at play in Gay's representation of criminals. In the 1720s, the public executions of several famous highwaymen and street robbers attracted crowds of people to the gallows at Newgate prison. The names of Jack Sheppard, Joseph "Blueskin" Blake, James Carrick, Jonathan Wild and Edward Burnworth, among others, became legendary, since these notorious criminals functioned at the time as celebrities and the accounts of their adventures circulated both in print and in the gossip of the street market and the coffee-house (McKenzie 590). Popular fascination with the lives of criminal offenders permeated the atmosphere of late 1720s, the time when John Gay wrote his most memorable play. Arguably, this "plebeian fantasy" (McKenzie's phrase), which often endowed the iconic criminals with picaresque biographies, sentimentalizing and oftentimes glorifying their actions and characters, induced Gay to
portray criminals as heroes of an operatic play. At the same time, the Scriblerian view of opera as a form of unsuitably "low" popular entertainment could be persuasively illustrated exactly through such a mocking debasement of the operatic hero: "For the Scriblerians, Italian opera was a toy of the rich – another example of false taste and cultural decay – and an assault upon Nature" (Bevis 168). Already on the surface of this complex work, therefore, there is at play a mocking inversion of the pompous style of the Italian opera, blended with a parody of popular balladry on the ups and downs of criminal life. This satiric, mocking attitude towards both the opera and the criminals is counterbalanced, however, by a more ambiguous, sentimental and even tragic, representation of the criminals-as-heroes. Satiric ridicule and sentimental sympathy enter into a restless dialectic that animates much of the profound artistic and political ambiguity of the play.

In the "Introduction" to his opera, the beggar ballad-singer (John Gay's playful alter-ego) pleads with the audience urging them not to discriminate against this production due to their prejudices regarding costumes or scenery, but rather to attempt to perceive in it a true and valid opera, composed and performed with due attention to all the best standards of the genre. At the same time, the beggar ironically apologizes for those minor elements of the play that in some manner breach the principles of operatic style:

I have introduc'd the Similes that are in all your celebrated Operas: The Swallow, the Moth, the Bee, the Ship, the Flower, &c. Besides, I have a prison Scene, which the ladies always reckon charmingly pathetick. As to the parts, I have observ'd such a nice impartiality to our two ladies, that it is impossible for either of them to take offence. I hope, I may be forgiven, that I have not made my Opera throughout unnatural, like those in vogue; for I have no Recitative: excepting this, as I have consented to have neither Prologue nor Epilogue, it must be allow'd an Opera in all its forms (Gay 1729: 155).

Already in the short Introduction to the play, Gay manages not only to outline the scheme of his parodic concept but also to attune the perception of his audience. In this introductory speech, the beggar directs the audience's attention to all kinds of major and minor theatrical and operatic conventions, mirrored and playfully distorted throughout the work. Above all, however, Gay emphasizes here the originality of his work: the audience is being prepared to receive something that is a formal and aesthetic novelty, a play marked with flippant differences from the conventional theatre and opera. In other words, the audience is not solicited to scorn and reject the operatic style of the play, but to accept, at least provisionally, such a frame, and even to see it as an improvement, a more realistic version of the genre, which the beggar advertises very modestly: "I hope,
I may be forgiven, that I have not made my Opera throughout unnatural”. Gay playfully presents his "Newgate Opera" as being less fanciful and more sober than the Italian operas he parodies. Neither should the shabby interiors, old rags or crude manners of the players mislead the audience: "The Muses, contrary to all other ladies, pay no distinction to dress, and never partially mistake the pertness of embroidery for wit, nor the modesty of want for dulness" (41).

The popularity of Italian opera started long before Georg Friedrich Handel arrived in London in 1710, with such operas and plays in recitative as Aeneas and Dido (1688-90) by Henry Purcell, The Prophetess (1690) by Betterton and Purcell, Psyche (1704) by Mathew Locke, and Arsinoe (1705) translated from the Italian by Thomas Clayton and performed at Drury Lane Theatre. In 1706, Congreve and Vanbrugh received a patent from Queen Anne and opened their new theatre in the Haymarket, in which they presented The Temple of Love: A Pastoral Opera, while the same year John Dennis published his Essay on the Operas After the Italian Manner, which are about to be Established on the English Stage, in which he despairingly criticized the vogue for "that soft and effeminate music which abounds in Italian opera" (quoted in Montgomery 415-19). However, it was Handel's music which particularly attracted theatre-goers to opera; the first play with music composed by Handel, Rinaldo (1711), produced by Aaron Hill, run for an entire four months (the play was also revived in 1731).

In 1718, Handel and Gay created together Acis and Galatea. An English Pastoral Opera, a mask and a musical drama largely fashioned after the Italian serenatas, with Gay being the author of almost the entire libretto. The opera was based on a classical story taken from Ovid, in which the nymph Galatea falls in love with a shepherd Acis, who is killed by a giant Cyclops, Polyphemus, also in love with the nymph. Handel, in fact, attended the Cannons estate, where the play was first performed, together with the almost entire circle of the Scriblerians, including Pope, Gay and Arbuthnot (Dugaw 145-6). While much of The Beggar's Opera clearly sneers at the "foibles of Italian opera", there seems to have been no direct hostility between John Gay and Handel either before or after the play was performed. In other words, the mock-operatic spoof was directed against the current fashion and its excesses rather than against a particular author, and thus against "people, not music" (McIntosh 425). Moreover, McIntosh concludes also that "there is no evidence to suggest that Handel was annoyed with Gay after the appearance of The Beggar's Opera" (421). Clearly, the implication about
It is worth remembering in this context, however, that Pope, Gay's close friend and associate in many literary ventures, was an ardent and unabashed critic of opera, to which the sneeringly mocking passage in *The New Dunciad*, published first in 1742 (and later included as Book IV of *The Dunciad in Four Books*), unequivocally testifies:

When lo! a Harlot form soft sliding by,
With mincing step, small voice, and languid eye;
Foreign her air, her robe's discordant pride
In patch-work flutt'ring, and her head aside:
(…)
*O Cara! Cara!* silence all that train:
Joy the great Chaos! let Division reign:
Chromatic tortures soon shall drive them hence,
Break all their nerves, and fritter all their sense:
One Trill shall harmonize joy, grief, and rage,
Wake the dull Church, and lull the ranting Stage;
To the same notes thy sons shall hum, or snore,
And all thy yawning daughters cry, *encore.* (Pope 2014: 279-283)

As Valerie Rumbold explains, the reference to "small voice" and the references to "effeminate sounds" and "affected airs" in Pope's commenting footnote express his overt disapproval of the "high-pitched vocal texture obtained by concentrating on soprano heroines and castrato heroes, to the detriment of natural male voices" (2014: 280). Pope also derides the use of *Recitativo*, i.e. the sung (instead of spoken) passages of dialogue in opera, a device which "to many English critics [was] a ridiculous affectation, especially since they could not understand the words" (Rumbold 2014: 281). Nevertheless, Handel is actually one of the few persons to receive praise in *The Dunciad*: he is credited with introducing more varied musical background for operatic plays, replacing the often monotonous compositions ("the same notes") that were so dear to Dulness and are the major target for Pope's mockery of opera (Pope 2014: 283-4).

Margaret Anne Doody rightly observes that the most striking feature of *The Beggar's Opera* may be located in its sustained "doubleness" or "duplicity", i.e. "its combination of lyric with melody, song with situation, speaker with what is spoken. The piece constantly puzzles and distracts our emotions and thoughts" (212). As a paradoxical "Newgate Opera", Gay's work is a tensed parodic blend of operatic sentimentality and satiric mockery and offers a multistable and fluid combination, continually forcing the audience to readapt and shift from "the loveliness of the song" to the "vulgarity and crassness of the characters" while giving no priority to any of the
included perspectives (Doody 213). Ian Donaldson makes a very similar observation, seeing Gay's literary works in general, and his "Newgate pastoral" in particular, as possessing "an odd ability to be at once ironical and sentimental, risible and grave" (161). Due to its playful parodic multistability, *The Beggar's Opera* has been recognized or classified, alternatively or jointly, as burlesque, opera, tragedy, comedy, farce, satire, mock-pastoral, mock-heroic, ballad-opera and mock-opera.

The opening scenes of Act I appear to be unmistakably and shrewdly satiric. Peachum is considering which of his fellow criminals to denounce for rewards and which to save from gallows or transportation by bribery (43-5). Peachum compares his "employment" to that of a "lawyer": "Like me too he acts in a double capacity, both against rogues and for'em; for 'tis but fitting that we should protect and encourage cheats, since we live by them" (43). The statement actively invites double interpretation, and may be read as both highly cynical and largely accurate. Jonathan Wild, for instance, became popular among Londoners not only for denouncing his comrade highwaymen but also for tracking, capturing and then triumphantly presenting them before the court in expectation of a reward. In 1720, the Privy Council consulted him even about the "ways and means of checking the increase in highway robberies" and he advised, not surprisingly, "an increase in rewards paid for apprehending highwaymen" (Nokes 8). The punishing machine of the rising "modern" state, thus, entered into a symbiotic and cynical relationship with the criminal underworld and its experts in order to ensure the technical efficiency of the law. The fluctuation between the grossly cynical and the disturbingly realistic is a very prominent level of ambiguity in *The Beggar's Opera*. The first Air sung by "[a]n old woman clothed in grey" also appears both exaggerated and candid: "Through all the employments of life / Each neighbour abuses his brother / Whore and rogue they call husband and wife: / All professions be-rogue one another" (Air I, 43). The gangs of prostitutes, thieves and highwaymen become thus a sarcastic allegory of emerging capitalist society – an allegory that is both comically absurd and surprisingly accurate.

The mock-romantic dimension of the play is also particularly weighty, and remains inter-locked with its parodic critique of society at large. Marriage is often allusively linked with execution. For instance, in Air IV Mrs. Peachum sings: "Her honour's signed, and then for life, / She's – what I dare not name" (50). Thus romance becomes a rather dangerous game, particularly well mastered by the elegant society, which Peachum urges his daughter to imitate: "If the girl had the discretion of a court
lady, who can have a dozen young fellows at her ear without complying with one, I should not matter it" (50). Polly (Mr. Peachum's daughter) is enamored of the handsome and virile Captain Macheath, a notorious highwayman, though she assures her worried father that a woman "knows how to be a mercenary, though she hath never been in a court or at an assembly" (53). Nevertheless, it turns out that Polly has already married Macheath, to the dismay of her preoccupied parents, who now consider her to be "ruined":

Mrs. PEACHUM: How the mother is to be pitied who hath handsome daughters! Locks, bolts, bars, and lectures of morality are nothing to them: they break through them all. They have as much pleasure in cheating a father and mother, as in cheating at cards. (56)

In a brilliant topsy-turvy reversal of the typical sentimental plot, the means that normally serve to secure girl's virginity ("locks" and "bolts") and are supposed to lead her to a respectable marriage become employed by Mrs. Peachum as means of saving the girl from marriage: "lectures of morality" mean pieces of advice on how to best profit from one's charms without falling into the trap of slavery (marriage). Mrs. Peachum becomes thus a parody of a caring mother, Mr. Peachum a parody of a severe Father: the only hope they have is in the Captain's becoming rich or dying, which are "most excellent chances for a wife" (56). Moreover, their words often forcibly suggest a parody of the aspiring middle classes, since they incessantly refer to the wasted "good breeding" of their daughter and the ruined "hopes of our family" (57). Mrs. Peachum hopes Polly will be able to deceive and manipulate men because "[s]he loves to imitate the fine ladies" (50). Gay's intense "parodic sensibility" is seen by Dugaw as "exposing social and moral disjunctions by means of the formal incongruities created by travesty" (2001: 159). In less technical terms, it may be added that the spontaneous and rowdy expressiveness of the lower orders of society lays bare the hypocrisy and cunning of the "respectable" social orders, which are normally masked by their well-controlled speech and elegant manners.

Polly, as might be expected from a young girl, is influenced by the romances she is fond of reading ("Those cursed play-books", as her father calls them), and her quixotic vision of reality contrasts humorously with the baseness and crudity of her surroundings. As in Don Quixote, however, her naive idealism appears alternately as ludicrous and touching. When Macheath assures her of his affection ("Suspect my honour, my courage, suspect anything but my love"), her girlish reply is "I have no reason to doubt you, for I find in the romance you lent me, none of the great heroes
were ever false in love" (65). The first Act ends with the couple parting in fear of Macheath being denounced by Polly's father, and this final scene contains several exceedingly melancholic love-duets, or dialogues in recitativo, so characteristic of the operatic plays. The singing duets are usually set to the tunes of popular English songs or ballads, often creating additional parodic contrasts between the "old" familiar song and the "new" words juxtaposed with its tune by Gay. The resulting incongruous structure of ballad-opera clearly "poke[s] fun at Italian opera", but perhaps also "expresses a kind of oral nationalism, asserting that English songs are as good as Italian arias" (Sussman 81). The parting of the lovers occasions much emotion on both sides ("O how I fear! How I tremble!" Polly exclaims), though Macheath expresses his affection in a song that reverberates with irony:

MACHEATH: The miser thus a shilling sees,
Which he's obliged to pay,
With sighs resigns it by degrees,
And fears 'tis gone for aye. (Air XVIII, 67).

As always in the play, romance is never too distant from the economics. The pecuniary comparison is later echoed by Macheath when he waits for the group of friendly prostitutes in the tavern, through a sarcastic and slightly self-ironic motto: "a man who loves money, might as well be contended with one guinea, as I with one woman" (72). While Polly sees him as a romantic hero, Macheath resembles more the stock character of Restoration comedy: a seductive rake, handsome, sly and sexually voracious – though Macheath is not "reformed" even after marriage.

The last melancholy scene of Act I, in which two lovers are torn apart, contrasts with the havoc and crudeness of the opening scene of Act II, where we find a gang of thieves in a tavern near Newgate, disputing "at the table, with wine, brandy and tobacco" (68). Their debate takes a shape of a mock-philosophical symposium, so to speak, with the robbers (who call themselves "a sect of practical philosophers") outlining their ethical theories and loudly proclaiming their philosophical views. Thus Ben Burge wants to vindicate their ways by claiming that criminals are "for a just

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54 This frequent eighteenth-century motif is radicalized into comic absurdity by Charlotte Lennox in her radiant parody of popular romances The Female Quixote, or The Adventures of Arabella (1752). Arabella interprets the world according to the clichés of romantic fiction and tries incessantly to "emulate the heroines of romances in their dignified conduct, their lofty speech, and their disdainful treatment of their lovers" (Nowicki 1994: 44). For instance, she sees the illness of Lord Harvey, who tries to marry her, as a desperate "Design to attempt his own Life". She thus sends him a letter in which she graciously allows him to live and assures her servant that "he will recover, If I command him to do so: When did you hear of a Lover dying through Despair, when his Mistress let him know it was her Pleasure he should live?" (15-16, emphasis added).
partition of the world, for every man hath a right to enjoy life” (69). And Matt of the Mint similarly concedes that they "retrench the superfluities of mankind" and that "money was made for the free-hearted and generous" (69). These vindications may be read as opportunist and grossly cynical in evoking the notions of justice and mutual sharing to justify stealing from others (supposedly from greedy and affluent aristocrats). But the discussion takes place after Ben's brother Tom has been hanged, and the sense of the utter precariousness of their lives adds poignancy to their jovial, heroic spirits: "the present time is ours, and nobody alive hath more" (68). The highwaymen may be hanged at any point in their lives, despite the fact that they are not "more dishonest than the rest of mankind" because "What we win, gentlemen, is our own by the law of arms, and the right of conquest" (68). Jemmy Twitcher and others see the difference between lawful and the illegal conquest as merely academic, while the true "robbers of mankind" are identified as those who accumulate wealth while not being able to enjoy it within their short life. The scene concludes with a toast to "courage, love and joy" and to "women and wine" which "should life employ" (Air XIX, 69).

If Gay provides here a parodic analysis of the criminal mind (and not its naive celebration), this analysis is again largely ambiguous, for the jovial highwaymen with their hedonism and slightly old-fashioned sense of loyalty and heroism seem to be rather amiable in comparison with the cold and greedy bureaucrats Peachum and Lockit, who manipulate the law and who buy and sell the lives of thieves in order to secure greater profits. Macheath, who joins the company in the next scene, observes that Peachum supervises all their activities: "Business cannot go on without him. He is a man who knows the world, and is necessary agent to us" (70). Macheath is forced to part with the gang because he fears retribution from Peachum, whose name implies the phrase "to peach somebody", i.e. to impeach or inform against a criminal. Peachum cooperates with the prison turnkey, Mr. Lockit, a proto-Dickensian villainous entrepreneur, in whose dark, Hobbesian vision of the world men are regarded as hungry "animals of prey" who "each other entrap" and "Like pikes, lank with hunger, who miss of their ends, / They bite their companions, and prey on their friends" (Air XLIII, 99). The spirit of courage, loyalty, adventure, and also the "exquisite sense of freedom", as William Empson observes (194), all add to the representation of thieves in a jolly "mock-heroic" atmosphere, in contrast with the murky machinations of the corrupted and disillusioned bureaucrats, Lockit and Peachum. But the air of cavalier heroism is
also undercut by Gay, for Macheath is later betrayed by his former lover, Jenny Diver, and finally even by Jemmy Twitcher, a member of his own gang. As Loughrey and Treadwell observe in their introduction to the play, the "underground" world is not really worse than the "respectable" one, but it is also no better (29). Nevertheless, the adventurous and morally dubious life of the highwaymen perhaps possessed a kind of allure for the bourgeois theatre audiences, which increasingly sought in art a temporary escape from their regular and regulated ordinary life (Wanko 495). When the highwaymen "take the road" to the sounds of the March taken from Handel's opera *Rinaldo*, they appear almost ennobled (Bevis 169).

This ambiguity seems to be crucial for the overall effect of the play, for in its representation it balances between the suggestion of sentimental identification and satiric rejection to avoid any simplistic categorization of the criminals. The highwaymen are affectionately human, but retain something of their terrible otherness as inhuman villains. When Macheath hides in the tavern, he is accompanied by a joyful group of prostitutes, who are presented by Gay, characteristically, with the mixture of comic charm, vividness, sympathy and burlesque irony. The gathering starts with the "ladies" and Macheath dancing together in "a dance à la ronde in the French manner" (68), a formal and dignified dance practised in higher society, thus providing a yet another parodic contrast between the affected bon ton of Gay's opera and the crude realities portrayed in it. The lyrics of the Air sung by Macheath also acquire a profoundly parodic character, for its subject (as in all romantic operas) is love, though it is not exactly the same "love" as the one typically depicted in Italian operas: "Youth's the season made for joys, / Love is then our duty, / She alone who that employs, / Well deserves her beauty." (Air XXII, 74). By replacing romantic love with mere lust and physical pleasure procured for profit, Gay parodically degrades the lofty operatic conventions, dragging them down to less-than-idyllic urban realities. *The Beggar's Opera* insistently plays with conventional divisions of all sorts, juxtaposing, colliding and effectively confusing the words of high prominent society and that of the rugged street beggars and prostitutes, parodically mixing "high art" with "low" street speech and songs, in a tonality and plot construction that combine and undermine the conventions of both comedy and tragedy. The world depicted by Gay is governed entirely by money and mercantile interests, while social rank, manners and the ideas of honour, courage or loyalty become purely theatrical illusions, either hypocritical masks or devices to trap the gullible. The cheerful whores affectionately imitate and humorously
mock the ceremonious speech and manners of elegant ladies, focusing on dress and proper appearance, paying each other nice compliments and addressing each other as "madam". But they have no scruples betraying Macheath and then arguing about their share of Peachum's reward.

Upon being admitted to prison, Macheath has to pay for his chains, his food, drink and cell, and is treated almost exactly like a first-rate gentleman in a luxurious hotel. The scene, in which Macheath is given his chains by Lockit, accumulates and condenses the literary, social, economic and political ironic undertones of Gay's work:

MACHEATH: Those, Mr Lockit, seem to be the heaviest of the whole set. With your leave, I should like the further pair better.
LOCKIT: Look ye, Captain, we know what is fittest for our prisoners. When a gentleman uses me with civility, I always do the best I can to please him. Hand them down I say. We have them of all prices, from one guinea to ten, and 'tis fitting every gentleman should pleases himself.
MACHEATH: I understand you, Sir [Gives money.] The fees here are so many, and so exorbitant, that few fortunes can bear the expenses of getting off handsomely, or of dying like a gentleman.
LOCKIT: Those, I see, will fit the Captain better. Take down the further pair. Do but examine them, sir. Never was better work. How genteelly they are made! They will sit as easy as a glove, and the nicest man in England might not be ashamed to wear them. [He puts on the chains.] If I had the best gentleman in the land in my custody I could not equip him more handsomely. And so, sir - I now leave you to your private meditations.

The fact that Macheath has to constantly pay bribes and fees for everything in Newgate, though he is to be hanged within few days, clearly confirms that it is very expensive to "die like a gentleman". While Gay satirically alludes to the fact that prisoners did have to pay for everything in Newgate and all other prisons, which were largely commercial institutions, he is also displaying how the mercantile logic of profit governs the provisional parodic social hierarchies (those who have money are "gentlemen" because they are able to pay, that is, "treat with civility") that function within prison walls. The prison becomes a metaphoric space in the play, a model for Gay's socioeconomic critique, because it is a degrading double, and hence a parodic mirror, of society at large. Lockit, the cunning guard in the Newgate prison, and his collaborator Peachum were both devised and treated by the audience as figures alluding to Robert Walpole, the prime minister, and Lord Townsend, his political ally and also brother-in-law (Loughrey and Treadwell 27). While the critique of Walpole's corrupt political court is subtle and concealed enough to "circumvent the possibility of censorship", Gay does

55 Nevertheless, Walpole must have felt some painful effects of the caricature, for he officially banned Gay's sequel to the play, entitled Polly (it was not performed, but was published in one edition in 1729). Walpole's censorship had the opposite result, however, as Colin Nicholson reveals: "In consequence, Gay

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suggest "a close resemblance between the arch-criminal Jonathan Wild and the arch-politician Robert Walpole through the figure of Peachum, manifestly modelled on Wild but frequently hinting at the First Minister" (Lewis 1988: 232-3). According to Dugaw, the contemporary social and political allusiveness of The Beggar's Opera is also parodic in the sense that it endows the established "symbol systems" of literary language (stock allegories, metaphors) with new, sharply satiric or crudely vulgar, references (2011: 36). As in Pope's The Dunciad, published the same year, the figurative language of elevated literary genres (romance, tragedy, epic poetry) is re-inscribed by means of humorous and often crude association and forced to collide with the rigid contemporary realities of economic rivalry, power struggle and political chicanery.

It should be added, however, that while the political hints strengthen the mock-allegorical dimension of the play, in which the criminal underworld serves as a critical parodic mirror of contemporary society and politics, the extent towards which the play boldly enters the abject world of criminality must also be appreciated. As Dugaw observes, Gay has a tendency to use popular, lower-class culture "to set up parodic mirrorings which propel his satire of social systems and their power relationships" (1991: 516). By employing such popular tunes as Chevy Chase, Cold and Raw, Over the Hills and Far Away for the Airs in The Beggar's Opera, but also by incorporating popular jokes and proverbs, slang and slur, folklore and games, Gay builds a dangerously alluring intimacy between criminals and theatre audience. The representations are not superficial because the amount of detailed knowledge of slang, methods, dealings, sayings, ethics and manners shared by London's robbers, thieves and whores that Gay accumulates is overwhelming. The microscopic realism of the play also parodically contradicts the detached and exotic concerns of romantic Italian operas. Gay explicitly analyzes the complex mechanisms through which criminals operate in practical and economic terms. In the longish conversation between Peachum, Mrs. Trapes and Lockit (Scene VI, Act III), the audience is given detailed information in jargon about the types of goods stolen and how they are made use of:

MRS TRAPES: To be sure, of late years I have been a great sufferer by the Parliament (...) The Act for destroying Mint, was a severe cut upon my business. 'Till then, if a customer stepped out of the way – we knew where to have her. No doubt you know Mrs Coaxer – there's a wench now ('till today) with good suit of clothes of mine upon her back, and I could never set eyes upon her for three months together. Since the Act

made more from the printed copies of the much inferior Polly than he did from the performances of the Beggar's Opera" (123).
too against imprisonment for small sums, my loss there too hath been very considerable, and it must be so, when a lady can borrow a handsome petticoat, or a clean gown, and I not have the last hank upon her! (...) Consider, Mr Peachum, that watch was remarkable, and not very safe sale. If you have any black velvet scarfs, they are a handsome winter-wear; and take with most gentlemen who deal with my customers. 'Tis I that put ladies upon a good foot. 'Tis not youth or beauty that fixes their price, the gentlemen always pay according to their dress, from half a crown to two guineas; and yet those hussies make nothing of bilking me (105-6).

The stolen articles are not only resold but often leased to whores, who want to dress nicely to allure clients and obtain a better pay for their "services", but they also have to pay the lease to Mrs. Trapes, who, in turn, extorts the fees by threats of throwing them into one of numerous debtor's prisons functioning in London. Mrs. Trapes alludes to the amendment in debt law made by the Act of 1725, which prevented imprisonment for sums less than ten pounds in superior courts, apparently seeing in this a great infringement upon her right to make profit and control her "customers". Instead of stylized and "elegant" operatic language, the play reproduces an actual social speech variety to expose not only the individualistic greed of particular persons, but to analyze how different levels and groups of English society are bound together in a tight grip of economic control, complicity and exploitation by means of lease, rent, debt, bribe, extortion and threat of denunciation. In such a messy world of mutual exploitation, doing business is very risky, as the sinister Machiavellian Peachum observes in his quarrel with Lockit: "Business is at an end – if once we act dishonourably" (86). Honour and trust are indispensable for doing business, especially perhaps for criminal and dishonest business, and even the degraded members of society must acknowledge it: "Mrs Coaxer charges you with defrauding her of her information-money, for the apprehending of curl-pated Hugh. Indeed, indeed, brother, we must punctually pay our spies, or we shall have no information" (86). Though honourable conduct is a necessity, there seems to be very little guarantee for it in a society that is a moral vacuum, one governed solely by the profit-drive.

Moreover, Gay's play is aware that lower-class women occupy a particularly vulnerable position at the ladder of commercialized urban society: they are presented as liable to physical violence, exploitation, venereal disease, and they are socio-economically dependent because of pregnancy and child-raising. Lucy, the daughter of Lockit, is pregnant by Macheath after he seduces her in the tavern ("But his kiss was so sweet, and so closely he pressed, / That I languished and pined 'till I granted the rest." Air XLI, 97). When Macheath is locked in Newgate, Lucy and Polly both arrive aggravated and enamored with him. They quarrel over their right to his affection, for
Polly is his newly-wed wife and Lucy is pregnant with his child. In an allusion to typical romantic plots, the rigid and stern fathers of both ladies oppose their relationship with Macheath. Thus, Mr. Lockit gently persuades Lucy "to bear your husband's death like a reasonable woman. 'Tis not the fashion, nowadays, so much as to affect sorrow upon these occasions" (87), while Mr. Peachum is much less polite: "Hussy! Come you home, you slut; and when your fellow is hanged, hang yourself, to make your family some amends" (93). The parodic interrogation of romantic clichés not only relates them to murky economic realities, but also to the sense of hypocritical morality that constantly hovers around the play. Polly is ready to accept Macheath’s having a lover; she merely demands that there is at least an "appearance" of "some preference shown to a wife" (91). Lucy, being pregnant, is in a more dismal situation than Polly, because of the economic danger she finds herself in, but above all because of certain social stigmatization and rejection: "I am forced to bear about the load of infamy you have laid upon me" (82), she says to Macheath when approaching his prison cell.

The quarrel between Polly and Lucy is, on yet another ironic level, brilliantly inscribed within the general travesty of operatic conventions. It harks back to the violent quarrel between two applauded and accomplished operatic divas, Faustina and Cuzzoni, a conflict which received much comment in contemporary press. Both divas appeared in Handel's *Alessandro* in 1727, an opera "carefully constructed so that neither Cuzzoni nor Faustina could claim to have the better role" (Loughrey and Treadwell 10). Unfortunately, a year later the conflict became so intense that the elegant ladies did resort to slurs and even blows on stage, during a performance of Bononcini's *Astyanax*. The scandal was so recent and so widely publicized that it must have forced itself upon the minds of the audience during the frequent operatic duets in which Polly and Lucy quarrel. Gay refers explicitly to the conflict in the introductory scene, when the Beggar (the assumed author of the play) assures his listeners that he has "observed such a nice impartiality to our two ladies, that it is impossible for either of them to take offence" (41). Lucy's dramatic anger ("Revenge, revenge, revenge, / Shall appease my restless spirit", Air XLVII, 108) acquires a parodic mock-operatic character, and the same goes for her attempt at "poisoning that slut" (Lucy poisons the gin which she offers Polly to drink), a scene which clearly echoes "the melodramatic scenes involving poisoned cups" that were very common in both Italian operas and heroic tragedies (Loughrey and Treadwell 108).
Bakhtin claimed that parody is organically alien to the high genres of classicism (epic, tragedy), and it is also usually alien to the genres of sentimental and romantic literature (opera, romance, romantic tragedy, sonnet, pastoral poetry, etc.), which is perhaps why these genres have been so frequently parodied. The serious epic or romantic genres, generally speaking, allow only one language: a stylized, eloquent and elevated "correct" literary language. This unified monoglot style does allow, of course, for great elasticity, erudition and eloquence, but it nonetheless works by the conventional exclusion of all impure, impolite and imperfect languages in order to produce stylistic elevation and coherence. Excluded languages, tonalities and perspectives return, however, in the parodic versions of those genres, which typically reject the pathos of "correct" language and present instead a diversity of comically and critically reprocessed languages. It is such "dragging down" of language that predominates in The Beggar's Opera, for its vision of the world is constructed precisely by the speech of whores, pickpockets, highwaymen and prison guards. Their speech is not, however, merely objectified and registered, but constructed through parodic stylization that not only reproduces but also satirizes the sociolect of the criminals and their perception of the world. Moreover, this presentation is possible only within a travesty of stylistically elevated and conventionalized literary language. In other words, the speech of the characters in The Beggar's Opera is hybridized at two levels, levels which are mutually dependent: (1) the expression of the "criminal" point of view is exposed through the stylization of their speech that aims at conveying both a sense of authenticity and the parodic ridicule of their language; (2) the parodied speech of the criminals serves as an ironic substitute for the elevated and conventionalized expression of the characters in operatic plays, and this substitution requires a degree of parodic stylization of their speech in the direction of such elegant and sublime expression. This double – contradictory and ambiguous – parodic process is the major source of contrast, humour and complex irony in Gay's "Newgate Pastoral". Moreover, in Bakhtin's theory, this parodic process of double stylization and comic fluctuation between registers is absolutely crucial in the development of the novelistic prose, especially in the comic/satiric line of the novel, in which the vivid and critical parodic representation of the heteroglot variety of registers and social variants of language interacts with mocking renditions of canonical literary styles (see Chapter IV, Section I). Blending seemingly unsuitable registers and elements into a complex parodic maze, Gay's play
achieves its marvelously disillusioning illusion of the "systematic equation of criminality with high society" (Nicholson 124).

It has been argued that every comedy contains elements of parodic degradation and "desublimation" of the serious, sentimental or tragic vision of the world (Bielik-Robson 299-310). Nevertheless, the poets and playwrights of the Scriblerian cast of mind tend to intensify the ingenious paradoxes of parody in their highly ironic, hybrid literary projects (mock-heroic, urban-pastoral, tragi-comic farce, comic-epic novel, etc.). The stable trajectories of literary conventions and canonical literary styles are useful for the Scriblerian authors precisely because they can be parodied, ironically manipulated and made to refract nuanced critical tonalities. While The Beggar's Opera is an entertaining comedy, its plot arrangement seems to mirror the plot of tragedies, in which all events are presented as leading to an inevitable and catastrophic end. In a comic-parodic and thought-provoking rewriting of Biblical tradition, Macheath is first betrayed by Jenny Driver with a kiss (78), much like Christ by Judas, so that Macheath mirrors Jesus surrounded by apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane, though he is surrounded by whores in a local tavern. In Act III, Mrs. Trapes, when informing Peachum about the highwayman's whereabouts, adds the ominous "I don't enquire after your affairs, so whatever happens, I wash my hands on't" (107), echoing the symbolic gesture of withdrawal made by Pilate. The fatal chain of events leads to the capturing of Macheath, his imprisonment and public execution.

The ending of Gay's dramatic piece is, however, as divided and duplicated as the entire play. As a metafictional and self-reflexive gesture, the playful ending mirrors and intensifies the cynical ambiguities and the conventional duplicity of The Beggar's Opera, for the author of the play, an anonymous beggar, has already provided the ending that "would have carried a most excellent moral": Macheath is tried and then hanged (120-21). A player, however, strongly protests that this would mean the play is "a downright deep tragedy" and, since "an opera must end happily", Macheath must be reprieved and saved in order "to comply with the taste of the town" (121). The play ends comically, with Macheath being saved and reunited with his wife, Polly, though he is not sure whether marriage is better than the rope (121). Nevertheless, the parodic multistable evoking of two endings actively invites contradictory interpretations. The beggar wrote the play originally with intention to punish Macheath, because he wanted, as he says (mocking a self-righteous tone), to observe the rules of "strict poetical justice":

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BEGGAR: Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners of high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen. Had the play remained, as I at first intended, it would have carried a most excellent moral. 'Twould have shown that the lower sort of people have their vices in a degree as well as rich: and that they are punished for them” (121).

Bearing in mind the biblical parallels of the play, it may be said that a tragic ending could really provide, at this point, a lesson and a moral, though one that would deeply trouble the conscience of the relaxed theatre audience. On the other hand, a comic ending may suggest that the play is too pessimistic and Menippean in its tonality to allow for any belief in reform and salvation. Alternatively, a comic ending may be seen as a cynical evasion of conflict, a happy restitution of the status quo, a cheap promise of hope. A tragic ending, in turn, would be perhaps a mere conventional device that would fail to stir any deeper emotions or reflections, apart from mawkish sentimentality. It is only by the parodic device of combination of those alternate contradictory endings that Gay is able to raise all such questions, because parodic distortion of convention self-reflexively draws attention to how this convention is historically constructed and how it functions or may function at present. The ambiguous presence of two endings, two imperfect resolutions, means that all those, and many other, interpretations are true, or false, though none of them exclusively.

Parody in The Beggar's Opera relies on the play of semiotic traces, for the language of the play is made of allusions, accentuations, quotations, stylistic echoes, imitations and inversions that borrow from the repertoire of "high" classical and "low" popular street culture alike. By organizing them into a series of contrasts, incongruities and ironies, Gay presents a radically challenging reworking of the elevated genres of opera and tragedy, which also performs a deliberately ambiguous parodic critique of the current socioeconomic system of values, moralities, aesthetic and cultural hierarchies. The ideals of honour, loyalty, justice, romantic love and compassion become tenaciously transformed and degraded into despicable "parodied valorizations" (Nicholson's term) of the morality of stealing, card-playing, seducing, exploiting and profit-making. To read The Beggar's Opera simply as a satire on criminals would entail a reduction of its parodic and mock-allegorical ambiguity, since the play suggests not only that the law and legality are in themselves complicit in criminality and degeneracy, but that socioeconomic realities are constructed in the way that makes it possible to distinguish between "criminal" and the "respectable" forms of abuse, fraud,
neglect and exploitation. This is the theme of the perhaps most memorable of all the Airs from the play, sung by Macheath just when he is to be hanged:

Since laws were made for every degree,
To curb vice in others, as well as me,
I wonder we han't better company
Upon Tyburn Tree!

But gold from law can take out the sting;
And if rich men like us were to swing,
'Twould thin the land, such numbers to string
Upon Tyburn Tree! (Air LXVII, 118).

The song provides the climax and the bitter summary of the play. It accentuates the division between the rich and the poor that manipulates perception and relativizes law and morality. The touching simplicity of rhyme and style, the charming affected naïveté of the lyrical speaker in the first stanza contrasted with the sardonic and darkly humorous explanation in the second stanza all posit Macheath in the role of an almost Byronic figure, nonchalant yet insightful, a mixture of martyr and bon vivant, half-aristocratic and half-criminal outcast of middle-class respectability. William Empson discusses Gay's work in the context of the shift from Augustan detachment to Romantic identification in poetry: "the poet now stole the dignities of the swain and the hero for himself, omitting to add irony" (167). He further identifies Macheath as a figure anticipating Byron's self-exaltation that parodies the Romantic ideal of the poet as an outcast and independent legislator: "Byronism is almost consciously the Poet as Macheath" (167-8). Nevertheless, the critique of society elaborated in Gay's comic tragedy is pessimistic enough to see outcasts as complicit in the wild machinery of competition and exploitation; Macheath's "tendency to equate women with one another and with money" (Piper 342) undermines his charming, free-spirited image. The bitter laughter of Gay's denigrating parody leaves no sanctuary or hideaway unsearched, but its overarching carnivalesque critique ambiguously sees the culprits nowhere and everywhere – criminals are not innocent, but they are very often mere cogs in the machinery of the system.

