

THE AUTHOR'S FARCE:  
SATIRIC AGENCY, AUTHORITY, AND THE PERFORMANCE OF  
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SATIRE ON FILM AND THE STAGE

By

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A dissertation submitted to the Department of English  
in conformity with the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen's University  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

December, 2010

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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates how dramatic performance affects satire, its forms of authorisation, adaptation, and interpretation. Focusing on Restoration and eighteenth-century dramatic satires and film adaptations of eighteenth-century satires, I reassess literary criticism that claims the incommensurability of satire and performance based on a particular understanding of satiric authority as unidirectional and didactic, and therefore incompatible with the multi-dimensional nature of film and theatrical authority. In Chapter One, I establish how satire inquires into the nature of authority itself, exposing its “truths,” disciplinary modalities, and mediations, rather than correcting social behaviour. By putting authorised discourses into conflict, satire renders the contingencies of authority and destabilises its own authority through reflexivity and indirection, which counteract clear communication. Satire then invites multiple readings, even disagreements, instead of imposing consensus or compulsory meaning. In its diffusion and fracturing of perspectives, satire becomes amenable to the multiple agents and conditions of theatre and film performances. The task of satiric film and theatre becomes to “tear the seams” of performance and to apply the same reflexivity that satire applies to other authorities to performance’s own seamless authorisation in order to pursue its broader inquiry into power and discipline.

In Chapter Two, I focus on the Collier Controversy, a pamphlet war in the late seventeenth century, which debated representations of vice in the theatre. I use the controversy to demonstrate what dramatic satire is not: uniform in intention, exposition, and interpretation. In Chapter Three, I examine Henry Fielding’s dramatic satires from 1730s to further debunk the idea of controlled and controlling relations between satirist and audience. I revise criticism of

Fielding's plays as "anti-theatrical" by demonstrating how his self-reflexive performances produce satiric theatre rather than negate theatrical performance. Chapter Four reviews adaptations of *Gulliver's Travels* and here I emphasise the need to combine satiric self-reflexivity in film authorship with critical content in satiric films. In the final chapter, I demonstrate how the mockumentary form used in Michael Winterbottom's 2005 film adaptation of *Tristram Shandy* successfully produces satiric effect by questioning the premise of its own authority alongside modes of authority and authorship satirised in Sterne's book.

## Acknowledgements

My thanks to the Department of English at Queen's for aiding me to complete this thesis in direct and indirect ways, as well as fuelling my love for satire.

I need to thank my supervisor, Christopher Fanning, first and foremost: Chris, you guided this project with generosity, rigor, and attention, asking the right questions and challenging me to think through the many critical quagmires that I entered into with this thesis. Your own work stands for me as a model of interesting and incisive literary criticism and your good humour and mentorship prove that one can be both an excellent critic/scholar and a great friend.

I would also like to thank my second reader, Donato Santeramo, for his enthusiasm about my project and for sharing his incredible stories about Fellini and Marcello Mastroianni. To Sylvia Söderlind, I owe thanks for bringing me into this PhD program in the first place and seeing me through to the end result with such interest and warmth. To Gwynn Dujardin and Marcie Frank, I am grateful for your genuine engagement with my project and for offering indispensable advice for its potential, future development. Finally, I need to thank Marta Straznicky for her many years of support and interest in my growth as a scholar here at Queen's.

I would be amiss not to thank Kathy Goodfriend for the endless intercessions, help, and friendship that she offered me while at Queen's. I also need to send special thanks to Earla Wilputte at St. Francis Xavier University: Earla, you brought the Restoration and 18<sup>th</sup> century to life for me and inspired me to investigate it further. Thank you for also allowing me to share that passion with your own students years later.

I certainly would not have survived here at Queen's or in Kingston without my incredible friends and allies. To Dana Olwan and Raji Singh Soni, I do not know where to begin, but thank you for your unwavering friendship, kindness, intelligence, laughter, and solidarity.

Dana, you have taught me to grow as a person of conscience, and Raji, you have inspired and challenged me to think the impossible. To Cara Fabre, I owe a lot for her friendship and for asking about my thesis at a crucial time, giving me the space I needed to talk through my ideas. To Andrew Stevens and Marcel Nelson, or the Thesis Writing Support Group, I am thankful for carrying me through the last lap with just enough laughter and distraction to overwhelm despair. Finally, I am grateful too for the time, phone calls, good humour, food, and wine that I have shared with Erin Milliken, Sayyida Jaffer, Ashley Vanstone, Janna-Marynn Brunnen, Jennifer Harrison, Emmy Anglin, Matt Strohack, Paul Barrett, Julia Cercone, Jess Roberts, Fraser Hawkins, Duncan Links, Kristiana Clemens, and Vee Blackburn.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Allan and Sharon Oryschak, particularly as it was written and completed with their steadfast love and support, material and otherwise. Dad, your patience, intellectual curiosity, and generosity are incomparable and I only hope to emulate them here and in life. Mom, your perseverance and passion for Truth and social justice continue to enliven me and help me always to try to see the bigger picture. This would have been impossible without the two of you.

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## Chapter 1: Satire in Performance/Performed Satire: Towards theoretical models in theatre and film

“[T]he structural characteristics of drama alone are powerful enough to undermine most attempts at pure satire on the stage.”

- Deborah Payne, “Comedy, Satire, or Farce?”

“The element that makes plays satiric is the nature of the performance they contain. Plays, of course, are performed, and their appearance before a public becomes the object of critical scrutiny in performance theory. Satire does not flow from the performance of a play but from the performance within it. My concern, therefore, is not with the substitution of performance for text but with satiric performance as represented by the text.”

- Charles Knight, *The Literature of Satire*

“And just as we cannot abandon the notion that upholding a positive norm is the determining generic function of satire, neither can we just give up the idea that satiric discourse is mimetic.”

- Rose Zimbardo, *At Zero Point*

“Results indicate that the ambiguous deadpan satire offered by Stephen Colbert in *The Colbert Report* is interpreted by audiences in a manner that best fits with their individual political beliefs. While common wisdom might suggest that this is simply comedy and people should ‘get the joke,’ this study demonstrates that such assumptions do not seem to hold true when the source is also ambiguous, offering no external cues to guide individuals’ message processing.”

- Heather L. LaMarre et al, “The Irony of Satire: Political Ideology and the Motivation to See What You Want to See in The Colbert Report.”

In her 1995 article, “Comedy, Satire, or Farce? Or the Generic Difficulties of Restoration Dramatic Satire,” Deborah Payne contends that “there *is* something about drama that resists – or makes difficult – the production of ‘pure’ satire on the stage” (3). Though Payne places “pure” in scare quotes and insists that she does not claim for satire “an ontological status” (4), she effectively imbues textual satire with a purity of authority and authorization of what she sees as “satire’s generic imperative”: to render “the object of its attack...manifest” (5). Here Payne takes recourse to traditional views of satire that I think are articulated best by Ronald Paulson in *The Fictions of Satire*:

Satire imitates, presents, explores, analyzes the evil (the term I shall use instead of Aristotle's 'ugly'), but it must at the same time (1) make the reader aware of a pointing finger, of an ought or an ought not, that refers beyond the page to his own life, or – and this is not always the same thing – (2) take a moral stand, make a judgement, and place or distribute blame. (4)

Like Paulson, Payne posits a clear-cut relationship between satirist, satiric object, and audience, whereby the deliberate outcome of satire is “hyper-correction” – that a reader must conform to a clearly defined, yet indirectly stated ideological or moral position, which stands in opposition to the object of ridicule. She finds this manifestation of the satiric object possible only through a retrospective narrative voice that establishes “the illusion of a ‘truthful’ or ‘objective’ speaker, if only to allow for a deconstruction of that very objectivity (and that deconstruction eventually becomes the content of the satire)” (7). In theatre, she counter-claims, “characters unmediated by a narrator diffuse satire’s argument by multiplying potential authorial perspectives... Drama, more inclined to produce discursive structures, works against satire’s need for argumentation and binarism” (9). Several critics, including Fredric Bogel, Rose Zimbardo, and Matthew Kinservik, take Payne to task on her description of satire as proffering an obvious object of satiric attack: Bogel rewrites the triangular relationship between satirist, satiric object, and audience as more ambiguous, while Kinservik redefines satire and comedy to accommodate the dramatic mode. Zimbardo suggests that a disagreement with Payne over the compatibility of drama and satire informs her work in *At Zero Point*, though she refuses to engage with Payne directly, claiming her commitment to reading the historical past instead. Thus each critic does not really fully address what I find to be the most contentious issue in Payne’s argument: drama and satire being

incommensurate as a result of drama's modes of signification and its productions or reproductions of authority.

Though a proliferation of examples in contemporary film and television satire provides me with an instinctive rejection of Payne's argument, I will demonstrate in this study how eighteenth-century satires *do* work in performance-oriented media, like theatre and film, in their temporalities and structures. The purpose of this dissertation is therefore three-fold: firstly, I re-establish the function of satire as one of inquiring into the nature of authority and discipline, exposing its "truths," modalities, and mediations, rather than disciplining or correcting audience and social behaviour. By "authority," I mean not only the cultural function and legitimacy of the author, but also the relationship between discourse and power (also state and legal), and alternately, power and knowledge, as Michel Foucault describes. I thus distinguish satire from a brand of unidirectional, unabashed didacticism by following critics, like Bogel and Frank Palmeri, who re-envision the positions of and relations between satirist, satiric object, and audience in more ambiguous and flexible terms. This ambiguity in satire consequently informs and initiates a diffusing of authorial perspectives, both within satire and its outward reception, which bypasses the necessity of a singular narrative, retrospective voice to enact satiric deconstruction; because of its multivalent nature, narrative satire becomes possible in the diffuse and multiple signifiers (body, landscape, props, gestures, the shot etc) of theatre and film. The second and primary aim of this dissertation and its examples, then, is to demonstrate the compatibility of this inquisitive thrust of satire with the semiotic texture of performance on the stage and screen, particularly when the satire self-reflexively engages the production and modes of authority in dramatic performance. Thirdly and finally, I will insist upon this self-reflexive and ironic dimension to performance and film semiotics in the adaptation of eighteenth-century

textual satires to the screen. Here I explicitly depart from critics who claim that satire and its complex ironies cannot be adapted, communicated, and received through film; instead I focus on examples that succeed and fail in translating satiric content and structure to film and I locate success and failure explicitly in the application of satiric inquiry to the structural modes of authorship and authority in the film medium itself. I recognise the semiotic and ontological differences between film and theatre performances; my introduction, accordingly, will reorient satire theory in relation to performance and film theories, as well as bridge my discussion of film and theatre by engaging recent discussion and debate over the issue of liveness or “presence” in performance media.

### **Satire and Theory: Discourse/Play/Power**

In their attempts to elucidate the nature of Restoration and eighteenth-century dramatic satire, Matthew Kinservik and Jean B. Kern draw attention to the fact that contemporary criticism in the period does not define dramatic satire nor does it distinguish between comedy and satire in the theatre, unlike discussions of verse satires from antiquity until the late seventeenth century, which proffer more generic imperatives and structure (Kern 240-41; Kinservik 22-24). John Dryden’s lengthy *Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693), “the pre-eminent theoretical document on the history of English satire” (Griffin “Dryden” 177),<sup>1</sup> traces a brief genealogy of dramatic satire originating in Roman festivals and impromptu raillery, as well as the Old Comedy of the Athenian Theatre, which later combines

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of Dryden’s *Discourse* chaotically discusses the relative merits of Horace and Juvenal, while offering the few existing definitions of satire, which are incredibly vague as Dryden himself points out. Dryden’s most significant theoretical contribution in *Discourse* seems to be his distinguishing of Greek “Satyr” from Roman “Satura,” arguing for the separateness of the terms in the development of satire.

with Tuscan Farce to develop into Roman Satire (xxiii). Though Dryden argues that “Satire [was] abstracted from the Stage” (xxv), he suggests that “true” satire is in verse, gradually refined along with developments in language. Commenting on another critic’s definition of satire, Dryden acknowledges that he “distinguishes Satire properly from Stage-plays, which are all of one Action, and one continu’d Series of Action” (xlvi), such singularity in design being contrary to the “Hotchpotch, which is properly a Satire” (xlvi). Dryden’s exclusion of satiric “Stage-plays” from his definition of satire certainly influences contemporary discussions of satire and the lack of theorising around dramatic satire.

Kern, nevertheless, sees this lack of a defined “dramatic satire” as providing opportunities for Henry Fielding to practice dramatic experimentation in his highly self-reflexive, satiric rehearsal plays of the 1730s, which I explore in my second chapter and which certainly are not dramas that are singular in action and design as Dryden suggests. Kinservik, on the other hand, uses the elastic classification “to expand our definition of satire to include many comedies of the period that do not strike the contemporary reader as ‘satiric’ ”(23). He attempts to undo the satire/sentiment binary informing criticism of Restoration and eighteenth-century plays by suggesting that comedies like Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers*, with their positive exemplars and poetic justice, can be seen as “satiric” as Restoration satires, like Wycherley’s *The Country Wife*, with their negative exemplars and ambiguous endings, if we consider the effect of censorship (the product of both the Collier Controversy and the adoption of the Licensing Act of 1737)<sup>2</sup> as being one of “disciplining” satire. Paralleling Foucault’s argument in *Discipline and*

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<sup>2</sup> The Collier Controversy refers to a pamphlet war in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century between Jeremy Collier, a non-conformist clergyman, and various playwrights and theatre critics, most prominently, William Congreve. Collier called for the reform of Restoration theatre because he objected to the “vice” and “profanity” represented therein. Several critics, including Kinservik, have identified Collier’s critique within a broader movement of social reform, spearheaded by groups like the Society for the Reformation of Manners in the 1690s. The Licensing Act of 1737 was a bill passed by Robert Walpole’s administration that reinvested power in the office of the Lord Chamberlain and limited performance to patented theatres and approved play-scripts only. In effect, this

*Punish* regarding the shift of power from physical and spectacular punishment to internalised forms of surveillance and discipline in the eighteenth century, Kinservik argues that “punitive” (read Hobbesian<sup>3</sup>) satire becomes “disciplined” in the wake of censorship, reforming the negative examples of Restoration comedies by rendering them sympathetic and rehabilitated so that an audience will internalise their positive behaviour rather than castigate bad behaviour. The underlying assumption of Kinservik’s expanded definition of satire, nevertheless, is that satire – positive or negative – fundamentally aims at correction and edification. Whether the audience adopts or rejects the satiric object and/or agrees or disagrees with the satirist, they are forced to identify *with* and *through* satire in a manner that disciplines or punishes.

It is precisely this emphasis on satire being fundamentally corrective that I move away from in this project. Correction as motive for satire tends to be the defence of satirists, especially Augustan satirists, against charges of mean-spiritedness, invective, and vicious representation (Griffin *Satire* 7-10) and I examine some of these defences and their ostensible insincerities in my first chapter. Indeed, satire does expose and ridicule socio-cultural and political behaviours or vices; yet the satiric investigation tends to be an open-ended inquiry (Griffin *Satire* passim), which tests and questions rather than confers moral legitimacy and imitability to the interworking of rhetoric and power, or discourse and discipline. Here I follow P.K. Elkin’s appraisal of satire: “[s]atire is a catalytic agent rather than an arm of the Law or an instrument of correction: its function is less to judge people for their follies and vices than to challenge their attitudes and opinions to taunt and provoke them into doubt and perhaps disbelief” (201).

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Act was tantamount to a governmentally-sanctioned censorship of the theatre. I discuss the Collier Controversy and the Licensing Act with greater depth in my first and second chapters respectively.

<sup>3</sup> “Hobbesian” refers to comedy that elicits laughter that is caustic and demonstrates, according to Thomas Hobbes, a laughing subject’s pleasure in his own “power and ability” (Griffin 165). Kinservik associates Restoration comedies with this type of humour because, unlike later eighteenth-century comedies, Restoration comedies do not emphasise sympathy and correction, but rather mock through and maintain unequal power relations.

Likewise, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that Menippean satire, its “lack of narration” and myriad of satiric objects and registers, as well as its use of fantasy or utopia, “serves not for the positive *embodiment* of truth, but as a mode for searching after truth, provoking it, and most important, *testing* it” (114). *Narrative* satire (and here I distinguish my discussion from one regarding *verse* satire<sup>4</sup>) enacts a philosophical and epistemological inquiry into “truths” instead of positing Truths or mimetic categories – the “deconstruction” function of satire which Payne identifies. The provocative nature of satiric inquiry finds itself in the absence of totalising controlled and controlling elements like poetic justice or harmonious resolutions through marriage. Unresolved, conflicting positions are key to narrative satire as its aim is “Socratic” – to ask “ethical questions” (Griffin *Satire* 44). In its “dialogic” structure, satire thus reveals the negotiated boundaries of Truth as “Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual,” Bakhtin asserts, “it is born *between* people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction” (110). Drama is in its very essence dialogic, even heteroglossic, thereby

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<sup>4</sup> Because of the scope of my project, I do not have the space to address the similarities and differences of verse and narrative satire extensively. One obvious difference, however, is that of generic imperatives. Verse satires have clear historic and generic models extending back to classic literature. Palmeri consequently insists that verse satire, unlike narrative satire, “provides a framework for the satirist’s declamations, sermonizing, and invective” (6). He also contends that verse satire “never parodies the satirist, the ‘I,’ the spokesman for the satire’s values. Its authority is not bifurcated and dialogical but single and undivided. It restricts itself to one perspective and one language, exhibiting almost no desire or ability to incorporate other points of view, other voices, other genres” (6). Nevertheless, Palmeri’s conception of verse satire as univocal draws solely on Marie Claire Randolph’s 1941 article, “The Medieval Concept in English Renaissance Satiric Theory” – a staple of New Critical readings of satire. Maynard Mack’s classic essay on Pope, “The Muse of Satire,” also represents this univocal view of verse satire, but he adds the distinction between the fictional satiric voice in the poem and the “historical” figure of satirist behind it. Following Randolph, Mack claims that satire contains “a thesis layer attacking vice and folly, elaborated with every kind of rhetorical device, and much briefer, an antithesis layer illustrating or implying a philosophy of rational control” (194). For Mack, the fictionality of the speaker in verse satire maintains this stable relation between thesis and antithesis, as well as confirms the “validity and necessity of norms, systemic values, and meaning that *are* contained by recognizable codes” (194). I am, however, more inclined to think that the voice of verse satire can be as (morally) ambiguous and self-reflexive as that of narrative satire. Rose Zimbardo, for example, focuses on the satirist-satirised trope in verse satires, claiming that “[s]atiric discourse comes to be double-edged, exposing its victim and its speaker at the same time” (62). She argues that verse satire modelled after Juvenal is “literary, self-reflexive, ‘open’ in Eco’s sense of an ‘open text,’ and, precisely because it is so, it *deconstructs* its speaker, the ‘I’ (66). My differentiation of verse and narrative satire, accordingly, reflects more of a generic difference than a difference in mode or approach to authority and authorisation.

making it possible, contrary to Payne's assertions, to explore and satirise the negotiated and constructed nature of Truth in the dramatic mode.

Narrative satire may demonstrate the ways in which authoritative positions and truths are negotiated and mediated, but it does not necessarily mediate its own contradictions or offer clear, positive positions of identification and affirmation for the audience. Frank Palmeri succinctly describes the multiple authorial and authoritative positions constituting narrative satire:

Narrative satire stands apart from other forms of satire and of narrative through its unresolved juxtaposition of conflicting frames of reference or systems of belief. Such satire adopts a continuing parodic stance toward other authoritative discourses; its parodies produce an open-ended dialogical form. (*Satire in Narrative* 1)

In *Satire, History, Novel*, Palmeri reiterates the unresolved nature of parody and dialogism in narrative satire, claiming that "it criticizes or parodies both extremes, but typically devotes little or no attention to positions that might mediate or accommodate difference between them" (11). He traces a Foucauldian effect on narrative satire, much like Kinservik's take on dramatic satire, offering a genealogy of the eighteenth-century novel that evolves from earlier narrative satire, but one where the novel develops and employs the mediating positions and conclusiveness that satire lacks. Unlike Kinservik's argument, then, Palmeri retains the distinction between narrative satire and the novel, even if the novel contains elements that could be labelled "satiric." An important aspect of satire, therefore, becomes its irresolution and lack of a clear or reliable mediating voice, implicating the audience in the construction of meaning and the attack. Irony, allegory, parody, and allusion in satire also enlist the audience in the active decoding of meaning and ridicule; these modes of double meaning open up the satiric text to interpretation. This, of course, does not mean that the entire audience is capable of successfully decoding the satire or

that they will reach consensus over an interpretation. Nor does it suggest that the satirist *wants* his entire audience to interpret satiric meaning.

In *The Difference Satire Makes*, Fredric Bogel provides a compelling framework for understanding the relationship between satirist, satiric object, and audience, which undermines definitions of satire whereby these relations are clear, controlling, and unidirectional. Essentially, Bogel takes issue with traditional definitions of satire that emphasize a “desire for univocality” (14), a concern that I have with discussions over the impossibility of performing satire in the multiple voices and signs of the dramatic mode. While Paulson argues that “[s]atire’s purpose ordinarily is not to create something new but to expose the real evil in the existing” (5), Bogel posits that satire does not begin with existing difference, but rather *creates* difference. He argues that both formalist and historical approaches tend to hold a static and matter-of-fact view of satire, be it in apparent universal or individual reference, or in terms of a stable moral and corrective position, which the satirist intends and with which the reader must and will always identify. Bogel thus proposes an alternative rhetorical approach to satire where

The ‘first’ satiric gesture... is not to expose the satiric object in all its alien difference, but to *define* it as different, as other: to make a difference by setting up a textual machine or mechanism for producing difference... not with the recognition of difference but with anxiety about proximity. (42)

Drawing on Mary Douglas and René Girard’s works on purity and scapegoats respectively, Bogel argues that satire exposes and enacts a type of identity politics that negates or expunges that which undermines a coherent sense of identity and community. Satire represents “an opposition between identity conceived as single, unitary, and categorically secure, and identity conceived as double, divided, and categorically permeable” (20); it dramatizes acts of

exclusions, judgment, and “boundary policing.” Like Bakhtin’s notion of negotiated Truth in Menippean satire, then, Bogel’s identity politics in satire reveal, in an anxious and uneasy manner, the negotiated and constructed nature of identities. Anxiety arises from the realisation that the binary between satiric object and the self (the satirist or the reader) may be false and that categorical certainties are not so certain. “As readers, then,” Bogel postulates, “we are put into a double rhetorical relation that dramatizes both the need for...categorical distinctions and their unavailability” (46). Satire teeters between sameness and otherness, Bogel argues, forcing the reader both to identify with and reject the satiric object. More importantly, I would argue, satire leaves room for the reader to mediate the dialectic that the satirist puts into motion. The openness of satire to audience mediation thus renders a unidirectional, singular, and coherent interpretation of satiric meaning rather improbable.

The complexities affecting the relationship between satirist, satiric object, and audience manifest in satire’s dependency on modes of double meaning and purposeful indirection, such as irony, allegory, allusion, and mock-imitation. Bogel claims that satiric imitation, for example, betrays an ironic proximity to the satirised object insofar as the purpose of the “counterfeit is to be not the real thing, yet virtually impossible to distinguish from the real thing” (23). This proximity complicates the simple rejection of the satiric object as radically other or incongruent. I would also add that satiric imitation deploys another dialectic opposing mimetic and nonimitative representation, revealing another dialectic between discursivity and “reality” that shows their relation to be both arbitrary and vital. Satire also exploits irony to consider the relationship between discursivity and reality, as irony exposes and plays with the bifurcation of signification.<sup>5</sup> Simply put, irony is saying one thing and meaning the opposite, though some

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<sup>5</sup> As Lisa Colletta explains, “[t]raditionally irony has been a means to expose the space between what is real and what is appearance, or what is meant and what is said, revealing incoherence and transcending it through the

critics would argue that irony is saying one thing, while implying another, and meaning *both*. For Bogel, regardless of its degree of stability or instability (as per Wayne Booth's taxonomy<sup>6</sup>), irony does not replace one meaning with another, but rather confers significance between both meanings (Bogel 67); because intended meaning does not cancel out literal meaning, irony becomes inescapably double and rife with ambiguities. Irony and its corresponding ambiguities, accordingly, also contribute to the less than clean-cut relationship between satirist, satiric object, and audience. One cannot always locate where irony begins and ends and therefore, irony in satire enables resistance to interpretive closure or uniformity. "[S]ome theorists, looking back to Kierkegaard, would argue that irony is inherently ungovernable," Dustin Griffin notes. "It takes the form of an evasion, a refusal to commit, a negation rather than an assertion. Thus we may find it virtually impossible to know where irony stops" (*Satire* 69). Such indirection, in effect, defers the positive, uniform, and unilateral intention and by extension, the "correction" that Payne and Kinservik attribute to the satiric function. The satirist's unwillingness to make positive, straightforward claims in the first place seems at odds with a clear didactic agenda.<sup>7</sup>

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aesthetic form and meaning of the work" (856). Here I argue, however, that satiric irony is not invested in transcending this gap, but rather highlighting and reifying it in order to pursue a particular critique of power. Later I will suggest that satire uses modes of double meaning like irony to expose the power-knowledge dynamic and the discursive strategies of power, which frequently exploit the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified. In my view, irony becomes satiric when it exemplifies the ways in which power constructs and operates through disingenuous discourses that separate intent from overt declaration, constructing aberrant bodies of knowledge or legitimacy.

<sup>6</sup> In *The Rhetoric of Irony*, Booth offers different categories of irony, which evaluate the degree of difficulty in interpreting irony. These categories include: 1) stable-covert-local irony, whereby ironic meaning is covert but easily discerned through decoding; 2) stable-overt irony, whereby the speaker explicitly declares the irony of a statement himself; and 3) unstable irony, whereby it actively resists interpretation and closure (*passim*). Though he allows for irony to be "inclusive" and an agent in "the building of amiable communities" (28), Booth importantly notes, "it is also true that even in the most amiable irony one can always imagine a victim by conjuring up a reader or listener so naïve as not to catch the joke; no doubt in some uses of irony the fun of feeling superior to such imagined victims is highly important" (27-28).

<sup>7</sup> In his discussion of Swift's sermons on sermons, Christopher Fanning draws an important distinction between Swift the satirist and Swift the sermoniser, which lends itself to my distinction here between didacticism and satire. Fanning argues that, in his sermons unlike his narrative satires, Swift attempts to resist self-consciousness in the communication of "Moral truth" (413); he "does not open the rhetorical situation to a deliberate confusion of the sacred and the secular or the preacher and the audience" (418) nor does he disrupt "the distinction between preacher and audience (here the ridiculers), maintaining a closed, unidirectional model of communication" (419). Swift,

Satire's dependence on irony points to its own ambiguity and complexity. "[R]eading satire is not so much about finding a position we can plug ourselves into as about exploring the complexity of a particular moral position," Bogel concludes. "As a result, readers are also engaged in exploring the question of what it means to take a position at all" (62). The purpose of satire and its use of indirection appears, again, to be one of inquiry, testing the limits and construction of positionality, Truth, politics, and morality.

The openness and ambiguity of satiric inquiry actively invites audience participation, especially since this inquiry tends to implicate satire's own authorship and authority. By this I mean to say that satire questions its own authority alongside forms of political, moral, and cultural authorities. In all of the satires that I investigate in this dissertation, the authors represented in these texts, plays, and movies, including Tristram, Gulliver, the authors in Fielding's rehearsal plays, and Steve Coogan as Tristram Shandy, operate both as agents and objects of satire. The manner in which their own authority is constructed becomes subject to the same ridicule and scrutiny applied to their satiric objects. Accordingly, Sheldon Sacks argues of *Gulliver's Travels* as a narrative satire, "all parts of the work, including the virtues ascribed to the rational horses, have been selected to facilitate ridicule of the external objects of the satire, not to create fictional examples of ethical truths" (334). All voices and positions in narrative satire are subject to the same discursive and ethical scrutiny. Where I part ways with Sacks, however, is his contention that the representation of a satiric object (as opposed to its external, historical referent) cannot be itself satirised and deconstructed. Frequently, as I will show throughout this dissertation, the representational value and the "real" subject of satire are equally

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therefore, avoids his satiric strategies (self-reflexive, extremely ironic, sceptical, and multi-positional) in his sermons, where he adopts (and tries to maintain) a straightforward relationship and agenda between sermoniser and audience, lesson and communication. For Swift, then, sermons are didactic and unidirectional, while satire questions the aims of its own authority and authorisations, as well as the basis of its interpretation and reception.

questioned, ridiculed, and dissected. In this instance, I agree with Charles Knight's assertion that "satire imitates both natural and fictive discourse to expose unreality or to reveal the problems of the discourse itself" (*Literature of Satire* 37).

Satire's indirection and irony invite multiple readings, thereby creating difference not only between satirist and satiric object, or audience and satiric object, or even satirist and audience, but also within the audience itself. Here I depart from Bogel in an important way: though his theory frames the act of identification and rejection between satirist, satiric object, and audience as ambiguous and enacting difference, his framework easily collapses these three categories into universal and uniform positions in and of themselves. In his astute review of Bogel's book, Charles Knight points out, "One of the troubling aspects of Bogel's abstract and Procrustean approach to the rhetoric of satire is that it requires readers and satirists to behave in uniform ways" ("Identifying Satire" 10). Granted, I am also providing a uniform pattern and function for narrative satire in this "Procrustean" dissertation; yet, I am specifically writing against a uniform effect on the audience, particularly in terms of correction and discipline. In essence, the community modelled in Bogel's understanding of satire is, in many ways, already uniform and striving to maintain that conformity; one audience member or reader placed in the satiric "double-bind" of identification and rejection seems to experience that double-bind in the same manner and all seem to experience the double-bind in the first place. While I agree with Bogel that satire performs and questions the type of rhetorical strategies that constitute identity as essentially coherent and true through exclusion and judgment, I depart from his argumentative frame in that I think that the audience is *already* differentiated.

If satire invites multiple readings because of its lack of clear, mediating positions and its doubled and doubling modes of signification, it reflects the existing stratification and diverse

positioning of audience members. Satire highlights practices of judgment and exclusion in social and moral milieus, particularly those executed through language and discourse, but it also plays on those invisible judgments and exclusions already informing a seemingly coherent, though diverse audience. As a consequence of its obscure referentiality and purposeful indirection, satire is *not* about equality or conformity of audience experience. According to sociological studies, most audience members “have difficulty determining whether or not a given work is intended as satire or what its author’s intention may be” (Griffin *Satire* 155). This reality of ambiguity and opaque intentionality is what I wager against the suggestion that satire “elevates” or corrects. The point of satire becomes less to teach – especially if an audience member does not recognise there is anything to learn or know – and more to expose or provoke an audience member to confront the ideological or moral positions through which he or she already interprets. That said, this confrontation may also never happen and several satirists, most especially the ones I study here (Swift, Sterne, and Fielding), all acknowledge the manner in which an audience member’s existing positionality can deny satiric understanding. As Knight claims, “the satirist issues a call for reform that he is well aware will be fruitless, or he retreats into a self-consuming irony” (47). Instead of “reforming” or mastering audience reception, satire appears to draw out the contours of any given audience member’s existing positionality because it self-reflexively demands interpretation. In his famous preface to *The Battle of the Books*, Swift writes,

SATIRE is a sort of glass, wherein the beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it. But if it should happen otherwise, the danger is not great; and I have learned from long experience never to apprehend mischief from those understandings I have been able to provoke; for anger and fury, though they add

strength to the sinews of the body, yet are found to relax those of the mind, and to render all of its efforts feeble and impotent. (1-2)

Though Swift seems to suggest a lack of self-reflexivity in the audience of satire, who fail to see themselves implicated in the critique, he still allows the audience to reflect generally and to cast judgment on fellow members. What becomes disengaged in Swift's definition of satire, then, is not the act of reflecting or even self-reflecting from consuming satire, but rather the act of reflection accompanied by change or correction. Audience members who do not see their part in the satire are merely confronted with or simply left disposed to their previous positioning and in this sense, satire can be self-reflexive *without* being corrective.

In this project, then, I am arguing against "democratic" conceptions of satire that insist that satire's mean-spiritedness comes from a place of and desire for equal opportunity and reform. Of the Augustans, for example, Christopher Yu argues that their satire represents and endorses a type of "cultural liberalism," which promotes "a liberal conception of education that in the end commits them to a critique of the self-rewarding impulses of power, including corporate and commercial power" (7). Indeed, satire critiques and questions power relations, but access to that critique, I would argue, is limited to those with the privilege already afforded by education; defences of satire may attach the satirist's agenda to one of "liberal education," but the knowledge required to decode satire in the first place demands prior familiarity with context and the objects of inquiry. In his letter to his French Translator, L'Abbé des Fontaines, who expunged material from *Gulliver's Travels* that he found "tasteless," Swift declares, "Nous convenons icy [sic], que le goût des nations n'est pas toujours le meme. Mais nous sommes portés à croire, que le bon goût est même par le tout, ou il y a des gens d'esprit, de jugement et de scavoir [sic]" (162). Barring the obvious problem of translating satire, which would already

necessitate a type of interpretation and mediation of meaning, Swift objects to de Fontaines' editorialising on the account that "good taste" is *universal*. He suggests that men from different nations could successfully read and decode *Gulliver's Travels* without editorial interference. The caveat to Swift's statement, however, is that taste is universal to "men of wit, good judgment, and learnedness." The universality of satire is therefore limited to men (and here the gendering of the reader is important) with education and privilege. The neoclassical and Augustan universal ideal is, consequently, not so universal or universally accessible in applicability.

The championed erudite nature of satire then seems to conflict with a "democratic" or universal vision of satire and its interpretation. This puts satire, and especially Augustan satire, at odds with an agenda of liberal education. For example, in his *Discourse on the Original and Progress of Satire*, Dryden insists upon satire as "instructive" though he also declares "Satire is a Poem of a difficult Nature in it self, and is not written to Vulgar readers" (xxxii). His description of satiric performance further distances satire from a disciplinary function by emphasising the end of satire as one of mutual appreciation between men of wit. He declares,

How easie it is to call Rogue and Villain, and that wittily? But how hard to make a Man appear a Fool, a Blockhead, or a Knave, without using any of those opprobrious terms? To spare the grossness of the Names, and to do the thing yet more severely, is to draw a full Face, and to make the Nose and Cheeks stand out, and yet no Master can teach to his Apprentice: He may give the Rules, but the Scholar is never the nearer in his practice. Neither is it true, that this fineness of Raillery is offensive. A witty Man is tickl'd while he is hurt in this manner and a Fool feels it not. The occasion of an Offence may possibly be given, but he cannot take it. If it be granted that in effect this way does more Mischief; that a Man is secretly wounded, and though he be not sensible himself, yet the malicious

World will find it for him: Yet there is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly Butchering of a Man, and the fineness of a stroak that separates the Head from the Body, and leaves it standing in its place. A man may be capable, as *Jack Ketches*'s Wife said of his Servant, of a plain piece of Work, a bare Hanging; but to make a Malefactor die sweetly was only belonging to her Husband. I wish I cou'd apply it to my self, if the Reader wou'd be kind enough to think it belongs to me. The character of *Zimri* in *Absalom*, is, in my Opinion, worth the whole Poem: 'Tis not bloody, but 'tis ridiculous enough. And he for whom it was intended, was too witty to resent it an injury. (xlii)

Though Dryden uses the execution – the spectacular enforcement of Law intended to instil fear and lawfulness in its audience – in his definition of satiric performance, he also emphasises the “fineness” and “genius” of satiric wit in order to counteract its disciplinary sting. For Dryden, the *exquisite* pain of satiric discipline is sensible only to witty men or men of “equal parts.” He models the ideal audience of satire, even the ideal *object* of satire, as learned, witty, and equal in privilege. Satire's proper decoding thus materialises as one entailing pleasure in the satirist's or one's own wittiness rather than discipline or fear. In his *Discourse*, Dryden subsequently oscillates between a definition of satire that is instructive – “the scourging of Vice, and Exhortation to Virtue” (xxxiii)<sup>8</sup> – and one that is pleasurable. This ambivalence informs his hesitant and shifting evaluation of Horace and Juvenal's satire respectively. He claims, “in my

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<sup>8</sup> Dustin Griffin makes an important point about Dryden's claim to instructiveness as the unifying structural and thematic principle of satire, especially when comparing this claim to the satiric practices of his contemporaries, like the Earl of Rochester, whom he conveniently excludes in his *Discourse* in favour of discussing the Ancients. Rochester's particular brand of satire does make individual attacks, which Dryden admonishes as petty and preventing “general instruction,” and while they do not promote a positive norm in opposition to vice, Rochester's satiric poems do enact a philosophical inquiry into political authority and its intersections with sexual and gender politics and the disciplinary modalities of bodies of knowledge. In other words, Rochester's work as a contemporary satirist does not conform to Dryden's somewhat reductive and historical view of satire as delightful instruction. Griffin concludes, “Dryden's theory is not only polemical; it is unmistakably prescriptive. Critics have from time to time tried to apply it retrospectively – and without much success – to the satires that Dryden himself and his contemporaries wrote” (“Dryden” 177-78). Satire as theoretically instructive does not seem to align with its practical complexities in composition or consumption.

particular Opinion, which I set not up for a Standard to better Judgements, *Juvenal* is the more delightful Author. I am profited by both, I am pleas'd by both; but I owe more to *Horace* for my Instruction; and more to *Juvenal*, for my Pleasure" (xxxvi). He ascribes sublimity in expression to Juvenal's more scurrilous satire, while he suggests that Horace's "grinning" satire offers him "Delight [that] is but languishing" (xxxvii). Dryden's preference for Juvenal, accordingly, seems to elevate the importance of condescending pleasure in the composition and consumption of satire over that of generous instructiveness.

Part of the "pleasure" of satire is, as Dustin Griffin explains, the self-satisfaction of decoding satiric complexity and obscurity and its attending sense of superiority. I would add, moreover, that pleasure comes from being able to decode satire successfully knowing others cannot or may not. A certain characteristic of the openness of satire, therefore, becomes the manner in which it seems to invite diverse responses, reflecting individual positionality, while simultaneously masking the inequality of those differentiated positions. Griffin further contends,

We might combine the idea of intellectual satisfaction (our pleasure in understanding a difficult matter) and the Hobbist idea of gratified superiority to suggest that another simple form of satiric pleasure lies in its reductiveness... Such reductions enable both satirist and reader to grasp a complex matter, to arrive at a judgment of it, and thereby to master it. This sense of mastery (while it lasts) brings with it some relief from the burdens of complexity, a pleasure that we have proved ourselves more than equal to a difficult task of understanding and assessment. We have extended our imagined control of the world and in the process elevated our own status in relation to it. (*Satire* 168)

Indeed, as Griffin and I have set satire up as a form of inquiry, such mastery over interpretation and decoding runs contrary to satire's scepticism about categorical certainty. Nevertheless, the

“reductive” fantasy of control that Griffin identifies in satiric interpretation reiterates the interplay of power and discourse that satire imitates and questions – how discursive control and knowledge interact with and bolster power relations.<sup>9</sup> Wayne Booth speaks similarly of a mastery that attends decoding irony:

Reconstructions of irony are seldom if ever reducible to either grammar or semantics or linguistics. In reading any irony worth bothering about, we read life itself, and we work on our relations to others as they deal with it... Though ironic statements are only a small part of all that men say to each other – even in this highly ironic age – they bring to light the hidden complexities that are mastered whenever men succeed in understanding each other in any mode, even the most flat or literal. (44)

Satire employs irony to represent the “hidden complexities” at work in communication and its corresponding relations. More specifically, satire indirectly and ironically exposes the danger of such hidden complexities as they relate to the discursive strategies of power, which both enact and mask the inequalities informing social relations by capitalising on the gap between intent and expression, and discourse and reality, as well as the unwitting. Because satire tends to ironise its

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<sup>9</sup> Critiques of Foucault’s concept of power relations can be transposed, I think, in many ways to the critique of satire and its political (in)efficacy. Because Foucault envisions “power relations” as “a whole series of networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology, and so forth” (*Truth and Power* 64) and the state as a superstructure to these networks, he leaves very little room for opposition to these power relations or the possibility of these relations not being entirely deterministic. Foucault claims that this network of relations makes it possible to think of challenging power relations in terms other than state/revolution, insisting “that there are many different kinds of revolution, roughly speaking, as many kinds as there are possible subversive recodifications of power relations, and further that one can perfectly well conceive of revolutions which leave essentially untouched the power relations which form the basis for the functioning state” (64). Essentially, revolutions may simply not be *revolutionary*. How can one, then, discern what a revolution is to begin with? Furthermore, these “subversive recodifications” remain largely undefined or broached in his work because Foucault is more interested in examining and historicising existing power relations. Similarly, because satire examines existing power relations, it tends to reproduce these relations – particularly in terms of social and intellectual stratification – even as it attempts to disentangle them. Discussing the “politics” of satire (i.e. conservative or liberal, reactionary or radical) and its “liberatory” or “transgressive” potential, then, becomes complicated as satire deconstructs power relations (conservative or liberal) at the same it reproduces them through its indirection. In focusing on existing power relations, satire does not necessarily attempt to re-imagine or define new ones except, perhaps, ironically (i.e. Swift’s Houyhnhnms?).

own authority, it subjects itself to the same scepticism and scrutiny about “hidden complexities” that it applies to other forms of authorised discourse. At the same time, however, though satire uses irony to critique the interworking of power and discourse, it can also reproduce, as I previously mentioned, the same victimisation and inequality in its own audience because its aims are intentionally ambiguous and ironic.

Satire investigates the relationship between rhetoric and power, discourse or bodies of knowledge and discipline, often times exposing its arbitrary, ridiculous, and oppressive axis. At the same time, satire emphasises a material and bodily effect in the discursive strategies of power. While I agree that satire deconstructs the relationship between sign and referent, representation and reality, through parody and other modes of double meaning, I also argue that satiric deconstruction does not infinitely defer a relationship between the epistemological and the ontological, the discursive and the material. In *At Zero Point*, Rose Zimbardo discusses the association between epistemological and ontological figures in Restoration satire. She contends that there were two competing discourses in relation to epistemological concerns in the latter part of the seventeenth century: the first is a “deconstructive” discourse linked to concepts of “Wit” and the second is a “constructive” discourse linked to natural philosophy. Zimbardo argues that Wit “discloses absence, the ‘great Negative,’ the abyss over which it plays and of which we get glimpses through wit’s *craquelure* designs” (9); in other words, Wit plays on the gap between signifier and signified, but in a manner that points to the absence of a centre or a transcendental signified, the *craquelure* of its structure being one that represents the contingencies of signification. “Because it challenges the validity of all linguistic signs and conceptual frameworks,” Zimbardo asserts, “Wit was considered by the cultural allies whose discourses shaped the new epistemological order to be especially threatening to institutional cohesion” (10).

She identifies this “new epistemological order” as one informed by empirical science and material philosophy, and their attendant positivism in terms of accurately and seamlessly describing the nature of objective reality through language. In relation to satire, Zimbardo claims that Restoration writers employed “Augustinian semiotics,” whereby all signs are contingent and cannot access “an invisible, mysterious centre,” in order “to subvert both the materialist philosophy coming to dominance in their own day and the essentialist philosophy that was their inheritance from Augustine’s time, the Middle Ages” (44). She concludes that, in Restoration satire, “the satiric antithesis is 1) always literary and remote, and 2) *never* a behavioural norm from which satiric thesis measures deviation” (49). While I agree with Zimbardo’s contention that satire does not proffer a clear evaluative structure to which one is measured or with which one measures, I disagree that satiric critique is “remote” and refers only to language itself. Rather I contend that the deconstructive impulse of satire remains connected to the “real” world insofar as it reveals the reciprocal relationship between the epistemological and the experiential or ontological and, more explicitly, discourse and power.

Instead of overriding the ontological, satire thus deploys a dialectic between the ontological and the epistemological. I align my argument here with Robert Phiddian’s distinction between (his views of) deconstruction<sup>10</sup> and parody – parody being a mode that he sees as having satiric potential unlike deconstruction. Initially, Phiddian argues that parody *is* deconstruction as

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<sup>10</sup> Phiddian certainly views and critiques deconstruction as a type of hermeneutic that finds all texts “decentred.” He writes, “it seems obvious that, if you employ a method which *assumes* that all texts are fragmented, decentred, and contain the seed of their own negation, you are liable to keep generating interpretations which purport to *discover* that individual texts are fragmented, decentred, and contain the seed of their own negation” (674). He also takes a rather unapologetic view of deconstruction’s potential ethics and politics – one that I do not fully agree with – by attaching it to nihilism. Phiddian argues, “To tie [deconstruction] to particular political ends is an appropriation that requires a potent combination of blindness and insight (blindness concerning the discourse of the oppressed combined with insight into the false consciousness of oppression). It is a dangerous tool because so corrosive – being no respecter of value, it can and will deconstruct your cherished categories as well as those you attack. It can be (and has been) used to support a rainbow alliance of liberationist critiques, but it can provide only negative liberation” (676).

it revels in the aporias of signification, its own “referential impurity,” and its mimetic failure. “Parody is the parasite genre that can attach to any other,” he argues, “supplementing it dangerously, living off its mimetic, expressive, or rhetorical energy, and reminding it and us that we are facing words rather than things, rhetoric rather than pure ideas, language rather than phenomena” (689). In its play on presence, absence, supplementarity, and intertextuality, parody entails *différance*, playing with differences while deferring the totalization of meaning and signification. However, where parody and deconstruction differ, Phiddian claims, is in parody’s satiric potential, which he locates in parody’s recognition that “the illusions we build with words impinge on material reality, and reality impinges back” (692). In effect, parody does not completely negate mimesis, but rather “loops back into something like mimesis, though it is a mimesis aware of the gulf between words and things, which the illusion of language bridges” (693). He offers the example of Salman Rushdie’s deconstructive methods in *The Satanic Verses*, alluding to the fact that Rushdie’s deconstructive and irreverent take on the Qur’an and the prophet Muhammad materialised into a *real* fatwa against his life. The fatwa, in any case, demonstrates the *power* of decree and language and its subsequent material effect. I would argue, therefore, that satire’s deconstructive impulse still links language and power, which results in a particular and *real* relationship with materiality. In Foucauldian terms, satire *poses the question of discourse to power* and reveals how their alliance both structures and reflects the material world. In effect, I argue that the “power” that satire addresses is *real*. Even the Restoration “deconstructive” satires that Zimbardo discusses unravel the rhetorical strategies of power, particularly in the case of class privilege, and in this unravelling they mark the operations of power through language. They also satirise the manner in which sexuality and its prohibitions and agency interact with and communicate power. Whether or not we can prove the “reality” of

satiric representations in Restoration plays or other narrative satires, we can still discuss a real relation between discourse, power, and materiality articulated therein.

As much as the “epistemological order” structuring institutions involves discursive formations, it also implicates power relations. Power here is not a “negative” – what exists outside language – nor is it simply linguistic; power informs bodies of knowledge and together they discipline material bodies. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault writes,

We should admit that power produces knowledge (and not by simply encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it to be useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. These ‘power-knowledge relations’ are analysed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is free or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.

(27-28)

In Foucault’s scheme, power and knowledge collude to form “bodies” of knowledge and the “body politic;” for Foucault, however, their technologies and operations, including corporal/capital punishment, are not merely discursive but rather objectify, inscribe, mark, and discipline the material body. Foucault asserts, “One would be concerned with a ‘body politic,’ as

a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subject them by turning them into objects of knowledge” (*Discipline and Punish* 28). Like Kinservik and Palmeri, then, I read satire through a Foucauldian lens, but one whereby satire meditates on discourse and its relationship to power as arbitrary and constructed, but also as material and real. Satire exposes the power-knowledge dynamic, its expressions in language and its disciplinary modalities, including its effect on the body and material concerns.

One common, satiric exploration of the power-knowledge dynamic in all of the satirists that I study in this dissertation is a particular satiric appraisal of the Law and not simply one ridiculing lawyers. Fielding, Swift, and Sterne all mock the law, its self-referentiality (in terms of precedence in Common Law) and ever-increasing production of discourse and interpretation, which in turn seems to evacuate legal language of essential meaning. These satirists also simultaneously highlight the powerful, material effect of the Law. As Foucault writes of the Law in the eighteenth century,

Law was the principle mode of representation of power (and representation should not be understood here as a screen or an illusion, but as a real mode of action).

Law is neither the truth of power nor its alibi. It is an instrument of power which is at once complex and partial. The form of law with its effect of prohibition needs to be resituated among a number of other, non-judicial mechanisms. Thus the penal system should not be analysed purely and simply as an apparatus of prohibition and repression of one class by another, nor as an alibi for the lawless violence of the ruling class. The penal system makes possible a mode of political and economic management which exploits the difference between legality and illegalities. The same holds true for sexuality: prohibition

is certainly not the principal form of investment of sexuality by power.

(*Power/Knowledge* 141)

Here Foucault renders legal discourse as a language communicating *and* facilitating power relations, not just in forms of punishment but also in acts of legitimization in cultural, political, and economic realms. What is most important to my reading of power in satire, however, is how satire exposes the ways in which forms of authority (literary, political, and social) exercise power through a particular engagement with language and epistemologies. The Law and lawyers' (mis)use of it to achieve particular ends and leverage provide the perfect example of how powerful, dangerous, and materially affecting the law and by extension, language can be. In *Gulliver's Travels*, for example, Swift mocks the prolixity of English Common Law and its subsequent misuse and discursive abuse, by offering a juridical ideal in Brobdingnag whereby "They are expressed in the most plain and simple Terms, wherein those People are not Mercurial enough to discover above one interpretation. And, to write a Comment on any Law, is a capital Crime" (111). Swift, however, combines this problem of discursivity with materiality when Gulliver faces the charges of treason in Lilliput, his punishment being that his eyes be removed. The Law, here, is not simply wordplay; it can mutilate the body. The Lilliputian decree can end Gulliver's sight, which is intimately linked to his way of knowing: empiricism. The Law can, in effect, rewrite epistemology and redefine ontology.

Fielding's satire on the Law in his rehearsal plays correspondingly links the discursive and the material by focusing explicitly on the Law's power to impoverish and ruin a person's material and living conditions. The legalities surrounding acting and debt, particularly in the manner that the Law criminalises both of them, as well as a lawyer's discursive manipulation of legal language and status, ultimately become a source of oppressive living conditions and bare

existence in Fielding's plays that I discuss in Chapter Two. Similarly, though perhaps in a less sinister manner, Sterne mocks legal discourse through his early inclusion of Mr. and Mrs. Shandy's marriage agreement in *Tristram Shandy*. The contract, which demands that Mrs. Shandy give birth in the country instead of London if she has a miscarriage or false pregnancy (which she does), contains very conditional language, constantly modified through numerous qualifying clauses, which parallels Tristram's language throughout his narrative. The legal contract, nevertheless, does not simply provide a linguistic or discursive joke in the book; it also sets into motion a particular relationship between narrative and reality insofar as the contract becomes the cause for Tristram's birth in the country and his father's use of the man-midwife, who crushes Tristram's nose with his forceps. Tristram consequently blames his crushed nose for the trajectory of his life and narrative. The seemingly causal relationship between (legal) language and Tristram's body deploys a dialectic in his narrative between the mimetic and representational nature of discourse, envisioning materiality's accessibility and inaccessibility through language.

Satire's propensity to reassert the bodily in the face of self-referential and lofty language or rhetoric emphasises the simultaneous disjunction and correspondence of discourse and reality. Material reminders in satire, particularly those relating to bodily function, produce categorical scepticism, by exceeding or challenging those clean categorical and discursive distinctions, at the same time that they force recognition of a dialogue between discourse and reality. Palmeri contends that satire's "levelling" of the spiritual with the material results in both an implosion of "social, philosophical, and literary hierarchies of value" and a "rhetorical reduction of metaphors to literal meanings" (12-13). I would state, however, that satire retains the tension between spiritual and material concerns, as well as figurative and literal meaning; it does not obliterate

them. For example, satire's metonymic representations – where a figure can stand for a historical referent or “real life person” – draw out the simultaneously disjunctive and correlative relation between (satiric) discourse and “reality,” playing with and capitalising on their tenuous connection. Here is another place where I part critical ways with Bogel and his conception of the relationship between satirist, satiric object, and audience. Bogel replaces the idea of the historical referent with a general notion of referentiality, which becomes – in his framework – a universal, satiric act of “exclusion, efforts of boundary policing, and introductions of difference that create – rather than grow out of – an opposition between satirist and the satiric scene or world” (12). In his review, Knight observes,

Bogel's call for referentiality and the policing of boundaries that make rather than reflect the opposition between the satirist and his scene seems to move his rhetoric in the direction of the New Criticism that he attacks, for reference is enclosed by the text and the audience is implied by it. The virtual elimination of a context and of an audience, other than that implied by the text, leaves Bogel primarily concerned with the nature of the satirist. (8)

Metonymic references become important links between context and text, reality and discourse, for both the satirist's work and the work of the audience, even though these references may remain difficult to decode or discern fully and with certainty.