2.5. Conclusion

As the presented analysis of John Gay's work illustrates, the topic of parody is important, even profound, because the dialectic distortion of convention situates a parodic work or performance in a problematic and critical relation to the system of
textual and cultural conventions that regulate the categories and perceptions of style, genre, artistic value, adequacy of representation, sublimity, correctness, originality, beauty and coherence. The multiple uses of parody in The Beggar's Opera, for instance, are by no means limited to its mockery of Italian opera, which, in fact, continued to thrive in England. On the other hand, the mock-opera structure of The Beggar's Opera inaugurated a new popular genre: ballad opera. Arguably, then, parody works here, first of all, as a great source of entertainment, because it offers a platform for a joyful perception of incongruities and comic reversals in its comparative technique of binding and blending of contrastive figures, perspectives and aesthetics. The "entertainment" factor, prosaic as it may seem, elucidates the fact that parody and parodic comedy have flourished in virtually every historical period, from ancient Greek theatre to postmodern TV shows, film and pop-culture in general (moreover, the very concept of "entertainment" suggests certain playfulness, jouissance, even a certain luxury as an addition to the drudgery of everyday mechanized routine). But parodic games of inversion and dissonance generate also polyvalent critical and satiric perspectives that often dislocate existing artistic conventions. When discussing Buckingham's popular Restoration burlesque of heroic tragedy (The Rehearsal, 1675), Simon Trussler pointed to the possible "corrective function" of parody: "the grosser absurdities of the heroic idiom could no longer be perpetrated with impunity" (1969: 2). Parodic forms may expose the pitfalls, absurdities or incoherencies dormant in conventional forms of representation. Still, however, the role of parody as a reformer of arts is equivocal and vexing rather than utilitarian or optimistic. Joseph Addison suggested in his essay on burlesque in No. 249 of The Spectator that "the Talent of Ridicule" is often employed to "laugh Men out of Virtue and Good Sense, by attacking everything that is Solemn and Serious, Decent and Praise-worthy" (Vol. II, 299). Gay's work surely did not reform Italian opera, but its ambivalent cynical/critical blending of criminality and respectability influenced numerous writers and artists: its echoes can be detected in Fielding, Byron, Dickens, Baudelaire, Wilde and, of course, Brecht, who wrote its famous adaptation, equally sharp and sarcastic, Die Dreigroschenoper.

Russian "Formalists" postulated that not only parody, but also "in general any work of art is created as a parallel and a contradiction to some kind of model" (Hutcheon 1985: 27). Consequently, parodies are not necessarily more imitative, derivative or parasitic than non-parodic artistic works, which also rely on sets of artistic conventions. Parody simply intensifies this duplicity and this possibility of intertextual
contrast/contradiction within artistic work. *The Beggar's Opera* contrastively blends together the contradictory styles and emotions of tragedy and comedy, opera and folklore, romance and obscenity, sublimity and ridicule. Bakhtin often writes of parody in almost metaphysical terms, recognizing in comic-parodic practices a disruptive and de-sublimating energy of carnivalesque utopia. Parody is for him a kind of general topsy-turvy methodology that for any concept, image or genre may provide its antithetical comic incarnation. Many later critics followed Bakhtin by identifying in parodic forms a deconstructive and displacing presentation of discourses, symbolic systems and artistic conventions that interrogates their status and structure in stylistic, cultural, political and even economic terms.

All those different aspects, aims and shades of parody can be discerned and analyzed in John Gay's work. In *The Fan*, the solemn pathos of epic tradition is juxtaposed with the light frivolity of the Rococo and Gay parodically substitutes the epic focus on male heroism with ambiguous and contradictory representations of female sexuality. In *The Shepherd's Week*, the contrastive frames of classical pastoral, comic realism and sentimentality build a self-contradictory and nuanced array of possible representations of the countryside. In *The Beggar's Opera*, a burlesque rendition of operatic conventions becomes a point of departure for the play of contrasts and incongruities that foreground the social and economic disjunctions. The key feature of all those transpositions and transformations is ambiguity, understood not as a lack of clarity but as a designed quality: a subversive dislocation of the illusion of unity and unproblematic coherence of artistic representation.

John Gay's practice of parody reveals the flexibility and productivity of parody as a technique of construction-through-deconstruction of conventions. As a poet and dramatist, he tends to search, experiment, avoid pathos and ready-made solutions and engage instead in a burlesque and satiric revision of the clichéd poetic forms. Stylistic and generic borders and distinctions are lightly and comically traversed, resulting in nets of complex contrastive and ironic juxtapositions. Moreover, he seems to self-consciously situate himself in a certain tradition of intensely playful writing, to which his translations of Ariosto aptly testify. As Derek Attridge observes in his essay on artistic innovation, "the creative achievement is a formal one, whatever else it may be" (334). By reshaping the formal limits of the genres he appropriates, Gay’s parodic creativity elaborates a critical attitude towards the form and medium of representation, which themselves become represented, revealed and comically undermined. Whether
the format or frame is that of opera, pastoral or epic poem, he distorts their stylistic and structural coherence to show how it relies on historically and socially determined semiotic conventions. As Attridge further suggests, "the act of breaking down the familiar is also an act of welcoming the other" (328), so that parody is also a certain invitation for "otherness", at least in a form of dialogic intrusion upon the predictable and ossified poetic genres.
Chapter III

Parodist as a Critic of Culture: Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad*

A brain of feathers, and a heart of lead

*Alexander Pope, The Dunciad*

3.1. Introduction.

The genre of mock-heroic poetry was revived towards the end of the seventeenth century by two major neoclassical works: Nicholas Boileau's *Le Lutrin* (1672, translated by John Ozell in 1708) and John Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* (1682). Mock-heroic poems were usually humorous narrative poems that applied the "high" style of classical epic to light and trivial modern topics. Pope's parodic masterpiece, *The Rape of The Lock* (1712, 1714) followed Boileau's use of the form, while *The Dunciad* follows the direction indicated in Dryden's poem, in which epic style was employed as a *mock-encomium*, an ironic praise of literary authors accused of intellectual and artistic mediocrity. Nevertheless, *The Dunciad* far exceeds the mock-heroic formula, and becomes instead a truly Menippean jumble of various travesties and parodic images of different genres, including pastoral poetry, biblical apocalypse, session poems, progress poems, *translatio studii*, prospect poems, prefaces, footnotes, keys, annotations, literary criticism and history, and possibly other discursive and poetic forms (Todd 1995: 193).

When discussing the poem, Ulrich Broich observes, at first, that because of its numerous personal satiric references, *The Dunciad* gives an impression of "a gigantic lampoon, in which imitation and parody of the epic have purely secondary and decorative function" (147). After a closer observation, however, Broich concludes that parody in *The Dunciad*

functions not only as means of covering the personal nature of satire (...) but also a medium through which the universal significance of the work can constantly be appraised. If we are to grasp Pope's intention in its entirety, then we can only do so by viewing all the functions of his parody as simultaneous and co-existent (...) its theme is just as epic as in *Paradise Lost*. It is not Milton's battle of good and evil, but that between dulness, in the broadest sense of the word, and wit, in the Neoclassical sense (152-3).
Divergent and dissonant interpretations are actively invited by Pope, since one of the major aims of parody in The Dunciad is to confuse pedantic neoclassical critics by offering the poem that is at the same time vulgar and refined, joyful and pessimistic, epic and comic, in an oddly unstable way. The elusive "anti-poem" rejects all generic distinctions, while those distinctions and oppositions that truly matter for Pope (wit/dulness, genius/pedantry, poetry/editing, light/darkness, order/chaos) are not forged into direct formulas and prescriptions, but illustrated indirectly, through an apocalyptic and humorous vision of the discord and chaos ensuing from their lack. The Dunciad thus evokes "sense" only as the lack and absence in the hollow void of its carnivalesque "nonsense". It constructs a profane and debased image of the world, in which the Moderns pervert the noble virtues of the Ancients, the virtuosos and pedants corrupt modern science and the Grub-street poets are usurpers and destroyers of true poetry. Even the Hanoverian kings become to some extent the degraded and duncical versions of the proper English monarchs.

The following discussion of The Dunciad is divided into four sections. First, Pope’s Peri Bathous is discussed as a text which immediately preceded Pope’s mock-epic poem and which illuminates it in various significant ways. Second, the parody of various motifs and stylistic traits of classical epic poetry is analyzed and interpreted. Third, the sustained parody of Milton’s Paradise Lost and its major functions in the poem are examined. Fourth, the hoax footnotes and prefaces (the "Notes Variorum") are discussed as contributing to the immensely ambiguous and playful character of Pope’s work.

3.2. The Anti-Sublime (Literary) Market: The Art of Sinking in Poetry
The first version of The Dunciad (1728) was directly preceded by another parodic text by Pope, Peri Bathous, or the Art of Sinking in Poetry (1727). In this mock-treatise on modern literature, Pope elaborates an ironic inversion of the conception of the sublime borrowed from the essay by Longinus, Peri Hypsous (first century CE). The entire essay is attributed to Martinus Scriblerus, the parodic figure of a pedantic critic and scholar, whose tedious prose is saturated with laudatory remarks on the modern wits and scholars: "our every-way industrious Moderns, both in the Weight of their writings, and in the Velocity of their judgements, do infinitely excel the said Ancients” (1727: 129). The logic of argumentation is based on a parodic reversal of Longinus but also on
a parody of the mechanistic and anatomical discourses of natural philosophy characteristic of the Enlightenment. Poetry is defined as the "natural and morbid secretion of the Brain", by means of which "the discharge of the peccant humour" is effected (133). Bathos is defined as the "true Profound", which, in contrast with the Sublime of Longinus, is concerned with the "art of sinking", with "diving" and "digging" (motifs explored later in *The Dunciad*). Bathos in nature is thus the opposite of the sublime represented by "the Sky, the Sun, Moon, Stars, etc."); it is located underground: "The profound of Nature is Gold, Pearls, precious Stones, and the Treasures of the Deep, which are inestimable as unknown" (135). Bathos is thus connected with material gain and mediocrity, with the downward movement that affords pleasure to "the greatest number" and hence provides the author with greater applause ("the Profound strikes universally and is adapted to every capacity"). Bathos is democratic and populist, and while it affords more pleasure and less effort than the upright ascending, it is not always easy for "the lowest of the Creation" to "descend beneath himself":

I grant that to excel in the Bathos, a genius is requisite, yet the Rules of Art must be allowed so far useful as add weight, or, as I may say, hang on lead, to facilitate and enforce our descend, to guide us to the most advantageous declivities, and habituate our imagination to a depth of thinking (134-5).

Bathos is a parodic reversal of the concept of sublime, replacing the ascent and aspiration, with everything that is "truly and fundamentally low" (143). However, the sublime is not the greatest enemy of bathos; the first maxim of every practitioner of the art of bathos should be "to avoid, detest, and turn his head from all the ideas, ways, and workings of that pestilent Foe to Wit, and Destroyer of fine Figures, which is known by the name of Common Sense" (136). What is located in the middle ("Corn, Flowers, Fruits, Animals, and things for the mere use of Man") is always of the "mean price" and hence is of little interest to "modern Criticks and Authors", who prefer the treasures (gold, pearls) of the Profound. That which is useful and practical should be abhorred, since only the profound has a charm of mystery. The sharp satire on modern taste is here directly linked with the criticism of the mercenary interests of the poets and the commodification of literature; the truest form of bathos is the mystery of gold as the material that is useless practically (due to its softness) and yet is valued above all that is useful, much above food and clothes, not to mention literature. "The art of sinking" is the art of worshiping "Gold, Pearls, precious Stones" exactly because they are *useless and mysterious*. 


The poetic examples of bathos are provided chiefly by Sir Richard Blackmore's epic poem *Prince Arthur* (1695). Pope mocks, for instance, its awkward use of metaphors and similes; "If he looks upon the Tempest, he shall have an image of a tumbled bed" (137). In Chapter VI "Of the several Kinds of Geniuses in the Profound and the Marks and Characters of each" Pope provides a mock-taxonomy of different types of authors based on how they "excel in their respective parts of Bathos" (141-3). There are, among others, "The Flying Fishes," a name bestowed on the "writers who now and then rise upon their fins, and fly out of the Profound; but their wings are soon dry, and they drop down to the bottom", and "The Frogs," who "can neither walk nor fly, but leap and bound to admiration: They live generally in the bottom of a ditch, and make great noise whenever thy thrust their head above water" (143). The list of poets ridiculed in the essay includes many of the later dunces: Richard Blackmore, Lewis Theobald, Ambrose Phillips and John Dennis.

In the section "Of Imitation, and Manner of Imitating," another motif that clearly anticipates *The Dunciad* can be found, namely the ridicule of antiquated style employed in the "sundry poems in imitation of Milton," in which "nevertheless was constantly nathles, embroider'd was broider'd, hermits were eremites, disdain'd was sdain'd, shady umbrageous, enterprise emprise, pagan paynim, pinions pennons, sweet dulcet, orchards orchats, bridge-work pontifical; nay, her was hir, and there was thir thro' the whole poem" (151). The use of antiquated, pseudo-archaic speech is yet another device that assists the Moderns in achieving the effect of gravity and seriousness – the practice being mimicked and parodied in Pope's mock-epic poem. The modern abuses of the figures of speech, such as metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, paronomasia, antithesis, hyperbole and periphrasis are each discussed in the following two Chapters (X-XI) and illustrated with examples from numerous poems. In all cases, Pope's criticism (often expressed in the form of praise delivered by the misguided Scriblerus) focuses on the effects of false intricacy and unnecessary complication. It is recommended that the authors "ought to lay it down as a principle to say nothing in the usual way" and thus offer "noble Confusion". The focus on deliberate confusion and complication is visible also in such expressions as "true mist," "Darkness is an essential quality of the profound," "obscurity bestows a cast of the wonderful," etc. The "florid style," common in modern poetry, is compared to flowers, which frequently grow "in the bottom of *Ponds and Ditches*" (169). Analogical mockery of stylistic preponderance, excessive flourishes and contorted poetic figures is evoked in Book I of *The Dunciad*:
Here one poor Word a hundred clenches makes,
And ductile Dulness new meanders takes;
There motley Images her fancy strike,
Figures ill-paired, and Similes unlike.
She sees a Mob of Metaphors advance,
Pleased with the Madness of the mazy dance (A: I, 63-8, p. 67).56

The entire essay is preoccupied with what may be located in the general ideological and economic shift from "the excesses of the baroque prodigal exuberance" towards "the restraint of the eighteenth-century thought preoccupied with pragmatic values" (Jarrett, Rachwał and Sławek 106). The sarcastic praise of the mysterious and precious stones over "the common sense" and other pragmatic values explains perhaps why satire as a "useful" genre of poetry (both didactic and entertaining) is for Pope a crucial mode of discursive production. Pope's philology derides the economy of artistic "production" that uses poetry in order to praise vain patrons, to gain favours, material advantages and popular applause, but it also forbids the mere indulgence in poetic fancy and, hence, useless detachment of poetry from the reality of human concerns. The laws of emerging literary market detach and alienate literature from its proper concern with beauty, truth and morality. Through parodic resignification, aesthetic qualities become signifiers for a corrupted and downgraded culture: such terms as "profound", "fine," "wonderful" or "talent" acquire negative, satiric meanings under the logic of ironic reversal. When Pope recommends using "the wrong Number" or the aim "to say nothing in the usual way", he offers a piece of mock-advice, in implied parody of the judgments promoted by the modern literary market.

Pope is at his best, however, when he offers (in the grave tone of Scriblerus) poetic translations after the modern fashion of the "most vulgar and low actions of life" for the delight of "every true lover of the Profound". Accordingly, Shut the door is translated as "The wooden guardian of our privacy / Quick on its axle turn", while Light the Fire is rendered as "Bring forth some remnant of Promethean theft, / Quick to expand th'inclement air congeal'd / By Boreas' rude breath" and Open the Letter as "Wax render up thy trust" (169-170). The verbosity, redundancy and artifice of these phrases offend the "Good Sense" that Pope opposed to the "false taste of Magnificence" in his poetic epistle addressed to the Earl of Burlington, written only few years later.

56 All references to the versed part of The Dunciad specify the book number + the line numbers + the page. In case of prose only the page number is given. I refer to the recent 2014 Routledge scholarly edition, containing the last version of the poem (The Dunciad, in Four Books). However, when I refer to the earlier versions of the poem, the letter "A" is added in the brackets. In such cases I refer to The Twickenham Edition of Pope’s Works, Vol. 5, edited by James Sutherland (1943), which also contains the earlier version – Dunciad Variorum.
The essay contains also numerous projects and proposals for the "Advancement of the Bathos," in which Pope mocks the application of economic industriousness to poetry. Scriblerus even advocates a division of the literary profession analogous to that of "modern manufacture", in which each branch produces a separate part of a product, as in "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" (171). Consequently, each trope and figure of speech will have their own section of labourers, for instance "Simile-makers" or "Metaphorists". Pope returns here to the topic of the commodification of literature, presenting the growing print trade as a commercialized industry interested in the mechanized process of production (rather than creation) of poetry. As Dorothy M. George reminds us: "The London watchmaking trade was minutely subdivided; the making of the watch was chosen as early as 1701 to illustrate the advantages of division of labour" (175). Science, mechanized labour and the market threaten traditional humanism; poetry produced merely to appease the public, to please the wealthy patrons or to sell on the market becomes reduced to a collection of dead stylistic clichés. Brean S. Hammond thus observes, "The Scriblerian target is homo mechanicus, a species both produced by and producing the new scientific learning, but at a cost to fundamental humanity, to naturalness, and to good writing" (quoted in Fanning 651).

In this respect, the parody of the epic in The Dunciad acquires an element of poignant criticism. Virgil's epic, for instance, was essentially a propaganda piece in praise of Rome and Augustus, a part of the monarch's efforts to "foster a religious revival by implementing an extensive building program to restore the temples and by promoting traditional Roman values" (Green IX). In one of his "Epitaph" poems, Pope noted even that Horace and Virgil should blush for their flattery to kings, which further illustrates his "complex response to the political dimension of the Maecenas circle" (Regan 460). The numerous longish footnotes, prefaces and appendices added in The Dunciad Variorum are saturated with mock-philological parody that follows the logic of Peri Bathous, condemning the pseudo-scientific intricacy which often covers ignorance or pettiness and endows trifle details with an air of gravity and consequence. In order to expose these tendencies, the footnotes themselves become exceedingly particular, tedious, pedantic, self-referential and confusing. In many ways, the concept of bathos is synonymous with that of dulness. Pope speaks of having discovered the "hidden forces of Bathos" much in the same manner as he speaks of the forces of
dulness, which is personified as the "mighty mother", with her "sons" acting as the representatives and promoters of her cause. The references to downward movement and gravity, to caves, recesses, pits and bottoms, as well as to darkness, obscurity and confusion, are likewise numerous in *The Dunciad*. Such phrases as "bleak recess", "clouded majesty", "chaos dark and deep", "night descending", "down sink the flames", "A veil of fogs", "mystic words" and "cloud-compelling queen" abound already in Book I of the poem.

3.3. "Figures ill-paired": the Mock-Epic in *The Dunciad*

The humorous mock-heroic poems of the period employed epic structures and style but presented an anti-epic world. As a result, a series of contrasts and incongruous juxtaposition occurred, and peculiar, double-voiced poems were created. Much of the ironic force of these parodies came from the popularity and esteem which the poems of Homer, Virgil and Milton continued to meet with – Pope could expect his audience to be familiar with the conventions of epic poetry to a degree allowing for the dissection and appreciation of numerous ironic parallels and comic distortions, even if his frequent footnotes also mockingly suggest that he had to mistrust the competence of his readership. An extended parody of epic poetry constitutes the spine of *The Dunciad*. The organizing motif of the poem, i.e. the establishment of the Kingdom of Dulness, is essentially a "parodic inversion of the central theme of the *Aeneid* – the epic concept of a founding of a Kingdom" (Colomb 6). Seen in the context of current politics, however, it may also be read as a "parody of the-return-of-Golden-Age motif, which appeared in the contemporary verses of flatterers of the King" (Griffin 436). A similar "topsy-turvy" motif had been used earlier in two much shorter mock-epic poems: John Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* and Sir Richard Blackmore's *The Kit-Cats*. Both earlier poems used the idea of the growing Empire of Dulness to mock their opponents. In the case of Dryden, it was directed against Thomas Shadwell, in that of Blackmore, dulness was personified by the opponents of the Kit-Cats literary circle. In Pope's poem, however, the mock-epic motif of the Kingdom of Dulness is much more elaborate and seems to serve as a broad metaphor for the critical analysis of contemporary culture.

Dulness becomes so blatant in modernity for Pope chiefly because of the availability of the printing press. Popular modern editions and re-editions of the classics, full of pedantic notes and self-praising editorial commentaries, are mirrored in
the concept of the poem as a found manuscript, "restored" by two "eminent" critics and editors, Martinus Scriblerus and Ricardus Aristarchus. In his preface to the work, Scriblerus evokes print and the low cost of paper as the main reasons behind "the deluge of Authors" that the poet presents in his poem:

He lived in those days, when after Providence had permitted the invention of Printing as a scourge for the sins of the learned, paper also became so cheap, and Printers so numerous, that a deluge of Authors covered the land; whereby not only the peace of the honest unwriting subject was daily molested, but unmerciful demands were made of his applause, yea, of his money, by such as would neither earn the one nor deserve the other. At the same time, the license of the Press was such, that it grew dangerous to refuse them either; for they would forthwith publish slanders unpublished, the authors being anonymous, and skulking under the wings of Publishers, a set of men who never scrupled to vend either Columny or Blasphemy, as long as the Town would call for it. (70-71)

Pope's poem is directed against obnoxious second-rate Grub-street authors and greedy publishers, but also against the world of academia, with Bentley and Theobald representing a new cast of pedantic, university-trained neoclassical philologists. In any case, Pope sees as crucial the burgeoning industry of print that prompted the publication of endless editions and re-editions of ancient and modern poets, as well as countless journals, criticisms, essays, lampoons, slanders and pamphlets. These are touched on by Pope in numerous allusions and imitations, especially within the spurious footnotes attached to the poem. The print market and the commodification of literature are Pope's explicit themes in The Dunciad, and the growing cult of print becomes its thematic centre. To reflect this "madness" of print, he decided to adorn the poem with numerous Introductions, Testimonies, Prefaces, Appendixes and footnotes, ruthlessly parodying the practices of modern philology and editing. This level of parody will be discussed in the forth section of this chapter, though it is worth mentioning here that the sheer number of annotations strengthens the illusion of the authentic "grave and ancient" poem that Pope wanted to create.

57 McKeon (1985) points out that the confrontations between Robinson Crusoe (1719) and Gulliver's Travels (1726) on the one hand, and between Pamela (1740) and Shamela (1741) on the other, enacted a Scriblerian parodic mockery of Protestant narratives constructed as "authentic". Many modern text were advertised as "restored" copies of some authentic manuscripts, memoirs or letters, while Pope, Fielding and Swift often applied this device in an ostensibly ironic way.

58 The Dunciad was first published in March 1728, divided into three "books", without any notes, appendices or proeme. The subsequent 1729 Variorum version was supplemented with the parodic philological apparatus (largely in response to the critics and detractors of Pope). It included: Advertisement, A letter to the Publisher, Testimonies of Authors, Preface by Martinus Scriblerus, abundant footnotes, Errata, seven extended Appendixes (including a hoax essay on Pastorals), A Declaration by the Author and an Index. These were further expanded in the subsequent versions of the poem (e.g. a mock-critical essay by Aristarchus was added).
The Invocation to the Muse, in the manner of all grand epic poems, opens the first Book of the poem and announces its subject and scope:

Books and the Man I sing, the first who brings
The Smithfield Muses to the Ear of Kings.
Say great Patricians! (since your selves inspire
These wond'rous works; so Jove and Fate require)
Say from what cause, in vain decry'd and curst
Still Dunce the second reigns like Dunce the first? (A: I, 1-6, pp. 59-61)

The fact that "Books" come before "the Man" and that they are "wond'rous" signals the inversion of values that Pope has already described in Peri Bathous. The Invocation is addressed to the "great Patricians," who become the inspiration for all the hack poets and writers wishing to gain their favors, since "Profit" is the "main end of our Writers and Speakers," as Scriblerus observed in Peri Bathous (173). A grandiose, epic syntax is contrasted with a mocking intention in a fluctuating "topsy-turvy" play of contrasts: the phrase "Smithfield Muse" is itself an "ironic compound of high classical and low grotesque," since the Smithfield referred to the place where the Bartholomew Fair, a very popular festive and commercial event, was held. Peter Stallybras and Allon White also note that: "After Charles II's return, Bartholomew Fair was extended from a market officially lasting three days to a fair of two weeks" (110-11). The opening of the poem thus signals the directions of the aesthetic and socioeconomic critique offered by The Dunciad.

The prefatory apparatus of the poem is in itself a complex parodic feat. In the Preface, The Dunciad is announced to be an imitation of a lost text that Pope has never read, the "first Epic poem, written by Homer himself, and anterior to the Iliad and Odyssey" (A: 48). The lost ancient poem is described in the following terms: "as it celebrateth the most grave and ancient of things, Chaos, Night and Dulness, so it is of the most grave and ancient kind" (A: 48). Pope's "imitation" of this work follows his earlier translations of Homer (The Iliad in 1715-20, The Odyssey in 1725-6), which brought him recognition and considerable income (and sparked some controversy over his abilities as a translator). Furthermore, the text offers a modernized, Anglo-Classicist imitation of the ancient work, in which all the references are replaced with contemporary and local allusions, yet these satirical references are so numerous to be obscure even for Pope’s contemporaries. Ricardus Aristarchus (a fictional critic invented by Pope, in allusive mockery of Richard Bentley) places the poem in the Greek tradition of the Tetralogy, in which the fourth piece, following a trilogy of serious tragedies, was a Satiric Tragedy, as in case of Euripides’ portrayal of "dull,
debauched, buffoon Cyclops”. The relation between parody and the previous parts is not only that of simple opposition:

But then it is not every Knave, nor (let me add) Fool, that is a fit subject for a Dunciad. There must still exist some Analogy, if not Resemblance of Qualities, between the Heroes of the two Poems, and this in order to admit what Neoteric critics call the Parody, one of the liveliest graces of the little Epic. Thus it being agreed that the constituent qualities of the greater Epic Hero, are Wisdom, Bravery, and Love, from whence springeth heroic Virtue; it followeth that those of the lesser Epic Hero, should be Vanity, Impudence, and Debauchery, from which happy assemblage resulteth heroic Dulness, the never-dying subject of this our Poem. (78)

This passage clearly shows how Pope evokes the ancient literary tradition and manipulates neoclassical philology to justify his exuberant poetics, but this justification is in itself an allusive mockery of the numerous accusations made after the first edition of the poem by critics and printers such as Bentley and Curl. Pope mocks in the Preface especially the rigid neoclassical rules devised for the composition of epic poetry, primarily the notions presented by René Le Bossu in his Traité du poème épique (1675), which Aristarchus frequently adopts in his analysis.

The Dunciad is based on the general "paradox" of all mock-heroic poems: the epic "classical" idiom (praising, magnifying, sublimating) is confused and blended with the "low" comic idiom (mocking, miniaturizing, vulgarizing). These conflicting attitudes often meet within a single word, as when Pope ironically calls the dunces "Heroes". Such sustained ironic self-contradiction, as Dorothy van Ghent notices, is crucial for the peculiar vividness of parodic forms, which often lies in the "simultaneity of contrasted extremes" (12). The blended opposites are not reconciled, but continue to contrastively subvert each other – in parodic forms "there is no dialectic resolution or recuperative evasion of contradiction" (Hutcheon 2001: 107). But the mock-heroic paradox also finds a very fertile ground in the historical context. As Steele declared in No. 18 of The Tatler (May 1709), "my chief Scenes of Action are Coffee-houses, Play-houses, and my own Apartment, I am in no need of Camps, Fortifications, and Fields of Battle" (Segar 1947: 16). In eighteenth century London "the idea of a gentleman has replaced the idea of heroic actor; the ideal of good judgment has taken the place of heroism" (Miner 1969: 476). The overtly heroic or epic idiom was often applied to the urban milieu of London only to ironically signal the fact that the Hanoverian Age was usually "content with unheroic temper" and to envisage an anti-orthodox "relaxed humanism" (Bevis 113). The Dunciad portrays the age as deficient in imagination and resources demanded for the creation of epic poetry (definitely in the case of Richard Blackmore) and for the expression of heroic values and ideals. This modern inability to
create a serious epic procures yet another ironic context for the use of mock-epic form. 59

The major dunce in the first version of the poem is Theobald, accompanied by other scholars, translators, editors, journalists, dramatists, booksellers, pamphleteers and poetasters, notably Richard Bentley, Thomas Cooke, Edmund Curll, William Bond, John Dennis, Eliza Haywood, Aaron Hill, Thomas Hearne, John Oldmixon, Ambrose Phillips, Thomas Woolston, most of the authors having been already satirized in Peri Bathous, either for personal grudge or for justified criticism. It should be noted that many of these personages were highly influential figures in the literary and social circles of Pope's London. The dunces, though they represent all sorts of negative qualities that should exclude them from any epic poem, are often described as if they were distinguished heroes in an ancient epic, e.g. the "Great Tibbald" is crowned and sits on a throne ("a gorgeous seat"), he also "hears loud Oracles, and talks with Gods". All dunces are, in fact, sons of the goddess Dulness, therefore they are frequently referred to as "heroes". Ironically, the chief dunce and the "hero" of the poem is inactive and sleeps most of the time. Dunces are also described as a vile and mindless "race", which may bring to mind the wild Yahoos from Swift's Gulliver's Travels. The "epic machinery" of gods and supernatural forces is limited to the goddess Dulness, described as the "Daughter of Chaos": she is the immortal patroness of all kinds of ignorance, dreariness, mischief and foolishness. 60

The sustained epic stylization of language creates in the poem the alternating impressions of epic praise and satiric mockery. To strengthen this elusive game, Pope frequently employs archaic forms or ornate constructions, which seem to be "grave and ancient", but also often appear pompous and pretentious when applied in descriptions of very trivial or comic events:

59 The very title of the poem is a pun on epic titles and the word dunce. In its morphological construction, it is based on oxymoronic blending, creating a miniature one-word parody. The tradition of epic titles is both identified (one word, ending with the -iad suffix) and contradicted by the choice of highly unsuitable root. Consequently, instead of the progress of civilization, as in Virgil's Aeneid, the poet "sings" of the progress of stupidity (a counter-civilization of sorts), and instead of epic heroes he "praises" the "accomplishments" of its dunces.

60 The fact that Pope has chosen a female goddess rather than a male god has been a subject of many debates. Stallybras and White (1986) suggest that the regal attributes of the Goddess contrast with her promiscuity; Todd (1995) proposes a reference to the popular eighteenth-century hoax history of Mary Toft giving birth to rabbits (cf. giving birth to dunces); Rachwal (1992) suggests that since women were not allowed in the coffee-houses, Dulness represents an impudent woman who improperly meddles in the male-dominated public sphere of poetry and politics; Brown (2011) writes that female Dulness, like Defoe's Lady Credit, represents the "feminine" fluidity, instability and volatility of consumerism and the market economy, which reshape social relations as well as the production and reception of literature.
But in her Temple’s last recess inclos’d
On Dulness lap th’ Anointed head repos’d
Him close she curtain’d round with vapors blue,
And soft besprinkled with Cimmerian dew.
Then raptures high the seat of sense o’erflow
Which only heads, refin’d from reason, know.
Hence, from the straw where Bedlam’s Prophet nods,
He hears loud Oracles, and talks with Gods.
Hence the Fool’s paradise, the Statesman’s scheme
The air-built Castle, and the golden Dream,
The Maid’s romantic wish, the Chymnist’s flame
And Poet’s vision of eternal fame. (A: III, 1-12, p. 150)

The language of this passage clearly illustrates Bakhtin's definition of parody as an intentional dialogized hybrid of opposing styles and perspectives. On the one hand, there is the brilliantly parodied elevated perspective of the epic language, its specific tendency to sublimate and enlarge, to speak in flourishes and grandiose metaphors. To describe heads as "refin’d from reason" is to apply euphemism, oxymoron and irony – the phrase is very much a micro-effect of the macro-scale parodic crossing of elegant with satiric language. The play of voices is visible in every line, in the choice of similes and the sombre localization ("from the straw") contrasting with the inspired vision. The use of pompous discourse actively mocks Tibbald, whose dismal position, in turn, transforms the poetic description into absurdity; the "high" perspective (idealistic, elaborately poetic) is crossed and blended with the "low" context (satirizing, grotesque). One can contrast this parodic passage with Pope's serious use of apostrophe and poetic vision in his youthful *Windsor Forest*:

Ye sacred Nine! that all my Soul possess,
Whose Raptures fire me, and whose Visions bless,
Bear me, oh bear me to sequester’d Scenes
The Bow'ry Mazes and surrounding Greens;
To Thames's Banks which fragrant Breezes fill,
Or where ye Muses sport on Cooper's Hill. (ll. 259-64, p. 203).

The "fragrant Breezes" from this early poem become replaced in *The Dunciad* with the smelly sewer of Fleet-ditch, which "Rolls the wide tribute of dead dogs to Thames" (II: 272, p. 189). Pope parodies the devices of classical poetry as well as its common motifs and tropes; Tibbald's prophetic vision may allude to the scene of Oracle's prophecy presented in Book VII of the *Aeneid*, but Tibbald only imagines he is talking with gods, while he is lying, like an animal, on straw, which is linked here also with the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem (Bedlam) – the first insane asylum in London, notorious for its poor, inhuman conditions. The ephemeral, transient and naive character of the poet’s dream is emphasized in ironic comparisons to the "air-built Castle," "Maid’s romantic
wish" and the "Chymnist’s flame". Madness, mad visions and prophesies are typical carnivalesque motifs. However, as Robert Griffin has pointed out, the "Bedlam's prophet" in this passage should be interpreted not only in the context of the poem's classical reference, but also in its allusiveness to the Old Testament: Tibbald becomes "set ironically against true prophecy, and is therefore seen within the evoked context of Scripture as a false prophet and usurper of the Word" (437). This comment reminds us that the opposition between the pedantry of scholars and the wit of true poets is inscribed within Pope's general binary opposition between the inspired/inspiring Word, or *Logos*, and the dead "uncreating word" of the dunces, perhaps also the word of Deists and Atheists, who "Make God Man's Image, Man the final Cause" (IV: 478, p. 333). Sutherland, in turn, suggests that the reference to Bedlam may also allude to the illustration that was added to the *Digression concerning the Original, the Use and Improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth*, constituting Section IX of Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub* (first published in 1704). The illustration is striking; it is reprinted in the Oxford University edition from 1958 and presents a lunatic, chained to a wall, with a strange grimace, lying on the straw spread on the floor, and pouring some liquid (urine?) from a bucket, while other lunatics seem to tumble around in the enclosed space of a barren cell. Behind the bars, visitors are seen, curiously observing the dismal spectacle (Swift 1958: 177). Theobald is elected the King of Dunces, and becomes a mad prophet because he is both a pretentious, talentless poet and a pedantic philologist and scientist. It is this combination of mediocre poet and pedantic scholar that Pope wishes to expatriate and enclose in the walls of Bedlam.

Book III continues with an extended parody of another epic motif, catabasis, i.e. the travel to a nether world (analogical to Aeneas' descending to the underworld in Book VI of the *Aeneid*, where he is guided by Sybil and meets his deceased father, Anchises). In Pope's version, Tibbald is transported "on Fancy's easy wing" to the "dusky vale where Lethe rolls" and where "Old Bavius sits, to dip poetic souls, / And blunt the sense, and fit it for the skull / Of solid proof, impenetrably dull" (III: 23-26, p. 223). There he meets his predecessor, Settle, who reports the past glory and the present fate of Dulness, but also foretells Tibbald's future rein in the Kingdom of Dulness ("All nonsense thus, of old and modern date / Shall in thee centre, from thee circulate", III: 59-60, p. 228).

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61 Curious Londoners and tourists could visit the "lunatics" enclosed in the Bedlam hospital on Sundays, for the ticket fee of one pence (Rachwał and Sławek 1993: 12).
It is also pride, vanity and impudence of Grub-street authors that the poem caricaturizes. In the later version, *The Dunciad in Four Books* (1743), advertised as "the first correct edition", Colley Cibber finally replaced Theobald as the main Hero and the new Monarch. An actor, playwright and poet, not well-educated yet very popular, Cibber was first and foremost a celebrity, a sly promoter of his own talent, and in this sense also a sign of his times. However, it is the event of appointing Cibber a *poet laureate* to the Hanoverian dynasty in 1730 that inspired most of the satire in later versions of Pope’s poem: "As a lackey of the regime, one who wrote, acted and produced plays, and was besides the King’s chosen poet, he presented a potent focus for the alleged vicious circle of Whig corruption, cultural commercialism and the decline of taste" (Rumbold 2014: 11). Cibber is often referred to as Mr. Bays (the role of dull coxcomb he played in *The Rehearsal*), and his efforts at writing are dramatically described in the following memorable lines:

In each she marks her Image full exprest,  
But chief in BAY’s monster-breeding breast;  
Bays, form’d by nature Stage and Town to bless,  
And act, and be, a Coxcomb with success.  
Dulness with transport eyes the lively Dunce,  
Remembering she herself was Pertness once.  
Now (shame to Fortune!) an ill Run at Play  
Blank’d his bold visage, and a thin Third day:  
Swearing and supperless the Hero sate,  
Blaspheme’d his Gods, the Dice, and damn’d his Fate.  
Then gnaw’d his pen, then dash’d it on the ground,  
Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound!  
Plung’d for his sense, but found no bottom there,  
Yet wrote and flounder’d on, in mere despair.  
Round him much Embryo, much Abortion lay,  
Much future Ode, and abdicated Play;  
Nonsense precipitate, like running Lead,  
That slip’d thro’ Cracks and Zig-zags of the Head;  
All that on Folly Frenzy could beget,  
Fruits of dull Heat, and Sooterkins of Wit.

Next, o’er his Books his eyes began to roll,  
In pleasing memory of all he stole,  
How here he sipp’d, how there he plunder’d snug  
And suck’d all o’er, like an industrious Bug. (I: 107-130, pp.114-17)

Visible here is a parody of the epic style of narration. The epic narrator is always distant and solemn; personal commentaries are avoided, the style is grave and pompous and there is a sense of distance rather than intimacy between the narrator and the addressee. This type of narration is partly preserved here as the narrator focuses on relating the "action" (the "laborious" process of composing dull verse) and Cibber's
efforts are related "in all the Pomp and Bustle of an Epic Poem". Cibber is identified as "the Hero" who "blasphemes his Gods". The satiric ridicule is visible mostly in the choice of epithets and similes. These refer mostly to the (failed) physical act of birth ("monster-breeding," "Embryo," "Abortion," "beget," "Sooterkins"), emphasizing Cibber's major fault: the impotent lack of creativity. The grotesque type of imagery contrasts with more elegant, poetic and rather euphemistic phrases ("vast profound", "Fruits of dull Heat"). The harsher epithets transform the epic description into ruthless mockery, and numerous accusations were made that Pope indulged in such moments in a mere personal attack. The description might seem harsh, but it needs to be remembered that the poem is a retort and a piece of retaliation of sorts, since Pope himself was a target of numerous attacks and painful commentaries from the beginning of his career, "attacks on his character, his honesty, his ingratitude, his greed, his physique, and his capacity to translate Homer" (Dobrée 1959: 213).

The invocation and the mock-heroic presentations of the dunces and their deeds are accompanied by numerous travesties of epic motifs. Book II describes a series of contests – the High Heroic Games – being a direct parody of the heroic games organized by Aeneas in Book V of the Aenead (e.g. chariot race, wrestling, foot race) and, to a lesser extent, of the funeral games in honour of Patroclus described in Book XXIII of Homer's Iliad. The travestied games comprise a pissing contest, a tickling contest, a noise contest, a diving (in mud and excrement) contest, and, finally, a reading contest that puts everyone to sleep. All are vividly comic as well as gross and somewhat offensive. In the pissing contest, for instance, the competitors are Chetwood and Curl (Osborne and Curl in the later 1743 version), while the prize is Mrs. Haywood – Eliza Haywood, the journalist and author of popular novels. The intertextual playfulness of the passage is heightened by the parodic inversion of Homer's description of the games in the Iliad, where the prizes included "a Lady and a Kettle,"

62 John Ozell characterized in this manner the style of Boileau's mock-epic poem, Le Latrin, in the "Dedication" to his translation of the poem published in 1708.
63 The motif of grotesque birth is typical for carnivalesque humour. In Rabelais' novel, the giant Gargantua is born through the left ear of his mother. The motif is reworked also in Sterne's Tristram Shandy, where Tristram's nose is crushed during birth with the obstetrical instruments by Dr Slop.
64 The responses to The Dunciad were numerous and, as could be expected, frequently harshly critical. Edmund Curll and Ambrose Phillips published Codrus, or the Dunciad Dissected as early as in 1728, accusing Pope especially of making poverty the subject of his satire. Pope responded to this criticism in A Letter to the Publisher, added to the 1729 Dunciad Variorum, and to the subsequent editions of the poem. Edmund Curll responded to that letter, in turn, in his The Curliad, or Hypercritic upon the Dunciad Variorum (1729). Among the positive and praising responses, there is especially William Harte's Essay on Satire, particularly on the Dunciad (1730), in which the author praises Pope's use of mock-epic form and his elevation of satire to an almost epic quality.
though the kettle was more esteemed in the eyes of competitors. Pope's parody is, supposedly, less misogynist, as another ironic footnote asserts: "Mrs. H. is treated here with distinction, and acknowledged to be more valuable of the two" (A: 120) – adding irony to an already insulting description:

Chetwood and Curl accept the glorious strife  
(Tho’ one his son dissuades, and one his wife)  
this on his manly confidence relies,  
that on his vigour and superior size.  
First Chetwood lean’d against his letter’d post;  
It rose, and labour’d to a curve at most  
So Jove’s bright bow displays its watry round,  
(sure sign, that no spectator shall be drown’d).  
A second effort brought but new disgrace,  
For straining more, it flies in his own face (A: II, 159-168, pp. 121-22)

When commenting on the folk carnival parody and travesty and their use of "gross realism", Bakhtin observed that "the essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (1984: 19-20). Both Bakhtin and Bourdieu linked offensive parody with "popular imagination", but there is much evidence that such desublimating parody was practised also by educated and sophisticated writers, both in antiquity and in modern times. As an intellectual exiled from the establishment by virtue of both his Catholicism and Tory allegiances, Pope finds in the tradition of joyful degradation an apt literary means for powerful criticism of the corrupt elites of London. The grotesque realism is visible in references to urinating, to scatological imagery, to all kinds of bodily functions (eating, farting, sleeping, yawning, etc.) that are frequent in the poem. They ridicule the detached ambitions and poetic aspirations of the dunces through a degrading reference to the "low" sphere of their bodies. As Stallybras and White observe, "in the classical body of Enlightenment poetic and critical discourse (...) the suppression and distancing of the physical body became the very sign of rationality, wit and judgment" (105). The neoclassical satire could use the popular carnivalesque imagery of the impure and unruly body to stigmatize and thus to exclude the satirized figures from the polite sphere of society. Through such ironic degradation, the "City-Swans", the index-learning pedants and pretentious scribblers (Bentley, Hearne or Theobald) are declassified and reduced to the members of the collective grotesque body of the "Grub-street" rabble. The elements of vulgar and grotesque realism contradict and hence also ironically highlight the epic stylization of the poem. The use of "bodily grotesque"
echoes Menippean Satire (which derives from the Greek philosophical school of Cynics, i.e. "dogs"), a tradition that aimed at parodying and debasing various preposterous and idealist philosophical conceptions.65

Though often "vulgar" in style or content, mocking and parodying texts were frequently written by the erudite and learned writers, borrowing their vocabulary from the most diverse sources, including the Saturnalian spirit of the carnival. Pope applies intricate parallels to Homer, Virgil and Milton in a work that is far removed from his earlier, delicately woven parody in The Rape of the Lock. The crude contrasts are visible in the account of the Heroic Games, notably in the Fleet Ditch diving contest, when poets and critics are challenged by the Goddess to dive into the stream filled with excrement and corpses of dead dogs:

This labour past, by Bridewell all descend,
(As morning pray'r, and flagellation end)
To where Fleet-ditch with disemboguing streams
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,
The King of dykes! than whom no sluice of mud
With deeper sable blots the silver flood.
'Here strip, my children! here at once leap in,
Here prove who best can dash thro' thick and thin,
And who the most in love of dirt excel,
Or dark dexterity of groping well.
Who flings most filth, and wide pollutes around
The stream, be his the Weekly Journals bound,
A pig of lead to him who dives the best;
A peck of coals a-piece shall glad the rest.' (II: 269-280, pp. 189-191)

The passage is one of the series of the parodic allegories, in which the literal "image" induces an equally offensive allegorical "interpretation": the printing industry is represented as a bath in excrement, while the "love of dirt" signifies the printer's and bookseller's love of cheap gossip, rumor and scandal. The "dark dexterity" is thus a necessary competence for anyone professionally dealing with writing or trading in the printed word. Pope finds in the mock-heroic poetic formula a suitable general allegory for the (delusional) "heroic" sense of self-importance which characterizes the otherwise mediocre poets and editors. The epic stylization of the poem is explicated in the following terms:

65 In Lucian's Symposium, the grotesque imagery of eating and drinking contrasts with the pompous debates in which the attendants of the symposium engage, in the Praise of Folly by Erasmus the deformed bodies of erudite scholars are described. The motif a sumptuous and grotesquely luxurious banquet is present in Trymalchio's feast in Petronius' Satyricon, and a similar motif is used in the numerous medieval parodies of the Christian Last Supper. In The Battle of the Books, Swift presented Bentley with a clumsy and grotesque body – "Bentley, the most deformed of all moderns; tall, but without shape or comeliness, large, but without strength and proportion" (1969: 163).
It is styled *Heroic*, as being *doubly* so, not only with respect to its nature, which according to the Best Rules of Ancients and strictest ideas of the Moderns, is critically such; but also with regard to the Heroical disposition and high courage of the Writer, who dar’d to stir up such a formidable, irritable, and impeccable race of mortals (A: 205)

The emphasis is therefore put on an ironic, grotesque magnification of the dunces and their vices. It is interesting to observe that in Pope's earlier mock-heroic, *The Rape of the Lock*, an almost reverse parodic strategy had been adopted:

    Belinda, the Baron, Sir Plume and the rest are dwarfed, and so rendered harmless, by their epic counterparts, in *The Dunciad*, the Burnets, Oldmixons and Cookes, themselves petty and contemptible, are inflated to epic proportions in the gargantuan caricatures (...) This method makes it easier for Pope to move from a level of mockery to that of prophetic communication. (Callan 1991: 247)

Pope shifts the burlesque combination of styles and perspectives in comparison with his earlier mock-heroic; the line of contrast is moved so that the satirized reality is endowed with the epic gravity and seriousness, but this seriousness is only provisional, and the criticism even more sardonic. The characters are presented through elaborate introductions, but the air of importance is dissolved when the dunces are mockingly put into the most ridiculous situations. The atmosphere of somber, prophetic seriousness that Pope often successfully creates, especially in the elevated descriptions and apocalyptic visions, constitutes only a certain façade, yet another element in the confusing paradox of his parody.

    This illusionist game owes much to the sense of correct proportion – the "just measure" – so crucial not only for Pope's classical aesthetic ethos but also for his ethics of correctness and restraint. Burlesque pomposity is one of the rhetorical means to reflect the excess resulting in the distortion of harmonious proportions, especially those between form and content, reason and body, ambition and capacity, praise and achievement. In *Epistle IV. To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington* (1731), Pope scorned the lack of proportion he perceived in thegrandiose suburban villas of some contemporary aristocrats:

    At Timon's villa let us pass a day,
    Where all cry out, "What sums are thrown away!"
    So proud, so grand of that stupendous air,
    Soft and agreeable come never there.
    Greatness, with Timon, dwells in such a draught
    As brings all Brobdingnag before your thought.
    To compass this, his building is a town,
    His pond an ocean, his parterre a down:
    Who but must laugh, the master when he sees,
    A puny insect, shiv'ring at a breeze! (ll. 100-108, p. 592).
The owner of such ostentatious villa will inevitably, and contrary to his intentions, appear Lilliputian; the snobbish aristocrat becomes a frail "insect" mocked by the monstrosity of the marble erection. The lack of proportion constitutes a breach of reasonable order and harmony, and this offensive incongruity is the opposite of concordia discors known from Pope's earlier poem, Windsor Forest, where "tho' all things differ, all agree" (l. 16). In contrast, the gardens of Timon's villa, with their trees having been artificially modeled into statues, are described in terms of an "inverted Nature" that is perceived by the "suff'ring eye" (l. 119). While the aristocrats visibly mock themselves with their ostentations spending and their "false Taste of Magnificence," the crimes against reason and taste perpetuated by duncical poets, critics, editors and collectors are much less theatrical, less open to the scrutiny of the gaze. Hence, they need to be inflated through the perceptual game of mock-epic stylization.

Pope's major theme in The Dunciad is simultaneously also the method of his parody: false sophistication, pseudo-intricacy, affected grandiloquence (targeted already in Peri Bathous), which are performatively reflected in the poem's structure and tonality. The reader cannot take anything in the poem quite seriously: every line is double-coded, ironic, illusive, simulated and simulating. Numerous prefaces, proeme, prolegomena, testimonies, notes and commentaries which attempt to discuss and vindicate the work also only pretend to be serious or academic. Martinus Scriblerus and Ricardus Aristarchus present their ponderous arguments in a feigned, antiquated style, reflecting much of Pope's contempt for the "mystic words". The number of classical allusions that Pope offers in the "diving in the mud" episode is a perfect example of such false intricacy, an open invitation for pedantic scholars:

First he relates, how sinking to the chin,  
Smitt with his mien, the Mud-nymphs suck'd him in:  
How young Lutetia, softer than the down,  
Virg'nia black, and Merdamante brown,  
Vy'd for his love in jetty bow'rs below,  
As Hylas fair was ravish'd long ago.  
Then sung, how shown him by the Nut-brown maids  
A branch of Styx here rises from the Shades,  
That tinctur'd as it runs with Lethe's streams,  
And wafting Vapours from the Land of dreams,  
(As under seas Alphæus secret sluice  
Bears Pisa's off'ring to his Arethuse)  
Pours into Thames, and hence the mingled wave  
Intoxicates the pert, and lulls the grave (II: 331-44, pp. 200-202)
The confusing mixture of elaborate allusions seems to entirely cover the fact that the scene here depicted is that of being immersed in mud and excrement, perhaps suggesting that lofty and learned language may cover up every nonsense. Pope seems to present here an extreme case of high burlesque, in which the exaggeratedly ornate and pompous style is used for relating most trivial or ridiculous action. The last exercise in the series of the games proposed by the Goddess Dulness is also pointedly humorous: critics are challenged to listen to their own writings for a few hours – without falling asleep:

Ye Critics! in whose grave heads, as equal scales,
I weigh what author's heaviness prevails,
Which most conduce to sooth the soul in slumbers,
My Henley's periods, or my Blackmore's numbers?
Attend the trial we propose to make:
If there be man, who o'er such works can wake,
Sleep's all-subduing charms who dares defy,
And boasts Ulysses' ear with Argus' eye (II: 367-374, pp. 205).

What follows is a reading session of the "pond'rous books" before a gathering of critics, who heroically fight not to fall asleep; yet they gradually give in: "At e'ry line they stretch, they yawn, they doze" (II: 390, p. 206). The second book of The Dunciad thus ends with a crowd of critics reposing in deep slumber.

The motif of the tediousness of the critics and their works returns several times in the poem. Book IV (added by Pope in 1742) also includes a fine couplet in criticism of the longish, dull and tedious commentaries by the modern editors such as Richard Bentley, a well-known neoclassical scholar, in his editions of Milton and Virgil:

For thee explain a thing till all men doubt it,
And write about it, Goddess, and about it: (IV: 251-2, p. 303)

This couplet is followed by a metaphor of a silk-worm:

So spin the silk-worm small its slender store
And labours till it clouds itself all o'er (IV: 253-4, p. 308)

The dunces appear as great heroes and yet are frequently compared to small things, especially to insects, spiders, silk-worms, bugs. This provides an ironic contrast with

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66 The scene offers a ridiculing metaphor for the poetic zeal and passion of the dunces: the waters of Lethe refer to one of the rivers of Hades, the river of unmindfulness, which allowed dead souls to forget their earthly lives. The comparison of the Thames and the sewer of the Fleet Ditch with the rivers of Styx and Lethe is, in turn, another example of gross mythological travesty.

67 Already in Canto I of The Rape of the Lock sleep becomes a charged signifier for Pope, with its "sleepless lovers" who "at twelve awake" (l. 16, Pope 2002: 125). But the mild satire on London's socialites sleeping till noon (a common satiric motif in the period) is here transformed into an almost metaphysical and ethical category: in The Dunciad slumber is a parody of vitality and activity, a perversion of poetic energy into mediocrity and pedantry.
their presentation in quasi-heroic terms and with the gravely apocalyptic tone employed in the poem. Insect is a derogatory metaphor that connotes and concentrates many different senses in which Pope critically represents scholars and poets: their dwarfed potential, their limited "microscopic" perspective, the sense of their laborious but mechanized activity, their cold "inhuman" rationalism and empiricism that replace daring and heroic humanism. In their pedantry, the duncical editors and literati "bring to one dead level ev'ry mind" (IV: 268, p. 310).

In Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot, published in 1735, so between the major installments of The Dunciad, Pope reiterates the topos of mechanized, insect-like repetitive labour that destroys the capacity for wit. In this poem, scribblers are compared to spiders immersed in their tedious tasks to the extent that they remain oblivious to any distorting criticism:

Who shames a Scribbler? break one cobweb through,
He spins the slight, self-pleasing thread anew;
Destroy his Fib, or Sophistry; in vain,
The Creature at his dirty work again;
Thron'd in the Centre of his thin designs;
Proud of a vast Extent of flimsy lines. (89-94, p. 601)

The parody of heroic games is an episode that contains probably more action than the rest of the poem taken together, since most of it is dedicated to the visions of the past and future glories of Dulness in Book III and to the flattering addresses made by the dunces to their dear Goddess (in imitation of the so-called "session of poets" poems) in Book IV. The sense of tediousness, lethargy and inaction, and the diminutive insect-scale perspective all stand in direct contradiction with the epic stylization of the poem, resulting in a sustained bitter parody that structures and animates Pope’s satiric critique. In its erudite and flamboyant intertextuality, The Dunciad borrows abundantly, however, not only from classical epic poetry, but also from Milton's celebrated Paradise Lost.

3.4. In "darkness visible": Milton Travestied
Milton was one of the most frequently travestied and parodied authors in the first half of the eighteenth century. The unmistakably Miltonic style that was portentous, full of tangible and visual imagery and stately diction proved ideal for numerous comic and burlesque transpositions. Robert Paulson sees Pope's satire in tandem with Dryden’s earlier mock-heroic when it comes to Miltonic influence, since both poems elaborate a
degrading *parodia sacra* composed in inverted analogy to the imagery and style of Miltonic epic:

The parody practiced by Dryden in *MacFlecknoe* and Pope in *The Dunciad* took its resonance from Milton: the egregious Shadwell becomes a mock-Messiah, preceded by Flecknoe as John the Baptist (as well as the Roman analogues of Tiberius and Augustus, Ascanius and Aeneas); the dunce Theobald and his mother Dulness make a parody Pietà, and Theobald is in effect the "Antichrist of Wit".

Milton was the last poet to write an artistically successful and influential serious epic, and the later humorous mock-epic poems often included numerous ironic parallels to *Paradise Lost*. Pope's vision of the Empire of Dulness clearly echoes Milton's vision of Hell – a metaphysical vision with political undertones – in which all limitations and distinctions are lost in the vast space of disorder and anarchy (Milton 2008: 56):

> Before their eyes in sudden view appear
> The secrets of the hoary deep, a dark
> Illimitable Ocean without bound,
> Without dimension; where length, breadth and height
> And time and place are lost; where eldest *Night*
> And *Chaos*, ancestors of Nature, hold
> Eternal *Anarchy*, amidst the noise
> Of endless Wars, and by confusion stand. (Book II: 890-897)

Pope’s parodying vision of the culture of Enlightenment as all-encompassing Darkness, Chaos and Dulness is ironically similar to Milton's vision of hell, and *The Dunciad* seems to give satiric concreteness to the general moral categories of *Paradise Lost*. Clearly, in the ongoing Battle of Ancients and Moderns, Pope was on the side of the Ancients, castigating the proud optimism of modern scientists and scholars, alongside the growing population of the second-rate poets from the notorious Grub Street. This criticism of everything "modern" stands in sharp opposition to Pope's earlier, optimistic epitaph "Nature and Nature’s laws lay hid in night;/God said, *Let Newton be!* and all was light", though an element of scepticism towards some practices of science is distinctly articulated in the optimistic *Essay on Man*, notably in its assertion that "the proper study of mankind is man" (Himmelfarb 25). Darkness constitutes a blatant opposite of the Enlightenment, while Dulness has much to do with pedantic scholarship, antiquarianism, index-learning, pompous diction and misapplied learning. The following "Miltonic" passage from Book IV of the 1743 version of the poem seems to fully invert the optimism present in Pope’s earlier poetry:

> Sick was the Sun, the Owl forsook his bow’r
> The moon-struck Prophet felt the madding hour:
> Then rose the Seed of Chaos, and of Night,
> To blot out Order, and extinguish Light,
> Of dull and venal a new World to mold
And bring Saturnian days of Lead and Gold.
She mounts the Throne: her head a Cloud conceal’d,
In broad Effulgence all below reveal’d,
(‘Tis thus aspiring Dulness ever shines)
Soft on her lap her Laureat son reclines. (IV: 11-20, pp. 273-4)

This gruesome vision is presented as an inversion of the progress of culture, whereas the parodied Pietà suggests mock-divine attributes of Dulness and of her son – in this version of the poem the allusion is to Colley Cibber. The unyielding goddess, inadvertently, shines "below reveal'd" – as Pope explains in the note: "The higher you climb, the more you shew your A——" (274). The forceful, humorous rhymes (light/night, mold/gold conceal'd/reveal'd) are typical of "high burlesque" parodies written in heroic couplets. The stress on contradictory meanings of the rhymed words suggests the blurring of all distinctions and the anarchic confusion in the Kingdom of Dulness. Miltonic blank verse is replaced by Pope with the heroic couplet – while during the Restoration period parodic poems were usually composed in short octosyllabic verse, after Dryden’s *Mac Flecknoe* the more spacious and stately heroic couplet became the favourite meter for burlesque poetry.

The stylization that ironically echoes Milton’s style is frequent in the poem, and is particularly intense in Book IV, which begins with the poet pleading to the potent forces of Dulness:

Yet, yet a moment, one dim Ray of Light
Indulge, dread Chaos, and eternal Night!
Of darkness visible so much be lent,
As half to show, half veil the deep Intent.
Ye Pow'rs! whose Mysteries restor'd I sing,
To whom Time bears me on his rapid wing,
Suspend a while your Force inertly strong,
Then take at once the Poet and the Song. (IV: 1-6, pp. 270-73)

Alluding to Miltonic descriptions of chaos and anarchy in hell, Pope presents Dulness as a force of night slowly covering every mind and every book, reducing them to the undistinguished darkness of stupidity. The sustained intertextual game with Miltonic epic provides Pope's work not only with poetic enrichment but also with a markedly Christian dimension, endowing the presented words and actions with additional moral and theological undertones. Throughout the poem, the numerous allusions to Milton’s epic concentrate on its Satanic and hellish imagery in order to associate the activity of the dunces with the forces of destruction presented in *Paradise Lost*. Theobald, the major dunce in the initial versions of the poem, becomes in effect a parodic counterpart of Christ:
In a perversion of Christ’s redemptive power, Tibbald restores the ephemeral (errors, puns, and blunders) and destroys the spirit and genius that should bring Shakespeare immortality. His role is directly antithetical to those immortal poets like Homer, Shakespeare, and Pope himself, whose creative imaginations echo the *logos*. The threat of the dunces, then, is that they threaten to obliterate the identities of the very poets whose powers they lack. (Nash 481)

The diabolic dunces represent the "uncreating word" (A: III, p. 340), the word that paralyzes the thought and imagination instead of setting it free, so that the dunces are often described as "brazen" or "brainless" race, while Dulness herself is "Laborious, heavy, busy, bold, and blind" (I: 15, p. 99). Pope’s poetics precede here William Blake’s figure of Urizen, a negative force of "heavy" materialism and rationality that arrests human soul. Blake’s famous vision of Newton as a figure bending towards the ground in a foetus-like shape – a "brazen" modern scientist opposed to the philosopher looking at the stars – is analogous to Pope’s Dulness, which stands for the pedantic preoccupation with materiality of the sign, with its tangibility, in the form of philological editing that kills the inspiring "spirit" of the letter: "Nor human Spark is left, nor Glimpse divine!" (IV: 652, p. 360). Printing, editing, correcting, spelling, footnoting, prefacing, revising, cataloguing – all are parodied in the text, which points to Pope’s preoccupation with the "spirit" of the Hellenic-Roman-Christian-Humanist tradition, which cannot be preserved by the mere "materiality" of the signifier.68

Nonetheless, Blake’s (and Milton’s) visionary poems are intensely serious, contained in pensive, momentous and lyrical style. Pope, on other hand, presents a vision that blends the sublime and the comic into a vast system of textual ironies. Even more fundamentally, his language is parodied and degraded, borrowed and minced, performatively reflecting the cultural degeneracy that Pope is attacking. There is a grotesque effect when Pope combines the structures of the rich classical and biblical allusions with a joyfully vulgarizing caricature. Milton’s presentation of Satan from the opening of Book II of *Paradise Lost* is allusively imitated, with Tibbald, and later Bays, replacing Satan as the gruesome Monarch in the opening verses of Book II of *The Dunciad*. Milton presents the hellish ruler with characteristic epic splendour and the air of exotic mystery (2008: 30):

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68 Pope's lack of faith in editing and in printed word might be a subject for interesting deconstructive analysis. The material signifier – the printed word – cannot in his view preserve "the signified" – guarantee the presence of the "spirit" of the letter. Pope, however, seems to believe in the communication of the minds through writing, even if writing itself does not guarantee such communication. Hence, Pope's notions of "divine inspiration", "spirit", "logos" or "living word" point to his preoccupation with the fundamental question of literature: can one arrange the words (the marks on the page) in such a way as to bring life into them? This seems to be the fundamental problem of Pope’s distinction between wit and dullness – the living logos and the dead print.
High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
Satan exalted sat, by merit raised
To that bad eminence. (II, 1-6)

Pope echoes the style and vocabulary of Miltonic description:

High on a gorgeous seat, that far outshone
Henley's gilt Tub, or Fleckno's Irish Throne,
Or that, where on her Curls the Public pours
All-bounteous, fragrant grains, and golden show'rs;
Great Tibbald sate: The proud Parnassian sneer,
The conscious simper, and the jealous leer,
Mix on his look. All eyes direct their rays
On him, and crowds grow foolish as they gaze. (A: II, 1-8, pp. 96-7)

The mysterious allure of Miltonic imperial imagery becomes assigned to the stupefying effect that the dunce monarch has on the crowds. The effect is strengthened when such mocking transposition is seriously and meticulously analyzed by the self-professed philologists: this short passage is explained in six tedious, parodic and implicitly satiric footnotes (e.g. the note to line 5 "Edm. Curl stood in the Pillory at Charing-Cross, in March, 1727, 8." has an additional note referring to this note: "NB: Mr. Curl loudly complained of this Note as an Untruth, protesting "that he stood in the Pillory not in March but in February" (A: 97). The self-absorbed, cryptic and often trivial footnotes add insult to injury, so to speak, since their presumed authors not only misread the satiric character of the poem but also confirm, in their pedantry, its mocking diagnosis.

The style of the poem brilliantly mimics epic language, and it often approaches the apocalyptic and prophetic tone characteristic of Milton's Paradise Lost. Theobald (later Cibber) is depicted as a mock-Messiah, the son of ignoble deity and a false prophet who is to reign over the restored empire of darkness and ignorance. The Fourth Book (first published separately, then added to the 1743 version of the poem, in which Cibber becomes the main hero) seems particularly grave and prophetic. Towards the end, this final Book develops into a directly apocalyptic description: lines 627-656 report the apocalypse with all accompanying natural phenomena (falling meteors, all-encompassing night, extinguished stars, etc.), and the poem ends with the following description:

Nor public Flame, nor private, dares to shine;
Nor human Spark is left, nor Glimpse divine!
Lo! thy dread Empire, CHAOS! is restor'd;
Light dies before thy uncreating word:
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And universal Darkness buries All. (IV: 651-6, p. 360)
This mock-apocalyptic style is deliberately and playfully ambiguous; it wittingly suggests the possibility that the dunces really posit a substantial and serious threat, but it also hints that the epic style is only a mockery of the sense of self-importance that Pope detects in the dunces of the Enlightenment. Can the dunces – who are compared to bugs and insects – really cause an apocalypse? The apocalyptic tone and stylization are present especially in Book IV and therefore testify to the fact that Pope still wished to sustain his harsh judgment bestowed upon his contemporaries after the numerous revisions of the poem. But the harshness of this judgment is mitigated by the ambiguity of parody governing the logic of the poem. Perhaps, the whole vision is only a miniature-apocalypse, a mock-revolution happening in the heads of the deluded dunces. As Norman Callan contends, "[t]he terminal points of Herbert's universe or Donne's are God and Man: Pope begins and ends with Man" (248). If the description of the apocalypse is serious, it prefigures not a mighty apocalypse caused by the omnipotent God, but a deep, eternal slumber caused by the repetitive, pedantic work of the industrious Men. The parodic apocalypse lacks the dignity and splendour of a tragic catastrophe, and, for this reason, it is perhaps even more pessimistic.

The Dunciad leads the mock-heroic parody to a certain extreme. Instead of intricate and subtle parodies of the epic style infused with light satiric humour, as in Boileau's Le Lutrin, John Gay's The Fan and Pope's own The Rape of the Lock, the logic of the mock-heroic paradox becomes radicalized, with the diction being even more pompous and archaic, and infused with obscene and offensive humour. There is also a breathtaking amount of spiteful and personal satire in the poem, delivered with little apology but with great frequency. In size, in scale, in the play of extreme contrasts, Pope radicalizes the potential of mock-heroic, and he was accused of breaking not only the rules of poetic decorum but also the rules of decency. If not for the licence given to satire and parody, such a breach of decorum would be difficult to account for, especially when bearing in mind his high standards of poetic diction – Pope has traditionally been discussed as a poet of "correctness" (e.g. in Tillotson 1950). The classical mock-heroic is not only radicalized but also transcended, to the further confusion of the reader, by the inclusion of the Miltonic epic. It is because of the grave, lyrical and prophetic style of Milton that the poem is so baffling and confusing; the prophetic tone gives a sustained impression of a mighty and serious epic, so that even the mock-heroic comedy acquires a pose of seriousness and gravity: Pope "maintain[s]
in delicately poised coexistence varying proportions of majesty and mockery, without allowing either to cancel or overwhelm the other" (Rawson 1998: 79). A similar confounding function is performed by the mock-philological apparatus. Pope thus applies parody as a technique of confusion with balanced precision: The Dunciad is too intricate to be dismissed as a joke, and to slanderous to be taken seriously. If it was devised to mock and fool the pedantic critics and scholars, it may perhaps still continue to do so.

In conclusion, apart from the ironic inversion of numerous epic conventions (invocation, coronation, heroic games and contests, a visit to a nether world ("catabasis"), the vision of the past, present and future triumphs, the establishment and growth of a kingdom, etc.), the poem also parodies the grandiloquent style of the epic, its tendency to praise, elevate and magnify the events. By adroitly confusing it with a sneeringly mocking language, Pope creates a hybrid discourse, a fluctuating and dissonant style that resonates with epic tradition and Miltonic sublimity as much as with the irony of Erasmus and grotesqueness of Rabelais. The textual paradox of parody allows Pope to write the hybrid poem that can be seen, depending on the perspective, as an elaborate epic or an insulting libel (or both). Indeed, the scale, the tone, the complexity of the work need to be taken into account to appreciate the lengths to which Pope went in order to make all these contradictory interpretations viable. For Hutcheon, parody is an "intertextual mode" in which "ironic difference is set at the very heart of similarity" (1991: 66). The Dunciad parodies serious epic poetry in so artful a manner that even its abusive satire acquires an air of epic dignity. The sheer fact that the poem invited numerous imitations and sparked great controversy proves that Pope's parody is not a backward-looking repetition that merely ridiculed an old style. The poem uses an intricate mimicry of epic conventions to elaborate a series of gross upheavals and displacements of the dignified epic pathos. It foregrounds a vivid, heightened perception of contrasts and paradoxes involved in the juxtaposition of classical heritage with the ominous forces of modernity.

3.5. Further into Darkness: Philology and the "Notes Variorum"

The Dunciad purports to tell the story of how the great humanist tradition becomes corroded and reified by literary market into mere dead "Books". In the first Variorum edition of the poem (1729) its title is discussed in two footnotes: one by Theobald and
one by *Scriblerus*, both sending the reader straight into the philological controversy concerning the removal of the letter "e" from the word which, according to Theobald’s misguided theory, should be spelled *Dunciad* (A: 59). This footnote is a parody, its target being Lewis Theobald, described in another footnote as "the Author of many forgotten Plays, Poems, and other pieces, and of several anonymous letters in praise of them in *Mist’s Journal*" (A: 75). Lewis Theobald was the author of *Shakespeare Restored, or the Specimen of the many Errors as well committed as unamended by Mr Pope in his late Edition of this Poet* (1726), in which the scholar methodically and insistently criticized Pope’s edition of Shakespeare’s plays, and in 1737 he published his own meticulous edition of Shakespeare’s plays, which was received with much critical acclaim and popular approbation at the time (Levine 1994: 228-31). The first footnote constitutes a miniature parody of Theobald’s style, the answer to this footnote in the second footnote comprises a mock-polite explication by Scriblerus. *The Dunciad in Four Books* has as many as six notes that refer to the title. Admittedly, Theobald’s extended research, his focus on "reading widely in Elizabethan literature, in the sources used by Shakespeare, also in his contemporaries" was perhaps something altogether too new in its dedication to a modern and vernacular author to be immediately appreciated by Pope (Levine 1994: 229). Hence, his meticulous editing and formal philology were ridiculed as misguided, self-involved and pedantic. But Theobald was chosen also on account of his literary "merits" and his earlier criticism of Pope: "This phantom in the poet’s mind must have a name. He seeks for one who hath been concerned in the low Journals, written bad Plays or Poems, and published low Criticisms: He finds his name to be Tibbald, and he becomes of course the Hero of the poem" (A: 51).

The mock-philological apparatus of the poem is not, however, limited to a spiteful personal satire; the lengthy, absurdly pedantic and self-referential footnotes in *The Dunciad* testify to a general contempt for the ignorance coupled with vanity that Dulness personifies. Theobald ceases to be the main dunce in the subsequent 1742 and 1743 versions of the poem, but the parodying footnotes were further extended. The abundant footnotes, while they create an affected atmosphere of seriousness and gravity, in general "turn out not to be serious or learned, and often follow the gossip and pamphlets of the day" (Bystydzińska 1982: 72). Additionally, another level of irony is added when the work requires modernizing editing: "the modern editor must add explanatory notes even to the original notes and has to conjure with the many altered editions that appeared in Pope’s lifetime, containing substantial additions,
contractions and substitutions. Pope added to the confusion (deliberately) by assuming several voices in the work, attributing the prefaces, notes, and appendices to a number of authors – to Theobald, Bentley, Scriblerus, and so on – although they were almost all by himself” (Levine 1994: 238).

Instead of the charming playfulness of the mock-epic formula in The Rape of the Lock, which was very apt for the portrayal of the neurotic aristocratic Belles and Beaux – their quarrels and petty concerns – the reader is presented here with a more complex and more bold parody, a work of greater scale and urgency. The Dunciad enacts Pope’s protest against the wish to objectify the artistic and the literary tradition through pedantic philology and narrow historicism. Bentley, Theobald, Cibber, Dennis and other Moderns as presented as craftsmen rather than artists, as philistines, thieves and copyists (“Smithfield muses”), who seek to exploit classical texts (so dear to Pope's heart) for profit and vanity:

When Dulness, smiling -- "Thus revive the Wits!
But murder first, and mince them all to bits;
As erst Medea (cruel, so to save!)
A new Edition of old Eson gave,
Let standard-Authors, thus, like trophies born,
Appear more glorious as more hack'd and torn,
And you, my Critics! in the chequer'd shade,
Admire new light thro' holes yourselves have made. (IV: 119-26, pp. 289-90)

The fourth Book was first published separately in 1741 as The New Dunciad, and then added by Pope to the 1742 version of the poem (The Dunciad in Four Books), and in many ways it constitutes an extension and explication of his vision. It restates, as in the passage quoted above, the criticism directed against editors and critics, emphasizing their disrespectful and cynical treatment of texts (which are "hack'd and torn" by their endless annotations) but also their narcissistic and naive faith in the importance of their own vocation ("Admire new lights thro' holes yourselves have made"). If the grotesquely idiotic dunces portray the emerging class of professional journalists, critics, and editors, then the poem points to Pope's evident lack of faith in their professionalism and competence. Swift’s earlier contempt in A Tale of a Tub for the "coffeehouse wits" who "can correct an author's style, and display his minutest errors, without understanding a syllable of his matter or his language" (1969: 158) is transmogrified by Pope into contempt not for "wits" but for dull "professionals" – products of academia and the emerging mass-scale book market. In his collection of essays The English Humorists (delivered first as lectures in 1851), William Makepeace Thackeray credits Pope's grotesque realism in The Dunciad with the destruction of the myth of literary
author: "It was Pope, I fear, who contributed, more than any man who ever lived, to
depreciate the literary calling" he writes, observing that in Pope’s times "there were
great prizes in the profession which had made Addison a Minister, and Prior an
Ambassador, and Steele a Commissioner, and Swift all but a bishop" (1942: 178).
However,

[1]he profession of letters was ruined by that libel of the 'Dunciad.' If authors were
wretched and poor before, if some of them lived in haylofts, of which their landladies
kept their ladders, at least nobody came to disturb them in their straw; if three of them
had but one coat between them, the two remained invisible in the garret, the third, at
any rate, appeared decently at the coffee-house and paid his twopence like a
gentleman. It was Pope that dragged into light all this poverty and meanness, and held
up those wretched shifts and rags to public ridicule. (Thackeray 1942: 178-9)

Pope's reference to "the cave of Poverty and Poetry" in Book I finds its analogy in the
very first words of Gay's Beggar's Opera, the memorable "If Poverty be a title to
Poetry, I am sure nobody can dispute mine" (1986: 41). Both remarks reflect the
contempt on the part of Scriblerian authors towards the masses of aspiring Grub-street
writers. Since the new cast of the "professional" poets, journalists and editors are driven
by "hunger" and "thirst" (I: 50, p. 105), they must, in Pope’s view, prefer "solid
pudding" to "empty praise" (I: 55, p. 105). It is primarily the reifying forces of the
market that destroy the literary calling, transforming its uniqueness into yet another
branch of mechanized industry driven by profit: "Poetic Justice, with her lifted scale, / 
Where, in nice balance, truth with gold she weighs" (I: 53-4, p. 105). The greed of the
dunces and the logic of the market destroy the distinctions of taste and the hierarchy of
true talent and learning.