A crucial part of identification in and through satire emerges, therefore, as an ability to see the *power* of signification in the *real* world and its corresponding epistemological and disciplinary modalities. Satire questions, ridicules, and anatomizes modes of authorization by highlighting the interworking of discourse, power (political, social, economic), and knowledge. Nevertheless, because satiric transmission, its indirection, and the triadic relationship of satirist,

satiric object, and an already differentiated audience are complex, complicated, and ambiguous, satire cannot and does not promote one, uniform way of seeing or comprehending. Didacticism or discipline is not the aim of satire in this case; rather, satire indirectly exposes the workings of didacticism and discipline, discourse and power, while not necessarily dismantling these modalities – hence satire’s seeming lack of political or moral efficacy. The diffusion of perspectives in performance, which Payne fears dilutes unilateral, controlled, and controlling relations between satirist and satiric object, and more importantly, satirist and audience, becomes an essential aspect of satiric agency, both for the satirist and the audience. It is precisely this diffusion of perspectives in narrative satire, which corresponds to inquiries into authority and authorized bodies of knowledge and behaviour, which renders it amenable to the diffuse modes of signification and authorization on the stage and the screen.

### **Power Plays: Satire meets Performance Studies**

In his review of books on ethnography, rhetoric, and performance, Dwight Conquergood argues for a particular likeness of the *homo rhetoricus* to the *homo performans*, claiming “affinities between rhetoric and performance” (80). Of the opponents to both rhetoric and performance, articulated in “antirhetorical topoi” and the “antitheatrical prejudice,” Conquergood claims they deploy “repressive attempts to rein in rhetors and performers who by their unruly practices destabilize an essentialist worldview anchored in Being, and replace it with a constructional view of reality in a process of Becoming” (80-81). In terms of rhetoric and its connection to ethnographic work, Conquergood reappraises sophistry and its specious argumentation, claiming that

Sophistic tactics resist systematizing and totalizing discourses because they are dispersed and nomadic; they are difficult to administer because they cannot be pinned down. Artful dodgers and tacticians of resistance are branded disreputable by proprietary powers because they are always on the move and refuse to settle down. (83)

Likewise, the work of ethnography, according to Conquergood, is to challenge and destabilise absolutism in thought and practice relating to culture, attempting to “unmask the ethnocentric underpinnings of the privileging of ‘reason’ that has characterized rhetoric in the West from Plato to Perelman” (81). He also locates in performance a type of spontaneity, movement, and play that mirrors the argumentative dislodging and shifting of sophist rhetoric and ethnography. Conquergood traces a “critical genealogy” that sees “performance” as a concept in cultural studies that moves from “*mimesis* to *poiesis* to *kinesis*,” playing with the boundaries of reality and appearance, constructing and deconstructing identity and culture, and finally, operating as “a decentring agency of movement, intervention, transformation, struggle, and change” (84). For Johannes Fabian, one of the ethnographers whom Conquergood reviews, performance is a way of knowing. One of the reasons that ethnographers must go to the field to live and interact with people is that so much cultural knowledge is embodied in gesture, action, and evanescent event; it is powerfully experienced, tacitly understood, but hardly ever spelled out, and if expressed, then more often than not in highly allusive, elliptical, and indirect ways. (85)

Performance operates here a means of communicating knowledge through *doing*, a type of embodied and active discourse whose legibility is determined by context, audience participation or engagement, and temporal experience; its signification and meaning are decidedly not closed and fixed. Conquergood thus connects the protean nature of performance to that of rhetoric,

finding in their resistance to totalities and fixity a parallel agenda and site of analysis for ethnographic study.

I begin with Conquergood's review because it provides some important and interesting parallels between the work of ethnographers and the work of satirists as I described in the previous section. Much like ethnography, satire challenges categorical certainty, exposing the constructedness of Truth and "reason," their authorization through interchanges of power and discourse, and the inculcation of certain epistemes through discipline. Scepticism, accordingly, informs both ethnography and satire and yet a specific engagement with power enables the ethnographer and satirist to have political and ethical relevance. By engaging power relations enacted or challenged by performance and rhetoric, Conquergood claims, "ethnographers avoid the apolitical theories of motion as free play, floating ironic detachments, and the endless deferrals of political commitment – the hollow luxury of never taking a stand" (83). Likewise, satire engages power to make indirect claims about politics in the real world, though it simultaneously exposes the arbitrary and constructed nature of that relationship. Satire also insists upon participation and self-reflexive engagement on the part of an audience to enact its inquiry and explorations; thus, the audience is complicit in the production of satiric meaning.

The affinity of operations that Conquergood underlines between performance and rhetoric, more importantly, facilitate the commensurability between satire and performance for which I argue in this dissertation. Rather than cementing controlled and controlling relations between observer or audience and subject or performer, performance compels dynamic response through its own dynamism in action and movement and the obvious interaction with a concrete and diverse audience. Though engagement with textual satire can be individual and private and the physical text is ostensibly a fixed artefact, the audience of narrative satire must contend with

the ways in which textual, narrative satires deconstruct the fixity and singularity of their own textuality and authority, as is the case for both *Gulliver's Travels* and *Tristram Shandy*. The continually contested reception of narrative satires, especially those of Swift and Sterne, also reflects this dynamism that counters stable textuality and uniform interpretation. The openness of satiric texts and their demand for interpretation, then, propel a kind of dynamism with and within their audience that does not oppose the demands or conditions of performance.

One of the most contentious issues in Performance Studies, apart from its own disciplinary boundaries, is nevertheless the relationship between “text” and “performance.” Approaches in the field vary greatly in their “reading” of performance, from Antonin Artaud’s assertion that performances, such as those by Balinese dancers, can happen outside and in spite of written language to Charles Knight’s contention that he can read satiric performance perfectly well in the (performative) language of dramatic satires alone. Part of the radical nature of Performance Studies, to which Conquergood alludes, is the fact that it contends with performance in a manner that is not logocentric or merely about “performative language,” opening up the field to a variety of cultures without privileging those that are euro-logo-centric.<sup>11</sup> In his much-debated article, “Disciplines of the Text/Sites of Performance,” W.B. Worthen argues, however, against an irreconcilable opposition between text and performance that informs much of the oddly contested relationship between Performance Studies and Theatre Studies, which evidently examines a (reciprocal) relationship between performance and written script. To undo this binary, Worthen argues,

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<sup>11</sup> In “Drama, Performance, Performativity,” W. B. Worthen offers a valuable critique of Conquergood’s ethnographic approach and its privileging of non-textual performances as more resistant to colonial/power relations and racist “foundationalist thought” than texts. “While writing (in some situations, at least) may now be associated with colonial hegemony,” Worthen remarks, “complicity with authority is hardly foundational to textual practices. The authority of writing and other performances as modes of cultural production is determined much as that of speech acts is: within an elaborate, historically contingent, dynamic network of citational possibilities” (1099).

Both texts and performances are materially unstable registers of signification, producing ‘meaning’ intertextually in ways that deconstruct notions of intention, fidelity, authority, present meaning. At the same time, texts and performance retain the gesture of semiosis, and discussions of both text and performance remain haunted by a desire for authorization. (“Text/Performance” 23)

While performance and text may utilise differing modes of signification, they can both play with open-endedness, inter-citatoriality, and gaps in signification at the same time that they can raise questions about their own particular forms of authorization, authority, or authorship. This renders performance *and* texts amenable to satire and its inquisitive aims. By continually insisting that performance appears unmediated or ephemeral, unlike the mediated, singular voice of narrative fixed in texts, we both ignore the mediations at constant play in performances, as well as the potential to illuminate those seemingly invisible mediations reflexively and satirically.

What then is performance? In his anthropological approach, Richard Schechner offers a useful diagram of what constitutes performance. He identifies four concentric circles, the centre one being drama, which he describes as a written-text independent of action and transmission. The next circle encompasses “script,” which includes a “basic code of the events” that has to be transmittable, though it does not need to be written. The next circle enveloping the script is the “theatre,” which Schechner defines as “the events by a specific group of performers; what the performers actually do during production. The theatre is concrete and immediate. Usually, the theatre is the manifestation or representation of the drama and/or the script” (72). Finally, the outer circle constitutes “performance,” which Schechner describes as the “whole constellation of events, most of them passing unnoticed, that take place in/among both performers and audience from the time the first spectator enters the field of performance – the precinct where the theatre

takes place – to the time the last spectator leaves” (72). Indeed all of these circles bleed into each other and for Schechner, performance is the least defined circle in his schemata. Performance comprises all agents and conditions relating to the event and the space and context of the “theatre,” including audience, performers, and technicians (85). Schechner criticises western performances for emphasising the “dyad drama-script,” claiming that they attempt to erase the “seams joining drama to script to theatre to performance” (73). As a part of his work with his avant-garde Performance Group, therefore, Schechner works toward breaking apart the “seams” of performances, drawing attention to the construction and occurrence of performances and inviting the audience to be aware of their experience and encounter within the performance space rather than being “absorbed into the event” (73).

Tearing the seams of performance apart is an integral part of satiric performance. Because performance combines multiple forms of authorization and signification seamlessly, satiric performance needs to inquire into and anatomize the various elements authorising performances in order to carry out its broader task of questioning the authority and authorisations of the power-knowledge dynamic.<sup>12</sup> If performance is, as Fabian suggests, “a way of knowing,” its epistemological and ontological values must be evaluated, indirectly or otherwise, in tandem with satiric critique. This includes the power-relations within the context of the theatre and performance itself, like those between playwright and director/producer; playwright and performer; technician and performer and/or playwright; performer and performer; audience and

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<sup>12</sup> I would be amiss not to mention Bertolt Brecht at this juncture. His *Verfremdungseffekt* or “alienation effect” works towards the same ends as Schechner’s or satire’s “tearing the seams” of performance. In his early twentieth-century “epic theatre,” Brecht desires to dissect the naturalism of nineteenth-century drama and render the invisibility of ideology in naturalized performance or behaviour apparent. He also wants to tear down the “fourth wall” that facilitates theatrical illusionism and separates actor/audience (93). “The aim of this technique,” Brecht maintains, “was to make the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident. The means were artistic” (93). His alienation effect demands a dialectic effect in the actor’s acting, contradicting action and feeling, demonstrating the work of ideology on the self and behaviour, and implying alternative action or possibilities, which should then lead the audience to realize that the performance “only represents one out of the possible variants” (94).

performer; critic and playwright/performer/producer; and finally, audience member and audience member. All these elements – technical, commercial, artistic, critical, receptive – inform the performance event, its authority, and its significance. Unlike the nineteenth-century and twentieth-century “illusionistic” and “mimetic” theatre that Schechner criticises, Restoration and eighteenth-century drama is more self-reflexively attuned to its “seams” and tends to engage and implicate its audience actively. It also has an astute, reflexive sense of “theatre,” which Schechner claims is “both intentionally and non-consciously a paradigm of culture and culture-making” (“Performance” 179). Yet, regardless of the level of self-awareness the audience has or the performance evokes in Restoration comedy and eighteenth-century dramas,<sup>13</sup> these plays still tend to elicit critical appraisals, like those of Jeremy Collier that I examine in Chapter One, which decry their ostensibly unmediated and seamless performances of vice. Rather than understand these critiques as evidence of performance’s *inability* to incorporate irony or satire, I would rather argue that these critiques represent the individual positioning of said critics – positions that are emphasised and elicited through satire’s ambiguity, indirection, and demand for self-reflexive interpretation.

If we see performance as loosely defined in Schechner’s terms as “*Ritualized behaviour conditioned/permeated by play*” (95), we can acknowledge that performance’s playfulness can be used in satire to expose the operations of power-knowledge in *learned* behaviour and by extension, discipline itself. Language, accordingly, does not represent the whole range of

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Holland explains that the Restoration stage and its scenery prevented audience members from being absorbed into the action. He identifies a separation between the “scene” – where actors played – and the scenic stage – the obviously artificial and painted sets (*Ornament* 32-36). He also describes Restoration stage practice as “progressive modernism,” intimating the anti-naturalist tendencies of their performances (36). Deborah Payne also points to the “subjective” nature of Restoration and Eighteenth-century theatre, suggesting that it undermines the pretence to objectivity that narrative satire seems to depend upon for its deconstructive impulse (“Comedy” 7). Although these plays do appear “subjective” in that there are multiple interlocutors present in their performance, they can still enact satire, I would argue, because of narrative satire’s own propensity for multiple perspectives and competing discourses. Satiric performance must, however, in this case, dissect or ironise or inquire into its own forms of mediations and authorizations.

disciplines that can be satirised, but rather facilitates their articulation in certain aspects of knowledge-formation. In terms of the theatre, acting and performing are themselves disciplines, internalized and self-conscious forms of signification, behaviour, and movement and thus, seemingly invisible. Even the extremely stylized theatricality or performance of Restoration and eighteenth-century plays, which certain critics would place in opposition to “naturalist” or “method” acting, hinges its success on the flawless movement and gesticulation of its disciplined actors. As Joseph Roach explains of the Restoration performance, “[c]orrect action in performance counted for more, evidently, than strict verisimilitude” (“Performance” 34). Drawing parallels between acting style and conduct manuals, Peter Holland claims, “acting style, except for the fools, was naturalistic; that is, it conformed to the conventions of social decorum” (*Ornament* 58). Roach also notes how style and theatrical convention in the period operate as sites of convergence for ideology and aesthetics in the bodies of the actor and the audience (“Power’s Body” 100). “Style readily disseminates those regularities, operating powerfully on the decorum’s of everyday life,” Roach explains.

The theatre tests behaviours on the bodies of exceptional practitioners, but it does so in the process of wider distribution. Generalities that govern conduct and establish priorities of value – Taste, Duty, Beauty, Honour – gain from the theatre an otherwise unattainable specificity under conditions of precise selection and control. As ritualized discourse, the theatre plays a part in what Foucault calls the ‘capillary form’ of the diffusion of power. Theatrical performance provides a ‘point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.’ In their reductive mechanisms, what are generally called period styles seem alien and quaint. In their ambition to promulgate

self-mastery and to implant particular behaviours in the body, however, they seem to have far greater contemporary relevance. (“Power’s Body” 110)

I would add here explicitly what Roach implies, namely that the theatre functions much like Foucault’s panopticon, where surveillance of the performers by an audience and the returned gaze of the performers promotes self-consciousness and, in turn, can promulgate discipline and self-mastery. Restoration and eighteenth-century theatres were not “black boxes,” whereby the drama was enclosed onstage by the proscenium arch, footlights, and the darkening of the house. Rather, the house in the period’s theatres was still lit and audience members even sat on stage with the performers (Payne “Reified” 30). The organisation of and surveillance in the theatre allows reciprocity between stage practice and social practice. For Roach, then, “[s]tyle is social order as lived in the body” (“Power’s Body” 115). Virtuoso performance imbricates style and social order seamlessly in the body, revealing and concealing the subjection of the body to style and social order.

The work of satiric performance, therefore, emerges as a two-fold process: firstly, to expose the disciplinary modalities of style and render their inscription on the body in performance legible; and secondly, to expose how such performance reflects disciplinary modalities in “real” life. Satiric performance tends to emphasise its own process and lack of mastery to expose the disciplinary seams of performance; in exposing these seams, however, satiric performance does not *model* or *correct* behaviour. A successful strategy for satiric performance is the “rehearsal play,” which Fielding uses extensively in his dramatic satires as I discuss in Chapter Two. The “rehearsal play” and its metatheatrical construction draw attention to the mechanisms of authorisation in the theatre, as well as the repetitive practice and discipline at the heart of performance. Schechner contends that the “fundamental ritual of theatre” is the

rehearsal or preparations for performance (183). In focusing on the rituals of theatre, the satiric rehearsal play can trace analogues to the ritual and repetition of social conventions and behaviours in society and by extension, their constructedness and power. The rehearsal play also renders obvious the doubleness of the actor or the dialectic between actor and character, by showing the actor *practice* a character's prescribed behaviour and identity. Marvin Carlson explains that this doubleness is analogous to the distance between "self" and behaviour described in Schechner's concept of "restored behaviour," namely "twice behaved behaviour" ("Responses" 36) or "group actions consciously separated from the person doing them – theatre and other role playing, trances, shamanism, rituals" (Carlson 4). Underscoring the doubled nature of the actor in the satiric rehearsal play highlights several important mediations in performances, including those between the performer and character; between identity (social and cultural) and performance; and finally, those between the actor and audience, as the actor and his or her performance mediate between the playwright/text figured in character and the audience. Consequently, the rehearsal play also represents the complex interaction of author, text, performer, performance, and reception in the theatre.

In its inquiry into theatrical authority, satiric performance needs to denote and explore the interstices and interactions of text and performance because their relation informs theatrical authorisation and signification. For example, in the framing elements of Restoration plays, like prologues and epilogues, or the rehearsal format of Fielding's dramatic satires, the playwright tends to elucidate the tenuous correlation between play-text and performance, generally citing the ability of actors to reconstitute the text spontaneously in performance (either through their own ingenuity or mistakes), particularly as they – not the playwright – mediate the audience's reception of the text. Actors, therefore, have an agency separate from the play-text and satiric

performance tends to highlight and question the authority of this agency, not simply because it stems from performance instead of text, but because the actor's agency ultimately *authorises* the performance received by an audience. The actor's authority is, accordingly, as important and questionable as the playwright's in terms of satire and its anatomization of authority.

Furthermore, the playwright in the rehearsal play is frequently satirised for being as inept in the production of successful drama. Dramatic satire can, therefore, produce satiric effect by ironising performance or play-text by juxtaposing or inverting or creating tension in the relationship between the playwright's authority (dialogue and plot) and that of the actor's in performance and characterisation. Worthen asserts, "[a]ll productions betray the text, all texts betray the idealist *work*" ("Text/Performance" 20). By "work," Worthen means "an ideal construction assigned to an equally absent 'author'," which "is a site of regulation, containment, a way to fix and stabilize meanings by predetermining the range of appropriate interpretation, of licensed reading" (17). In spite of their seeming status as "works" – works that have clear, stable meaning and intention – satiric texts take into account the instability of their authority and authorisation; satiric performances, then, also take into account their own instability in terms of authority and authorisation, as well as their own tenuous relation to a supposedly stable dramatic script. More importantly, dramatic satire, like its textual counterpart, does not aim to *correct* or *discipline* performance, performer, playwright, play-text, or audience in a manner that will control their relations; rather, dramatic satire puts these sites of authorisation into conflict in order to emphasise their instability, mediation, and negotiation vis-à-vis each other.

I want to extend Worthen's logic of inevitable textual and performative failure in relation to a "work" to a brief discussion of film or television adaptation and textual satire, which I explore in-depth in my third and fourth chapters on adaptations of *Gulliver's Travels* and

*Tristram Shandy* respectively. Endemic to critical discussions of film adaptations is the tendency to reify books as “works” – singular, original, hermetic, definitive – in comparison to their film counterparts, which necessarily appear as secondary and derivative at best. In branches of theatre studies, dramatic performance has also been seen as parasitic in relation to the play-text – the literary “work” that can exist un-performed as it fully encodes and contains its own performance (Worthen “Drama” 1096). Performances of Shakespeare’s plays, for example, tend to be used as examples of how performances succeed or fail to adapt Shakespeare’s “works,” the defined “essence” of his play-texts (never mind that Shakespeare’s texts are already unstable documents). Under this logic, the performance of Shakespeare’s plays is only an *adaptation* of the text instead of an authority in its own right. Privileging play-text over performance, therefore, operates much like privileging book over film adaptation: it prioritises the literary over other forms of signification and representation without acknowledging their differing, yet equally legitimate, authorising modalities. “Too often, adaptation discourse subtly reinscribes the axiomatic superiority of literature to film,” Robert Stam explains, “...[t]he inter-art relation is seen as one of Darwinian struggle to the death rather than a dialogue offering mutual benefit and cross-fertilization” (4). Linda Hutcheon echoes Stam’s critique of the parasitic characterisation of adaptations, suggesting that the adaptive process is an evolutionary one whereby there is “both repetition and variation” (177). An adaptation, she continues, “does not draw life-blood from its source and leave it dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep the prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise” (176). Consequently, both performance and film adaptations are – in Worthen’s terms – “iterations.” They do not simply cite their “textual origins” but rather act as “surrogates” that “far from being authorized by [their] script, [produce] the terms of [their own] authorization in performance,

raising (as all acts of citation, reiteration, and surrogation do) these terms for inspection at the moment [they act] to conceal them” (“Drama” 1104). Satire in dramatic performance and film adaptation, then, must re-open these concealments in authorisation for inspection and self-reflexively examine the ways in which they authorise their own authority alongside other power relations.

### **Film/Theatre: Presenting the presence of satire in stage and screen performances**

Addressing the differences between theatre and film performances has been a particular task of drama and film critics alike. Though I will address some of these differences in the following section, I must state that I integrate a discussion of film and theatre performances because they both seem to elicit the same kind of critical rejection in satire criticism – one that views their authorising conditions as incompatible with satiric authority. J. Paul Hunter’s claims regarding Fielding’s move from dramatic satire to the novel and his greater satiric success with the novelistic form typify this type of rejection:

Whatever the dramatic advantages of rendering to the senses, the price one pays is in collaboration, for little can be added but much lost as additional consciousnesses bring their limits to the fleshing out of a vision. It may well be that drama – because it depends upon intermediate consciousness before it realizes itself as art and because it insists on the relative retreat of an author’s distinct voice behind the personalities of different characters – is less reflexive by nature than any other literary kinds...

Like film, its progeny, drama is essentially communal, and that traditional strength was a liability to a writer anxious to interpret the subjective implications of action in particular circumstances. (73)

Here Hunter denies a reflexivity in performances, dramatic and cinematic, that I argue does exist and I identify examples of satiric performances that point to the “subjective implications of action” throughout my dissertation. More importantly, I have already established how multiple “consciousnesses” or characters do not undermine “fleshing out” satire’s aims and inquiry; this is only the case if we conceive of satire as unidirectional and unambiguous in its negotiations between satirist, satiric object, and audience or if we see satiric texts as stable, closed “works,” which enables readers to achieve consensus in interpretation through solitary reading, a uniformity that satirists overtly claim is impossible to begin with. Yet Hunter’s link between theatre and film as a result of their diffuse authorial, “realistic,” and communal status provides the basis on which I examine the peculiar forms of signification and reception of theatre and film under the same framework of satiric performance.

Discussing theatre and film interchangeably under the rubric of Performance Studies is not as controversial as it may seem, unless one makes claims for the superiority of one medium over the other. Worthen’s article about the relationship between text and performance focuses exclusively on Baz Lurhmann’s film adaptation, *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), while Schechner’s response to this article notes that film still incorporates the “performance quadrilog,” namely “1) spectators/audience; 2) authors (of the action); 3) directors/arrangers; 4) performers” (36-37). To qualify his “performance” analysis of film, Schechner adds, “[e]lectronic media further complicates matters, introducing its own level of performance in addition to, *though not replacing*, the level of ‘live performing’ ” (my emphasis 37). In her article, “Theatre and Film,”

Susan Sontag also explains, “cinema is a ‘medium’ as well as an art, in the sense that *it can encapsulate any of the performing arts* and render it in a film transcription” (my emphasis 135). Finally, film critic Eric Bentley plainly asserts, “[t]he truth is dramatic art is possible on both stage and screen. On both it could fulfil its function of presenting an account of human experience deeply and truly” (108). An actor’s “live” performance thus coincides with film’s other forms of authorisation, which includes the director, producers, editing or montage, individual photographic shots and sequences, and finally, specific commercial imperatives; performance and film’s other demands do not cancel each other out. The work of satiric performance on film, therefore, becomes to submit its own medium specificity and authorisations to satiric critique in order to propel its satire; this includes, but is not limited to, an inquiry into the construction of dramatic performance in film.

Most claims against an equation of film and theatre performance, nonetheless, evoke the concept of “presence” as a means of demarcating between them. Whereas theatre has an immediate, embodied identification and interaction between actor and audience, the cinema has only a reflection on a screen, whose performances are not reciprocally constructed or received by an audience. “Theatre,” Cormac Power notes, “appears to have a unique potential to place objects of representation *there* on the stage before us, with events and actions actually *taking place* without having been pre-recorded or narrated” (15). However, Power complicates this idea of presence in theatre by citing Derrida’s notion that “there is nothing outside representation,” suggesting instead that “presence can be seen *as a function* of theatrical signification” (8) and therefore, theatre has “the very potential... to put presence *into play* [which] enables us to consider the importance of theatre as an art form that can allow us to reflect upon and question the construction of ‘reality’ in the contemporary world” (9). Playing with presence becomes

another means of “tearing the seams” of performance, thereby exposing theatre’s disciplinary modalities and their reflection and reproduction in the “real” world. Roger Copeland also notes,

The ongoing critique of theatrical presence is also valuable insofar as it reminds us that no experience (no matter how ‘live’) is entirely unmediated. The ‘copy theory of knowledge’ was invalidated long ago. The innocent eye never existed. Furthermore, the idea that the theatre’s ‘liveness’ is – in and of itself – a virtue, a source of automatic, unearned moral superiority to film and television, is sheer bourgeois sentimentality. (42)

Copeland’s remark about class and theatre speaks to the ways in which “presence” becomes a marker of the supposedly exclusive nature of theatre in comparison to *mass media*, which is seemingly more democratic and inclusive. The experience of theatre thus becomes more attached to commercial and social conditions rather than perceptual and cognitive ones.

In lieu of “presence” and “absence,” the differentiation of film and theatre ultimately hinges on the issue of medium specificity as it pertains to the use of space, as well as its systems of identification between audience and performance. Regarding space in both forms, Sontag states succinctly,

Theatre is confined to a logical or *continuous* use of space. Cinema (through editing, that is through the change of shot – which is the basic unit of film construction) has access to an analogic or *discontinuous* use of space. In the theatre, people are either in the stage space or ‘off.’ When ‘on,’ they are always visible or visualizable in contiguity with each other. In cinema, no such relation is necessarily visible or visualizable. (141)

Sontag’s focus on space implies what Stanley Kauffman identifies as the major and most obvious difference between film and theatre: “a mechanical omnipresence [in film] that the theatre never has, the camera” (157). For Kauffman, the camera facilitates this discontinuous use of space in

the cinema, which also allows the cinema to rearrange the supposedly fixed spatial relation between audience and performance (155). Countering the numerous claims of theatre critics regarding the “magic” of theatre and the “presence” or immediacy of flesh and blood actors, film critics André Bazin and Christian Metz suggest that the freedom of the camera in relation to space enables a seemingly more unmediated experience than the theatre. “Dramatic causes and effect have no longer any material limit to the eye of the camera,” Bazin contends. “Drama is freed by the camera from all contingencies of time and space” (115). Likewise, Metz claims that the absence of material reality (“live” actors and physical objects on stage) in film negates the need for the audience to split its perception between the fiction represented and the “present” against which it is represented. He posits,

The unique position of the camera lies in this dual character of its signifier: unaccustomed perceptual wealth, but at the same time stamped with unreality to an unusual degree and from the very outset. More than all other arts, or in a more unique way, the cinema involves us in the imaginary: it drums up all perception, but to switch it immediately over into its own absence, which is nonetheless the only signifier present. (250)

Value judgments aside, Metz and Bazin both see identification as more direct and unimpeded in cinema, because the audience does not need to negate material reality to perceive its fiction. The camera can supposedly simulate reality more seamlessly and with greater license. In effect, Bazin believes that the “theatre calls for an active individual consciousness, while the film requires only a passive adhesion” (113).

While I completely disagree that the audience of cinema is passive or that film audiences do not already recognise what they view on screen is not real, I think it is undeniable that film

has a potential for hyperrealism in its special effects and its seamless composition and construction of shots and scenario. Such potential becomes the source of exploitation and exposure in satiric films, specifically the “mockumentary” genre that I discuss in Chapter Four, which ridicules and deconstructs the ostensibly “unmediated” documentation of reality on film. In “mockumentary,” dissecting an actor’s performance or a director’s “vision,” employing reflexive-mechanical interjections into montage, editing, and framing (i.e. discontinuous or self-conscious fades, dissolves, split screens, jump cuts etc.), and simply going “behind-the-scenes” and exposing the commercial, industrial, and technical concerns informing film production all contribute to a satiric appraisal of both the film’s subject matter and its own authorisation of such subject matter. It also forces the audience to contend with the multiple factors and agents that author film’s singular composition, leaving such singularity open to question and negotiation. Film thus produces satiric effect by simultaneously reflecting upon and ironising its form and content.

In effect, this dissertation aims to chart the various strategies of satiric inquiry as it exposes the power-knowledge dynamic and its relationship to discourse *and* as it operates through various modes of authorisation – stylistic, technical, literary, cultural, political, and economic – in dramatic satire, film adaptations of narrative satire, and mockumentary. I divide my discussion into two parts, the first contending with issues surrounding satiric performances in the theatre and the second with satiric performance on film and more specifically, film adaptations of canonical eighteenth-century satiric texts. My first chapter, “The Collier Controversy and the problem of interpreting satiric performance in Restoration comedies,” examines the critical discussion in the late 1690s surrounding Restoration comedies, spearheaded

by Jeremy Collier, a non-conformist clergyman who rejected the “profanity” and “vice” of Restoration comedies’ “Hobbesian” satire. Unlike critics who locate Collier’s discomfort with Restoration comedies solely in their dialogue, I contend that Collier’s ultimate objection was to embodied performance and the ways in which Restoration comedies expose and conceal the potential disjunction between identity and action, class and behaviour; language provided for Collier a seemingly stable articulation of morality and power that the indifference of “force and motion” destabilises. In Restoration comedy, the reflexive and ironic doubleness of performance/performer and the refusal of conventional dramatic closure (i.e. poetic justice) render the need for self-reflexive interpretation and the negotiation of meaning vis-à-vis an audience in satire apparent, such subjective negotiation being an affront to Collier’s essentialist ideas of moral and political authority. Consequently, I argue that Collier’s criticism of satiric performance effectively exposes what satiric performance is *not*: disciplinary and didactic. Instead satiric performance enacts an inquiry into discipline itself, destabilising its forces and forcing its audience to define the contours of moral “Truths” and behaviour.

My second chapter, “The Author’s Force: Henry Fielding, the theatre, and satiric performances as ‘allegories of unreadability’,” further debunks the idea of a controlled and controlling relation between a satirist with a moral agenda and an audience in need of correction. In his “rehearsal plays,” Fielding reflexively draws attention to the negotiation of meaning that transpires between audience, performers, playwrights, and critics in the theatre, without necessarily positing clear-cut points of identification and authority. He compounds this ambiguity and instability by constantly undermining the authorial figures in his play-within-the-plays and maintaining conflict between performance (as a seemingly spontaneous, diffuse authority) and commentary (as a supposedly premeditated, definitive authority) on the stage.

Accordingly, Fielding does not negate or condemn performance and its authorisations by privileging textual authority in order to perform satire, as many critics of Fielding's plays suggest by calling them essentially "anti-theatrical." Rather, in troubling the uniformity and unidirectionality of stage authority, Fielding indirectly unsettles other forms of authority, especially political and economic power, by exposing their performative rather than ontological status, as well as their negotiated boundaries through both discourse and performance.

Thus far my dissertation establishes that satiric meaning is negotiated rather than unilateral, satire is ambiguous inquiry rather than didacticism, and that performance operates as a successful vehicle for satire's inquiry into authority insofar as it self-reflexively questions its own forms of authorisation. The third chapter, "Charting *Gulliver's Travels*: Interpretive conundrums, fidelity, and the difficulties of adapting Swift to live-action film," begins my discussion of film within this framework of satiric performance. Surveying film adaptations of Swift's text, I examine the tendency to realise the text's fantastic elements in lieu of adapting Swift's satiric inquiry to a film format, which connects to certain creative and commercial conditions. Focusing on Sturridge and Moore's attempt at a complete adaptation of *Gulliver's Travels* (1996), I argue that, while it succeeds in adapting Swift's narrative *realistically* onto film, it lacks a self-reflexive engagement with medium specificity, thereby sealing off the film from the openness, ambiguity, and inquiry of Swift's satiric text. Nevertheless, the premise of my argument does not rest, as with most critics, on the notion that one cannot produce satiric self-reflexivity or Swift's ironic complexities on film; rather, by identifying the problems of film adaptations in surrogating Swift's satire, I emphasise the need and possibility to marry satiric self-reflexivity in film's authority to critical content or commentary in film or film adaptations of satire.

My final chapter, “Satire, Celebrity, and the Conditionality of Authority: (mis)adapting Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, in Michael Winterbottom’s *A Cock & Bull Story* (2005)” demonstrates how Winterbottom’s film answers many of the problems that I identify in film adaptations of *Gulliver’s Travels*. Winterbottom’s film adaptation materialises as not only a successful adaptation of Sterne’s book, but also a successful satire of film adaptations, film production, and film celebrity. In fact, *A Cock & Bull Story* abandons a straightforward adaptation of the content in Sterne’s book in favour of satirising its own forms of authorisation through mockumentary – a mode that ridicules and anatomizes the various agents and conditions effecting and affecting film authority, including the construction of reality on film and the importance of celebrity, as a nexus of commercial and popular authority, in film production and reception. Ultimately, the film achieves satiric effect because it employs satiric self-reflexivity to its own modes of authorisation. This, in turn, also happens to reproduce the conditional and contingent forms of authority represented and satirised in Sterne’s book, but uniquely and independently within the medium specificity of film.

## **Chapter 2: The Collier Controversy and the problem of interpreting satiric performance in Restoration comedies**

In his response to Aubrey Williams' article, "No Cloistered Virtue: Or, Playwright versus Priest in 1698," Robert L. Root Jr. states, "[e]ssentially, the Collier Controversy involved critical theory, not dramatic practice" (926). Here Root points to the inadequacy of Williams' argument about the nature of the late-seventeenth century debate over the English theatre, because it depends upon defences of the drama written by Restoration playwrights themselves in order to refute the critical censure of non-juror and theatre commentator, Jeremy Collier. These defences, of course, do not always coincide with the content or performance of Restoration comedies, nor do they openly admit to the multiple and problematic interpretations that Restoration plays' oftentimes ethically questionable representations proffer. Instead, many of these defences rely on general, even abstract philosophical or theoretical definitions of the functions of comedy and satire. Root's point, consequently, becomes an important one: critical theory, be it the playwrights' or even Collier's, cannot account entirely for the dramatic practices of the Restoration stage. What Collier's various tracts, as well as those of playwrights and their supporters, do reveal about the Restoration plays is the complex transmission and circulation of satiric agency that occurs through dramatic performance; they elucidate the interplay of playwright, actor, audience, and critic that complicates the simple authorisation of satiric or ironic intent. In this chapter, I will instead examine Jeremy Collier and his supporters' uncomfortable relationship with dramatic performance and its ostensibly nebulous negotiation of satiric meaning.

The Collier controversy refers to a pamphlet war in the late 1690s, initiated by Jeremy Collier, a non-juror clergyman who aimed to reform the Restoration stage. Collier publishes his first tract, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, in 1698, attacking popular playwrights, like Dryden, Wycherley, and Congreve (his most active respondent), for violations against morality, decency, and the clergy in their comedies. *A Short View* was extremely popular and sparked approximately eighty-six other responses and counter-responses between 1698 and 1726 (Anthony 8, 296-97). Collier himself writes four subsequent tracts, *A Defence of the Short View*, *A Second Defence of the Short View*, *Dissuasive from the Play-House* (two editions), and *A Farther Vindication of the Short View*, the total output of his work being approximately six hundred and forty-seven pages. His prolific output and views certainly saturate discussions of the moral representation in the theatre, as well as prologues and epilogues in early eighteenth-century plays (Kinservik 44). Noting a shift in the early eighteenth century away from Restoration comedies, with their negative exemplars and ambiguous endings, to sympathetic or sentimental comedies, with their positive exemplars and poetic justice, theatre historians traditionally attribute this transition exclusively to Collier and the popular adoption of his view. Nevertheless, Matthew Kinservik, among other critics, contends that Collier was part of a broader movement toward social reform following the Glorious Revolution, spearheaded by citizen groups, like the Society for the Reformation of Manners, as well as private individuals who sought legal action against actors and performers for indecency and profanity (48-50). The Collier controversy may not have been the only cause for changes in English drama, but it had a profound effect on future censorship of the stage, enshrined in law by the Licensing Act of 1737, a bill requiring all play-texts be governmentally approved for performance; the Act was not repealed until 1968. That play-texts become the target of censorship for Collier and later

Walpole's government is important as it marks a particular difficulty in locating responsibility and authority in the diffuse signifiers of dramatic, satiric performance.

Early on in *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, Jeremy Collier articulates the tenuous moral nature of performance: "*Show, Musik, Action, and Rhetorick* are moving entertainments; and rightly employ'd would be very significant. But *Force* and *Motion* are Things indifferent, and the Use lies chiefly in the Application" (1-2). In rendering movement "indifferent" in gesture or music or rhetoric, Collier implicitly questions the moral efficacy of performance itself. He claims that his contemporaries in the theatre, particularly those writing comedies, misapply this movement "under a very dangerous management" (2). His criticisms of the theatre, nevertheless, remain fixated on the perceived offensive language and dialogue of Restoration plays and ignore the agency that attends those that provide and manage the "force" and "motion" applied to the entertainment: the actors. Performance analysis becomes the noted blind-spot throughout the course of all of Collier's anti-theatrical tracts. As P.A. Skantze notes, "Disconcerted by performance – motion is a thing indifferent until *in use* – Collier treats plays as texts and his own work as critical commentary, citing page references to scripts rather than recounting memorable performances" (138).<sup>14</sup> Collier's occlusion of performance analysis speaks at once to the ephemeral quality of performance – it is hard to record and account for performance unlike printed dialogue – but also to a great discomfort that he has with the embodied nature and affective influence of dramatic, satiric performance.

Aubrey Williams provides a useful framework for understanding Collier's issues with performance. He contends that the fault-lines of the Collier Controversy are drawn over "the

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<sup>14</sup> I take a different approach to Collier's relationship to performance than Skantze does, however, in that I focus on Collier's concerns over the ambiguous moral nature of performance, a more general concern than Skantze's conception of Collier's objection to performance because it offers "movement," which is equated to "agency," to female characters in Restoration comedies.

mimetic representation of vice and folly on the stage” (235), rather than simply a debate over the uses (and misuses) of language. Collier and other anti-theatrical critics, like Rev. Anthony Hornbeck and Jacques Bénigne Bossuet (Bishop of Meaux), enact a decidedly platonic rejection of performance, as they “simply will not tolerate any realistic imitation of evil in the theatre” (Williams 235). This lack of tolerance for mimesis connects Collier and his antitheatrical peers to earlier, even ancient antagonists of the theatre. Their antitheatrical polemics tend to claim authority through Plato’s *Republic*, since it discourages dramatic performance on the basis that “imitation is formative – those who imitate will tend to become what they imitate” (Barish 21); accordingly, only positive examples should be represented on the stage – something Collier harps about in his multiple diatribes, rejecting the negative exemplars of dramatic satire. On the opposing side of the debate, Williams contends that supporters of the theatre and the playwrights themselves, such as John Dennis, William Congreve, and John Vanbrugh, generally provide a defence of mimetic representation informed by Aristotelian principles of drama and more specifically, his ideas of catharsis (238). In a vicarious experience animated by “live” or embodied performance, the spectator’s passions are aroused and, in part, satisfied until Reason restricts pleasure, moderates it, and purges corresponding desires.<sup>15</sup> “Where the opponents of the stage detail an economy of gaze and desire,” Jean Marsden remarks, “most of the defences assume a link between gaze and reason, so that watching a play becomes an ongoing process of analysis that prevents the onset of desire” (31). For theatre defenders following Aristotle, the pleasure of play performances can potentially instruct spectators by spurring the rational management of their felt sensory experience. It is precisely this felt sensory experience in the

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<sup>15</sup> The author of *A Vindication of the Stage*, like John Dennis, speaks strongly to the pleasing and vicarious nature of viewing embodied performance. He writes, “Who can express the Charms of a well wrought Scene *lively* Represented? The Motions of the Actors charm our outward Senses, while the pleasing Words steals into our Souls, and mixes with our very Blood and Spirits, so that we are carry’d by an irresistless [sic], but pleasing violence into the very Passion we behold” (my emphasis 25).

audience inspired by embodied performance – not simply the written word – that Collier and other anti-theatre critics fear.

Though catalogues of text citations fill his tracts as evidence of theatrical misdemeanours, Collier does emphasise the dangerous visual aspect of the theatre, which, by extension, points to the problems of representing satire through embodied, mimetic performance. While Restoration playwrights and their proponents defend ironic dramatic representations of vice, suggesting that “lively Representations” of vice on the stage reflect a “reality” that will inevitably repulse a morally attuned audience, Collier decries that *performed* vice becomes acts of real vice that serve merely to entertain and taint the audience. In fact, through embodiment, performance seems to literalise or actualise criminality and occlude any possible ironic representation or interpretation in the theatre, rendering satiric performance wholly incompatible with didacticism.<sup>16</sup> In *A Short View*, Collier complains of performed vice in dramatic satire and its insidious functions on the stage:

’Tis sometimes painted at length too and appears in great variety of progress and practice. It wears almost all sorts of dresses to engage the fancy and fasten upon the memory and keep up the charm from languishing. Sometimes you have it in image and description; sometimes by way of allusion; sometimes in disguise; and sometimes without it. And what can be the meaning of such a representation unless it be to tincture the audience, to extinguish shame, and make lewdness a diversion? (4-5)

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<sup>16</sup> I endorse Barish’s description of Collier’s attitude towards performance: “It is true also that his specific critical comments can be grotesquely inept, with a Tertullianesque literalness that suggests a kind of tone-deafness to all imaginative experience. Yet it is hard not to suspect, from the scores of pages and the quantities of energy lavished on topics like decorum, verisimilitude, and the morality of dramatic fables, that these interest him for their own sake, that he is as powerfully attracted as he is violently repelled by the phenomenon that he is investigating” (226). In agreement with Barish’s appraisal, I do think that Collier’s visceral and extensive reaction to dramatic satire does, in a large way, speak to the attractiveness and power of the theatre in the first place.

Here Collier comments on not only how the language of Restoration comedies is offensive, but also how the plays draw a “lewd picture,” underlining the visual nature of their representation and the multifarious impressions left by these lively representations of vice. Collier’s description of performances as pictures or images becomes important when we consider, as M.H. Abrams postulates, that eighteenth-century epistemology recognized an idea as “a mirror-image of sensation” (160), thereby heightening the threat of embodiment and embodied understanding in an audience getting “ideas” from live, visual representations. Collier further complains that these “images” occur with “No censure, no mark of infamy, no mortification... touch them” (148), suggesting that authorial interjections seem not to inform or intervene in the performances in order to establish a clear, didactic or ironic intention.<sup>17</sup> In my formulation of satire, such interjections would defeat the aims of dramatic satire as it occludes the formal irony and referential ambiguity that are integral parts of satire; as well, it presumes (and believes) that satire has only one apparent moral agenda. Collier explicitly identifies this satiric agenda with the playwright and denies the audience, through his totalizing readings of Restoration plays, the agency with which they could interpret levels of irony or decipher satiric meaning in performances.

For Collier, dramatic satire overwhelms the Reason of an audience and does not, as Rose Zimbardo would contend, “*demonstrate to understanding*” (*A Mirror to Nature* 11). Rather, dramatic satire creates false understanding or reasoning based on unmediated sensual

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<sup>17</sup> This type of annotating of dramatic scripts to decipher satiric meaning becomes an object of ridicule for Henry Fielding in the print version of his play, *Tragedy of Tragedies*. Following his Scriblerian forebears (Swift, Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot), Fielding uses the persona of H. Scriblerus Secundus, an inept Modern critic, to provide copious, lengthy, and oftentimes misleading annotations alongside the dramatic text in order to satirize the type of ridiculous encumbering or hampering of meaning that such authorial interjections and critical postulations have on the play. In my understanding of satire, the Scriblerian move also suggests that satire invites and plays with multiple translations and interpretations of its matter rather than demands and textually cements one definitive interpretation.

experiences. In a response to William Congreve's refutation of his claims, Collier directly attributes this false consciousness on the part of the audience to performance. He writes,

A Character of Disadvantage upon the *Stage*, makes a stronger impression than elsewhere. Reading is but Hearing second hand: Now Hearing at the best, is a more languid Conveyance than Sight... The Eye is much more affecting, and strikes deeper into the Memory than the Ear. Besides, Upon the *Stage* both the Senses are in Conjunction. The Life of the Action fortifies the Object, and awakens the Mind to take hold of it. Thus a dramatik [sic] Abuse is rivetted [sic] in the *Audience*, a Jest is improv'd into an Argument, and grows up into Reason (*A Defence* 25-26).

The "jest" motivating satiric performance transforms into an un-ironic rationalisation of bad qualifications and behaviour in Collier's formulation, particularly when satiric representations debase the "gentility" of the individual object of ridicule. Such transformation occurs only through the conjunction of senses entranced by performance, which curiously excludes "Reading" or a wilful act of mediated reception. "Thus a Character of Scandal becomes almost indelible," Collier continues, "...he that's made a Fool in a *Play*, is often made one for His Lifetime. 'Tis true he passes for such only amongst the prejudiced and unthinking; but these are no inconsiderable Division of Mankind" (*A Defence* 26). Though Collier may not deny his audience Reason outright, especially those of a certain class, his interpretations of dramatic satire do deny for the most part the audience's capacity to interpret dramatic representation, enact moral censure themselves, or more importantly, choose to act independently of the lively representations on the stage.<sup>18</sup> He suggests that theatre is "the entertainment of those who are

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<sup>18</sup> In his 1693 publication, *A Short View Tragedy*, which predates Collier's first tract by five years, neoclassicist Thomas Rymer takes the Aristotelian defense of dramatic satire to task for the same reason as Collier, namely that the stimulated audience cannot process the content of performances intellectually. He complains of *The Rehearsal's* Bayes and his arguments defending Restoration drama, stating, "Aristotle tells us of the two senses that must be

generally least both in Sense, and in Station... Barrenness of Fancy makes them often take up with those Scandalous liberties” (*A Short View* 6).

The real danger of performed vice for Collier then becomes its affective influence on the spectator, who only seems to be able to respond to the performances un-ironically and to imitate them automatically. Indeed, female spectators become the major focus of Collier’s concern over the irresistible pleasure and influence of embodied satiric performance. When discussing, for example, the debauching of “Married women” on the Restoration stage, Collier laments,

on our *Stage*, how common is it to make a Lord, a Knight, or an Alderman a Cuckold? The Schemes of Success are beaten out with great Variety, and almost drawn up in to a Science. How many Snares are laid for the undermining of Virtue, and with what Triumph is the Victory proclaim’d? The Finess [sic] of the *Plot*, and the Life of the Entertainment often lies in these Contrivances. (24)

Here Collier conflates the debauched female character on the stage with the female spectator, suggesting that both are corrupted through the “Life” or performance of finely construed libertine/male plotting or dramatic satire itself – two other elements whose differences are obscured in the course of Collier’s argument. In essence, dramatic satire inevitably incriminates female spectators because they too become trapped in the scheme and their witnessing gaze animates within them a vicarious experience of libertine debauchery. As Marsden explains,

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pleased: our sight and our ears. And it is in vain for a poet, with Bayes in *The Rehearsal*, to complain of injustice and the wrong judgment in his audience, unless these two senses be gratified... The worst on it is that most people are wholly led by these senses, and follow upon content, without ever troubling their noodle further” (Clark 159). I enjoy how Rymer misses the satiric content of Bayes’ characterization. In *The Rehearsal*, Bayes’ creation of nonsensical content in his own dramatic productions, through pure spectacle, spontaneous battle scenes, bad rhymes, and dance sequences, ironically points to the same abuses of the stage, particularly those that contravene classicist ideas of time, order, and verisimilitude in the drama, which Rymer attempts to expose himself. Bayes, in fact, becomes a straw man for other Restoration playwrights when their prologues or epilogues make fun of bad playwriting.

Sight creates a bond between spectator and event, which of necessity implicates the observer. Because of the link between sight and desire, the nature of this guilt is always distinctly sexual... This link between sight and sex becomes of primary importance with regard to the female spectator, whose gaze becomes the true source of anxiety for Jeremy Collier and his followers. (22-23)

Marsden's argument presumes, however, that Collier's recognition of a desirous female gaze constitutes some sort of spectatorial agency. She overstates the case for a link between desire and agency in Collier and the other anti-theatrical writers by suggesting that both characterise women as "gazing subjects rather than passive objects of male desire" (38). This overstatement becomes evident when considering the way in which Collier addresses a woman's modesty and her vicarious experience of the theatre. In *A Short View*, Collier writes,

Modesty is the distinguishing Vertue [sic] of that Sex, and serves both for Ornament and Defence: Modesty was design'd by Providence as a Guard to Virtue; And that it might be always at Hand, 'tis wrought into the Mechanism of the Body. 'Tis a Quality as true to Innocence, as the Senses are to Health; whatever is ungrateful to the first, is prejudicial to the latter. The Enemy no sooner approaches, but the Blood rises in Opposition and looks Defiance [sic] to an Indecency. It supplys [sic] the room of Reasoning, and Collection: Intuitive Knowledge can scarcely make a quicker Impression; And what then can be a surer Guide to the Unexperienced [sic]? It teaches by Suddain [sic] Instinct and Aversion; This is both a ready and a powerful Method of Instruction. The Tumult of the Blood and Spirits, and the Uneasiness of the Sensation, are of Singular Use. They serve to awaken Reason, and prevent surprize [sic]. Thus the Distinctions of Good and Evil are refresh'd, and the Temptation kept at a proper Distance. (11)

Collier does assign “the room of Reasoning” to the blush – that unmediated response and defence of women exposed to vice. Marsden rightly contends that this “Tumult of the Blood and Spirit,” inspired by the witnessing of vice, has close proximity to “the youthful passion it is supposed to protect against” (Marsden 27). Her insight can be extended to align Collier’s views of female spectatorship with those of the defenders of the stage and their Aristotelian arguments about drama, vicariousness, and catharsis. Nonetheless, it is impossible to ignore Collier’s old fashioned misogynist attitudes that render women’s knowledge intuitive rather than cognitive; “Providence” institutes women’s “Modesty,” thereby ideologically separating their bodily desire from agency and the capacity to govern their selfhood. Collier does not allow for women to manage their desires or determine their own actions after arousal; “license” operates here as something very distinct from “agency.” Moreover, as Marsden concedes, Collier intimates that women seem to lose the “power” of modesty when they enter the playhouses (27). Female spectators, like their lower-class male counterparts in the audience, thus remain objectified in Collier’s paradigm. Though spectatorship and particularly female spectatorship is of great importance to Collier as Marsden insists, his anxiety over women in the theatre has more to do with his belief in their complete inability to be agents of choice or discernment in the playhouse – such agency being a fundamental concern and aspect of satire in general. He thereby portrays spectatorship as a powerful but passive and unmediated experience of victimisation, rather than one that incorporates active and subjective interpretation or participation.

It is precisely this charge of play performances victimising audiences that the supporters of the theatre refuse to take up. Theatre proponents in the early eighteenth century tend to privilege the audience’s agency over the power of license represented in Restoration comedies on the stage. The anonymous writer of *A Letter to A.H. Esq.* goes as far as to defend the authority

of the audience over even that of the church fathers, whom Collier cites copiously in his various tracts; he flatly asserts, “No Man ought to pay such a Respect either to Councils or Fathers, as to submit his Judgement contrary to his Reason” (3-4). This very Protestant defence of reason evokes a confidence in audience reception and subjective interpretation that escapes Collier’s point of view entirely. It also suggests an alignment between rationality and dramatic satire that overrides Collier’s negative appraisal of the aims of “lively” satiric performance. In *A Vindication of the Stage*, the anonymous pamphlet writer forecloses a discussion on the “chief and prime businesses” of comedy in favour of discussing how dramatic satire responds to a particular type of demand and taste in the audience. He states, “if Delight be the end of Comedy, the Charge will fall on the People, and not the Poets, so that at least *Mr. Collier* has laid his Arguments wrong, for if the Spectators were displeas’d with the Representation, the Poets wou’d quickly change it” (5). Certainly contemporary spectators were displeased with Restoration comedies in the early part of the eighteenth century, as scholars like Robert Hume demonstrate, situating Collier’s disparaging views of the theatre as “more or less representative of the predominant public opinion,” as well as fuelling an already mobilized movement towards reforming the stage and reactivating the theatre censor in the office of Master of Revels (“Jeremy Collier” 308). Nevertheless, Collier does not focus on or include this real public anger as evidence for his own vitriolic criticisms of the playhouses; for Collier, the members of the public do not figure as agents of reform, but rather the beneficiaries of it. The stage vindicators, on the other hand, champion the public as agents of discernment and judgement, even at the expense of the playwright’s authority in the comedies. In fact, authorial intention becomes a moot point for many defenders of the stage. When the writer of *A Letter to A.H.*, for example, admonishes Collier’s belief that stage satires of clergymen will tarnish the whole of the office, he declares,

I daresay, whatever the Intention of the Poet is, 'tis not receiv'd so by the Audience. For at this rate, every foolish Peer who is brought on the Stage, must be suppos'd to intend a Reflection on all the Men of Condition; an Alderman, who is a Cuckhold, must be look'd on as the representative of his Brethren. 'Tis absurd to make no distinction; as if a particular Vice in a particular Man, cou'd not be expos'd without a design'd Reflection on all who belong to him. (7)

The writer's dismissal of the playwright's intention here does not necessarily reject an insidious agenda on the part of the author, but rather bolsters the capacity of the audience to assert their own judgement over and above the playwright's work. "That whatever the Design of the Poet has been," he remarks again, "it has not had the effect with the People [to discard the clergy's authority]: For who disbelieves the Authority of their Function, or thinks the worse of Good, Learned, and Ingenious men among them?" (8). Highlighting the ambiguity of the author function in dramatic satire and its potential irrelevance in individual interpretation, *A Letter to A.H.* effectively articulates the need and presence of an actively engaged and discerning audience to "read" and enjoy satiric performance without necessarily the automatic, licentious responses that Collier dreads. This is not to say, however, that the anonymous author rightly homogenises the audience of dramatic satire as one that can always discern satiric or ironic intent and will never be vicariously titillated by embodied representations of vice.

Because of his unwillingness to extend spectatorial agency to theatre audiences, unlike the supporters of theatre, Collier narrowly focuses his criticism to the reform and disciplining of the playwrighting satirist and not the public that attends play performances. In his preface to *A Defence of the Short View*, Collier declares, "Those who Paint for Debauchery, should have the Fucus pull'd off, and the Coarseness underneath discover'd. The Poets are the Aggressors, let

them lay down their Arms first” (ii). By ascribing the crude meanings or “poyson” of Restoration plays to aggressive playwrights, Collier’s criticism radically overlooks the agency that actors and actresses have in interpreting the playwright’s text through performance; actors like spectators become victims of the author’s supposedly perverted imagination. In this sense, Jonas Barish accurately asserts that Collier differs from his critical ancestors in that he does not simply reproduce a declamation of actors for the hypocrisy central to their artistry (223). For Collier, actors and particularly actresses emerge as merely images produced by the author and they seem, therefore, to represent without control over signification. “An Author must have Right done him, and be shown in his own Shape, and Complexion,” Collier writes of Congreve and his satiric practice,

Yes by all means! Vice must be disrobed, and People poyson’d, and all for the sake of Justice! To do Right to such an Author is to burn him. I hope Modesty is much better than Resemblance. The Imitation of an ill Thing is the worse for being exact: And sometimes to report a Fault is to repeat it. (71)

He intriguingly attaches the exactitude of “imitation” and the act of “reporting” faults or vices to the playwright, overriding any responsibility the actor may have for the significance of his or her performance. Performers do not even register as agents of signification in Collier’s scheme. His account of actresses performing under “Disorders of Liberty” further accentuates this lack of interpretive or signifying agency on the part of the performer:

They have oftentimes not so much as the poor refuge of Double Meaning to fly to. So that you are under necessity either of taking Ribaldry or Nonsense. And when the Sentence has two Handles, the worst is generally turn’d to the Audience. The Matter is so

contrived that the Smut and Scum of Thought rises uppermost; And like a Picture drawn to *Sight*, looks always upon the Company. (*A Short View* 12)

Actresses are exposed in their performance of “liberties,” since imitation seems to actualise these vices. Because the author stands as the “reporter” of these vices, however, female performers materialize as victims of their characters, which singularly reproduce the smuttiness of the author. The direction of the gaze then – here the lewd picture looking upon the company – provides an interesting reversal. This characterisation of performance does two things simultaneously: it places the power of the gaze in the spectacle rather than the spectator,<sup>19</sup> again suggesting objectification and a lack of agency on the part of the audience. At the same time, the content of the performance (both literal and ironic), as well as the contrivance or mode of performance, lay not in the purview of the performer but rather the author of the spectacle, who limits signification on a discursive level so that the lewd is the only interpretive possibility. The “movement” or “force” in performance, produced by the actor, simply does not create meaning or *make sense* to Collier.

Even when actors perform prologues and epilogues, “and remove from Fiction into Life [and] converse with the *Boxes* and the *Pit*, and address directly to the Audience,” Collier still maintains that the author dictates the significance of the performance and “exceeds himself” (*A Short View* 13) in shaming the performers. Indeed actors do deliver epilogues and prologues, as Collier explains, “to justify the Conduct of the *Play*, and bespeak the Favour of the Company”

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<sup>19</sup> Collier’s perception of theatrical spectacle as a picture that stares back at the spectator can also be connected to the spatial relationship between spectator and performer in baroque theatres. As Deborah C. Payne explains, because Restoration actors performed comedies “on the forestage,” their close proximity to the audience, as well as the illuminated nature of the theatres, allowed them to return their gaze to the audience members and engage them directly (30). In fact, this close setting allowed Restoration actresses to “know the regulars in the boxes and the pit,” revealing a type of intimacy between actor and spectator, which undoes contemporary theories of spectatorship, mostly foregrounded in cinematic frameworks, that emphasise scopophilic voyeurism at the expense of recognising the inter-subjective relationship between audience and performers in the theatre (Payne “Reified” 31). However, Collier seems to refuse his female actresses this agential participation with the audience, by crediting their performance as one wholly derivative of and solely constructed by the playwright’s scripted intentions.

(13) on behalf of the playwright; and the prologues and epilogues that Collier lists “like Rocks in the Margin” (Dryden’s *The Mock Astrologer* and *Cleomenes*, Wycherley’s *The Country Wife*, and Congreve’s *The Old Batchelor*) do play off metaphors linking authorship and sexual potency, as well as portray female actresses as willing, compliant, and enabling of that sexual performance or worse, as sexually available to the audience. However, like many critics reading these very same texts today, Collier refuses to see actors or actresses as agents in this role and instead frames the delivery of epilogues and prologues as yet another bawdy objectification and victimisation of actors by a playwright who needs to defend his smut. He ignores the significance of the role that actors play when they perform this intercession between playwright and audience, namely that they highlight their role as performers “in-between,” who can mediate text and reception. This function, in effect, has a major impact on the production of meaning and implicates the performer as one who, along with the playwright, authors satiric intent. When we consider the prologue to *The Country Wife*, for instance, Wycherley dramatises and ironises precisely this “in-between” nature and responsibility of the actor.

The male performer of the prologue to *The Country Wife* represents himself, not as character but as an individual and actor, being torn between the intentions and desires of the playwright and those of the audience. He describes the poets as “cudgel’d bullies” who never “at first or second blow submit to” an audience (lines 1-2), instead provoking them and doing so primarily through the actor’s delivery of a prologue: “For poets out of fear first draw on you; / In a fierce prologue the still pit defy” (8-9). Here the actor points to the activity and agency of the pit or audience, while simultaneously crediting the fierce prologue to the cowardice of the playwright; the performer erases his own position as mediator of the dynamic between author and audience, this deletion echoing the erasure of the actor’s agency in the rest of the prologue

through a constant emphasis on his submission to another's will. The prologue continues to assert the actor's more important allegiance to the audience, one that emboldens his own power and agency, as he states, "But we, the actors, humbly will submit, / Now, and at any time, to a full pit; / Nay, often we anticipate your rage, / And murder poets for you on stage" (21-24). His conceit suggests that actors can butcher the playwright's text on stage through performance to assuage or entertain the audience; perhaps, more importantly or humorously to Wycherley as playwright and author of the prologue too, violence to the author and text can be more owed to an actor's artistic liberties or even blunders in performance than to any attempt to lull an unhappy audience. This "murder," nevertheless, underscores the actor's ability to manoeuvre on stage in spite of the author's directives (something self-consciously noted by the prologue's author) and to change the text in the moment of performance – an enormous amount of power, especially when the audience responds directly to the performance and not the text. The prologue then moves to draw attention to behind the scenes, when the eager-to-please actor exclaims to his audience, "We set no guards upon our tiring room, /... We patiently, you see, give up to you / Our poets, virgins, nay our Matrons too" (25, 27-28). He provides the audience not only with assurance that their reception dictates the performance, but also offers access to life supposedly beyond the stage. Deborah C. Payne proposes that, while there are suggestions, as Collier would presume, of virginal and married actresses being objectified and prostituted to spectators, the humour of the passage "is directed against those spineless actors who would kill stage poets and surrender women in order to appease the audience" (24). I would suggest, however, that the statement also dramatises the power of an actor – spineless or not – over that of the poet, and how he or she operates as a key for the audience in determining the value and meaning of the

spectacle, and for negotiating a relationship between audience and playwright and more importantly, “real” life and performance.

Through epilogues, which Congreve describes as interventions so “that the delight of the Representation may not so strongly possess the minds of the Audience, as to make them forget or oversee the Instruction” (12), and through prologues, such as that to *The Country Wife*, actors are able to stress the constructed nature of the play, by performing “reality” against representation, and drawing attention to their, the playwright’s, and the audience’s participation in the production of its meaning. This role of the actor, in the sense of both self and character, becomes the emblem that triggers the audience to accept and enjoy plays as representation, while imbricating performance itself into notions of reality. In dramatic performance, as W.B. Worthen asserts, “the actor simultaneously affirms and transgresses a moral vision of the relationship between self, action and the world. In doing so, the actor’s performance dramatizes the ethical dialectic that animates his audience’s sense of theatre” (*Idea 6*). Accordingly, Collier, in his inability to see actors as agents in the performance of plays, also fails to acknowledge the way in which prologues and epilogues operate in a self-reflexive manner, by openly acknowledging and underscoring this “ethical dialectic” at the heart of an actor’s performance and theatre itself, which also often underpins the satiric content of many Restoration comedies. The prologues, epilogues, and performances require the audience to suspend *and* heed this “ethical dialectic” because they are in the theatre, supposedly enjoying mere representations, while both they and the actors also participate in conferring meaning to the spectacle vis-à-vis an understanding of the outside world. For Collier and the opponents of theatre, there seems to be one element of the dialectic missing, that is to say that the sanctioned ethical disconnect of action, self, and world at the centre of acting *does* animate within the audience a sense of the theatrical. Collier does not

admit that the theatrical or performative, registered through the actor, can arbitrate a play's significance. He chooses instead to locate authority in the author and conflates theatrical representations with the playwright's very essence.

Collier's omission of the centrality and power of actors on the Restoration stage is quite startling not only in terms of their role in mediating theatrical representation, but also because of their status in both popular culture and the law during and after the Restoration. Cheryl Wanko demonstrates the extent to which actors and actresses became celebrities in their own right in the early eighteenth century, because of the simultaneous public consumption of actors' performances as well as biographies and other published ephemera produced during the print boom in the early part of the century. This burgeoning consumer culture of the theatre world ensured actors' "continued presence in the public eye" and "their ability to present themselves (or have others present them) as fascinating people" (5). Payne echoes this idea of a "star system" from the Restoration stage onwards, stressing the increasing importance of the actress as not only celebrity, but also professional, concluding that, after the Restoration, actresses emerged as "the new stars, the nouveau aristocrats of an emergent visual culture that rewards a captivating performance" ("Reified" 35). Actors therefore hold "authority" as savvy performers and celebrities, just as playwrights are famous and celebrated for their wit. Though this emerging prominent role for actors in the public sphere may have undone some of the old stereotypes about the dubious nature and social status of actors and acting, it did not, on the other hand, render them less susceptible to the law. Joseph Wood Krutch lists numerous occasions – shortly after the publication of Collier's first anti-theatrical tract – where legal action was taken against actors (not playwrights) for performing "indecent" or "profane" plays. Vincent J. Liesenfeld also notes that, prior to the Licensing Act of 1737, the laws against "indecent expressions" in plays

only seem to apply to actors as they, “not managers or playwrights, were prosecuted whenever these laws were enforced” (13). Those who drew up the petitions against the actors obviously do not subscribe to Collier’s belief in disciplining playwrights instead of actors, and these lawsuits render actors responsible and liable for the material represented in dramatic satire precisely because they are the ones who perform and thereby seem to disseminate the offensive material. In fact, one actor, George Bright, was actually charged and fined a hefty sum of £10 for uttering the “profane” statement, “Please you Sir to Commission a young couple to go bed together a-Gods name” (qtd. in Krutch 159). The utterance here becomes the basis for legal punishment and the utterer legally punished, instead of the playwright who writes the profane dialogue. In one of various petitions to Queen Anne, written on behalf of the “Comedians Acting in the New Theatre in Little Lincoln’s Inn-fields” (Betterton, Barry, Bracegirdle & Co.), the actors themselves try to enact the same erasure of their agency in performance as Collier does, all the while locating all authority in the playwright, in order to aim all disciplinary action at him and his script, and to absolve their responsibility for publicly performing dramatic satires:

May it please your Maj:<sup>tie</sup> to give such orders and directions as in your princely wisdom you shall think fitt for perusing & correcting plays prepared to be Acted, that your petition:<sup>ers</sup> may not be misled to act any plays wherein may be contained any expressions that may give just occasion of offence and that the prosecution on such Indictment against your petition:<sup>ers</sup> may be stayed. (qtd. in Krutch 159)

Like in Collier, censorship – a necessary protection for actors – is directed at the playwright and his text as the sites of authority in lieu of contending with the seemingly indifferent or, from the actors’ defensive standpoint, neutral “force” and “motion” of performance. Curiously, even when the Master of Revels or Lord Chamberlain had approved play scripts, actors were still charged

for uttering offensive passages and although they requested that the censor's approval be the basis for staying prosecution, "such requests were seldom honoured" (Liesenfeld 13).

Collier's location of theatrical authority solely in the playwright's person, without regard to the actor's role as mediator, celebrity, and legally liable, can be linked to his political position as a nonjuring clergyman at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the result of his refusal to pledge allegiance to William of Orange and Mary. "The attack on the stage," J. Hopes states, "evolved directly out of Collier's opposition to the revolution" (166).<sup>20</sup> Certainly, in the playwrights and their supporters' responses to *A Short View*, Collier's status as non-juror becomes not only a source of ridicule, but also the very basis of Collier's objections to the theatre in general. Critic John Dennis implies that Collier's puritanical rejection of theatre relates to his rebellious denial of the King's authority. In *The Usefulness of the Stage*, Dennis' direct reply to Collier, he insinuates an analogy between the Puritans' shut-down of the theatres and the regicide and civil war in the mid-seventeenth century, insisting that

the Drama, and particularly Tragedy, is among reasons useful to Government, because it is proper to restrain a people from rebellion and disobedience, and to keep them in good correspondence among themselves: For this reason the Drama may be said to be instrumental in a peculiar manner to the welfare of the *English* Government; because

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<sup>20</sup> Though Hopes' article provides an excellent overview of Collier's political position, I disagree with its materialist assessment of Collier's politics or at least those represented in his stage polemics. Hopes asserts, "Like Hobbes, Collier regarded all men as naturally equal, being born with similar instincts and abilities" (162-63), and further contends that for Collier, "[q]uality is not a natural attribute but a civil one" (163). These assertions disregard how Collier's classist attitudes are informed by arguments that constantly resort to justifications by "Nature" and "Religion" rather than socially-constituted legal or civil ones. William Congreve even draws attention to Collier's essentialist classism in *A Short View*, where Collier claims that "The *Priest-hood* is the profession of a Gentleman" (136) and spends a vast amount of space arguing that clergymen obtain "natural" gentility from religion and their paternity, not just the law or society. To this essentialist argumentative line, Congreve himself responds in a decidedly materialist manner: "Nature and Religion agree in this, that neither of them hath a hand in this Heraldry of *secudum sub & supra*; all this comes from Composition and Agreement of Men among themselves" (74).

there is no people on the face of the Earth so prone to rebellion as the *English*, or apt to quarrel among themselves. (63)

Dennis' belief that contemporary loyalty, good governance, peace, and stability coincide with the theatre and its rational management of the passions implicitly maligns Collier's impassioned hatred of the theatre, which becomes invariably linked to his disobedience and unwillingness to swear allegiance to the current monarchy and its government. The author of *A Vindication of the Stage* explicitly (and sarcastically) remarks that Collier wants to "hear no Oaths in the play-house" (5) because he has an aversion to taking them himself (12). Fair or unfair, I would argue, the correlation between Collier's dislike of theatrical representation and his politics is an accurate one, though not for the same reasons as his counter-attackers. Rather, Collier's political position represents a type of undivided and fixed notion of authority that dramatic performance contravenes when the author's words are cut off, displaced, and not represented from or representative of his personhood. Of political authority, he writes in *Vindiciae Juris Regii*, published nine years before *A Short View* and shortly after the Glorious Revolution, Collier condemns "that pernicious distinction between the King's *Person* and his *Authority*, which has been always too prevalent" (qtd. in Hopes 166). Authority and the authorising body are indistinct for him. "[T]hough in reality it's nothing but the King's Authority which makes his Person Sacred, and therefore the same inviolable Privilege ought to extend to all those who Act under him," he continues, "notwithstanding this, it has often happened that those who pretend a great Reverence for his *Person*, make no scruple to seize his Forts, fight his Armies, and destroy those who adhere to him, under the pretence of taking him out of the Hands of Evil Counselors" (47). Here the King's authority becomes inseparable from his actual person (a body specifically endowed with authority through paternity) and Collier's distaste lies in the distinction between

office and person being made by the defenders of William's usurpation of the English throne. Collier's political conception of authority would, accordingly, inform his aversion to the ventriloquism that he sees at play on the stage, because authority is not embodied by the author or playwright, but dislocated through the actor, just as the king's authority becomes disembodied in revolutions through the removal of his person, yet not necessarily the office. This is where an actor's agency might seem irrelevant on the stage – he or she has no authority to begin with as mere tools of the author function – and why Collier directs all his criticism to an authority situated wholly in the personhood of the author, which he sees as abusive and corrupt because of its irreligiosity. The only “true” authority for Collier is a dogmatically Christian and unambiguously “moral” one.

The indivisible union of authority and personhood resonates in Collier's objection to the dramatic satirists' treatment of the clergy. Alongside his censure of profanity and immorality in *A Short View* and subsequent tracts, Collier denounces the satirizing of clergyman, as he thinks “that the dignity of office should shield its occupant from abuse and satire” (Hopes 166). He views the ridicule of a bad priest as equal to ridiculing the priesthood wholesale, disallowing the individual identity of a priest to be considered separately from his function and office. This results in an interesting tension that underscores his argument throughout *A Short View* and points to a critical problem in satire generally; Collier oscillates between the necessity of individuation or universalization in satire, depending on which one rectifies his particular gripe with the satiric representation.<sup>21</sup> In his discussion of stage obscenities, for example, Collier praises the ancient playwright Plautus for representing Alcesimarchus, a passionate lover, “in Generals. He paints no Images of his Extravagance, nor descends to any nauseous particulars”

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<sup>21</sup> This type of argumentative slipping between general and universal also sustains, though in an inverse manner, defences of the satire by satirists themselves, who attempt to alleviate their representational responsibility.

(19). When pointing to certain vices, Collier hopes for vague generalities and universals in satire rather than particularity and individualised censure. In contradistinction, he condemns the satirists' aims at clergymen as being general and "striking at universals" (97). He declares, "in other cases, they [the playwrights] level at a single Mark and confine themselves to Persons... [But with the clergy, t]hey play upon the *Character*, and endeavour to expose not only the Men, but the Business" (97). Office and function, particularly ones of a higher or spiritual quality, become inextricable from all the bodies that inhabit them. Even the priest cloth, a signifier of the office, is barred from theatrical use by Collier, as the costume seems inseparable from the authority it signifies and the body that it envelops: "'Tis not enough for them to play the Fool unless they do in *Pontificalibus*. The Farce must be play'd in a Religious figure, and under the Distinctions of their Office... the little *Idea* is apt to return upon the same Appearance" (111). He ultimately refuses to acknowledge the gap between identity and action that enables acting and theatrical representation, as well as that which separates signs of authority from the authorising body. Congreve seizes on this point of contention, firmly stating, "If an offending Servant is punish'd by the Law, the honour of the Service is not by that means violated; so far from that, that it is rather vindicated: Neither on the Stage is the divine Service ridicul'd, only the ridiculous Servant is expos'd" (*Amendments* 62). Congreve concludes that, if playwrights are in fact representing and imitating the priesthood in a way that tarnishes its character as an office, he "will agree heartily to condemn both the Play and the Author" (68). His distinction between the play and playwright at this juncture reveals an essential difference between producer and product, function and identity that Collier does not accept conceptually. As a rejoinder to Congreve, Collier insists that embodiment of and action in an official capacity essentializes authority and significance in the person: "Though the Function and the Person are separable in

Notion, they are joyn'd in Life and Business. 'Tis true, the Office and the Person are two Things; but yet 'tis the Person which executes the Office: This makes them share a disadvantage in Common" (*A Defence* 70). His repudiation of distinguishing identity from action certainly fuels his anxiety about dramatic performance. The body that performs and represents is, for Collier, in essence what is represented. In refusing to see the interplay and difference of signifier and signified, he implicitly dismisses the potential for ironic performances in dramatic satire, which plays and depends on the bifurcation of signification, and more generally, denies the possibility of *embodied* performance – the presence and kinetics of the body is paramount here – being simply representation in the first place.

Even at the level of characterisation, Collier demands uniformity in identity, "Nature," and action. In *A Short View*, Collier articulates his essentialist view of behaviour and identity when he discusses the treatment of persons of "quality" in comedies: "Let us remember that Operations always resemble the Nature from whence they flow" (47). This platonic assertion acts to support Collier's claims that "Great Persons" (the clergy certainly fall under this rubric) should be treated with respect and admiration, as Nature accords them both, and therefore, they should not be the objects of ridicule in stage comedies. Dramatic representations that show people acting contrary to their social position, which is inextricable from their Nature, constitute gross liberties on the part of the authors and tarnishes their authority. For instance, Collier condemns Aristophanes and belies his "authority" as wanting of Judgement because of "ununiform" characterisation, contending that

If we examine his *Plays*, we shall find his characters improper, or ununiform; either wrong at first, or unsteady in the Right. For the purpose. In his *Nubes* A. 3. S.3. p. 146. 150. He puts dirty expressions into the Mouth of his Man of Probity, makes him declaim

vitiously [sic] against Vice, and Corrects scurrility with Impudence; Now what can be more idle and senceless [sic] than such Conduct as this? (*Short View* 43)

Collier does not read the irony of Aristophanes' *Man of Probity* (he speaks smuttily in spite of his supposed decency), because of the danger this incongruous characterisation proffers, namely that one's action may be contrary to one's identity and office. This, of course, undermines Collier's entire moral framework, as it cannot register such ironies without sacrificing its elemental and indissoluble links of body, action, Nature, and social class. The anonymous author of the antitheatrical pamphlet, *The Occasional Paper No. IX*, expresses the anxiety over this disconnect of status, morality, and ontology more succinctly and explicitly, when he decries the agency derived through the incongruous performance of "operations" vis-à-vis "Nature": "[the audience] are now to be taught how they might *Be*, without a Creator; and how, now they are, they may live best without any Dependence on his Providence" (7). Contemporary critical theory, particularly that of Judith Butler in her works *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, sufficiently demonstrates the ways in which performance destabilises precisely these "natural" categories of being, like those of "quality" and "Providence" to which Collier and the author of the *Occasional Paper* subscribe, by showing that their terms can be shifted through (imperfect) repetition, so I will not rehearse that theory here. Nonetheless, Collier especially fears the type of performance that embodies irony and incongruity and destabilises his moral vision, and he frames such ironic dramatic representations in Aristophanes as "the Inconsistency of Precept, and Practice" (*A Short View* 43), thereby reiterating the impossibility of satiric performance being didactic. These "immoral" representations, moreover, completely destroy any credibility that Aristophanes has as an "authority" in Collier's view, which leads us back to Collier's focus on the author as the sole site of authority in dramatic satire.

Though actors, by virtue of their craft and performance, undermine Collier's maxim of operations flowing from "Nature," Collier is unambiguous in his identification of the author as the agent of satiric meaning (*qua* lewdness and atheism). Once again, Congreve rejects Collier's identification of atheism and vicious characters with the author's person, declaring, "I hope I am not yet unreasonable; it is very hard that a Painter should be believ'd to resemble all the ugly faces that he draws" (9). However, Collier renders the "wit" that he associates with the celebrated rakes of Restoration comedies as indistinguishable from the author who displays his own wit in dramatic satire. He answers back to Congreve:

To give Success, and Reputation to a *Stage Libertine*, is a sign either of Ignorance, of Lewdness, or Atheism, or altogether. Even those Instances which bear the relating ought to be punish'd. But as for Smut and Prophaness, 'tis every way Criminal and Infectious, and no Discipline can atone for the Representation: When a *Poet* will venture on these liberties, his *Perswasion* [sic] must suffer, and his *private Sentiments* fall under Censure... if he suffers his Pencil to grow Licentious, if he gives us Obscenities, the Merits of *Raphael* won't excuse him: No, To do an ill Thing well, doubles the Fault. The Mischief arises with the Art and the Man ought to smart in proportion to his Excellency (10-12).

In this passage among others, Collier repeatedly betrays his inability to read or conceive dialectically those links between forms of representation and their author. Form, especially the mode of writing and performance, cannot be regarded as ironically or inversely related to content, especially salacious and vicious matter. Critiquing Collier and more contemporary critics for their "discomfort not only with the aesthetic but the moral effect of the [Restoration] plays," Charles O. McDonald asserts,

It seems to me absolutely necessary to distinguish thus sharply and clearly between the ‘wit’ of the author as creator standing outside of his work and the ‘wit’ of the characters created inside it. Not to do so is to expose ourselves at once to the old fallacy – as old as Aristotle’s naïvely conservative espousal of the point of view of the chorus in Greek tragedy – of singling out a certain character within a dramatic work as ‘author’s spokesman’ and thus blunting all the subtlety of drama’s dialectic (525).

By describing drama’s dialectic as a subtle one, McDonald highlights the ways in which performance on the stage obscures the author function, by collapsing the text into an immediate and embodied representation that seems to mask its constructedness and authorship, thereby drawing into question authorial intention and, in particular, one of satiric correction. Collier demands, as McDonald sarcastically points out, authorial interjections to draw indifferent performance towards a clearly defined moral centre, identified with the author and qualifying his authority. Collier’s stipulations for authorial (moral) injunctions on performance are, of course, premised on the reinstatement of a holistic and literal view of language (the signifier is in essence the signified), which occludes metaphor, irony, euphemism, and other forms of double meaning. In his preface to *A Short View*, Collier states, “*Indeed Things are in a great measure Govern’d by Words: To Guild over a foul Character, serves only to perplex the Idea, to encourage the Bad, and mislead the Unwary*” (*A Short View* 5-6). Julie Stone Peters adequately uncovers Collier’s anxiety over the arbitrary nature and latent moral vacancy of language represented by the word play and “wit” of Restoration playwrights. “Because Collier recognized the importance to morality of language built on truths that exist in real terms,” Stone Peters claims, “he most feared the playwright’s language built solely on language and the resulting moral relativism” (147). Although I agree with Stone Peters that Collier mistrusts and condemns the discursive reality

created by Restoration playwrights, because they use language in a manner that emphasizes its potential cross-purpose use or lack of moral essence, I find it more compelling that Collier himself proposes discursive interjections, such as the omission of oaths, the reimplementation of the chorus or the application of poetic justice, to “discipline” dramatic satire and curtail moral relativism. This linguistic remedy, in my view, suggests that Collier has a greater anxiety and concern for the invisibility of moral and other intentions produced by the “reality” of embodied performance than for slippery signification in language. For Collier, dialogue and plot construction, or simply and fundamentally, playwriting – *in spite* of performance – become the only means through which we can discern the moral and didactic intentionality of satire claimed by the playwrights.

In terms of intentionality and satire, Collier works with a very traditional definition of satire and theatre in general: “The business of *Plays* is to recommend Virtue, and discountenance *Vice*” (1). Most of the playwrights in their defences outline the same intention as motivating their dramatic satires. Congreve cites Aristotle on this front, stating, “the Business of Comedy is to delight, as well as to instruct: And as vicious People are made ashamed of their Follies and Faults, by them seeing them exposed in a ridiculous manner, so are good People at once both warmed and diverted at their Expence [sic]” (8). In his response to Collier, John Vanbrugh employs the “mirror to nature” argument to justify his use of negative exemplars, insisting that “The Stage is a Glass for the World to view it self in; People ought therefore to see themselves as they are; if their Faces too Fair, they won’t know they are Dirty, and by consequence will neglect to wash’em” (46). The important distinction between Collier’s understanding of the classical theatrical paradigm and the playwrights’ is that Collier expects the author to *represent* and *produce* a corrective moral result in the play and the audience, while the playwrights expect the

audience to assert or reawaken their moral faculties as a response to the comedies' seeming moral ambiguity and negative examples. For Vanbrugh, Congreve, and the other dramatic satirists, responsibility for interpretation and reception remains firmly entrenched in the audience since the satiric move is not one of punishment, but one of provoking self-reflection in the audience. Thus audience reception, which the playwrights characterise (somewhat dubiously) as inevitably morally conscientious, forecloses the need for their comedies to discipline or represent the disciplining of vicious characters.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, this delegating of moral responsibility to the audience ends up facilitating the playwrights' attacks and rebuttals of Collier's censure. Vanbrugh and Congreve's justifications for their dramatic satires seek to highlight the ways in which Collier's uncovering of smut in their plays has more to do with the weakness and perversity of his critical framework than with moral deficiencies in their comedies. For instance, Vanbrugh, with reference to Collier's (mis)quotations of Lady Bute's dialogue in his play, *The Provok'd Wife*, exclaims, "'tis not Virtue she exposes, but her self, when she says 'em: Nor is it me he exposes, but himself, when he quotes 'em" (48). Thus the playwrights represent Collier's repellent responses to their plays as simply reflections of his own sickly moral constitution.

Indeed the playwrights' condemnation of Collier and their continued insistence on the moral instructiveness of their comedies should be read with caution. As Dustin Griffin reminds students of satire, the satirists' statements on the functions or effects of satire "are likely to be propagandizing for their own particular way of writing satire. And not infrequently their theory fails to account for their own practice" (*Satire* 6). Nevertheless, the importance of the

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<sup>22</sup> Jay Oney implies a similar dynamic of satiric play, moral outrage, and audience responsibility in his article, "Jeremy Collier Answered: Shifting Poetic Justice from the Playwright to the Audience in the Work of Neil LaBute." LaBute is a contemporary American playwright and filmmaker who not only cites the Restoration playwrights as his dramatic forbears, but also receives Collier-like criticisms for his own portrayals of morally vacant, despicable contemporary rakes who avoid and escape all reprimand (41-42). Oney suggests that LaBute answers to Collier's criticism of a lack of poetic justice in Restoration comedy, by "provoking in his audience a strong strain of moral condemnation towards his erring characters" (49). Ethical positionality, therefore, derives from the audience making judgments rather than LaBute representing ethicality itself in his plays.

playwrights' defences to an understanding of dramatic satire is the acknowledgement that satiric agency is not simply exercised by the satirist; rather, satiric agency operates explicitly through a negotiation of meaning between audience and satirist, which is mediated through actors' performances, the staging, and, in the case of Collier, critical reviews and responses.

Accordingly, Matthew Kinservik describes the ensuing pamphlet battle between Collier and the playwrights as one where " 'Satire' is a product of their individual acts of criticism and interpretation, not a pre-existing tool to be used or ignored" (28). Unfortunately, Kinservik abandons this notion of a more complex and inter-subjective negotiation of satiric agency in favour of espousing a definition of satire that sees instruction as its main goal, which he then problematically universalises as the basis for theatre itself; in his scheme, all comedies are satiric because of the supposed instructive impetus behind theatrical representation. For Kinservik, later eighteenth-century comedies, which employ "poetic justice," sanitize their representations of vice, and consequently satisfy most of the stage reformers' demands, remain "satiric" in that they still instruct the audience, though in a different manner – one with a Foucauldian twist that "disciplines" gently instead of "punishing" harshly like the earlier "Hobbesian" Restoration comedies. However, the dramatic satirists point to their deliberate attempts at leaving their representations "open," sometimes unresolved and without authorial interjections or glosses, in order to compel the audience to respond with due concern, not *show* them how to respond. This is provocation not instruction. Still dramatic satire's provocative ambiguity cannot be predicated on a certainty about audience reaction and this, of course, is demonstrated in the variety and the extent of discussion generated in the Collier controversy. Here then we see the product of understanding satire, as P.K. Elkin claims, not as punitive or corrective but as a type of inquiry, contingent on both the satirists' provocative delivery and the audience's receptiveness, whose

end is the exercise of the audience's own ethical judgements. Where the inquiry stops is based on the audience member's own moral limits, which, Collier rightly fears, may not exist in the first place. Sieur de Saint Euvremont, a French drama critic, whose work was translated into English in 1687 for the Duke of Buckingham (known himself for penning dramatic satires), describes this inquisitive mode of characterisation in Restoration comedies. Of the "English comedy," he contends,

The Truth is, these tricks and simplicities, these Politiks and other Characters ingeniously devised, are carried on too far in our opinion, as those which are seen upon our [French] Stage, are little too faint to the relish of the *English*; and the reason that, perhaps, is that the *English* think too much, and that we [the French] commonly think not enough. (15)

Euvremont insists upon the superficiality and "unnaturalness" of French drama's allegedly more classical, ornamental, and static forms of theatrical representations, contrasting them to what he sees as the depth and complexity of English dramatic comedy, where "the point is to dive well into the nature of things" (16). He also stresses, however, the danger in the philosophical bent of English comedy and its design:

It is as difficult for us to enter in, as for the *English* to get out: They become Master of the thing they think on, though they are not of their own thought; their mind is not at rest, when they possess their Subject; they still dig when there is no more to be found, and go beyond the just and natural Idea which they ought to have, by too sollicitous [sic] an enquiry. (16)

The potential bottomlessness of satiric inquiry lends itself to a nihilism that puts everything, every idea into doubt, lending no fixed authority to any particular moral or ethical position. The

inquiring mode of satire thus calls into question disciplinary frameworks themselves instead of “disciplining,” or positing and coercing conformity in the morality and thought of the audience.

Collier would obviously not share the dramatic satirists’ brand of optimism with regard to a mass audience’s ability to answer to their satiric inquiry with moral rigour and decode philosophical, satiric intent successfully. Trusting the audience to interpret the indifference of satiric performance subjectively *and* morally necessarily undermines Collier’s unified and fixed notion of authority. In *Vindiciae Juris Regii*, Collier further exemplifies his disdain for and fear of the subjective in relation to authority and morality, when he condemns the kind of ad-hoc governing that arises in times of political conflict. He places supreme moral authority over resolving disputes in the King and rebukes individual governors who act in accordance with their own subjective (and therefore questionable) assessments of conflict and the need for self-preservation: “For we are not at all enlightened about the Measures of those *Just Revenges and Damages*: But this Point is Prudently left to the Ignorance, Ambition, and Ill-nature of every Man, to interpret as he pleases” (3). Collier believes that the answer and remedy to such Hobbesian human nature is a clearly-defined and -articulated, indisputable and essentialized moral authority, not faith in human subjectivity and Reason.

Alternatively, dramatic satire invites multiple self-referential readings, even misreadings from the audience in its refusal to represent an unambiguous moral authority on the stage; this spells out chaos for Collier. His attempts to “discipline” dramatic satire with a particular emphasis on the author and the censorship or reform of his writing signal his desire to re-order, re-centralize, homogenize, and solidify the moral authority that is mediated, dispersed, and obscured in the multiple performances and modes of signification occurring on stage, as well as contested through satiric inquiry and its subjective determinateness. Collier’s anxiety towards

satiric performance consequently arises from its resistance and seeming indifference in “force” and “motion” toward spelling out its intentions— such intentions being always conditional to the audience’s interpretations and translations anyway. Collier despises and finds discomfort in performed satire because the theatre (which houses a group of bodies watching other bodies perform satiric texts without overt authorial interpolations) concretizes, realises, and forces an inter-subjective negotiation of meaning and positions on issues of morality, Truth, and Nature that he ultimately conceives of as non-negotiable.

Understanding satire as an inter-subjective negotiation of meaning rather than a unilateral imposition of a unified, didactic authority, my next chapter on Henry Fielding’s dramatic satires challenges critics who argue that Fielding either fails to produce satire *or* drama, because his inquisitive and dialectic form of satiric theatre – a form that puts performance and authorial commentary into dramatic conflict – does not proffer a coherent dramatic or didactic effect. I argue against definitions of drama as unmediated or “pure” representation in order to accommodate Fielding’s highly self-reflexive dramatic satires under the rubric of “theatre.” I also demonstrate how Fielding’s self-reflexive theatrical authority, which points to the mediation of meaning through the various agents and aspects of the theatre, reflects his satiric conception of political, legal, and social authority as negotiated rather than a given.

### Chapter 3: The Author's Force: Henry Fielding, the theatre, and satiric performances as "allegories of unreadability"

Assessing Henry Fielding's dramatic satires of 1730s in relation to pantomime and other theatrical diversions, John O'Brien claims, "we can think of Fielding as a profoundly antitheatrical playwright, as he systematically refuses to deploy the full range of the theatre's apparatus" (196). For O'Brien, Fielding's dialectical approach to theatre in his rehearsal plays – offering both performance and commentary – privileges dialogue over performance, enacting visuality not "as an aspect of the performance he stages," but rather as a metaphor that enables his critique of "the obfuscation" and diversion informing both contemporary theatre and politics (196). He subsequently aligns Fielding with theatre critic/polemicist Jeremy Collier, citing both as opposed to the performance- and spectacle-oriented semiotics of theatre. Here O'Brien echoes other critics, notably J. Paul Hunter,<sup>23</sup> who see Fielding's rehearsal plays or dramatic satires as uncomfortably *un-theatrical* because their self-reflexive design undermines theatre's ostensible "pure representation" (Hunter 69). I take issue with O'Brien's, Hunter's, and other critics' rejection of Fielding's plays as un-theatrical in large part because this rejection assumes unmediated or unified signification (*pure representation*) as the essence of theatrical performance and the dramatic mode. As Jones DeRitter reminds us,

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<sup>23</sup> In a common critical move, Hunter anticipates Fielding's novel writing and argues of his playwriting, "he seems to be resisting the dramatic mode and moving towards forms that could more readily accommodate extreme degrees of artistic self-consciousness in its two main thrusts – concern with the process of creation and with the nature of response" (69). O'Brien uses Hunter's assumptions as a starting point for his analysis of Fielding's plays and several other critics, including Freeman, actually adopt this particular reading as Fielding's own conception of his authority. There are two noteworthy exceptions: as I cite below, in his article, "Artistic Accommodations in Fielding's *The Author's Farce*," Albert J. Rivero spends quite a bit of space defending the reflexive, authorial dimensions of Fielding's plays as historically and inherently theatrical; nevertheless, he cedes to a representation of Fielding's satiric authority as failed because he "stoops to conquer" the tastes of his audience, which I argue against in this chapter. Susan K. Ahern suggests that, instead of *pure* representation in theatre, Fielding creates "a new kind of realism," one that subordinates storytelling to emphasize "visual and verbal patterns" (53). As a result, Ahern argues, Fielding "has discovered a vehicle that not only conveys but creates meaning" (53).

Theatre is a public event; it does not exist in any abstract form, and each concrete instance of it can be viewed as an almost infinitely mediated negotiation. If I attend a play, the distance between the playtext and myself is defined, enacted, and acted upon to a greater or lesser degree by the theatre managers, by the director, by the actors, and by any fellow spectator, who chooses to make his or her response to the play part of my experience on that particular evening. (16)

Infinitely mediated, theatre performance and spectatorship cannot render *pure* representations; such purity becomes even more *contaminated* when one considers the highly reflexive models of theatrical transmission in Restoration and eighteenth-century theatre specifically. Restoration plays are full of self-reflexive moments that dissect performance both on and off stage, in their narrative as well as their extra-performance elements (prologues, epilogues etc.). Moreover, as Lisa Freeman states of eighteenth-century theatre in particular, “this was not a theatre of the fourth wall... This was not a theatre of absorption in character, then, but a theatre of interaction in which the audience was as much part of the performance as the players” (4-5). Finally, as Alberto J. Rivero argues, the representation of an “authorial dimension” in a play, as Fielding does in the rehearsal play format, is a part of a lengthy dramatic history, including Greek tragedy and comedy, as well as Elizabethan theatre, most evident in the mousetrap scene in *Hamlet* (27-29). In their desire to see theatre as *pure representation* or unmediated visuality or simply, *literally* enacted, critics like O’Brien and Hunter ironically resuscitate Collier’s desired view of theatre, whereby irony cannot and should not exist within the representational framework of dramatic performance.

In this chapter I challenge critics who cannot or do not want to reconcile Fielding’s dramatic satires with theatre, both as concept and practice. I argue that the embodiment of

dramatic performance, its concreteness or literality, does not exclude the possibility of abstraction or metaphor or irony in performance, like that deployed in satire. In playing with the gap between audience and performer/playwright, as well as performer and text, Fielding opens up a space for critical and satiric metaphors in and *through* performance itself. Indeed Fielding addresses dramatic performance within his rehearsal plays in a manner that does point to anxiety regarding theatre and politics as “allegories of unreadability,”<sup>24</sup> whose multiple and seemingly literal signs diffuse and deflect legitimate (cultural) authority. Nevertheless Fielding’s satire also aims to anatomize authority and disciplinary modalities in general by self-reflexively inquiring into the nature of his own authority – theatrical authorship. Instead of identifying and explicating historical references or satiric targets, I will explore Fielding’s definitions and satiric expositions of authority and its agents, adopting and adapting Brean Hammond’s “cultural politics” approach to Fielding’s work, whereby “the semiotic domain of signs, images, and meanings... was for [Fielding] the political battleground of most significance... more than a partisan politics” (78). I will also draw out implications that cultural politics have for the extensions and limitations of satiric authority.

In providing his audience with dialectical polarities, most frequently spectacle and critical commentary, Fielding emphasises the negotiation of meaning that transpires between audience, performers, playwrights, and critics, without necessarily positing clear-cut points of

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<sup>24</sup> I borrow this phrase from Markus Wessendorf who borrows it from De Man to describe a production of *Frank Dell’s The Temptation of St. Anthony* (1987) by the American, avant-garde theatre troupe, The Wooster Group. The performance is ostensibly an adaptation of Flaubert’s *La tentation de saint Antoine*, which uses the rehearsal model and includes pantomime and dance much like Fielding’s dramatic satires, while decentring Flaubert’s text in the adaptation through its meta-theatrical frame. Wessendorf argues that the Wooster Group’s performance “re-induc[es] the allegorical structure of *La tentation*... [but] cannot be clearly identified as a mimetic staging of the text” (139). The result of this paradox, Wessendorf contends, enacts De Man’s understanding of allegory, whereby neither the literal (here the rehearsal) nor the figurative (the adaptation) are privileged in the signification or interpretation of the play; *St. Anthony*, thus, becomes what De Man calls an “allegory of unreadability,” namely a thematization of the polysemic and unstable readings and meanings of text and performance. I feel it is an appropriate description for Fielding’s representation of theatrical authority and satiric authority, as well as political power, which I will describe further in the chapter.

identification and authority. While several critics want to see Fielding's author figures and critical commentators "as a part of his attempts to organize the viewing experience of the audience" (Fisher 120), I argue that these figures of authority and mediation in the rehearsal plays are often undermined by irony, particularly in their inability to escape the commodity- and spectacle-driven nature of contemporary theatrical entertainment – an inescapable fact for Fielding as well.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, I identify two elements in Fielding's dramatic satires: firstly, they perform an inquiry into authority and discipline rather than enact didacticism and disciplining (*organization* as abovementioned or *punishment* in Matthew Kinservik's paradigm), reiterating the emphasis on investigation instead of correction in satire; and secondly, they do not equate satiric authority with control or stasis in that they constantly unsettle the mimetic and epistemological parameters of dramatic performance, its authorship, and its reception. In order to trace these elements in Fielding's theatrical works, I focus exclusively on his rehearsal plays and afterpieces, specifically *The Author's Farce*, *Pasquin*, *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*, and *Eurydice Hiss'd*. Here I follow Jean B. Kern and Peter Lewis' categorization of these plays as Fielding's "dramatic satires," as they enlist "militant irony... sufficiently developed to control the play rather than serving as temporary decoration" (Kern 242) and provide critical commentary not just on dramatic forms through burlesque, but also refer to targets *outside* of the theatre (Lewis 87). Both critics allow satire and theatre to co-exist, identifying the self-reflexivity and extended referentiality of Fielding's plays as theatrical satire as opposed to satirically anti-theatrical.

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<sup>25</sup> I am indebted to William B. Warner's reading of *Joseph Andrews* for my understanding of Fielding's relationship to his narratorial authority. Unlike most critics, Warner proposes a homology between Fielding's playwriting and novel-writing, figured in Fielding's sceptical approach to narration (novelistic or theatrical) and education. As he writes of the narrator in *Joseph Andrews*, Warner contends, "Fielding promotes acts of reflection that will militate against the headlong rush to consume absorptive narratives... Although the narrator poses as the reader's taskmaster, the educational project he advances with so much ostentation is in fact spurious, always exceeded by the confusions the novel involves its readers in. Since its action is inimitable and its characters are not exemplary models of behaviour, the readers of *Joseph Andrews* are thrown back upon their own resources and insights" (257).

## Negotiating and renegotiating and re-renegotiating the boundaries of authority in *The Author's Farce*

At the end of the first act of Henry Fielding's 1730 play,<sup>26</sup> *The Author's Farce*, Luckless, the impoverished poet protagonist of the play, who grieves his material conditions because no one values his dramatic genius and he cannot marry his true love, offers his new play-text to a publisher, Bookweight. In turn, he asks Luckless if the play has been "accepted" for performance for "A play, like a bill, is of no value before it is accepted, nor indeed when it is very often" (I.vi.8–10). Here Bookweight outlines one of the main tensions running through Fielding's first full-length play utilising the rehearsal framework (play-rehearsed-within-a-play): exchange value overriding use value in the commodification of art. For Bookweight, literature accrues value through exchange like currency instead of value being some sort of innate, immaterial, and transcendent quality. The publisher then further describes the valuation of play-texts based on a distinction between "acting" and "reading" plays:

Why sir, your acting play is entirely supported by the merit of the actor, without any regard to the author at all: in this case, it signifies very little whether there be any sense in it or no. Now your reading play is of a different stamp and must have wit and meaning in it. These latter I call your substantive, as being able to support themselves. The former are your adjective, as what require the buffoonery and gestures of an actor to be joined to them to show their signification. (1.6.28–37)

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<sup>26</sup> Fielding did revise *The Author's Farce* in 1734 and most amendments to the original text were updates in the historical figures satirised, as well as the addition of a couple, new, contemporary objects of ridicule.

Several critics take up this distinction to discuss how *The Author's Farce* attempts to mediate these two positions, rendering Fielding's play both substantive and adjectival. "*The Author's Farce* succeeded because it was an 'acting play,' most prominently in its third act," Rivero claims, exemplifying this position; "That we are still examining it today and acknowledging its 'merit' and didactic intent to testify to its status as a 'reading play' " ("Artistic" 23). In the third act, Fielding's play becomes Luckless' proffered script – a mishmash of pantomime, ballad opera, and melodrama presented as a puppet show, in which live actors play the puppets. In his framing of this action as a rehearsal with authorial interjections, Fielding seems to "elevate" these spectacle-driven theatrical forms and make them "substantial" in order to educate his audience in proper taste (Hammond 87; Rivero 23; Hunter 51).

In their use of Bookweight's categories to propose mediation, however, critics reiterate a binary that does not exist in the theatre (acting versus reading plays) and is not even a reality for Fielding's play. The substance of acted plays and published plays, including *The Author's Farce*, is always transactional, contingent upon an actor's performance, on audience reception, and the willingness of theatre managers to produce the plays and publishers to publish them, and then furthermore, for the reading public to discern wit and meaning in them. No play "supports itself" so to speak. In a discussion of published plays prior to the Licensing Act of 1737, DeRitter postulates that "an apparent but illusory connection between the stage and the page" exists because of the "refusal of the eighteenth-century English reading public to read plays that had not been acted" (16-17). While the experience of viewing and reading a play differ, they are not mutually exclusive experiences and their relationship informs the dissemination and consumption of play-texts in the eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup> That Bookweight offers the "substantive

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<sup>27</sup> DeRitter further asserts that the manner in which plays are published reminds the reader of their status as partially realised documents. He notes that "the editorial treatment of printed plays seems calculated to establish the priority

play” as a product of his own publishing acumen and enterprise is itself suspect and ironic, particularly as Fielding exposes his participation in a system of exchange that alienates author from work, and stuffs texts with ancient “learning” that the translators do not even understand. Authority is always negotiated and established through multiple exchanges, including satiric authority and agency, which critics seem to want to identify as “control,” unidirectional and detached from the systems that it criticises; I will counter this idea of “control” and satiric authority later in this section. When Bookweight refuses to give Luckless an advance for his script, he offers the following as a defence:

Why, had you a great reputation, I might venture. But truly, for young beginners it is a great hazard, for indeed, the reputation of the author carries the greatest sway in these affairs. The Town have been so fond of some authors that they have run them up to infallibility and would have applauded them even against their senses. (I.vi.43-49)

Here reputation or “merit,” what Rivero describes as a “substantive abstraction” (“Artistic” 18), becomes impossibly ambiguous, as Bookweight never explicitly connects or dissociates reputation from “substance,” nor clearly attaches or detaches such reputed authority from performances or playtexts, “applause” evoking the theatre though Bookweight is discussing publication. Authority, even reputable authority, then seems to be an index of multiple factors and signs rather than some sort of free agency or abstraction.

In the first two Acts of *The Author’s Farce*, Luckless certainly subscribes to and represents a type of authority that wants to transcend material and commercial limits. His poor

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of and greater authenticity of the stage production. Title pages of the printed scripts from the seventeenth and eighteenth century invariably indicated where the play was being performed at the time of the printing, and all but the cheapest editions included cast lists as well. The orthographic conventions of printed scripts continuously disrupt the narrative flow of the text; both the insistent repetition of the character’s names and the printing of stage directions in a different, harder-to-read typeface continuously reminds the readers that they are dealing not just with a script, but a transcript – that is, an account of something that happened somewhere else, at a different time and in a different place” (17). Accordingly, readers are reminded that plays are “events” and that such “happenings” constitute a large and missing part of the play text’s actual substance.

material circumstance becomes a satirical synecdoche for his unappreciated, yet innate and thus “immaterial” poetic genius. Mrs. Moneywood, his landlady, articulates this synecdochal relationship between Luckless’ poetic authority and his poverty while she complains that Luckless has not paid his rent; she asks, “Could I have guessed that I had a poet in my house? Could I have looked for a poet under laced clothes?” (1.1.5-6). By suggesting that the poet’s nature might reside underneath his garments, Moneywood effectively essentializes the poet as an identity, her question rendering poetic genius synonymous with an inner or hidden selfhood. Luckless’ response to Moneywood’s question reaffirms such an essentialised view of poetic genius, while at the same time it denotes the alienation of such essential genius as a result of the capitalistic nature of literary production. He declares, “Why not [strip the poet’s laced clothes], since you may often find poverty under them?” (1.1.8-9). Here Luckless equates his divestment as a poet with an exposure of his meagre material circumstances. Luckless also becomes identified with Nobody (a farcical, dancing figure in his puppet show), which is implied not only in Luckless’ lack of status but also by Nobody’s “laced coat and that is all” (3.1.332). This identification further inscribes Luckless’ material condition – “nothing” – as an extension of the immateriality of his poetic genius. Nobody operates as an apt figure for the playwright as well – a bodiless head, responsible for performances, good and bad.<sup>28</sup> In contradistinction to his dance companion, Somebody, who Jill Campbell notes, “flaunts his rank or position, though he lacks personal substance” (1808), Nobody and Luckless the poet, the supposed “substantive abstractions” of the play, have no place or purpose in the materialistic, capitalistic scheme.

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<sup>28</sup> In her footnote explicating Nobody and Somebody’s dance sequence, Jill Campbell explains that, as a part of “a tradition of witticisms,” Nobody “is the person responsible for some mishap around the house... and generated a visual image of a figure with almost no ‘body’ or trunk, the legs coming up almost to the neck. When ‘Somebody’ appeared as Nobody’s complement, he was represented with a very large trunk and stunted legs” (1808).