The Dunciad seems to be committed to preserve and protect the literary tradition
against the superficiality of greedy booksellers and hack Grub-street writers when it
 displays how "the epic tradition and the rest of human culture are perverted at the hands
of the Dunces" (Kinsley 36). The Moderns obliterates humanist and classical learning by
preserving it only in the form of mere dead objects, items to be edited, catalogued and
sold on the market, to be later kept in the snobbish collector's closet. Book IV
introduces two antiquarians, Mummius and Annius, who are collecting ancient coins
and manuscripts (which turn out to be fake), and Pope's footnotes refer also to the
snobbish vogue of importing to London the mummies from the catacombs in Cairo for
personal collections (IV: 347-96). According to Richard Nash, the "Annius/Mummius"
episode from the later versions of The Dunciad grounds the relationship of the poet
with the past in Christian moralism: Pope stands on the side of the living poetic Logos.
rather than antiquated tradition (Old Testament) represented by the two collectors of rusty coins (Nash 471). Pope sees himself as a part of poetic tradition that is living and evolving, while editors and collectors stand on the side of the mummified "dead" writing. An interest in material objects and remnants, in spelling and errors rather than in the "spirit" and "meaning" is what Pope finds to be the defining feature of neoclassical pedantry. In its daring spirit of carnivalesque parody, *The Dunciad* is the opposite of meticulous editing and audacious marketing; it refuses to treat literary tradition as dead, sanctified and mummified. It audaciously parodies the motifs of classical epic, which are degraded and deformed to satirically reflect the perversion of value and taste in modern times.

Pope's approach to the texts of classical tradition and his preoccupation with saving its "spirit" is visible also in his approach to translation, as presented in the *Preface* to his own translation of *The Iliad*, where the duties of the modern translator of Homer are considered:

That which, in my opinion, ought to be the endeavour of any one who translates Homer, is above all things to keep alive that spirit and fire which makes his chief character: in particular places, where the sense can bear any doubt, to follow the strongest and most poetical, as most agreeing with that character; to copy him in all the variations of his style, and the different modulations of his numbers; to preserve, in the more active or descriptive parts, a warmth and elevation; in the more sedate or narrative, a plainness and solemnity; in the speeches, a fullness and perspicuity; in the sentences, a shortness and gravity; not to neglect even the little figures and turns on the words, nor sometimes the very cast of the periods; neither to omit nor confound any rites or customs of antiquity. (Pope 1715: 9, emphasis added)

Interestingly, Pope fully appreciates paying attention to punctuation ("the very cast of periods") and to all minor nuances of diction and style ("the little figures and turns of the words"), but his classical language is not dead only because its chief concern is to render "the strongest and most poetical" interpretation in order keep the text "alive" (which suggests that translation may also "kill" the original text). The resurgence of classical learning is possible only through *creative* imitation and translation, which are the opposite of the dull, philological editing. Howard D. Weinbrot has pointed out that the pessimistic tonality of *The Dunciad* shows that the poet "feared the collapse of a coherent Western intellectual tradition" (2005: 240). In terms of cultural history, the creative application of ancient learning was identified by Pope with the Italian Renaissance, while Mediaeval times had been linked with dulness as early as in his youthful poetical project, *Essay on Criticism* (1711):

> And the same age saw Learning fall, and Rome
> With Tyranny, then Superstition join'd
As that the body, this enslave’d the Mind;
Much was Believ’d, but little understood,
And to be dull was construe’d to be good
A second Deluge Learning thus o’er-run
And the Monks finish’d what the Goths begun. (ll. 686-92, pp. 165-6)

It is clear from his earlier poetry that Pope did believe he lives in the Enlightenment era of the restoration of ancient learning. The Empire of Dullness meant for him, therefore, the second fall of Rome, a demise of learning through its corruption by the vulgar. The eighteenth century was fascinated with ruins as well as with the history of the fall of Rome. The metaphors of decay, descent, fall, backward movement and chaos are crucial for the poetic structure of Pope's mock-heroic and its juxtaposition of epic grandiosity with modern triviality: it is the history of gradual decay and dissolution of values and cultural harmonies. Book III of The Dunciad provides, for instance, many interesting historical analogues of the destruction of learning caused by ignorance and pride. It alludes, for instance, to the Chinese emperor Chi Ho-am-it, who destroyed all the books and killed all the learned men of his empire, simply because he wished all learning to date from his reign:

Far Eastward cast thine eye, from whence the Sun
And orient Science at a birth begun.
One man immortal all that pride confounds,
He, whose long Wall the wand’ring Tartar bounds.
Heav’n’s! What a pyle! Whole ages perish there:
And one bright blaze turns Learning into air. (A: III, 65-70, p. 156)

The prospect vision of the past achievements of dullness reflects Pope's protest against the desecrating of the intellectual tradition, which involves also its mummification perpetuated by Theobald and his like. Pope is concerned with the fragility of tradition which "a bright blaze" may quickly turn into oblivion: the dunces are linked with barbarians who want to establish their own empire of nonsense, the empire of mad lexicographers, editors and pedants. This harsh comparison to barbaric customs might

69 This fascination with ruins and decay was reflected in the poetic discourse of the time, while in the second half of the century ruins became an important element of the aesthetics of the picturesque. Already in Joseph Addison's A Letter from Italy (1704), ruins provide an inspiration for a passionate poetic description:

Immortal glories in my mind revive,
And in my soul a thousand passions strive,
When Rome's exalted beauties I descry
Magnificent in piles of ruin lie.
An amphitheatre amazing height
Here fills my eye with terror and delight (ll.69-74, p. 42).
have been particularly painful for those imagining themselves to be modern, enlightened scholars.⁷⁰

Book III of the poem, while continuing the motif of prophetic vision, is also written in an allusive parody of the so-called *translatio studii* presenting the progress of knowledge across countries and continents through translated books (Broich 2010: 149). In Pope's version, the idea is parodied as "the progress of Dulness" which evokes a number of historical parallels referring to power-usurping and civilization-destroying barbarians: Vandals, Goths, Huns, Visigoths, though an unsympathetic reference is also made to the earlier practices of the Catholic church:

Lo! Rome herself, proud mistress now no more
Of arts, but thund'ring against heathen lore;
Her grey-hair'd Synods damming books unread,
And Bacon trembling for his brazen head.
Padua, with sighs, beholds her Livy burn,
And ev'n the Antipodes Virgilius mourn. (III: 101-6, pp. 231-32)

By the historical and geographical extension of his theme Pope universalizes the topic of dulness and, by this token, achieves a double effect: the personal satire is transcended, but its poetic legitimacy and ironic force are also strengthened. More importantly, however, the historical parallels prove that the poem is not condemning science as such. The contemptible Goddess wants, in fact, "to destroy *Order* and *Science*, and to substitute the *Kingdom of the Dull* upon earth" – she also "leads captive the *Sciences*, and silenceth the *Muses*" (268). The poem is written against philistinism and pedantry, which Pope identifies only with certain tendencies in modern science, which constitute "the proper employment for the *Indolents* before-mentioned, in the study of *Butterflies, Shells, Birds-nests, Moss,* &c. but with particular caution, not to proceed beyond *Trifles*, to any useful or extensive views of Nature, or of the Author of Nature" (269). The focus exclusively on the minute detail, the description and cataloguing of trifles with no regard for more general, "extensive" or "useful"

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⁷⁰ The commentators who exhibit more favourable view of the Enlightenment often see Pope’s social analysis as unfair in many respects: "Pope was 'wrong' about much that he saw as epitomizing duncery. He could not see the scientific revolution that lay behind the seemingly foolish virtuosos, that they as much as Newton were indicia of what was new and valuable in science. He could not see that genuine artistic value could be packaged in such popular forms as opera (…) He could not see that, whatever its excess, Walpole’s rough-and-ready politics is one hallmark of the modern practice of participatory democracy. And he could not see the advance in knowledge and understanding made possible by the kind of index learning represented in a Theobald, a Bentley and even a Dr. Johnson" (Colomb 18).
knowledge (and with complete disregard for the spiritual sphere) is what Pope despises in modern science and ridicules in his epic parody of modern triviality.  

This view of modern science is discernible also in the grotesquely elaborate footnotes, which deserve a particular attention in this respect. They are essentially a parody of the footnote as such: its studious and serious tone, its structure and function, its style of emphasis, reasoning and reference, its focus on detail. More specifically, they mimic the long, tedious footnotes of the scholars of the period, especially the philological commentaries placed in various editions and re-editions of classical works, notably by Bentley (known for his focus on spelling and pronunciation, his grandiloquent style and a penchant for an often aggressive, personal attack on other critics and authors). The parodic footnotes (especially those signed with the names Scriblerus, Bentley, Theobald, Dennis or Aristarchus) often refer to single words and phrases in the poem and subsequently send the reader to diverse and often obscure sources (including contemporary journals and pamphlets), presenting an overwhelming number of useless quotations and discussing small errors, single words and misprints, but also often turning to personal quarrels and grudges. They serve to ridicule Pope's detractors, mainly the editors and critics Lewis Theobald and Richard Bentley, who, "by attempting to garner authority over classical texts by their specialized knowledge, challenged Pope's claim to be able to translate and imitate these texts accurately" (Doolittle 7). Many footnotes extend over several longish paragraphs and incorporate quotations from the actual notes and essays by Dennis, Curl, Bentley, Theobald and others. The same is true about the numerous prefaces and appendices attached to the poem. Consequently, The Dunciad becomes "at once a book and a mock-book, or parody of a book", a project conceived "to satirize all aspects of contemporary book production and consumption", as reflected in its "mock prefaces, footnotes and other bookish impedimenta" (Kinsley 29).

71 Pope faced the development of modern science at its often awkward beginnings. Richard Jones quotes in his study many instances of the extremely ponderous and obscurantist diction applied in the seventeenth-century scientific treatises, in which such expressions as "targigradious incession", "deobturated", "proratarctic", "antinobilism", "anfracuous", "alexipharmaical" or "transpecificated" were frequent (Jones 1963: 18). Pope seems to be particularly enraged by the rude entrance of scientific pedantry and formalism into what he considered to be the territory of the humanist spirit, the divine inspiration and poetic genius: literature and philology. Ironically, the pedantic learning brings with itself a new age of darkness, after the brief age of humanism and light that was inaugurated by the Renaissance scholars and poets.
3.6. Conclusion

*The Dunciad* elaborates a gruesome vision of the world governed by mediocrity, greed, petty quarrels and intrigues, in which the anti-values of darkness, chaos, stupidity and anarchy are ironically presented in sublime and heroic terms. The method of parody is that of extreme contrast and intense contradiction: Pope’s vast erudition and the pathos of epic tradition are set side by side with scatological humour, offensive mockery and pedantic editing. By means of a series of crude comparisons and degrading associations, Pope creates an anti-epic poem that reflects his contempt for the corrupt and apocalyptically deranged modern world. Whether in the prophetic visions, the heroic games, the procession, the coronation, or the session of poets, *The Dunciad* debases classical myths, traditional allegories and elevated poetic imagery to reflect how writing becomes perverted by the mechanized and market-driven mass production of books.

As the product of a culture valuing wit and satire, *The Dunciad* aims to offer, however, perhaps the best which Pope thought a "modern" poet could offer in place of the scope and pathos of Homer and Virgil. By means of degrading and desecrating mockery, in a tonality of joyful pessimism that proved unpalatable to the "polite" taste of the city, Pope demarcates in *The Dunciad* his own position in the Battle between Ancient and Modern Books. This place is constructed as a sight where the light of wit and poetic inspiration marks its active presence, within the metaphysical opposition between the living Logos of poetry and the dark empire of print as the dead language of corrupted writing. It is in the culture of print that the immediate presence of "sense", "reason" and "wit" risks being irretrievably lost, and, as a result, writing may freely take off in all its dire, destructive and pretentious absurdity. The forces that animate such alienated and dangerous writing are primarily those of the market-place; that is, a place where all distinctions are lost and confused, and where order is conceivable only as the chaos of constant fluidity and exchange of all and everything. The imagery of chaos, darkness and anarchy serve here as "Pope’s most thorough indictment of the commodification of literature, art and morality itself" (Brown 1985: 156). Consequently, *The Dunciad* parodies the concept of the book as a material object and as a commodity to be sold on the market. The poem itself appears fragmented, random, anarchic, confusing; it is composed of thousands of allusions, citations, hackneyed epic motifs, local references. It itself ironically partakes in the degradation of poetry, for its
pedantic footnotes satirize neoclassical editors but also conveniently explain many aspects of the work and warmly praise Pope’s achievement. Indeed, it is not always easy to draw a line between the grotesque "inside" and the satirized "outside" in such a carnivalesque text – as Frank Palmeri notices, "the Scriblerian project as a whole is based on such fruitfully paradoxical self-parody" (335). Even the licence granted to satire is transgressed, for Pope addresses by name his numerous enemies – often obsolete figures and minor pedants he personally disliked. The laughter of *The Dunciad* is ambiguously self-subverting as its mockery is both grossly cynical and ethically engaged.

Parody in *The Dunciad* should be seen, as I have argued, as complex and multi-layered: it forges an entire system of ironies, inversions and multiple degradations within the general frame of a mock-heroic poem. As Bakhtin remarked, parodied genres no longer belong to the genres that they parody, "that is, a parodic poem is not a poem at all" (2011: 59). *The Dunciad* is not a poem, not because it breaches the rules of poetic decorum and composition, but because it is a playful and critical meta-literary project that questions the very terms of the aesthetic construction of poetic discourse in a period when the market economy is reshaping the traditional cultural landscape. Pope creates a monstrous work – complicated, offensive and marvelously grotesque – that aims at criticizing his contemporaries rather than merely conforming to their taste. By comically destroying that great achievement of Western civilization – epic poetry – it questions the fundamentals of literary value.

On the other hand, however, while it is certainly an extraordinary parodic feat, *The Dunciad* may still be located in the very old and prolific literary tradition of mock-epic poetry, a tradition which has its roots in antiquity, but which prospered in the Renaissance and continued to be very productive till the late Romantic period. It includes Luigi Pulci’s *Il Morgante* (1478-83), Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* (1532), Tassoni’s *La Secchia Rapita* (1622), Boileau’s *Le Lutrin* (1674), Voltaire’s *La Pucelle d'Orléans* (1762), Wieland’s *Oberon* (1780), Byron’s *Don Juan* (1819-24), Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (1833) and many other poems, in which parody of the epic structure and imagery and of classical poetic diction in general played crucial role, alongside their contemporary satiric and political undertones. According to Bakhtin, the humorous, critical and realist tendencies in the parodies of poetic genres and official epic narratives paved the way for the modern novel (Fielding’s "comic-epic" novels well illustrate how the novel is closely related to mock-epic tradition). *The Dunciad* is,
therefore, a part and parcel of long tradition of parodic narrative poetry, a tradition which continued to critically and imaginatively refashion the epic genre throughout various epochs.
Chapter IV
Parody in Novelistic Discourse: Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne

The rubbish heap. The point is exactly that I come from your rubbish heap. All that you cast off through the centuries as refuse is now speaking through me. If my form is a parody of form, then my spirit is a parody of spirit and my person a parody of a person (…) It is not coincidence that precisely at the moment when we desperately need a hero, up pops a clown – a conscious and, thereby, serious clown.

Witold Gombrowicz, Diary (Trans. Lillian Vallee)

4.1. Introduction
The prominence of parody in novelistic discourse requires at least a brief introduction of its own. As Terry Eagleton notes in his study of the English novel, most scholars agree with the proposition that "the novel has its roots in the literary form we know as romance" and that many novels retain "their romantic heroes and villains, wish-fulfillments and fairy tale endings". Nevertheless, novels also need to negotiate their representations with "the prosaic world of modern civilization" where "things have to be worked out in terms of sex and property, money and marriage, social mobility and nuclear family" (2005: 2). Many novels vividly highlight their comic opposition to the "elevated" and "marvellous" world of romances and epic poems, juxtaposing the heroic ethos with bourgeois morality; the elegance and idealism with the dreariness of poverty, crime and tedious work; the elevated poetic diction with the coarseness of ordinary speech, etc. Both Henry Fielding and Tobias Smollett defined their novels in explicit opposition to popular romances. Smollett, in the Preface to The Adventures of Roderick Random, for instance, cites the parodies of chivalric romances written by Cervantes and Lesage as his models, and explains the historical origins of romances in the following manner:

Romance, no doubt, owes its origin to ignorance, vanity, and superstition. In the dark ages of the world, when a man had rendered himself famous for wisdom and valour, his family and adherents availed themselves of his superior qualities, magnified his virtues, and represented his character and person as sacred and supernatural. The vulgar easily swallowed the bait, implored his protection, and yielded the tribute of homage and praise even to adoration; his exploits were handed down to posterity with a thousand exaggerations (…) and hence arose the heathen mythology, which is no other than a collection of extravagant romances. (1952: 2)
Smollett perceives his novel as a satiric and parodic destruction of the mythology of "extravagant romances" and his ideas seem parallel to Bakhtin's notion of "novelization", which refers to the historical and literary process of the parodic descent of the elevated poetic imagery and symbolic vocabulary into the sphere of prosaic experience: "Of special importance is the re-accentuation of the poetic images into prosaic ones, and vice versa. In this way the parodic epic emerged during Middle Ages, which played such a crucial role in preparing the way for the novel" (2011: 421). Bakhtin sees an essential link between laughter and realism (broadly conceived), identifying in satire and especially in different kinds of parody and comic travesty the prime means for a continual "uncrowning" of serious official forms and mythic narratives, making space for more nuanced, contradictory, polyvalent and problematic representations of reality (2011: 60-61).

Bakhtin admits that such parodic tendencies are especially prominent in the tradition of the comic and satiric novel (Cervantes, Fielding, Smollett, Thackeray, Dickens) and in highly stylized (mock)philosophical novels (Swift, Sterne, Voltaire). These novels belong to what Bakhtin calls "the Second Stylistic Line" of the development of the novel. The First Stylistic Line (including the sentimental and Gothic novels) is closer to romances and epic narratives; it tends to value elegant diction, proper manners and the bon ton of well-bred conversation; it employs exotic or private settings, and, at the level of style and imagery, is "cleansed of all possible associations with crude real life" (Bakhtin 2011: 385). The Second Stylistic Line comprises, thus, the parodic-travesty image and inversion of the stylistically elevated novel:

Representatives of the Second Stylistic Line (Rabelais, Cervantes and others) parodically reverse this device of avoidance; they develop, by means of comparisons, a series of deliberately crude associations, which have the effect of dragging what is being compared down to the dregs of an everyday gross reality congealed in prose, thereby destroying the lofty literary plane that had been achieved by polemical abstraction. Here heteroglossia avenges itself for being excluded and made abstract. (Bakhtin 2011: 385-6)

The hybrid combination of the "low" or "vulgar" with elevated and pompous literary tone or point of view is already apparent in burlesque and mock-epic forms, but in comic novels the parodic interrogation of all forms of serious, abstract and elevated discourse is even more varied and profound. The Second Line of novelistic development feeds on the expanding and omnivorous assimilation of extra-literary heteroglossia: all the words, concepts, events and persons that were systematically
excluded from the literature of "respectable" language under the rules of propriety, elegance and decorum become here materials for the parodic appropriation of novelistic prose. Thus, the speech of servants or tradesmen, if it appears at all, is abstracted and "polished" in the First Stylistic Line, as in Richardson's *Pamela*, a tendency that was directly reversed by Fielding in his coarse and bawdy (yet intricate) travesty of Richardson in *Shamela*. The Second Stylistic Line is the embodiment of the "low" and crude side of life, of all the "waste" rejected by the official and respectable genres, offering an image of the world that must appear profane from the point of view of elegant literature. The First Stylistic Line thrives on the use of the eloquent "correct" language as a flexible medium for narration, description or philosophical meditation. In the Second Stylistic Line, in contrast, all kinds of "respectable" and correct language (polite, poetic, official, learned, etc.) become both a target and a refracting medium for various forms of mockery and banter. As Renate Lachmann observes, Bakhtin is primarily interested in this second – parodic, heteroglot and carnivalized – type of the novel: "Rabelais and Dostoyevsky belong to a common genre tradition having its beginnings in the Menippean Satire, a tradition which in its thematics, stylistics, and narrative structure represents a counter-tradition to the 'epic' (classical) line of European prose" (119).

Characteristic of the Second Line is the parodic reworking of various established and canonical genres and styles, often jumbled together (epic, romance, biblical parable, pastoral, poetic apostrophe, sermon, travel account, historiography, etc.), which is interconnected with a prominent satiric and picaresque element, resulting in a heterogeneous assemblage of varied and contradictory representations of reality. The "adventure plots" of these novels entail, above all, numerous encounters between heterogeneous people – people of the most various "sorts", old and young, squires and beggars, gentlewomen and chambermaids, clergymen and speculators, prostitutes and highwaymen, ideologues of opposing political parties or religious denominations, foreigners and villagers, etc., whose characteristic ideological and linguistic representations of reality are analytically disclosed as being more or less imperfect.

_Tellingly, Bakhtin finds the ancient blueprint for the Second Stylistic Line of the novel in *Satyricon* by Petronius – a(n) (anti)novel that may be described as an obscene (but philosophically erudite) mock-romance. As Clive T. Probyn observes, Smollett’s novels combine "Romance and a satirist’s Realism, the latter being concentrated but superficial image of irreducible ugliness and the artistically irresolvable", a combination which is signalled "in the novels’ titles, where a name taken from romance (Roderick, Peregrine, Ferdinand, Launcelot, Humphrey) is yoked to its 'realistic' antonym (Random, Pickle, Fathom, Greaves, Clinker), suggesting symbolic meaning (chance, disaster, moral decline, moral despair and human detritus respectively), as is the case in Sterne’s Tristram Shandy" (122)._
narrow-minded, hypocritical or foolish. The predilection for comic and satiric criticism means that such novels not only assimilate extra-literary heteroglossia (socio-linguistic speech diversity), but also artistically set out these varieties creating a parodic galaxy of contradictory voices. The novel offers "an artistically profound play with social languages" through the interrelation between stylization ("an artistic image of another's language") and parodic stylization ("an exposé to destroy the represented language"):

In order to be authentic and productive, parody must be precisely a parodic stylization, that is, it must re-create the parodied language as an authentic whole, giving it its due as a language possessing its own internal logic (…) Between stylization and parody, as between two extremes, are distributed most varied forms for languages to mutually illuminate each other (…) What is realized in the novel is (…) an ideological translation of another's language, and an overcoming of its otherness – an otherness that is only contingent, external, illusory. (2011: 365)

Bakhtin's idea of novelistic heteroglossia refers to the author's ability to transcend his or her own style and its ideologeme, and to offer a platform for the inter-illumination of different socio-generic languages. It points to the novelist's attempt and ability to critically represent different socially valid styles of language. After being artistically reproduced within the literary language, the non-literary discourses become "indirect" – detached from their original function, they change into aesthetic and analytical "images" of language. Stylization is motivated by the wish to imitate or accurately represent a certain style, whereas in parody the presentation is always critical, problematic and divided. Stylization and style march "in the same direction", while in parody "there cannot be that fusion of voices possible in stylization" and the assumed style "clashes hostilely" with the parodying intention (Bakhtin 1999: 193-4). Hence, the term "parodic stylization" signals Bakhtin’s insistence on irony and incongruity: the parodied genre or language is not silenced or simply rejected, but retains the right to its problematic presence: "the anarchy of parody stems from the fact that no monological voice can completely subdue the vestigial language of the other" (Phiddian 1995: 85).

The result of parody is the problematic presence of suspect, "alien" and imperfect languages, a shared space for mutually hostile or contradictory perspectives. For Bakhtin, "parodic stylization of generic, professional and other strata of language" in the novel is typically combined with the critical interrogation of "the common view" understood as "the verbal approach to things and people normal in a given sphere of society", hence as "the going point of view, the going value" (2011: 301-2).

This tendency is visible to some extent in the novel in general, as novelistic discourse is neither fully literary and conventionalized nor simply "everyday" and
ordinary, but ever-searching and fluctuating in-between: "Novelistic discourse is always criticizing itself" (Bakhtin 2011: 49). Bakhtin's idea of the novel is not that of a stable genre, but of a restless, creative – dialogic and parodic – linguistic energy. Especially in the Second Line of its development, the unmediated "direct" language uttered by the unproblematic "I" of the authorial voice becomes radically reduced in the novel, giving place to multiple images of styles and variants of language that embody different socially and historically determined (imperfect, relative) axiological and ideological perspectives. The polyphonic abundance of various styles, registers and voices in such novels results, paradoxically, in the confusing absence of a single, universally valid "direct" word. Moreover, the chronotope of the Second Line – unlike in legends, myths and romances – is often emphatically and unashamedly "here and now"; it has its roots in a carnivalesque zone of proximity, familiar contact and satiric laughter, where all the flamboyant or tendentious discourses may be mocked. Bakhtin’s major point, however, is that parodic treatment of heteroglossia in the novel does not amount only to "a gross and superficial destruction of the other's language", as in crude travesty, or to comic incongruity between styles, as in various mock forms. Rather, the parodic orientation of the novel aims at the artistic reconstruction and deconstruction of the rhetorical and ideological validity of the presented socio-linguistic perspectives. Seen from this angle, parodic novel is a giant and complex literary machine (as Sterne might say) for the relativizing, distorting, clashing, contrasting and questioning of multiple literary and non-literary discourses, undermining the myth of an abstract – stylistically and ideologically neutral – language.

4.2. Henry Fielding and "the Ludicrous instead of the Sublime"

Henry Fielding's writing inherits much of the satiric and deconstructive ethos that defines Scriblerian poetics (or "prosaics"). This is symbolically confirmed in his self-adopted literary pseudonym, *Scriblerus Secundus*, a proud but somewhat ironic title he employed, for instance in the mock-preface to the second edition of his popular play, *The Tragedy of Tragedies, or the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1731), where he directly discusses the Scriblerian theory of bathos. But already in the shorter "Preface" to *Tom Thumb* (1730) Fielding added to the Augustan theme of the Battle of Modern and Ancient books his own ironic word-play:

And here I congratulate my Contemporary Writers, for their having enlarged the Sphere of Tragedy: The ancient Tragedy seems to have had only two Effects on an
Audience, viz. It either awakened Terror and Compassion, or composed those and all other uneasy Sensations, by lulling the Audience in an agreeable Slumber. But to provoke the Mirth and Laughter of the Spectators (…) is a Praise only due to Modern Tragedy. (Fielding 1969: 148)

As a consequence of his mock-theory of tragedy, Fielding constructs a bathetic inversion of tragedy, its intentionally "failed" imitation. The play has three short Acts and introduces King Arthur, Queen Dollallolla and their Court, to which they welcome Tom Thumb, the (literally) "little Hero", after his victorious return. Tom boldly requests the hand of princess Huncamunca, a prize which he is granted by the King. The "absurd" names of the courtly characters (Dollallolla, Noodle, Doodle, Foodle, etc.) in themselves provide much humour at the cost of the assumed "tragic" style of the play. The comic-tragic plot involves mysterious prophesy, ghosts and gallons of blood, comically intensifying the murderous plots of the Elizabethan and neoclassical tragedies (the implicit targets of the mockery). The language that Fielding creates in his theatrical burlesques is particularly vivid and colorful, offering a surprising medley of the serious and the elevated blended with grossness and absurdity. Much of this stylistic vitality and this profound sense of parody is retained in his first two novels: *Shamela*, which is a "specific" parody of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), and *Joseph Andrews*, a mock-novel professed to have been "Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes, Author of Don Quixote"*, which provides a more "general" parody of various canonical literary styles and common novelistic devices. Fielding's shift from the popular theatrical entertainment of burlesque comedy to novelistic writing aptly illustrates the tight historical and structural linkage between the Second Stylistic Line of the novel and the common literary practices of burlesque and satiric parody.

4.2.1. Travesty and Metafiction in *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*

The dramatic occurrences narrated in Samuel Richardson’s epistolary novel *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* simply enchanted most of its readers, and the work proved to be a great and lasting commercial success. But the same dramatic events provoked Fielding to compose an elaborate travesty of the work, entitled *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*, the first edition of which was published under the pseudonym of Conny Keyber on April 4, 1741 (Dudden 1952: 315). The text is an explicit parody of
Richardson's novel, elaborated on the basis of the much-exploited device of the recently discovered "authentic version" of an already published text. It thus contains a letter in which Parson Olivier provides Parson Tickletext with "Papers (…) which will set Pamela and some others in a very different Light, than that in which they appear in the printed Book" (Fielding 2008: 313). He assures him that "[t]he true name of this wench was SHAMELA, and not Pamela, as she stiles herself" (2008: 314). Consequently, Fielding destroys the sentimental elegance and pomposity of Richardson's poetics, replacing them with parodic stylization that reproduces the "authentic" language used by gossiping servants, rakish clergymen and simple-minded squires. By admitting parodic heteroglossia into the novelistic frame, Fielding constructs a debased inversion of the epistolary novel.73

As a travesty, Shamela was designed primarily to undermine the legitimacy of Richardson's literary project by dismantling its formal and ideological foundations. Despite its occasional character, however, the parodic technique in this short novel comprises also broader meta-literary and satiric themes. The intertext of Fielding’s Shamela seems to be at least twofold. Primarily, it includes Richardson's Pamela as a kindhearted literary combination of sentimentality and the epistolary novel. Secondly, it is composed within the neoclassical idiom of the mock-heroic, burlesque, satire, raillery, ironic mask and other parodic forms, which Fielding himself practised extensively as a dramatist before the 1737 Licensing Act. Fielding (alias Scriblerus Secundus) adhered to the Scriblerian ethos of the older generation of writers, particularly in his burlesque and farcical plays implicitly attacking Robert Walpole74 and Colley Cibber (Dudden 1952: 197).75 The Scriblerian heritage is evident in the mock-praise of Pamela that Shamela begins with:

This Book is the 'SOUL of Religion, Good-Breeding, Discretion, Good-Nature, Wit, Fancy, Fine Thought and Morality. There is an Ease, a natural Air, a dignified Simplicity, and MEASURED FULLNESS in it, that RESEMBLING LIFE, OUTGLOWS IT. The Author reconciled the pleasing to the proper (…) when modest Beauty seeks to hide itself, by casting off the Pride of Ornament and

73 In this sense, Fielding’s work is similar to Scarron’s travesty of Virgil, which also retains the rudiments of the original plot, but presents it in a grossly debased style. I included some of the arguments presented in this sub-section, albeit in a substantially different version, in an earlier paper on Fielding’s Shamela (Uściński 2012).

74 Samuel Richardson, a successful printer by profession, also printed Sir Robert Walpole’s newspaper, The Daily Gazetteer. Pamela, however, was published anonymously, and most probably Fielding believed it to be written by his old enemy Colley Cibber (Dudden 1952: 308, 324).

75 The title’s phrasing "An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews" echoes directly Colley Cibber’s autobiography, parodied earlier by Fielding in An apology for the life of Mr. [Theophilus] Cibber, a Comedian, a mock-autobiography "in the style and manner of Poet Laureate", published in July 1740 (Dudden 1952: 289).
The passage from Parson Tickletext’s letter mocks a vulgar easiness in applying grandiose terms (morality, beauty, religion), as well as ecstatic praise devoid of moderation or critical distance. It is a direct parody of the flattering letters which Richardson used as a preface to the second edition of *Pamela*, but it also already gives the reader a key to the overall parodic rationale of *Shamela* in the brilliant comic-pornographic paradox of "modest beauty" which "seeks to hide" by rejecting the pride of ornament – and so it actually ends up being naked – that is, "displays itself without any covering". The false modesty thinks that the "ornament" (an "Augustan" or neoclassical value) is artifice and manipulation, while "natural easiness" (a Shaftesburian or "sentimental" value) is not. Fielding polemically inverts this paradigm by insisting in *Shamela* that it is the aesthetic mode of "spontaneity" and "simplicity" epitomized by the virtuous servant-girl that can be most artificial, most ideologically complicit, while "ornament" at least communicates something of its own cultural arbitrariness.

The authenticity of the presented letters is assured by Parson Olivier’s letter and the editor’s note on the title page: "A full account of what passed between her and Parson Arthur Williams; whose Character is represented in a manner something different from what he bears in PAMELA. The whole being exact copies of authentick Papers delivered to the Editor" (Fielding 2008: 305). Parson Olivier, in his response to a letter from Parson Tickletext, explains that he had been acquainted with the history of Pamela "long before I received it from you, from my Neighborhood, to the Scene of Action" (Fielding 2008: 312). What follows is a series of "authentick" letters, which should be communicated "to the Publick, that this little Jade may not impose on the World, as she hath on her Master" (Fielding 2008: 314). As in case of *Pamela*, the "suspension of disbelief" starts as soon as the reader succumbs into this structural illusion of "authenticity" produced by epistolary novel, namely, that the letters contain true words and emotions of the characters (and not literary conventions): "The sensation of actual participation communicated by the confidential letter is undoubtedly the most valuable attribute of the technique" (Kearney 68). Since Richardson’s illusion is recognized as an abuse of literary licence, what follows is a parody of melodramatic conventions present in Richardson’s fiction that ruins its sentimental delusions and elegant prose:
Letter II

Shamela Andrews to Henrietta Maria Honora Andrews

Dear Mamma,

O what News since I writ my last! The young Squire hath been here, and as sure as a Gun he hath taken a Fancy to me; Pamela, says he (for so I am called here) you was a great Favourite of your late Mistress’s; yes, an’t please your Honour, says I; and I believe you deserved it, says he; thank your Honour for your good Opinion, says I; and then he took me by the Hand, and I pretended to be shy: Loud, says I, Sir, I hope you don’t intend to be rude; no, says he, my Dear, and then he kissed me, till he took away my Breath – and I pretended to be Angry, and to get away (…)

Your Affectionate Daughter,

SHAMELA   (2008: 316)

In such passages Fielding merely adheres to the logical consequences of the Richardsonian literary enterprise: the naturalism of the aesthetics of "a natural Air, a dignified Simplicity" demands that a country girl employed as a servant-maid will speak according to her probable abilities, even after keeping in mind the assertion of Pamela’s talent made by Mr. B: "Why, Pamela, you write a very pretty Hand, and spell tolerably too. I see my good Mother’s Care in your Learning has not been thrown away upon you. My Mother used to say, you loved reading" (Richardson 12-3). It is difficult to describe Richardson’s fiction as "tolerably spelled", and that is one of the incongruities that Fielding spots in Pamela’s narrative: how a "simple girl", unless a prodigy, can combine in her speech an impeccable grammar with polished formulas and eloquent argumentation. Shamela, clearly, also knows her etiquette, though her linguistic abilities to narrate it are limited: "I pretended to be shy" functions as an "unornamented" equivalent of the more proper and accepted "O how ashamed I was!" produced by Pamela. Shamela’s incorrect spelling itself offers an ample vehicle for mockery – “Vartue" instead of "Virtue", "poluteness" instead of "politeness", "sect" instead of "sex" and "Politricks" instead of "Politics". Since the literary construction of the sociolect of Pamela’s letters is that of polished politeness rather than affectionate sincerity, Fielding offers his readers a "truly honest" country-girl, who repeatedly neglects the "false ornament" of polite conventions:

O! Bless me! I shall be Mrs. Booby, and be Mistress of a great Estate, and have a dozen Coaches and Six, and a fine House at London, and another at Bath, and Servants, and Jewels, and Plate, and go to Plays, and Opera’s, and Court; and do what I will, and spend what I will. (Fielding 2008: 325)

76 Such malapropisms purport to parody the affected, pseudo-educated speech of the aspiring classes, and Fielding continues to use the technique in Joseph Andrews, where Mrs. Slipslop in particular tends to twist all complicated or foreign-sounding words ("she was a mighty Affecter of hard Words"). The technique was perfected by Richard Brinsley Sheridan in The Rivals (1775), with its unforgettable Mrs. Malaprop. Such verbal blunders – frequent in later comedies and comic novels – ridicule the affectation of the speaker, expose his or her hypocrisy and often contain also additional puns or satirically reflect common fallacies and misperceptions.
Shamela, as her emblematic name indicates, is primarily a clever actress: she feigns, shams, counterfeits, pretends, but in her letters she lays bare her devices and confesses all her schemes (unlike Pamela, in Fielding’s view). She is a stylized caricature, but within the lines of Richardsonian poetics of innocence: she thinks in simple, down-to-earth practical colloquialisms, and her diction is unprompted to the point of vulgarity, as are her tactics of seduction: "I pulled down my Stays to shew as much as I could of my Bosom" (Fielding 2008: 327). Parodic stylization is here a crucial technique and offers a vehicle for additional comic effects when Shamela's writing is compared and contrasted with Pamela’s "dignified Simplicity".