The inability of Luckless' poetic genius to "materialise" in *The Author's Farce* marks the alienation of the playwright from the production of plays, the result of a capitalist system that replaces use value with exchange value. Of both *The Beggar's Opera* and Fielding's play, J. Douglas Canfield states, "As with academic publishing today, authors were alienated from their labor with a vengeance" (327). However, Canfield does not consider exchange value as underpinning this alienation, particularly as he omits the simile comparing plays to bills in quoting Bookweight;<sup>29</sup> instead, he begs the question, "who can judge the 'value' of a work of art: publisher, producer, actor, audience?" (327). My answer is that all these points of exchange determine the value of the work, which, in turn, disassociates authorship from a singular, immaterial conceptualisation of poetic authority. Bookweight articulates this disassociation of literary production from notions of authorial singularity or genius in his admission that the labourers in his hack writing shop are paid in wages, but either do not take credit for their own work or they take credit for others' work. He states, "The study of bookselling is as difficult as the law, and there are as many tricks in the one as the other. Sometimes we give foreign names to our own labour, and sometimes we put our own names to the labour of others" (2.7.49-53). Authorship and authority, then, have no immediate relationship to the text authored or to the value of the text in the marketplace or libraries.<sup>30</sup> The labourer's wages, the ultimate expression of exchange value, do not necessarily correlate to the use value of the text, its "merit," or

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<sup>29</sup> Canfield quotes Bookweight as follows: "A play... is of no value before it is accepted, nor indeed when it is, very often" (327). As you can see, he leaves out the comparison between a play and a bill. Accordingly, he focuses the critique of capital on accumulation rather than exchange value and use value.

<sup>30</sup> In this instance, *The Author's Farce* seems to parallel Marx's appraisal of political economy and its influence on producer and productivity. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx argues that, as political economy evolves, the worker no longer reaps the value of his labour, which has been "congealed in an object" (71) from which he will not utilise or profit. Instead, the worker exchanges work for wages, exchange value then replacing use value; wages, a measure of exchange value, do not necessarily have any relation to the worker's labour nor do they always represent the value of labour, as wages depend on transactional market value rather than "inherent" use value. Accordingly, "the worker is related to the *product of his labour* as to an *alien object*" (72). For Marx, the servitude of such labour positions affects not only a worker's relationship with objectified labour and the act of production, but also "the relationship in which he stands to... other men" (78). Like Marx, *The Author's Farce* does link exchange value to principles and ethics in various social relations or sociality in general.

production value; consumer and publishing demands, with their basis in exchange, determine value. Furthermore, Bookweight's comparison between the law and the publishing industry anticipates arguments that I will make further in this chapter about the arbitrary and thus hazardous relationship between discourse and power. Like lawyers, publishers can manipulate discourse to legitimize and facilitate dishonest business transactions and to consolidate power. Ultimately, in comparing the law with literary production, Bookweight underscores the manner in which exchange value not only informs literary authority, but also other forms of social power or authority and their attendant relations.

Fielding's depiction of Luckless and Harriot's relationship illustrates how capitalistic exchange informs broader social bonds. Though critics want to identify this relationship between exchange value and abstract, essential values (e.g. Love) as necessarily corrupt, much like what they see as the inverse relation of art and capital, Harriot and Luckless' love story complicates these corrective, binaristic lines of interpretation. In spite of their lofty declarations of love, Harriot makes it clear to Luckless that his material conditions *need* to improve before she will marry him. Although Harriot concedes that she does not expect excessive wealth, nor does she agree with her mother's insistence that "Riches are the only recommendations to people of sense of both sexes, and a coach and six is one of the cardinal virtues" (2.10. 12-14), she does not want to be poor. She insists upon "a middle state" (1.3.84), her ultimatum rebuffing the excesses of the idle upper-class while shunning the "greasy" lowness of the lowest classes. Here the "middle ground" argument – a mediation of extremes – undoubtedly reflects incipient bourgeois logic. To her mother, Harriot explains, "give me a man who, thrown naked upon the world, can make his way through it by his merit and virtuous industry" (2.10.16-18). Does Fielding, then, espouse this logic and embrace a "mediated" capitalism? Does Fielding have a problem, as Rivero

implies, with the fact that virtue or merit is no longer “a substantive abstraction but an adjectival adjunct of solid ‘industry’ ” (“Artistic” 18)? Or does he represent through Harriot’s financial goals the impossibility of “merit” escaping this system of exchange value, without necessarily making his own value judgements? Did merit as a “substantive abstraction” ever exist?

Unlike Harriot, Luckless subscribes to a romantic love that wants to exist outside of financial concerns and consideration, much like his “substantive” and essential view of authority. Luckless’ approach to love, nevertheless, seems naïve and becomes itself a source of fantasy and, by extension, mockery in the play. He declares, “oh! my Harriot is to me/ All ambition, pleasure, store, / Or what heav’n to attain” (1.3.53-55). In effect, Luckless places love and companionship above the goal “to amass excessive gain” (1.3.49). While Luckless’ desire appears admirable, Fielding puts Luckless’ romantic and lofty notions of love into question, more than he does the material considerations attending Luckless and Harriot’s relationship. Fielding crafts their declarations of love in song verses, which renders them heroic but also undeniably contrived; such contrivance seems out of place in what has been, up until this point, a realistic portrayal of the vicissitudes of being a poor author. Susan K. Ahern contends that, “Even though they sing to each other and speak in couplets, they seem a step closer to the audience than the other couples; after all, their exchange takes place in Luckless’ room, not in a dramatic reading or in a puppet-show performance” (51). Instead of fomenting distinctions between reality and fiction, however, I argue that Fielding’s intermingling of the overtly theatrical in the realistic portions of the frame play, through Harriot and Luckless’ love story, merely collapses their difference further, highlighting the mediation and construction of both reality and fantasy in *The Author’s Farce*. Consequently, the versification of Luckless and Harriot’s “romantic” love merely heightens the sense of fantasy attached to such abstract,

essentialist values. Such fantasy comes into question further when we consider Fielding's use of a popular ballad to accompany the lovers' verses; this undermines Luckless and Harriot's love exchanges in that they employ conventional terms that correspond to supposedly degraded poetic and theatrical form or more accurately, conventional terms defined by exchange value instead of use value. Applying popular ballads to Luckless' declaration of a "pure" love, then, appears to mock its unrealistic abstraction of substance and significance.

Witmore, the figure of cynical intelligence in the play, further critiques the effect of political economy on art and social bonds, but also points to the impossibility of ascribing value without transaction. Witmore most acutely condemns the devaluation of art as a result of commodification. When Luckless describes his writing as a chronic condition like the gout, Witmore declares,

In an age of learning and true politeness, where a man might succeed by his merit, it would be an encouragement [to write]. But now, when party and prejudice carry all before them, when learning is decried, wit not understood, when the theatres are puppet shows, and the comedians ballad singers – would a man think to thrive by his wit?

(1.4.28-35)

Witmore points to all the channels – partisanship, anti-intellectualism, spectacle – through which authority or "merit" are mediated, denying the potential of substantive abstractions like "learning" or "*true* politeness" to be self-actualising. He also announces the pervasiveness of such decentring mediation, linking the commodification of learning and art to a decline in all other "values." In act two, after discovering a ridiculous playbill actually belongs to Luckless, advertising his preposterous puppet-show performed in the third act, Witmore refuses to attend the performance as he decries Luckless for "selling out": " 'Sdeath! I have heard sense run down

and seen idiotism, downright idiotism, triumph so often that I could almost think of wit and folly as Mr. Hobbes does of moral good and evil, that there are no such things” (2.9.27-30). Witmore suggests that moral ambiguity and relativism accompany the anti-intellectual, commodified pleasures of the Town. When spectacle and partisan politics inflect authority and authorship, epistemes transform and previously held ontological certainties become ambiguous and shifting categories; moral distinctions collapse.

It should be noted, however, that Witmore’s own moral authority and artistic arbitration are refracted through his position as a wealthy, learned bachelor. When he finally agrees to attend Luckless’ performance, Witmore proclaims that he will fulfil his role as a wit and “be a fashionable friend and hiss with the rest” (2.9.35-36). Witmore is by no means interested in challenging norms or trends. His position of moral and artistic outrage is connected to his privilege as a gentleman, leaving him seemingly less vulnerable to material and economic precariousness. Furthermore, Witmore was the one who suggested that Luckless “sell out” in the first place. He advises Luckless, “If thou wilt write against all these reasons, get a patron, be pimp to some worthless man of quality, write panegyrics on him, flatter him with as many virtues as he has vices” (1.5.51-55). Though he ascribes more “honour” to writing for nobility, Witmore also evacuates nobility of essential value and honour with his oxymoronical description of “a worthless man of quality;” quality does not exist as a clearly defined ontology but rather as the product of a public and financial transaction between pimping aristocrat and desperate author. Value, be it defined in pre-capitalist feudalism or political economy, is negotiable not a given.

In *The Author’s Farce*, exchange value determines authority, rightly or wrongly, and Fielding’s own authority is by no means an exception to this rule. In trying to align Fielding with

Luckless or a desire for satire to recuperate a nostalgic form of “pure” dramatic authority, critics inevitably confront the compromised nature of Fielding’s own authority, much as they do when contending with the ambivalence of the Scriblerian project (their deployment of and popularity through the use of “low” forms and the extravagances of print that they satirise).<sup>31</sup> Fielding himself financially benefits from the manipulation of the low and degraded, though popular and profitable dramatic forms (pantomime, puppetry, and opera). *The Author’s Farce* was extremely successful with forty-one performances in barely half a season, “the greatest hit since *The Beggar’s Opera*” (Hume *Henry Fielding* 68). Rivero’s conclusion about Fielding’s satiric credibility and authority typifies this critical conundrum:

[Fielding] might protest his satiric intent as justification for parading puppets on his stage, but the ineluctable fact remains that he has stooped to this device to attract unsuspecting members of the public under false pretenses, that he has participated in the corruption of art he is purporting to chastise, that he has compromised his craft to make money. (17)

If we understand Fielding’s satiric authority as one that is correctional and moral, we undoubtedly have to acknowledge his hypocrisy in attempting to elevate “low forms.” J. Douglas Canfield, on the other hand, offers a useful critique of such a position by suggesting that entertainment and satire are not mutually exclusive, especially given satiric concepts like

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<sup>31</sup> Several critics note Fielding’s affinity with the Scriblerian Project, though generally as a “tag along kid brother of gloomy elders” as Howard Weinbrot remarks (See Hunter 72; Lewis 5; Fisher 123; Hammond 78). Indeed, Fielding criticises the decline in entertainment linked to increased commodification and himself invokes the Scriblerians in his use of Scriblerus Secundus as the mock author of *The Author’s Farce*, as well as the profuse, mock editor of the text version of his play, *The Tragedy of Tragedies*. Hume and Weinbrot, however, do distinguish Fielding from the Scriblerians in his differing political affiliations pre-Walpole. Weinbrot even goes as far as to speculate that Fielding is “Anti-Scriblerian and Anti-Papal” because of his poor, personal relationship with Pope, fuelled by his protection of cousin and sometimes patron, Lady Wortley Montagu, whose feuding with Pope is well-known and documented. Based on private and published writing by Fielding, whereby he mocks Pope openly, Weinbrot proposes that Tom Thumb is actually a satiric representation of Pope and his small stature. He also distinguishes Fielding from his Scriblerian predecessors in that his satire is more ludic and the relationship to his audience less hostile. He concludes, “Fielding sees an enlarging audience and ultimate light, whereas Scriblerians see a shrinking audience and ultimate darkness” (34).

Bakhtin's carnivalesque. "To pretend that the entertainment value of [*Beggar's Opera* and *The Author's Farce*] *undercuts* their satire," Canfield argues, "is to pretend that such notions as humor, laughter, delight, and entertainment are free from cognitive, political, ideological contamination" (331). I would further argue that Fielding's satiric exposure and farce<sup>32</sup> of authorship identifies these points of cognitive, political, and ideological modulation in the theatre, emphasising the negotiated boundaries of categories like entertainment and satire to begin with. Canfield's criticism effectively points to the critical tendency to associate satire with a reassertion of clearly defined values and binaries, which Fielding's satire exposes as pure fantasy.

The entire third act of *The Author's Farce* challenges ideas of not only a pure cultural authority in the theatre but also satiric authority as "control." In this final act, Luckless sits commenting on the sidelines as his ghost "puppets," Signor Opera, Don Tragedio, Sir Farcical, Pantomime, and Mrs. Novel, compete for love and attention while interacting in their various modes at the court of Nonsense, which becomes synonymous with the after-world in many of Fielding's plays. The puppets represent both the "spirit" of the theatrical forms after which they are named, as well as the real, popular authors and performers of these forms, namely castrati

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<sup>32</sup> Farce becomes a useful genre for Fielding in that it can be used to explore and represent the deconstruction of things "natural" or "true" by employing the "perverse" farcical form, which "links together the popular and the aristocratic in uneasy harmony" (Holland 115). Farce is generally characterised by and criticised for its complete lack of literary merit or wit and its superficiality that points to a deficiency in significance altogether (Holland 107). As Peter Holland explains, "By being unnatural, by being derived from foreign sources, by appealing for a non-intellectual response from the intelligent and unintelligent parts of the audience alike, by asking for laughter without thought and entertainment without instruction, farce defined by inversion all those characteristics which proper comedy necessarily wished to achieve" (121). In other words, farce does not conform to the Horatian model of "instruct and delight," thereby undermining the moral purpose of ridicule to correct human imperfections and reinstate cultural and social imperatives. Moreover, farce concerns itself with the monstrous and grotesque, and is "proud that it can drive beyond the limits of naturalism" (Holland 118); in effect, such a monstrous form pushes the boundaries of what is real and natural. The "shallowness" of farce, nevertheless, comes from its conventional reassertion of social balance and harmony at its conclusion. *The Author's Farce* employs this shallow ending when Luckless and company discover their innate nobility and royalty. In spite of this "shallow" ending, Fielding's satire exposes such a re-establishment of norms as fantastical by putting both inherent nobility and unified authority/authorship into *deep* (not superficial) doubt throughout the whole of the play.

like Farinelli, and Lewis Theobald, Colley Cibber, John Rich, and Eliza Haywood. The simultaneously individual and general identification of the puppets enables, as Freeman insists, the blurred lines and equivocation “between the fictions of everyday life and the fictions of the stage” (62). While Freeman contends that Fielding exploits his “real” and fictive puppets – Luckless and the ghost-puppets – “to attain a position of authority from which he can act as a cultural Spectator, legislating taste and judgment and distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate forms” (58-59), I would argue that these kinds of clear distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate forms and authority are precisely what Fielding mocks, as he demonstrates the already compromised and modulated nature of authority. Indeed, Fielding does “[shape] narratives that serve his own particular social values and interests” (Freeman 65), but he does not conceive of an authorial or cultural mastery void of subjective bias or external influence, especially market determinants. Theatrical authority is particularly mediated and diffused because of the multiple transactions contributing to its signification (market-author-text-actor-audience, in this and other orders), making a type of singular, unified authority and authorial control impossible.

Luckless’ and by extension, Fielding’s relationship to his puppets demonstrates this lack of *total* control over the various signifiers and “emblems” that he deploys. Several critics remark on the “emblematic” nature of the puppets, emphasising their representational value as abstract and conceptual instead of “real.” Of the performance of these “emblematic” figures by live actors, Valerie Ruldoph argues, “the actor’s puppet-like gestures (probably squeaky voices), tend to have an alienating effect upon the puppet show” (34). This alienating effect, nonetheless, is mediated by the fact that the puppets are still human actors. Live actors as puppets that are ghosts thus render the signifying power of these “emblems” both abstract and embodied,

nonrepresentational and mimetic, again conflating “substantive abstractions” and “adjectival” performances and raising the question of how significance is constructed by means of negotiation. Anthony Hassell claims that Fielding’s love of puppetry anticipates his supposed domineering narratological approach in his novels,<sup>33</sup> while also informing his intention to emphasise his own authorship and control – as the commenting puppet master – in such a manner that his characters appear as “no more than puppets, created by him, and moving and speaking only at his bidding” (74). Contrary to Hassell’s conflation of Fielding and Luckless, as well as his declaration of Fielding’s total mastery of representation enacted through the puppet-show, the play unravels this control or domination when Murdertext (here a figure of a puritan objector to the theatre) and a constable interrupt the performance. Mrs Novel bursts into song admonishing the constable for stopping the show, the encroachment of her song on “reality” signalling the collapse of difference between the frame play and the puppet show. Novel’s song also indicates the end of Luckless’ authorship as he afterwards has to ask Mrs Novel to “mollify [her]self” (3.1.797). His admonishment, however, does not stop Novel and she continues to insult the constable, notably a figure of authority, answering to his insistence that he is “a constable by day and a justice of peace by night” with the retort, “That is, a buzzard by day and an owl by night” (3.1.904-906). Here the puppets begin to act without the puppetmaster’s bidding, asserting their own agency and challenging authority.

The completely contrived recognition scene or mock anagorisis at the end of *The Author’s Farce* effectively renders pure authority and authorial control as pure fantasy. When

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<sup>33</sup> Anthony Hassell documents Fielding’s later scholarly and practical interest in puppet theatre, including Fielding’s extensive, validating footnote to *The Veroniad* (1741), whereby “he traced the history of the puppet-show in classical times, quoting an impressive range of authorities” and his covert participation as “a principle in the conduct of a fashionable puppet theatre in Panton Street in 1748” (74). Fielding’s love for puppetry, then, highlights the ambivalence rather than categorical certainty of his satiric authority; puppetry, furthermore, becomes an interesting satiric analogy for attempts at pure authorship, not influenced by external or market pressures.

Luckless discovers that he is the King of Bantam, his fortune instantly changes from poor author to rich monarch. Luckless' biological nobility surfaces, the implication being that such authority and honour are innate. Yet Bantam is, Canfield reminds us, "utopia: it is both no place and this place at the same time" (330). Accordingly, the utopic character of Luckless' innate nobility indicates its fantastic, unreal nature; as a substantive abstraction, Luckless' royal self can only exist in the "escapist fantasy" (Canfield 330) from capitalist systems of value performed at the end of the play. This fantastic recognition of innate nobility and wealth becomes ridiculous when the puppet Punch reveals that his mother is, in fact, Moneywood, the Queen of Old Brentford and that he is, therefore, also Harriot's brother. Kinship and even more preposterously, *royal* kinship between puppets and "real" characters completely entangles and confuses reality and fantasy, representing the recognition of innate nobility as only "real" and profitable in theatrical terms. As Freeman argues, "it becomes increasingly apparent that in a pattern of spiralling regression even the 'real' is only constituted or a manifest representation of yet another theatrical frame" (64). This other and final theatrical frame is farce, and the resolution of farce's test to the limits of what is true and natural is superficial at best, as it magically restores order and balance. The ontological certainty of Luckless and the puppets' nobility, then, is equally superficial and magical; substantive abstractions like innate nobility or authority thus appear fantastic. In terms of Fielding's "overall" control of all these theatrical frames, he can only ultimately maintain the "reality" of his own authorial control by resorting to the generic conventions of farce and the "unreal" or magical reconstitution of categorical certainty.

Fielding's own "pure" cultural and authorial control of *The Author's Farce*, therefore, seems equally as contrived and "unreal" as the generic certainty of farce, especially as the playwright "resorts" to a supposedly degraded theatrical form to exercise his own overriding

authorial control. In the head note to her edition of the play, Jill Campbell describes the confusion of these last few recognition scenes of *The Author's Farce* as “unsettl[ing] this controlled satiric relation between the two levels of representation in the play” (1782). She defines the “controlled satiric relation” as precisely Fielding’s exploitation of “popular entertainments of his day in order to expose them satirically” (1782). I would, conversely, locate Fielding’s satire in his exposure of the impossibility of maintaining categorical distinctions and asserting “pure” or uncompromised authorial control, theatrical or otherwise. His satire, in effect, is not so much invested in control and by further implication, improvement or correction of theatrical taste; rather, his satire explores how so-called “controlled” relations are created and create meaning. In this sense, I agree with Freeman’s characterisation of Fielding’s relationship to genre. “For to the extent that Fielding urges generic distinctions toward the point of collapse,” Freeman argues, “he also abstractly foregrounds the extent to which those generic structures function as necessary bulwarks in the staging of meaning” (61). While genre may offer, as Freeman also suggests, epistemological certainty because it establishes patterns of expectation and recognition in audiences and actors, it is only one set of “controlled” relations into which Fielding inquires and cannot account for the structuring of the various epistemological questions that Fielding asks; this becomes particularly apparent in Fielding’s more explicit questioning – through increasing topicality – of the relations that also define and are defined by political authority.

### **Ventriloquist/Dummy: Theatrical and Political Authority in *Pasquin***

Whereas *The Author's Farce* represents the manner in which exchange value, determined by the publishing industry and theatre management, mediates theatrical and poetic authority, *Pasquin* – Fielding's enormously popular "Dramatick Satire on the Times" produced in 1736 – focuses more explicitly on how dramatic performance affects and effects authority. In *Pasquin*, Fielding utilises the rehearsal format for his entire production and instead of one play (like Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*), he offers the rehearsal of both a comedy, *The Election*, and a tragedy, *The Life and Death of Common Sense*, employing his satire to the entire night of entertainment. The application of the satirically self-reflexive rehearsal frame to the "whole show" so-to-speak signals *Pasquin's* general and intense preoccupation in the *production* of meaning within the theatre space itself and through performance specifically. The authors of the plays-within-the-play, Trapwit and Fustian, instruct and comment extensively (and ironically) not only on the generic expectations of their respective comedy and tragedy, but also on the actions and role of actors and audience alike in theatrical signification and interpretation. *Pasquin* opens with actors as actors; they discuss the absence of Fustian and the resulting delay in the rehearsal of the tragedy. While the rehearsal cannot begin without the playwright, the actors' presence played against Fustian's absence reflexively highlights the way in which theatrical authority operates as a transaction between embodied actors and absent author. The play, nonetheless, impresses upon the centrality of performers in this signifying transaction, as mediator between author and audience, and though the theatre is the site and locus of Fielding's satire, it does not set its limits on theatrical authority and its transactions. *Pasquin* also inquires into the making and deployment of political authority, utilising the relationship between playwright and actor as a satiric analogue for the relationship between state power and political

agent. In effect, the play satirically exposes and unsettles the controlled and controlling relation between authority and actors/agents, and vice versa.

In the rehearsal of Trapwit's *The Election*, the players and playwright explicitly confront the negotiation of wit and satire vis-à-vis dramatic performance. The comedy outlines an election, as its title indicates, between the urban courtier party (here the Whigs) and the country squire party (here the Tories) and how a country Mayor, his wife, and daughter decide on his political affiliation. The comedy is a satire of a satire on the machinations of electoral politics and the major part that bribery and favours play in political choice and legitimacy. Therein Trapwit directs his actors and his direction indicates the tenuous negotiations of satiric wit, subtlety, and dramatic action. When Lord Place, the court candidate, attempts to act out bribery, the following exchange ensues:

TRAPWIT. You, Mr. that act my Lord, bribe a little more openly, if you please, or the audience will lose that joke, and it is one of the strongest in the whole play.

LORD PLACE. Sir, I cannot possibly do it better at the table.

TRAPWIT. Then get all up, and come forward to the front of the stage. Now gentlemen that act the Mayor and Alderman, range yourselves in a line; and you, my Lord, and the Colonel, come to one end and bribe away with right and left.

FUSTIAN. Is this wit, Mr. Trapwit? (173)

Here Trapwit demands an obviousness of action so that the audience will not mistake the gist of his satire: flagrant bribery. In a sense, such flagrantly acted out bribery effectively portrays the pervasiveness and brazenness of electoral bribery that both Trapwit and Fielding criticise. At the same time, however, Fustian's question ("Is this wit?") suggests that the lack of subtlety in Trapwit's writing and direction does not constitute satiric wit. Indeed the subtlety of satiric wit is

associated with its intentionally ambiguous design, as I describe in my introduction, which creates difference rather than uniformity in reception; hence, Fustian implies there is no “wit” in Trapwit’s blatancy and desire to render his joke apparent to all through performance. Yet Trapwit’s insistence on overt action also points to the potential subtlety and illegibility of performance. Here the “unreadability” of performance superimposed on the “unreadability” of satire results in doubled ambiguity, which further confounds a reading of satiric authority as unidirectional, uniform, and didactic by nature. Though Fielding exposes the “unreadability” of performance through Trapwit, he also simultaneously mocks Trapwit’s avowal of a satiric authority, which is read clearly and universally, through Fustian’s comments. Fielding’s own satire then operates on both levels at the same time, teetering between making obvious the potential ambiguity of action and intention in performance and disassociating satiric authority from such clarification.

The dialectic of ambiguity and clarity in performance and commentary never quite resolves itself in *Pasquin*. Irony tends to undermine either perspective, making authorial intention uncertain, thus ensuring openness for the audience to stake out their own relationship to and interpretation of the action. In reflexively interrogating the roles of performer/performance and spectator, Fielding draws attention to the audience’s participation in the construction of meaning and by extension, satiric meaning. Several critics, including Hunter and O’Brien, argue that Fielding dissects performance in order to reflect upon and organise spectatorship. In offering action and commentary, Hunter argues, Fielding’s plays offer a “comparative spectatorism,” as the playwright assumes “responsibility... for forming observers’ habits” (68). O’Brien similarly focuses Fielding’s intention on the education of spectators. By virtue of its self-reflexive nature, O’Brien argues, the rehearsal play presents “a case study in the phenomenology of

spectatorship,” whereby “the institutional and material practices that mediate between author and the spectator are made into an object of study in their own right... to render our absorption in the spectacle impossible, to force the viewer... to adopt a critical relation to the performance in front of him” (199-8). Indeed Fielding does expose the mediation of theatrical authority through author, performer, environment, market, and audience by way of the rehearsal format and this, in turn, can enable the audience to consider their own spectatorship and relation to the representation. However both critics – Hunter especially – claim that Fielding privileges commentary over action in an attempt to consolidate his authorial control, which inevitably conflicts with the visual and “pure” representation that these critics identify with theatrical performance, the result being Fielding’s “anti-theatrical theatricalism.” I fundamentally disagree with characterising Fielding’s dramatic work as anti-theatrical, as well as with Hunter and O’Brien’s shift of emphasis away from critical reception of performance back to a model of unilateral and uniform authorial control. Performance, including performance of commentary, undergirds Fielding’s critique and the agency of actors necessarily moderates the control of playwright – a moderation that Fielding is well aware of. Live performance allows for spontaneous shifts and ulterior motives in the construction of meaning in *Pasquin* (to which we obviously do not have access now). Because Fielding *stages* the critique, it is inevitably theatrical and mediated by performance.

Throughout *Pasquin*, Fielding represents how performance conditions can overwhelm textual intentions,<sup>34</sup> which occasions the potential for actors to act spontaneously and

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<sup>34</sup> The material and performance conditions under which Fielding stages *Pasquin* were themselves pretty precarious and informed both Fielding’s playwriting and his performers. Fielding took over the Little Haymarket theatre in approximately 1736 after John Rich, famous for popularising pantomime at Convent Garden, recently refused to stage his plays (Hume *Henry Fielding* 200). Finances were extremely limited; Hume suggests that actors were not paid for rehearsals, and scenery and costuming “were absolutely minimal” as the “scenic requirements of *Pasquin* are virtually nil – ‘The Playhouse’ and a ‘room’ or two” (205). Furthermore, the group of actors who Fielding enlisted for his earlier performances of *Pasquin* were “fairly new fringe players” and Hume notes that, until Fielding

independently of the playwright's bidding. One curious aspect of the rehearsal is that the actors are paid in cheap wine; in fact, the actors refuse to rehearse until Trapwit plies them with alcohol. As the playwright's absence at the beginning of the play highlights the relationship between absent author and embodied actor, the absence of the actors unless they are paid ironically marks their occupation, both in terms of employment and a physical presence occupying the stage. As much as the rehearsal cannot begin without the playwright, it also cannot occur without the performers. Trapwit works the reality of actors drinking as payment into his comedy, as Lord Place and Colonel Promise drink with the Mayor and the Alderman. Collapsing the reality of drinking into the dramatic action has two implications: firstly, it signifies a loss of control literally, in terms of physiology, and figuratively, in terms of the author's wit and ability to create. After the Mayor demands "More wine here," Fustian complains, "I wish, Mr. Trapwit, your actors wouldn't get drunk in the first act" (172). Fustian's complaint points to the obvious fact that, with the actors drunk in the first act, they perform the rest of the comedy intoxicated and therefore potentially unhinged and off script. Secondly, Fustian earlier compares the quality of the wine to that of Trapwit's authority, because Trapwit settles for cheap wine, asking the prompter to "fetch two pots of porter, put it into bottles, and it will do for wine well enough" (170). Fustian retorts, "Ay faith, and the wine will be as good as the wit, I'll answer for it" (171). Fustian refers ambiguously to "the wit," neither attributing it to Trapwit or the actors who will consume the cheap wine; regardless, the cheap wine becomes the wit or substance of the play and such intoxicating substance cancels out any sense, be it the author's and the actor's.

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scored Charlotte Charke, Cibber's daughter and a successful actress, in his company, none of the players were "front-line performer[s]" (207). In *The Prompter*, Aaron Hill praises Fielding's economy against the spectacular excesses of Cibber and Rich, declaring, "a Gentlemen, under the Disadvantage of a very bad House, with scarce an Actor, and at very little Expence, by the single Power of *Satire*, *Wit*, and *Common Sense*, has been able to run a Play on for 24 Nights, which is now, *but* beginning to *rise* in the Opinion of the Town" (77).

Another important example of Fielding drawing attention to how performance conditions reconstitute the play-text in unexpected ways occurs when Lord Place goes to bribe the Mayor and we discover that the actor has no prop coins. The absence of the prop in the actor's hand completely changes the meaning of the following exchange:

MAYOR. Come, here's a round to my Lord and the Colonel's health; a Place, and a Promise, I say; they may talk of pride of courtiers, but I am sure I never had a civiller [sic] squeeze by the hand in my life.

TRAPWIT. Ay, you have squeezed that out pretty well: but show the gold at those words, sir, if you please.

MAYOR. I have none.

TRAPWIT. Pray, Mr. Prompter, take care to get some counters against it is acted.

FUSTIAN. Ha, ha, ha! upon my word the courtiers have topped their part; the actor has out-done the author; this bribing with an empty hand is quite in the character of the courtier. (174)

While the lack of coins does not allow for the Mayor to make obvious the bribe, contravening Trapwit's intention, it ultimately offers a stronger, satiric signification, as Fustian explains, because the courtier's promises would most likely be empty. Hunter suggests that "the point may seem to be that actors know more than authors about drama, or that theatre is chance, not art, but the diversion of attention to prop problems enables that the real point – about hollow promises and empty hands – gets readily granted" (61). The ironic, satiric point may, in fact, be one "about hollow promises and empty hands," but it does not necessarily stand as the only "real" point. One could also read the real point of Trapwit plying his actors with alcohol as a replication of the bribery necessary for assuming positions of authority; nevertheless, this reading does not negate

the fact that the actors, real and in the play, need to be hired to embody the script and deploy its significance, and that their ontological state mediates signification. What is interesting about Hunter's contention is that he inadvertently argues that Fielding achieves his ironic point *through* performance and a representation of the chance of theatre rather than in spite of it. While I recognise that Hunter argues for Fielding's ultimate control over the representation by artfully creating the "chance" himself, I find it significant that Fielding focuses on the performance and its mediating factors to proffer irony and satiric significance; in other words, by making a joke about the chance of theatre, he draws attention to the ad hoc manner in which performance can *rewrite* a playwright's authority. He thus acknowledges the limits of his own authorial control, though not necessarily to reassert greater power and control. Furthermore, though Hunter acknowledges that Fustian and the other authors of the plays-within-the-play are part of the critique (54), he also places a lot of stock in the authorial dimension of the plays, in spite of Fielding's constant undercutting of both their and his own authority with relentless irony. Ascertaining Fielding's "real point" is a constantly shifting proposition because of the unresolved dialectic between commentary and performance, the meta-performance and the actual live performance of the meta-performance.

The tendency to read Fustian and the author figures of Fielding's plays as "not so much the objects of satire as the agents of it" (Rivero *The Plays* 135) creates another clear binary – satiric object versus satiric agent – that conflicts with Fielding's ambiguous representation of both theatrical and satiric authority. Trapwit's role as satiric object may be evident in his name as well as his inability to recognise his own ironic and contradictory statements, like claiming he will not include "one impure joke" in his play, at the same time that he gets his actors drunk, expects them to imitate bribery overtly, and demonstrates to the actors playing Colonel Promise

and Miss Mayoress how to give “your best embraces” and encourages them to “practise this behind the scenes” (198). Nevertheless, inebriated actors, bribery, and fornicating lovers/actors do ironically provide, as Trapwit claims, “an exact representation of nature” (173) and its satirization. Trapwit thus functions as both an object and an agent of satire – the paradoxical nature of satiric authority as it both replicates and mocks authoritative relations. Such ambiguity in satiric authority necessitates the participation of the audience in the construction of meaning, rendering it diverse and subjective, therefore delimiting the power of the playwright and a uniform reading. Fielding’s own theatrical authority then is doubled, being both the object and agent of satiric inquiry and critique. “Fielding’s theatrical reflexiveness is more about response than creation,” Hunter contends, “for even its creative aspects emphasize the artist’s rhetoric and his need to know what will, in fact, produce the response he intends” (65). Yet, if Fielding also mocks the actualisation of authorial intentions, intentionality also becomes both the agent and object of satire. Indeed Fielding showcases the importance of reception in negotiating meaning, but that does not mean that he believes or knows he can produce or control his intended results, particularly if the complete and uniform realisation of authorial intention is the joke itself.

Fustian certainly seems to be a more reliable authority on playwriting and performance than Trapwit, his satiric remark about Lord Place’s empty hand being an example of his role as a satiric agent. In spite of containing fewer authorial interjections, as Lewis notes, Fustian’s tragedy and its inverse relation to his declared theatrical intentions “establish that Fustian is as much of a fool as Trapwit” (154-55). Fustian’s role as agent therefore becomes confused when his commentary during his own tragedy, *The Life and Death of Common Sense*, contradicts the reality of its performance; he too functions simultaneously as an agent and object of satire, his authority then seeming unreliable. His tragedy operates as a satiric allegory whereby emblematic

figures, Law, Physic, and Firebrand the Priest, conspire with the Queen of Ignorance to overthrow Common-Sense. Fustian's comments on *The Election* and his satire in *The Life and Death* proffer a typical critique of the deterioration of theatrical arts, which is linked to the increase of nonsense and popular diversions like ballet and pantomime. Nevertheless, he like Luckless employs precisely the forms of entertainment and theatrics that he criticises and yet, unlike Luckless, Fustian seems to employ them unconsciously. The best example of this unconscious contradiction occurs when Fustian introduces his final act. Fustian proclaims to Sneerwell, the drama critic,

Now, Mr. Sneerwell, we shall begin my third and last act; and I believe I may defy all the poets who ever writ, or will ever write, to produce its equal: it is, sir, so crammed with drums and trumpets, thunder and lightening, battles and ghosts, that I believe the audience will want no entertainment after it: it is as full of show as Merlin's cave itself, and for wit – no rope-dancing or tumbling can come near it. Come, begin. (217)

Fustian's enthusiasm for special effects and spectacular battles may be evidence enough of his own attraction to and deployment of diversions. The stage directions that follow his boast, however, enable the performance to undermine Fustian's pretensions to unparalleled writing or "wit" completely. The directions are "*a ridiculous march is played*" followed by the command: "*Enter Queen Ignorance, attended with Singers, Fiddlers, Rope-Dancers, Tumblers &c*" (217). Indeed these diverse acts – rope-dancers and tumblers particularly – accompany Queen Ignorance as a part of Fustian's critique, but he makes no mention of his complicity or his ironic, immediate inclusion of rope-dancers and tumblers in his show of wit. Instead, the performance stands alone as an ironic contradiction to his authorial declamations. Here we have the perfect

example of how *Pasquin* achieves irony through performance undoing the commentary, rather than the other way around.

Fustian undermines his authorial intentions and pretensions in additional and less overt ways. His authorial justifications and the performance of his play ironically begin to mirror his objections to Trapwit's play. During *The Election*, for example, Fustian complains that Trapwit stages scenes of silence and places actors on stage without dialogue. He complains that Colonel Promise is "but ill-named; for he is a man of very few words" (173). Fustian, of course, points out the unintentional irony in Colonel Promise's name (that irony is, of course, doubled when the Colonel's promises are actually empty); however, he also points to a theatrical economy that desires all players to be of use as well as to have substance – a substance supposedly vested through dialogue. He later complains of Trapwit's scene of silence between Colonel Promise and Miss Mayoress, the two lovers in the play; after the stage directions call for "*a long silence here*," Fustian declares, "Pray, Mr. Trapwit, is nobody ever going to speak again?" (196). Ironically, during *The Life and Death*, Fustian refuses to give the Drummer lines, rendering him a pure spectacle. When the drummer tells Fustian, "I don't know what is in my part, sir; but I desire to have something in it; for I have been tired of doing nothing a great while," Fustian replies, "Silence" (219). Here the drummer begs for purpose and substance and Fustian denies him with precisely the silence that he criticises in Trapwit's authorship. Joseph Roach supplies an interesting analysis of Fielding's use of silent scenes. He suggests that Fielding straddles a theatrical history that envisions speech as thought and a modern theatre where non-speech indicates thought ("Uncreating" 45-6). In modern theatre, Roach claims, silence is "subtext, the poetry of unspoken thought. Inflection is its lexicon, silence its grammar, gestures its punctuation, actors and auditors its coauthors" (45). Roach uses the example of Colonel Promise

not speaking and how Fustian's focus on his silent character instead of the speaking ones in the scene indicates the curiosity of the audience to probe into unspoken significance. If satire investigates the controlling yet arbitrary relationship between discourse and authority, then silence in satiric performance heightens the sense of potentially unrealised or ambiguous intentionality, as well as highlights how actors and audience are agents that contribute to theatrical significance.

Another excellent example of Fustian employing theatrical tactics, which ironically reproduce Trapwit's *faux pas*, is that he represents Queen Common-Sense as asleep during most of the play. This can be read in a couple of ways: it can signal the slumber of Common-sense in contemporary theatrical productions and the political reality, as well as her "sleeping on the job" in Fustian's own production. To Sneerwell, the critic who questions this characterisation, Fustian defends Common-Sense's inactivity and silence as being part of "the practical rules of writing... the first and greatest of which is protraction or the art of spinning, without which the matter of a play would lose the chief property of all other matter, namely extension" (211). He concludes, "Mr. Sneerwell, you are one of those who would have no character brought on, but what is necessary to the business of the play. – Nor I neither – But the business of the play, as I take it, is to divert, and therefore every character that diverts is necessary to the business of the play" (211). Here Fustian explicitly, though inadvertently, aligns himself with Trapwit by identifying his diversion strategies and production – even extension – of nonsense. He also disregards his earlier objections to Trapwit placing any character on stage without dialogue because it contravenes the economy of stage business and circumvents authorial control. The "art of spinning," which puts Common-Sense to sleep, also evokes politics and the diversionary tactics of politicians. I agree with O'Brien's contention that the "dual critique of entertainment and

administration that Fielding and others mounted in this decade offers a compelling forecast of the way that modern politics has been frequently disparaged as a form of diversion” (182). Roach also suggest that silence in Fielding’s plays bridges the stage/politics metaphor, because “one of the key things contemporary politicians have in common with the players is their recourse to silence and unspoken thought” (49). Though Roach does not offer it as an example, Fielding links silence and politics most explicitly in *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* as I will show in the last section of this chapter. Making diversion or “spinning” part of the art of playwriting, like that in the art of politics, then develops an illusory relation between discourse and legitimate authority. In *Pasquin*, as Laura McGrane notes, Fielding “uses structural devices to expose the gap between words and intentions, ambiguous agency and surface role-playing, that is inherent in political speech making” (189). Spinning also implies, therefore, that the agent or actor can act and wield discourse in spite of authority.

I have already demonstrated how the playwrights in *Pasquin* expose the potentially distorting mediation of theatrical authority by way of actors. While Fustian complains extensively about unruly actors and their “plaguing [of him] with alterations” (205), he also enjoys the embodiment of his authority in a separate agent. He refuses to read his own dedication as he “hate[s] to read [his] own works” (201) and instead lets Trapwit read it for him. Until he receives praise from his audience, Fustian does not take credit or responsibility for his dedication, which reveals the benefit of authority operating through agents other than the author. This benefit in the gap between authority and agent repeats itself when Fustian falsely attributes his prologue to a friend (the prologue again supposedly representing authorial intention) and only identifies his authorship of it after he again receives approbation. Responsibility for theatrical representation, then, can become equally as disengaged from authorship because of its

ventriloquist nature and its mediation through actors and audience. Satirists certainly highlight the potential disconnect between authored and received intent, capitalising on this gap to avoid full accountability, as Fustian demonstrates when he objects to Sneerwell's complaint that his "satire on law and physic [is] somewhat too general" (210). To Sneerwell's concern, Fustian replies, "What is said here cannot hurt either an honest lawyer, or a good physician; and such may be, nay, I know such are: if the opposites to these are the most general I cannot help that" (211). Fustian displaces satiric agency and recognition onto the audience, which may or may not result in a "general" or universal reading. The self-reflexive mediation of satiric intent through audience members draws attention to the decentralised power of satiric authority, putting into doubt a controlled and controlling unilateralism in satiric critique. Conversely, Matthew Kinservik argues that *Pasquin* "marks a significant change in Fielding's approach to dramatic satire," one that is "judgmental, punitive, and authoritarian" (82-83). He claims that Fielding's adoption of the name "the Great Mogul," when he became *de facto* manager of the Little Haymarket theatre in 1736, speaks to his authorial identification with "a clearly autocratic title implying regal authority" (83). Yet *Pasquin* ridicules precisely this type of authoritarian and "punitive" approach. When Firebrand suggests to "Make a huge fire and burn all unbelievers," Common-sense herself declares, "Men cannot force belief upon themselves / And shall I then by torture force it on them?" (214). Punitive measures and tyranny do not correspond to legitimate forms of power and the principles of Common-sense, nor do they connect easily to satiric authority, which exposes its own limitations precisely because of its mediated and diffuse or diffused nature. Furthermore, Kinservik's claim that Fielding's stage-name, "the Great Mogul," indicates aspirations of theatrical autocracy discounts some irony. The name may be mocking other theatrical and political "moguls" (namely, John Rich, Colley Cibber, and Walpole), whom

Fielding has and will go on to ridicule ruthlessly, not to mention the fact that the regal title is disproportionate to Fielding's leadership of a company that Hume describes as "even more of a scratch group than scholars have realized" (*Henry Fielding* 206).

Fielding associates his critique of theatrical authority to politics by highlighting the manner in which agents, like actors, can distort legitimate, though disembodied authority. As I suggest, however, authority is by no means a *pure*, monolithic, and immaterial essence – its power is negotiated through agents and mediated by discourse. In *The Life and Death*, Fustian satirises agents of the state, emblemized by Law, Phisic, and Firebrand, the oracular priest, and exposes how each figure abuses rhetoric and discourse in order to undermine Common-sense's authority. The abuse of rhetoric emphasizes the arbitrary intersections of discourse and power and how these arbitrary intersections have material effects that enable oppression. Firebrand, for example, insists upon his "infallibility" as a cleric/agent of the Sun (here a pun on the literal Sun and Christ) and yet he can only qualify his legitimacy by uttering his own qualifications. When Common-sense demands that Firebrand identify the source of his authority and "Show me the instrument, and let me read it," Firebrand responds,

Madam, you cannot read it, for being thrown

Into the sea, the water has damaged it,

That none but priests could ever read it.

QUEEN COMMON-SENSE. And do you think I can believe this tale?

FIREBRAND. I order you to believe, and you must. (215)

Firebrand's characterisation of the clergy stresses their role as intermediaries in interpreting and enacting authority, at the same time that it underlines their capacity to dictate without sourcing their authorities, which can lead to deceitful and forceful application. Law also operates as an

intermediary; the relationship between capital “L” law and lawyers, however, is a nebulous one, mainly determined by the agent’s discursive dexterity. As Law explains,

Thou know’st my Lord of Physic, I had long  
Been privileged by custom immemorial,  
In tongues unknown, or rather none at all,  
My edicts to deliver through the land;  
When this proud queen, this Common-sense, abridged  
My power, and made me understood by all. (207)

Here Law implies how he functions for the benefit of a few because of his access to and deployment of obscure “tongues.” Common-sense undoes this power when she “abridges” his discursive power; in other words, she reigns in the proximity of legal language – the result of endless self-citation through precedent – in order to remake Law as “common.” Physic similarly acts a supposed agent of health and yet he deploys a pharmaceutical discourse and regimen(t) “armed with deadly pill” that seeks to “kill, and then dissect” (216). For Physic, the body becomes object and site to test discourse, produce further knowledge, increase the profession’s power, and sell pharmaceuticals. It is exactly this mix of specialization and commodification, facilitated by unreliable and subjective discursive strategies, which causes Queen Common-sense to rail against Law, Physic, and Firebrand. She bemoans how “priests and lawyers and physicians made/ These general goods to each a private trade” (215).

*The Life and Death’s* satiric allegory of Law, Physic, and Firebrand as deceitful representatives of authority connects to a critique of real politics through what Laura McGrane describes as “a failed oracular model” (174). This failed oracular model consists of a medium assuming the authority of a supposedly invisible source. McGrane usefully traces Fielding’s

portrayal of the oracle throughout his career, literary and dramatic, and notes Fielding's opposition to

such whispered encounters between faceless, even headless, authorities and their craven subjects... [and he] sought to provide an unmediated print model for political and literary exchange in the eighteenth century, a consensual framework for communication that would transform and, more important, expose relations between minister and subject, director and audience, author and reader. (174)

Politicians capitalise on the gaps between intent and discourse to govern. I would add that the “failed oracular model” corresponds to the actor and author relationship in *Pasquin* as well, as the actor who utters in theatre can signify in spite of the playwright's authority. McGrane attaches Fielding's self-reflexive concerns about this model to anxiety about his own “self-authorship” (191). In the epilogue, where Fielding “quits playing” and allows Common-sense (now a ghost because she was murdered by Firebrand) to express his authorial intentions to improve his audience's taste, she claims that he “reverts to the invisible speaker behind the medium” (191). McGrane seems to suggest that this reversion compromises Fielding's satiric exposition of self-authorship because he himself deploys the autocratic, elusive authority that the oracle engenders to express his “real” intent. What is missing from McGrane's analysis of the “consensual” relation between director and audience, or author and audience, however, is the role and agency of the performer in this exchange; there is also a conflict between the notion of a “consensual” model and an “unmediated” form of exchange in her argument. The actor as medium renders “unmediated” communication in the theatre impossible, though the model for understanding remains based in a negotiation between author, actor, audience, and even critic. Fielding represents the mediation of theatrical authority through actors as important and

significant as that enacted by the audience or critics, carrying through to the epilogue that doubt of what McGrane earlier describes as the failure of “authorial transcendence” in the oracular model (191).<sup>35</sup> This doubt may also be amplified by the fact that Common-sense was played by the same actress (Mrs. Egerton) as the naïve, impressionable, Miss Mayoress in *The Election*, creating, as Rivero suggests, suspicion in the audience about Common-sense’s authority (*The Plays* 131-32). Within the *Pasquin* as a whole, the epilogue actually becomes an overt symbol of an actress’ agency. Trapwit defends his omission of an epilogue to *The Election*, complaining,

Faith, sir, I can get no one to speak it; the actresses are so damn difficult to please –  
When first I writ it they would not speak it, because there were not double entendres in it; upon which I went to Mr. Watts’s, and borrowed all his plays; went home, read over all the epilogues, and crammed it as full as possible; and now, forsooth, it has too many in it.  
(200).

Here the actresses decide the content of the epilogue, *consenting* to a representation that might sexualise them on stage and imply a corresponding sexual availability offstage. A consensual model therefore also exists and mediates the relation between author and actor, not simply author and audience.

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<sup>35</sup> After his ironic quarrel with Common-sense, Fustian explicitly describes the impossibility of unmediated authority in the theatre in his long tirade to Sneerwell. He even claims such mediation before a text is authored by the Muses. The tirade is worth quoting at length: “These little things, Mr. Sneerwell, will sometimes happen. Indeed, a poet undergoes a great deal before he comes to the third night; first with the muses, who are humourous ladies, and must be attended; for if they take it into their head at any time to go abroad and leave you, you will pump your brain in vain: then, sir, with the master of a play-house to get it acted, whom you generally follow a quarter of a year before you know whether he will receive it or no; and then, perhaps, he tells you it won’t do, and returns it you again, reserving the subject, and perhaps the name, which he brings out in his next pantomime; but if you receive the play, then you must attend again to get it writ out into parts, and rehearsed. Well, sir, at last, the rehearsals begin; then, sir, begins another scene of trouble with the actors, some of whom don’t like their parts, and all are continually plaguing you with alterations: at length, after having waded through all these difficulties, his play appears on the stage, where one man hisses out of resentment to the author; a second out of dislike to the house; a third out of dislike to the actor; a fourth out of dislike to the play; a fifth for the joke sake; a sixth to keep all rest in company. Enemies abuse him, friends give him up, the play is damned, and the author goes to the devil: so ends the farce” (205).

Whether or not the epilogue can actually succeed in conveying authorial transcendence or an unmediated directness, let alone reverse Fielding's satiric anatomisation of theatrical authority in *Pasquin*, is debatable. To assume that Fielding stops "playing" in the epilogue or actually departs from the re-signifying project of epilogues in general is also up for debate. The epilogue itself identifies how it is supposed to reconstitute the meaning of the actual play:

... the Epilogue, by rule,  
Should come and turn it all to ridicule;  
Should tell the ladies that the tragic bards,  
Who prate of virtue and her vast rewards.  
Are all in jest, and only fools who heed 'em. (228)

The epilogue "begs a serious word," abandoning the occasion to ridicule the author and warning against senseless entertainments, while it utilises a patriotic argument, praising Shakespeare, Locke, Newton, and Jonson, to defend its ridicule: "Content with nature's bounty, do not crave / The little which to other lands she gave" (228). Yet throughout the play, patriotism takes on a valence of ridicule, as political figures attempt to carve out legitimacy by invoking the patriotic. Taking on patriotism as the "serious" word of the epilogue then mimics the tactics of politicians, playfully aligning these grave or sincere authorial intentions with those of politicians; the legitimacy of ventriloquised theatrical authority vis-à-vis political authority becomes equally tenuous. Fielding also attempts to resignify patriotism to assuage his audience, effectively and ironically reiterating the agenda of most epilogues. Adopting the patriotic stance distances a London audience from their supposedly degraded taste by displacing corruptions in entertainment onto foreign agents. In effect, the audience does not have to relate to the satiric content of play – its target re-aimed at foreigners – and the epilogue follows its rule of glossing

over or isolating the critique. Fielding's epilogue does not, therefore, reassert some sort of transcendent authorial control; instead, through its ironically conventional epilogue, *Pasquin* further exposes the symmetry between theatrical and political authority, underscoring the artifice and arbitrariness of the controlled and controlling relationship between invisible authority and subject.

**“a beautiful image of the instability of human greatness and the uncertainty of friends”:  
satire, performance, and doubt in *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* and *Eurydice  
Hiss'd***

To accompany the publication of his last play, *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*, prior to the Licensing Act of 1737, Fielding includes a “Dedication to the Public,” which he uses to flatter the audience who honours “[his] performance every night of its exhibition, where [they] have never failed showing the greatest delight and approbation” (232). He also simultaneously uses the dedication as an opportunity both to reaffirm and undercut what seems like interpretive consensus over the satire in his play, namely the out-and-out lambasting of Walpole as he relates to figures like Cibber or Rich, who “endanger the constitution of the British theatre” (233). Several critics note that, until *The Historical Register* and its afterpiece *Eurydice Hiss'd*, Fielding's satire of politics was more general and less partisan (O'Brien 201; Hume *Henry Fielding* 232), *Pasquin* demonstrating the previously bi-partisan, equal opportunity stroke of Fielding's satire. These last two dramatic satires, however, mark a turn in Fielding's theatrical authorship insofar as the satiric attack becomes obvious in its aim at Walpole and his ministerial corruptions. The play offers a series of discontinuous, disconnected events, which take every

opportunity to criticise rather than narrate. The title of the play is itself ironic; *The Historical Register*, an actual annual publication that offers a supposedly objective account and calendar of the year's events, becomes a vehicle for Fielding's overtly partisan, subjective attack (O'Brien 201). Whereas critics tend to differentiate Fielding's other author figures of his plays-within-the-play from his own authorship, they tend to agree that Medley, the playwright in *The Historical Register*, is Fielding. Hume argues, "*The Historical Register* is both Fielding's play and Medley's interior play" (*Henry Fielding* 234) and Lewis goes further, contending, "Medley, the author of the inner play, is not a Bayes-figure, but the antithesis of a Bayes-figure, being Fielding's spokesperson and possibly even a self-portrait" (187). Superimposing Fielding's authorship onto Medley's, coupled with Fielding's increasingly and seemingly overt satiric aims, raises several interesting questions regarding the tensions that I have identified in dramatic satire, namely those between overt and ambiguous satiric intentionality; dramatic performance versus dramatic commentary; individual versus general identification; and finally, coerced versus consensual interpretation. I will, however, demonstrate that, in spite of their overt and partisan tone, *The Historical Register* and *Eurydice Hiss'd* maintain these tensions, as Fielding puts into doubt the resolved, uniform, and agreed upon reception of his dramatic satire, particularly in terms of the popularity (or in the case of *Eurydice Hiss'd*, failure) of his plays.

*The Historical Register* opens with two players discussing Medley's play, debating the potency and wittiness of his satire as it correlates to varying levels of directness. The first player complains that he wishes the satire "had been a little stronger and plainer," while the second insists that the satire "is plain enough" (239). The following exchange ensues:

1 PLAYER. Hum! Ay, it is intelligible; but I would have it downright; 'gad, I fancy I could write a thing to succeed myself.

2 PLAYER. Ay; pry'thee, what subject wouldst thou write on?

1 PLAYER. Why no subject at all, sir; but I would have a humming deal of satire, and I would repeat in every page, that courtiers are cheats and don't pay their debts, that lawyers are rogues, physicians are blockheads, soldiers cowards and ministers –

2 PLAYER. What, what sir?

1 PLAYER. Nay, I'll only name 'em, that's enough to set the audience a hooting.

2 PLAYER. Zounds, sir, here is enough wit for a whole play in one speech.

1 PLAYER. For one play! why, sir, it's all I have extracted out of above a dozen.

The demands of Player 1 for general and clearly identifiable satire evidently come into conflict with a notion of wit, as Player 2 implies, which accords greater value to subtlety in spirit and expression. Player 1, nevertheless, champions satiric wit as overt hostility, advocating the naming of names so as to expose satiric targets and provoke the audience successfully. Like Fustian and Trapwit, the two players reveal the dialectical play between explicit and implicit reference in satire. In spite of the players' open discussion of satiric aims, however, Fielding adeptly avoids *full* satiric disclosure by carefully silencing Player 1's name-calling of ministers, strategically cutting off his "satiric" attack after the word "ministers." The dash articulates the fine balance between literal and implied attack in satire, which Fielding carries through the rest of play. Silence in performance, as it was criticised in *Pasquin*, becomes the means through which Fielding exposes not only the ambiguous, even deceptive authority at heart of Walpole's ministry, but also at the heart of satire itself. Because satiric authority emphasises the gap between signifier and signified, rhetoric and intent in the discursive strategies of illegitimate power and authority by reifying this gap, it inevitably reproduces (and in many cases benefits from) the gap between literal and implied meaning, general and specific attack. Fielding,

accordingly, deploys measured amounts of silence to ensure he maintains the tension between overt and implied attack, both implicating targets and audience and isolating the critique. As seen above, it is specifically the silence available *through* performance that enables the satire to be both intelligible and ambiguous.

Medley's commentary throughout *The Historical Register* links illegitimate political power, performance, and silence. Silence in these cases marks how malicious intent can remain unexpressed and disconnected from action; performance, in turn, can replicate this disconnect as the actor can act without necessarily expressing intent and the audience reads an actor's performance without necessarily having access to his or her motivations. In the play, actors become overt satiric analogues for politicians. During the exchange between Corsican politicians, Medley points to the silent, first politician "who says nothing, [and] knows it all" (245). When Sourwit asks, "But how do you intend to convey this knowledge to the audience," Medley responds, "Sir, they can read it in his looks; 'sblood, sir, must not a politician be thought a wise man without giving instances of his wisdom?" (245). Medley's comment operates in two interesting and opposing directions. On the one hand, Medley's comment draws attention to the politician's silence, interpreting the silence as significant for an audience. The silence is therefore made expressive, particularly through the actor's "looks." Yet, on the other hand, Medley does not explain or identify the knowledge or "wisdom" that constitutes the silence and the look. In other words, while he shows the politician's silent appearance to be significant, he does not define that significance; it remains open for interpretation and the commentary does not render all intent explicit. Medley's emphasis on the actor's looks, accordingly, provides a perfect opportunity for performance to reconstitute or signify without textual authority. Depending on how the actor performs and interprets his "looks," the audience will extrapolate different

meaning of his supposedly hidden knowledge. Here Fielding both self-reflexively points to performance's power of signification and leaves an opening for performers to signify independently.

In *The Historical Register*, performance as concept and practice in theatre and politics, like authorship in Fielding's other rehearsal plays, becomes the obvious agent and object of satire. Medley explicitly announces this satiric association of politics and theatre to Sourwit:

SOURWIT. But what thread or connection can you have in this history? For instance, how is your political connected with your theatrical?

MEDLEY. Oh very easily – When my politics come to a farce, they very naturally lead me to the play-house, where, let me tell you, there are some politicians too, where there is lying, flattering, dissembling, promising, deceiving, and undermining, as well as in any court in Christendom. (242)

Medley critiques performance as enabling deception and in associating politics and farce he emphasises the superficial nature and potential non-sense of politicians' performances. Because farce's grotesque superficiality and inversion "drive beyond the limits of naturalism" (Holland 118), actors/politicians inhabit positions of unnatural authority through their farcical performance. Pistol, the bragging "prime minister theatrical" suggestive of Walpole, embodies spectacle, being accompanied by drums, fiddles, and a mob, while he articulates how that spectacle inflects his authority. He justifies his illegitimate performance as the result of his superficial theatrics: "We claim a lawless power, yet for some reasons / Which to ourself [sic] we keep as yet concealed; / Thus to the public deign we to appeal" (258). Pistol then gets on his knees to beg the mob's assent and they hiss at him, obviously rejecting his performance. The mob's hiss certainly seems like Fielding's appeal to his own audience to identify with the mob's

opinion of this actor with ulterior motives and to hiss at him also. The critique of politics and performance here is obvious, but how this critique connects to *real* politics and specifically how it relates to Walpole remains contingent on audience reception. As Hunter points out, Pistol also represents Colley Cibber and his son, Theophilus Cibber – two farcical figures of theatrical authority – but because Medley openly associates the stage and the state, Walpole too is implicated (64). Though Fielding emphasises audience reception in the negotiation of legitimate authority and the rejection of illegitimate power, he does so without explicitly naming names, making the audience themselves identify Pistol with Walpole and to hiss or not.

The audience's role in interpreting *The Historical Register* and its supposedly obvious satire itself becomes a source of satire in the play. Fielding repeatedly highlights the manner in which an audience mediates theatrical and satiric authority, rightly *and* wrongly. Medley himself complains that audience reaction determines the significance of his play and that their collective arbitration of value does not necessarily correlate to a play's intended substance. He chooses to secure his authority and authorship by printing the play before it is performed and insists upon "always print[ing] as fast as you write, that if they damn your play, they may not damn your copy too" (241). Hunter attributes the de-emphasis and lack of irony in Medley's authorship as a result of Fielding's increasing concern over the power and influence of audience reception instead of the author's power and influence. He offers Fielding's characterisation of Lord Dapper as an example of this concern, as the Lord does not recognise himself as an object of satiric attack in his love of fashionable entertainments and he ends up bidding in the staged auction of abstractions, like courage and modesty, forgetting the difference between his position in the audience and the actors' position on stage (66-7). While I agree with Hunter's take on Lord Dapper and his role as the clueless object of ridicule, I would argue that, as much as Fielding

seems concerned about proper reception of his work, he also capitalises on the ambiguous nature of performance and the invisibility of its intent by overemphasising the ways in which the audience accrues responsibility and accountability through their mediation and reception of such ambiguity. The dedication that Fielding attaches to the publication of his play exemplifies how he scapegoats audience perspective as the source of satiric understanding and personalising the attack.

In order to defend his play against claims that it slanders Walpole and the ministry, Fielding offers an anecdote in his “Dedication to the Public” affixed to *The Historical Register*, which draws into doubt interpretations reached by an audience through consensus. He describes two gentlemen who see a pub signpost with the figure of an ass. One gentleman tells the other named Bob (here both a generic name and a nickname for Robert Walpole) that the picture is of him. Bob, being “extremely short-sighted,” gets angry and threatens the owner with prosecution “for exposing his features in that public manner” (235). A gathering “mob” then agrees that “the sign was the exact picture of the gentleman” (235) until a “good-natured” man sees “the jest of the multitude” and tells Bob, “the sign hung out is the sign of an ass, nor will your picture be here unless you draw it yourself” (235). Identification in satire is a matter of self-reflection and Fielding suggests that individuals who feel criticised by satire, in fact, implicate themselves in the critique (keeping in mind, of course, that Fielding’s argument here is conveniently defensive). Satire’s emphasis on self-reflexivity reflects upon and stresses individual positionality and its constitution, rather than changing or reconstituting that subject. Although it tends to be the rhetorical defence of satirists, didacticism seems incompatible with satire’s intentional ambiguity, the result of its oscillation between general and individual attack, overt and implied meaning. As William Warner argues of *Joseph Andrews*, like the other satiric

authors I examine, “Fielding’s narrator knows that most of what readers will learn will be something they are ready to learn, because they already half know it, so the text Fielding writes can only function as a catalyst that induces a certain re-cognition” (257). The importance lies in the fact that the *reader* or *audience* does the work and identification, but there is no pretence that the author can fully control their interpretation and recognition nor can he induce some sort of fundamental correction or change in the audience’s perspective. The other caveat to this model, however, is that audience reception and popular interpretation are not reliable authorities on satiric meaning either. Though it also ironically and implicitly reaffirms the anti-Walpole aspects of *The Historical Register*, Fielding’s dedication to the public also points to fallibility in audience interpretation, even when it reflects general consensus; after all, common sense is, in the course of Fielding’s plays, not so universal.

As I mentioned previously in reference to *Pasquin*, Lisa McGrane argues for the primacy of this consensual, reciprocal model of authorship and reception in Fielding’s plays and writing. As opposed to the unidirectional authority of an invisible source, she contends,

Fielding offered readers the opportunity to purchase common sense through a consumer model of exchange that encouraged author and reader, king and petitioner, to value forms of absolute authority only as variable commodities. That is, the worth of authorial voices, and of authority in general, would be determined by market determinants and by self-conscious contracts rather than divine dictates. (196)

Indeed Fielding underscores the mediated and transactional nature of authority and while he exposes these mediations and transactions, he does not render absolutely clear how the audience *should* mediate and receive his work. What becomes an evident problem in McGrane’s proposition – a problem to which Fielding himself draws attention – is that common-sense does

not necessarily correspond to popularly purchased and negotiated contracts. The presence of the mob in *The Historical Register*, accordingly, simultaneously mirrors the audience and registers Fielding's scepticism about the equation of popular perspective and common-sense.

Furthermore, the auction scene enacts this consensual model of reception, whereby value is negotiated through an auctioneer offering qualities or virtues, like courage and modesty, to an audience who gets to negotiate their value. Yet this auction is also obviously a source of ridicule. Hen, played by Charlotte Charke,<sup>36</sup> acts as the auctioneer, a mockery of real-life auctioneer, Christopher Cock. Charke, an actress known for her cross-dressing on- and off-stage, adds a layer to the mockery in that she as a woman obviously does not have a "cock." Jill Campbell also identifies how the auction scene satirises the consumer paradigm that McGrane advocates:

"Cock's auctions made *buying* a social event, and the crowds that gathered at an auction for entertainment acted out the movement of price-setting through demand that was crucial to their emerging 'consumer society,' creating as well the spectatorship to consumption upon which that society depends" (37). Campbell importantly notes that the objects at auction accumulate value through "the representation of the object the auctioneer offers" (37) instead of their ontological status. The auction then signals how performance negotiates meaning and value and how an

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<sup>36</sup> Charke is an interesting choice as the arbiter of value because she represents the type of gender ambiguity and absence of male genitalia (Campbell 37-38; DeRitter 82), which Medley mocks in an earlier scene where his ladies express their desire to procreate with Farinelli, the castrato. I part ways with Campbell, however, in that I think her appraisal of Fielding's anxiety over "natural" gender categories is slightly over-determined. Much like his use of Eliza Haywood as a performer in spite of her association with the female novel-writing that Fielding criticises in *The Author's Farce*, Fielding's use of Charke to perform in his plays, in spite of his ridicule of gender ambiguity, and *her* consent to perform in them suggests to me playfulness as much as anxiety about such transvestism and spectacle. This is not to say, however, that Fielding endorses and celebrates fluid gender categories. Rather, I think Charke's public and private transvestism highlights the mediation of performance and authority between character and "real" (gender) identity, marking the production of theatrical meaning vis-à-vis the "real" world, which Fielding is constantly attempting to expose and play with. The performative element of gender also mimics the negotiations and exchanges that determine value in lieu of pure, authoritative categories in Fielding's plays. Finally, DeRitter points out that Charke had "talent for cross-gender impersonations" and that both she and Fielding reaped social and financial stability from "the taste of the town conferr[ing] a degree of legitimacy in the group [The Great Mogul's Company] in the form of cold hard cash" (83). Here the popularity of Charke's performances implies a degree of openness and receptivity in the audience; it may also highlight Fielding's opportunity to exploit it, though he does use her transvestism in clever, effective, and meaningful ways in his satire.

increase of value correlates to increased demand and interest in the audience. The value of the object thus finds its basis in popularity, whereby fashion dictates consensus over meaningfulness; like reception at auctions, consensual readings of theatrical performance do not necessarily represent ontological “truth” or substantial “value.” In effect, Fielding disassociates theatrical reception from some sort of inculcation and reaffirmation of absolute truths and meaning.

*Eurydice Hiss'd*, Fielding's afterpiece to *The Historical Register*, provides the most obvious and damning representation of audience consensus. The afterpiece shows tragedian Spatter's play about the author of *Pasquin*, Pillage, who fails to receive positive reviews and popular reception of his after-piece, *Eurydice*. *Eurydice* was one of Fielding's actual after-pieces, which was hissed off the stage at Drury Lane in February of 1737. *Eurydice* was an operatic, allegorical satire that follows stock satiric figures, like the foppish Beau and the female politician, to hell, where the devil offers the supposed moral of the play: “How little these wretches know, that the vices which were their pleasures in the other world, are their punishment here; and that the most vicious man needs scarce any other punishment than that of being confined in his vice” (290). Hume describes how the audience's reaction to *Eurydice* was so volatile that the Riot Act had to be read to the crowd and the after-piece was never produced again (*Henry Fielding* 222). He also notes, however, that no one knows exactly *why* the audience reacted so violently. Nevertheless, *Eurydice Hiss'd* dramatises the audience's negative reaction to *Eurydice*. One of the gentlemen who attended the play describes the herd mentality behind the play's poor reception:

‘Tis true, at first the pit seemed greatly pleased,  
And loud applauses through the benches rung,

But as the plot began to open more,  
(A shallow plot) the claps less frequent grew,  
Till by degrees a gentle hiss arose;  
This by a catcall from the gallery  
Was quickly seconded: then followed claps,  
And 'twixt long claps and hisses did succeed  
A stern contention. Victory hung dubious.  
So hangs the conscience, doubtful to determine,  
When honesty pleads here and there a bribe;  
At length, from some ill-fated actor's mouth,  
Sudden there issued forth a horrid dram.  
And from another rushed two gallon forth:  
The audience, as it were a contagious air,  
All caught it, hallooed, catcalled, hissed, and groaned. (307)

Whereas early reception of the play seems to be a contest between two elements in the audience (mirroring the two party system of government), the later reception takes on the effect of a contagion, whereby the response is infectious and thoughtless. An important aspect of this contagion, however, is its cause: the author. The playwright of *Eurydice* writes the “horrid dram” to which “ill-fated actor” is subjected and from which the audience rebels.

While Fielding criticises thoughtless consensus in the audience, he also demonstrates the complex network involved in producing and receiving satiric plays. Because *Pillage* is a reflection of Fielding himself, signalled in *Pillage*'s mutual authorship of *Pasquin* and *Eurydice*, he implicates Fielding in this network and shows his own accountability and potential

dubiousness. Once again, the author-figure in Fielding's play is both object and agent of satire, complicating the extent to which we should rely on his overt declarations and commentary as indicative of intent and guidance.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, as most critics specify, Pillage also satirises Walpole, his attempts to bribe in exchange for support, and his failed Gin Tax. Pillage promises parts to actors, which reflects both theatrical and political patronage as well as the increasing prominence and professionalization of the actors themselves. He also bribes his audience for their favourable reception; the majority, however, ends up rejecting the play much like the House refuses to pass Walpole's Gin levy. Pillage accordingly drinks himself into a stupor at the end of *Eurydice Hiss'd*. In aligning his own authority with Walpole's, Fielding curiously inscribes his authority with the same misuses of discourse, power, and capital and the same failures. In effect, Fielding puts into doubt the legitimacy of his own theatrical authority by playfully portraying his own inescapability from the nepotistic and consumerist frameworks structuring theatre and politics. Honestus, the self-proclaimed "impartial" member of Pillage's audience, demands "merit" in writing, but as we have seen before, the absence of "pure" merit in Fielding's own satire implies the inimitability and impossible negotiation of such "pure" merit in the theatre on some level. In other words, merit cannot be, as was demonstrated in *The Author's Farce*, a substantive abstraction. Because merit is negotiated through a complex network of exchanges that includes economic transactions, its legitimacy is equally negotiable rather than certain. In essence, *The*

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<sup>37</sup> When critics collapse Fielding's authorship with Medley's in *The Historical Register*, they tend not to focus on the aspects that put Medley's and by extension, Fielding's satiric critique into doubt as well. Medley clearly identifies himself as a "Modern" and his closing triplet proudly announces his status as one: "And kindly all report us to the town; / No borrowed nor stolen goods we've shown. / If witty, or if dull, our play's our own" (268). Medley's modernity links him to "modern Apollo," a satiric representation of Colley Cibber and his marring edits of Shakespeare's play-texts for performances. "Modern," as Medley suggests, enables the satire to be current and implicate his contemporaries. Yet in light of Fielding's engagement with the Scriblerian project, his use of a modern author certainly raises questions about the reliability or wittiness of his "original" authorship or what he himself declares as his satiric intent. Medley as a Modern implicates his authorship as a source of critique as well.

*Historical Register* and *Eurydice Hiss'd* outline the parameters of authority, be it the author's, the politician's, the performer's or even the audience's. Pure authority, representation, and reception simply do not exist, but what Fielding's satire exposes is the manner in which each is heterogeneously constituted and mediated – this includes his own authority. As a result, the underlying scepticism of Fielding's satiric inquiry into authority proffers more questions rather than inculcates a certain lesson or absolute morality.

**Coda: Fielding's satiric authority, the Licensing Act of 1737, and the Preface to *Joseph Andrews***

It is impossible to write an account of Fielding's dramatic satires, their performances, and effects without discussing Walpole's piece of legislation, the Licensing Act of 1737, which vetted and effectively censored play-texts, shut down un-patented theatres like the Little Haymarket, and ended Fielding's theatrical career writing satires for the stage. Other critics have extensively discussed and debated the causal links between Fielding's dramatic satires and the enacting of the bill; I would rather conclude with a discussion of what the Act does to shape a notion of a satiric, dramatic authority. Kinservik contends that the Licensing Act "reformed" satiric drama insofar as the legislators "were recommending a return to the sympathetic satire of the early eighteenth-century" (116). He traces a transition from Fielding's punitive, mean-spirited, personal, and metonymic satiric attacks to disciplined, exemplary, general, and metaphoric satire "that is refined, smiling, and natural" (117) following the institution of the Act. Kinservik points to an important distinction (though for a different purpose) that I make between satire and comedy, namely that, while satire points to the effects of mediation on authority,

unlike comedy, satire does not privilege or represent the ideal model of mediation. Comedy may be exemplary and sympathetic but satire is clinical – it dissects and exposes power and its potentially nefarious relationship to discourse rather than reforms either discourse or power; it exposes points of identification and authority rather than clearly promotes them. Satire engages and elucidates disciplinary modalities instead of corrects or re-disciplines subjects. Satire does not offer models of behaviour to be internalised but rather shows how these behaviours have been received, learned, and internalised because of the intersections of power, discourse, and knowledge. In effect, the Licensing Act proves satire’s point by demonstrating that the control of discourse is tantamount to the wielding of power.

Kinservik posits that the end of personal attacks in satire is the Licensing Act’s main thrust of reform, suggesting that Fielding and his variety of metonymic satire “perverts the true purpose of the stage by using a public forum to settle personal scores” (117-18). I would argue, however, that the censoring capability of the Act attempts to curb the ambiguous signification of satire relative to personal attacks and more specifically, attacks on the government (power). As I demonstrate in *The Historical Register*, Fielding maintains the tensions between overt and implied attack and the ways in which performance of the play can support moments of satire where language is absent. Naming names in moments of slander is easily prosecuted, while suggestive meaning can only be rooted out by *reading into* and excising potentially slanderous parts of the text or preventing performances that can imply slanderous meaning not overtly indicated by the text. In many ways, the Act fights against the suggestiveness of satire, which is merely doubled by the “unreadability” of performance. The Licensing Act aims to limit at the same time that it underscores the intentionally diffuse nature of satiric authority, particularly when dramatised. The Act exposes satire as multivalent and slippery and reveals the law’s desire

to render satire uniform in intention and the satirist-playwright unilaterally controlling and controlled.

In his Preface to *Joseph Andrews*, published in 1742, Fielding makes efforts to distance his work as a novelist from that as a dramatic satirist in the 1730s. In attempting to describe what he sees as his new genre of fiction, the “comic epic-poem in prose” (42), Fielding disavows the burlesque, following Lord Shaftsbury, who rejects burlesque on the basis that the Ancients did not practice it. Fielding tempers this rejection, however, by acknowledging, “I have had some little success on the stage this way” (43). His litotes here undercuts his major success on the stage, effectively (and perhaps disingenuously) diminishing its importance and impact in relation to his current undertaking. He goes on to distinguish the humour in *Joseph Andrews* from the burlesque by stating that it is comedy, not caricature, which means that is ostensibly more realistic and useful in exposing affectation, which Fielding argues is “the true ridiculous” (45). To oppose the grave and humourless didactic fashion of Samuel Richardson in *Pamela*, Fielding also argues, in Aristotelian fashion, that comedy sweetens instruction and that mirth and laughter “are probably more wholesome physic for the mind, and conduce better to purge away spleen, melancholy and ill affections, than is generally imagined” (43). Fielding, nevertheless, explicitly and glaringly does not use the term “satire” to describe his generic or ethical endeavour in *Joseph Andrews*.

In lieu of “satire,” Fielding refers to “ridicule” throughout his Preface, though ridicule here becomes theoretically defended in ways similar to satire. He explains the difference between affectation and hypocrisy in order to demarcate the proper targets for laughter and admonishment. Unlike hypocrisy, which is the “absolute negation” of nature (45), affectation becomes the appropriate object of ridicule in that it is not as successfully dishonest as to pervert

nature. For Fielding, the mild incongruity of affectation and nature produces the ridiculous, whereas “[g]reat vices are the proper objects of our detestation” (47). Yet, as is the problem with satire, the capacity to control what an audience morally rejects or merely laughs at is suspect; the distinction between ridicule and detestation emerges as a fine one. Fielding accordingly attempts to defend his ridicule by clarifying his approach to representing vice in his text:

But perhaps it may be objected to me, that I have against my own rules introduced vices, and of a very black kind into this work. To which I shall answer: first, that it is very difficult to pursue a series of human actions and keep clear from them. Secondly, that the vices to be found here, are rather the accidental consequences of some human frailty, or foible, than causes habitually existing in the mind. Thirdly, that they are never set forth as the objects of ridicule but detestation. Fourthly, that they are never the principal figure at that time on the scene; and lastly, that they never produce the intended evil. (47)

The inclusion of vice serves the purpose of realism, as a part of the “series of human actions,” in Fielding’s work, though supposedly not in a prominent fashion. Exposure of gross behaviour becomes at odds with Fielding’s new comedic approach, thereby theoretically distancing his novelistic authority from his dramatic, satirical one, whose purpose, as one of his critics describes, is “to hiss and spit to vex Mankind” (“The Church Yard” 16).<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, Fielding resorts to a typical defence of satire and concludes his Preface by stating,

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<sup>38</sup> The anonymous poet satirically celebrates the “death” of Fielding’s stage career in his poem, “The Church Yard” (1739). He equates this death with that of Tom Thumb and Pasquin, rendering it a mock-heroic tragedy. He also comments on Fielding’s new career as a lawyer. He describes Fielding as “the Hydra of one Head depriv’d/ With others not less terrible surviv’d,/ And from the recent Wound a new one sprung/ Hiss’d on, in spite of Fate, with venom’d Tongue” (16). I find the description of Fielding’s person as a hydra incredibly interesting insofar as it offers an image of his authority as a multiple and diffuse one. As I am suggesting of the Licensing Act, the aspects of Fielding’s authority that this anonymous critic despises and decries are its irrepressibility and multiplicity. Furthermore, his association of the satirist and the lawyer emphasises the unholy alliance of rhetorical power and public position, and its capacity to be deceptive and oppressive.

And here I solemnly protest, I have no intention to vilify or asperse any one: for tho' everything is copied from the book of nature, and scarce a character or action produced which I have not taken from my own observations and experience, yet I have the utmost care to obscure the persons by such different circumstances, degrees, and colours, that it will be impossible to guess at them with any degree of certainty; and if it ever happens otherwise, it is only where the failure characterized is so minute, that it is a foible only which the party himself may laugh at as well as any other. (47-48).

Fielding echoes Dryden's insistence that satire *pleases* the subject of ridicule as much as a member of the audience who does not identify with the critique. While Fielding retains a self-reflexive dimension from his satiric plays and attaches it to the authorship and reception of *Joseph Andrews*, he seems to distance self-reflexivity here from any particular critical or inquisitive engagement with human behaviour. In other words, Fielding does not seem to want the self-reflexivity of his novel to loop back to actuality or material reality with any particular consequence or deep questioning.

A major difference in Fielding's approach to ridicule in the Preface of *Joseph Andrews* versus his satirical enterprise on the stage, which may be attributed, as Kinservik suggests, to the effect of the Licensing Act on Fielding's authorship, thus materialises in his seeming retreat into general or universal application of his laughter instead of the topical and individualised application of satire in his plays. The narrator of *Joseph Andrews* outright claims, "I describe not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species" (242). Whereas the "reality" of Fielding's satiric plays arises from his unapologetic exposure of the individual mediations and negotiations constituting Truths and power, the realism of his critique described in his Preface and *Joseph Andrews* derives from a rather abstract and universal framework of human behaviour. I would

conclude, then, that Fielding's specific use of the word "ridicule" instead of "satire" – a word he boldly uses to describe *Pasquin* – in relation to his more generalized, humorous critique in *Joseph Andrews* implies his own understanding of the importance of individual exposure or metonymic representation in satiric practice. Fielding maintains a distinction here between comedy and satire, which counters Kinservik's claims that the two modes are merely continuous or that satire evolves into a mode that is sentimental, generous, general and exemplary after the Licensing Act.

Ultimately, Fielding's dramatic satires point to the potential of performing satire on the stage, by demonstrating the manner in which satire does not necessarily enforce particular controlled and controlling relations between satirist and audience and is, therefore, amenable to the multiple agents and conditions of theatrical authority. In self-reflexively anatomizing theatrical authority in conjunction with other forms of authority, Fielding's dramatic satires destabilise and open up authority in general to critique – a critique that exposes the oftentimes nefarious relationship between discourse and power, its intervening and implementing actors and agents. In my next chapter, I survey film adaptations of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in order to discuss problems of producing satiric effect on film, problems located in the failure of these film adaptations to apply satiric self-reflexivity to film authorship in order to carry out broader social critique. I discuss this failure of *Gulliver* adaptations to be satiric, however, not from a position that sees film as a medium incapable of producing or reproducing the complex ironies represented in Swift's text. Alternatively, I argue that film can produce satiric effect by subjecting its own authority to the same satiric inquiry being aimed elsewhere. As Fielding's dramatic satires demonstrate, satiric inquiry must not only address political, moral, and economic authorities, their constitution and imposition through discourse, but also the authority of satire

itself, be it on the stage or screen, as it plays into the same networks of discourse, power, and knowledge.

## Chapter 4: Charting *Gulliver's Travels*: Interpretive conundrums, fidelity, and the difficulties of adapting Swift to live-action film

On the heels of the 1996 release of Charles Sturridge and Simon Moore's television miniseries adaptation of *Gulliver's Travels*, David Nokes discusses the increased appetite for and popularity of producing film adaptations of "bankable literary classics" in his article, "It isn't in the book." Nokes' argument rehearses several of the complaints plied by literary critics against film adaptations, namely the "infidelity" of said adaptations in relation to their literary counterparts, as well as the supposed oversimplification of content in filmmaking and the lack of imaginary or intellectual work involved in watching films. While he acknowledges that "any adaptation of a literary classic is inevitably an interpretation, or reading, of the text; and like other reading reflects the reader's own cultural values," Nokes contends,

Film purports to offer a definitive image, a reductive yet beguiling photographic simplification of complex textual ironies. It appeals to the laziness of a post-McLuhanite generation, for whom visual gratification is always more immediately pleasurable than verbal exploration. And, of course, film versions get things wrong; this is not just a matter of anachronistic rhododendron bushes, or omitted sub-plots. Loyal readers of the texts will more readily forgive omissions than inventions.

While Nokes' generalizations about "fidelity" are no longer fully relevant in contemporary discussions of film adaptation,<sup>39</sup> they do raise several interesting questions about the specific

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<sup>39</sup> As I discuss in more detail in my next chapter on *Tristram Shandy*, Adaptation Studies has rejected this "fidelity discourse" as it inscribes a superiority and originality to literature, which then creates a false and arbitrary hierarchy between media, does not acknowledge medium specificity and the unique capabilities of film, and erases the manifold adaptations, imitations, and intertextuality that inform most literature too. Arguments like Nokes' reflect, as Robert Stam would argue, how " 'Fidelity discourse' relies on essentialist arguments in relation to **both** media. First it assumes that a novel 'contains' an extractable 'essence,' a kind of 'heart of the artichoke' hidden 'underneath' the surface details of style. Hidden within *War and Peace*, there is an originary core, a kernel of

process or problems of adapting a satire like *Gulliver's Travels* to the screen. What constitutes “fidelity” in adapting satire? What is the “spirit” of satiric works? Their content and details? Or the manner in which content and details are delivered? Would the inclusion of contemporary references in film adaptations amplify satiric effect or is “inventing” an up-to-date referential framework a gross violation of the book as Nokes suggests? If we do in fact live out post-McLuhan truisms, how do we render the medium the satiric message? Furthermore, if Nokes is correct, is it impossible to represent the complex irony undergirding a satire like *Gulliver* in the performance- and photography-oriented mode of filmmaking? In this chapter, I explore these questions by offering a brief survey of *Gulliver* adaptations. I conclude with a reading of Sturridge and Moore's *Gulliver* miniseries to demonstrate and emphasise the importance of a self-reflexive approach to forms of film authority and authorisation – an importance equal to that of critical content – in order for a film to be successfully satiric.

### **Surveying *Gulliver's* early travels in film**

Identifying the “spirit” of *Gulliver's Travels* and the aims of its satire and irony, particularly in the fourth voyage, remains a highly contested issue in literary criticism. In his often-cited 1974 article, James Clifford summarises the reception history of *Gulliver's Travels*, outlining the positions of the “hard” and “soft” schools of interpretation. In the “soft approach,” critics tend to read under the rule of the “golden mean,” suggesting that Swift's satiric point is to

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meaning and events which can be ‘delivered’ by an adaptation. But, in fact, there is no such transferable core: a single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signals that can trigger a plethora of possible readings. An open structure, constantly reworked and reinterpreted by a boundless context, the text feeds on and is fed into an infinitely permutating intertext, seen through ever-shifting grids of interpretation” (15). Stam would diagnose David Nokes' critiques as symptomatic of “logophilia” and the “myth of facility” attached to cinema, which “ignores the intense perceptual and conceptual labor – the work of iconic designation, visual deciphering, narrative inference, and construction – inherent in film” (6-7).

have humanity aim for behaviour like Don Pedro de Mendez's, somewhere between the uncivilised depravity of the Yahoos and the impossibly pure rationalism of the Houyhnhnms (35-36). For the softies, Swift's work is comical and less severe, Gulliver's misanthropy being the result of what Richard Rodino identifies as his "frustrated" idealism rather than a ringing endorsement of the extreme rationality of the Houyhnhnms (1055). Alternatively, the "hard" school reads Gulliver's antisocial nature at the end of his fourth voyage as representative of Swift's "rigorous and ascetic" norms (Clifford 40). For the hard-knocks, Swift's satiric intention is to demonstrate, through the Yahoos, "the depths to which human beings can and do sink whenever they cease pursuing the higher ideals embodied *sincerely* in the Houyhnhnms" (my emphasis, Rodino 1055). Clifford suggests that either reading is inadequate because they both constitute "man's" ultimate predicament: "He knows he can never attain perfection, yet his attempts to set up alternative solutions involve choices which he cannot wholly justify" (47). Moreover, any absolute reading cannot account for the ironies, contradictions, scepticism, and difficulty of the text, which suggests that Swift himself intended to resist such totalised readings and absolutism. "Swift's genius has confronted us with a work which, like other masterpieces of literature, can never be explicated with absolute certainty" (47), Clifford concludes rather limply. This statement seems to epitomize the entry point into critical studies of *Gulliver's Travels*, as well as skirts around the relationship between this type of resistance to certainty and satire as a genre or mode in general.

At the crossroads of the "hard" and "soft" schools of interpreting *Gulliver's Travels*, Ashley Marshall takes a markedly different approach in addressing the ever-contested grounds for explaining Swift's satire. Rather than centring her explication of *Gulliver's Travels* on an interpretation of the fourth voyage, Marshall explains Swift's satiric practice by focusing on the

choices and work of *Gulliver* literary imitators and adapters, emphasizing that to adapt means to make, as Nokes claims of film adaptors, particular and decisive assumptions about the aim and meaning of the source text. Alongside commercial incentives or benefits of adapting a popular work, these choices offer an indication of the comprehension and reception of the work.<sup>40</sup>

Surveying the multiple contemporaneous, literary imitations of *Gulliver*, Marshall concludes that these adaptations fail to reproduce the unique difficulty and obfuscation of Swift, who seems to have had innumerable points in mind, and to have been writing with several audiences in mind, several types of readers who would read and respond differently. The interpretations that explain Swift's satire according to a specific thesis are perfectly valid as partial explanations of a difficult text. Their sponsors' failure to acknowledge the limited applicability of any single theory, however, inevitably leads to inflated claims that are often promptly challenged by proponents of other theories. (234)

She concludes that the "bewilderment" endemic in Swift's text becomes simplified and less ambiguous in adaptations as well as criticism, because while "we expect satirists to convey a clear-cut argument (whether the goal is moral reformation or blistering condemnation), in Swift's best satire the object is decidedly *not* specific transmission, and the point is *not* merely to impugn a particular target" (234). Here Marshall echoes Raymond Bentman's contention about Swiftian satire, though Bentman takes the argument further by contending that

*Gulliver's Travels* is an especially clear example of the error of modern criticism of satire, which says that in satire 'standards of judgment are indubitable' or that in satire the reader is 'sure what the author's attitude is or what his own is supposed to be.' And much criticism of *Gulliver's Travels*, which insists that a single meaning be attached to

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<sup>40</sup> In the literature and criticism that I reviewed about children's adaptations, abbreviations, and translations of *Gulliver's Travels*, many critics note the act of interpretation insinuated in editorial choices as well, whether the editors wish to carry this hermeneutical responsibility or not (Kosok 359).

the work, or that it be approached from a single point of view, seems to be an unwitting demonstration of the single view which Swift denounces. (547)

Marshall is unwilling to challenge the conventional definition of satire, maintaining that it conveys “a discernible satiric agenda, and readers of satire are conditioned to look for (and either find or construct) an authorially announced or defined objective”(232). Bentman, on the other hand, identifies Swiftian difficulty and his elusive agenda as a marker and outcome of satire itself. This reading aligns with my contention that satire is multivalent and aims to produce multiple readings; satire does not operate to correct or discipline through consensus over one reading, but rather to reproduce and expose the mechanism of discipline itself, articulated and exercised through the entanglement of discourse and power. Accordingly, a reader responds to satire in a manner that depends on his or her own interpellated, subjective positioning, thereby further reflecting the production and product of discipline and ideology that satire questions. (I will directly discuss this function of satire in relation to Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* later in this chapter.)

Like the literary imitators of Gulliver, contemporary examples of *Gulliver* media adaptations do, on many levels, fail to represent the complexity of Swift’s work, not only in terms of omissions and inventions, but also in terms of satiric effect and tone. Few of these adaptations contend with the satiric complexity, epistemological questioning, and socio-political inquiry of the source text and few generate many interpretive quandaries like those elicited from the text. Nokes aptly sums up the status of these film and television adaptations prior to Sturridge and Moore’s 1996 televised *Gulliver’s Travels*:

‘When once you have thought of big men and little men, it is very easy to do all the rest,’ was Samuel Johnson’s comment on Gulliver’s Travels. Sam Goldwyn could hardly have

put it better. For several decades, film-makers were content to leave it at that; big men and little men; cartoon characters and sci-fi special effects.

Film adaptations of Swift's text certainly tend to privilege the visual capacity of film and animation to render the book's fantastic elements and extreme scale instead of contending with its narratological and satiric perplexities.

The earliest example of these film adaptations and their literalising visual approach is Georges Méliès' 1902 silent short, *Le Voyage de Gulliver à Lilliput et chez les géants*, representing, as the title suggests, Gulliver's first and second voyage.<sup>41</sup> The opening scene shows Gulliver carefully walking through the Lilliputian village, reproduced as an intentionally artificial, highly stylized setting, reminiscent of later German Expressionist film sets and emphatic of Méliès' formalist and theatrical approach to filmmaking. In the second sequence, we see the Lilliputians in miniature and above Gulliver on a platform, throwing arrows into the large, slumbering, and tied-up explorer. The third scene dramatizes the Lilliputians feeding Gulliver, who occupies a table on the left side of the frame, as the Lilliputians scale a ladder to reach his table and supply him with food. In the course of Gulliver's meal, a tiny sedan chair arrives; Gulliver grabs the vehicle from mid-frame and places it on his table. Out of it appears the empress, who curtsies to Gulliver, gets back into her sedan chair, which he then places back on the ground. As the empress' chair travels out of the frame, a fire breaks out in the village that appears as a background to Gulliver's table. The guards appear distressed, gesturing in futility, while Gulliver produces a soda siphon and sprays out the fire. Gulliver then kisses his soda

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<sup>41</sup> The colourist who worked with Méliès on his films, Segundo de Chomón, made the first Spanish film adaptation of *Gulliver's Travels* in 1903, a silent short entitled *Gulliver en el país de los gigantes*. Like many subsequent Spanish adaptations, Chomón's *Gulliver* focuses on the second voyage, where Gulliver is the major source of ridicule and satire, unlike North American versions that tend to focus on the voyage to Lilliput and the comical or ridiculous nature of the Lilliputians (Corisco 112). In his version, like in Méliès', Chomón plays with scale and the variously sized characters through filming and editing techniques that he and Méliès developed, Ana Corisco explains; these techniques allow differently scaled takes to be combined and superimposed into one take, offering the appearance of giants interacting with a miniscule Gulliver (116).

siphon, which is conspicuously anachronistic, and while not as offensive as putting out the fire with his urine, the siphon is still suggestively comedic. The soda siphon gag is, in fact, commonplace in early film and vaudevillian slapstick comedy (Neale et al 23), highlighting the intermingling of stage performance and early silent films that I will describe in Méliès' work later. The next sequence begins with a King, Queen, and court jester in a medium shot, playing cards. A young woman, supposedly Glumdalclitch, arrives in the frame, carrying a small, balled-up handkerchief, which she places on the table. The handkerchief unfurls and a tiny Gulliver appears on the table. The company appears amused with the little man who gesticulates wildly as they laugh heartily. The final scene shows Gulliver's attempts to speak with Glumdalclitch, who has trouble hearing the tiny man. As a final resort, Gulliver produces a small ladder, which he then scales to be closer to her ear, only to fall down the ladder.

The appeal in very loosely adapting Swift's book is evident: Méliès takes delight in cinematically reproducing the variations and comedy of scale in *Gulliver's Travels*.<sup>42</sup> This does not, however, mean that Melies' adaptation is, in any way, an unsophisticated take on Swift. To have large and miniature human bodies appear animated and performing within the same frame marks one of the major innovations and illusionistic capabilities of cinema. Méliès' short adaptation certainly exemplifies his production of *trucage* or trick films, whereby the filmmaker operates as a cinematic magician, performing illusions backed by theatrical, highly stylized settings and made possible through creative editing and montage. Coupled with his filmmaking, Méliès directed the Théâtre Robert-Houdin in Paris, a theatre that was dedicated to live magic, while also being one of the first venues for motion pictures (Solomon 600). Matthew Solomon

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<sup>42</sup> The satiric and comedic potential of scale in lieu of political and cultural allegory, in fact, seems to be a major preoccupation of the French reception and translation of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. For example, an early play by Mariveaux, *L'Île de Raison*, written in 1727, focuses almost exclusively on the contrast of size in the book (Graeber 15). The play was based on DesFontaines' early translation in French, which occludes Swift's contextual references as well as those sexual and scatological, this lending itself to the simplified focus on scale and comedy.

details the intermedial relationship between Méliès' theatrical magic and his cinematic illusions, arguing that this "up-to-date" form of magic allowed professional magicians like Méliès to deploy "cinematic effects as a substitute for – and somewhat less often, as a complement to – forms of machinery, visual illusion, and sleight-of-hand tricks in the theatre" (596). As a result, these turn-of-the-century trick films moved magic "from the periphery to the centre of world amusement... [and bridged] the implicit boundaries that separated live performance from cinematic reproduction" (597). In *Le Voyage de Gulliver*, Méliès is able to perform multiple tricks and illusions, all centred in interactions between human figures and Gulliver, miniature and giant. His adaptation consequently distils Swift's narrative into its optic possibilities, occluding any satiric potential in his play with scale. This adaptive approach in *Le Voyage* matches the general style that André Gaudreault identifies in the rest of Méliès' oeuvre:

[Méliès] demonstrates an alternative attitude toward story-telling, one less focused on story *qua* story. He neglects those narratological aspects that mark the early films of [D.W.] Griffith, such as the developments of psychological characters, the creation of suspense, and the illusion of realism...

As just about everyone agrees, [Méliès] was bent on creating cinematic spectacle – bringing to the nascent medium elaborate studio sets, make-up, costumes, trick effects, etc. (112)

In *Le Voyage*, Méliès achieves the majority of his visual tricks, such as having the Lilliputians' tiny arrows penetrate giant sleeping Gulliver, through rapid editing and overprints so that the variously sized characters appear to act together within the same frame. Uncharacteristically, however, he also uses camera position in order to play with the scale of his subjects. Whereas he commonly uses long shots that accommodate full theatrical sets as well as show the full length of

human bodies (Gaudreault 112), Méliès uses a medium shot in Gulliver's trip to Brobdingnag, crowding the Queen, King, and Court Jester into one frame that shows them merely from the torso up, thereby exaggerating their giant size. Such an exaggeration becomes more apparent when juxtaposed with Méliès' earlier framing in the journey to Lilliput. There he employs his characteristic long shots that capture not only several Lilliputians and their village, but also Gulliver's entire body, its largeness communicated in comparison to the Lilliputians' tininess rather than the space it occupies in the frame. This creates a unique scale of its own: the Lilliputians are miniature in relation to Gulliver's human size, both fully captured in the frame, while the court of Brobdingnag becomes giant through the medium shot that renders them large in relation to both Gulliver and the eye of the camera.

Throughout the short, Gulliver, played by Méliès himself, performs his character in a manner that bolsters the sense of cinematic illusion and amazement in the varying scale of the film's characters. When encountered with the Lilliputians and especially the empress, for example, Gulliver adjusts his spectacles constantly and in an exaggerated motion, emphasizing their diminutive and unbelievable size. Gulliver also frequently gestures to the film audience, breaking down the supposed fourth-wall in the cinematic experience. Such self-reflexive gestures demonstrate that Méliès' films have, argues Gaudreault, "no particular allegiance to the maintenance of diegetic illusionism, but rather to the *appreciation of illusion* itself" (113). Gulliver's gestures to the audience both draw attention to the various tricks and demand that these tricks be understood as illusions, encouraging the film viewer to question how the medium and the filmmaker, much like a magician, produce such tricks. As Gaudreault explains of Méliès' work in general, "Spectators are never really fooled (nor meant to be) – especially since many filmic elements in this system exist precisely in order to remind viewers that they are watching a

film” (113). While such self-reflexivity and questioning of realism would be serviceable to satiric meaning, *Le Voyage de Gulliver* as a silent short does not broach or represent the book’s satire; rather, it signals an early and ongoing approach to adapting Swift’s text to film: the use of special effects to render the book’s scale and fantastic elements as “real.”

The scale and fantasy of *Gulliver’s Travels* also make the book a favourite for animated adaptations. The most popular animated full-length version of *Gulliver’s Travels*, made by the Fleischer brothers in 1939, reiterates this desire to reproduce the book’s scale in a literal rather than satiric manner, focusing exclusively on the first voyage to Lilliput. While Max Fleischer wanted to maintain a satiric strain in their adaptation, his concept of his “favourite” book’s satire is itself limited to the idea of scale in relation to pride. He claims that the book simply represents “the smallness of human beings regardless of how great they think they are” (qtd. in Kanfer 110). The cartoon details Gulliver’s trip to Lilliput, his capture, and his attempts to reconcile the King of Blefuscu with the King of Lilliput and prevent the war caused by the monarchs’ absurd disagreement over which song would be sung at the wedding of Prince David and Princess Glory, their respective children. While it begins by showing an animated book by candlelight, open to a page with the actual first lines of Swift’s text, establishing not only its literary link but also Gulliver’s point of view, Fleischers’ cartoon exercises significant creative license in the rest of its narrative. The addition of David and Glory and the disagreement over the wedding song certainly reflects the commercial impetus behind this full-length animated feature: Fleischers’ *Gulliver’s Travels* was made to compete with Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937), the first ever full-length American animated film. The love story provides a saccharine fairy-tale element to the plot, with Princess Glory and Prince David drawn conspicuously to look like Snow White and Prince Charming, and the songs, “Faithful” and “Forever,” eventually sung

in harmony at the end of the film, match Disney's successful incorporation of song into their feature, while also facilitating the "Gilbert and Sullivan" approach that Dave Fleischer desired (Carbaga 113). As the trailer proclaims, *Gulliver's Travels* provides "one solid hour and twenty minutes crammed full of laughter and gay music." Any satire becomes, as Dave Fleischer demands, "thickly sugar coated" (qtd in Kanfer 110), the cartoon casting aside all critique of political machinations in Lilliput, operating instead as a singsong tale gently opposing war and its seemingly absurd causes.<sup>43</sup>

Characterization and artwork in the animated film complement the Fleischer brothers' light-handed, pacifist approach to satiric scale in the book. In their attempt to show the littleness of men despite their status, they add characters like Gaby the Town Crier, whom the Fleischers describe as "One of the smallest of stature of these little people, but big in his own self-importance" (qtd. in Carbaga 115). Gaby's pride, however, becomes a mark of his endearing character rather than a point of ridicule; as the trailer notes, Gaby is a part of "a cast of new characters [that] will soon be old friends," such familiarity marked by positive identification rather than scorn. The animators represent the Lilliputians and their miniature counterparts, the Blefuscans, in caricature style thereby increasing their amiable and comical nature. By contrast, they draw and animate Gulliver as a "real" human being, implying a link between his heroism and humanity – this being an obvious departure from the book's satiric vein. In the book, Gulliver's heroism appears naïve in relation to the malevolent political manoeuvring in Lilliput,

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<sup>43</sup> Five years prior to the Fleischers' full-length production, Disney made an animated short based on Gulliver's voyage to Lilliput entitled *Gulliver Mickey* (1934). Whereas Fleischer's Gulliver appears to be a pacifistic, cautionary tale, perhaps because of their film's close proximity to the outbreak of the Second World War, *Gulliver Mickey* revels in his physical prowess and military might. The short opens with Mickey reciting his tale of shipwreck to his nieces and nephews, once he puts down the copy of *Gulliver's Travels* he was reading. The majority of the action portrays Mickey resisting and enduring ridiculous, miniature attacks by the Lilliputians. However, in the final part of the cartoon, a spider of equal size begins to fight Mickey, and the story deteriorates into Mickey attacking and defeating the spider. When we return to the narrative frame of Mickey storytelling, we see his nieces and nephews cheering him on as he performs the battle and battering of the spider, only to be frightened by a tiny toy spider that a nephew dangles in front of him on a string.

and Gulliver's outlook at the end of Book Four completely undermines an inherent sense of greatness or heroism in humanity. Though animation is not formally a realist mode, the Fleischer brothers do enhance the "reality" of Gulliver vis-à-vis the Lilliputians by employing the rotoscope, a piece of technology that they developed so that animators could animate "over the movements of a live-action figure, the intention [being] to clearly authenticate the 'humanness' of the [character]" (Wells 209). An actor with a mature male voice also performs Gulliver, which again sharply contrasts the high-pitch, caricatured voice of King Little of Lilliput or the non-verbal, comical noises made by Snoop, Sneak, and Snitch, three clumsy spies employed by King Bombo of Blefuscu and characterized as "a bit like the Three Stooges in their zaniness" (Carbago 115). Gulliver's only function in the animated film seems to be one of facilitator, not only of peace between the kingdoms but also love between David and Glory; in essence, his character is flat, simply mediating the relationships between madcap counterparts and ideal lovers. Ironically (and most likely unintentionally), Gulliver's blandness as a character in comparison to his "zany" cast-mates does align with the vacant and inconsistent nature of his character in the book, which, several critics argue, enables him to be both a satiric target, particularly in his naive dealings in Lilliput and Brobdingnag, and a satirist in his own proud critique and negation of human folly, particularly in his encounters with the Houyhnhnms and his final return to England (Chalmers 84; Hawes 427).

Though the Méliès' and Fleischers' adaptations do not represent or even attempt the satire of *Gulliver's Travels*, their example does not exclude, as per Nokes' argument, the possibility of translating Swift's complex satire and irony to the screen. Animation certainly has this capacity, as Paul Wells explains:

Animation accentuates the intended ‘feeling’ of the text through its very abstractness in the use of colour, form and movement. This is crucial in any attempt to adapt a literary text because animation simultaneously literalizes and abstracts; live action merely literalizes and fixes, speaking thereafter to the issue of verisimilitude and not to inherent ‘feeling’ or flexibility in the text...

The act of adaptation in animation, therefore, is not predicated on the determinants of narrative events as described in a literary text but on the stimulants of function and purpose – not in the fact that something happens, but the way it happens. (210)

Here “feeling” or “stimulants of function and purpose” can be substituted for satiric effect and the accommodating formalist, rather than realist, semiotics of animation are conducive to producing satiric self-reflexivity. But what about live-action? Is it impossible, as Wells implies, for live-action to move beyond its literality and verisimilitude to evoke satiric effect/affect? Méliès’ film and performance do demonstrate the potential to break through the fourth-wall of cinema in order to facilitate a self-reflexive critique of verisimilar representation, which, in turn, bolsters the type of inquiry and critique that *Gulliver* performs. Nevertheless, I argue that live-action adaptations of *Gulliver’s Travels*, including Sturridge and Moore’s television miniseries, fail to question the premise and construction of their own representation and how this representation might participate in and reproduce the disciplinary and ideological formations that it mocks or criticises. Consequently, these adaptations do not attempt to render the complicated ironies, ambiguities, and uncertainties that mark Gulliver’s narration and the satiric critique in Swift’s text. While my claim here appears to be one replicating those arguments of “infidelity” in film adaptations, I distinguish my discussion from critics like Nokes insofar as I am not arguing that the failure results from an inherent inability for complex or ironic representation in film;

rather, I am insisting on the need for a self-reflexive approach to filmic authority in movies that adapt satiric texts, otherwise they fail to be *satiric* not *faithful*. My focus on Sturridge and Moore's miniseries and its failure to produce the type of satiric critique modelled in Swift's text emerges from the filmmakers' own insistence that their adaptation attempts to realise *Gulliver's Travels* and its satire fully on film and for a contemporary audience.