Parodic stylization is visible also in the idiolect of Shamela’s cynical mother: "you have a very difficult part to act" Henrietta Maria Honora77 assures her daughter in Letter III, and makes her point clear in Letter V: "when I advised you not to be guilty of Folly, I meant no more than that you should take care to be well paid before-hand, and not to trust to Promises, which a Man seldom keeps, after he hath had his wicked Will" (Fielding 2008: 316). The main target here is the great stress on prudence (understood as the preservation of virginity) in Pamela’s parents' letters, which Richardson indeed makes strikingly visible:

> Yes, my dear Child, we fear – you should be *too* grateful – and reward him with that *Jewel*, your *Virtue*, which no Riches, nor Favour, nor any thing in this Life, can make up to you (...) we both charge you to stand upon your Guard: and if you find the least Attempt made upon your *Virtue*, be sure you leave every thing behind you and come away to us; for we had rather see you all cover’d with Rags, and even follow you to the Church-yard, than have it said, a Child of ours preferr’d worldly Conveniences to her *Virtue*. (Richardson 14)

This concern is transformed by Fielding into cold calculations expressed through an unabashed tone and a coarse lexicon. Within such linguistic degradation, the logic is imitated, yet the purpose shifts, as "Virtue" changes into "Vartue" and moral survival becomes a plainly economic survival (in *Pamela* those two work miraculously in accordance). Shamela’s maxim is the memorable "I thought once of making a little Fortune by my Person. I now intend to make a great one by my *Vartue*" (Fielding 2008: 329-30). It is not only that Pamela’s heroic chastity is a sham, a mere pose – her obsessive focus exclusively on sexual purity is in itself a mockery of morality.

According to Claude Rawson, "Shamela, Fielding’s first fiction, combines parody with some of the dramatic skills, notably in vigorously expressive dialogue and a vivid

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77 The name is Fielding’s pompous version of Richardson’s much less flamboyant Elizabeth.
comic action" (1968: 1). Interestingly, unlike its Richardsonian predecessor, Shamela marks her author’s transition to prose writing, already in possession, as he was, of great literary skills and knowledge of theatrical effects. Fielding’s talent made her a character vile but entertaining: her manipulative seduction of Squire Booby (Lord B. in Pamela) can definitely count as a "vivid comic action" perfectly suitable for a stage performance:

Well, he is in Bed between us, we both shamming a Sleep. He steals his Hand into my Bosom, which I, as if in my Sleep, press close to me with mine, and then pretended to awake. – I no sooner see him, but I scream out to Mrs. Jervis, she feigns likewise but just to come to herself; we both begin, she to recall, and I to bescratch very liberally. After having made a pretty free Use of my Fingers, without any great Regard to the Parts I attack’d, I counterfeit a Swoon. Mrs. Jervis then cries out, O, Sir, what have you done, you have murthered poor Pamela: she is gone, she is gone. O what a Difficulty it is to keep one’s Countenance, when a violent Laugh desires to burst forth. (Fielding 2008: 318)

The joviality of this passage issues from situational comedy heightened by the contrast with Pamela’s devotional laments as it suggestively questions her impeccable moralism. As Simon Dentith observes, Fielding’s "skill of parody" allows him to communicate parodic nuances "efficiently and comically, with even a glance at the ‘immediacy’ of Richardson’s use of the present tense, permitted by the convention of epistolary novel" (Dentith 2000: 61). Shamela’s letters often sound almost like stage instructions: written in present tense, concise, with emphasis on mimicry, postures, costumes (e.g. "quilted petticoat", "blue Camlet Coat", "round-ear’d cap"), paraphernalia, etc. Fielding’s profound sense of travesty and generic volatility is directly inherited from the Scriblerians; Shamela combines in its intertextual mixture the situational dynamism of burlesque plays, an epistolary mock-melodrama, a comedy of manners and satire. Through its travesty of Richardson’s work, Shamela simultaneously elaborates, in fact, a sharp, satiric critique of puritan morality. Parody offers an apt vehicle for satiric puns focused primarily on the clergy, caricaturized throughout the text within its fictional framework, notably by means of the characters of Parson Tickletext and Parson Williams. Shamela speaks of her lover Parson Williams’ homiletic talents in the following manner:

Well, on Sunday Parson Williams came, according to his Promise, and an excellent Sermon he preached; his Text was, Be not Righteous over-much; and, indeed, he handled it in a very fine way: he shewed us that the Bible doth not require too much Goodness of us (…) to go to Church, and pray, and to sing psalms, and to honour clergy, and to repent is true religion. (Fielding 2008: 324)

The theology of "modest goodness" elaborated by Parson Williams reduces religion to singing psalms and honoring clergy and it suits Shamela's hypocrisy particularly well.
Incidentally, she and her mother enjoy reading passionate sermons of George Whitefield, an Anglican Protestant minister connected to the Great Awakening movement and "renowned for the vehemence and theatricality of his oratory" (Goring 2008: 34). Fielding mockingly juxtaposes various forms of religious enthusiasm popular in the eighteenth century, such as the Great Awakening, with a similarly enthusiastic, almost pious, admiration of Richardson's novel.

Even though Shamela is often regarded as "a work of almost pure sustained parody" (Levine 1967: 7), it seems that satire and a socially sensitive irony are intertwined here with literary parody: Shamela satirically portrays clergy, morality, attitudes to sexuality and marriage, but perhaps primarily eighteenth-century gender politics. Shamela’s mastering of the technique of blushing (Fielding 2008: 334, "The most difficult task for me was to blush, however, by holding my Breath, and squeezing my Cheeks with my Handkerchief, I did pretty well.") perfectly satirizes the paradigm of sensibility, understood as

the operation of nervous system, the material basis for consciousness. During the eighteenth century, this psychoperceptual scheme became a paradigm, (...) a gendered view of the nerves: not only were women’s nerves interpreted as more delicate and more susceptible than men’s, but women’s ability to operate their nerves by act of will (part of Newton’s account) was seriously questioned. (Barker-Benfield XVII-XVIII)

The reformation of manners, from being a boisterous rake to becoming an almost MacKenzian "man of feeling", which Mr. B. undergoes under the influence of Pamela’s piety and delicacy, confronts a satire of "gender reversal" in Shamela: Squire Booby is mercilessly manipulated as Shamela negotiates a reformation that amounts to total submission: "Nothing can be more prudent in Wife than a sullen Backwardness to Reconciliation; it makes a Husband fearful of offending by the Length of his Punishment" (Fielding 2008: 336). The consequences are hilarious as Squire Booby is constantly fooled by the team of Shamela, Mrs. Jewkes and Parson Williams, till he becomes her slave and pious adulator. The socially expected delicacy of women’s sensibility – blushing, swooning, hysterical emotionalism – becomes a consciously devised weapon that Shamela gradually learns to develop to perfection as the novel progresses. Accordingly, what in Richardson has had a potential for challenging the bourgeois gender ideology, as Eagleton claims in his polemical study "The Rape of Clarissa" (1998: 125-43), in Fielding is decoded as a mere "battle of sexes" in its most rowdy version. As Richardson himself admitted in a 1749 letter: "It is apparent by the whole of Mr. B behaviour that nothing but such an implicit obedience, and slavish
submission, such as Pamela shewed to all his injunctions and dictates, could have made her *Tolerably* happy, even with a *reformed* rake" (quoted in Barker-Benfield 251). Fielding’s parody served thus not only to comically uncover the shortcomings in Richardson’s realism, including the counterfeited epistolary formula of elegant letters written by a barely literate child, but also to criticize the whole project on moral grounds. The targeted industry of "virtue/vartue" practiced by hypocritical preachers, moralists and false prophets, included writers too; Richardson’s commercial success is thus paralleled to Pamela’s social advancement: both Pamela (the heroine) and *Pamela* (the novel) relied on "virtue/vartue" as a social commodity to be advertised and then sold for the highest price possible. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that Theodor Adorno traces in the novels of Richardson and Defoe "the beginning of an approach to literary production that consciously created, served, and finally controlled a 'market'" (160).

Still, however, what Fielding’s parody does not fully acknowledge in its relative conservatism is the radical asymmetry of the socio-economic relation between the rakish Lord B. and Pamela. In *Moll Flanders*, published eighteen years before Richardson’s debut, Daniel Defoe includes copies of lodging bills and accounts of expenses, and describes in detail the economic obstacles that made Moll Flanders, his picaresque heroine, resort to shoplifting and prostitution. In the early modern period, parody was usually based on the stratification of genres and languages stricter than is visible today. Instead of plurivocal democracy, there was a ladder of distinctions between "high" and the "low" genres and registers distinguishing social classes and their respective manners, dictions and practices. It is within such a socio-linguistic matrix that the fishwife speaking the language of Juno could appear ridiculous. The projection of a festive and egalitarian *mésalliance* between various cultural registers – the parodic inversion of high into low, and vice versa – is characteristic of carnivalesque genres, as Bakhtin notes, and this projection allows the critical inter-illumination of languages and points of view from across several strata of society. But this egalitarianism is constructed as comically absurd, not as a realistic possibility. The "progressive" novels of Defoe and Richardson, with their promise of individual improvement, social mobility and redemption, may thus be contrasted with a relatively "conservative" strain present in some satiric fiction targeting various forms of aspiration seen as "affectation" and understood as undeserved social mobility. Fielding's travesty thematizes, among other things, the threat perceived in the increased
literacy among the lower ranks of society that marks their growing appetite for social mobility (rather than for disciplined labour): "if Shamela is about bad bourgeois writing, it is also about the lower class's very access to writing" (Frank 47).

English poetry, satire and novel of the first half of the eighteenth century are often discussed by scholars in the context of the "gradual transition from a patrician culture to a culture dominated by the logic of the market" (Frank 3). Yet, as Terry Eagleton reminds us, the "aristocratic" and "bourgeois" value systems did not form a simple and unequivocal opposition. In fact, they were largely convergent:

Uniquely among European nations, the English landowning elite had itself long been a capitalist class proper, already accustomed to wage labour and commodity production as early as the sixteenth century (…) the English mercantile class was able to inaugurate its own key institutions (the stock exchange, the Bank of England) and secure the predominance of its own form of political state (parliament) in the aftermath of the 1688 revolution (…) In eighteenth-century Britain, then, we encounter a robust, well-founded unity of agrarian and mercantile interests, accompanied by a marked ideological rapprochement between new and traditional social elites. (1996: 31-2)

Eagleton's account is that of a peaceful "public sphere" unifying all interests through the commonly accepted values of "civility", "sensibility" and "homogenous reason", thus securing the hegemony of the official culture. However, McKeon (1985) points to a number of ideological tensions between the class of nobility and gentry and the aspiring higher-middle classes (an "aristocratic" vs. a "progressive" ideology) on the one hand, and to the growing privileged bourgeoisie protecting their status against potential transgressions and disruptions caused by the middle and lower ranks (the rise of "conservative" ideology) on the other. In Judith Frank's formulation:

England's transformation into a commercial society and the power of money to level distinctions between the various ranks were the social ills around which the Opposition organized its platform, complaining of a general moral degeneracy in the nation that originated in Walpole's court. (41)

It is not always easy to distinguish between a mere elitism of learned and talented poets, and their entrenched conservative ideology. Eliza Haywood in The Female Spectator warns a Lady against "those Impertinences and loose Ribaldry, she is liable to be persecuted with, in those mix'd Companies at our mercenary Places of Resort; where all, without Distinction, are admitted for their money" (62). The English places of public meetings and entertainment are contrasted by Haywood with the French ones, where only "Persons of the first Quality" are admitted. In the public spaces of London, where the distinctions of rank gradually change into the distinction of economic class, it was no longer possible to tie together aristocratic blood, classical education, wealth and
social position. The "conservative" discourses of the time often targeted the potentially disruptive, radical ideas of both dissenting Protestants and free-thinking libertines. Many writings of the period sought also to contain and discipline the classes of labourers, servants and the poor. In the Review no. 36 from 1709, Daniel Defoe divided English society into seven major segments: the great, the rich, the middle sort, labourers, farmers, the poor and the miserable (Varey 3). The stability of such stratifications was troubled, however, by the increasing social as well as "cultural" mobility connected with growing literacy and the print culture, which provided, especially for the liminal groups (the middle sort, women, labourers, servants) a platform for aspirations to literacy, education and, ultimately, social and economic empowerment.

Bourgeois individualism constituted, cemented but also threatened the coherence of the established social and economic order. Marriage was one of the means of upward social mobility, and often it was the only available one, since the laborious accumulation of capital or a career based on education were not always realistic options for the liminal groups mentioned above. The heroine/narrator of Defoe's Moll Flanders, herself a wife five times, observes that such "Fortune Hunting" was by no means confined to women:

I observ'd that the Men made no scruple to set themselves out, and to go a Fortune Hunting, as they call it, when they had really no Fortune themselves to Demand it, or Merit to deserve it; and That they carry'd it so high, that a Woman was scarce allow'd to enquire after the Character of Estate of the Person that pretended to her. (53)

In Fielding's Shamela, the readers are presented with a shrewd female servant who attempts to seduce a wealthy squire and become his wife. By reducing the cultural and social aspirations of the servants to vulgar materialism and hedonism, Fielding attempts to ridicule the subversive potential of bourgeois values of virtue, labour, sentimentality and benevolence, and mitigate its impact on the lower strata of society. Since Pamela was able to "spell tolerably" and thus could represent in her letters the story of the struggle of her virtue against injustice, her social mobility was presented by Richardson not as "affectation" but as a deserved reward. Fielding's Shamela can be read as an attempt to force Pamela back into the terms of burlesque ridicule by disciplining Richardson's feminine sentimentality though the satiric representation of her "authentick" letters, in which her frequent malapropisms (notably vartue instead of
"virtue" and *poluteness* instead of "politeness") were to prove that servant's writing must be a mere parody of the genteel manners and reason.

Nevertheless, *Shamela* is primarily a reaction against the flat sentimentality of Richardson's novel and the popular craze it induced. Margaret A. Rose, to melt the terms parody and metafiction, coined the phrase "meta-literary criticism" which "is distinguished from other types of literary criticism by its presentation within the confines of fictional reference" (Rose 1979: 107). Parody not only ridicules but also interrogates either a particular work, a given literary convention, aesthetic fashion or intellectual trend – a certain mode of reading and writing – to take a critical and normative stand in the literary debates of its time. Fielding occupies a prominent place in the Scriblerian tradition of parodic or "meta-literary" criticism of a rising "sentimental" bourgeois literature, and one can surely identify Shamela as a link/mediator between Pamela and reality: the quasi-realism of Richardson’s melodrama is mocked from every side by a cannonade of comical reversals and counter-sentimental puns. The crass hilarity of Shamela’s account of the Wedding Night constitutes a climax of the travesty of Pamela’s melodramatics:

> I acted my part in such a manner, that no Bridegroom was ever better satisfied with his Bride’s Virginity. And to Confess the Truth I might have been well enough satisfied too, if I had never been acquainted with Parson Williams. *O what regard Men who marry Widows should have to the Qualifications of their former Husbands.* (Fielding 2008: 335)

The overt sexual content of Fielding’s spoof of the book described by him as "very improper to be laid before the Youth" explores the fact that, "[b]ecause Pamela’s idea of virtue seems limited (…) to the immuring of chastity against violation before marriage, there is naturally much concern with sexuality in her letters" (Johnson 1969: 23). Richardson thus extracts sexuality from its social context by radicalizing the ethics of chastity into a religion and, simultaneously, stages a social drama of what Raymond Williams called "the necessary settlement, the striking of a bargain between advantage and value" (quoted in Eagleton 1998: 139). Fielding’s rhetorical exercise is to create a realistic and probable fictional framework, an alternative version in which the voices silenced by Richardson debunk not only the social underpinning of sexual desire but also its literary misrepresentation. The somewhat idealized descriptions of private feelings and emotions, which were a trademark of Richardson’s work, are deflated by Fielding, who radicalizes the discrepancy between "Richardson’s puritanical notions of inner grace" and the "endless opportunities for hypocrisy" that such interiorized
morality is bound to offer (Hammond and Regan 97). Richardson’s supposedly accurate psychology becomes decoded by Fielding in an almost proto-psychoanalytical fashion: the "true" inner motivations (vanity, greed, lust) lurk beneath the elegant surfaces of social respectability.

Metafiction, understood as a literary self-reflexivity of sorts ("fiction about fiction"), is usually identified with games and purposeful distortions that examine the "historical provisionality" (Waugh’s term) of established literary devices and conventions. Fielding systematically complicates the relationship fiction/reality and fiction/morality: what is "authentick" and sincere in literature is not its pretended strict adherence to facts. The private investigation by Parson Olivier, the subsequent investigation by Parson Tickletext ("I made it pretty much my Business to enquire after her, but with no effect hitherto"), the assurances by Parson Olivier ("her history will appear in the following letters, which I assure you are authentick") – all are mock-epistolary in character. Tickletext, once an admirer of Pamela, hastily publishes what he trusts to be the "exact copies" of her "authentick Papers"78:

As I have your implied Leave to publish, what you so kindly sent me, I shall not wait for the Originals, as you assure me the Copies are exact, and as I am really Inpatient to do what I think a serviceable Act of Justice to the World (Fielding 1741: 367, emphasis added).

All those misdirected disclaimers of fictionality and assurances of originality in fact deconstruct at the meta-narrative level the illusion of authenticity allowed by the epistolary technique that Richardson is accused of having exploited. Tickletext believes every letter he reads to be a true story once its authenticity is suggested to him: he stands for quixotic readers devoid of any trace of scepticism and fond of mawkish melodrama. Parson Tickletext’s assertion that Pamela possesses "MEASURED FULLNESS in it, that RESEMBLING LIFE, OUTGLOWS IT" (Fielding 2008: 310) functions as a concise piece of mock-praise of the kind of literature that Fielding, apparently, disliked: life does possess fullness and measure, but "measured fullness" is an obvious annulment of both terms into a small pedagogy of conduct books that Pamela was initially intended to be. It ends up as a venerated work of literature – a

78 The device of claimed authenticity of some mysteriously found "true" versions of known literary works had already been auto-ironically applied by Fielding in his earlier work: "In the Preface to the Tragedy of Tragedies the fictitious editor begins, in the solemn style of a university professor editing a classic, by giving account of the authorship, history, and character of the opus magnum (...) explaining (in imitation of a device employed by Pope in connection with the Dunciad) that the Tom Thumb of 1730 was merely a ‘surreptitious and piratical copy’ of the ‘genuine and original’ Tragedy of Tragedies now published" (Dudden 1952: 65).
misunderstanding in the view of the parodist, the "modest Beauty" and harassing didacticism of the text inviting his merciless mockery. Richardson himself was fictionalized in Shamela’s final letter (Letter XIII) and described in the following manner:

the Gentleman who writes Lives, never asked more than a few Names of his Customers, and that he made all the rest out of his Head; you mistake, Child, said he, if you apprehend any Truths are to be delivered. (Fielding 2008: 341-2)

Richardson "writes Lives" but those are lives that have never been lived, there are no "Truths" to them. It is less important if the criticism was fully justified: even if one has to agree that "Richardson succeeds in engaging our sympathies for his helpless heroines and, in portraying a male-dominated world, brilliantly conveys the anxieties of young women” (Kearney 23), the heroines must have appeared predictable and stale enough to allow for parody. Symptomatically, Shamela, though ultimately a cartoon, embodies a kaleidoscopic range of all-too-human emotions (ambition, avarice, revenge, lust, etc.), being also a prototype of a shrewd manipulator and social opportunist in vein of Becky Sharp, the wicked yet complex and engaging heroine of Thackeray’s Vanity Fair, while Pamela’s girlish shyness dominates the one-dimensionality of her character. The commercial success of the book is for that reason boiled down to an (also satirized) incompetence, or simply bad taste, on the part of its readers. Professional writers, like Henry Fielding or Eliza Haywood, must have envied the enormous popularity of Pamela, though their parodic responses to the novel, if not triggered by commercial opportunism, were clearly also made much more marketable by its fame: "Shamela and, subsequently, Joseph Andrews, began to exploit the market which Pamela had opened up, and at this time Fielding needed additional income" (Stewart 41).

While An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews may be read exclusively as an occasional polemic with Richardson’s novel, it also provides a number of general parodic inversions of the devices of sentimental and romantic literature that are later explored in Joseph Andrews. Parody is here not a mere game of ludic degradation; it incorporates a metafictional critique of sentimentalism and a satiric exposure of puritan morality. Fielding’s understanding of literature, it appears, stood in sharp contrast to Richardson’s novel: Pamela offered a pleasant, if naive, illusion with a touch of (misguided) pedagogical motivation, whereas Fielding’s writing tended to endorse literary refinement, remaining often scornful towards cultural philistines. This "ironic juxtaposition" (Hutcheon’s term) of two literary worlds compares and contrasts them
through parody, producing complex comic and metafictional effects. Richardson breached the famous Augustan/Scriblerian dictum from Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*: "Learn hence for Ancient Rules a just Esteem; To copy Nature is to copy Them" (ll. 139-40). By pretending to "spontaneously" portray nature, he created its flat idealization along the lines of reductionist morality, and Fielding defamiliarizes such "spontaneity" as ideologically complicit, while also demonstrating how intertextual competence is requisite for an efficient articulation of any artistic vision.

4.2.2. Parodic Stylization in *Joseph Andrews*

If in *Shamela* Fielding parodies not only the novelistic techniques of Richardson but also the moral demagogy and naive sentimentalism that he detected in his prose, then *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* (1742), Fielding’s first fully-fledged attempt at novelistic form, continues in a similar direction, yet on a visibly larger scale. In its self-professed general "comic-epic" scheme, it may be regarded as "Fielding’s attempt to adapt Scriblerian modes of burlesque to a novelistic genre" (Lund 97). The novel is also advertised in its subtitle to have been "written in imitation of the manner of Cervantes", whose famous *Don Quixote* constitutes, in many ways, a blueprint for many later comic novels. Neoclassical critics usually located the defining feature of Cervantes’ prose in its flagrantly parodic use of narration, i.e. in the so-called "high burlesque" elevation of style and manner that is systematically contrasted with the "low" or "mean" quality of the actions and characters depicted. Indeed, by blending the style of aristocratic-chivalric romance with gross "down-to-earth" picaresque adventure, *Don Quixote* mockingly denigrated the clichés of the pompous "epic" romances. This view of parody in Cervantes is accurate to a degree, but also somewhat reductive: "the technique of parody operates intensively in the detail of *Don Quixote*", Dorothy van Ghent notices, because it organizes there an "intricate mixture" of contradictory elements, "emotion and burlesque, tradition and immediacy, felt time and the atemporal time of images, brute fact and conceptual delicacy (…) designed in a simultaneity and a spiraling intertwining as one act of perception" (14). Parody in *Don Quixote* becomes the larger-than-life technique of presentation based on extreme contrast: gross materiality is juxtaposed with pathos, brute force with idealism, triviality with true wisdom, all at a vivid comical proximity. Clearly, the iconic pair of Quixote and Sancho also embodies the polar extremes of diverse human qualities. The sustained
contrasts and crude comparisons shatter not only the idealist illusions of chivalric heroism, but all one-sided judgments and clear-cut categorizations. Parody works here precisely as that "inter-illumination" of languages, to use Bakhtin’s parlance; it offers an unceasing play of perspectives and counter-perspectives.

Importantly, *Don Quixote* is thereby a typical representative of the Second Stylistic Line of novelistic development, a satiric and picaresque tradition in which the lofty abstract style (for instance of the epic, of the chivalric or pastoral romance) is allusively and mockingly destroyed by "a series of deliberately crude associations" that pull exalted literary style and imagery towards the grossly prosaic and comic-grotesque representations of everyday life (Bakhtin 2011: 386). If the First Line of novelistic development thrives on polite elegance, the Second Line parodically displaces this coherence by comparing the lofty literary plane with a crudely and satirically portrayed social reality. Parody in those novels provides the laughing "corrective of reality" to the abstracted literary language, a corrective which is "always richer and more contradictory than any single genre or word" (Morson and Emerson 434).

*Don Quixote* is, thus, in a sense, a guidebook on how to construct parody, and *Joseph Andrews* is its adept disciple, for it also relies on the game of contrastively mingled perspectives and tonalities. Fielding adopts an erudite, high-pitched "classical" style to render the comic adventures of a young servant Joseph Andrews and his friend Parson Adams. However, not only are their adventures often crudely grotesque, risible or trivially comic, but also the two companions meet on their journey most diverse persons, often mean and contemptible, usually representing the vices and faults typical of their profession or occupation, social class or position. In this way, the picaresque and satiric tendencies in Fielding’s novel allow him not only to travesty canonical literary styles and genres, but also to parody numerous socially valid and recognizable discourses: "In the English comic novel we find a comic-parodic re-processing of almost all the levels of literary language, both conversational and written, that were current at the time" (Bakhtin 2011: 301). Cervantes’ model provided numerous later novelists with a characteristic method of the parodic organization of heteroglossia; a particularly vivid and complex method of contrasting and exposing the social and stylistic variants of language. As the present discussion argues, there is predominant in Fielding's novel an intensely parodic *stylization* that orchestrates the interplay between canonical literary styles and distinct variations of social heteroglossia – an interplay that governs almost all levels of the novel’s organization.
This stylistic heterogeneity in *Joseph Andrews* is particularly visible at the level of narration. Behind the more or less sustained cover of the direct and apparently objective account, the narrator's voice is frequently stylized into parodic reflection of various styles of verbal expression: the high biblical style, epic style, dry business jargon, spiteful gossip, hypocritical preaching, scholarly argumentation, amorous poetic diction, etc. In this way, different methods of seeing, organizing and evaluating life and reality ironically clash and confront one another. The initial chapters of *Joseph Andrews* already provide numerous examples of such parodic stylization in the narrative. Very common, as might be expected, are various mock-classical stylizations:

Now the rake Hesperus had called for his Breeches, and having well rubbed his drowsy Eyes, prepared to dress himself for the Night; by whose Example his Brother Rakes on Earth likewise leave those Beds, in which they had slept away the Day. Now Thetis the good Housewife begun to put on the Pot in order to regale the good Man Phoebus, after his daily Labours were over. In vulgar language, it was in the Evening that Joseph attended his Lady's Orders. (2008: 32)

This pompous description is ironically presented as completely redundant, since it may be translated into one short sentence of "vulgar" language. The "vulgar" language, however, is both deliberately avoided by Fielding, especially when it would perfectly suffice, and also often evoked for comic contrast; already on the next page Lady Booby hypocritically describes her female servants as "the wicked Sluts, who make one ashamed of one's own Sex", while she herself is slyly attempting to seduce her adolescent servant, the intrepidly virtuous and good-hearted (albeit slightly naive) Joseph (2008: 33).

A hypocritical tone is frequently assumed by the narrator, who, for instance, describes the odiously brutish Lady Booby as possessing a "gentle and cultivated Mind" and delighting herself in the very "innocent Amusement" of "demolishing the Reputations of others" (2008: 37). Her impudent servant, Mrs. Slipslop, in turn, is referred to as that "fair Creature", full of "native Charms", right after being described in the following mock-euphemistic manner:

She was a Maiden Gentlewoman of about Forty-five Years of Age, who having made a small Slip in her Youth had continued a good Maid ever since. She was not at this time

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79 The initial chapters of *Joseph Andrews* continue the parody of Richardson’s *Pamela* that Fielding offered already in his short piece, *Shamela*, but do so in a more nuanced manner: an ironic twist is given to gender roles, for the innocent maid (Pamela) becomes an innocent male-servant (Joseph), whereas the rakish Lord B. becomes transmogrified into equally lustful Lady Booby: "The lusts of Lady Booby and Mrs. Slipslop come up against the solid wall of Joseph’s virtue and innocence. Joseph’s letters to Pamela (if much shorter and more to the point than Pamela’s) are couched in a not dissimilar tone of puzzled innocence. And Mrs. Slipslop is a rough parallel to Mrs. Jewkes, including a physical resemblance. Lady Booby remains to the end of the novel a distorted, burlesque female version of Mr. B, torn between lust for Joseph and anger at his resistance" (Macallister 61).
remarkably handsome; being very short, and rather too corpulent in the Body, and somewhat red, with the Addition of Pimples in the Face. Her Nose was likewise rather too large, and her Eyes too little, nor did she resemble a Cow so much in her Breath, as in two brown Globes which she carried before her; one of her Legs was also a little shorter than the other, which occasioned her to limp as she walked. (2008: 27, emphasis added)

The effect of such a euphemistic and pseudo-objective description is all the more offensive and grotesque. Characteristic of Fielding's narrator is the ironic, ventriloquist use of the language that may pass for genteel, erudite and elegant, but which in fact proves to be a cover for hypocrisy, ignorance, vanity, greed or mere pretentiousness. The eruditely stylized language offers a constant burlesque contrast with the numberless "vulgar" or "obscene" actions and persons which it describes or comments upon with ironic restraint. Working within the "perfect blend of parody and realism" (Lund 102), Fielding’s narrator thereby assumes an "affected" pose of elegance, moderation and objectivity, which in fact fortifies the mocking and indirectly critical tonality of his account.

The irony is further strengthened by the parodic stylizations that imitate the pompous and emotionally engaged narration of sentimental fiction. The advances of Mrs. Slipslop are rendered in a style mocking the romance, while a Homeric simile is additionally inserted: "As when hungry Tygress, who long has traversed the Woods in fruitless search, sees within the Reach of her Claws a Lamb, she prepares to leap on her Pray; (...) so did Mrs. Slipslop prepare to lay her violent amorous Hands on the poor Joseph, when luckily her Mistress's Bell rung, and delivered the intended Martyr from her Clutches" (2008: 29). The scene of the attempted seduction of Joseph by the old, ugly and lustful Mrs. Slipstop and by the hypocritical Lady Booby is in itself a parodic inversion of the typical sentimental motif of a virtuous maid being ill-used by a rakish and violent Squire. This plot device was employed not only by Richardson, but also in numerous earlier romances, tragedies and sentimental comedies (Lewis 1972: 22). Here, within a disparagingly "mock-romantic" routine, it is the female characters who become satirically transformed into violent and voracious monsters, despite Fielding's presumably honest assertion that "we have naturally a wonderful Tenderness for that beautiful Part of the human Species, called the Fair Sex" (2008: 32).

80 Such comic-parodic degradation of the romantic "idealization" of female figures is a trademark of Swift's poetry (e.g. The Lady's Dressing Table, Cadenus and Vanessa), but it may be found already in the portrait of Lady Dulcinea in Part I of Don Quixote (Book IV, Chapter IV: 291-3), and in countless other burlesque transpositions of "romantic" characters and motifs. In her essay "The Female Monster in Augustan Satire", Susan Gubar identifies such images of degraded femininity with an ambivalent male
Common and important in Fielding's style of narration are also the elements of the parodically stylized poetic or declamatory discourse, for instance in the poetic apostrophes, full of philosophical pathos and written in ostensibly archaic diction:

O Love! what monstrous Tricks dost thou play with thy Votaries of both Sexes! (…) Though puttest out our Eyes, stoppest out our Ears, and takest away the power of our Nostrils; so that we can neither see the largest Object, hear the loudest Noise, nor smell the most poignant Perfume. Again, when thou pleases, 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. Thou can't make Cowardice brave, Avarice generous, Pride Humble (…) If there be any one who doubts all this, let him read the next Chapter. (2008: 31-32)

Characteristically, the narrator switches from pseudo-pathos to a more direct and familiar (and extra-diegetic) comment addressed to the reader, who might already be at a loss to what extent this flamboyant poetic tirade is to be taken seriously. The long apostrophe to "Vanity" (Book I, Chapter XV: "O Vanity! How little is thy Force acknowledged, or thy Operations discerned?") is also preposterously stylized, and it voices Fielding’s characteristic scepticism vis-à-vis all outward signs of respectability and pathos, since vanity may often "wear the Face of Pity, sometimes of Generosity; nay, thou hast the Assurance even to put on those glorious Ornaments which belong only to the heroic Virtue" (2008: 60). Nevertheless, the narrator ends the longish apostrophe with the assurance that its sole purpose was "to lengthen out a short Chapter" (2008: 60). Since the parodic game with fixed rhetorical conventions cannot be realized within a pure monolithic style, the intrusive and self-conscious narrators in the novels of the Second Stylistic Line choose apt means to provisionally assume various styles, to quickly switch roles and change discursive masks, often reflecting the tension between the detached or outmoded poetic tonalities and a fluid, polyglot reality. Fielding alludes to motifs and persons from classical literature frequently when commenting on trifling events – when Mrs. Slipslop casts a scornful look at Fanny, it is "not unlike that which Cleopatra gives Octavia in the Play" (2008: 139). Mock-heroic elements appear in the novel as well, for instance in the battle between Adams and the Squire’s companions in Book III, where the "Stone Pot of the Chamber" is linked with a giant stone used as a weapon by Turnus in Virgil’s Aeneid (2008: 224). The moral doubts Lady Booby experiences after she unjustly dismissed Joseph are narrated, in response to body and materiality: "the monstrous woman allows the satirist to exorcise his fear of mortality and physicality by projecting it onto the Other", yet "she may also function as a sign of his fascination with materiality" and hence as a "fascinating alternative" to the detached, self-controlled position of satirist (393). The connection between parody and gender (and between "Augustan" burlesque and travesty and the social position and symbolic representation of women in particular) is a complex topic that requires separate extensive research and discussion.
turn, in the style of the allegorical dialogue, in an ironic echo of medieval morality plays:

She was a thousand times on the very Brink of revoking the Sentence she had passed against the poor Youth. Love became his Advocate, and whispered many things in his favour. Honour likewise endeavored to vindicate his Crime, and Pity to mitigate his Punishment; on the other side, Pride and Revenge spoke as loudly against him: thus poor Lady was tortured with Perplexity; opposite Passions distracting and tearing her Mind different ways. (2008: 39)

Immediately after evoking the style of morality plays Fielding turns to the more down-to-earth language of legal quarrels: "So have I seen, in the Hall of Westminster, where Serjeant Bramble hath been retained on the right side, and Serjeant Puzzle on the left; the balance of Opinion (so equal were their Fees) alternately inclined to either Scale; now Bramble throws in an argument, and Puzzle's scale strikes the Beam, again Bramble shares the like Fate, overpowered by the Weight of Puzzle. Here Bramble hits, there Puzzle strikes" (2008: 39). These sarcastic and abrupt shifts in style and register cannot be reduced here to a mere search for artistic variety. Edmund Burke considered variety to be a crucial quality of the beautiful, but only when it takes the form of "gradual variation" that is "continual and hardly perceptible at any point" and which Pope would perhaps appreciate as the *concordia discors* – in opposition to the "angular figures" of Hogarth, which "vary in a sudden and broken manner" and therefore "are the ugliest" (Burke 2008: 102-3). Parody is the "ugly" image of language, and the aesthetic of dissonance that dominates in the Menippean tradition of "debasing" and "profaning" writing altogether rejects the categories of smoothness, delicacy, elegance and softness (which for Burke constitute jointly the artistic ideal of the "beautiful") as inadequate for the valid representation of reality – as if a beautiful and correct(ed) language was not able to reveal the complexity of human reality. The linguistic-stylistic variation in Fielding's prose does not aim at artistic harmony and unity, and it patently ignores the principles of generic decorum. Parodic presentation and deconstruction of social and literary discourses is not, in fact, possible in an isolated and coherent "monologic" style; it may surface only as play of differences, in an architecture of incongruity between the elements counterpoised within the textual maze.  

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81 What characterizes the Second Stylistic Line of novelistic development (which, as Bakhtin argues, has its roots in Menippean satire) is not only a democratic plethora of styles and registers of language, but a general and pervasive "carnivalesque mood", a constant comic degradation of everything that on the surface appears perfect, finished, respectable, unified, ideal or abstract. Parody in these novels operates not only as a specific technique, but as an overarching logic of organization, an "anti-aesthetic" game with literary representation and convention. In other words, parody and parodic stylization are not simply rhetorical or logical procedures, but elaborate the poetic-imaginative systems of representation, the
The interrogation of fictional illusion and the shattering of stylistic coherence appear to be, in fact, the chief characteristics of Fielding’s novelistic writing in general:

Unlike Defoe or Richardson, Fielding shows no desire to achieve minute realism. He does not provide an illusion of actuality that allows the reader to participate immediately in the lives of his characters. (...) Whatever we see in Fielding’s world is filtered through his own telling; his arrangement, his commentary and his idiom control our awareness throughout. (Price 1973: 396)

As a novelist, Fielding draws richly from his theatrical experience of a prolific writer of farcical burlesque shows; he would deliberately construct mimetic illusion or sentimental identification only to suddenly destroy them, in a comic slapstic fashion. Following Patricia Waugh’s insight that "metafiction explicitly lays bare the devices of realism; it does not ignore or abandon them" (1984: 18), there may be traced in Joseph Andrews a productive tension between what Roger D. Lund identifies as "the burlesque and mimetic procedures" (105). In contradistinction with Richardson’s sentimental pathos, Fielding’s prose indulges in comic bathos, i.e. in a disrupted and "degraded" sublimity. Nevertheless, Fielding definitely wants also to benefit from the advantages of novelistic conventions – their absorbing plots, their palpable and concrete language, their diegetic and psychological liveliness – though he vigilantly avoids sliding into the kind of naive realism and cheap didacticism that he identified in Richardson’s first novel. As Margaret A. Rose notices, parody may also serve a heuristic function – "educating the reader to a more 'reflective' reading of the text" (1979: 122). Fielding is both sceptical about the novel and fascinated by its formal possibilities – this duality of approach may account for the volatile, intrusive and prominently self-conscious exploration of narrative voice in the entirety of Joseph Andrews.

The representation of the speech of characters – through inner monologues, soliloquies, dialogues or quarrels, but also as reflected in narration through indirect or free-indirect discourse – is also an integral structural element of the comic novel that provides a vast and fertile ground for the comic-parodic organization of heteroglossia. In Joseph Andrews almost every secondary character is a parodic image of a socially typical and often contemptible "sort" of person. For instance, the "Doctor" that treats Joseph's wounds after he has been robbed and beaten by a couple of ruffians is exposed

"complex artistic forms for the organization of contradiction, forms that orchestrate their themes by means of languages – in all characteristic and profound models of novelistic prose, in Grimmelshausen, Rabelais, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne and others" (2011: 275, emphasis added).

82 Fielding, in fact, often directly addresses in the novel the "classical Reader", the "amorous Reader", the "curious Reader", the "good-natured Reader", or the "impatient Reader", etc. Like Sterne after him, Fielding humorously projects readerly expectations or reactions and makes these "projected" readers part and parcel of his writing.
as an ignorant and rather pretentious quack, whose methods are based on various antiquated sources. When asked about Joseph's condition, he replies:

'Sir,' says the Doctor, 'his Case is that of a dead Man. – The Contusion on his Head has perforated the internal Membrane of the Occiput, and devellicated that radical small minute invisible Nerve, which coheres to the Pericranium, and this was attended with Fever at first symptomatick, then pneumatick, and he is at length grown delirious, or delirious, as the Vulgar express it.' (2008: 55, Fielding’s emphasis)

The ridicule is encoded both in the substance of the parodied language and in the simple fact that, after a few days, Joseph has almost completely recovered. The languages embodied by the characters in comic novels may often mirror the ways of speaking that appear tendentious or outmoded already "in real life", as Bakhtin observes, so that parodic stylization often merely accentuates the fact that these "socio-linguistic perspectives" are "doomed to death and displacement" (2011: 312).

At The Dragon Inn, where Joseph rests after his unfortunate adventure, the reader also meets some other, more or less ignoble, characters, notably the hypocritical and obnoxious clergyman Barnabas and the lively Inn-keepers: Mr. Tow-wouse and his domineering, harsh and greedy wife, Mrs. Tow-wouse, whose voice is "wonderfully adapted to the Sentiments it was to convey, being both loud and hoarse" (2008: 54). In almost every utterance, she exposes her coldly pragmatic and calculating worldview. When Joseph is unable to pay at the Inn, he is detained, and it turns out that his companion, the good-hearted (but radically absent-minded) parson Adams, has forgotten to pay for his stay and the rented horse: "this was that fresh Instance of that shortness of Memory which did not arise from want of parts, but that continual Hurry in which Parson Adams was always involved" (80). Mrs. Tow-wouse demands that Joseph shall pay with the "little Piece of Gold" he received from his beloved Fanny. When Joseph refuses to part with the precious souvenir because he has a great "Value" for it, she exclaims: "A pretty Way, indeed, to run in debt, and then refuse to part with your Money, because you have Value for it. I never knew any Piece of Gold of more Value than as many Shillings as it would change for." (2008: 80-81). Clearly, the word

83 There is also a brilliant parody of tedious legal language in Book IV, Chapter V of Joseph Andrews: "These Deponent saith, and first Thomas Trotter for himself saith, that on the … of this instant October, being Sabbath-Day, between the Ours of 2 and 4 in the afternoon, he zeed Joseph Andrews and Francis Goodwill walk across a certane Felde which ledes thru the said Felde belonging to Layer Scout, and out of the Path which ledes thru the said Felde, and there he zede Joseph Andrews with a Nife cut one Hassel-Twig, of the value, as he believes, of 3 half pence, or thereabouts, and he saith, that the said Francis Goodwill was likewise walking on the Grass in the said Path in the said Felde, and did receive and karry in her Hand the said Twig, and so was cumfarting, eading and abatting to the said Joseph therein. And the said James Scout for himself says, that he verily believes the said Twig to be his own proper Twig, &c." (2008: 252).
"value" in her down-to-earth logic, unlike in Joseph's enamoured fancy, has a purely monetary meaning. An analogical dispute, but concerning the word "Charity", takes place between Peter Pounce, a snooty nouveau-riche money-lender, and Parson Adams:

'Sir', said Adams, 'my Definition of Charity is a generous Disposition to relieve the Distressed.' 'There is something in that Definition,' answered Peter, 'which I like well enough; it is, as you say, a Disposition – and does not so much consist in the Act as in the Disposition to do it; but alas, Mr. Adams, Who are meant by the distressed? Believe me, the Distresses of Mankind are mostly imaginary, and it would be rather Folly than Goodness to relieve them. 'Sure, Sir;' replied Adams, 'Hunger and Thirst, Cold and Nakedness, and other Distresses which attend the Poor, can never be said to be imaginary Evils.' 'How can any Man complain of Hunger,' said Peter, 'in a country where such excellent Sallads are to be gathered in almost every Field? or of Thirst, where every river and stream produces such delicious Potations? And as for Cold and Nakedness, they are Evils introduced by Luxury and Custom. A man naturally wants Clothes no more than a Horse or any other Animal. (2008: 239)

In the pseudo-philosophical exhortation of Peter Pounce, "Charity" is reduced to a mere ornament, to an outward pose of benevolence – at any rate something too extravagant and fanciful to interfere with the serious business of life. Fielding quite often exposes in his burlesque prose the contradictory tonalities and perspectives embedded within the same word (e.g. "virtue", "morality", "hero", "greatness", "noble", "honest"), activating a perception of social heteroglossia that disrupts and divides the monoglossia of the "national" language: through parodic stylization he accentuates the socio-linguistic variety of interests and ideologies operating beneath the mask of the "abstracted" neutral system of language.

The speech of the characters reflects various socially typical "masks" – the exposed and more or less directly ridiculed attitudes and axiologies; the common opinions, typical judgments and circulating phrases. The picaresque element, in turn, allows the novelist to investigate what Bakhtin calls the "vulgar conventions", i.e. all the unofficial and "ugly" dealings and clandestine relations in a society, usually covered by a thin veil of appearances and superficial respectability; picaresque novels elaborate "the sharply intensified exposure of vulgar conventions and, in fact, the exposure of the entire existing social structure" (2011: 165). This is visible in Fielding's portrayal of relations of power and dependence – in households, inns, courts and aristocratic mansions; his satire is usually directed against "the arrogant abuse of power: the petty power of innkeepers, or the greater power of squires and justices" (Macallister 79). The exposure of vulgar conventions is parodically strengthened by the elevated literary style that fortifies the contrast between the official and unofficial worlds. In this context, the
burlesque dialectic of contrast between "elegant" literary style and "crude" reality acquires in comic-picaresque novels a particularly sarcastic and piercing force.

In its performatively accentuated colorful variety, the speech of the characters is in itself also a frequent source of comic discord between registers. In Chapter IV of Book II, entitled "The History of Leonora, or the Unfortunate Jilt", the elegant romantic tale narrated by the "perfectly well bred" Lady during the travel in the "Stage-Coach" is often interrupted with short remarks made by other passengers. Thus, when Horatio begins "conceiving Hopes from the behaviour of Leonora; whose Fondness for him was now as visible to an indifferent Person in their Company, as his for her", Mrs. Slipslop's reaction is: "I never knew any of these forward Sluts come to good" (2008: 88). When Parson Adams attempts to lead a theological dispute about "eternal Punishment" with the host at the tavern, he is promptly reminded of the earthly realities: "what signifies talking about matters so far off? the Mug is out, shall I draw another?" (85). This constant and insistent contrasting of registers and styles is an almost obsessive propensity of Fielding’s writing: by putting face to face various elevated tonalities and crude or base aspects of life, he achieves most of his comic and satiric effects.

Even in the interlude Chapters, in which Fielding engages in half-serious theoretical deliberations about art, history or poetry, this parodic tendency is prominently marked. In the opening Chapter of Book II, Of Divisions in Authors, Fielding acknowledges that "common Readers" often think that authors divide their writing into books and chapters simply "to swell our Works to a much larger Bulk" (2008: 76). Fielding tries to vindicate the practice, and in the short essay he constantly juxtaposes classical erudition (referring to Montagne, Virgil, Homer and Milton) with similes and metaphors taken from the "low" prosaic register. Thus against the widespread opinion that chapters are like "Buckram, Stays, and Stay-tape in a Taylor's bill, serving only to make up the Sum Total", Fielding advocates seeing divisions as "those Stages, where, in long Journeys, the Traveller stays some time to repose himself" or "take a Glass" (2008: 76). Next, the "Contents prefixed to every Chapter" should be seen as "Inscriptions on the Gates of the Inn" that inform the readers/travelers of the kind of "Entertainment" they might expect upon entering (77). Further on, he refers mockingly to the opinion of some modern critics that Homer published his epic in installments (77). Finally, authors are linked with butchers: "it becomes an Author generally to divide a Book, as it doth a Butcher to joint his meat, for such Assistance is of great Help to both the Reader and the Carver" (78). Fielding himself implies an
involvement in positing a burlesque mocking contrast when he says that "Similes" in books "require Simplicity" (78). But the parodic game in this Chapter is more complicated: the resulting picture is that of the classical literary heritage being reduced to a mere "Refreshment" or "Entertainment" provided for consumers in convenient installments ("for only fifteen Shillings more"). Readers may always skip the more tedious chapters "without any Injury to the Whole", including, as the narrator asserts, the chapter "I am now writing" (78). This is clearly a satire on the degraded cultural role of literature and on fashionable installments of reedited classical works, but this satire is realized through a brilliantly self-reflexive and humorous parody, which takes a surprisingly light attitude towards literature, or rather mocks such an attitude on the part of the projected reader. Indeed, in Claude Rawson's view, the erudite and elevated stylization in *Joseph Andrews* is "an expression of instinctive attachment to the role of art and of civilization as bulwarks against the irrepressible and unruly energies of life" (147). Terry Eagleton also tends to portray Fielding as a traditionalist and a conservative humanist who protects time-honoured virtues against the vulgar middle-class pragmatism (2005: 53-69).

A Bakhtinian reading of Fielding's burlesque, however, would need to be attuned to a more nuanced ambiguity between the terms of contrast, for various cultural illusions, traditional ideals and naive dogmas dissipate when dragged into the messy world of prosaic realities that prove too complicated to be embraced by dry philosophical or moralistic formulas. Fielding’s technique is not an outward rejection or castigation, but a parodic dialectic of contrast and comparison, in which the dissonant registers of heteroglossia critically illuminate one another. This perceptual game occurs between counterpoised and radicalized extremes: the simplicity of Joseph and the idealism of Parson Adams highlight the greed, vanity, opportunism and hypocrisy of other characters, while the cultivated voice of the narrator contrasts with the havoc and crudeness of the grossly realistic adventures. Fielding juxtaposes especially the classical and Christian sublimity with vividly "prosaic" representations of contemporary social and economic reality (for instance, in the disputes between Parson Adams and Parson Trulliber). According to Wojciech Nowicki, the parodic format elaborated by Cervantes is translated into an axiological polarity wherein the charitable, good-hearted (and often poor) Christians encounter the cold, greedy and hypocritical ones: Joseph, Parson Adams and other "positive" characters are perceived as "mad" and quixotic by the society in which the principles of cold pragmatic calculation and
hypocrisy are signs of reason and sanity (2008: 66-7). But the results of such a performative comparison are often ambiguous. Parson Adams, visibly modeled on Don Quixote, is surely perceived as an awkward and slightly deranged daydreamer by the surrounding world, but perhaps also by the reader: Adams’ impetuous temper and his naive hopes to achieve fame and raise fortune by the publication of his sermons transform him into a lunatic almost as dubious as Cervantes’ hero.84

If Parson Adams is a modernized embodiment of Don Quixote, he seems to be devised in polemical distinction to England’s most iconic delusional idealist, the knight Sir Hudibras from Samuel Butler’s poem, a figure haunting the "Augustan" imagination as reminiscent of the devastating religious conflicts of the seventeenth century. Fielding was surely writing with that anti-fanatical, sceptical and satiric heritage in mind, but he nonetheless presents Adams as an amiable idealist, even a benevolent and sensible one, though often possessing a somewhat graceless and clownish air:

It is not perhaps easy to describe the Figure of Adams; he had risen in such a violent Hurry, that he had neither Breeches nor Stockings; nor had he taken from his Head a red spotted Handkerchief, which by Night bound his Wig, that was turned inside out, around his Head. He had on his torn Cassock, and his Great-Coat; but as the reminder of his Cassock hung down below his Great-Coat; so did a small Strip of white, or rather whitish Linen appear below that; to which we may add the several Colours which appeared on his Face, where a long Piss-burnt Beard, served to retain the Liquor of the Stone Pot, and that of blacker hue which distilled from the Mop. (235)

It is not surprising that even the otherwise grim Peter Pounce can not help laughing at this sight: "This Figure, which Fanny had delivered from Captivity, was no sooner spied by Peter, than it disordered the Composed Gravity of his Muscles" (235). Parson Adams is in a constant hurry throughout the novel, always disorderly in his appearance and, importantly, always short of money (which is why he so often talks about the importance of "Charity") – the comic burlesque contrast is strengthened by his frequent perorations, often strict in tone, on various moral or metaphysical subjects. These sometimes prove to be quite illuminating, but often seem comically inadequate in a given situation: when Adams is trying to console Joseph in distress (his beloved Fanny has been kidnapped by the companions of the rakish Squire), his melodramatic _consolatio_ (through which Fielding slightly parodies also the language of sermons, full of moral clichés and platitudes) only worsens the already despicable condition of his companion: "Be comforted, therefore, Child, I say be comforted. It is true you have lost

84 As Eagleton succinctly explains: "The trouble with holy innocents like Don Quixote, or Parson Adams of Joseph Andrews, is that it is not always easy to distinguish their moral innocence from simple ignorance, which is of no particular credit for them. As Quixote shows, a goodness which is simply blind to the world can wreak havoc in it" (2005: 66).
the prettiest, kindest, loveliest, sweetest young Woman: One with whom you might have expected to have lived in Happiness, Virtue and Innocence. By whom you might have promised yourself many little Darlings, who would have been the Delight of your Youth, and the Comfort of your Age. You have not only lost her, but have reason to fear the utmost Violence which Lust and Power can inflict upon her" (230). Adams continues his elegant oration, to Joseph’s dismay, by observing that "no Accident happens to us without the Divine Permission, and that it is the Duty of Man, much more of a Christian, to submit. We did not make ourselves; but the same Power which made us, rules over us, and we are absolutely at his Disposal" (230) – this seems to be a particularly ill-suited reflection given the circumstances.85

"Sermons and preachers", as Carol Stewart succinctly puts it, "are singularly ineffective in Joseph Andrews" (48). This is surely accurate with regard to Parson Barnabas and Parson Trulliber, who are more straightforwardly ridiculed, but it applies also to Parson Adams: "As a preacher, Adams is pedantic and dogmatic, and dogmatism was precisely the tendency against which Latitudinarianism militated. In Joseph Andrews, it is Fielding, rather, who is able to hold together a narrative (or a society) in which there are diverse views and voices, of which he appears benignly tolerant" (Stewart 48). If the traditional church-bound moral discourses fail in the novel, the more secularized (learned, poetic, scientific, sentimental) discourses appear often equally limited: Fielding is not really "benignly tolerant" towards all the contradictory voices in society – he rather stoically allows them to flourish in his novel, only to cynically expose their excesses and absurdities. This method of parody is applied to the "professional" speech of judges, doctors and preachers as much as to the spontaneous utterances and worldly wisdom of Mrs. Tow-wouse, the Innkeepers, the Squire and his companions, and to all the other characters who rely on their experience rather than on bookish wisdom. Though Fielding tends to associate "simplicity with the lower classes, affectation with the middle, vanity with the upper" (Karl 155), even the

85 Bakhtin insists that "[the] speaking person in the novel is always, to one degree or another, an ideologue, and his [sic] words are always ideologemes. A particular language in the novel is always a particular way of viewing the world, one that strives for social significance" (2011: 333). In the novels of the Second Stylistic Line, there is a particularly strong tendency to ridicule (in a subtle or gross manner) various (professional or home-made) ideologues. In the novel in general, in fact, the tendency to play with language in a formal and poetic way often gives way to the problematic representation and re-accentuation of different points of view and moral or ideological quandaries, through the typically novelistic process of "experimenting by turning persuasive discourse into speaking persons" (Bakhtin 2011: 348). The historical link between the comic novel and different forms of parody and travesty had a decisive impact on this capacity of novelistic discourse to cross-examine the most diverse discourses.
simple and good-hearted – and heroically chaste – Joseph might be seen as a mock-romance caricature, designed at least initially as a parodic mirror to Richardson’s angelic Pamela Andrews. As Robert Phiddian writes, Bakhtin’s emphasis on heteroglossia and polyphony in novelistic discourse is not about "a jolly sense that there is place for everything" – it rather points to "the exhaustion of discourses" and the absence of valid meaning lurking behind the plentitude of inadequate discourses (1997: 685-6). Heteroglossia is not simply a positive phenomenon – it is also very much about falsity, pretence, ideological manipulation and social division. The play of differences in novelistic parody – the dividing, differing and undermining of languages – renders them relative, void and inauthentic. Frederick Jameson defines parody as "the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language" (1991: 16), and surely parody often exposes the emptiness and futility of a parodied (literary) language. Still, however, parody is not simply a static relational effect – it is also a manifestation of the dialogic struggle between different versions and varieties of language; it impels a creative dynamism that tends to remain dissatisfied with any single and unified linguistic concept of reality that claims to be final and complete.

Both the picaresque and comic tendencies in Fielding’s fiction contribute to the vast panoramic diversity of styles and languages he parodies: "The comic style demands of the author a lively to-and-fro movement in his relation to language; it demands a continual shifting of the distance between author and language (...) If such were not the case, the style would be monotonous" (Bakhtin 2011: 302). The style of the comic novel needs to be pluralist and dynamic, to constantly shift "from common language to parodying of generic and other languages", sometimes in a gradual, sometimes in an abrupt manner (2011: 302). Admittedly, the above discussion of Joseph Andrews points merely to some of its numerous parodic tendencies and directions, but it perhaps sufficiently illustrates the trend towards diversification and relativization of discourses in Fielding’s comic-burlesque novel. It is this tendency, according to Bakhtin, that produced in the novels of Dickens and Dostoyevsky a truly polyphonic symphony of socially current viewpoints and discourses.

In the novels of the First Line there may be, of course, also a profound sense of contradiction, contestation and irony, but such novels tend to realize it within a single stylistic plane, in their own monoglot – elegant and "correct" – language, so that the conflict takes place at a linguistically direct (conceptual, logical, metaphorical) level. The stylistically elevated and sterile language of the First Line, in its claims to beauty,
objectivity and validity, is "particularly vulnerable to parody by the second line" (Morson and Emerson 358). Respectable and polite language is, undoubtedly, also important to the Second Line, but it is merely one among many languages, and hence it is (often violently) forced to enter into dialogue with contradictory voices and images. Such disruption may be harshly defiant, as in various travesty, comic or picaresque forms, but may also be very nuanced and subtle. Jane Austen’s early novels, for instance, seem to echo Fielding's "mock-elegant" style of narration: much of Austen's sarcastic humour depends on the parodic stylization of the usually decorous and euphemistic speech of the characters, mockingly appropriated by the narrator in free indirect discourse. In this manner Austen delicately but systematically unmasks ignorance, hypocrisy and malevolence that reign in polite society. In Northanger Abbey, the parody of Gothic romances and other novelistic conventions is also made effective through very nuanced and discreet stylistic devices (Uściński 2012b). The distinction between two Stylistic Lines of novelistic development is by no means sharp and stable – there is often an oscillation in particular novels between the isolated purity of style (the First Line) and the more contrastive orchestration of heteroglossia (the Second Line).

Fielding’s Joseph Andrews is an apt example of the parodic energy of the Second Stylistic Line of novelistic development. The multiplicity of styles and discourses destroys here the purity and one-sided direction of monoglossia (of the epic, the romance, Richardsonian sentimentalism), replacing it with a boisterous carnival of heterogeneous voices and counter-voices. The novel also lightly and humorously deconstructs a variety of established literary codes and devices. There is in Fielding’s novel a constant, tensed conflict between the elegant but lifeless "classical" literary language and the crude, pragmatic and often hypocritical language of "everyday business", so to speak. These two poles of the linguistic spectrum produce plenty of comic entertainment when juxtaposed and intertwined. For Fielding the only way to recycle literary language is to parody both the poetic diction and everyday jargon; to turn "topsy-turvy" official bourgeois language in order to expose its flatness and banality and hence to purify one’s own verbal expression. He parodies both the poetic and the socially sanctioned "everyday" ways of verbal expression, exposing the logical and ideological disjunctions and incongruities lurking behind them (indeed, parody often extracts from language the minutiae of what we would call today "ideology" or, as Terry Eagleton (2007: 195) puts it, "the play of social power within language itself").
The tendency towards plurivocality, grotesque contrast and parodic criticism in Fielding’s prose has fueled the development of novelistic prose and has exerted, directly and indirectly, a lasting influence on numerous later novelists.

4.3. Fortifications of the Soul: Gentle Mockery and (Symbolic) Castration in Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy.

I write a careless kind of a civil, nonsensical, good-humoured Shandean book, which will do all your hearts good –
– And all your heads too, – provided you understand it.

Laurence Sterne, Tristram Shandy

In carnival, parodying was employed very widely, in diverse forms and degrees: various images (for example, carnival pairs of various sorts) parodied one another variously and from various points of view; it was like an entire system of crooked mirrors, elongating, diminishing, distorting in various directions and to various degrees.

M. M. Bakhtin, The Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics

4.3.1. Introduction: the (Anti)Structure of Shandean Parody

If Scriblerians mocked all forms of pretentious gravity and exposed base intentions behind the masks of seriousness and solemnity, the culmination of their efforts – a lightness of mind and discourse – is reflected in the flourishes and spurious verbosity of Sterne's prose. Pope missed "pleasing Intricacies" and "artful wildness" in the plain, geometrical gardens surrounding Timon's villa, but he would find them in abundance in almost every sentence modulated by Shandean eccentricity. It is this strange tolerance towards all forms of eccentricity, which The Dunciad would quickly reduce to madness and corruptive self-delusion, that partly explains the liberality and mannerism of Sterne's pen. But this spirit of tolerance, sometimes verging upon frivolity, remains ambiguous. Tristram Shandy, inasmuch as it is governed by contrast and contradiction, celebrates subjectivity both mockingly and charmingly, in the vein of The Rape of the Lock, where parody is based exactly on the withdrawal of direct judgment, in a high-burlesque pseudo-epic dramatization of triviality. The action of Sterne's first novel is also surprisingly anti-epic, especially when it focuses on stepping down the stairs or on the act of peeping through a keyhole. In both works, moreover, eccentricity marks the genteel classes, which are perhaps only to be gently mocked for the curiosities and
excesses of their behavior. Tristram Shandy explains to his gentle readers, mockingly and charmingly, that he writes down his opinions, after all, not to argue against "predestination, or free-will, or taxes," but simply

in order, by a frequent and more convulsive elevation and depression of the diaphragm, and the succussions of the intercostal and abdominal muscles in laughter, to drive the gall and other bitter juices from the gall-bladder, liver and sweet-bread of his majesty's subjects, with all the inimicitious passions which belong to them, down into their duodenums. (4:22, 206)

Sterne's work is, in this sense, not limited to some particular polemical intervention in a contemporary debate or controversy, but is much more universal, if not timeless, since it aims, ultimately, at providing the medicine of laughter to his readers. Laughter seems to be, indeed, a universal human capability, a kind of bodily reaction inherent in human nature. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* follows in many ways the tradition of the ruthless but intricate mockery of learned and official discourses, a tradition that has its roots in the ancient comic *Menippea* by Lucian, Seneca and Petronius, and continues through the Renaissance and Baroque, especially with such well-known works as *The Praise of Folly* by Erasmus, *Don Quixote* by Cervantes and *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by Rabelais, all alluded to by Sterne. These works are characterized by complex parodic unmasking of diverse literary traditions, learned texts and intellectual currents, and though many discourses, concepts and authorities they parody – directly or indirectly – have passed long ago into oblivion, their parodies retain much of their vitality. As Bakhtin observes:

In Rabelais, whose influence on all novelistic prose (and in particular the comic novel) was very great, a parodic attitude toward almost all forms of ideological discourse – philosophical, moral, scholarly, rhetorical, poetic and in particular the pathos-charged forms of discourse (in Rabelais, pathos almost always is equivalent to lie) – was intensified to the point where it became a parody of the very act of conceptualizing anything in language. (...) Rabelais taunts the deceptive human word by a parodic destruction of syntactic structures, thereby reducing to absurdity some of the logical and expressively accentuated aspects of words (...) discrediting any direct or unmediated intentionality and expressive excess (any "weighty" seriousness) that might adhere in ideological discourse. (2011: 309)

This seems to be true also about Sterne, who was in many significant ways a disciple of Rabelais. The general parodic character of the work is explicated by Tristram in the first book:

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86 Bakhtin never wrote a critical analysis of Sterne's prose, but he frequently referred to Sterne in his studies on the carnivalesque and on the role of parody in the development of the European novel. In "The Discourse in the Novel" Bakhtin observes: "In the English comic novel we find a comic-parodic reprocessing of almost all the levels of literary language, both conversational and written". Especially in Sterne's prose, the "parodic stylization of various levels and genres of literary language" results in a vivid and profound "parody of the logical and expressive structure of any ideological discourse as such
By this contrivance the machinery of my work is of a species by itself; two contrary motions are introduced into it, and reconciled, which were thought to be at variance with each other. In a word, my work is digressive, and it is progressive too, – and at the same time. (1:22, 48)

While the "life" and the "opinions" in Sterne's novel are often "at variance with each other" (one being progressive and the other digressive), they cannot be separated. Tristram's autobiographical account of his life is both interrupted and animated by his digressions. This chronological duplicity is inter-woven with another, spatial one:

whatever motion, debate, harangue, dialogue, projects, or dissertation, was going forwards in the parlour, there was generally another at the same time, and upon the same subject, running parallel along with it in the kitchen. (5:6, 248)

Tristram sees even his family as a "machine" that "consisted of a few wheels" which were "set in motion by so many different springs" that its movements were more intricate than that of a "Dutch silk-mill" (5:6, 248). The hobby-horsical discourses of the parlour contrast with what is happening in other rooms of Shandy Hall. Walter and Toby themselves are based on a comic contrast, and hence form a parodic machine of their own, much like Quixote and Sancho, who mutually highlight their eccentric positions: while Walter is devoted to "close reasoning upon the smallest matters" (1:3, 5), Toby is a slightly naive, benevolent "simpleton". Sterne created thus a complex narrative machine, and his "parody novel" was famously analyzed in this respect by Victor Shklovsky, who attempted to exhibit how Sterne was able to "lay bare" the general, underlying structures and laws of the novelistic narration by applying its conventionalized devices in a highly arbitrary, displaced and discontinuous manner. After the Russian Formalists, numerous modern critics praised Sterne's prose for its innovative, metafictional character.87

Sterne started composing *Tristram Shandy* at the moment when novel writing became a culturally influential discursive practice and, though not yet firmly established as a respectable genre, its general patterns were conventionalized enough to invite parodic exposure. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift mocked the use of the first-person narration as a device creating the impression of a truthful, almost confessional account, while Fielding did the same for the epistolary novel in *Shamela*. Sterne, however, parodied novelistic conventions in a more thorough manner; he exposed the impression

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87 *Tristram Shandy* fascinated Russian "Formalists": Shklovsky, Tynyanov and others focused on diverse techniques of parody employed by Sterne, such as displacement, debasement, mechanization and laying bare of the device (Shklovsky 1929, cf. Neubauer and Stewart 2004, Renfrew 2012).
of a chronological and realistic account offered by the novel as an illusion created by an arbitrary limitation imposed upon the digressive narration, which in his novel is let loose, becomes exuberantly intrusive and constantly frustrates, interrupts and inverts the factual, progressive account. While the nascent eighteenth-century "realistic" novel offered "a reading experience marked by diegetic absorption and psychological identification" (Manheimer 176), the charm of Sterne's parody owes much to his conscious playing with the perceptual expectations of the new class of novel-readers; Sterne openly teases and provokes them, and carefully doses, frustrates and enhances their readerly pleasures through a series of "radical subversions of textual conventions" (Landry and Maclean 522). It is perhaps not an accident that Sterne adopted the autobiographical mode as a general model for his parody; the eighteenth-century debates on identity and its continuity and coherence coincided with the proliferation of autobiographical and journal writing in the period (Nussbaum 38-48). From Bunyan's widely influential *Grace Abounding* (1666) to the journals of Samuel Pepys, Jonathan Swift, John Wesley, Edward Gibbon and James Boswell, the first-person account of oneself became an important mode of self-scrutiny and self-construction, a mode which found particularly fertile ground after being transplanted into the emerging modern novel by Defoe and Richardson. Autobiographical narratives, including "the conversion narratives" of the dissenters, "tend to confirm identity, to reassure writers and readers uncertain of the sameness of the 'self' that it could be defined and set in place" (Nussbaum 45). While humorous and parodic writing typically requires a degree of distance, a pose, playful impersonation or ironic mask, the eighteenth century witnessed a fascination with the possibility of gazing into the most private, intimate and "authentic" depths of the self through reading (and writing) journals, diaries, memoirs, confessions, and letters. Consequently, Sterne's prose finds itself often teasingly blending the confessional mode with theatrical artifice, further subverting the established rules of novel writing.

Yury Tynyanov saw parody as a device for a renewal of the tired and "automatized" literary construction (Markiewicz 1968: 286-7). It seems, however, that parody may well operate on relatively fresh or recently coined artistic conventions as well. McKeon delineates the development of the English novel as starting with the phase of the "naive empiricism" of Defoe and Richardson, which is quickly counteracted by the "extreme skepticism" of writers such as Swift, Fielding and Sterne, who parody the devices of authenticity and realism by evoking the more playful, Menippian tradition of fiction, while remaining hostile to the pompous style and far-fetched plots of "romances". Consequently, their works involve a "double negation", and hence often a double parody of both the "romantic" and the "realistic" conventions of novelistic writing (162-70).

The ways in which *Tristram Shandy* parodies the autobiographical novel and its constructions of selfhood, consciousness and conscience have been discussed in many studies. Elizabeth Kraft, for
Furthermore, in Sterne's extravagantly heteroglott work, the general parody of novelistic devices interacts with comic-parodic versions of virtually all possible forms and genres of writing in prose: autobiography, philosophical essay and dialogue, scientific treatise, encyclopedia, tale, fable, sermon, epistle, literary criticism, travel account, dedication, oath and even prayer. Sterne parodies the language of prose, both literary and scholarly, Latin and vernacular, classical and modern, sacred and secular. This madly erudite parodic prose is accompanied by more basic parodies operating at the semantic, syntactic and stylistic levels: words are often employed in a highly ironic or ambiguous fashion (e.g. "nose", "whiskers", or "bridge"), sentences are often excruciatingly and absurdly long, complicated and surprisingly ordered (also paradoxical statements or maxims, parodic apostrophes and mock-invocations are frequent), while diverse types of parodic stylization are devised to endow particular passages of text with a mock-scientific, mock-poetic or mock-sentimental flavor. The manner in which Sterne treats the graphic representation of the text is also unconventional and disruptive. The blank page left for the reader to fill in (Book VI, Ch. 38), or the missing chapter or the "marble page" after Yorick's death (Book I, Ch. 12) point to his playing with the limits of print as a medium of communication.

The entire novel, in its polyglot juggling with discordant styles, frames, motifs and voices, is saturated with unmasking parodies. Common, for instance, are the parodies of the mechanistic and deterministic explanations of various phenomena, constituting a trademark of "Shandeism", of which Sterne, indeed, says that it "forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely through its channels" (4:32, 234). Almost everything is explained with reference to theories of natural philosophy and to classical sources. Sterne reflects, for instance, on the connection between climate and wit in Book III, Chapter 20 ("our air blows hot and cold – wet and dry, ten times a day, we have them in no regular and settled way; – so that sometimes near half a century together, there shall be very little wit or judgment to be seen or heard of amongst us"). The correlation between wit and judgment is then illustrated by the experiment with the chair. In such constant shifting of focus, most diverse, often

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instance, sees a marked correlation between Sterne's novel and The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, as both texts parody the scholastic (materialist and anti-materialist) as well as "experientially defined" identity (104-5). Wayne C. Booth observes that Sterne radicalizes the device of the "self-conscious" and "intruding" narrator applied already in earlier comic-parodic novels, e.g. by Cervantes, Scarron, Marivaux, Goodall and Fielding (163-185). Charlotte Sussman argues that Tristram Shandy explores the limits and pitfalls of the "retrospective narration" typical of spiritual autobiographies by focusing on "minute movements of the mind in the present" (134-5).
ridiculously trivial and unconnected topics are discussed, creating surprising shifts in style and theme, as if Sterne wanted to parody the very idea of "the chain of reasoning" (a common phrase in *Tristram Shandy*) by exaggerating the arbitrary character of what Locke would term "the association of ideas". The entire novel functions thus as a parodic image of the workings of consciousness: "Shandeism" stands for a hobby-horsical psychology that ironically plays with the rationalistic or deterministic concepts of the mind typical of the Enlightenment.

Almost every sentence of the novel, while typically dealing with some odd or trivial matter, carries within itself a pose of complexity and significance. Walter's decision to take a walk towards a fish-pond, for instance, is immediately commented upon by Tristram:

> Had my father leaned his head upon his hand, and reasoned an hour which way to have gone – reason, with all her force, could not have directed him to anything like it: there is something, Sir, in fish-ponds – but what it is, I leave to system-builders and fish-pond-diggers betwix't'em to find out – but there is something, under the first disorderly transport of the humours, so accountably becalming in an orderly and sober walk towards one of them, that I have often wondered that neither Pythagoras, nor Plato, nor Solon, nor Lycurgus, nor Mahomet, nor any one of your noted lawgivers, ever gave order about them. (4:17, 200)

In this typical exploration of the Shandean grammar of mockery, a word is taken out of the previous sentence or paragraph (here "the fish-pond") and becomes a new topic of a small, mock-philosophical dissertation. The sentence gives a lofty encomium of its topic, refers to the old-fashioned theories of humours and to various classical authors, as if summoning the entire classical tradition in order to elevate the somewhat trifling topic. The novel abounds in minor events being elevated to grandiose proportions. As a mock-encyclopedia, it gives a whole catalogue of particular gestures, objects or words commented upon in lengthy, intricate deliberations. There are discourses upon ravelins, buttonholes, breeches, bridges, noses, chambermaids, sleep, death, names, hats, critics, orations and numerous other topics, all adorned with numerous allusions and citations from diverse and often obscure sources: "You see as plain as can be, that I write as a man of erudition; that even my similes, my allusions, my illustrations, my metaphors, are erudite" Tristram asserts (2:2, 57).

The first principle of Sterne's prose is to avoid monotony and seriousness. The constant shifts and alterations of style, frequent digressions, shifts forwards and backwards, but also the original choice of strange words and terms, exotic arguments and theories, even the use of punctuation and the varied length of sentences contribute to the impression of unbridled inventiveness. This avoidance of saying anything simply
or seriously translates into constant parodic playing with all kinds of conventional rules and limitations aimed at surprising or confounding readers. By the presentation of distorted and displaced convention, Sterne draws attention to the conventional, arbitrary nature of literary representation; his novel is a parodic double, a subverting mirror to established modes of writing, philosophical and novelistic alike. In order for this machine of parody to operate, conventional artistic patterns have to be thus both foregrounded and contradicted. This is why Tristram so often evokes the rules of "proper" writing and the notions of decorum, but also frequently and openly declares his intention to distort them: "my writing is a species by itself", "let people tell their stories their own way", "I have a strong propensity in me to begin this chapter very nonsensically", etc. Conscious of having surprised his readers, he often provides some witty explanations or excuses for violating the rules of a proper, "expected" and conventional manner of writing:

I would not give a groat for that man's knowledge in the pen-craft, who does not understand this, – That the best plain narrative in the world, tackled very close to the last spirited apostrophe to my uncle Toby – would have felt both cold and vapid upon the reader's palate; – therefore I forthwith put an end to the chapter, though I was in the middle of my story. (2:4, 61)

Here Tristram suggests that after the elevated, pompous apostrophe to Toby ("– stop! my dear uncle Toby – stop! – go not one foot farther into this horny and bewildered track, – intricate are the steps! intricate are the mazes of this labyrinth! intricate are the troubles which the pursuit of this bewitching phantom Knowledge will bring upon thee. – O my uncle; fly – fly, fly from it as from a serpent", etc.) it would be against all notions of decorum to simply return to the "plain narrative". Not only is this a typical case of "laying bare" the rhetorical device, but it is also a meta-fictional and ironic gesture that preempts any possible attack from a critic regarding the stylistic accurateness of the novel.