### **Adapting the (un)familiar: Sturridge and Moore's *Gulliver's Travels***

Noted for being the only film version that tackles all four of Gulliver's voyages, Charles Sturridge and Simon Moore's *Gulliver's Travels* (1996), starring Ted Danson as Gulliver, tends to be lauded critically for its attempt to adapt Swift's text fully. David Nokes in particular praises Sturridge and Moore for offering more than just the special effects, caricatures, and the little and big men of other versions. The film adapts a significant portion of Swift's narrative, including the generally avoided voyage to the land of the Houyhnhnms, which generates most of the interpretive conundrums in its critical reception and complicates a heroic or sympathetic portrayal of Gulliver. It also cleverly translates Gulliver's narration to film by transforming Gulliver's scribbling into a series of flashbacks, one of the most definitive narratological tools of film (e.g. *Citizen Kane*), and into an extended lecture by Gulliver for a live audience represented at Bedlam and the college of doctors. Such narratological moves demonstrate creative problem solving in terms of the issues surrounding medium specificity in adaptation and, more specifically, translating text and first person narration into performance and moving pictures. The film also retains much of Swift's critique of political institutions and forms of authority, even extending such critique beyond Swift's text to include gender inequality and patriarchy,

particularly in an eighteenth-century context. What this version of *Gulliver's Travels* lacks, however, is the book's satiric construction: the self-reflexive and self-ironising mode of Gulliver's narration and its corresponding ambiguities that bolster, as Bentman and Marshall suggest, its satiric nature and imperative. The filmmakers' desire for a hyper-realistic rendering of Gulliver's fantastic experiences results in a refusal to undermine the veracity of Gulliver's tale; this forecloses the doubt and scepticism imbued in his text, which implicates the audience by forcing interpretative choices. These choices may include drawing connections between the represented critique and the audience's own reality, thus allowing a satiric appraisal and exposure of "real" institutions and their disciplinary modalities. As Michael DePorte contends, Swift's satiric concern "is not Gulliver, but Gulliver's readers. What can he have Gulliver say or do that will catch readers off guard, unsettle their assumptions, make them see with new eyes?" (100). However, Sturridge and Moore undermine this satiric agenda by hermetically sealing *Gulliver's Travels* in a realist film construction, which, in turn, contains its critique, distances the audience, and imposes a definitive interpretation of Gulliver's experiences, especially his encounter with the Houyhnhnms.

One of the major creative changes in Sturridge and Moore's *Gulliver's Travels* is its framing narrative, structuring Gulliver's adventures as a series of flashbacks, which he both experiences and retrospectively narrates, the voyages intercut with his retelling of them to his wife, Mary, his son, Tom, Dr Bates, and the doctors and spectators at Bedlam. The film opens with Gulliver's return home after being lost at sea for eight years (his voyages made sequentially uninterrupted) and the camera charts his point of view as he approaches the home in which Mary and Tom reside with Dr Bates. The camera, along with Gulliver, witnesses Mary serving Dr Bates through a window and, when the perspective changes to inside the house, the scene shows

Dr Bates proposing to Mary in a near threatening manner. We return to Gulliver's point of view and the explorer retreats to the stables, where he is later found by Tom and Mary. This opening reveals that, in Gulliver's absence, Dr Bates has taken over both his practice and his position as breadwinning patriarch in the family; Gulliver is literally on the outside looking in, both in the sense of his family and society. The sequence signals Gulliver's ultimate dilemma in the film, which DePorte describes as the guiding theme of Moore and Sturridge's adaptation: "*This* Gulliver *wants* to re-enter normal life; whether or not he can becomes the controlling question of the film" (100). DePorte describes this narrative frame as "Moore's most brilliant stroke," as he "impose[s] on Gulliver's disconnected adventures the plot of that most famous fabulous voyage, *The Odyssey*" (100). Indeed, *this* Odyssean Gulliver deviates enormously from Swift's Gulliver insofar as textual Gulliver never desires re-entry into society; rather, he merely and barely tolerates humanity following his experience with the Houyhnhnms. He concludes his entire written account by stating,

But the *Houyhnhnms*, who live under the Government of Reason, are no more proud of the good Qualities they possess, than I should be for not wanting a Leg or an Arm, which no Man in his Wits should boast of, although he must be miserable without them. I dwell the longer upon this Subject from the Desire I have to make the Society of an *English Yahoo* by any Means not insupportable; and therefore I here intreat those who have any Tincture of this absurd Vice, that they will not presume to appear in my Sight. (260)

Through intense contemplation of humble Houyhnhnm perfection, Gulliver does not reintegrate himself into society, but rather abstracts himself further so that society becomes more tolerable, though only from a detached distance. Nor does he want to reintegrate; this Gulliver rejects human pride of reason and self, making love of humanity insupportable as well, rendering him

only more anti-social, withdrawn, and disdainful. His only potential company seems to be other misanthropes or horses. What is difficult about this final passage, however, is whether the audience should sympathise with Gulliver's anti-social behaviour, an indication that the Houyhnhnms *do* represent a desired perfection, or whether they should laugh at the detached Gulliver who neighs with his horses and rejects society. Is Gulliver here a satirist, rebuffing vices and supporting reason, or a satiric device, exhibiting ridiculous and irrational behaviour himself? Or is Gulliver both, an inescapable paradox?<sup>44</sup> The constantly shifting and unreliable nature of Gulliver's character in the book merely increases the ambiguities and questions raised by the ending. For DePorte, the narrative frame of Sturridge and Moore's adaptation "novelizes" *Gulliver's Travels* in that it makes Gulliver a coherent character, depicting his struggle as a singular, progressive one to have his experiences legitimized and his part in society confirmed, differing largely from Swift's socially regressive and potentially dubious Gulliver. In their "novelization," the filmmakers consequently "substitute psychological complexity for satiric complexity" (DePorte 100).<sup>45</sup> Through novelization and psychological development, the film

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<sup>44</sup> In *Gulliver and the Gentle Reader*, Claude Rawson identifies Gulliver's character as satiric device and a channel through which Swift mocks his own "visionary absurdity," namely the satirist's "lonely madness of trying to mend the world." He writes, "It is wrong, I think, to take Gulliver as a novel-character who suffers a tragic alienation, and for whom therefore we feel pity or some kind of contempt, largely because we do not, as I suggested, think of him as a 'Character' at all in more than a very attenuated sense: the emphasis is so preponderantly on what can be shown through him (including what he says and thinks) than on his person in its own right, that we are never allowed to accustom ourselves to him as a real personality despite all the rudimentary local color about his early career, family life and professional doings" (27). Rawson concludes that Gulliver "in his unbalanced state" and his self-righteous misanthropy at the end of the travels render him "less a character than (in a view which has much truth but needs qualifying) a protesting gesture of impotent rage, a satirist's stance of ultimate exasperation" (28).

<sup>45</sup> Clement Hawes offers a differing, yet compelling take on Gulliver's shifting character, which counters critics like Rawson, who insist that Gulliver is not a character per se. "Swift's satire engages with *character*," Hawes contends, "as both a formal and ideological problematic. *Gulliver's Travels* highlights the mediations between the precarious position of the individual as such and the ethos of an aggressively expansionist society" (411). Hawes argues that Gulliver is Swift's satiric answer to a novelistic protagonist like Robinson Crusoe, as his experiences of "unfamiliar and thwarting norms... lead to trauma rather than learning and maturation, and to alienation rather than sociability" (412). In his attempt to mediate individuality and institutional forces, Gulliver experiences a disintegration of character in lieu of the wholeness, stability, and maturity of character figured in most novels or bildungsroman of the period. I would tend to align myself with this reading of Gulliver's persona, as it encompasses analysis of the manner in which power and discourse operate in order to discipline and interpellate subjects – an end that I have attributed to satiric inquiry in general.

audience can, therefore, develop an unambiguous and sympathetic identification of and with Sturridge and Moore's Gulliver; this sympathetic identification occludes the ambiguity and difficulty of identifying with Swift's Gulliver and the negotiation of satiric meaning that arises from these uncertainties. In "Film, censorship, and the "corrupt original" of *Gulliver's Travels*," Alan D. Chalmers echoes DePorte's argument of novelization, citing the "hard school" critics' understanding of Swift's character to argue against the affinity of Sturridge and Moore's adaptation to Swift's book. He claims,

Gulliver is a collapsible satiric device in Swift's hands, absurdly impervious to the enormity of his experiences, inhumanly adaptable, simultaneously the recorder and embodiment of all human folly and vice. To give flesh to this textual phenomenon is inevitably to impose upon it the consistency of character, a more or less stable identity, which Swift's man unnervingly lacks (84).

For Chalmers, embodiment seems to equate to a uniformity of character because of the presence of only one body; he repeats the suggestion that, unlike textual performance, embodied performance cannot produce satiric effect. On the contrary, I will argue later that embodiment and novelization are less responsible for the film's "de-satirising" of the book than the film's simplified inversions and, more importantly, its non-reflexive, hyperrealist mode of representation, which also informs the actors' performance.

While Sturridge and Moore's framing narrative does "unfaithfully" centre Gulliver's drama in the familial and domestic as opposed to the purely political and colonial, it does extend and update Swift's critique in useful ways.<sup>46</sup> The film exposes the intermingling of public and

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<sup>46</sup> David Garrick's short lived, fifteen performance theatrical version of *Gulliver's Travels, Lilliput* (1756), also employs familial drama in order to adapt Swift's satiric critique to the stage. Child performers played the Lilliputians in order to facilitate the differing scale, while the comedy reorients itself to the relationship between Lord Flimnap and Lady Flimnap (here a foppish lady with manners from Blefuscu/France) in Lilliput, and her

private authorities and shows the ways in which these authorities are explicitly gendered. It also highlights the patriarchal violence that threatens both spheres, an aspect of criticism wholly absent from Gulliver's decidedly misogynist narrative.<sup>47</sup> Dr. Bates figures prominently in this critique, as his usurpation of Gulliver's family and medical practice structures and inflects all the power struggles in the fantastic lands to which Gulliver travels. To mirror Bates' patriarchal interference in private and public spheres, Sturridge and Moore rewrite all the political and institutional ties into familial relationships as well, charting how a distinctly masculine political and institutional administration, with its seemingly unavoidable attendant brutality, exposes itself as patriarchal violence, targeting and endangering women and the home. Men desirous of power and in positions of power appear prone to corruption, malpractice, expropriation, inequity, and violence in both public and private. In Lilliput, for instance, the military leaders, General Limtoc and Admiral Bolgolam, who act as political conspirators against Gulliver, are made into the sons of the Emperor in the movie. This familializing of the ministers in the film gains more significance when we discover the military leaders actually murdered their own mother. The scene of the government meeting to discuss their punishment of Gulliver (for urinating on the royal apartments in order to put out the fire) reveals Limtoc and Bolgolam's genocidal attitude

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attempts to seduce giant Gulliver as the Lord pursues other mistresses. The love triangle plot certainly resonates with earlier Restoration comedies, which also use these familial relationships and their corruption to comment satirically on social expectation and realities. "Garrick was not interested in political or religious issues," Lillian Gottesman explains, "[he] focused his [microscope] on the one foible which he recognized theatrical possibility – the upper-class marriage of convenience – and he set this comic yet serious and relevant subject on stage" (35-36).<sup>47</sup> I will not list the several places in the book where Gulliver purports misogynist views. I will argue, however, that while other aspects of his character and criticism seem inconsistent, particularly when he undermines his own critique by (ironically) insisting on the difference between the lands he travels to and England, Gulliver's misogyny seems to inform his character throughout the book and his appraisals of both England and the foreign lands. In discussing the capricious, unfaithful, and vain nature of the women in Laputa and Lagado, for example, Gulliver contends, "This may perhaps pass with the Reader rather for an *European* or *English Story*, than for one of a Country so remote. But he may please to consider, that the Caprices of Womankind are not limited by any Climate or Nation; and that they are much more uniform than can be easily imagined" (139). While Gulliver is clearly talking to a male reader who would share such misogynist views, such views are never really undermined, contradicted, or ambiguous like those dealing with political or colonial institutions and contexts. I would, therefore, not include misogyny as a target of Swift's satire.

and its connection to a distinctly “masculine” form of dominance. In the meeting, Limtoc and Bolgolam contrive numerous, horrendous ways to kill Gulliver and the emperor declares of their suggestions, “You were so keen to kill mother last year and now I miss her dreadfully. You’re both too impulsive.” While his statement appears comedic, the emperor himself offers the generals’ matricide – a literal destruction of the maternal/feminine – as an example of their genocidal impulses and perilous manipulation of power, linking the familial to the public, and thus rendering their abuses of power (political and otherwise) as patently patriarchal.

Limtoc and Bolgolam’s patriarchal assertions of power manifest further in their positioning of their stepmother – here representative of the stereotypical evil stepmother – in the course of their schemes. Gulliver’s continuous, yet unintentional insults against her (leaving spit all over her hand after kissing it and saving her life by urinating on her to put out the fire) provide excuses for the generals to carry out their murderous plans; they exploit their stepmother’s position as slighted woman whose honour and person need to be defended. The empress, however, is complicit in their particular brand of violent male dominance. After the emperor awards Gulliver with the highest military honour, one that exceeds that held by the brothers, Limtoc suggests, “The monster must prove his loyalty by killing all Big Enders. Every man, woman, and child.” The emperor then commands Gulliver to carry out this massacre, to which Gulliver responds, “Oh, I don’t think there’s any need to crush them completely, your Majesty. They can do us no harm, and I’m sure they’ll make a dignified surrender. With all due respect, we’ve won the war, there’s no more threat. We’ve won.” The empress then storms into the frame and interjects boldly, “My husband gave you an order!” She insists upon the emperor’s executive authority, while also naming his familial role as husband; in essence, she names the emperor’s superior power as brutally official and domestic as she herself endorses a massacre. In this, the

filmmakers align the empress with Bates and his manoeuvring as a malicious surrogate<sup>48</sup> in Gulliver's family. Her willingness, as a stepmother and second wife, to comply with such extreme violence on both accounts, familial and political, correlates to Bates' willingness to interfere institutionally and domestically, as substitute physician and patriarch. Both surrogates materialize as illegitimate, particularly as the ending of the film confirms the "natural" family – Gulliver, Mary, and biological son, Tom – as the only legitimate set of willing power relations. Indeed Mary Gulliver's willingness to fight against institutional oppression in spite of Gulliver's ostensible madness demonstrates her innate inclination toward maintaining her "natural" family rather than being complicit in institutionalised patriarchy like the step-mother empress. The scene that follows the empress' declaration of her husband's overarching patriarchal authority emphasises this correlation between surrogacy and malevolence as it immediately cuts to Bates at home, pouring what appears to be a doping potion in Gulliver's drink in order to have him committed at Bedlam. Having committed Gulliver, Bates can usurp his position as both head of his family and practice. Here the narrative frame explicitly draws the connection between Bates' malignant and underhanded execution of power and that of the empress and her stepsons. This symmetry continues throughout the film, as Bates' malevolent medical/patriarchal narrative repeatedly intersects and inflects all power relations in Gulliver's journeys.

Violence as a necessary extension of corrupt patriarchal power emerges more explicitly in Gulliver's voyage to Laputa. Sturridge and Moore re-envision the precarious relationship between the flying island of Laputa and Lindalino, one of the cities in Laputa's dominion

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<sup>48</sup> While not deploying the same sinister valence, Glumdalclitch's surrogate role as caretaker for Gulliver in Brobdingnag takes on an equally "unnatural" tenor as the step-mother empress in Lilliput. Glumdalclitch is a young girl and a giant, both elements contributing to a sense of the grotesque nature of her inverted role as mother to adult Gulliver and her naive belief that she will return with him to England to be his wife. Surrogacy in both instances does not seem to lend itself to the "natural" domestic situation – Gulliver, Mary, and their biological child – idealised and confirmed at the end of the movie. This naturalization, of course, runs counter to and undermines a feminist argument that would emphasise the constructedness rather than the essential nature of such an ideal.

renamed Munodi in the film, as a battle between a husband and a wife, father and mother. In the book, Laputa and Lindalino can be read to allegorically represent England and colonized Ireland.<sup>49</sup> The section details Lindalino's rebellion against Laputa's oppressions, whereby the inhabitants of the town erect pointed rock towers with their own magnetized load stones and explosives, meant to "burst therewith the adamantine Bottom of the Island," as the King would punish mutinies or rebellions in his dominions by hovering the Island above them, depriving them of sun and precipitation, or by bombing them with "great Stones" (Swift 144-45). When the King tests the inhabitants of Lindalino by sending down a line attached to a piece of adamant (the wordplay here is obvious), which consists of "a Mixture of Iron mineral," he discovers that the towers are designed to be powerful enough to pull the Island down and enable the citizens of Lindalino to "kill the King and all his Servants, and entirely change the Government" (146). The King subsequently relents. This Lindalino rebellion figuratively points to Ireland's rejection of an English ironmonger's (Wood) introduction of a debased currency (a mixture of Iron mineral) into their colonial economy (Swift 145; Hawes 423). In the film, however, the Rajah of Laputa declares war on Munodi, now the estate of his wife, for its refusal to pay their "brain tax," essentially a ration of food sent up for Laputan consumption. Laputa is completely inhabited by men, while Munodi completely by women; the gender divide here is obvious. The men of Laputa are attracted to abstract philosophy, mathematics, and music, rendering them decidedly out of touch with the women whom they bear over – overbear – with their floating Island. Accordingly, the Rajah's son – another family member added to the mix by Sturridge and Moore – recasts Laputa and Munodi's relations as that of a dysfunctional family. As the Island passes over Munodi, the Rajah's son explains to Gulliver, "I just know they'll be trouble. Mother and father

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<sup>49</sup> Here I am aware and echo Clement Hawes' caution about reading Swift's text allegorically: "Swiftian allegory is occasional and ad hoc and often multivalent" (416).

disagree about everything. She's a very down-to-earth woman. Father's always had his head in the clouds so to speak. They've lived apart for quite a while. I had a very unhappy childhood." Here Laputa and Munodi no longer personify players in a colonial struggle but rather parents in a domestic dispute, disrupting and harming the development of their child, this alienation matching that between Gulliver and his wife and the deleterious effects that it could have on their own son. (The discussion between Gulliver and the Rajah's son is intercut with Gulliver's own son, Tom, watching Bates ride off to Bedlam, while he attempts to reconstruct Gulliver's narrative.) The orientalist elements of Laputa in the film also obscure the colonial struggle in the book by making Laputa, its philosophy, and music "other," a quasi emblem of a colony (i.e. India) instead of the colonizer (i.e. England). More importantly, by orientalising the Laputans, the filmmakers demonstrate their privileging of critique aimed at gender inequity and patriarchy over criticism of other forms of oppression like those associated with colonialism; here the film begins to mark the limitations of its critique, limits not present in Swift's satiric practice. The political dispute between Laputa and Munodi effectively translates into domestic violence, when the Rajah decides to respond to his wife's refusal to pay the tax by bombing her estate. In a scene depicting the Rajah's decision, Gulliver and the Rajah's son link the seeming irrationality of this violence to the Rajah's corrupted position as father and husband, the result of his intellectual and political bankruptcy. When the Rajah suddenly awakes from his contemplation of Laputa's situation, replete with Flappers hitting him with their bladders-on-a-stick, he declares, "I have it! We must bomb them!" The sequence cuts to a close up of the Rajah's son who asks desperately, "Bomb mother?" The shot crosses over to a close-up of Gulliver, who asks as a follow-up question, "Bomb your wife?" Here the continuity of the questioning upheld in the continuity between close-ups renders Gulliver and the son's logic continuous also: the irrationality of the Rajah's

political decision to enact war arises from his willingness to attack his own wife and the mother of his child. Patriarchal violence is, therefore, the unthinkable danger of a totally masculinised, “out-of-touch” political power.

The Laputans problematically and violently disengage from filial bonds because of their commitment to abstract philosophy and knowledge. This disengagement matches that of the “professors of speculative learning” at the Academy of Lagado, who have razed the land surrounding them in order to implement their scientific and technological innovations. Here the film evokes a rather anti-intellectual, anti-academic ethos, positing institutions dedicated to the production of knowledge as male dominated and thus inherently impractical and destructive. While the film successfully reproduces several of the Royal Academy’s experiments and their absurdity as described in the book, including extracting sunlight from cucumbers and signifying through objects as opposed to language, it rearticulates the context of these experiments as they relate to Gulliver’s attempt to return home instead of suggesting the limitations of material philosophy and empiricism. Gulliver’s desire to return home purely motivates his trip to the academy, whose representation becomes an echo of Bedlam in the film. “They were mad, all mad. So obsessed with their own world that they had forgotten reality,” Gulliver explains of the speculative scientists at the Academy. He consequently parallels their blind madness to his own self-obsession with the worlds that he visited in lieu of the reality of “home.” The scientists accordingly send Gulliver to the “Room of Answers” in order to get instructions as to how he could return to England. He approaches the room, door barred and covered in cobwebs signalling the scientists’ long-time disinterest in “answers,” and declares upon entry, “Is this the room of answers? Please, I have to know the way home.” In a medium shot, Gulliver approaches a man with his back turned, facing a window. The sequence cuts to a close-up of the man and as he

turns around, we discover that he happens to be Gulliver as well; the scene cuts to a close-up of a surprised “real” Gulliver. The next shot returns us to the doppelganger, who states, “You know the way home but you’ll never find it, because deep in your heart, you don’t want to.” The scene cuts to a close-up of an increasingly agitated Gulliver who lunges forward to strangle his double and declares, “That’s not true.” When the shot cuts back to the doppelganger, he transforms into Bates and the two of them now appear to be in Gulliver’s cell at Bedlam. The strangling of the double exposes Gulliver’s resistance to institutional, patriarchal power figured by the scientists in Lagado, Dr. Bates, Bedlam, and finally Gulliver himself, an adventurer and doctor alienated from home and family. Gulliver’s attack on this patriarchal and destructive figure indicates his “true” desire, which the film consequently confirms as the noblest one: to be a committed father and husband rather than a *committed* scientist and explorer in Bedlam.

Gulliver exhibits his own propensity for this type of destructive, patriarchal attachment to science and technology in his earlier voyage to Brobdingnag. His second stop clearly establishes the relationship of masculinity, oppression, and science as the film offers an interesting variety of reversals in its version of the voyage. The King of Brobdingnag becomes a Queen, and more importantly, a black woman. In this DePorte sees Sturridge and Moore’s gender changes as “motivated by a concern to maintain gender balance” (99). However, I would argue that these changes are far more significant. In the film, Brobdingnag comes to signify good government, particularly when juxtaposed with the political machinations in Lilliput. The following exchange between the Queen and Gulliver, which is only in the film and not the book, highlights such idealised good government in the female-run kingdom:

GULLIVER. In our country, we also have very high taxes. It keeps people in their place.

QUEEN. We have no taxes.

GULLIVER. But everyone's bringing you the fruits of their labour.

QUEEN. So they can be divided up between the whole kingdom fairly.

GULLIVER. Amongst the higher classes, you mean.

QUEEN. [laughs] No, we have enough food to feed everybody. A farmer brings in his crop and takes home some of his neighbours'. Look [pointing to the division of produce]: each takes his share and nobody goes hungry.

GULLIVER. But unless some people are starving, how can there be structure to society? What do your ministers say about this?

QUEEN. Ministers? Each village sends their farmers to meet with me twice a year and we decide on the common good.

GULLIVER. Common good?

Here the structural and economic equality of Brobdingnag conflicts with Gulliver's English perspective and expectations, which emphasise class disparity, administrative corruption, and the inconceivability of the common good. A black Queen signifies the ultimate reversal in colonial, patriarchal power relations; she and her court of black women represent a type of egalitarian society, whereby qualities like equity and transparency of authority become directly linked to a female leadership typically marginalised by white, English, patriarchal systems of authority. Maleness *and* whiteness alternatively correspond to inequality and oppression. "I cannot but conclude," the Queen declares after Gulliver's dissertation on England's institutions, "that your People are the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the earth." While the Queen's declaration appears nearly verbatim from the

book,<sup>50</sup> “race” takes on a different valence in the film because the Queen herself is black. Here “race” means not only Englishmen as it does in the book, but also white men in general. The filmmakers ensure this significance of race by replacing the word “Natives” with “People” so as not to confuse white, patriarchal, colonial agents with Indigenous and colonised people – a contemporary understanding of “Natives.” The Queen’s gender and race thus inversely equate white, colonial, patriarchal power with insidious and unjust administration. Gulliver’s attempt to change the Queen’s mind about the nature of his “race” brings science and its attendant aggression into this equation and merely substantiates her appraisal of white men.

As in Swift’s text, Gulliver attempts to defend England’s supposedly advanced and innovative civilization against the ruler of Brobdingnag’s humiliating questions and criticism by giving a demonstration of gunpowder, notably a technology of war and violence. In film, prior to his demonstration, Gulliver announces, “Now witness the exciting power of this substance – created, I might add, by my odious race and seemingly unknown to even your greatest minds.” He identifies gunpowder as a marvellous production of English knowledge, implying that this knowledge supersedes that of Brobdingnag’s own scientists. These “great minds” of Brobdingnag, scientists introduced in an earlier scene, are also conspicuously all men. In this earlier scene, the scientists attempt to dissect Gulliver, pinned to the table, in order to figure out what he is; when one concludes that he must be a clockwork toy and all three aim their scalpels and scissors at Gulliver’s crotch to find the key, Gulliver screams, “Take your hands off of me!” In an extreme close-up, Gulliver implores them, “Please, there’s been some terrible mistake; I’m a doctor myself. There’s nothing wrong with me!” The scientists’ aim at Gulliver’s “manhood” and his potential emasculation forces Gulliver to call out his profession, implying the conflation

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<sup>50</sup> The entirety of the ruler of Brobdingnag’s quotation in Swift’s text is as follows: “I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth” (108).

of his masculinity and institutional position. The next reverse shot reveals that the scientists have become the doctors at Bedlam, evaluating Gulliver's sanity while he is restrained on an examination table. By aligning the Brobdingnag's scientists, Gulliver, and the doctors at Bedlam, the film again reifies the relationship between institutional forms of masculinised knowledge and potential violence, as well as how it impinges upon individual identity and freedom. When the sequence returns to Brobdingnag, Gulliver continues to insist on the sameness between his miniature self and the giant scientists, countering their continual humiliation of his identity and masculinity:

Gentlemen, please! Listen to me! I come from a civilised country, which abounds with several millions of people of both sexes of my own stature, where the houses and the trees and the animals are all in proportion. And I have no trouble feeding myself or protecting myself or anything else for that matter. I am a man, just like you.

Civility, virility, and self-sufficiency fall under Gulliver's rubric of maleness and he makes claims to the balanced and proportionate nature of English society and life. The scientists respond to this with laughter, such qualities appearing ridiculous in Gulliver, as he is completely vulnerable and alone in his current, miniature situation. To prove his intellectual and masculine prowess, however, Gulliver offers the gunpowder recipe to the scientists. Though he increases the proportions to account for the differing scale, the Brobdingnagian scientists also alter the amount of ingredients in order to magnify the result for the audience of giants. The demonstration ends in a small explosion, which threatens the Queen's body and her position. Gulliver's show of scientific strength is, accordingly, disproportionate – much like the failure of Englishmen and their institutions to be even and fair – and the result is destruction and the endangerment of women. (The male scientists are noticeably absent from the demonstration.)

Gulliver consequently undoes the irony of his own statement that gunpowder is the product of the great minds of his “odious race;” the demonstration merely qualifies the Queen’s conclusion about the perniciousness of white men and their supposed “scientific” advancements.

Reversing the gender of certain characters in power enables Sturridge and Moore to explicitly masculinise the variety of political and institutional oppressions that Swift identifies in his book. By making Gulliver’s master a mistress in his voyage to Houyhnhnmland, the filmmakers not only fix the relationship between virtuous, rational forms of government and female leadership, championing a sort of matriarchal “caretaking” model mirrored in Mary Gulliver’s character and juxtaposed with Gulliver’s institutionalization, but they also secure a clear reading of the Houyhnhnms in the film: they are quite simply the ideal. Steven Poole pronounces or, more accurately, denounces their interpretation of the voyage:

the Houyhnhnms, in an elementary misreading, are glossed as a truly ideal society.

Gulliver’s Houyhnhnm ‘Master’ is re-cast as ‘Mistress,’ a nag voiced by Isabelle Huppert.

Deleted, however, are the Houyhnhnms’ failings. In the book, they are proto-Nazis, obsessed with purity of race. Their name means ‘Perfection of Nature,’ and they debate ‘whether the Yahoos should be exterminated from the face of the earth.’

While I agree with Poole that Sturridge and Moore simplify and idealise their representation of the Houyhnhnms, I do not fully endorse his own interpretation of the Houyhnhnms. Certainly their discussion of exterminating the Yahoos equates to a debate about eugenics and a retrenching fear of difference; nevertheless, the filmmakers mainly miss the mark in terms of their overly earnest interpretation of the Houyhnhnms as much as in their omissions. Claude Rawson outlines how earnest interpretations of the Houyhnhnms, which includes readings like Poole’s that underscore their “cold, passionless, inhuman” character, do not take into account

Swift's deeply ironic representation, whereby "the Houyhnhnms, though they are positive, are not a *model*, there being no question of our being able to imitate them" (30). He contends that reading the Houyhnhnms as a mimetic model in both instances – positive or negative – misses the point and recreates the clear categories that Swift's constant indirection unsettle.

My own understanding of the Houyhnhnms follows Rawson as well as R.S. Crane's early, yet compelling argument that Swift employs the horse as a figure of rationality because it inverts and defies the logic of textbook examples of human reason. These textbook examples frequently compare the rational to the irrational like a man to a horse (405). In this Crane concludes,

It might well have occurred to a clever satirist then that he could produce a fine shock to his reader's complacency as human beings by inventing a world in which horses appeared where the logicians had put men and men where they had put horses, and by elaborating, through this, an argument designed to shift the position of man as a species from the *animal rationale* branch of the tree, where he had always been proudly placed, as far as possible over toward the *animal irrationale* branch, with its enormously less flattering connotations. (406)

Indeed through this inversion, Swift could offend and insult readers who know their logic, as Rawson and Crane both believe. Yet it could also pass as a joke for those who can decode Swift's logical inversion and who would accordingly discount Gulliver's perspective precisely because it defies logic and he constantly undoes the certainty of his views with ironic statements. Either way, Swift's "logical" refutation functions on multiple levels: to criticise human behaviour by insulting human pretensions to reason and logic; to undermine and mock Gulliver's perspective because of its illogical nature; and, in my view, to put into doubt the premise of logic

itself, found in textbooks and received as a given; this follows other epistemological and hermeneutical challenges found in the book, especially those questioning material philosophy and/or empiricism, varieties of subjectivism, and the privileged status of national and colonialist identities (Zimmerman 13-15). Swift's use of the horse as *animal rationale*, then, not only puts into question our assumptions about human claims to reason or Gulliver's subjectivity, but it also exposes the way in which axiomatic and epistemological assumptions and categories – like these textbook definitions of logic – structure and discipline our perspectives, though in a potentially arbitrary and unstable manner. These multivalent and ambivalent possibilities of the logical inversion, therefore, confirm Marshall and Bentman's assertion that Swift's satire evokes and registers several reactions across readers, rather than a singular, unidirectional meaning, and my own assertion that satire gestures to and probes disciplinary modalities rather than simply asserts them. The inversion is not simply a parody of reasoning; the inversion both poses the questions about reasoning and comes into question itself.

Nowhere in Sturridge and Moore's film are the inversions called into question. The film's reversal of animal and human, like the inversion of gender and race, appear uncomplicated and straightforward, denying what Rawson calls the "undermining doubt" of Swift's satiric critique (32) – a scepticism of authority that I attach to all satire. DePorte criticises the film representation of the Lilliputians as "grossly repulsive" instead of "exquisitely beautiful" and the Brobdingnagian court as "a handsome lot" (99) while the book emphasises their grotesqueness, typified by the giant Nurse's "Dug so varied with Spots, Pimples, and Freckles, that nothing could appear more nauseous" (Swift 71). The film reverses their appearances so that their institutional character and outward form is symmetrical, cutting out the irony and confusion of Swift's characterisations. These alterations, though DePorte sees them as minor, play a

significant role in ensuring the clear-cut interpretation of the film's inversions: male domination and power-grabbing corrupt the nuclear family and institutions. Swift's complex inversions, on the other hand, (i.e. Brobdingnagians may be ugly but they seem to have a more ideal approach to legal and governmental systems than the beautiful Lilliputians) do not perform simple ridicule or transmit one, authoritative argument or critique. Even if the film's ridiculing of patriarchy offers an intelligent update of Swift's institutional criticisms, I would not label the film's critique "satiric" because of its directness and inability to question its own authority alongside the forms of authority that it criticizes. This in large part is the result of the filmmakers' own straightforward definition of satire; as Duncan Kentworthy, the film's producer, explains in the special features' "making of the film" documentary,

There's no getting away from the fact that *Gulliver's Travels* is a satire because, although it sounds terrifying and intellectual, in fact, satire is just something poking fun at the ridiculousness of human behaviour, which is certainly as true today as it was two-hundred and fifty years ago.

The "terrifying" and "intellectual" aspects of satire correspond, I would argue, to its topicality (not generality) and its scepticism, which probes into epistemologies and discipline. The film's reluctance to engage these perplexities or to draw concrete contemporary allegories or analogies for their criticisms reflect the filmmakers' basic and general rather than satiric understanding of Swift's inversions.

Sturridge and Moore's handling of the Houyhnhnms ultimately exemplifies their earnest take on Swift's inversion of human and animal. They translate Swift's issues of (human) reason and (animal) irrationality into those of *humanity* and *inhumanity*, especially through their parallel intercutting of Gulliver's trials in Houyhnhnmland with those in Bedlam. Poole is right to

complain that the filmmakers omit the Houyhnhnms' ostensible imperfections or obvious inhumanity and render the Yahoos insignificant, stating that the "Yahoos are now blue bushpeople with comedy teeth, so that Gulliver's horror is funny for the wrong reason: not because they are like him, but because they are so innocuous." The Yahoos are not completely inoffensive or harmless, however; unlike the hypothetical situation described in the book, the Yahoos do lead a revolt and raze the Houyhnhnms' homes in the film and the Houyhnhnms subsequently dispatch Gulliver from the island. In lieu of the Houyhnhnms' ridding themselves of Gulliver because of a theoretical fear, the filmmakers offer them a concrete reason for his expulsion, alleviating the Houyhnhnms of their quasi-xenophobic, eugenical attitudes in the book. Nevertheless, the film insists upon differentiating Gulliver from the Yahoos, though it does not spare his English doctors and audience at Bedlam of their similarity to the Yahoos. The framing narrative implies that their inhuman treatment of Gulliver matches the brutish nature of the Yahoos. Alternatively, Gulliver appears adaptable in Houyhnhnmland, eager to learn and adopt their honest way of life – even imperfectly – and reject the inequalities, vagaries, and viciousness of both Yahoo and English existence. Nevertheless, his adaptability or willingness to learn does not signify submission or powerlessness or even his role as a "collapsible satiric device;" instead, it marks his humane ability to mediate his dominance-prone, patriarchal position. The filmmakers represent this humane ability in Gulliver when his Houyhnhnm Mistress, just prior to his forced departure, tells Gulliver, "You are more Houyhnhnm than Yahoo," implying a greater symmetry and equality with the perfect Houyhnhnms. Following this statement, the film cuts to a sequence whereby Gulliver rides on his Mistress' back, galloping freely and ecstatically across a field, reversing her earlier throwing of Gulliver off her back in their initial encounter. DePorte describes the scene as "truly bizarre" and asks,

This must be a fantasy, but what can it possibly mean? That Gulliver longs for some kind of sexual union with Mistress (like the boy in *Equus*)? That he wants to assert his old human prerogatives? This ambiguity is typical of the uncertain handling of Gulliver's Houyhnhnm experience. (101)

Contrary to DePorte's suggestion that the scene is ambiguous, I contend that it overtly signals Mistress' trust in Gulliver in spite of his seeming likeness to the Yahoos. Indeed the ride could have a sexual connotation, the Mistress being feminised, but the importance lies in its consensual nature. Here humanity equals consensual and equitable treatment and this overrides (pardon the pun) and frees Gulliver of *patriarchal* prerogatives, which are clearly exhibited in the non-consensual and oppressive tactics of the insatiable female yahoos or Bates and the physicians at Bedlam. The last scene shows Mistress watching Gulliver from a hillside as he sets off to sea in his canoe. As Gulliver paddles off, the scene cuts to a full shot of Mistress on a hillside and in the background a chorus of whinnying breaks out. Gulliver sadly declares, "as I sailed away, the Houyhnhnms cried out to me from the beach. I didn't turn to look. It is a sound that will stay with me until the end of my life." The film does not draw attention to the fact, as Chalmers and others have cited, that the canoe is made of Yahoo skin, thereby avoiding the issue of supposedly humane Gulliver performing an inhumane act. Moreover, the Houyhnhnm salute at Gulliver's melancholic departure echoes Mistress' acknowledgement of his sameness rather than his radical alterity. In this way, the conclusion of the Houyhnhnm voyage and the subsequent confirmation of Gulliver's humanity and veracity in the final courtroom scene do not replicate what Rawson identifies as the satiric end result of the inversion in the book:

While the Houyhnhnms are an insulting impossibility, the Yahoos, though not a reality, are an equally insulting *possibility*. Swift's strategy of the undermining doubt is nowhere

more evident than here, for though we are made to fear the worst, we are not given the comfort of knowing the worst. (32)

The film does not play with such scepticism – a doubt which might force the audience to make choices and see that “the world, gentle reader, includes thee” (Rawson 32). Gulliver’s likeness to the Houyhnhnms or their superior humanity is not mocked or undermined or questionable in the film, thereby not implicating the audience in an active negotiation of its meaning; rather, the logical inversion and Gulliver’s relation to it are constructed as “truth,” particularly in the film’s climactic courtroom scene.

**The whole truth, and nothing but the truth: realising the certainty of Gulliver’s testimony, undoing the uncertainty of satire**

By placing the final climax scene in a courtroom, Gulliver’s film narrative takes on an interesting significance. When Mary Gulliver arrives in the packed courtroom for a hearing on whether or not Gulliver will be released from Bedlam, she asks Bates in a distressed manner, “Why are all these people here? But you said nothing about it being public?” The public nature of the courtroom captures the way in which Gulliver’s madness and raving are made into spectacle throughout the film. An audience is always included in scenes where Gulliver lectures and verbally reconstructs his voyages, be it to Mary, Tom, Bates, or strangers at Bedlam. The head examiner even draws attention to the spectator-performer model of Gulliver’s narrative, when he responds to the audience reaction in the courtroom with the ironic assertion that “this is a medical examination not a dramatic performance!” This reflexivity of a spectator-performer model in the film has the potential to reproduce the satirically self-reflexive and parodic mode of

Swift's text and yet, as I describe later, the hyperrealist mode of the film encloses that dynamic within the filmic frame to the exclusion of the actual audience's identification with the audience in the film, who are uncomfortably aligned with the Yahoos and by extension, social criticism. Nevertheless, the publicity of Gulliver's personal experience at Bedlam ultimately reflects the film's overarching concern that patriarchal institutions interfere in the private and familial lives of individuals. Part of the idealism of the Houyhnhnms is that they do not need institutions to curb individual freedoms because the natural rationality of Houyhnhnm individuals makes discipline unnecessary. Gulliver explains this to the courtroom audience: "It was with the greatest difficulty that I could make [Mistress] understand what I meant by power, government, and war. Law and punishment and a thousand other things had no equivalence in their language." Discipline is conspicuously absent from Houyhnhnm society in large part because of their supposed plain-dealing (this explains why Gulliver must leave instead of being punished in Houyhnhnmland); such honesty and harmony of discourse and action, on the other hand, is conspicuously absent at Bedlam. There discipline seems to fracture individuality and allow institutional figures like Bates to wield power inhumanely. Consequently, the administrator's declaration to the audience, as the camera enters the courtroom, becomes an ironic one: "What we do here at Bedlam is humane but yet disciplined." Gulliver's forced imprisonment certainly contradicts the humane conditions at the mental institution, as do the spectacularisation and publicizing of Gulliver's personal struggle and attempts to reunite with his family. The courtroom thus signifies the public and inhumane interference of institutions in private and more specifically, family life.

Along with its significance as a site of discipline, the courtroom also functions as a place where perspectives and testimony are rendered legitimate in the public sphere. Miranda Burgess

describes the role of the courtroom in this process of legitimization, mediating, and confirming private declarations in public. “Positioned between state authority and Habermasian publicity,” Burgess contends, “the courtroom acts as a gateway or medium through which the rules of the former inform the latter – and through which participants in the latter receive the mediated sanction of the former” (397). For Burgess, “Habermasian publicity” refers to the sphere of the citizen, juxtaposed with the private (“economic, affective, material”), and which is then further bifurcated into “the literary and political public spheres” (394). Judgment in court, accordingly, marries the political authority of the state with the authority of publicity and the literary – the stately courts and the courts of public opinion. Thus, the court actively participates in not only disciplining individuals but also constructing the “truths” that legitimize discipline. In this sense, the courtroom seems an apt choice for Sturridge and Moore to situate Gulliver’s trials and experience. Satire produces a form of inquiry in regard to “truth” like that executed in the courtroom, while it also operates as a type of testimony that attempts to expose injustice. As a result, satire tends to clash with the official story and public opinion – the “truths” produced by the operations of the power-knowledge dynamic and its disciplinary discourses, which I argue satire exposes. Yet, at the same time, satiric authority becomes subject to questioning because it draws attention to the fact that it employs the very same discursive strategies to construct “truth” and testimony, thereby leaving it susceptible to the same critique of subjectivism and self-interest. Nevertheless, it is precisely the clash of discourses, personal testimony and the official story that facilitates satiric inquiry.

Bates’ cross-examination of Mary and Gulliver in the courtroom performs this collision of discourses by contrasting Gulliver’s critical narrative with institutional and public opinion. He exclaims,

[Gulliver's] a lunatic, gibbering against mankind, tearing down all shreds of decency and modesty. Filthy in word and filthy in thought. He has a heart burning with hatred against the whole human race and a mind fuelled with images from the dunghill. Are we to stand by and hear our entire nature libelled and besmugged?... What presumption? To show men what they are and teach them what to be? You are either a liar, sir, or a lunatic. Which is it?

Bates identifies Gulliver's critical perspective with madness, attempting to delegitimize Gulliver's appraisal of mankind with his seeming anti-social tendencies, exemplified in his desire to "return to his cell" because the courtroom is "full of yahoos." Chalmers notes that Bates' outburst mimics – nearly verbatim – William Makepeace Thackeray's famous reaction to *Gulliver's Travels*,<sup>51</sup> effectively dramatising and thematising the "legacy of hostile reception" of Swift's book precisely because of its damning allegations against institutions and human nature (77). Bates and Thackeray personalise satiric discourse in order to limit or delegitimize its applicability. In response to Bates' outburst, Gulliver declares, "Every single thing I've told you is the truth and happened to me. Isn't it enough that I've said it's the truth?" When Bates responds, "No it is not enough," Tom suddenly materialises in the courtroom and, to the surprise of the entire court, produces the tiny, Lilliputian sheep that leads to Gulliver's exoneration and freedom. This is where the film falls short of Swift's satiric performance. In the book all we have to pursue as "truth" is Gulliver's own assertion of his narrative's veracity. In other words, Gulliver's query, "isn't it enough that I've said it's the truth," remains an open question about the nature of "truth" and discourse in the book. Alternatively, the film qualifies Gulliver's narrative

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<sup>51</sup> Of the fourth voyage, Thackeray asserts, "It is Yahoo language: a monster jibbering shrieks, and gnashing imprecations against mankind – tearing down all shreds of modesty, past all sense of manliness and shame; filthy in thought, furious, raging, obscene" (qtd in Chalmers 77). Here Thackeray conflates Gulliver's misanthropy with Swift's character, equating Gulliver's perspective with that of Swift's authority. Like the film, Thackeray does not attend to the radical instability of Gulliver's authority and the way in which irony constantly undermines that authority; this, in turn, erases the satiric uncertainty of what constitutes an authoritative, uniform understanding of Swift's intentions.

as patently true by producing *real*, concrete evidence; this shuts down the inquiry and undermining doubt that underwrite Swift's satire. In pursuing its logic of incredibly realistic representation, then, Sturridge and Moore's film also ends up confirming the reality and veracity of Gulliver's narrative; this, in turn, rewrites the last chapter of Gulliver's narrative – a chapter in the book that completely undercuts Gulliver's testimony and leaves its "truth" open to interpretation.

In a special feature documenting the making of *Gulliver's Travels* (1996), producer Duncan Kentworthy describes the hyperrealist aim and mode of the miniseries. He explains how the filmmakers endeavoured to make the special effects so invisible that they appear as "un-special effects." For the scene with wasps in Brobdingnag, for example, the filmmakers filmed real wasps, enlarged and edited them into the frame with a miniature Gulliver, and coordinated Gulliver's movement to correspond with their action. They also employed a new technology that allowed them to track the movement of one take (for example, the giant plate that Gulliver sits in a chair and speaks from in Brobdingnag) and reproduce the charted motion in a stationary take (Gulliver sitting, discoursing from a chair), which then gets superimposed into one shot, its coordinated movement effectively masking the separateness of each shot. The most significant realist element of the film, however, is the filmmakers' choice to use real horses in their representation of the Houyhnhnms. These horses, of course, cannot ape human actions and activities as they can in the book and therefore the filmmakers maintain the horsiness of the horses, only adding the occasional, dubbed direct speech of Mistress (Isabelle Huppert), who literary only says "Houyhnhnm," "man," and "You are more Houyhnhnm than man" with Gulliver extrapolating all other communication. The aim of the filmmakers materialises, therefore, not as an attempt to reproduce the complicated, satiric self-reflexive construction of

the book, but rather to render the unreal nature of Gulliver's travels impossibly real, effectively following the legacy of other film adaptations of *Gulliver's Travels*. In his review for *Variety*, John P. McCarthy declares of the film's production values, "Special effects are so accomplished and fluid they rarely draw attention to themselves. Portuguese and English locations are ideal, and costumes lavish." All these illusionistic elements and technologies enhance the authenticity and seamless editing and construction of film, thereby further occluding the intensely parodic and satirically self-reflexive structure of the book.

The final chapter of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* epitomizes the satiric self-reflexivity that I identify closely with the text's satiric impulses. The chapter simultaneously emphasises and destabilises both Gulliver's "truth" claims and his authority. "I have given thee a faithful History of my Travels for Sixteen Years, and above Seven Months," Gulliver insists in the opening lines of Book IV, Chapter XII, "wherein I have not been so studious of Ornament as of Truth" (255). Here Gulliver echoes the language and jargon of empiricism, exemplified by proponents of the Royal Society who insist upon linguistic directness, which Swift mocks and questions through the whole text. In *The History of the Royal Society of London, for the Improving of Natural Knowledge*, for example, Thomas Sprat articulates the empiricist's desired relationship to language and discourse. He contends that the scientists at the Royal Society endeavour to exclude from their discourse all the "ill effects of this superfluity of talking [which] have already overwhelmed most other arts and professions" (2041). He claims that the unadorned language of empirical discourse will "represent truth, clothed with bodies; and to bring knowledge back again to our very senses, from whence it was at first derived to our understanding" (2041). Indeed Sprat undermines the "unadorned" approach of his own discourse by personifying "truth" as a figurative "body" to be clothed by literal "bodies." Sprat cannot escape the metaphoric and

approximate nature of language itself and bridge the gap between sign and signified. Swift also mistrusts this gap, demonstrating the ways in which it affects both the production of knowledge and discipline. Unlike Sprat, however, Swift has no mind to pretend that this gap can be sutured, thus putting into doubt the idealistic and holistic nature of Houyhnhnm discourse. In this sense, Gulliver's written authority is questionable like all written authorities, including Swift's own textual authority. Swift consequently ironises Gulliver's next statement in the final chapter that, in spite of other travel writers committing to print "the grossest Falsities on the unwary Reader," he would impose on himself

as a Maxim, never to be swerved from, that I would *strictly adhere to Truth*; neither indeed can I be ever under the least Temptation to vary from it, while I retain in my Mind the lectures and Example of my noble Master, and the other illustrious *Houyhnhnms*, of whom I had so long the Honour to be an humble Hearer. (256)

Gulliver's travels are apparently fantastic and unreal, but they are also realistic insofar as they allegorically and metaphorically point to social and political realities. In these "[i]rresolvable antinomies," Hawes contends, lies Swift's ultimate satiric gesture, as "Gulliver is damaged, decentred, imploded – but Gulliver is right – a typical Swiftian stroke" (426). Such antinomies continue as Gulliver insists upon "the structural violence of colonial relations" (Hawes 426), comparing colonialist expansionism to piracy and claiming the illegitimacy of "enlightening" and civilising indigenous peoples, at the same time that he ridiculously absolves England of such colonial crimes: "But this Description, I confess, doth by no means affect the *British Nation*, who may be an Example to the whole World for their Wisdom, Care, and Justice in planting Colonies" (Swift 258). He also insists that his "sole Intention was the PUBLICK GOOD" (256) and claims an instructional value to his work, though he concludes with the impossibility of

Yahoos and humans being able to imitate and pride themselves with the Houyhnhnm virtues of good government and reason (260). As Hawes notes, Gulliver here performs “the contradiction of a proud denunciation of pride” and Swift’s last joke: “the satirist satirized” (427). The text’s simultaneous confirmation and delegitimization of the “Author’s veracity” in the final chapter opens up Swift’s narrative to a variety of differing and opposing interpretations, implicating the audience in the construction and negotiation of the book’s meaning, satiric and otherwise, and perhaps their own condemnation.

The final scene of Sturridge and Moore’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and its verification of Gulliver’s story cancel out the work of Swift’s “satiric mirror” in the text. Not only do Mary’s “faith” and Tom’s proof of evidence qualify Gulliver’s sanity and authority, they also seal Gulliver’s case in the sense that the audience is excluded from evaluating the evidence themselves. Gulliver’s easing back into social and family life at the end of the film also glosses over and renders impotent the film’s institutional criticism, as Gulliver seems to transcend the violent and unfair patriarchal and institutional prerogatives that the film earlier criticised. “Indeed the film betrays Swift’s complex, often contradictory understanding of liberty (inextricable as it is from his own strong censorious tendencies),” Chalmers asserts, “erasing it under a cruder, more dominant ideological discourse in which the transcendent role of ‘freedom’ obscures the presence, within such discourse, of censorship” (83). Chalmers points to an important aspect of satiric authority: it always draws attention to ideological and disciplinary blind spots while acknowledging and playing with its own. The film, on the other hand, accepts its own ideology to the exclusion of its own exclusions. As a part of that exclusion is the film audience itself. In the final scene of the film, Gulliver, Mary, and Tom walk along the majestic seaside in England and in a voice-over, Gulliver concludes,

All the Yahoo vice I can begin to accustom myself to once more, except for pride – that I cannot tolerate. I see myself for what I truly am. I have lost eight years of my life and yet, and yet the moments I have had, the marvels I have witnessed, the wonderful truths I have seen. You see, when night falls and you close your eyes and go to sleep and dream, I have seen the things that you can only dream about. I have been there. I was lost at sea for a long time, but I have been there, oh yes, all the way and back.

Though Gulliver performs here a type of pride equivalent to textual Gulliver's at the end of the book, his authority remains unquestioned in its proud singularity. In fact, the film combines this voice-over with a gradual aerial, bird's eye view shot, implying the God-like, overseeing and total nature of Gulliver's authority and testimony. In this camera movement and voice-over, there is no irony but rather an emphasis on the transcendence, loftiness, and singularity of Gulliver's experience and authority; the result of such untouchable singularity and totality is a denial of satiric or critical engagement. Gulliver's supposedly singular and inaccessible testimony at the end of the film reiterates the enclosure of the film's hyperrealist construction, erasing the film audience's vicarious and simultaneous experience of Gulliver's journey and therefore any lines of critical identification. In spite of their "faithful" and comprehensive adaptation of several aspects of Swift's book, Sturridge and Moore de-satirise their film by failing to question both Gulliver's authority and the construction of their own narratological authority.

In effect, Sturridge and Moore's adaptation of *Gulliver's Travels* points to the necessity of applying satiric self-reflexivity to the process of filmmaking as much as or perhaps even more so than in adapting the narrative content of the text. In my next chapter, I will examine Michael Winterbottom's 2005 film adaptation of Laurence Sterne's eighteenth-century satiric text,

*Tristram Shandy*, in order to demonstrate how satiric self-reflexivity applied to modes of authorisation in film and film adaptations effectively produces satire on film. Though Winterbottom's film narrative diverges from that of the book's entirely, focusing instead on the life and performance of the leading man, Steve Coogan, it still translates Sterne's satiric deconstruction of singular and "novel" authority by "mockumenting" the ways in which film authority is conditional and conditioned by multiple agents and circumstances, commercial and artistic, as well as tied to celebrity. In anatomising its own forms of authority through mockumentary, *A Cock & Bull Story* not only adapts *Tristram Shandy*'s anxious and contingent authority onto the screen, it also produces satiric effect through its *own* terms as a film of an ostensibly failed film adaptation.