4.3.2. The Cultural Semiotics of Gentle Parody

In other words, Sterne violates all the possible rules only because he obsessively wants to do everything properly and according to the rules (at least Tristram declares so). The same goes for the treatment of chronology and the presentation of the most minute details and circumstances; Tristram declares that it is only not to "disappoint any one soul living, that I have been so particular already" (1:4, 5). This wish to satisfy the
curiosity and expectations of all his readers accounts for Tristram's bizarre intrusions and plentiful digressive explanations:

As my life and opinions are likely to make some noise in the world, and, if I conjecture right, will take in all ranks, professions, and denominations of men whatever, – be no less read than the Pilgrim's Progress itself – and in the end, prove the very thing which Montaigne dreaded his Essays should turn out, that is, a book for a parlour-window; – I find it necessary to consult everyone a little in his turn; and therefore must beg pardon for going on a little further in the same way: For which cause, right glad I am, that I have begun the story of myself in the way I have done; and that I am able to go on, tracing everything in it, as Horace says, ab Ovo. (1:4, 5)

The commodification of literature attendant on the mass-scale print trade, coupled with the growing literacy of the English society of the mid-century, placed the demand on Sterne to account for the taste of "all ranks, professions and denominations of men whatever" and to be prepared that his work might become "a book for a parlour-window". However, in order to "consult everyone a little in his turn", the market-wise Sterne must also "beg pardon"; the first crucial paradox of politeness and benevolence is the impossibility of satisfying everyone, and Tristram's obsessive wish to appease both the learned critics, the refined ladies and the vulgar (everyone's good can be consulted only "a little", i.e. in the empty gesture of meaningless politeness) provides for the metafictional parody of the literature as a communicative act of sentimental exchange. In its obsessive concern with politeness, Sterne’s novel dramatizes the impossibility of a successful (polite) communication within the fast-growing literary marketplace. In other words, a printed and distributed literary text, regardless of its content or style, while satisfying one group of readers, will inevitably offend the taste or disappoint the expectations of other readers, and there will always be a pedantic critic to heavily scorn the work.90

The first draft of the initial part of the book was, in fact, rejected by Robert Dodsley, an eminent London bookseller, who remained unconvinced by the ruthlessly satiric tone of Sterne's style. Consequently, the contents of the first installment of the novel (Book I and II, published in York in 1759) are already the result of Sterne’s polishing and adapting his writing to the current taste of the polite reading public (Ross 9). The language of Tristram Shandy is typically not harshly satiric (and it is "bawdy"

90 At the level of its general meta-fictional parody, Tristram Shandy is not only a novel about writing a novel, but it also posits the reader and the readerly expectations as a part of its own fictional construct (Rose 1995: 175). The novel explicitly thematizes readerly expectations as its major concern, suggesting perhaps in this way that every novel is, in fact, about readerly expectations. In other words, Tristram Shandy not only plays with expectations posited by literary conventions but, in a circular and hermetic matter, it projects its fictional readers and their expectations while generating them, and then ironically evaluates its success or failure in terms of how it fulfills these “invented” expectations.
in a very careful, manipulating way) and, in seeking to appease the taste of his potential readers, it offers an odd blending of burlesque and the sentimental novel, much in the vein of Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews*. The shift that both writers made from harsh wit to more "sentimental" comic laughter reflects the general tendency of policing laughter in the eighteenth century: indecorous humour and criticism inherent in burlesque and satire becomes replaced towards the mid-century by the more "benevolent" and "tolerant" laughter of the sentimental comedy and novel (Frank 19-22, Dickie 2005: 274-6). While the much-discussed historical process of the "rise of the middle class" may have contributed to the popularity of various comic renditions of classical literary formats in the seventeenth century, ideals of benevolence and progress, but also a Puritan strictness and faith in individual self-improvement, contributed to the growing preference for subjective and sentimental language over the social critique of satire and the frivolity of burlesque. As Andrew M. Wilkinson concisely puts it, "satire was killed with kindness" (228).

Like *Joseph Andrews* in its mock-polite tone, *Tristram Shandy* often dramatizes the clash between the sentimentalized subjectivity of the new type of novel and the tradition of the graphic "carnivalized" humour represented by Cervantes, Rabelais or Swift. Fielding's term "comic epic poem in prose" seems to be a suitable for this parodic tradition which mockingly inverted the "high genres" of classical literature and philosophical rhetoric. The theme, plot, style and narration in *Tristram Shandy* are visibly anti-epic, often focusing on most trivial events monstrously dramatized, a strategy to which Sterne actually admitted in a letter: "I am persuaded that the happiness of the Cervantic humour arises from this very thing – of describing silly and trifling Events, with the circumstantial Pomp of great Ones" (quoted in van Ghent 97).

As a mock-autobiography, on the other hand, Sterne's novel (with its first-person narration) parodies the confessional mode of the modern novel as characteristic of Defoe and Richardson (and the Protestant "spiritual autobiography" mode in general). Sterne's novel is anti-epic, anti-sentimental and anti-novelistic, while in its plentiful digressions, grotesque stylistic variety and mock-erudition bending towards absurdity, it can be seen as a representative of the Menippean tradition.91

91 It is worth noting that Howard D. Weinbrot in his recent, major study of the *Menippea* does not consider *Tristram Shandy* to be an instance of Menippean prose due to its lack of harsh criticism: "In Menippean satire (…) the encroaching false orthodoxy embodies a potentially fatal act within its pages, anger within the reader" while "in *Tristram Shandy* benevolence triumphs and reduces malevolence to a comic sputtering we enjoy" (2005: 9). Arguably, however, the pessimistic tone of such works as Seneca's
Shklovsky's analysis of Shandean parody of fundamental novelistic devices is widely acknowledged, yet it is interesting to note that the second part of his essay, which discusses sentimentality as a device and claims that "art is without compassion", is discussed less often. Shklovsky makes the following observation:

The representation of things from the "sentimental point of view" is a special method of representation (...) In its essence art is outside emotion. Remember how fairy tales humans are thrust into barrels perforated by nails and then rolled down into the sea. (...) "Blood" in art is not bloody, it rimes with "love"; it is material either for sound pattern or for an image pattern. (1968: 77)

A cheerful or fascinated representation of torture, humiliation and other monstrosities in literature, and perhaps especially in comic literature, is anti-sentimental in the sense that its dominant, distancing sense of artifice and incongruity excludes the possibility of a close sentimentalized identification with the presented characters or events. Shklovsky identifies Sterne's style as parodic also because of the frequently mock-sentimental or even anti-sentimental tonality of his prose. The episode in which Walter is informed about his son's death, for instance, occasions a comic misunderstanding and a mock-elegy. The readers are thus clearly not to take Bobby's death "seriously" and to mourn him as they would mourn the death of Clarissa Harlowe. Quite conversely, readers are presented with numerous (characteristically Shandean) mock-erudite (the idea of erudition as such is constantly parodied by Sterne) and mock-sentimental observations on mourning, dying and the passage of time:

'Where is Troy and Mycenae, and Thebes and Delos, and Persepolis and Agrigentum?' – continued my father, taking up his book of postroads, which he had laid down. – 'What is become, brother Toby, of Nineveh and Babylon, of Cizicum and Mitylenae? The fairest towns that ever the sun rose upon, are now no more; the names are only left, and those (for many of them are wrongly spelt) are falling themselves by piece-meals to decay, and in length of time will be forgotten, and involved with everything in a perpetual night: the world itself, brother Toby, must – must come to an end. (5:3, 245)

Arguably, this is not a typical reaction to the news of the death of one's son. Walter's numerous speculations and observations on death are delivered with pathos and exaltation, but they end in a rather humorous manner:

For this reason, continued my father, 'tis worthy to recollect, how little alteration, in great men, the approaches of death have made. – Vespasian died in a jest upon his close-stool – Galba with a sentence – Septimus Severus in a dispatch – Tiberius in dissimulation, and Caesar Augustus in a compliment. – I hope 'twas a sincere one – quoth my uncle Toby. – 'Twas to his wife, – said my father. (5:3, 247)

Apocolocyntosis or Pope's The Dunciad is parodic and ambiguous – bitterly ironic, yet also enjoyably comic.
The contorted orations, theoretical speculations and philosophical reflections in *Tristram Shandy* often refer to trivial or even ridiculous matters or events, but even when the topic is of the most grave sort (the death of Bobby), the parodied orations refuse to lend themselves to an unequivocally serious consideration.

Sterne’s highly ambiguous stance towards sentimentality is epitomized by the figure of Uncle Toby, whose good-heartedness, simplicity and benevolence contrast positively with the aloofness and abstractedness of Walter’s language. Nevertheless, Toby’s sentimental worldview occasionally develops into a madness of its own: this is visible in Toby’s despair caused by the Treaty of Utrecht, which puts an end to his reenactments of the battles on the bowling-green. His utter dissatisfaction with the end of the war is accounted for in his "Apologetical Oration":

Tell me then, my dear brother Shandy, upon which of them it is, that when I condemned the peace of Utrecht, and grieved the war was not carried on with vigour a little longer, you should think your brother did it upon unworthy views; or that in wishing for war, he should be bad enough to wish more of his fellow-creatures slain (...) When we read over the siege of Troy, which lasted ten years and eight months, – though with such a train of artillery as we had at Namur, the town might have been carried in a week – was I not as much concerned for the destruction of the Greeks and Trojans as any boy of the whole school? Had I not three strokes of a ferula given me, two on my right hand, and one on my left, for calling Helena a bitch for it? Did any one of you shed more tears for Hector? And when king Priam came to the camp to beg his body, and returned weeping back to Troy without it, – you know, brother, I could not eat my dinner.

– Did that bespeak me cruel? (6:32, 320)

The fact that Toby's wish for the war to continue is driven by his most benevolent instincts is a culmination of the parodic contrast between Toby's excessive sentimentality and his penchant for militarism. As a veteran obsessed with battles and military terminology, he seems to be a particularly inappropriate figure to personify the then fashionable ideals of sentimentality and benevolence.

Sentimental identification becomes itself thematized in one of Sterne’s sermons, which is inserted into the novel, especially in the way Trim is reading it and reacting to its contents. "The Abuses of Conscience" is presented in Book II of *Tristram Shandy*. While Trim is unable to continue his reading of the sermon to the company assembled in the Shandy Hall (he is moved by the accounts of torture in "the prisons of Inquisition" despite Walter's and Slop's assurances that it is "only a description"), the

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92 The sheets of paper containing the sermon "The Abuses of Conscience" happens to be inserted into the copy of Stevinius that Trim fetched to Shandy Hall upon Uncle Toby's request. Sterne provides thus a fictional motivation for the insertion of the sermon into the contents of the novel, much like Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, e.g. with the "History of the Curious-Impertinent".
task of reading passes to Walter, who rereads the passage about the torture, this time without any interruptions:

– Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretched – what exquisite torture he endures by it! – 'Tis all nature can bear! Good God! See how it keeps his weary soul hanging upon his trembling lips, – willing to take leave, – but suffering to depart! – Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell! (2:17, 94).

The question here seems to be not to what extent art (description) can (artificially) produce emotions that are authentic, but rather to what extent these feelings (of grief, compassion, indignation), even if authentic, are ethical in the sense that they translate into the fostering of ethical attitudes and actions. This surely is one of the questions that a conscientious preacher and writer of sermons needs to try to answer. Sterne seems to suggest that evoking emotions by providing examples and illustrations is not only better than the dry theoretical formulas or intricate legal provisions, but that the formalized discourse itself is, in a sense, prone to be unethical in that it is deceptive and confusing. Sentimental or sentimentalized discourse has therefore not only a didactic potential, but rather is presented as a form of discourse more honest and less prone to harmful misinterpretation than the abstract and formulaic language of the law. It is the image of the body rendered through the sentimentalized identification with the bodily symptoms of suffering that is counterpoised with the dead letter of the law: the sentimentalized body becomes thus the ethical point of reference. It is no longer the grotesque and sinful body discarded by the ascetic tradition of Christianity, but a body that incites compassion through visible symptoms of physical pain. It is the body – and not the "abstract" law or religion – that moves the conscience.

On the other hand, however, polite and sentimentalized identification may also prove manipulative, and it has been suggested that Trim uses sentimentality to manipulate his employer Toby in order to gain various advantages, since he "often does and says touchingly generous things that move Toby to reward him with a guinea" (Anderson 521). Sterne seems to have his own reservations about the sentimentalized conscience. Judith Frank, in her reading of the torture scene, points to the paradigm of sensibility according to which "it is physiology that guarantees the subject's transparency, making intention and true character visible to others" (66). If the eighteenth-century cultural paradigm of sensibility, which manifested itself both in empiricism relying on the senses and in the ideology of private benevolence (which contrasted with harsh social inequalities and often cruel laws), made the body into an anchor and the guarantee of moral and epistemological veracity, the figure of a tortured
body could both be used to point to the cruelty of Catholic formalism and dogmatism and to evoke English morality based on a privatized response to human suffering. But the sentimentalized presentation of the tortured body contrasts sharply with the absurdly tedious descriptions of Trim's attitude, posture and gestures while reading it, including his emotional response to the torture scene. As a servant, Trim is presumably unacquainted with the classical literary conventions, and Walter's and Dr Slop's assurances that it is "only a description" are contrasted with Trim’s imagining his brother being subjected to the tortures described in the sermon, and reacting in a very emotional way: "Here Trim's face turned as pale as ashes", or "Here the tears began to trickle down" (2:17, 94). This "naive" identification is praised, however, by Walter:

Thou hast read the sermon extremely well, Trim, quoth my father. – If he had spared his comments, replied Dr Slop, – he would have read it much better. I should have read it ten times better, Sir, answered Trim, but that my heart was so full. – That was very reason, Trim, replied my father, which has made thee read the sermon as well as thou hast done, and if the clergy of our church, continued my father, addressing himself to Dr Slop, would take part in what they deliver as deeply as this poor fellow has done, – as their compositions are fine; – [I deny it, quoth Dr Slop] – I maintain it – that the eloquence of our pulpits, with such subjects to enflame it, would be a model for the whole world. (2:17, 97)

Walter contrasts Trim's passion with the disengaged manner of preaching he seems to observe in the Anglican Church. What is at stake here, therefore, is the figure of Trim as a benevolent servant, who, despite being uneducated and somewhat naive, is positively contrasted with the dispassionate learned clergy. It is the very body of Trim while reading Yorick's sermon that signals his honesty: "Corporal Trim's eyes and the muscles of his face were in full harmony with the other parts of him; – he looked frank – unconstrained, something assured, – but not bordering upon assurance" (2:17, 82). Tristram's preposterously studious descriptions of Trim's posturing (the position of his right leg, left leg, knees, feet, arms and palms is described with mathematical precision) invites the question, however, to what extent the body can be manipulated and, consequently, to what extent the signifier of the body can be as misleading as the linguistic signifier.

*Tristram Shandy* seems to persistently return to the topic of the entrance of signification into the material sphere of the body. What most visibly distinguishes the mocking strategies of Sterne’s novel from earlier comic-parodid works is its focus on the impact of the parodied discourses on the sphere of private experience, in a peculiar analysis of subjectivity that offers a proto-psychoanalytic reflection upon language and
various psychological "mechanisms" (in contrast with Rabelais and Fielding, where the focus seems to be on the public or social domain).

4.3.3. The Wound of Language

The opening scene of Tristram Shandy belongs among the most memorable in English literature. The scene of the coitus interrupted with "a very unseasonable question" wittingly dramatizes the major theme of Shandean parody: the madness of language. This question marks the rude intrusion of language into the sphere of biological existence, which is the major source of the comic accidents and eccentric theories presented in the novel: from its very beginning – the moment of conception – life becomes constantly "interrupted" by opinions, theories, schemes, harangues, propositions, reasons, objections, digressions, postulates, apostrophes. Language, in Tristram Shandy, seems thus to have a life of its own, and is able to multiply and reproduce itself ad infinitum:

every word, Yorick, by this means, you see, is converted into a thesis or an hypothesis; – every thesis and hypothesis have an offspring of propositions; – and each proposition has its own consequences and conclusions; every one of which leads the mind on again, into fresh tracks of enquiries and doubtings. – The force of this engine, added my father, is incredible in opening a child's head. – Tis enough, brother Shandy, cried my uncle Toby, to burst it into a thousand splinters. (6:2, 283–4)

Language as a system of signifiers promulgates itself; it inseminates the mind and disseminates by forming ever new combinations of signifiers into theses and hypotheses, thus leading the human mind "into fresh tracks of enquiries and doubtings". It is the words – not the human bodies – that copulate in the Shandean universe.

Sterne suggests that language opens new splinters in the human brain and human body (it invades the human body as if an alien element, being at the same time its disease and its prosthesis), and Ross King argues that Tristram Shandy is a novel about the "wound of language", the irreparable damage and the lack that signification installs within the biological completeness and coherence of life (294-5). Arguably, the Inquisition prison scene is the most pointed example of formal dogmas violently intruding upon the body. In the broader, anthropological sense, it can be said that the human body, being relatively weak and defenseless (without sharp claws, strong teeth, fur, etc.), always needs a prosthesis of culture and language to protect itself against nature. The human body is therefore always to some extent the body of a cyborg; it requires tools, clothes, weapons, but also language, society and culture in order to
survive. In "Tristram Cyborg and Toby Toolmaker", William C. Mottolese observes that Shandean bodies are less Rabelaisian and more like the bodies in Jonathan Swift: "Augustinian in conception – decaying prisons housing potentially lucid souls" (683). Perhaps at play in Sterne's novel is the contrast between the grotesque body as something that liberates from the intricacies of language and the body as a negative limitation to spiritual pursuits. Within such coordinates, language becomes the force that excites desire and aspirations which exceed the bodily life; the drama of human existence is thus played out between the limitations of the biological existence and the desire for some ideality installed by the signifier, an ideality that remains dissatisfied with the materiality of the body. Consequently, the body plays in this drama a double, ambiguous role: it is both a negative limitation and a positive liberation, a grotesque reminder of the biological and material dimension of life that liberates from the abstractedness of ideal aspiration. As in Rabelais, comic tension is usually located between lofty rhetorical fireworks or some intricate scholarly theories on the one hand, and the "lower" level of the bodily needs and material existence on the other.

Applying basic psychoanalytical terms (which seem almost obligatory here because of the novel's most pervasive strand of imagery: that of castration and (phallic) fortification), it can be stated that Tristram represents the "ego" (consciousness) wishing to satisfy the impossible demand of the "super-ego" (which represents the symbolic order: the law, language and society). Especially in Slavoj Žižek's formulation of Lacanian psychoanalytical theory, the super-ego stands for the obscene rigor of the law personified by the figure of a strict, punishing father, who is impossible to appease and remains always discontented with one's behavior, because "what characterizes super-ego" (as Žižek writes):

is precisely the absence of 'proper measure' – one obeys its commands not enough and/or too much; whatever one does, the result is wrong and one is guilty. The problem with the super-ego is that its command can never be translated into a positive rule to be followed. (2008: 407)

Because the demand of super-ego that becomes interiorized is the demand of the Other (it is our inner image of what the Other wants), we are never certain whether what we do is right, proper and accurate (Lacan uses the question in Italian, Che vuoi? - "What do you want")? The super-ego is the dead letter of the law, without a benevolent God to tell us how to interpret it, an abstracted and dry law which is impossible to fulfill: super-ego stands for the oppressive and castrating "voice of authority" that we interiorize and for which we compromise our desires in order to function in the
symbolic sphere – the sphere of law and language (cf. Eagleton 2007: 180). Sterne dramatizes this anxiety in relation to the super-ego by referring to the anxiety of the print as the material medium of writing. In a highly ironic way, his narrative is a parody of print as a medium that radically severs the link between the author and the reader, so that the writer as benevolent as Tristram Shandy is at a loss as to how to satisfy his absent interlocutors. Of course, Tristram is at these moments a mere parodic mask that Sterne is wearing, and while Tristram is striving to satisfy the taste (the palate) of all his readers, Sterne mocks them constantly between the lines. "Writing", Tristram argues, "when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation": it is a matter of "the just boundaries of decorum and good-breeding" (2:11, 73). Clearly, this is the mocking voice of Sterne speaking in the brackets, who, by a strange twist of logic, suggests that he has no doubt about the propriety of his writing ("I think") but that, in fact, this is something the reader should be certain of ("you may be sure"). In other words, it is the reader now who is mocked by the super-ego, who tries to understand author’s demand/intention behind the labyrinthine prose and who strives to arrive at the correct interpretation. All the obscene associations are thus attributed to the reader's imagination, as the "authoritative" author uses the figure of the "benevolent" narrator to politely withdraw from his commanding position, and thus to avoid any responsibility. "Fair and softly, gentle reader! – where is thy fancy carrying thee?" (3:33, 150):

I define a nose as follows – entreating only beforehand, and beseeching my readers, both female and male, of what age, complexion, and condition soever, for the love of God and their own souls, to guard against the temptations and suggestions of the devil, and suffer him by no art or wile to put any other ideas into their minds, than what I put into my definition – For by the word Nose, throughout all this long chapter of noses, and in every other part of my work where the word Nose occurs – I declare, by that word I mean nose, and nothing more, or less. (3:31, 148)

This passage is a parody of the most pathos-charged languages of the time, i.e. scholarly, religious and legal – it is a mock-definition, mock-commandment, mock-oath, mock-testimony and mock-explication at the same time. The ease with which Sterne uses religious language for a somewhat frivolous parody – and at the same time strongly denies all frivolity – is actually quite telling. Formulaic language and the very act of the formalization of language through empty, polite forms and formulas is a frequent target for Shandean parody. The formalized signifier is typically detached from its contextual meaning through the parodic process of drawing the attention to such formalization, so that "form" overshadows any "content". In the mock-definition
of the nose (or Nose), the reader only knows that some meaning is forbidden and censored (nose), while only the correct meaning is to be taken into account (nose), yet both are "signified", apparently, by the same material signifier. It is not really a pun upon the two meanings of the word "nose" (in Johnson's dictionary, at least, only one definition is provided), but a parody of the formalization of language, of the wish to make it precise, to evoke only one interpretation, which is radicalized to the extent that even the word which would otherwise be not pondered upon becomes a mystery inviting all kinds of (potentially "unchaste") associations. In other words, the desire to castrate language (and the nose) is resisted by the semiotic propensities of language, which cannot be enclosed in a system of ordered totality but must remain fluid and elusive. Language is a patchwork of diverse, competing systems of sociolects, and this heteroglossia endows linguistic signs with dubious, unstable meanings that sabotage the demands of strict decorum and legal or philosophical precision.

The ambiguous nature of language is crucial for Shandean parody, since language stands both for vitality (parody) and rigid confinement (ideological decorum). The laughter of the playful, parodic language is a fence protecting against the castrating rigidness of formalized language, and against spleen and melancholy in general. In the Dedication to the first installment of the novel, Sterne confesses that he lives

in a constant endeavor to fence against the infirmities of ill health, and other evils of life, by mirth; being firmly persuaded that every time a man smiles, – but much more so, when he laughs, it adds something to this Fragment of Life (2, emphasis added).

Toby's whistling of Lillabullero is also a protective shield against grave or intricate language, since he whistles it usually when "anything, which he deemed very absurd, was offered" (1:21, 19). Sterne's parodic fence operates like a membrane that filters any serious discourse and extracts from it only pomposity and absurdity:

The gift of ratiocination and making syllogisms – I mean in man – for in superior classes of beings, such as angels and spirits – 'tis all done, may it please your worship, as they tell me, by Intuition; – and beings inferior, as your worship all know – syllogise by their noses: though there is an island swimming in the sea (though not altogether at its ease) whose inhabitants, if my intelligence deceives me not, are so wonderfully gifted, as to syllogise after the same fashion, and oft-times to make very well out too: but that's neither here nor there – (3:40, 161)

Without even giving a predicate to the subject in his sentence, Sterne proceeds by parodic interjections which refer both to theology and to noses (and to a certain swimming island, which may refer to the Renaissance motif of the "ship of fools" or, satirically, to Albion, the Island of Great Britain). The benevolent Tristram (who is a
good-natured mask for the satiric Sterne) laments the ambiguity of language and, while pretending to assume some responsibility, bestows most of the guilt upon his readers:

In books of strict morality and close reasoning, such as this I am engaged in – the neglect is inexcusable; and Heaven is witness, how the world has revenged itself upon me for leaving so many openings to equivocal strictures – and for depending so much as I have done, all along, upon the cleanliness of my readers' imaginations (3: 31, 147-8)

The "openings" of language are the cracks in the rhetorical fortification that make it impossible to fully arrest the flow of signification (cf. the numerous allusions to Locke's associations) and to master reality through a clear, stable and precise language. The persistent ambiguities of language sabotage the totality of any "strict morality and close reasoning", constantly interrupting the "judgement" with the frivolous "wit" of dangerous associations, much like the manner in which Tristram's mother interrupts Walter on the very first page of the novel. The symbolic order castrates, but by means of such castration it triggers the fantasy of the subject's autonomy and mastery, which desires to fully appropriate language and reality. Such mastery may result, rather pessimistically, in the construction of the prison-house of precise, unequivocal language, and hence of the absolute, totalitarian law.

In somewhat simplified terms, the symbolic castration refers to the intimidating gap between one's official, public role and image on the one hand, and one's private, immediate self on the other. Slavoj Žižek, a scholar who frequently applies Lacanian psychoanalysis to the discussion of the erotic undertones, to obscenity and/or its censorship in literature and cinema, explains the term "symbolic castration" as

the castration which occurs by the very fact of me being caught in the symbolic order, assuming a symbolic mask or title. Castration is the gap between what I immediately am and the symbolic title which confers on me a certain status and authority. In this precise sense, far from being the opposite of power, it is synonymous with power; it is that which confers power on me (par. 17).93

Castration can thus be equated with the acquisition of a symbolic role, for instance, that of a King, or Queen, or an Anglican clergyman, or a famous writer. This public image bestows symbolic power (the phallus) on the subject but also castrates him/her by producing an irreducible, alienating gap between one's authentic, private self and the symbolic role assumed by the subject. The phallus is, paradoxically, a signifier for castration, since it "replaces" the natural, authentic organ with a fake one:

So one has to think of the phallus not as the organ which immediately expresses the vital force of my being, but, as such an insignia, as a mask which I put on in the same

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way a king or judge puts on his insignia - phallus is a kind of organ without a body which I put on, which gets attached to my body, without ever becoming its organic part, forever sticking out as its incoherent, excessive supplement (ibid. par 7).

Castration is the very condition of the formation of the speaking subject, its formation both as the abstract speaking "I" and the member of the community of language-users with his or her determinate role and image, and this castration, paradoxically, bestows one with the symbolic power (the phallus) within the system. Yet such a symbolic role is not synonymous with freedom, with authentic self-expression or self-realization but with a place in the "anonymous mechanism of the symbolic order" (Žižek's phrase). Symbolic power is castrating because it bestows an alienating mask, a role scripted by the system. It is perhaps against this castration by the fixed self-image of a provincial clergyman that Sterne writes his opinions in the form of a playful, erudite novel. Indeed, opinions are of primary importance in the novel: they are a particular kind of propriety, something that allows for the self-formation and individualization. Parodying Locke's definition of property, Sterne discusses opinions as something that could be claimed as one's own, much like the apple, which Sterne borrows from Locke, who had earlier used it as his example. Sterne agrees with Locke that "the gatherer of the apple, in so doing, has mixed up something which was his own, with the apple which was not his own, by which means he has acquired a property" (3:34, 151). Consequently, opinions can also be annexed and claimed to be one's property:

> By the same learned chain of reasoning my father stood up for all his opinions; he had spared no pains in picking them up, and the more they lay out of common way, the better was his title. — No mortal claimed them; they had cost him moreover as much labour in cooking and digesting as in the case above, so that they may well and truly be said to be of his own goods chattels. — Accordingly he held fast by 'em, both by teeth and claws — would fly to whatever he could lay his hands on — and, in a word, would entrenched and fortify them round with so many circumvallations and breast-works, as my uncle Toby would a citadel. (3:34, 151).

The first meaning of fortification is thus the formation of subjectivity through language: "opinions" determine one's subjectivity as much as "life". Walter's quixotic pursuits and his tendency to perceive himself as a scholar, erudite and orator are linked here with Toby's hobby-horsical obsession with warfare and military terminology. Opinions can

94 "Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a 'property' in his own 'person': this no body has any right to but himself. The 'labour' of his body, and the 'work' of his hands, we may say, are properly his. WHATSOEVER then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state nature hath placed it in, it hath by this labour something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other men: for this labour being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others." (Locke 1943: 130, emphasis added).
thus be claimed one's own by their interiorization, by the process of identification with
certain subjective position, yet this process is always at risk of being disrupted by
turning into "overidentification," i.e. a fanatic and quixotic madness. As Phiddian
notices, Swift often posits this problem with relation to religion, and what Žižek sees as
the "absence of proper measure" in the super-ego is perhaps that which may transform
religious faith into fanatical obsession, sliding from "pious imitation" into a "mad
parody" (Phiddian 1995: 158). The search for authenticity, honesty and truth behind
what are often confusing, alienating and rigid ideologies (the "dead chains of
signifiers") motivates much of Sterne's parody of those official discourses and
ideologies that inscribe a subject into the symbolic order.95

This complicates the significance of the fortifications and the ambiguity of
language in the novel, especially since language provides the means and the target of
parodic technique, but also because language is a recurrent theme in Tristram Shandy, a
theme that relates in slightly different ways to Walter, Toby and Trim. Language as a
fortification stands for them for the prison of the desire for mastery over language
(Walter wants to "untie the knot" of the intricacies of scholarly discourses, and Toby is
"perplexed" by the ambiguities of military terminology). However, while Walter
remains a Quixote entangled with language, good-natured Uncle Toby decides to
abandon terminological quandaries and follows Trim's advice to build the miniature
models of fortifications on the bowling-green, which models later serve as means of
entertainment rather than explication. Uncle Toby's wound in the groin (even if not
preventing him from normal, physiological functioning) symbolically castrates him by
preventing him from taking part in combat. As a veteran, Toby has to use signs (at first
linguistic, later the toy-fortifications he builds with Trim) as tokens that allow him to
retain his symbolic status of a soldier in the comforts of his private space.96 In this

95 Sterne's anxiety about his public image as both a respected clergyman and a bawdy satirist seems to be
involved in the contrasting of Tristram as the benevolent, over-polite narrator and Tristram the bawdy
and mocking imposter. In other words, Sterne thematizes the contrast between his public role of a
serious and respectable Anglican clergyman and his "private" selfhood – that of an intelligent, erudite
jester with a penchant for obscene jokes – by introducing Tristram as a façade of the well-intentioned
narrator (mitigating the "symbolic castration" offered by his public, priestly office). Sterne seems to be
more anxious about his public image than another clergyman and bawdy satirist, Jonathan Swift.
However, he also went further than Swift in this contradiction, for he adopted the persona of Yorick in
the title of his sermons (first volumes published in 1760), a step that sparked much controversy (Goring

96 In this sense, Uncle Toby is a figure of harmless, benevolent masculinity, a prototype of the "man of
feeling", in which figure the mock-heroic parody of valor and gallantry provides also a more positive
pattern of a good-natured, amiable gentleman. This benevolence is visible in his relation with his servant
Trim; Toby not only treats him with dignity and friendliness ("The poor fellow is my servant, – not my
sense, the wound of language is also the opening allowing for the self-constitution and expression of the subject; Toby's passage from an actual soldier to a symbolic soldier is possible because of the symbolic mechanism of abstraction. However, by abandoning language and learning, Toby is rendered also a childish, retrograde figure; he is represented by Sterne very sympathetically (more so than Walter), but also with an air of triviality. As Howard Anderson observed, "Toby's actions are a parody of the traditional occupations of the upper classes: like a good knight, Toby turns to love when he has no more battles to fight, courting the impatient widow Wadman" (514). Uncle Toby is a simulacrum of a real knight, but his simplicity, benevolence and deep faith make him an amiable figure, even if his toy-fortifications against the madness of language enclose him, perhaps, in a peaceful retirement of his own, private madness.

Walter, in turn, wishes to gain mastery over language by writing in a clear, precise and codified way (cf. his meticulous, pedantic translation of Slawkenbergious, and his Tristra-paededia); yet his efforts are constantly mocked and frustrated by the intricacies and ambiguities of the theories he is engaged with. In other words, the castration (the "fall" from paradise into language) liberates, but also wounds and frustrates; and if Toby, in a sense, regains paradise on the bowling-green by limiting the grip of language over him, Walter is frustrated with his efforts to control reality through language. There is a burlesque contrast between Walter's sophisticated, scholarly pursuits and his inactive, domestic retirement – between his sophisticated theories and his ineptitude and clumsiness. Indeed, his scholarly pursuits do not seem to lead to any particular improvements or achievements and, what is more, frequently bring him disappointment and frustration. This mocking contrast between Walter's philosophical zeal and erudition and his practical ineptitude is thematized in the chapter on door-hinges:

slave" (5:38, 277), Toby declares), but he also establishes a pension for him to secure Trim's future after his own death.

It perhaps also points to what Freud would call "sublimation", i.e. the reprocessing of libido (sexual energy) into the more subtle and socially acceptable pursuits, such as artistic creativity, scientific study or political/charitable activism. The symbolic reenactment of the actual thing (war reenacted through toy-fortifications and toy-cannons) translates into the novel's constant replacement of erotic love (the prime motif in the romances and "typical" novels) with endless discussions between men (while the women in Tristram Shandy do not really feature in an "erotic" context). Within a thus redirected drive, however, there is always a remnant of the "sexual": the erotic puns and suggestive allusions in Sterne's digressions seem to show his awareness of this irreducible biological-sexual remnant lurking behind most sublime and poetic turns of language. Furthermore, as Stephen Soud observes, Toby's wound and his war enactments in the garden may represent "an implicit commentary on Sterne's notion of the origin of warfare – a sublimation of the sex drive forced by the delicate balance between human weakness and a longing for empowerment" (403).
Every day for at least ten years together did my father resolve to have it mended – 'tis not mended yet; no family but ours would have borne with it in an hour – and what is most astonishing, there was not a subject in the world upon which my father was so eloquent, as upon that of door-hinges. – And at the same time, he was certainly one of the greatest bubbles to them, I think, that history can produce. (2:21, 137)

According to Ross King, Walter uses language as a means for the "procedure of textual compensation for bodily loss", yet this supplement of "textual prosthesis" for the wounded "patriarchal power" always fails (293-4). The loss, accident and interruption are typically associated with science, hobby-horsical obsessions and absent-mindedness. This is plainly visible in Tristram's ambiguous "castration" (the sash-window accident), in the flattening of Tristram nose caused by the obstetrical instruments of the somewhat absent-minded Doctor Slop, and in the fatal mistake at the Trismegistus Shandy's christening. "Like his nose, and later his penis, Tristram's name is drastically abbreviated and becomes yet another signifier of retrenched masculinity" (King 297). The christening, as a religious act of naming, is contrasted with Walter's superstitions about the mystical power of Christian names. The scene represents the moment where Walter's misguided phallic construction is "scattered" by Susannah, who fails to accurately reproduce the name. Walter attempts to remedy the harm by composing Tristra-paedia with the view of compensating for the physical damage by ensuring a "correct" education for the young Tristram (this project also fails, however, due to the slow tempo of Walter's writing). In a similar logic, Dr Slop, after wounding himself with a knife, is made to recite Ernulfus' curse. There is, therefore, a constant tension in the novel between the harmed, imperfect and sick body and a belief in the therapeutic role of language.98 Unfortunately for the characters, fluid and ambiguous language makes all their knowledge and schemes futile; traditional masculine pastimes, especially the academic pursuits of Walter, are reduced to trivial, useless, hobby-horsical obsessions, cultivated in the quiet of a private room.99

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98 Medicine is another crucial topic in this respect: Sterne was suffering from consumption (tuberculosis) while writing the novel, which is reflected in Tristram's preoccupation with his "vile asthma" or "vile cough". Medicine seems to be a subject of mockery rather than faith and the therapeutic role of laughter seems to compensate for the inadequacy of the eighteenth-century medical knowledge: the treatment of consumption "had not palpably evolved since the Ancients" limited as it was to "controlling one's lifestyle, environment, exercise in the form of riding and so on, travel and change of air" which offered, at best, an "erratic potential for cure" (Lawlor 53).

99 The theme of language that fails to effectively govern reality is that of Shakespeare's Hamlet, in which the tragic hero delays revenging his father, doubting the word of the ghost. Walter Shandy, as a frustrated father, and Tristram, as his sickly son, offer a certain analogy with figures and actions in Shakespeare's Hamlet, the play which is alluded to in the name of Parson Yorick. Tristram's parodic writing might be seen as a revenge for Walter's linguistic obsessions and domestic failures, one which provides a fortification against all the misfortunes that have befallen him due to the fact that his father was "poisoned" with language. The "hobby-horse" appears in Hamlet as well, in Act III, Scene 2, right in the
Language castrates the subject by allowing it into the symbolic order, yet it may also provide means for liberation and individual self-expression. Hence, in *Tristram Shandy*, there is the constant parodic clash between the formalized, official language (order) and playful, punning and ambiguous language (disorder), which mocks the pathos and the seriousness of the castrating-phallic idiom (the language of the father – here typically Walter's misguided theories). This parodic mode of a sustained juxtaposition of serious and mocking language underscores the ambiguous character of language as such, which can be both confusing and liberating, poisoning and therapeutic. Shandeanism is therefore concerned with a carnivalesque liberation from the entrenching and enchanting gravity of language taken too seriously, against the *castrating/phallic* potential of language i.e. total self-identification with the symbolic self-image/role/power. Walter Shandy is satirized exactly for his pompous and aloof manner:

My father instantly exchanged the attitude he was in, for that in which Socrates is so finely painted by Raffael in the school of Athens; which your connoisseurship knows so exquisitely imagined, that even the particular manner of the reasoning of Socrates is expressed by it – for he holds the forefinger of his left-hand between the forefinger and the thumb of his right, and seems as if he was saying to the libertine he is reclaiming – 'You grant me this – and this: and this and this, I don't ask of you – they follow themselves of course' (4:7, 190).

The grotesquely elaborate gesture, so frequent in Sterne, points to the rhetorical effect that the language tries to achieve while being merely an illusion sustained by symbolic gestures and formulas. Seriousness is thus a certain stylistic mask, a simulacrum produced by the flow of the specific syntax of the heavy sentences delivered with a due pose and with an emphatic gesture. The serious argumentations of Walter turn out to be mere burlesques since, despite the pathos of delivery, their content is, ultimately, ridiculous: the anatomical locus of the soul, the magic influence of names, the historical study of the noses, etc.

Before Sterne, Swift employed mockery of the pseudo-learned discourses to point out the absurdity of many past and contemporary theological and political debates. In the First Book of *Gulliver Travels*, for instance, the quarrel between the two "great" empires of Lilliput and Blefuscu centers on the impenetrable metaphysics of origin as symbolized by the egg – but it is not sufficient to start *ab ovo* – one still needs to know which side of the egg to choose to start with:

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end of Hamlet's teasing conversation (full of bawdy puns) with Ophelia before the performance of the Mousetrap play (93-4), a dialogue which may have influenced Sterne.
Whereupon the emperor his father published an edict, commanding all his subjects, upon great penalties, to break the smaller end of their eggs. (...) It is computed, that eleven thousand persons have, at several times, suffered death, rather than submit to break the eggs at the smaller end (Swift 1994, 44).

The great prophet Lustrog, who seems to represent an important figure (presumably comparable to Luther) in the theological controversy over the egg-end, "in the fifty-fourth chapter of the Brundecral" provided a doctrine "that all true believers shall break their eggs at the convenient end", consequently causing schism and war due to the divergent interpretations that the passage induced. The quarrel between the Nosarians and Antinosarians in Slawkenbergious' tale (TS, 4, 175-180), for instance, reflects a similar nauseating absurdity of quarrels over meaningless dogmas and doctrines. Similarly, the debate between Didius, Kysarcius and Triptolemus on christening formulas (which resembles the mock-dialogues between the learned in Lucian's Symposium) leads to the absurd argument about the relations of kin between the mother and her child, the question earlier debated upon and resolved by:

not only temporal lawyers – but the church lawyers – the juris consulti – the jurisprudents – the civilians – the advocates – the commissaries – the judges of the consistory and prerogative courts of the Canterbury and York, with the master of the faculties, [who] were all unanimously of the opinion, That the mother was not of kin to her child. – (4:29, 226-9)

Only the most learned and titled personages, after long and scrupulous consultations, are able to reach such an absurd conclusion. What Sterne's mockery points to is the element of absurdity and madness at the center of reason. The supplement of insanity is inherent in the symbolic order: society, authority, religion and law are not based purely on logic and reason but involve a necessary element of ideological mystification, which is merely sanctified and legitimized as reason. The symbolic order (authority, religion, law) always includes this necessary supplement of absurdity, usually hidden behind the mask of complexity, respectability and solemn seriousness. The quixotic madness of super-ego is the interiorized demand of the non-sense of the pure, abstract signifier that cannot be interiorized; it overwhelms, stupefies and castrates the reason of the speaking subject.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ According to Žižek, the super-ego is to be understood exactly as such radically exterior, inhuman, absurd, mercilessly objective law; an alien dead chain of signification that cannot be translated into the reality of human life and feeling. The frequent parody of the absurdity of legal language in Sterne points to this traumatic meeting between the living-feeling subject and the absurd, dead letter of the (religious or secular) law that cannot be implemented in life (Žižek 2013: 30-31). Consequently, the "dead letter" of the law is what the "obscene" supplement of the law – the superego – feeds on, since the impossibility of translating the symbolic law into positive "life-ethics" fuels the recurrent "fundamentalist" urge to implement the dogmatic law "literally"; in all its alien, cruel absurdity.
However, all symbolic constructions and fortifications need language as its scaffolding, its material-semiotic basis (e.g. terminology, concepts, metaphors, etc.); yet language is not a very good material, and always threatens the stability and coherence of every misguided attempt at constructing the total symbolic map of reality. Shandean parody seems to capitalize exactly upon this self-deconstructing propensity of language, its ultimate polysemy, its fluidity and ambiguity that threaten the fortifications of symbolic order. Lacan often emphasizes the slippery, unstable character of signification, the processes of "the sliding of the signified under the signifier" (152-3). These centrifugal, fluid tendencies are counteracted by the processes of fixation, fetishism, and ideological fixture (point the capiton) that attempt to arrest ambiguity and explain everything within a stable, coherent and total paradigm. In other words, therefore, words are meaningless outside the social-ideological system, but retain some of their mobile, unstable and meaningless character even within the system. In Sterne, as in much of (post)modernist, experimental literature, a highly ambiguous literary language signals a resistance against the one-sided totality of law and authority. Sterne’s parody animates various learned discourses and complex theories only to prove them, at some point, to be too eccentric or misguided to be taken seriously.101

Sterne's novel can hence be read as an elaboration of the biblical myth of the Tower of Babel, the myth of the total construction/fortification that is undermined by the confusion, ambiguity and fluidity inherent in language. In Chapter XI of the biblical Genesis from The Authorized King James Version we read that, after people had invented the building materials ("they had brick for stone, and slime for mortar"), God "confound the language of all" and "scattered them abroad from thence" so that they could not complete the building of the city (16). Toby's resolution to build toy fortifications in the backyard in order to avoid the intricacy of militaristic terminology creates hence a parodic reversal and miniaturization of the story of Babel. Constructing,

101 The absurdity of the “marriage articles” drawn up for Mrs. Shandy, and Sterne's criticism of the objectifying language of the canonical and secular law is discussed by Dennis W. Allen (see esp. 656-7). In his deconstructive reading of Tristram Shandy Allen argues that Sterne presents two attitudes towards language: phallic (controlling, manipulating) and vaginal (polysemic, playful), and concludes that Sterne refuses the “phallic” concept of "the referentiality of language" (670). But Allan's reading somewhat simplifies the matter – it may be said that Sterne mocks the excessively abstract and pedantic terminological debates that are detached from any concern with reality, and thus postulates a return to a more “realistic” and more “referential” language. Likewise, Derrida's attempts at exposing the “phallogocentric” bias of Western metaphysical discourses are not coterminous with a plea for a non-referential (or purely self-referential) language. On the contrary, the metaphysical belief in logos as a source of absolute truth is criticized by Derrida as the belief in a purely abstract, ideal concept (“transcendental signified”) detached from the material and historical conditions of its (re)production.
engineering, machinery, maps, diagrams and medical instruments are contrasted in *Tristram Shandy* with unhappy accidents; with chances, mishaps, errors and misunderstandings that impede their proper operations.

Analogically, Tristram attempts at "constructing" a coherent narration are always somehow frustrated by the slippery and elusive character of language. Tristram's maxim is "I begin with writing the first sentence – and trusting to Almighty God to the second" (8:2, 376). Language, in Shandean prose, is never a matter of one, separated, clear and unequivocal thought or sentence. Sterne opposes, therefore, the separation of wit from judgment advocated by John Locke:

> Now, Agelastes (speaking dispraisingly) sayeth, That there may be some wit in it, for aught he knows – but no judgment at all. And Triptolemus and Phutatorius agreeing thereto, ask, How is it possible there should? for that wit and judgement in this world never go together; inasmuch as they are two operations differing from each other as wide as east from west – So, says Locke – so are farting and hiccupping. But in answer to this, Didius the great church lawyer, in his code *de fartendi et illustrandi fallacii*, doth maintain and make fully appear, That illustration is no argument – nor do I maintain the wiping of a looking glass clean to be a syllogism; – but you all, may it please your worships, see the better for it. (3:20, 130)

Parody certainly intensifies the clash and contrast between chains of dead signifiers (e.g. pathetic style, pompous poetic diction, an absurd theory) and the complexity of human reality. In this passage, an antiquated rhetorical style and a dogmatic way of reasoning based on citing of numerous authorities and invoking diverse logical principles are parodied. Locke's separation of judgment from wit was praised by Addison in No. 62 of *The Spectator*, but it is criticized by Sterne: since judgment is meant to clearly distinguish between the ideas, and wit is meant to put various ideas together, even to fancifully mix them, then language and thought devoid of wit would be perhaps absolutely clear, but also dull and repetitve: "Now, my dear Anti-Shandean, and thrice able critics, and fellow-labourers (for to you I write this Preface) – and to you, most subtle statesmen and discreet doctors (do – pull off your beards) renowned for gravity and wisdom (...) How it comes to pass, that your men of least wit are reported to be men of most judgement. – But mark – I say, reported to be – for it is no more, my dear sirs, than a report" (3:20, 130-34). The rigid and dogmatic language of "judgement" needs to be counterbalanced by the more confusing and ambiguous language of "wit".

In its materiality, the linguistic signifier is "too alien" to be fully interiorized by the speaking subject. Language, in other words, proves to be too confusing, too inadequate in its imperfection and mere materiality for the sophisticated, spiritual
aspirations of human beings. This "stupidity" inherent in the materiality of the sign (which can always be misspelled, misprinted, misunderstood, or may mean different things, etc.) as opposed to its "ideal", spiritual meaning (what Derrida would call the "transcendental signifier", the pure abstractedness of a concept) is what constantly frustrates, fractures and entangles in vain pursuits and misguided theories (especially, as Sterne notices, in the case of "words of little meaning, and as indeterminate a sense", for instance: "power", "spirit", "substance" and "space" – the topics of endless philosophical disputes and scholastic controversies). At the same time, therefore, it is this "stupid materiality" of language that rescues one from the madness of the total enclosure of an "ideal" construction, from the purely abstract, spiritual or theological coherence. The materiality, plurality and opacity of language liberates from the castrating presence of the phallus embodying the totality of the coherent symbolic order.102 Parodic language, in Sterne, becomes the medium of ambiguous, mocking laughter, which becomes a fence/defence protecting against the ideological entrenchment. The fortifications of the (ideal, abstract) order are dismantled through playful mockery and parody, and such exposure of absurdity impedes the total identification with what is formulated in the language of the symbolic order. Parody undermines the construction of a total fortification represented by the Tower of Babel: parodied language is therefore a kind of an antidote for the poison of language. As William R. Handley noted in his paper The Ethics of Subject Creation in Bakhtin and Lacan:

"Official" languages always exist, just as do myths of cohesion, the voice of super-ego, or illusions of totality. Their constitution is only enabled, however, by unofficial languages, bodily transgressions, exceptions, non-coincidence, and the unfinalisable nature of any human act. For both Bakhtin and Lacan, as long as we desire a master to dictate what is good for us or presume that there exists before us "the Good" to dictate duties for all, evil will retain its exalted and revolutionary force (162).

The desire for good, for unproblematic justice and absolute law always drags within itself the perverse super-ego supplement, an excess of control, a fortress and fortification erected to secure the human soul. The word "fortifications" in Tristram Shandy retains thus its double meaning: it may serve as a protection (the fence of laughter) and as an enclosure or confinement within the "madness of language", as the

102 Tristram's accident with the sash-window can thus be read in two ways. It can be seen as the "symbolic castration" that is necessary for the subject's formation (the bestowal of the phallus), but also as the cutting off of the phallus, an accident that provides an antidote to symbolic castration. Since the accident is caused by Susannah, it may stand for the feminine liberation from the oppressive system of paternalistic language that gives Tristram his peculiar, individualistic sense of personal misfortune and alienation, which allows him, in turn, to mock the "system" of language (and the novel).
excess of mastery and ideological control. It seems that Uncle Toby's fortifications embody this duality; they refer both to his hobby-horsical obsession and his attempt to escape from it, i.e. his withdrawal from the semantic intricacies of military terminology into the world of his toy fortifications. The double, uncertain meaning of the word "fortifications" itself signals the ambiguity of words that is explored in *Tristram Shandy*. The ideological fortification provides explanation and certainty against confusion and absurdity, but such a fortress may always entrench and imprison the soul within the rigid system of fixed interpretations of reality. As in other mock-serious, Menippean texts, *Tristram Shandy* uses parody as means of liberation from the single-mindedness of the narrow, naive or doctrinaire thinking, through a therapeutic performance of comic subversion.

On the other hand, however, the therapeutic and subversive role of parody does have its important satiric and critical dimension. Parody in *Tristram Shandy* appears to be also a defence against intellectual clumsiness, pedantry, and ignorance, not so much a total refusal of language (symbolic order) but only of its excessive confinement, its terrifyingly alien and reifying dimension. Sterne scorns the abstractedness of mechanistic and deterministic philosophy as much as various old-fashioned scholastic and theological doctrines, and thus targets a language which is not only "too idealistic" or "too serious", but also simply naive, clichéd, inaccurate, chaotic, prejudiced, old-fashioned, misinformed and "impractical". The two gentlemen, Walter and Toby, largely isolated from society in their domestic (dis)quietude, may thus also be the means of Sterne's mild satire on the contemporary parochialism of the country gentry. In their quasi-pastoral isolation from the outside world, "Tristram's relatives are seen as rural clowns, gamboling in the green, and sometimes golden, world" (Anderson 509, emphasis added).

The parody of learning and gravity in Sterne is thus thoroughly ambiguous; it is not nihilistic or anti-Enlightenment in a simple, unidirectional way, and there is even an element of fascination with various complex theories and postulates. While Walter's intellectual curiosity is appreciated, his naivety and often narrow-minded pursuits are mocked; he is declared from the outset to be "in truth a slave" to his "extreme exactness" (1:4, 6). Intellectual seriousness is thus constantly tested against a deconstructing laughter, continuously pushed towards absurdity, its idealism being contrasted with the complexity of a defective and incomplete reality, and with the confusing and misleading character of language itself. Laughter, the Shandean "fence",
is thus a kind of fortification of the soul, a protection against the walls of another fortification, that of a dogmatic seriousness and gravity, which blinds, confuses and castrates. As Walter and Toby enclose themselves in their isolated mansions, they create an alternative universe that is partly utopian and partly ridiculous, while the rest of the world and society is accessed only through maps and books they are so fond of studying (Bystydzieńska 1993: 70-71). Since the characters focus solely on their peculiar pursuits, their capabilities for sober judgment become reduced; they are drained of wit in the manner described earlier by Cervantes:

In resolution, he plunged himself so deeply in his reading of these books, as he spent many times in the lecture of them whole days and nights; and in the end, through his little sleep and much reading, he dried up his brains in such a sort as he lost wholly his judgment. His fantasy was filled with those things that he read, of enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, wooings, loves, tempests, and other impossible follies. And these toys did so firmly possess his imagination with an infallible opinion that all that machina of dreamed inventions which he read was true, as he accounted no history in the world to be so certain and sincere as they were. (1969: 19)

*Don Quixote*, to put it rather bluntly, is a novel about reading and believing what you read. When the safe distance of social convention is erased, and the (necessary) minimum of social "hypocrisy" is deleted, one becomes a Don Quixote, i.e. a naive (though perhaps honest) reader/believer, who may then easily be manipulated by those who do not believe so readily. The gravity and intricacy of language, when encountered by those more honest and prone to be misled by it, may even rob them, literally and metaphorically, of their dignity and property, as Parson Yorick would claim:

Sometimes, in his wild way of talking, he would say, that Gravity was an errant scoundrel, and he would add, of the most dangerous kind too, – because a sly one; and that he verily believed, more honest, well-meaning people were bubbled out of their goods and money by it in one twelve-month, than by pocket-picking and shop-lifting in seven (1:11, 19).

Yorick believes that "the very essence of gravity was design, and consequently deceit", and the word "bubbled", which referred in the eighteenth century especially to all kinds of financial frauds and legal manipulations (cf. "the South Sea bubble"), is particularly telling here. There is something in the grave and intricate language of the law and science, theology and even philosophy, that makes it inherently dishonest; it is confusing, stupefying and hypnotizing. This grave language as a dead (the obvious pun on "grave") chain of signifiers (the fetishized letter of the law) can create an illusion of truth, an ideological construction that would "justify" and allow for all kinds of mischief and injustice, even for outright robbery. Parody in Sterne is thus a textual performance; a cultural practice which aims at defending the human soul against the
linguistic fortifications of ideology. It is the very awkwardness of Walter and Toby that makes them harmless, since their attempts at constructing ideal fortifications (Walter with his opinions and Toby with his toy-constructions in the bowling green) are thwarted by their own ineptitude as much as by various accidents. It is their naivety that renders them amiable, contrary to those despised by Yorick: deceptive hypocrites. Walter, Toby, even Tristram – they all are to some extent victims of language.

Parody thus acquires an almost ethical status within Shandean textuality. In "The Abuses of Conscience," Sterne uses the exemplum of a sinner, who justifies his ways by adhering strictly to the letter of the law:

When old age comes on, and repentance calls him to look back upon his black account, and state it over again with his conscience – Conscience looks into the Statues at Large; – finds no express law broken by what he has done; – perceives no penalty of forfeiture of goods and chattels incurred; – sees no scourge waving over his head, or prison opening his gates upon him: – What is there to affright his conscience? – Conscience has got safely entrenched behind the Letter of the Law; sits there invulnerable, fortified with Cases and Reports so strongly on all sides; that it is not preaching can dispossess it of its hold (2:17, 88).

Uncle Toby's comment ("these are but sorry fortifications") seems to be the opinion shared by Sterne: it is one of the abuses of conscience to "entrench it" with legal provisions and statues. The legal and ideological entrenchment is "a mistake in which has ruined thousands", so that one should be "like a British judge in this land of liberty and good sense, who makes no new law, but faithfully declares that which he knows already written" (2:17, 95). This injunction to make "no new law" marks the attempt to distinguish the reason from the dead letter (the signified from the signifier). The dead letter of the law may only multiply difficulties and contradictory interpretations, whereas "good sense" thrives on the limited law that is "already written" and proceeds without creating new principles and regulations, since these may weaken the critical abilities of conscience by supplanting it with the illusion that one's acting is ethical simply as long as no statue or provision is explicitly violated. Language is a fortification of the soul, the condition of its formation, identity and sanity, but also a trap that alienates from conscience and from the body, and hence from the "authentic" core of one's existence. Sterne's parodic attitude to language, especially to what Bakhtin

103 Bakhtin emphasized the role of parody in the "English comic novel" exactly as interrogating the "incorporated languages" and "socio-ideological belief systems" that become frequently unmasked and exposed as "false, hypocritical, greedy, limited, narrowly rationalistic, inadequate to reality". The major technique in this process is parodic stylization: "what predominates in the novel are various forms and degrees of parodic stylization of incorporated languages, a stylization that, in the most radical, Rabelaisian representatives of this novel-type (Sterne and Jean Paul), verges on the rejection of any straightforward and unmediated seriousness" (Bakhtin 2011: 312).
would call, very broadly, an "ideological discourse", signals his mistrust towards the labyrinthine convolutions of theoretical disputes, speculations and harangues. As Bakhtin puts it, in parody "true seriousness is the destruction of all false seriousness" (2011: 312). This is why in Sterne's novel there is no positive, seriously argued and seriously presented theory or proposition, but there are countless, often very complex, mock-theories and mock-arguments:

A man and his Hobby-Horse, tho' I cannot say that they act and re-act exactly after the same manner in which the soul and body do upon each other: Yet doubtless there is a communication between them of some kind; and my opinion rather is, that there is something in it more of the manner of electrified bodies, – and that, by means of the heated parts of the rider, which come immediately into contact with the back of the Hobby-Horse, – by long journeys and much friction, it so happens, that the body of the rider is at length filled as full of Hobby-Horsical matter as it can hold; (1:24, 51)

There seems to be also a gender bias in Sterne's parodic mockery of serious language. It is within the feminine sphere of domestic affairs that masculine theories and pastimes appear useless and ridiculous. This also ambiguously dramatizes the literacy gap between the contemporary women and men on the one hand, and masters and servants on the other. The somewhat odd and pompous name of Trismegistus, which Walter devises for his son, proves too complicated to remember for Susannah, the female servant. Consequently, while she frustrates Walter's urge to control reality through naming and classifying, her mistake at Tristram's christening provides a fatal distortion of the patriarchal ritual of the passing of names and titles onto the next generation.

Ambiguously, however, Tristram Shandy is saturated also with a celebration of artistic freedom and eccentricity through the Shandean defence of "wit" in the form of bawdy and playful humour, in contradistinction to the dry and morose "judgment". As in Swift's writing, the comic-parodic animation of scholastic, scientific, theological or legal discourses seems to be driven by the assumption that a tint of absurdity may be extracted from every dogmatic or abstract proposition or formula. The parodic mode in Tristram Shandy engages in an inventive game of puns, contrasts and paradoxes – in its mock-serious tonality it is balancing between brilliancy and madness. As Hammond and Shaun see it, Sterne’s language is "not only describing but also enacting the text’s intended effect upon the reader, in an anatomical flourish that reveals an exuberant delight in language itself" (173).

Bakhtin understood the Menippean tradition of parodic writing as a carnivalesque form in which corrupt languages and mad ideologies contrast with healthy and reasonable language. This uncorrupted and "natural" language, however, tends to
remain "invisible" and hidden – it is presupposed rather than presented. Consequently, "it is far from easy and not always possible" to extract from parody "that normal language, that normal style" (Bakhtin 2011: 76). Every language at the disposal of the parodist appears to be a sham, an already imperfect derivation of the true, original sense. In his early work, Of Grammatology, Derrida went even further when he questioned the logic of originality and presence by insisting that there is no origin, because the idea of origin as such implies difference, repetition and derivation:

Deviation and derivation are two-way processes; the origin is never prior to the copy as its "originality" and "authenticity" already point to its difference from the "copy" and contains the "beginning of degeneration". Analogically, since norms and normality function only against the background of what is defined as error or abuse, they themselves inevitably partake of degeneration. Somewhat akin to deconstruction, parody exposes idealistic languages – various blueprints of logical or mimetic correctness – as partial and provisional. Sterne elaborates in Tristram Shandy a complex philosophical and poetic system, but it is a parodic, Menippean system, saturated with ambiguity and composed of absurdities, contradictions, mismatched views and distorted styles – mounting layer upon layer – and gradually growing into the entire architecture of nonsensicality known as "Shandeism". In its constant testing of his readers' intellectual capacities (their "wit" and "judgment"), Sterne charmingly invites them to negotiate between Shandean folly and wisdom, his "sense" and "nonsense".

4. 4. Conclusion: Parody in the Novel
Bakhtin emphasizes that parody is not merely a stylistic device, and that in literature it often marks a playful and (often extremely) sceptical attitude towards language. Parody in the novel may critically expose various rhetorical, logical, axiological and organizational tendencies of a presented discourse. These tendencies, which may be represented from multiple angles in the parodied discourse, are inevitably part and parcel of the way in which language functions as a symbolic and social convention. As
Michael Bernard-Donals observes, Bakhtin is interested in the "polyglot social dimension of language" and thus in "the relationship between the materiality of social order and the language uttered by those who live in it" (172). Bakhtin was profoundly influenced by Marxism, but also by phenomenology, psychoanalysis, formalism, vitalism and numerous other intellectual traditions. Language is for him not just a flexible and "user-friendly" inter-subjective system of communication, but the epistemological and ideological frame within which the formation of subjectivity and collectivity occurs. Language is the substance of the social and the political. There is no simple distinction between "sign" and "thought" or between "meaning" and "language" (nor are those identical) in Bakhtin's thinking-writing, so that his understanding of parody escapes the formalism of many earlier accounts and engages various philosophical backgrounds. Most importantly, language for Bakhtin is far from an ideal, perfectly working and coherently organized system, and parody is often precisely the presentation and interrogation of that imperfect language; language that is in constant flux and yet always tied to a certain limited or limiting worldview.

In novelistic discourse, the tendency to reproduce various existing or "authentic" languages (through stylization) makes it possible to achieve an impression of veracity and realism (cf. Defoe, Richardson), but it may also serve to critically or comically expose (through parodic stylization) currently socially valid languages and ideological points of view. The very structure of the novel – the interplay of voices of the narrator and the characters (voices that may (partly) contradict each other and may contradict the author’s point of view) – demands at least a minimum of playful distance towards the presented discourses (even if the novelist avoids an overtly ridiculing parody). As a multi-stylistic, evolving and flexible form, the novel omnivorously incorporates all kinds of genres and registers of language – it is "wildly inclusive of discursive styles drawn from all directions, high and low, academic and popular" (Dentith 78). Bakhtin admits, of course, that the tendency towards conventionality and predictability in the novel was also very prominent, but many of the respectable, canonized novelistic patterns were promptly parodied:

Parodic stylizations of canonized genres and styles occupy an essential place in the novel (...). Throughout its entire history there is a consistent parodying or travestying of dominant or fashionable novels that attempt to become models for the genre; parodies on the chivalric romance of adventure (Dit d'adventures, the first such parody, belongs to the thirteenth century), on the Baroque novel, the pastoral novel (Sorel’s Le Berger extravagant), the Sentimental novel (Fielding, and The Second Grandison of Musäus) and so forth. This ability of the novel to criticize itself is a remarkable feature of this ever-developing genre. (2011: 6)
Fielding’s *Shamela* well illustrates how parody may attempt to question the respectability of a previous, influential novel and at the same time clear the ground for new patterns of novelistic writing. The novel has always tended to separate itself also from other genres, especially the epic, popular romances, pastoral and other "poetic" or highly "conventionalized" genres: "the novel establishes itself and its credentials for serious consideration by the deployment of parody, which it uses to devalue alternative genres and their ways of depicting the world" (Dentith 55). It is not surprising, therefore, that Bakhtin singled out the novel as a form that structurally and historically situated itself in the most critically and polemically marked fashion towards all kinds of verbal activity: literary, professional or everyday. In this context, the prominence of parodic genres and the rise of the novel in the early-modern period may be seen as largely convergent phenomena, for at that time "there was a shifting away from Latin as a master-language towards the use of different European vernaculars, creating the conditions of parody and travesty, dialogue and conversation, that help to constitute the novel" (Hammond and Regan 2006: 20). There is no "harmony" and no sense of "mutual limitation" between the novel and other discursive formats, because "the novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language" (Bakhtin 2011: 5). As Bakhtin notices, when compared with the novel, all other literary genres and their languages appear slightly too conventional, rigid, adhering too strictly to a prescribed generic code.

Parody plays a crucial role in the open-ended, self-critical development of novelistic language and testifies to its ability to critically rearticulate voices, views and ideologies; any canonical style or official "truth" becomes merely one among many voices in the novel – it inevitably enters into dialogue and polemic with other styles and "truths". The three novels described in this chapter may serve to illustrate different scopes and targets of parody in novel writing. Fielding’s *Shamela* is based on an analytical and highly polemical travestying imitation of Richardson’s first novel: the technique is that of the systematic debasement of piously sentimental language into cynical and opportunist calculation. The conventions of self-inspection, authenticity and immediacy of feeling procured by the epistolary technique are ironically deconstructed. It is the specific, focused, instrumental and satiric use of parody that predominates in *Shamela*, whereas in *Joseph Andrews* the parody of epic and romance conventions is more playful and offers a springboard for novelistic creativity.
accompanied by mild ironic criticism. As a mock-romance, it reproduces different clichés and stock devices of romances, but combines them with alert irony and intellectual playfulness. The satiric and picaresque orientation of *Joseph Andrews* allows Fielding to critically expose the opinions and points of view predominant in contemporary English rural society, embedded in parodically reproduced sociolects and types of jargon. In its ironic condensation of disparate styles and registers (official and vulgar, sublime and gross, hypocritical and naive), Fielding’s novel elaborates an influential and fertile scheme for the organization of novelistic discourse.

Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* is a particularly complex and intellectually demanding parody, presumably because "sentimental" novelistic discourse becomes at the time itself complicated and hence more resistant to simple mockery. Sterne enters into dialogue with the conventions of the subjective and inner-oriented novelistic narrative, which already in itself was problematic. His novel also displays and distorts the narratological mechanisms and diegetic conventions of novelistic discourse, for instance by projecting its own assumed reader and incorporating readerly expectations as its theme, or by radicalizing and deconstructing the chronological and factual accuracy of linguistic representation. Sterne’s predilection for wit, situational comedy, bawdy humor, pun and word-play, and his sense of absurdity and paradox evidently contradict but also interrogate (without destroying it) the sentimental preoccupation with feeling, intimacy, momentary impression, inner monologue, authenticity and truthfulness. Even more startling, however, is the ingenuity with which Sterne plays with philosophical, legal and other learned (or quasi-learned) discourses. From its very beginning, the novel is all about the outlandish, never-ceasing theoretical speculation—about Tristram’s conception, his birth, his name, his education, about military strategies, maps, sermons, anatomy, property, but also about numerous strikingly trivial matters.
Concluding Remarks

The present study discusses parody as a flexible and widespread technique, a method that combines mimicry with incongruity and inversion, hence a dialectic game with the device, a playful dialogue with convention. Parodic treatment of canonical literary styles and other discourses has provided the basis for numerous comic, playful or bitterly satiric forms since classical times: mock epic poems, humorous dialogues, Menippean satires, travesties, burlesque comedies. The most important manifestations of the technique in literature include: (1) parodic treatment of the established "classical" or popular literary genres, motifs, authors and traditions; and (2) parodies of diverse non-literary forms and discourses (philosophical, learned, formal, everyday). These parodies make it possible to achieve a certain distance from official and received discourses and to playfully contradict predominant patterns of representation. In this manner, parody combines creativity with criticism and tradition with innovation. This combination, however, is far from peaceful, for parody typically foregrounds contrast and contradiction – unlike in respectful imitation, what counts in parody is the series of paradoxical juxtapositions and (abrupt or subtle) disparities, a sustained tongue-in-cheek irony achieved by incongruous and complicated mimicry. Parodic genres and discourses provide perhaps the most concrete and lurid examples of the unceasing competition and tension between diverse stylistic and socio-ideological variants of language.

Laughter, as Bakhtin discusses it, proves to be virulently dialogic – it feeds on incongruous perspectives and respects no boundaries, so that no genre or discourse is safe from its parodying and travestying drive. The ancient tradition of parodic writing that includes Satyr-tragedy, comic-epic poetry and Menippean mockeries of philosophy is echoed in neoclassical burlesques, which were typically defined in terms of a sustained incongruity between "style" and "subject-matter". Such vivid, topsy-turvy "mismatchings" in parodic forms tend to expose the conventional and tendentious character of other, straightforward literary forms. It is this tradition that elaborated what may be seen as the core parodic model – an influential literary pattern within which the
splendid imagery and décor of "high" canonical or official styles and genres become synthetically intertwined with "vulgar" discourses and crude, often forcefully gross imagery. The result of such an enforced dialogic encounter between disparate registers is a galaxy of ingenious contrasts and surprising correspondences, a carnivalesque system of multiple parodies and satiric exposures. Cervantes’ Don Quixote would be a classic example and the works discussed in the present study (Gay’s The Beggar’s Opera, Pope’s The Dunciad and Sterne’s Tristram Shandy) all intently realize this general parodic model. The same tradition was enormously influential for the development of the comic novel; novels by Rabelais, Fielding, Dickens and Dostoyevsky, as Bakhtin notices, echo this general parodic pattern.

The present study discusses the purposes and textual mechanisms of parody in various writings by John Gay, Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne. Parody in their works forges a complex deconstructive reworking of the linguistic and rhetorical logic of the parodied styles or genres. Their poems, essays, plays and novels are full of contradictions, forgeries, duplicitous rhetoric, mocking stylizations and playful imitations. Parody, in my view, feeds on incongruity and contrast; it hybridizes, hollows out and exposes in various ways the languages and representations it animates. At the same time, parody in the Scriblerian texts often works also against incongruity understood as hypocrisy, naïveté, ideological tendentiousness; exposing the absurdity of social relations seen from carnivalesque distance it bitterly intensifies the inevitable discrepancy between language and reality. It is both satiric and playful.

Style (and hence all kinds of stylistic or rhetorical organization of discourse, which may be reflected in parody) marks the intrusion of the arbitrary, conventionalized signifier upon the seemingly pure and transcendent ("abstract" in Bakhtin's sense of the term) "content" (signified) of linguistic utterance. No language is fully liberated from the "social materiality" of style. Parody points to the conventionality and materiality of the process of signification – it is not a purely logical, abstract and "persuasive" procedure, but rather a cultural performance that engages a number of levels at which language functions: rhetorical, aesthetic, social, emotional (affective), symbolic, ideological. Culturally valid and recognizable genres and discourses may be manipulated in parody for the sake of comedy, satiric critique or artistic experimentation, but in all cases there is a sense of polemical trans-accentuation, a split of hybridization that demolishes the unity and coherence of the "direct" word. At this general and fundamental level, the clash of languages and
ideologies in parody is one of the prime methods of dialogic resistance against the "mythological" and "magical" unity of language, against the "absolute fusion of ideological meaning with language" (Bakhtin 2001: 370). The truly dialogic representation of another’s language in literary discourse is possible only in the space of difference and incongruity – in-between conventional, coherent and monologic languages: only there can language "reveal its essential human character; from behind its words, forms, styles, nationally characteristic and socially typical faces begin to emerge, the images of speaking human beings" (Bakhtin 2011: 370).

The carnivalesque spirit of joyful relativity entails, in Bakhtin’s analysis, the parodic inversion and "degradation" of all the refined, official and sublimated languages, art forms and imageries; a dispersal of accumulated symbolic capital and a disruptive descend from sublimity and abstraction towards what Emerson and Morson, in their influential study on Bakthin, call by the term prosaics:

Prosaics encompasses two related, but distinct concepts. First, as opposed to "poetics", prosaics designates a theory of literature that privileges prose in general and the novel in particular over the poetic genres. Prosaics in the second sense is far broader than theory of literature: it is a form of thinking that presumes the importance of the everyday, the ordinary, the "prosaic". (15)

Parodic forms often challenge the devices of coherence and sublimity in art and representation by juxtaposing them – dialectically and contrastively – with more or less palpably "anti-aesthetic" qualities of vulgarity, obscenity, bathos, absurdity, kitsch and camp. Parodic appropriation of "high" and "canonized" literary genres and cultural representations in neoclassical literature finds its continuation in the tendencies towards both gross realism and formal experimentation in modern literature. However, if parody destroys poetic idealism and linguistic abstraction, in its movement of critical displacement it also often exposes "the everyday, the ordinary, and the prosaic" as mediocre, banal, cliché-like, stupid, limiting or boring. Parodic tradition has perhaps contested all attempts at coherent idealization, including the "pastoral" and other forms in which ordinary everyday life is idealized and glorified. Parody may be used within different agendas, but as such it is neither simply poetic nor prosaic; it rather fluctuates in-between those conventional extremes. Bakhtin seems to be aware of that, and he may be seen as a philosopher of the "parodic" as much as of the "prosaic" – many of his central critical terms (carnivalesque, heteroglossia, dialogism) are almost synonymous with his broad but nuanced concept of parody. If we can see "prosaics" as the final goal of parody, it is also possible to see parody as feeding on unceasing difference,
incongruity and representational failure – a strategy of constant troubling, a playful laughter of (perverse) inversion without a final aim. Looking at the parodic machinery of *Tristram Shandy*, for instance, one may see it as an unceasing play of differences and deferrals, a carnivalesque deconstruction of the idea of language as a coherent system.  

Parody and parodic stylization are often involved in the procedures through which literature (or any other medium of artistic representation) seeks to *defamiliarize* and critically reinvent itself; to polemically – but also *creatively* – distance itself from poetic routine or banal everyday expression. While a degree of healthy conventionality and predictability is indispensable for any semiotic process, these may easily degenerate into the tendentiousness or dogmatic automatism of a clichéd pattern. Parody is hence also that prolific constructive technique: it engineers comic genres and playful subgenres upon the debris of conventionalized, tired or obvious devices, making them culturally productive: mock epic, mock romance, mock tragedy or mock pastoral are clear examples. Or, in similar fashion, it unleashes the ambiguous (anti)aesthetic dialectic of the carnivalesque, the satiric, the bathetic, the grotesque, the absurd and the surreal in numerous literary and artistic forms. Indeed, literary history proves that parodic inversions of artistic norms, routines and conventions "may suggest *new directions* for art, even if that direction is sometimes towards more parody" (Chambers 24, emphasis added). Russian "Formalists" were the first to argue that parody may be located at the core of many avant-garde pursuits and innovations in art and literature. Parody may not always be high-brow, deconstructive or metafictional, but it demands a mixture of imitation and subversion that is potentially explosive and may shatter conventional frames of artistic expression and representation. Parodic discourses – these diverse "verbal masquerades" (Bakhtin’s phrase) – are impure, hybrid, twisted, tainted with irony, crooked and self-reflexive. They often expose the illusions on which the more straightforward artistic, formal and everyday genres and codes rely.

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104 Robert Phiddian maintains, however, that the displacement and relativization of discourses in literary parody usually do come to a halt at certain point, and parody, unlike deconstruction, usually turns into satire: "in parody (...) the play of differences in language is also defamiliarized, disrupted by physical realities and social, moral, and political imperatives" (1997: 691). In his view, satire marks the finitude of parodic free-play and stands for its traditional limit and aim. But Phiddian seems to echo a somewhat simplistic (though widespread) binary distinction between satire as anchored in living "reality" and parody as lost in the ocean of hermetic "textuality" (and thus, perhaps, also Locke's distinction between "wit" and "judgment", which Sterne deconstructs).
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