**Chapter 5: Satire, Celebrity, and the Conditionality of Authority: (mis)adapting Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, in Michael Winterbottom's *A Cock & Bull Story* (2005)**

A general survey of reviews and interviews on Michael Winterbottom's 2005 film adaptation of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, yields a common, almost unanimous critical prelude – that Sterne's book is “un-filmable.” The deep irony of this pre-emptive conclusion of un-filmability is, of course, that it is being used to discuss an already filmed version of *Tristram Shandy*. It is also a critical appraisal produced and promulgated by the film itself, when Tony Wilson asks Steve Coogan, the film's star, in an interview in the film-about-the-film-adaptation, “Why *Tristram Shandy*? A lot of people have said it's un-filmable.” This sound-bite anticipates, even shapes the critical discourse about the film that follows, which, in a way, matches Sterne's own ironic, anticipatory representation of critical and/or readerly interpretations or interpellations in subsequent volumes of his book. In fact, *Tristram Shandy*'s conversation with his readers and critics not only supplies much of the satiric content of his book, but also marks its major self-conscious novelties or oddities, like the infamous marbled page or the blank one supplied for the reader to draw Widow Wadman's portrait. Indeed it is precisely these oddities and novelties, firmly imbricated and concretely manifested in the textuality of the book, which compel critics to say that *Tristram Shandy* is impossible to adapt to other media.

This chapter, therefore, explores how Winterbottom renders the “un-filmable” text filmable, by entering into conversation with Sterne's book. While the mockumentary, self-

reflexive mode of the film does reproduce some of Tristram's own self-referential musings and meditations upon the nature of representation and medium, it inevitably cannot adapt Sterne's satiric play on the book as object or the physical process and product of print. The film instead deals with itself *as a film*, departing from the action of the text entirely, and proceeds to anatomise its own authority and modes of authorisation self-reflexively and satirically on multiple levels: as a "faithful" film adaptation of an "un-adaptable" text; as a behind-the-scenes exposé of the production of hyper-realism on film; as a (faux) documentary recording "reality;" as a vehicle for Coogan's supposed celebrity; and to legitimize Coogan's acting ability and talent. In effect, the film focuses on Steve Coogan's life, tabloid infamy, and performance anxiety in order to provide an alternative and contemporary, yet mutual rendering of the contingent authority and originality that Tristram mocks and performs in his own attempt to write his life and opinions.

As a part of this mutually anxious and hilarious performance, the filmmakers punctuate their failed mastery of Sterne's text with specifically filmic allusions (i.e. musical score and sequence structure) to Federico Fellini's own "failed" cinematic autobiography, *8 1/2*. In my discussion, I read Fellini's film as deconstructing "auteurism," a movement in cinema akin to "Modern" writing in the eighteenth century (that Sterne imitates and mocks), which emphasises individuated genius and vision. Citing Fellini's celebrated anti-masterpiece in a deliberately underwhelming homage, the filmmakers ironically adapt Tristram's own masterful failure of novelistic and autobiographical endeavours, but within the medium specificity and referential frame of film. As a result, *A Cock & Bull Story* successfully establishes – in its own right – cinematic performance, celebrity, and film auteurism as the contemporary satiric cognates of Tristram Shandy/Laurence Sterne's original performance, celebrity, and authority.

## **Anatomy of Originality: Adaptation and *Tristram Shandy***

Tell me, ye learned, shall we for ever be adding so much to the *bulk* – so little to the *stock*?

Shall we for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring only out of one vessel into another?

Are we for ever to be twisting, and untwisting the same rope? for ever in the same track – for ever at the same pace? – Tristram Shandy (V.I.408)

Stylistic, historical, and critical discussions of Laurence Sterne's eighteenth-century book, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, tend to begin with an appraisal of and introduction to its anomalous status in each of the above categories. Whether they rehearse or question Sterne's authority as an anachronistic or contemporary one; a pre-modern, modern, or postmodern prototype; the beginning, middle, or climax of modern developments within the novel genre; or simply an elusive stroke of philosophical, psychological, theoretical and/or narrative mastery, many of these discussions seem to agree on the fundamental eccentricity of Sterne's work – a singularity most noted, ironically, in its elasticity and its "hospitality... to different approaches and divergent readings" (*Casebook* Keymer 3). Many point to the inauguration of this eccentric literary and critical heritage in Sterne's own time, famously captured in Dr Johnson's declaration, "Nothing odd will do long. *Tristram Shandy* did not last" (219). Perhaps the greatest irony of Johnson's statement is that one can attribute the book's longevity, popularity, and literary canonization to precisely how *odd and different* it seems.

While the radical individuation of or what I would term "hermetic originality" critically attached to Sterne's eccentric text is at the heart of its own self-appreciation and self-satisfaction, such a notion of distinction is also a target for the book's satiric inquiry, especially in relation to the originality of writing and authority. As Christopher Fanning notes, *Tristram*

*Shandy* satirically questions the relationship between authorship and originality by playing with 1) the ontological paradox of representational art (“the original is always necessarily outside the work”); 2) the status of the work as necessarily open to (and compromised by) readerly interpretation; and 3) the manner in which print as a medium complicates these issues: “For author and narrator attempting to control their creation, the multiplicity of print is both an opportunity to display one’s originality to the world, and a threat to that originality – it is subject to others’ copying and sets a precedent for the author himself, to which, if he is to remain truly original, he cannot return” (“The Things”). In conceding the ways in which Sterne challenges notions of singularity and originality in *Tristram Shandy*, particularly through modes of adaptation, repetition, and integration of reader response that I will discuss later in this section, we can move beyond the arguments of impossible adaptation cited in discussions and reviews of Michael Winterbottom’s 2005 film adaptation, *Tristram Shandy: A Cock & Bull Story*.

Regularly, reviews of film adaptations tend to reify books as objects of hermetic singularity and originality in relation to their film counterparts. What I mean by “hermetic originality” or singularity is the idea that a literary work is sealed off and wholly singular, the fully unique inception of an irreproducible origin. Hermetic originality thus also implies that there is only one manner of reading the text and that the rules of engagement are controlled and produced only within the text itself. Simply put, the book seems to exist and have been created in a literary vacuum. Attributing books with hermetic originality, therefore, erases prior influences or inter-texts that inform, inflect, and buttress the textual performance, as well as the various and changing interpretations of a given text. Reviews of adaptations that automatically privilege source text over film adaptation conceive of literature as “works” – singular, independent, original – and film as a derivative mode – dependent, partially realised, and by extension, faithful

or unfaithful to the singular and original “spirit” of the text. “Too often, adaptation discourse subtly reinscribes the axiomatic superiority of literature to film,” Robert Stam explains, “...[t]he inter-art relation is seen as one of Darwinian struggle to the death rather than a dialogue offering mutual benefit and cross-fertilization” (4). Linda Hutcheon echoes Stam’s critique of the parasitic characterisation of adaptations, suggesting that the adaptive process is an evolutionary one whereby there is “both repetition and variation” (177). An adaptation, she continues, “does not draw life-blood from its source and leave it dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep the prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise” (176).

Sterne’s own system of imitation in *Tristram Shandy* plays on the potentially parasitic procedures of literary imitation, while also demonstrating the mutualism and cross-fertilization that can occur in literary adaptation and can produce unique, dynamic performances. In spite of his claims to original authorship, Tristram cites other literary works constantly (e.g. “Alas, Poor Yorick!”) and outright plagiarises others – most famously and ironically Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* and its commentary on plagiarism, which is the epigraph to this section.<sup>52</sup> Yet it is precisely this ironic or doubled execution of Tristram’s authority and its “borrowings” that lends itself to the uniqueness of his authorship. As Jonathan Lamb explains, Sterne’s “highly self-conscious procedure of imitation is transformed into an extraordinarily intimate exhibition by means of the method of assimilation” (“Sterne’s System” 144). In fact, what becomes distinctly “Shandean” is the tendency to cite, imitate, or repeat characteristics

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Keymer actually identifies how Sterne’s book derives some of its points of interest, characters, and episodic structure from a relatively obscure 1756 novel entitled, *The Life and Memoirs of Mr. Ephraim Tristram Bates*, both obviously sharing the title character’s name (Sterne, *Moderns* 50-52). Sterne’s borrowings once again test the characterisation of his book and authority as entirely original. Keymer suggests that Sterne may have answered the call of a reviewer in *Critical Review*, who declares *Ephraim Tristram Bates* a “motley production... [,] wou’d appear to admirable advantage handled by a man of abilities” (qtd in Keymer 51). The “motley production” and its proper “handling” certainly echo language in Sterne’s book and his letters about its composition and reception, making Keymer’s claim that Sterne takes up the reviewer’s challenge all the more compelling.

(hobby horses<sup>53</sup>) and other narratives overtly and covertly, and, at the same time, satirically undermine the accuracy or ostensibly fixed meaning of that citation, imitation, or hobby horse with some sort of failure or double meaning. Shandean repetition, then, ironically produces a constantly unique and protean performance, as “opportunities of using imperfection upon imperfection in various reconstitutive moves begin to multiply” (Lamb *Sterne’s Fiction* 49). This type of imitation and repetition is also a fundamental aspect of satire itself; the product of satiric imitation seems *to adapt* its sources for ridicule or deconstructive inquiry, creating in their ruin witty and ironic failures.<sup>54</sup> Like satire, Shandeism imitates forms of authorisation and authority in order to expose their contingencies, this exposure becoming its unique contribution to the authoritative discourse. Lamb describes this exuberant instability in *Tristram Shandy* as “Shandean relativity,” which “allows nothing to stand neutral or independent” (*Sterne’s Fiction* 7). This Shandean relativity certainly applies to Tristram’s bold claims of originality and singularity.

I offer part of Tristram’s Preface, the supposedly direct statement of his authorial intentions, as merely one example of how Shandean repetition and relativity operate. Tristram’s Preface provides insight into the way in which Tristram confidently claims his original

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<sup>53</sup> Each character in *Tristram Shandy* seems unique and distinct through his particular obsessions or “hobby horses”: Tristram with his deformed nose, disjointed narrative, and failed climaxes; Walter Shandy with his abstract argumentation, encyclopaedism, and failure to “reason” with his wife; and Toby Shandy with his miniature re-enactments of the Battle of Namur and failed sexual prowess, which ironically matches his military might.

<sup>54</sup> Walter Shandy actually correlates Shandean repetition with satiric imitation when he describes Toby’s repeated miniature re-enactments of the battle of Namur. As Tristram explains, “My father would often say to Yorick, that if any mortal in the whole universe had done such a thing, it would have been looked upon by the world as one of the most refined satires upon the parade and prancing manner in which Lewis XIV. from the beginning of the war, but particularly that very year, had taken the field – But ‘tis not my brother Toby’s nature, kind soul! my father would add, to insult anyone” (VI.XXII.538). Toby’s downsizing of the battle could be interpreted as a satiric move, particularly since toying with scale is a conventional tactic of satire. More interesting, however, is Tristram’s inclusion of Walter’s musings on the satiric potential of Toby’s hobbyhorse in his own narrative. Though Walter insists that a satiric understanding of Toby’s Shandean behaviour contravenes his “good nature,” Tristram’s decision to author the satiric implications of the bowling green destabilises the “sentimental” interpretation of Toby’s character. This satiric destabilisation, in turn, also affects Tristram’s authority, putting into question the singularity of his intentionality and perspective.

authorship and intentions, undermines those claims through borrowings and failed execution of those intentions, and ironically yields unexpected and dynamic results. While discussing wit and judgement, for example, “which the great author and bestower of them thought fit originally to give me” (III.XX.227), Tristram declares, “All I fret and fume at, and what most distresses my invention at present, is how to bring the point itself to bear” (III.XX.230). Though he claims “wit and judgment” to be his “original” gifts, Tristram also asserts that the proper articulation of his original genius is his primary concern. Overall, this assertion comes into direct conflict with his seeming inability “to bring the point itself to bear,” a frustration realised in Tristram’s constant and ironic undermining of his own narrative certainty and promises. His point in the Preface – that wit and judgement should not be separated, though that seems to be the case with his critics – is subsequently obfuscated by meandering logic and chaotic grammar for several pages. The irony compounds when Tristram claims,

I hate set dissertations, – and above all of the silliest things in one of them, to darken your hypothesis by placing a number of tall, opaque [sic] words, one before the other, in a right line, betwixt your own and your readers conception, – when in all likelihood, if you had looked about, you might have seen something standing, or hanging up, which would have cleared the point at once, – (III.XX. 235).

Here Tristram ridiculously attributes clarity not to linear writing (placing one word in front of another) but rather to setting a scene with the ambitious expectation that the reader will sort through the clutter and happen upon a particular point. He then quotes verbatim from Rabelais, though without proper attribution, putting into question not only his singular authority by citing another, but also his originality as he quotes word-for-word. This quotation from Rabelais catalogues a list of objects (“a sot, a pot, a fool, a stool, a winter-mittain, a truckle for a pully, the

lid of a goldsmith's crucible, and oyl bottle, an old slipper, or a cane chair" – the cane chair being Tristram's "original" contribution to the list) – that should not impede one's "laudable desire of knowledge." Yet such a catalogue ironically lines up a number of words that further delay and obscure Tristram's point about wit and judgement. Thereafter, he begins his own "set dissertation," precisely what he detests, by comparing at length wit and judgement to knobs on the frame of his chair. Here Tristram's small contribution of the cane chair to Rabelais' list actually reconfigures the citation to furnish his own original performance and metaphor. As a result of such constant, ironic revisions, Tristram's paradoxically confident *and* failed narrative authority manages to create a continually changing and unique performance.

While self-reflexivity and irony produce much of the uniqueness and oddity identified in Tristram's narrative voice, the most "novel" aspects of *Tristram Shandy* seem to develop in Sterne's play on the notion and actuality of his book as a physical object, and how this concreteness mediates his authority and readerly interpretations. Thomas Keymer contends that the "leap we now think of as distinctly Shandean – [is the leap] from self-reflexive narrative fiction to self-referential printed artefact" (73). Keymer demonstrates the extent to which *Tristram Shandy*, "for all its aberrancies," is actually quite in step with the fashion of the "new species" (novels of the mid-eighteenth century), particularly the self-reflexive, ironic narrators in Henry Fielding's novels (50).<sup>55</sup> Sterne's major innovation or novelty, consequently, becomes how his text inquires into the "nature" of a book – a physical object produced through print

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<sup>55</sup> Keymer also illuminates how Sterne's book derives some of its points of interest, characters, and episodic structure from a relatively obscure 1756 novel entitled, *The Life and Memoirs of Mr. Ephraim Tristram Bates*, both obviously sharing the title character's name (SNM 50-52). Sterne's borrowings once again test the characterisation of his book and authority as entirely original. Keymer further suggests that Sterne may have answered the call of a reviewer in *Critical Review*, who declares that *Ephraim Tristram Bates*, a "motley production... [.] wou'd appear to admirable advantage handled by a man of abilities" (qtd in Keymer 51). The "motley production" and its proper "handling" certainly echo language in Sterne's book and his letters about its composition and reception, making Keymer's claim that Sterne takes up the reviewer's challenge all the more compelling.

mechanisms.<sup>56</sup> The most infamous example of Sterne's play on the book as object is, of course, the marbled page, which Tristram describes as "a motley emblem of [his] work" (234). Adding to the emblem's novelty, each marbled page in every early printed text is different and unique, because each is individually produced and "the process of eighteenth-century marbling never produced the same result twice" (Fanning "Small Particles" 391). Through the marbled page, Fanning explains, "each specific copy...possesses this quality of originality – something that modern reprints fail to reproduce, committed as they are to an idea of originality as disembodied" (391). The marbled page enables Sterne to show how each physical book authors and embodies the originality of his writing, not simply the words disembodied and by themselves. The individual book, with its possible "original" physical variations, becomes inextricable from its narrative (Fanning "Small Particles" 391). It is precisely this originality, concretely manifested and embodied in the actual physical apparatus of the book, which leads many critics to say that *Tristram Shandy* is impossible to adapt to other media. Because Sterne's originality is so imbricated in his satire and play on the book as "printed artefact," it seems as though it is impossibly original, un-imitable and ultimately, un-filmable.

Though *Tristram Shandy*'s status as a "self-referential print artefact" explores and satirises a particular textual condition that cannot be adapted to film, it also reflexively indicates another important contingency that affects the book's authority: the reader's intellectual and

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<sup>56</sup> Christopher Fanning firmly establishes the relationship between Sterne's "self-referential printed artefact" and the Scriblerian tradition, which Keymer neglects to address fully in his desire to place Sterne amongst his contemporaries. Like Sterne, the Scriblerians too employ "textual presence," a term that Fanning uses to denote the self-reflexive engagement with and the performative nature of books as physical objects, which "represent the paradoxical condition of thought in language and language in printed form" (367). Scriblerian use of textual presence satirises print "as it isolates individual minds from one another, reifying knowledge and reducing thought to a series of uncommunicative objects called "books"" (369). Indeed Keymer and Sean Regan accurately contend that Sterne "novelises" the Scriblerian text by aiming its satiric inquiry at the novel and its emergent conventions. According to Fanning, however, the Shandean innovation of Scriblerian "textual presence" is not so much that its aim is the novel, but rather that Sterne seems "less tortured about its contradictions," unlike the Scriblerians who fret philosophically over the ambivalence of their texts, because they are "presented in the physical form of a printed text [and therefore] necessarily... subject to [their] own critique of the modern condition" (369). Alternatively, Sterne embraces print culture, celebrity, and their material conditions and conditioning of authorship and authority.

physical interaction with the print artefact. This interaction mediates and offsets the originality and singularity of a text as much as its embodiment and reproduction through print. In a much-cited letter to an American fan, Sterne himself laments bathetically,

In *Tristram Shandy*, the handle is taken which suits [the readers'] passions, their ignorance or sensibility...

...it is not in the power of any one to taste humor, however he may wish it... His own ideas are only call'd forth by what he reads, and the vibrations within, so entirely correspond with those excited, 'tis like reading *himself* and not the book. (411)

While Sterne can cite the originality and novelty of his writing in the un-manageable variety of handles it produces for the reader, he also acknowledges that readerly interactions with the book significantly alter the book's meaning, even to the extent that meaning becomes a reflection of the reader's individual identity rather than the author's or even the book's.<sup>57</sup> Such a relationship between book and audience reveals the inter-subjective, rather than unilateral and singular, nature of textual authority. In Volume II, Tristram insists that “[w]riting, when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation” (XI.125). Though Tristram acknowledges his “management” of the conversation – his narrative being ironically chaotic and unwieldy – he also opens up that management to a diversity of interlocutors and agents. Accordingly, Sterne satirically addresses the contingency of Tristram's own authority, by

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<sup>57</sup> Here is where I part ways with Melvin New's description of *Tristram Shandy* as satire, because New insists that Sterne's “purpose in writing is moral correction” (75). While mastery is involved in the adaptive process of satire (Sterne's production of multiple handles), mastering reception is not the aim of his satire or satire in general, I contend, particularly as it employs the doubleness of rhetoric or discourse and recognises the inter-subjective negotiation of meaning. The satirist engages or even provokes his reader or audience on moral and philosophical issues, but cannot necessarily master their responses or positioning. As Sterne gauges his own satiric work, he acknowledges the inability to control his audience's reception, suggesting instead that their interpretations serve merely to re-articulate and –affirm individual subjective positioning rather than cause a universal shift or correction in perspective. While *Tristram Shandy* sets into motion several inquiries that test conventional thinking and conceptual frameworks, instruction seems to be a moot point in Sterne's satiric experiment; it is the force and dynamism of the inquiry, not the result, which constitutes the potency of the satire.

juxtaposing his claims of authorial singularity and originality with gestures to the dialogic relationship between text and reader. As many critics like Lamb and Melvyn New among others concede, self-reflexive attention to reader interpretation and interpolation in *Tristram Shandy*, coupled with intertextuality, creates the “openness” of Sterne’s text, one that helps resist a simple, linear, and totalized reading of it. This, consequently, questions the type of total power or authority that an author or reader can have in discursively representing or interpreting the world, which satire probes and ridicules in general.

Total and singular authority may be impossible for both author and reader of *Tristram Shandy*; however, as Derek Alsop and Chris Walsh argue, Tristram’s awareness of his readers’ relative autonomy, as well as his endless, chaotic intertextuality, “extends rather than forecloses the potential for creative participation” (39) in his conversation. In essence, adaptations emerge as a potential form of creative participation or interaction with *Tristram Shandy*, particularly in the fact that they can engage Tristram’s own system of imitation and adaptation, while extending his discussion into the future and to a new and broader audience. The creative interaction possible through Tristram’s conversation, therefore, matches the potential of a creative adaptation to “dialogue” with source text, as per Stam and Hutcheon’s suggestion, and to evolve into its own unique performance. Indeed the point of departure for several adaptations of *Tristram Shandy* tends to be entering into conversations with or about the book. In his comic book version of *Tristram Shandy*, for instance, Martin Rowson offers his adaptation as an interlocutor in academic discussions of Sterne’s text. Rather than delivering a straight-forward, “heritage” adaptation or an “illustrated classics” version of the book, Rowson makes his adaptation a satirical “graphic thesis” of *Tristram Shandy*, whereby his role and that of his dog, Pete, illustrated and interjecting in Tristram’s narrative, “is to provide a contemporary viewpoint

of the novel, with [Rowson] as adaptor, artist, and exegete, and Pete as [his] stooge” (69).

Rowson offers his adaptation as a satire of how readers and critics read and interact with the book or, as David Richter explains, how the “lit crit types and the Hollywood moguls... use the literary text as a backscratcher to their own narcissistic itches” (83). In order to be effectively satiric and Shandean, Rowson also applies satiric self-reflexivity to the comic book genre and adaptation, “subverting the accepted structures of comic book narrative and design as effectively as Sterne had originally subverted the structure of the novel” (Rowson 64). In effect, Rowson’s comic book questions its own forms of authorisation in a manner analogous to Sterne’s book and yet, because he applies satiric inquiry to his own authorship and adaptation, Rowson produces his own unique, satiric performance.

I want to stress once more the importance of satiric self-reflexivity in the authorship of adaptations, be they film satires, dramatic satires, or even comic book satires. Adaptations of satiric texts may reproduce content, but in order to be “satiric,” they must submit their own modes of authorisation and authority to satiric inquiry; this, in turn, enables the satiric adaptation to pursue satire’s broad critique of the constitution of authority and the relationship between discourse (here specifically filmic discursivity) and power or legitimacy. I re-invoke here Brean Hammond’s idea of “cultural politics,” which he attributes to Henry Fielding’s dramatic satires, in order to emphasise that the type of authority and power anatomized by the filmmakers in the movie – celebrity – extends into a general commentary on other forms of cultural authority. I argue, therefore, that Michael Winterbottom’s film adaptation of *Tristram Shandy* is a successful satire as a result of its examination into the oftentimes-ridiculous modes of authorising film adaptations through the mockumentary genre. Winterbottom radically departs from the actual content of Sterne’s book, focusing instead on the life and opinions of his lead actor, Steve

Coogan. Mastering the book in any sense, even that of actually reading it, becomes a source of ridicule throughout the film. Nevertheless, what Winterbottom produces in his “unfaithful” and rather defeated departure from Sterne is a satiric performance that is analogous to Tristram’s own frustrated and ironic authorship, but also satirically relevant to a contemporary audience, who can become implicated in the satiric critique.

Richter makes a similar claim about Rowson’s comic book and its satiric effect. He contends that Rowson’s travesties of the comic frame not only “substitute for the moments of rapt stasis within *Tristram Shandy*, they substitute in part for its participation in what D.W. Jefferson called the ‘tradition of learned wit’” (87). Richter concludes that Rowson’s satire of visuality, which is endemic to contemporary culture, in lieu of classical learning, “gives us back an aspect of the text that most of [his] own generation can never directly experience” (87). I read this “experience” as an explicitly satiric one. Accordingly, Winterbottom’s satire becomes one that documents an attempt to make an adaptation of Tristram’s attempt to record his life and opinions. These various layers of meta-filmic narrativity allow the filmmakers to adapt Sterne’s satire and simultaneously satirise film adaptations, film production, and film celebrity. Consequently, I agree with Liese Spencer’s conclusion that “Winterbottom has succeeded in filming the ‘unfilmable’ by playing fast and loose with the novel in a way Sterne might have approved” (*Sight & Sound*).

**(Under) Performing *Tristram Shandy*: authorising adaptation in *Tristram Shandy: A Cock & Bull Story* (2005)**

In the special features of *Tristram Shandy: A Cock & Bull Story*, which an unknown narrator in the film announces should be used as “footnotes” to the film, famous British actor and comedian Stephen Fry interviews real-life Sterne scholar Patrick Wildgust at Shandy Hall. In his historio-biographical tour of Sterne’s home, Wildgust repeats the writer’s now infamous quip about his authorial purpose: “I wrote not [to] be fed, but to be *famous*” (Campbell Ross 6). Fry remarks, in turn, that this is a very twenty-first-century concept and it is precisely this type of authority exercised and refracted through celebrity and popular culture that becomes Michael Winterbottom’s point of entry into the conversation that Tristram begins back in 1759. This conversation marks not only the limits of Tristram’s authority, but also how the value of his authority depends upon the manner in which his text circulates and is celebrated in the market place. Keymer argues that Tristram’s “open” conversation becomes reality through Sterne’s mode of serial publication, whereby he is able to respond to initial criticisms and reactions and elicit further ones in subsequent volumes. Keymer adds that the “fundamental plasticity in *Tristram Shandy* was intensified by Sterne’s determination to maximize his profile and sales among the broadest possible constituency of readers” (Casebook 8). Tristram’s conversation thus registers the way in which his popularity and celebrity expands his authority, as he can increase the sales of his book by reabsorbing reader taste and interpretation back into his text (ironically or otherwise), thereby also augmenting his authorial performance.<sup>58</sup> This dynamic between celebrity and expanded authority certainly resonates with *Tristram Shandy: A Cock & Bull Story*’s take on film authorship and adaptations, which satirises the extent to which celebrity

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<sup>58</sup> Sterne’s celebration of his own celebrity, Fanning argues, is what distinguishes his satire from that of his satiric predecessors, the Scriblerians. They viciously satirise the Grub Street hacks for their mercenary over-production of texts, feeding the popular consumption of “literature” for financial gain. Unlike writers who enact authorship as commodity, the Scriblerians subscribe to idealised notions of authority and authorship, their value dependent on immaterial or “essential” factors like intelligence, knowledge, or learned genius. Sterne, however, accepts and revels in literary celebrity and his book’s popularity, letting these material markers stand mutually with, rather than in contravention to authorship as “a transcendent, logocentric category” (Fanning “Small Particles” 370).

authorises the legitimacy and quality of film adaptations. The film ridicules what can be seen as the parasitic nature of film adaptations, something despised and contested by Adaptation Studies and characterised as feeding off a book's literary status and popularity. Indeed the irony of this adaptation is that, while *Tristram Shandy* is canonical in the literary circles, it remains relatively obscure to a broad audience.

Furthermore, *A Cock & Bull Story* mocks the ways in which film depends upon celebrities to authorise and legitimize film production and to attract the broadest possible film audience. Like their ironic choice of obscure and unmanageable text, the filmmakers choose relatively obscure actors as leading men, Steve Coogan and Rob Bryden, in order to critique the relationship between film authority and celebrity. In his review of the film, Melvyn New asserts, "much of an American's disappointment with this film, and perhaps especially an American Sternean, is that the primary actors, Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon, are relatively unknown on this side of the Atlantic, yet much of the film seems to depend on an intimate knowledge of their film and TV careers, their tabloid existence, their relationship to one another" ("Review"). I would argue, however, that the unrecognisability of Coogan and Brydon contributes to the irony fuelling the film's satiric critique of authority and legitimacy, as well as underscores Coogan's own performance anxiety. The filmmakers and Coogan are all well aware of and even discuss Coogan's limited fame in the movie itself. New's complaint then ironically emphasises the authority and legitimacy that film audiences invest in celebrity actors, precisely the type of authority and legitimacy that the film ridicules.<sup>59</sup> By combining the problems of an "un-

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<sup>59</sup> I would tie New's complaint of not knowing enough background information about Coogan to grasp the extent of the film's humour back to his argument about making satiric references in *Tristram Shandy* accessible to all readers. In terms of annotating the book, New claims that glossing Sterne's many allusions does not "define what the reader might discover in these several plots, but rather [...positions] the reader on the brink of interpretation, to tease out that natural and persistent urge to understand the text we confront" (*Backside* 21). Jonathan Lamb disagrees with New's position, suggesting that identifying Sterne's numerous references "strip[s] initiatives from readers... especially in view of the great lengths taken by Sterne to extend them" (*Sterne's Fiction* 3). He argues that such

filmable” and relatively unknown text with those of relatively unknown celebrities, Winterbottom is able to mock audience, critics, and filmmaker’s expectations of mastering a book’s form, content, and cultural cachet in the medium specificity and compression of film or through a celebrated actor’s performance.

My identification of Winterbottom as the “author” of *Tristram Shandy: A Cock & Bull Story* here is somewhat misleading. Though critics like John Traugott, Wayne Booth, and Melvyn New see Tristram the author as the organizing principle of the book’s chaos, Winterbottom as director does not occupy the same authority; in fact, he absents himself narratologically as filmmaker in the movie about the movie. Whereas every other character plays their “real-life” counterpart in the mockumentary, Winterbottom does not appear in the film and neither does the screenwriter. Instead, Jeremy Northam, famous for his roles in other film adaptations like *Emma*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Golden Bowl*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *Possession*, plays the director, Mark, who appears rather defeated and very marginal to the production and action in the film and the film-about-the-film. Winterbottom’s absence consequently has a double effect on the conceptualisation of film authority in the movie. Firstly, it points to the collaborative nature of film projects and how it conditions and undermines any singular or individuated notion of film authorship. The marginalisation of the director and writer in the self-reflexive documenting of the film adaptation represents the contingency of their authority or vision, particularly as it becomes side-lined by the business pressures of filmmaking, the demands of producers and financiers, and the emphasis on how the actors, their identities,

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identification interpolates the reader in a limited way, one that counters Sterne’s own acknowledgement of his audience being a heterogeneous group with varying subjective interactions with his text. While the Florida annotations are indispensable to scholarly engagement with *Tristram Shandy*, they do specifically reflect a literary critic’s desire to understand and explicate the book. In my view, consequently, New’s disappointment with the film and his limited knowledge of Coogan and Brydon speak more to the limitations that the film adaptation and its own unique references place on the mediating role of the literary critic vis-à-vis the literary text, perhaps even making that role irrelevant, rather than a failure in the film to adapt and extend Sterne’s satire on authority and originality.

and performances overtly (and perhaps superficially) author films. The use of Northam as director, in this case, intensifies the self-reflexive dimension of the film adaptation. His identity as a known actor in film adaptations becomes an ironic emblem of film authority negotiated through and authorised by the iconographic culture and industry of movie celebrity. In *A Cock & Bull Story*, actors operate as the image of film authorship and authority, with this image mediating the development and reception of the film.<sup>60</sup> This informs the second effect of Winterbottom's absence behind-the-scenes, namely the film's fictionalisation of the ostensibly absent author of documentaries.

While documentary film encompasses a variety of authorising modes and its parameters of authorship are heavily contested, the genre is generally defined as “a subcategory of nonfiction – it is a form that tells stories, makes assertions or observations about the real historical world, rather than the fabricated worlds of fiction” (Ward 176).<sup>61</sup> In representing the director as an observable participant, Winterbottom mimics an actuality that seems unmediated, as the acting director is in and not directing the film-within-the-film; the camera thus seems free and objective in documenting the making of the film. Melvyn New accepts this type of

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<sup>60</sup> Ian Hart plays the screenwriter in the mockumentary and would have probably been most recently identified by a North American audience as Professor Quirinus Quirrel from the popular film adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001), though Hart is firmly established as a respected British actor. Interestingly, the actual screenwriter, Frank Cottrell Boyce, credits himself through a pseudonym, Martin Hardy, because he “thought that it would be inappropriate to take credit for what turned into a largely unscripted performance” (New “Review”). Like Winterbottom's use of an actor to play his role as director, Boyce's pseudonym fictionalises and displaces the authority invested in the screenwriter. Moreover, Boyce's refusal to take credit for the actors' improvisation reemphasises the power that actors and their performances have in authoring the film. I will discuss the role of improvisation further in this chapter, with particular reference to Steve Coogan and his identity as “pantomime,” as well as in relation to Fellini's clown trope in 8 ½.

<sup>61</sup> Following Bill Nichol's taxonomy, Paul Ward lists six potential modes of authorship in documentary film, these six modes not being mutually exclusive, however. They are 1) poetic, whereby “associative editing” evokes “a mood rather than stating or asserting things directly” (136); 2) expository, whereby a voiceover guides a viewer through a “show-and-tell” model of the material (136-37); 3) participatory, whereby the documentarian openly appears and interacts with his or her subjects (177); 4) observational, whereby there is no voiceover but rather simply an imagistic exposition of subject matter (177); 5) reflexive, whereby the subject reflects on the means of representation itself (177); and finally, 6) the performative, whereby the documentarian and their subjects actively create “the documentary by performing certain social actions” (177). These modes display varying degrees of self-reflexive engagement with the ways in which the construction of film negotiates the representation of subject matter and confounds notions of objectivity in documentaries.

unmediated authority in the mockumentary portions of *A Cock & Bull Story*, stating, “the director rests satisfied with the belief that the scenes represent ‘reality’ as opposed to the ‘fiction’ he is filming.” New concludes, “Winterbottom’s failure to examine his implied assumption that filming Tristram Shandy constitutes ‘the real world’ is the very trap Sterne set for his readers (and film directors) 250 years ago.” Nevertheless, in fictionalising his position as director in the documentary portion of *A Cock & Bull Story*, Winterbottom effectively and evidently detaches the behind-the-scenes narrative from a documenting of the real world. He does not set up the simple binary of reality versus fiction that New suggests, but rather further complicates the issue by adding yet another level of authorship to the construction: the absent “real” director who directs the image of the director in the documentary about the directing of another film. Such a self-reflexive construction undoes the notion of an unmediated documentary or representation of a “real” world entirely, highlighting and setting into motion the film’s satiric paradigm. Like the novel, *A Cock & Bull Story* underlines the subjective nature of representation and concepts of reality, simultaneously demonstrating and satirising the extent of and limitations to such singularity or individuated authority.

Winterbottom is, nevertheless, not entirely absent as filmmaker in *A Cock & Bull Story*. He subtly inscribes his authority through the mechanical semiotics of the film, in frame manipulations and transitions, such as irises, wipes, and split screens. His use of these mechanisms, which alter the seamless construction of film images, enacts a type of “textual presence” in the film akin to that in the novel, reminding the audience of how filmmakers construct film narratives physically or through certain physical machinery (i.e. the camera and production/editing machines). Consequently, the actors’ performances do not quite author the film alone. Yet the effect of Winterbottom’s reminder of the mechanistic conditions and

conditioning of film images is quite different from Sterne's "textual presence" in that it obviously deals with a very distinct medium: film text not written text.

The black page of the novel and the black screen of the film, for instance, deploy alternative interpretations. In signifying and emblemizing Yorick's death in the book, James Kim explains, the black page can represent "the inexpressibility topos" or the inability of language to articulate grief or even Yorick's absence; the block of ink can "also [register] all the things that Yorick's enemies did say... all the slanderous invectives published by Yorick's enemies and [Tristram] deposited them on one horribly inky page" (4). The black page, accordingly, deals specifically with the capacity (or opacity) of text and language to mediate representation spatially and in terms of significance. On the other hand, the black screen of the film highlights the primacy of the image in film authority through its blatant absence. Its appearance happens during a discussion between Steve Coogan, Mark the director, Simon the producer, and Joe the screenwriter about what parts of the book should be included in the film. When Joe suggests that the black page be included, the screen goes black but the dialogue continues with Simon commenting, "I don't know how interesting a black screen is going to be for an audience."<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the black screen enables Winterbottom to exercise his authority as he can intervene into and override the performances of his actors with no image at all; this black screen occurs during the supposedly "real" portions of the film, drawing further attention to the constructedness of the documentary footage.

More importantly, the inclusion of the black screen marks the failed potential of imitating and representing certain aspects in the book, particularly its performative elements of textual

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<sup>62</sup> During a conference presentation of an earlier version of this paper, I experienced first hand the effect of the film's black screen. While I was showing the clip and the screen actually went black, the panel moderator thought the technology had failed, demonstrating the extent to which the expectation of an image being projected guides our understanding and reception of filmic representation.

presence, insofar as the black page and its significance become radically decontextualised in the film. When the screen returns to the discussion between the filmmakers, Joe endorses including the black page in the film, but his justification lies in the fact that the black page inspired the original cover of the Sex Pistols' album, *Anarchy in the UK*; the relevance of the black page to contemporary popular culture then overwrites its significance in relation to Yorick's death and Tristram's narrative. While this offers the film's audience a glimpse into the extensions and manifestations of Sterne's influences in more contemporary works, the black screen cannot convey and master the black page's meaning. The black screen signifies, nonetheless, the compromised nature of the adaptor's translation of the book content onto film, creating a mutually contingent authority to that exercised in Tristram's writing, while it also stresses the centrality of spectacle to film representation.

The dominance of spectacle – its image and performance – in film becomes the main vehicle through which *A Cock & Bull Story* satirises film adaptation and authority, marking its continuity with and departure from a Shandean performance. The long-held contention of film adaptation critique and theory is that film is a “showing” medium, whereas literature is a “telling” one (Hutcheon 38). Winterbottom plays with this graphic nature of film vis-à-vis what could be seen as the “telling” subtleties of Sterne's narrative. The perhaps most deliberate example of Winterbottom's satirisation of “film-as-showing-medium” is the film's re-enactment of Tristram's (near) castration by the window sash. In the book, Tristram begins the story by using asterisks to block out the cause of his unplanned circumcision, namely Susannah's command to “piss out of the window” (V.XVII.449). These asterisks seemingly spare the reader the obscene nature of the accident. Tristram further delays overtly informing his reader of his precarious bodily condition by reporting Susannah's ambiguous claim after the accident

(“Nothing is left... – nothing is left – for me, but to run my country”), while he also later acknowledges the prurient danger that narrative subtlety or evasion poses “to the Reader’s imagination” (450). Though Tristram discloses the background story to the sash falling (Trim’s removal of the weights from the window’s pullies in order to supply Toby with more lead for the miniature battlefield) and the story gets passed on from Susannah to the Cook to Jonathan to Obadiah and then to Walter Shandy, Tristram defers any explicit revelation of the state of his penis. Even Walter’s reaction to Tristram’s maiming avoids directly addressing the issue, as he pulls out the *Tristra-pœdia* and reads a section on circumcision, the title of which is written in Latin (adding yet another layer of translation or decoding) and whose information is blocked out by more asterisks.

All these layers of narrative deferral, which point ironically to the “telling” mode of literature, are completely levelled in the film’s adaptation of the scene. The shot sequence begins with a close-up of Susannah lifting the window sash, asking Tristram to “poke [his] little pecker out the window” as she cannot find his chamber pot. Here the film already diverges from the novel’s representation in that Susannah not only gives Tristram the obscene command overtly, but what she says does not align with the number or sequence of the asterisks in the book. The scene sequence thus continues:

- 1) close-up of Young Tristram’s face
- 2) tilt pan downward to Young Tristram’s penis, urinating medium shot from behind with Susannah holding Tristram at the window
- 3) cut to an extreme close-up of Tristram’s penis as the window falls
- 4) jump cut to a close-up of Tristram screaming
- 5) tilt pan downwards to a close-up of Tristram’s penis with the window lifted slightly

6) cut to a close-up with both Susannah and screaming Tristram in the frame

The close-up of the juvenile penis combined with a real depiction of urination completely invert Sterne's oblique narration of the window sash incident, unsettling the film audience with its explicit representation. Winterbottom's use of tilt pan shots<sup>63</sup> adds to the graphic nature of the sequence in that the camera movement creates continuity between young Tristram's close-up and the penis in the frame, rendering it undeniably that of the child actor in the scene rather than a double or prop. The jump cut between the window falling and Tristram's screaming happens at such a speed that a viewer cannot tell whether the window hits the penis or not, but the implication holds and the viewer feels as though she has seen actual violence. These hyper-graphic and realistic elements of the sequence consequently overemphasize the "showing" mode of cinema in relation to the book's deferred "telling" one, highlighting the distinct mediation of filmic significance through the economy and explicitness of the image rather than the potentially expansive evasiveness of language.

Nevertheless, just as Tristram's asterisks and other graphic symbols (dashes, the marbled, black or blank page) *show* meaning without necessarily telling it, playing with conventional understandings of linguistic and textual representation, Winterbottom's mockumentary *tells* the audience more about film adaptation than actually showing it, effectively destabilising the showing/telling binary articulated in film adaptation theory. This satiric destabilisation of showing/telling is centred on Steve Coogan's performance, persona, their rationale and negotiation of the film image, thereby challenging the critical assertion that, in relation to literary texts, "[all] performance media are said to lose internal character motivation in the shift to

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<sup>63</sup> Tilt pan is a type of "moving close-up" and "a vertical camera movement from a fixed position often used to suggest an imbalance, or strangeness, or to emphasize size, power, or menace" (<http://www.filmsite.org/filmterms19.html>). In this instance, Winterbottom's tilt pan certainly augments the menace and power of the window falling on Tristram's member.

externalization” (Hutcheon 42). Indeed externalities – dramatic action, landscape, and bodies – constitute the content of film images and the film certainly selects and exploits most of the physical humour of the novel. In spite of this attraction to externalities and physicality, *A Cock & Bull Story* satirically opens up the film image to reveal the contingencies and circumstances that motivate, author, and legitimize it, by documenting Coogan’s performance and life. These conditional/conditioning circumstances reside not only in the frame of the film image itself, but also outside of it, including – most significantly – the marketplace and celebrity culture. Film authority becomes inextricable from the film industry in *A Cock & Bull Story*.<sup>64</sup> Decentring the adapted book entirely, the film traces how production factors, budget, Coogan’s “real” tabloid infamy and television fame shape his and, by extension, the film’s authority and legitimacy. Even the marketing of the actual film follows through with this focus (albeit a mocking one) on Coogan as authority. The American version of the DVD cover portrays Coogan in costume as Tristram, sitting in a director’s chair with “Steve Coogan, Star” prominently displayed on its back. The tag-line reads, “HE’S ABOUT TO PLAY THE ROLE OF HIS LIFE.” This line takes up the doubled meaning of Coogan as leading man and Coogan simply playing Coogan. The lack of effort involved in playing himself undercuts the significance of Coogan’s performance as star and leading man.

Moreover, the aforementioned discussion between the filmmakers about what content from the book should be adapted ends up becoming a discussion about the capacity of Coogan to perform and authorise the film. To ply the film with more material from the book, Coogan

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<sup>64</sup> In an interview, Winterbottom explains how the financial issues and early reception of the film rushes in the film itself actually happened in his crew’s attempt to make the film: “on Tristram we were having terrible financial problems and what happens in the film is actually a milder version of these conflicts. The original people who agreed to finance it backed out before shooting began. So it was all very stressful and down to the wire” (Porton). The “real” financial issues bleed over into the film’s representation of such difficulties, further destabilising the reality/fiction binary which the film plays with and re-emphasising the effect of industry on the narrative itself.

suggests Widow Wadman's story and the filmmakers immediately begin to discuss who should play the Widow. They agree on famous actress Gillian Anderson, and Simon declares in front of Coogan, "We could make a real movie if we had a star." Simon's statement certainly mocks Coogan's celebrity quotient at the same time that it equates legitimate or "real" movies with star power. Simon then recuperates from his insult, insisting that the film will be legitimate if there are "two stars," to which Joe, the struggling screenwriter replies, "Two stars – I just think... I think that'll be the review." Here again Joe links the quality of the film adaptation to the celebrity factor that legitimises its production, re-emphasising and ridiculing the correlation of stardom to "genuine" film authority, particularly from his behind-the-scenes position as co-author.

In his own defence, Coogan responds to Joe, "I don't see myself as a star – more of a craftsman. A medieval craftsman." He accordingly draws into the discussion yet another form of film authority, namely the method actor who stands in contradistinction to the Hollywood star. Unlike the line worker of mass production, the medieval artisan produces the whole artefact by means of performing all the complex operations in its production. Because mass production is not the end of artisanal production, the craftsman's performance and product seem to transcend mere commodification. Coogan's analogy follows that, whereas the star gains credence and authority through celebrity and marketability, the method actor supposedly focuses on his "craft" or art, implying that his performance is more nuanced, realistic, and therefore, more legitimate because it is more complete and does not simply rely on celebrity culture and the market.

Coogan's Stanislavskian argument about acting as a complex craft<sup>65</sup> certainly echoes Scriblerian

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<sup>65</sup> Constantin Stanislavski, a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century theatre director and critic, argues against "typecasting" in the theatre – the Hollywood star system being a homologous framework of typing – in favour of acting informed by a sense of psychologically individuated and complex character. For Stanislavski, the character actor who represents the intricacies of individual psychology, later adapted into American film and theatre acting by Lee Strasberg as

notions of “authentic” authorship, as well as carries the same critique: the craftsman still produces artwork for the market.

The effect of the filmmakers discussing the various types of actors, differing levels of recognisability, and competing notions of authenticity or legitimacy becomes a re-articulation of the centrality of the performer and performance in constituting and informing the overt authorship and content of the film image, film production in general, and finally, the film’s reception. Coogan’s position as author and authority with all its attending anxiety, therefore, becomes central to the film’s adaptation of Sterne’s satire of masterful authority and singularity. Part of Coogan’s anxiety arises from his own fame as an impressionist, which we are reminded of constantly in the film. The film even concludes with an extended scene of Coogan and his co-star, Rob Bryden, doing Al Pacino impersonations. Coogan’s ability to impersonate, however, takes on the valence of his inability to perform anything but a derivative and low-brow form of acting or imitation; this, of course, serves to undermine both Coogan’s role as a leading man and the film’s seriousness in adapting a literary “masterpiece.” However, in light of Winterbottom’s engagement with Sterne’s style of imitation, Coogan emerges as an apt choice for Tristram because Coogan as comic impersonator, impersonating himself, mirrors Winterbottom as adapter of Sterne, who is a satiric imitator himself. Imitation and adaptation consequently and ironically inflect authorship and authority in all three figures.

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“method acting,” emerges as the only authentic and realistic artist, whereas the type simply fills the need of mass production in the theatre (Wojcik 173). As Pamela Robertson Wojcik explains, Stanislavski “links typecasting to the “lines-of-business” tradition which dominated 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century theatre and was indigenous to the stock system, appearing in virtually all professional theatres of Europe from the Renaissance forward” (171). The lines-of-business operates on a model whereby an actor would fill a role or type (lead, supernumerary, comedian, tragedian, lady, maid, ethnic identity etc.) for the entire theatre season, with the eventual possibility of ascending the line to starring roles. This model, accordingly, is less concerned with the individuality of actors, characters, or plays and more geared towards the business and repertory concerns of theatrical production (Wojcik 172). Stanislavski associates the lines-of-business with the division of labour in mass production, claiming that typing, like working on an assembly line, produces “poorly endowed actors, whose range is not broad, but rather one-sided” (qtd. in Wojcik 173).

Pantomime is another mode of adaptation and imitation that gets attached to Coogan's form of acting the film. Millie Taylor explains the imitative and performative mode of pantomime as

a simple re-telling of a well-known story performed by stock characters, where the framing and sending up of the performance, the play with distance through the interaction with the audience, the physical comedy and artifice of music, dance and spectacular scenic allusion, and the implicit sexuality are equally important in appealing to a wide audience constituency. (15)

Taylor's description of pantomime as imitative, adaptive, interactive, comical, self-reflexive, and wide-reaching echoes qualities found both in Tristram and Coogan's performances, with Coogan's being called "pantomime" outright by the child actor in the window sash scene.

Pantomime thus undoubtedly carries a negative connotation as a haphazard, inauthentic, and low-brow form of mimicry. For example, to produce the most costly parts of the film – Toby's battle scenes – the filmmakers employ seventeenth-century war enthusiast David Inglesby to ensure the accuracy of their representation of the battle at Namur. Indeed his expertise and enthusiasm are in the wrong century; however, as Simon the producer asserts, the group of war re-enactors, with whom Inglesby associates and brings along as extras, are "willing, able, and cheap" to shoot the battle scenes. Here again the film demonstrates the contingency of film authority and authorship vis-à-vis industry and financial concerns; it also highlights the lengths to which filmmakers go in order to construct a legitimate "reality" on film. To assert his expertise, Inglesby tells Simon, Coogan, and Bryden that he has a list of the soldiers' names, which the actors can shout out as they shoot at each other to enhance the accuracy of the battle; such calling of random names would no doubt be lost on a contemporary audience, effectively

undercutting Inglesby's usefulness in terms of ensuring the film's realism. Inglesby, however, comments on the "woefully inaccurate" battle scenes in the film adaptation of *Cold Mountain* and how his crew "wouldn't be interested in participating in a pantomime like that." Here pantomime signifies a lack of authenticity and realism that seems ridiculed but also intended, especially when Inglesby's desired "authentic" battle scenes end up being pantomimic, inauthentic, and contrived themselves. Of these battle scenes, Rob Brydon claims, "the model is more impressive." By employing pantomime, nevertheless, the filmmakers are able to question the reality, authenticity, and mimetic potential of the film image and the extreme degree to which they are constructed in cinema. As Peter Holland explains of pantomime and farce in the eighteenth-century context, it is "proud that it can drive beyond the limits of naturalism... farce has its own logic, derived from its very conventionality, refuting the demands of contemporary theories and their high valuing of the 'natural,' of the necessity of mimetic accuracy" ("Farce" 118).<sup>66</sup>

The farcical, melodramatic, and pantomimic elements informing Coogan's acting throughout the film emerge as conscious plays with and against the immediacy of the film image and cinematic performance, implying their constructedness and enabling satiric aims. Coogan's performance of the hot chestnut scene typifies this play, as it satirically dissects the realism represented in the film. After viewing rushes of the "woefully inadequate" and contrived battle scenes from *Tristram Shandy*, one of the financiers asks whether or not Coogan's hot chestnut scene was cut from the film, as it was the reason they agreed to fund the movie. Winterbottom uses a wipe to transition from the rushes viewing to Coogan in a boardroom, beginning to

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<sup>66</sup> I link Holland's description of Restoration and post-restoration farce to an understanding of English pantomime because both incorporate Italian and French sources, principally commedia dell'arte, as many theatre historians have acknowledged (Holland "Farce" 115; O'Brien 42). Indeed contemporary English pantomime has evolved from its eighteenth-century form; however, it retains several of its antecedent features, like stock-characters and scenarios, as well as a fusion of dance, song, physical comedy, and audience participation.

perform the chestnut bit. The scene then cuts to Coogan, Mark, Simon, and Joe walking in the street, celebrating the fact they obtained financing for the film. Joe informs Coogan of the irony involved in this decision, particularly since Coogan would not be playing Phutatorius, the recipient of the chestnut in the novel. Coogan complains, “but I’ve been practicing that for weeks,” and the scene changes to Coogan, rehearsing in his dressing room. The first shot consists of a close-up of Coogan with an uncomfortable look on his face and one eye twitching. In a voice-over, he describes his performance as a “less is more” one: “First, I tried to keep it small.” After he describes his next method (“Then I pushed the idea of struggling to control the pain”), a medium shot captures Coogan with his hand down his pants, wobbling back and forth with an uncomfortable look on his face. The sequence then cuts to a full body shot of Coogan, cupping his crotch and jumping around ridiculously, the voice-over stating, “Then I just went for lots of energy.” Here Coogan anatomizes his performance, which becomes increasingly farcical as he contemplates and devises the scenario further; this, in effect, reflects and mocks the work of method acting and the attempt to embody individual psychology. When Coogan stops jumping around and declares, “That looks too contrived,” an assistant enters the frame and offers him a “real” hot chestnut so that Coogan can find out what “the general reaction is.” The assistant places a chestnut in Coogan’s pants and his reaction is immediate; Coogan falls back into a clothing rack of costumes, leaving his lower body out of the frame, and yells to the assistant to remove the chestnut. As the assistant goes in to get the chestnut from Coogan’s pants, Coogan begins to yell expletives, demanding the assistant to remove his hands from his “knackers” and the assistant backs out of the frame. Coogan then stands and shakes out the chestnut, which drops from his pant leg, and he falls to the floor exasperated. While on all fours, Coogan looks to the off-screen assistant and complains, “You had your fucking fingers up my asshole.” He then

breaks out of his performance momentarily and, with a smile on his face, declares calmly, “At least take me for dinner first.” Though he returns to writhing in pain afterwards, Coogan undermines the realism of his experience through his inclusion of the tasteless sexual joke. He reveals that his seemingly authentic reaction is actually being played for a cheap laugh, further ridiculing the methods that supposedly legitimise his performance, while fictionalising the actuality of the hot chestnut in the scene.

Coogan’s pantomimic performance and self-reflexivity certainly intimate shades of Tristram’s own anxious, contingent authority. Coogan desires to distance himself from his previous comedic work and the stigma associated with impersonation and “character” acting, namely a lack of distinction, legitimacy, or singularity in performance because of the overtly secondary nature of or caricature in such mimesis. Like Tristram, who is not born into his own narrative until Volume IV, Coogan is anxious and desperate to assert primacy and authority within the narrative frame right at the beginning of the film adaptation. As he addresses the camera head-on, Coogan states, “I’m Tristram Shandy. The main character in this story. The leading role.” Though Coogan is supposed to be in character and in period, he breaks out and utilises the reflexivity of speaking directly to the camera to allude to his analogous fraught authority as leading man in a film. Coogan repeats such anxiety in the mockumentary portions of the film, fuelled by his rivalry with co-star Rob Bryden, particularly when he narcissistically contemplates his face in his hotel room one night. He asks his girlfriend, Jenny, “Do you think I should have my nose straightened? Do you think I have a character actor’s nose or a leading man’s nose?” Indeed Tristram’s own anxiety about his failed authority and tragic circumstances seems embodied in and caused by his deformed nose. Yet Coogan’s nose obsession further

attends to the distinction drawn between character actors and leading men in relation to authority and legitimate performances in film.

Character actors are renowned for their ability to *be* their roles, their chameleonic talents verging on self-effacement. Though they may be better or more “realistic” actors, character actors tend to be in supporting roles. Lead actors, alternately, are the stars, but not necessarily because of their ability to act but rather because of their celebrity or their physical attractiveness.<sup>67</sup> Their legitimacy as stars does not rest on their ability to perform multiple roles seamlessly, “realistically,” individually, and differentially; rather, they mediate each role through the seeming singularity and uniqueness of their on- and off-screen persona. “Both the non-actor in type and the Hollywood star create a role homologous with themselves” (174), Patricia Wojcik explains, with this homology or singularity being produced and promoted by the industry and spectators alike (170). Although he earlier defends his position as a character actor or craftsman, Coogan like Tristram wants to be identified by filmmakers and his audience as a singular and novel personality, not just some impersonator of other eccentric identities. Nonetheless, the binary of lead versus supporting roles that Coogan laments speaks at once to the dynamic that requires a star to shine in relation to his supporting cast, but also to how the need for a supporting cast indicates the collaborative process of authoring a film; the singularity of stardom and its authority become relative. Coogan’s rivalry with Brydon over centrality in the

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<sup>67</sup> In his polemic, “In Praise of Character Actors,” film theorist Rudolf Arnheim elaborates on the difference between the star, whom he refers to as the “hero” or “heroine,” and the character actor: “Both stylize; otherwise they wouldn’t be actors. But the character actor’s model exists in reality; the hero’s only in the pictorial advertisement of the cosmetic industry... Even the average directors have the most charming notions so long as they’re working with character actors. They cleverly use original props and work on the most effective mannerisms of facial expression, speech, and gesture. The leading player they mould into a mannequin, forbid him everything impulsive, everything new, everything mundane. His sorrow and his pain must submit to the conventional gymnastics, and, just as in court, nothing new may be added and nothing withheld” (205-206). Arnheim locates authenticity, flexibility, and creativity in the character actor, suggesting that the focus on the marketability and star quality of a film star locks that star into a homogenous, singular, and predictable type.

movie thus reveals the inter-subjective negotiation of authority that occurs in movies, invoking the ethos of “Shandean relativity” in the film’s sites of authority.

A major part of this inter-subjective negotiation of authority and legitimacy, as well as satiric meaning in *A Cock & Bull Story* is the role of the critic or expert. The film plays with the legitimacy that critics or experts provide when they authorise a film’s representation of an adapted literary text. As with Sterne and Tristram, critics and experts appear as a necessary evil and satiric butt in terms of gauging the film’s fidelity, reception, and legitimization.<sup>68</sup> As the filmmakers discuss and disagree on the intentions behind making the film, Simon turns to Sternean expert Patrick, played by Stephen Fry, to clarify the intentionality of the book. From Shandy Hall, Patrick describes Sterne’s purpose as the following:

The theme of *Tristram Shandy* is a very simple one. Life is chaotic; it’s amorphous. No matter how hard you try, you can’t actually make it fit any shape. Tristram himself is trying to write his life story but it escapes him because life is too full, too rich to be captured by art.

The irony of Patrick’s reading of *Tristram Shandy* is that it is rather simple, encapsulating and totalising the book’s content in basic terms. He then uses Walter as an example of the book’s major theme, arguing that he “tries to plan every aspect of Tristram’s birth, conception, childhood, and so on, and his plans go all wrong.” The scene cuts to Coogan as Walter pacing and sobbing as he contemplates the tragedy of baby Tristram’s nose being crushed by forceps; Coogan then walks across the room and throws himself in a swan-dive onto his bed, all in a contrived and melodramatic manner. The scene cuts back to a medium shot of Patrick, sitting

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<sup>68</sup> Fellini’s *8 ½*, an important inter-text to *A Cock & Bull Story*, also deploys the critic-writer as an important, though satirized figure in the construction of film authority. The critic-writer in Fellini’s film is eventually hanged as a part of Guido’s fantasy of taking control of his film and vision; this, nevertheless, is matched with Guido imagining his own suicide when he realises his lack of mastery over his subject matter, including his actresses, as the director. I will discuss this with greater depth in the final section of this chapter.

prominently behind a desk set with a large, antique book, other texts, and several quill pens, evocative of serious scholarly authority. He concludes, “Walter is indeed the most unfortunate of men. If his life can be celebrated, so too can all of ours.” Juxtaposing Patrick’s scholarly assessment of Walter as a tragic figure with Coogan’s decidedly melodramatic, ridiculous acting has two results. Firstly, it attempts to apply axiomatic thinking, like Walter Shandy’s, to Coogan’s performance of the character. Secondly, it deconstructs the critical appraisal because Coogan’s melodramatic take renders Walter as a more bathetic than tragic figure. The incongruity of the serious criticism and the performance ironises both the role of the critic and Coogan, as neither performance can authorise or inform the other, effectively questioning the legitimacy of both in the film.

The critic/author dichotomy in *A Cock & Bull Story* curiously finds itself in the actual critical discourse surrounding the film adaptation. Winterbottom seems to resist identifying critics as an important factor in the production and reception of the film. In an interview with Richard Porton, for example, Winterbottom claims, “the primary aim was to make a film and not to please scholars.” At the 2005 Toronto International Film Festival premiere of *A Cock & Bull Story*, in response to a question regarding how many times the filmmakers had read *Tristram Shandy*, Winterbottom repeats his intention that his audience is not literary by quipping, “We’re relying on the fact that no one else has read it” (qtd. in Gow 14). He accordingly downplays the significance of literariness, literary criticism, and critics in arbitrating the film’s legitimacy and quality. While the film strays from the book’s narrative and focuses on Coogan’s persona and performance, it inevitably finds a niche audience in Sterne enthusiasts and scholars, highlighting the limits to Winterbottom’s identification of his audience; after all, the film’s first public screening was for scholars at Shandy Hall. Moreover, Winterbottom acknowledges that he

utilised Shandy Hall's curator, Patrick Wildgust, as a resource while researching and writing the film script, showing a dependence on expertise in authoring the film. Notwithstanding this, actual Sterneans like New also play into the critic/author satiric dynamic by refusing to concede fully to the intricate referential interplay between Winterbottom's film and Sterne's book. "For die-hard Sterneans, the film has its own fun," New asserts in his film review, "primarily to set them wondering whether or not certain scenes are allusive or just over-readings by textual enthusiasts." He lists several plausible allusions but stops short of reading them as successful analogues and adaptations of Sterne's work, claiming that his "quarrel... is not with the director's comprehension of his work, but with his lack of execution (and adequate funding?)."

Now New is a major critical authority on *Tristram Shandy* and his annotated Florida Edition is indispensable to scholarly work on the book; yet he finds his role as expert undermined by his unfamiliarity with Coogan and Bryden and the ways in which *A Cock & Bull Story*'s frame of reference shifts Tristram's issues of authorship and authority to specifically filmic concerns, like funding, celebrity culture, and the medium itself. Unlike Tony Richardson's adaptation of *Tom Jones*, which New holds up as the "gold standard" of film adaptations, *A Cock & Bull Story* not only plays self-reflexively with film semiotics within the narrative frame, but also satirically represents and questions the outside forces that drive film production and shape film authority. To conclude New states, "A good movie of *Tristram Shandy* can be made, and Michael Winterbottom deserves enormous credit for revealing that to us, even if sketchily and momentarily." While he acknowledges the possibility of a film adaptation, New seems to want the film to translate and master the book in a total fashion, neglecting that the sketchy and ephemeral qualities of *A Cock & Bull Story* correlate to Tristram's own seemingly impromptu, fleeting, and partial authority.

**Winterbottom's *Tristram* in conversation with Fellini's *Guido*: de-authorising auteurism and un-mastering masterpieces in *A Cock & Bull Story***

When Steve Coogan as Tristram Shandy describes his botched conception in the film, he adapts textual Tristram's version of John Locke, the winding of the clock, the Shandy's sex habits, and the association of ideas to that of Pavlov's dogs and their bell-induced salivating. As the scene cuts away from the dogs to Walter and Mrs Shandy copulating mechanically, Nino Rota's musical theme from *8 ½* begins to play in the background. Here Winterbottom curiously evokes Federico Fellini's own mock, sketchy, and incomplete autobiographical film, utilising and demonstrating the ways in which a film's musical score can spur its own associative chains of ideas and meaning. In fact, all the music in *A Cock & Bull Story* comes from other movies, like Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract*, Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*, and Ingmar Bergman's *Smiles of a Summer Night*. Winterbottom explains how his musical allusions not only suit the scenery and action of his film, but also playfully adapt ideas from the other movies: "You're aware of what music works, but also of the connections, and it's quite fun to play around with that sort of thing" (Porton). As an important layer of film semiotics, music then contributes to the type of playful and self-conscious intertextuality that Winterbottom finds in and adapts from *Tristram Shandy*. The *8 ½* theme plays under three more scenes after the conception one; in all of the scenes, it punctuates the conditional and transitory authority that Steve Coogan/Tristram exercises and performs in *A Cock & Bull Story*, associating his performance with what Thomas Doherty identifies as Fellini's vent "against *autoauteurism*" in *8 ½* (22). (Auteurism also relates to the music from the other film scores as many critics analyse

Greenaway, Kubrick, and Bergman as director-auteurs). This creates a satiric correlation between Coogan as actor-author and Guido (the film director in *8 1/2*) as auteur, which subsequently links historical and theoretical ideas of film authorship to Tristram's own anxiety about and vent against singular and original authority. In *8 1/2*, Guido's inability to reproduce and represent his individual vision in his film, under the pressures of a nagging producer, demanding mistress, angry wife, and an insecure lead actress, proffers a satiric critique of the originality and authorial singularity invested in auteurist conceptions of film authorship. As Fellini's film reveals and revels in the contingencies and conditionality of film authority, it becomes an ideal means to bridge Coogan's anxious film performance with Tristram's self-conscious textual performance.

As a concept alluded to in *A Cock & Bull Story*, auteurism emerges as a useful film correspondent to Tristram Shandy's investigation into the nature of textual authority and modern writing. Modern writing in the eighteenth century is linked to authorship that characterises itself in the terms that I ascribe to "hermetic originality" – the fully unique inception of an irreproducible origin. Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition*, published the same year as the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* (1759), reads as a manifesto and defence of this type of modern writing in the eighteenth century. Young specifically addresses the issue of imitation and following classical rules, setting it in opposition to the exercise of "genius" and the production of "originals." He writes,

[i]n the Fairyland of Fancy, Genius may wander wild; there it has a creative power, and may reign arbitrarily over its own empire of Chimeras. The wide field of Nature also lies open before it, where it may range unconfined, make what discoveries it can, and sport

with its infinite objects uncontroled [sic], as far as visible nature extends, painting them as wantonly as it will. (37-38)

This liberty of imagination contributes to the originality of a given work, whereas learning merely serves to enhance (or inhibit) the manifestation of “natural” talent. Imitation, as an inferior, less authentic kind of artistry, does not allow this nurturing of “natural talent” – only “original,” unfettered imaginative writing can. Young declares, “An *Imitator* shares his crown, if he has one, with the chosen Object of his Imitation; an *Original* enjoys an undivided applause. An *Original* may be said to be of a *vegetable* nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius; it grows, it is not *made*: *Imitations* are often a sort of *Manufacture* wrought up by those *Mechanics, Art, and Labour*, out of pre-existent materials not their own” (11-12). Tristram accordingly identifies his writing as “modern” by claiming in Volume I, chapter four, “for in writing what I have set about, I shall confine myself neither to [Horace’s] rules nor to any man’s rules that ever lived” (5).

Historically and theoretically auteurism, particularly that identified with the French New Wave in the 1950s, envisions film authorship in terms similar to those Young ascribes to “modern writing” in the eighteenth century. Auteurism claims that film authorship should represent the original and singular vision of the director, with this vision structuring their corpus of work and subsequently its analysis.<sup>69</sup> As Helen Stoddart explains, the French director/critics

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<sup>69</sup> Though I provide this rather simple definition of it, auteurism and auteur theory have been heavily contested and have evolved alongside other critical theory, particularly structuralism and post-structuralism. John Stubbs outlines five distinct, though not mutually exclusive stages in auteur criticism: firstly, within and around the New Wave in the 1950s, auteurism “equates the film director with authors of novels or plays” and “the author, therefore, becomes the *agent* who creates meaning and is a prime source of help for the critic in uncovering meaning” (xii). This is the auteurism that I am dealing with, because Fellini’s *8 ½* was made in 1963, after these critical debates in the French circle and in the early stages of the second phase, which structuralism introduces and influences. A product of the 1960s, auteur structuralism contends that the critic should “replace the idea of a biological author with the notion of the author-in-the-text, that is, a group of themes, conflicting dichotomies, and visual mannerisms associated with the author” (xii). The third phase maintains structuralist principles but acknowledges the collaborative nature of filmmaking; it suggests that a director’s style reflects his or her choice of collaborators, like the screenwriter or

wanted cinema to be seen as equal to literature in profundity and meaning, though it constitutes that meaning through a new and unique language, one that “affords the directors a means of personal expression and is not simply a mass art form which deals only in popular pleasures” (“Auteurism” 39). Francois Truffaut’s 1954 polemic in *Cahiers Du Cinéma*, “Une Certaine Tendence du Cinéma Français,” inaugurates auteur theory and criticism by lambasting the “Tradition of Quality” in France, namely cinematic adaptations of literary works. He criticises French film adapters for being not only unfaithful to their literary predecessors in that they skew narratives to suit their own ideological and political concerns, which he sees as smutty, banal, and formulaic, but also illegitimate artists because they are simply “metteurs-en-scène” or scene setters, who do not produce their own original work or appreciate the intricacies of the medium itself. Truffaut declares, “Talent, to be sure, is not a function of fidelity, but I consider an adaptation of value only when written by *a man of the cinema*” (229). He concludes that the best French “cinéastes” are “– curious coincidence – ... *auteurs* who often write their dialogue and some of them themselves invent the stories they direct” (233).

The high value attached to originality then matches the genius accorded to an intimate understanding of the mode of representation. Through this intimacy with the medium and its conventions, as well as a modern ability to flout them and break free of psychological realism, Truffaut argues that the auteur exercises an elevated artistic mastery over that of the metteur-en-scène because

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cinematographer. The fourth stage coincides with Barthes’ declaration that the author is dead; this auteurism abandons definitive readings of authorial intentionality, though it holds that, if the reader authorises meaning, the reader can also choose to read film through an auteurist lens. Stubbs concludes the cycle of auteur criticism with post-structuralism and the Foucauldian notion of author as “discursive subject.” Here the auteur, like the author, becomes the text – the site of authority coded by and promulgating hegemonic and/or ideological discourses and/or narratives (xiv).

This school which aspires to realism destroys it at the moment of finally grabbing it, so careful is the school to lock these beings in a closed world, barricaded by formulas, plays on words, maxims, instead of letting us see them for ourselves, with our own eyes. The artist cannot always dominate his work. He must be, sometimes, God and, sometimes, his creature. (232)

For Truffaut, the abandonment of realism in favour of a more self-conscious form of filmmaking, which forces the audience “to see for themselves,” corresponds to the superior originality, audacity, and legitimacy of the work as well as to the singularity and importance of the director. Although Truffaut’s auteur seems to reproduce the type of authority that Sterne attributes to *Tristram Shandy* – one that acknowledges its contingency vis-à-vis an audience, alternately the creator and created – auteur criticism does not necessarily follow through with an inter-subjective paradigm of authority.

In his article, “On the *politique des auteurs*,” New Wave critic André Bazin warns against “an aesthetic personality cult” (257), a type of celebrity that functions as authority, glossing over the film product itself, and which seems to bias auteur criticism in *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Bazin emphasises the importance of tempering the praise and attention focused on a film director with a closer look and evaluation of the content and form of his or her individual films. He mitigates the individuation of auteurist genius by flatly asserting,

In fact it is not even true of the most individual artistic disciplines that genius is free and always self-dependent. And what is genius anyway if not a certain combination of unquestionably personal talents, a gift from the fairies, and a moment in history? Genius is an H-bomb. The fission of uranium triggers off the fusion of hydrogen pulp. But a sun

cannot be born from the disintegration of an individual alone unless this disintegration has repercussions on the art that surrounds it. (252)

The individuality of the artist may integrate several disparate works into an identifiable corpus; however, such singularity is always dependent on the interactions of many parts, including the weaker parts or works, which Bazin feels an auteur will inevitably produce over his or her lifetime. An artist may also produce one brilliant film while the rest of his or her works are failures, raising further questions about evaluating a filmmaker's authority or legitimacy through the cohesive and singular lens of auteurism. For Bazin, genius is always conditioned and mediated by other, sometimes outside factors and thus is never fully independent or free; he declares genius to be the result "of a fortunate combination of circumstances in which there is a precarious moment of balance between talent and milieu" (252-53).

It is precisely this negotiation of film authorship or auteurship between talent and milieu that Fellini meditates on and mocks in *8 1/2*. In the film, total authorship remains elusive even for a filmmaker that garners celebrity as an auteur. As Frank Burke notes, "Nowhere is Fellini the *auteur* more dead than in his own work" ("Changing the Subject" 37). Though this romantic auteurist move in the French New Wave seems to complement Fellini's own fanciful move away from Italian neo-realism and its materialist and ideological concerns,<sup>70</sup> *8 1/2* nevertheless operates

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<sup>70</sup> Frank Burke explains that, unlike Fellini's films prior to *La Dolce Vita* and *8 1/2*, his subsequent films in 1960s and 70s (and those of his contemporaries like Antonioni and Visconti) self-reflexively engage with modes of representation, questioning Italian neorealism's "seemingly artless and unmediated portrayal of reality," and marking a critical turn that inquires into the ways in which neorealism actually manipulates and constructs "reality" (*Fellini's Films* 28). Burke then traces an interesting trajectory in Fellini's corpus; "it is conceivable to view Fellini's career along a reality/representation/signification continuum," he argues, "moving from neorealism to modernist questioning of representation (e.g. *8 1/2*) then to postmodern transformation of the real and the representable into pure signs (e.g. Fellini's *Casanova*)" (27). Burke, however, acknowledges the problem of reading Fellini's work as a whole through this continuum, suggesting that individual films from Fellini's earlier period do pay attention to the politics of representation and signification. Burke also states that Fellini's play with signification is not a neutral process, but one that highlights the gap between signifier and signified without invalidating the relationship. Of Fellini's position, Burke concludes, "in the age of the simulacrum, we still live in and through, not merely in renunciation of, reference and representation" (42) and therein lies Fellini's satiric impulse.

as a satiric inquiry into the kind of radical subjectivity which auteurism postulates. Timothy Hyman claims,

In *8 ½*, Fellini renounced the political or social emphasis of neo-realism, and the new relationship between the artist and the outer world that resulted has since become fundamental to much Italian cinema. Guido, groping blindly from within toward his millennial vision, is the blueprint for a new kind of film director, whose ideology originates not in any analysis of society, but in the artist's own constitution. (172)

While Hyman rightly identifies the centrality of subjectivity in negotiating the film image and concept in *8 ½*, he discounts the ways in which Fellini undermines the singular or hermetic nature of film narratives and images produced by an individual, particularly through an emphasis on the inevitable relationship – as fraught as it may be – between individual and institution, what Fellini himself describes as “pathologic conditioning” (Fellini 61), which then reflects and promulgates ideology in spite of a focus on individual constitution.<sup>71</sup> Through its episodic and loose structure, its seamless progressive, digressive, and regressive movements (a structure that certainly resonates with that in *Tristram Shandy*), *8 ½* questions not only the relationship between cinematic discourse and its referents, but also the ability of an auteur to master such a relationship.

Guido, the film director in the film about the making of his film, fails to convey cinematically and coherently the “tatters” and “memories” of his own life. In his notes, Daumier,

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<sup>71</sup> Guido's own memories and reflections on his Catholic upbringing reveal the complicated issue of representing an individual consciousness as opposed to a social one. He represents, for example, being reproached by his teacher-clerics for engaging Saraghina, the prostitute, or by the Cardinal, who informs him that there is no salvation outside the church; while these encounters demonstrate institutional repression of the individual or artistic expression, they also reveal the contingency of individual identification or vision in relation to institutions, as well as proffer an explanation of Guido's attitudes toward women and personal liberation. As Daumier complains, these poetic sequences that supposedly attack the Catholic conscience actually render Guido as “an accomplice” not only because of their nostalgia factor, but also because he employs them to attempt to elucidate and explain away his own (oftentimes oppressive) individual consciousness and activity.

the writer-critic and supposed collaborator in the meta-film, describes Guido's script as an incoherent mess and failure. "You see at first reading it's obvious it lacks a fundamental idea, or say, a philosophical premise that turns the film into a series of completely senseless episodes," he complains to Guido,

Oh, their elusive realism is, perhaps, even amusing, but what is the writer's real intention? To frighten us? To make us think? From the very opening scenes there's a total lack of poetic imagination. I'm sorry, but this could be a most pathetic demonstration – proof that the cinema is fifty years behind all other arts. The subject doesn't even have the merits of avant-garde films, though it has all their drawbacks.

Though Guido's film script evidently challenges realist modes of film by highlighting the constructed and subjective nature of filmmaking, it fails to capture a singular and coherently intended vision of the auteur, here described as the romantic ideal of a strongly individual, original, and imaginative poetic voice, which Daumier complains is absent from the medium entirely.

Apart from a lack of cohesion and strong intentionality in his script, Guido himself struggles with an inability to access and represent his own consciousness automatically and lucidly, questioning the integrity and possibility of portraying a singular vision. His desire for auto-auteurism becomes evident in his exchange with and idealisation of Maurice the magician, who acts as master of ceremonies in a telepathy show at the rest-cure spa where Guido's stays during the film's pre-production period. Maurice and the telepath correctly read one of Guido's childhood memories of wine crushing, successfully reproducing the incomprehensible word, ASANISIMASA. Guido asks the magician, "What's your trick? How do you transmit thoughts?" He responds, "I don't know how it happens, it just happens." The magician's response reaffirms

the mysterious and elusive nature of an automatic and unidirectional transposition of individual memory and thought. Indeed the meta-filmic frame of the film allows Fellini to reproduce this specific memory and, as Burke concedes, offers “a feeling of completeness and presence” to Guido’s vision; however, as Burke also contends, “8 ½ implies a questioning of individuation and a critique of author and text that will become central as Fellini’s work moves beyond a modernist context to postmodernity” (*Fellini’s Films* 162). This questioning puts into doubt an unimpeded and unidirectional relationship between auteur and his discourse, and then his discourse and its referents.

The screen tests toward the end of 8 ½ offer the best example of how Guido’s fantasy of singular authority and masterful vision becomes undermined by the other agents authoring and authorising his film. The screen tests reveal the failure of Guido’s directives to elicit authentic and individuated representations of the women in his life. He cannot decide which actresses to cast in their roles because, as Daumier complains, “No actor could breathe life into the characters in your script. They’re too undefined, too generic, practically non-existent.” This is the moment where Guido imagines Daumier being hanged and as the hanging occurs, the famous circus theme plays in the background. The music here signals both Guido’s fantasy of his individuated authority, literally strangling out competing voices, and the violent nature of authority imagined in such singularity. The music thus punctuates Guido’s desired vision and authority but also their impossibility in real terms. When Luisa – Guido’s estranged wife – gets up and leaves the screening, angry at Guido’s attempt to recreate her, Guido follows her and they have the following exchange:

Guido. What’s wrong? What’s happened?

Luisa. Nothing. Nothing ever happens between you and me.

Guido. Did the screen test offend you? It's just a movie.

Luisa. Oh, I know it's just a movie. And just a lie, even if you did put all of us in it. You showed only what suits you. The truth is another matter!

As “nothing happens between” them, Luisa notes the lack of inter-subjectivity in Guido's perspective, attributing his monolithic outlook to his failure to relate to her.<sup>72</sup> She also articulates how the singularity of his auteurist vision cannot master “true” representations of his friends, family, and lovers, pointing to the limitations of this radically individuated and individual authorship. Luisa and the screening room, as a site of viewership, thus portray the audience to whom Guido must speak and who also have the agency to interpret and undermine Guido's intentionality and vision; they represent the inter-subjective reality that conditions a film's meaning, opening up the singularity of the filmmaker's vision to multiple negotiations and renegotiations.

Guido's abandonment of his film project at the end of *8 ½*, with the meta-film ironically still standing in its wake, effectively decentres and satirises the auteur's role in film authority and its product. Scored again by the circus theme, the climax of the film – a press conference at the massive spaceship launch site that Guido has built for his non-existent film – demonstrates not only the ultimate undoing of his singular authority, but also the unbearable pressures and unrealistic expectations placed on Guido because of a singular investment of authority and vision in the director-auteur. Fellini does not represent these pressures as necessarily tragic, however, as Guido displays clownish tendencies that render his character decidedly bathetic and satiric.

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<sup>72</sup> An important analogue to Guido's compromised mastery and authority is his seeming inability to love, registering his failure as auteur through his failed relationships to women, much in the same way that Tristram, Toby, and Walter's authority is compromised through failed encounters or engagement with women. Likewise, in *A Cock & Bull Story*, Coogan's consistent inability to connect sexually and otherwise with his wife or consummate his encounters with Jenny, the film intern who endlessly cites film auteurs like Bresson or Fassbinder, links masculine sexual prowess to the potency (or impotence) of his performance and authority. The necessarily inter-subjective mode of love challenges the singularity and individuation idealised by and accorded to these male authors or authorities; love places conditions on and anticipates compromise or dialogue between individuals.

Stoddart argues that Fellini's deployment of the circus clown in several of his films "establishes a continuity with *commedia dell'arte* in his work;" like Coogan's pantomimic performance, the circus clown in Fellini's work carries "the legacy of a popular and satiric dramatic form" and performs spectacle rather than interiority, which consequently challenges the material, ideological, and psychological imperatives of neorealist filmmaking ("Subtle" 54).

At the press conference, Guido displays his clownish behaviour. As two men escort him out of his car, Guido buckles his knees several times, an action that the auteur clownishly performs at other times in the film. He also tries to run away, childishly resisting the press conference where journalists will interrogate his vision and direction. The camera then changes perspective and charts Guido's point of view, advancing in one continuous shot with reporters approaching and leaving the frame as Guido supposedly passes them by. The reporters ask Guido an array of questions ranging from his current film intentions to answers about life and philosophy in general, suggesting his auteurist genius extends into a universal one. The perspective briefly shifts back to an omniscient long shot when Guido passes the magician who wishes him "buona fortuna;" the magician here again signifies the elusive form of representation and phantasmal type of authority to which Guido aspires; the magician's wishing of luck merely underscores the unrealistic nature of such authority. A barrage of questions then ensues and the camera pans the reporters again, each one shouting their query without waiting for Guido's responses. Guido's silence or unwillingness to answer their questions effectively disarticulates his singular authority, while pointing to the ridiculousness of having to answer all these questions.

In spite of Guido's silence, his producer insists that Guido will produce an "art film," and, in an aside to him, informs Guido that he must make the film or be ruined. This

demonstrates in an urgent and decisive manner how the commercial aspects of filmmaking temper the individual liberty and vision accorded to the auteur. Like a child, Guido slips under the table as a man shouts, “Clown! Buffoon! Come out, lousy actor,” while another declares, “What an incurable romantic.” The impossibility of Guido’s romanticism, his desire for auto-auteurism and a cohesive, original poetic voice, results in Guido shooting himself under the table, effectively rendering himself and his romanticised authority as non-existent. The coda of the film, however, finds Guido alive, having given up on making the film and ordering his crew to dismantle the giant, phallic spaceship structure, this edifice being an appropriate symbol for Guido’s narcissistic, monolithic authority and its deconstruction. Yet it is never clear which is the fantasy: Guido’s suicide or the circus represented at the end of the film, whereby all of Guido’s friends, lovers, and crew suddenly reconcile with him and harmoniously dance in a circle under his directive and the shadow of the spaceship. Nevertheless, Guido’s singularity is imagined as possible only in death – self-destruction – or in the circus ring, a common thematic site for Fellini in his films, which Stoddart describes in Bakhtinian terms as a carnivalesque space, where there is interrelatedness between individuals that inverts hegemonic relations (“Subtle” 53).<sup>73</sup> In other words, the circus ring is an inter-subjective space that satirically undercuts the radically singular subjectivity imagined in the director/auteur-function. To this effect, Frank Burke notes how Guido joins the dancing line, no longer inhabiting the centre of the ring, while young Guido, who is also a part of the circus, slowly shifts out of the spotlight to

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<sup>73</sup> Stoddart’s full argument outlines how Fellini’s capturing of the circus (as a live art form) on film demonstrates not only the irreconcilability of both forms, but also “the fundamental ambivalence of the film image itself, which both reinvents life and marks its passing” (61). Of 8 ½ specifically, Stoddart contends, “in the circus, characters rarely betray any interiority (i.e., they are pure spectacle) and the relations of looking are more direct (i.e., the spectator has only one point of view and the performer may return his or her gaze). Thus, when Guido turns his world into circus, that world achieves an order and a structure that he was unable to lend it as a filmmaker. Yet he has done so on film – and in a film in which the distinction between life and performance has been nearly impossible to make and in which distinction between subjective vision and external reality are constantly undermined or blurred. Consequently, the circus is inevitably framed as an impossible and fantastic world” (*SWT* 50-51).

the right side of the frame when the screen fades to a close. The camera accordingly no longer finds Guido as its subjective source. Both figures' movement then registers the decentring of Guido as director and the debunking of his juvenile fantasy of individuated authority ("Changing the Subject" 41; *Fellini's Films* 160).

By employing the circus musical theme and a shot-for-shot homage of the press conference scene in *8 ½*, Steve Coogan's dream sequence in *A Cock & Bull Story* links his own anxious performance to Guido's fantasised and satirised one. Out of fear that Rob Brydon (Uncle Toby) has become the star of the movie, Coogan attempts to read *Tristram Shandy* in order to master its content, but falls asleep in the process. He begins to dream that he is in a miniature womb, sidelined from the action of the film as Brydon shoots the Widow Wadman scenes with Gillian Anderson. The womb reappears from an earlier, mockumented scene whereby Coogan is fitted into a giant size uterus in order to recreate Tristram's birth. Instead of resorting to the illusionistic conventions of cinema (simply inverting the image), Mark the director insists that Coogan be upside down in the womb so as to appear authentic and realistic; to these demands, Coogan replies sarcastically, "He wants realism? I am a grown man, talking to the camera, in a fucking womb." The grotesque womb and Coogan's appraisal accordingly highlight and mock the constructedness and technical complexity of a realist mode of filmmaking. More importantly, however, the womb becomes an emblem of Coogan's authority in his dream. Like Guido's whimsical yet dismantled spaceship, it suggests the emasculated and impotent nature of Coogan's imagined authority, but takes Coogan's one step further back in that his authority, like Tristram's, is not even juvenile – it has not even been birthed.

The *8 ½* music plays under Coogan's dream and when Brydon receives praise from Mark, Simon the producer, and other crew members for his performance, the camera charts

Brydon's point of view as each person approaches the lens to offer their praise, recreating Guido's perspective at the press conference. The point of view shifts to an omniscient one as Brydon asks whether Coogan had watched his successful scene and the camera then moves to capture the once gigantic womb as a tiny one in the background. Brydon and Anderson approach the womb and the point of view cuts to Coogan's through a low angle, full shot that makes Brydon and Anderson appear comparatively larger than life. Crouching down to introduce herself to *in utero* Coogan, Anderson comments, "I didn't realise he was so small;" Brydon rejoins that Coogan "is a lot smaller than me. Can we see how small he is?" The sequence cuts to a close-up of the womb and although the close-up generally functions to nuance and individuate actors' performance and to distinguish their characters as leads, Coogan's close-up consists mostly of the womb and its walls, his face barely visible and thus unrecognizable as a star or even "himself," though his body is naked, leaving him exposed and without the cloak of character, literally and figuratively. After a crewmember explains how the film will recreate the water-breaking and birth of Tristram, the sequence returns to a close-up of Coogan in the womb and a flush of water soaks him in a humiliating fashion to which the crew and cast respond in laughter. They eventually walk away, leaving Coogan "in labour" so to speak. Anderson repeats her amazement that Coogan is so small and Brydon subsequently quips, "That's his actual size," playing ironically with the idea that the tiny womb is in fact a realistic rendering of a life-size uterus.

Coogan's *in utero* presence in the dream consequently becomes a manifestation of his vulnerable, diminutive, and undistinguished authority and celebrity in relation to not only Brydon, his competition as leading man, but also Anderson, the legitimate Hollywood star. Yet, whereas Guido's dreams fantastically express his singular authority in spite of its impossibility in

real terms, Coogan's dream operates more like a nightmare whereby he is not even able to *imagine* his own masterful performance, legitimate authority, and bankable celebrity. In this sense, Coogan fails even more than Guido as a subject and this disparity between subjects implies unfaithfulness or illegitimacy in the film's allusion to *8 1/2* itself. This further satirises the masterful and singular authority expected in not only film authors but also film adaptations; Coogan and his film simply do not measure up. Nonetheless, this insufficiency ironically creates continuity with Sterne's and Fellini's satiric appraisals of authority and singularity, while establishing the adaptation's own individuality and significance.

The most significant and unique extension of both Sterne's and Fellini's satire of authority and singularity in *A Cock & Bull Story* emerges through the relocation of authorial locus from the book author/film auteur position to that of the performer and the image of the performer. In *A Cock & Bull Story*, performers, their performance, and celebrity seem to authorise cinematic legitimacy and legacy. When Coogan awakes from his Fellini-esque dream, he finds the set of *Tristram Shandy* turned into its own circus ring, replete with flamethrowers and fireworks, as the crew and extras celebrate the securing of additional funding for more spectacular battle scenes. Once again, like the shot sequence at the press conference in *8 1/2*, the camera charts Coogan's point of view as cast and crew approach him with the good news, suggesting that the legitimacy of the film and thus Coogan himself (as the star) are now secure through Gillian Anderson's agreement to act in the film, her celebrity, and the resulting increase in financial backing. The perspective cuts to a medium shot of Jenny telling Coogan, "they're going to have their love story and love scene too. It's like some Hollywood version of *Tristram Shandy*" to which Coogan responds, "Fassbinder would've never sold out like that." In remarking on Fassbinder's auteurist authority as more authentic, Coogan notes the death of the

auteur in the commercial, formulaic, and spectacle driven nature of Hollywood production; such idealised and singular authority cannot exist under the conditions of contemporary filmmaking. Coogan's lack of actual knowledge about Fassbinder, however, renders his statement decidedly superficial, satirising the weight and reliability of Coogan's own authority. At the same time, because his statement goes uncontested and even becomes confirmed by Jenny in her subsequent verbal dissertation on Fassbinder as a "fantastic writer," Coogan's authority remains central and significant though ridiculed. His performance of authority therefore still stands as authoritative in the film.

Like Tristram's and Guido's authority, Coogan's signifying and authorising power as actor nevertheless becomes contingent rather than hermetically singular or total as a result of the inter-subjective reality of the cinema. As in *8 1/2*, *A Cock & Bull Story* utilises the screening room as a reflexive site for the audience to recognise the significance of reception in negotiating filmic significance and authority. At the film's conclusion, the cast and crew gather to watch the final cut of the Tristram Shandy movie, which the audience of the meta-film never see. Authoring the final cut of the film certainly remains in the power of the director and editor, highlighting a layer of authority beyond actors and their performance. For example, in spite of her celebrity and credit, Gillian Anderson's scenes are all supposedly cut. Moreover, the producers are angry that the filmmakers edited out the spectacular battle scene reshoot – the film's financial salvo and *raison d'être*. Yet the film also undermines this power in the director, the writer, and the editor, as the audience of *A Cock & Bull Story* are privy to the image of actors responding to a film rather than the film adaptation itself; we watch and react to the actors watching and reacting to themselves. This reflexivity recentres the negotiation of meaning in the interaction between the film audience and the image of the actors and their performance. Combined with Coogan's

ongoing performance anxiety and personal insecurity, the screening room scene ultimately undoes and mocks the total mastery expected or assumed in filmmaking and then, more specifically, in the making of a film adaptation. Disappointed by the result, the producers ask how *Tristram Shandy* the book ends. The screening room scene then transitions to a supposedly omniscient scene, staged as a direct, non-reflexive period recreation of the cock and bull story ending.

While this conclusion allows the adaptation to end “faithfully” by transcribing the book’s ending onto film, it seems to mismatch the content of the meta-film completely. In effect, the ostensibly straightforward and therefore faithful adaptation at the end of *A Cock & Bull Story* still mockingly denies a type of closure that proffers a singular and authoritative understanding of either its own narrative or the legitimacy of the adaptation in relation to Sterne’s book. This leaves the film’s legitimacy or authority open to interpretation, effectively operating as a satire inquiring into the nature of authority and authorisation in film adaptation. This too can be said of *Tristram Shandy* the novel in that the cock and bull story can either sum up the book’s meaning (it is total nonsense and a bad joke) or it does not even attempt to master, authorise, and control what has come before in a fixed, singular, and monolithic fashion. Such an ending will inevitably be inadequate, creatively and otherwise, like Walter’s impotent bull. The faithful ending of the film adaptation, then, becomes a mark of the film’s inadequacy in adapting the book, as the ending cannot account for the rest of the film’s narrative let alone the book’s, but also how its radical departures from the book produce its own distinct satiric conditions. By revelling in its own inadequacy and secondary nature in relation to celebrated masterpieces *Tristram Shandy* and *8 ½*, *A Cock & Bull Story* thus not only ironically translates their satiric inquiries into singular authority/auteurism and originality but also establishes its own unique satiric terms by

extending their satiric inquiry to a new and different process and product of authorship: film adaptation.

## **Conclusion: “Satiric performance” not “satiric anti-performance”**

As a conclusion to their 2009 sociological study of Stephen Colbert’s *The Colbert Report* (a contemporary television satire) and the reception of Colbert’s “deadpan” satiric performance on the programme, Lisa LaMarre, Kirsten Landreville, and Michael Beam contend that an audience member processes Colbert’s satiric humour and its political message through his or her own particular ideological positioning. LaMarre et al note that Colbert’s “extreme form of deadpan” – a performance without real “external cues for processing” – produces “source ambiguity,” which “requires the audience to participate in determining whether the source is sincere” (217). While the study finds that both self-identified conservatives and liberals perceive Colbert as “humorous,” it suggests that “Colbert’s ambiguous deadpan humour” tends to elicit audience responses that bolster previously held political bias, which then leads audience members to read Colbert’s political targets as aligning with their own critical aims or opposition. The effect of such “biased processing” is polarization, which, the investigators gravely conclude, “has been found to have negative consequences for democracy” (227). Satiric polarization, the study goes on to speculate, “will likely play a significant role in strengthening attitudes” (227).

I begin my conclusion with the results of this sociological study because it grounds and reiterates several of my theoretical contentions about the nature of eighteenth-century satire in performance and satire in general. As I argue in my introduction, satire’s dependence on indirection and modes of doubling meaning, such as irony and parody, produces and plays with the type of “source ambiguity” that the sociological study identifies. Such ambiguity in satire elicits multiple and varied responses or judgments, I also conclude, echoing Fredric Bogel’s claims that satire does only not represent difference but rather *creates* it. In my first chapter, I

examine the Collier Controversy of the late seventeenth century, a debate over the representation of vice in Restoration comedies that elicited such a variety of responses on the efficacy of dramatic satire. I demonstrate how Jeremy Collier, a theatre critic and puritan polemicist, rejects the representation of vice in these satiric comedies on the basis that performance can only be mimetic not ironic and, consequently, that vice seems to be promoted in Restoration comedies as opposed to criticised. Collier's criticism identifies two important issues: firstly, the complex transmission and circulation of satiric agency between author, actor, audience, and critic that occurs through dramatic performance, which distances dramatic satire and its practice from a singular, straightforward, and didactic agenda; and secondly, how dramatic satire's use of ironic and morally ambiguous performance forces audience interpretation and an inter-subjective negotiation of meaning and positions on issues of morality, Truth, and reality, which Collier ultimately conceives of as non-negotiable and un-ironic because of his own positioning as a non-conformist clergyman.

Unlike Bogel, therefore, I maintain that satire reflects and replicates differences already manifest in audience members because satire simultaneously deconstructs and reproduces the discursive strategies of power. Satire may mock and rail against differences or hierarchies, but it does not level them, especially if satire reaffirms rather than challenges individual ideological and social positioning, and varying levels of privilege and learning. Satire accordingly does not alter or correct individual positions; it aims to expose and inquire into the disciplinary modalities that shape individual positionality, though it does not undo them. This, in effect, challenges conceptions of satire as committed to an agenda of universal education. In my second chapter, I show how Fielding's plays complicate didactic or coercive notions of satiric authority, highlighting the ways in which satire intentionally and ambiguously teeters between obvious and

implied meaning, self-righteous and hypocritical measures, mimetic and non-mimetic representation, and metonymic and metaphoric references, through an extensive use of double meaning, most notably irony. These unresolved dialectics in satiric, dramatic authority reinforce Fielding's critique of institutional and political authorities, namely the arbitrary and negotiated, yet essential relationship between discourse and power in law, politics, theatre, and the marketplace. However, because Fielding's plays do not resolve or mediate the oppositions that they set in motion, they do not represent a standard or legitimate authority to discipline audience taste and perception. Instead, Fielding's dramatic satires demonstrate the modalities and ideologies of discipline itself, as power-knowledge operates with and through discourse.

My understanding of satire, accordingly, conflicts with its traditionally ascribed function of didacticism and edification, whereby the satirist renders the object of attack obvious to an audience that confirms and conforms to an indirectly stated ideal. Because satire invites multiple readings through its intentional ambiguity and demand for self-reflexive interpretation, it undermines the singularity and stability of its own authority, intention, and reception. In this case, satire does not exercise an authority that creates the unidirectional, controlled and controlling relations between satirist and audience imagined in a didactic definition of satire. Rather, satire's source ambiguity forces satiric meaning to be negotiated vis-à-vis an audience, indicating the inter-subjective nature of power and discourse. Authority in satire, be it the social, political, or literary authority that satire anatomizes or the authoritative voice of satire itself, becomes a site of contest rather than a monolithic absolute. As I argue in my third chapter on adaptations of *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift's satire not only aims at the nefarious relationship between discourse and power that informs epistemology, law, politics, and colonial expansion, but also puts into doubt Gulliver's authoritative account that supplies this critique. Depending on

his own relationship to power, figured through scale in the text, Gulliver adjusts, undermines, or ironises his own authority, creating a complexity confounds clear judgement and simple inversions (e.g. rational/irrational or animal/human), which few adaptors attempt to replicate. As Raymond Bentman contends,

*Gulliver's Travels* is an especially clear example of the error of modern criticism of satire, which says that in satire 'standards of judgment are indubitable' or that in satire, the reader is 'sure what the author's attitude is or what his own is supposed to be.' And much criticism of *Gulliver's Travels*, which insists that a single meaning be attached to the work, or that it be approached from a single point of view, seems to be an unwitting demonstration of the single view which Swift denounces. (547)

I argue, therefore, that irony and ambiguity undergird satiric authority, with such shifting foundations intentionally complicating univocal and unidirectional communication. For performance to be satirical, then, it must direct irony and anatomisation to its own authority to elucidate how satire itself participates in the same complex and ambiguous interchanges of discourse and power. Satiric authority, consequently, undoes its own singularity; it not only demands interpretation because of its complexity, but it also reflects the subjective and negotiated nature of authority and interpretation, which destabilises notions of total authorial control or total authority while pointing to how they powerfully structure and materially affect the world in real terms.

Turning away from understanding satire as didacticism or corrective and controlling therefore allows for a discussion of satiric performance. Critics like Deborah Payne-Fisk and J. Paul Hunter argue for the incommensurability of satire and dramatic performance because they subscribe to a model of satiric communication that emphasizes satiric authority as univocal,

which is incompatible with the multiple sources of authority in the theatre or on film. Yet abandoning a notion of satiric authority as singular in intention and unidirectional in application or communication enables us to envision satiric agency in the diffuse and multiple agents/conditions of dramatic and filmic performances. Furthermore, moving beyond the idea that satiric authority has a transparent, singular intention facilitates analysis of satire *in performance*. Critics argue that performance cannot convey satiric intention because it is “unreadable;” embodiment and the temporal nature of performance render ideology hard to discern and disallow re-reading. Within the previous claim against satiric performance, however, we see the paradox that mobilizes such antagonism. The intention of satire is transparent, but we need to re-read in order to understand it. Alternately, if we acknowledge that the intention of satire is ambiguous, that the authority of satire is not singular, and that the reception of satire is actively differentiated, as I contend in my introduction and throughout this dissertation, we can accept that theatrical and filmic performance can enact satiric inquiry and transmit satiric agency.

Integral to the production of satiric effect through performance, however, is a satiric, self-reflexive approach to the modes of authorisation in the theatre or on film. Satire may critique and inquire into power and its discursive strategies and disciplinary modalities; nevertheless, satire must question its own forms of authority in order to create an experience of destabilised and ambiguous signification that highlights the arbitrary, though concrete relationship between epistemologies of power and discourse. In my introduction, I invoke Richard Schechner’s model of “tearing the seams” of performance to denote a successful, reflexive strategy for satiric performance. In tearing its seams so to speak, satiric performance draws attention to the ways in which meaning is negotiated, mediated, and authorised through the various agents and elements of the theatre and film. In theatre, these relationships include those between text and

performance; director and performer; performer and performance; performer and performer; audience and performance; viewing environment and stage; and commercial considerations and artistic accommodations. In terms of film, we have the added relationships between image and montage; editing and sequence; production and distribution; as well the relationship between celebrity and text; celebrity and film performance; source text and adaptation, exemplified in the particular case of film adaptation in my discussion. In chapter four on Michael Winterbottom's film adaptation of *Tristram Shandy*, I argue that the film successfully reproduces the conditional and contingent forms of authority represented and satirised in Sterne's book, by using a cinematic mode that satirises the relationships that I have outlined as mediating film authorisation and its representation of the "real": mockumentary. In ridiculing and anatomising the manner in which celebrity, commercial considerations, and actual film production construct film authority, I contend that Winterbottom's *A Cock & Bull Story* not only adapts the content of Sterne's critique on singular and original authorship, but also creates its own formal satiric commentary on the singularity and originality of film authorship within the medium specificity of film. In this sense, *A Cock & Bull Story* accomplishes what film adaptations of *Gulliver's Travels* fail to do, as I outline in chapter three, namely render film a satiric aesthetic mode rather than simply a transcription of critical commentary or content.

Though tearing the seams of performance or satiric self-reflexivity in performance operates differently in film and theatre (e.g. mockumentary in Winterbottom's film adaptation of *Tristram Shandy* versus Fielding's rehearsal framework in the theatre), it remains an essential strategy for producing satiric effect in either form. More importantly, while satiric self-reflexivity in film and theatre authorship may self-consciously challenge and anatomize forms of realism and seamless representation, it does not operate as an anti-aesthetic. Instead, I argue,

such reflexivity produces a distinctly satiric aesthetic. In my second chapter on Fielding, I counter claims that his dramatic satires are un-theatrical by demonstrating that Fielding's self-reflexive approach to his theatrical authority enables his satiric appraisal of political and cultural power, rather than signals his frustration with dramatic modes of representation. In playing with the gap between audience and performer/playwright, as well as performer and text, Fielding opens up a space for critical and satiric metaphors or irony in and *through* performance itself. I conclude my second chapter with a discussion of the Licensing Act of 1737, which, in part, effectively vetted and censored play-texts and ended Fielding's career writing increasingly topical and political satire. I suggest that the Act attempts to unify and control satiric authority like Fielding's, by excising not overt defamation or political statements from texts – the naming of names is easily prosecuted as slander – but rather preventing performances that can represent the suggestiveness of satire and its diffuse authority. Fielding's plays seem dangerous as a result of the manner in which they highlight how performance can support moments of satire not made explicit through authorial interjections or direct commentary. The Act itself, accordingly, shows how satiric authority and performance must be *read into* and limited as opposed to being clear and controlled in the first place. In dramatic satire, performance here becomes conducive rather than an obstacle to satiric agency and Fielding's self-reflexive plays produce a distinct form of theatre practice based on a model of satire *in* performance.

A consequence of my theoretical model of satire and satire in performance becomes a re-evaluation of the ways in which discussions of contemporary performance and performance media address the issue of satire and its aesthetics. My inclusion of the study on *The Colbert Report* to conclude my analysis of eighteenth-century satires on film and eighteenth-century dramatic satires anticipates work that I think needs to be done concerning satire as a particular

aesthetic mode in contemporary performance, rather than simply a characteristic applied to certain political or didactic moments within a particular work. For example, satire as a critical and generic term seems largely absent in research on contemporary theatre in North American and European contexts. With the exception of Modern theatre (e.g. Brecht, Piscator etc.), satire largely appears only as a key-term in criticism of contemporary plays from South and Central America, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the former Soviet Union or criticism on plays by or relating to ethnic-minority groups in North America and Europe.<sup>74</sup> This keyword search and its results raise an important question for further consideration: why do critics apply the term “satire” fairly exclusively to theatrical work from othered contexts or marginalised groups?

Indeed, a simple answer may be that traditional satire criticism has imagined the struggle between satirist and satiric object as one of margin versus centre, dissenter versus power, outsider versus community, minority versus majority. However, as I argue in this dissertation, satire’s relationship to power and its complicated reproductions of power relations render this binaristic model unworkable. Therefore, I am interested instead in the implications of critical resistance to making satire the centre of discussion about contemporary theatre practice in North America and Europe. Do critics apply the term “satire” to work from othered contexts because they have a seemingly overt “politics” from which we can extrapolate didactic insight? If critics analyse satire from othered contexts through a didactic lens, how they do figure aesthetics into their discussion? Do critics avoid discussing satire in North American and European contexts because they do not see aesthetic value in satire? Or do they envision contemporary and

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<sup>74</sup> As of September 24, 2010, the MLA international bibliography had only 6 hits with the key terms “satire,” “contemporary,” and “theatre.” Of the six hits, only two entries discussed modern and contemporary theatre from North America and Europe, but they examined Modernist and Shakespearean theatre. The other entries were on Hispanic American theatre, Indian theatre, and Pakistani theatre. While yielding more hits, my searches on the International Bibliography of Theatre and Dance, with the same key terms, resulted in entries on Hispanic theatre, Indian theatre, Eastern European theatre, Soviet theatre, African American theatre, Yiddish theatre among “others.”

postmodern theatre practice in North America and Europe, which can be very aesthetically self-reflexive, as not invested in questioning or questions of power, politics, discipline, and knowledge?

In this dissertation, I actively resist understanding satire as didactic and anti-aesthetic. What I argue for as an alternative is a reciprocal relation between politics and aesthetics, both being essential aspects of satiric inquiry into forms of authority. Satire is not informed by a politics of anti-aestheticism but rather a politics of authority that sees aesthetics as a part of a larger matrix of discourse and power. In this sense, satire employs a unique aesthetic of its own in order to engage politics – a satiric performance not a satiric anti-performance. The extension of this argument to a discussion of contemporary theatre would be, consequently, how satire reflects politics while informing and producing its own distinct aesthetic or theatre practice.

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