

The Significance of the Tale-Teller as a Humourist in Jonathan Swift's

A Tale of a Tub

By Fumiko Takase

And, whereas the mind of Man, when he gives the Spur and Bridle to his Thoughts, doth never stop, but naturally sallies out into both extreams of High and Low, of Good and Evil. 1

Swift's personae, whether they are the Tale Teller, Bickerstaff, the Modest proposer, or Gulliver, are not characters in novels or dramas in the full sense of the term "character," for the reader does not learn how they look and act in realistic human relationships with their fellow creatures and their worlds. Rather, their *raison d'être* consists in verbal display of purposes fixed by Swift. They always speak in the first person singular and rarely step outside the range of the discussions designed by their creator. In this respect they are, we may say, presented as the supposed authors of the works, whom Swift employed for the expressing of some ideas on philosophical, religious, political, and moral issues.

From another angle, more artistic than the first, the personae are called Swift's masks.² The "mask" imagery implies that the assumed author is nothing more than the thinly disguised projection of Jonathan Swift and often leaves us with the problem of identifying Swift with his personae. But there is reason enough for interpreting his personae as masks, for, according to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, the "persona" originally meant the actor's mask,³ by which the actor impersonated a character other than his own. However, the persona, which from its origin involved fabrication or deception, soon developed to mean the personality put on in real life by an individual for purposes of concealment, defense, disguise, or adaptation to his environment, and also to denote a character itself in a drama or in a novel. The persona, as understood around Swift's time had already come to connote more than the mask or impersonation of its primitive stage: it was a fictitious author--a convenient vehicle used by the real author for some particular discussion or purpose in self-defense. The connotation inevitably included and reinforced the seed of fabrication in the origin of the persona itself in relation to an individual's identity, and made open a path to a full-grown character in a drama or a novel, clearly other than his creator's. Swift's personae are, in fact, basically a product of his creative imagination in the transition period when the persona was getting rid of its two-dimensional stage of the mask and would soon grow into a Parson Adams or a Squire Western as the novel came into full existence. The confusion in Swiftian criticism concerning the relationship between the creator and the created is, in part, due to Swift's awareness of the usefulness of the persona as his mouthpiece in journalism, politics, and satire, and, in part, due to the consistent and viable nature of his personae, not so superficial

and practical a disguise as the masks, nor so realistically developed as the characters in novels and dramas, perhaps, as a result of Swift's interest in so-called character-writing.⁴

The use of impersonation for satire and literary purposes became popular in the late years of the seventeenth century and continued into the eighteenth century. If we consider the original nature of satire as attack and persuasion,⁵ and the conflicts between the old and the new in these formative centuries of modern society, we can surmise why satire had been in vogue and the persona had become a favorable instrument for the satirist for concealment of his identity. Indeed, there had been political and religious upheavals and the emergence and growth of political parties--the Tories and the Whigs. Intimately bound up with these current events of the time, periodicals came into existence, with the *Weekly News*, in their embryo state, issued as early as 1622.⁶ The battle of party propagandas through pamphleteering and journalism, the deadly struggle between the writers and the critics,⁷ and the official censorship had compelled the satirist to employ the device of disguise.

The periodicals especially made full use of personae, chiefly for political and moral purposes. For political reasons, the essayist could take on the air of impartial judgment, the humble view of a third person, under the guise of a persona, who stood far above the political and religious factions. The periodicals created morally-and socially-defined characters or types derived from the character-writing, one of the most popular and ubiquitous literary forms of the seventeenth century,⁸ keeping pace with the tradition of a drama preserving so much of Jonsonian humours that M. A. Harris contends that "with these Characters we have only another presentation of the Humours, Jonson calls them."⁹ Under such impersonal titles as *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, and *The Examiner*, the periodical-writers deliberately rejected the party label and tried to appear detached, fair, and honest. For moral purposes, eighteenth century writers thought themselves formulators of a new social conscience. They proposed "to reconcile good breeding, good taste, and good life, to instruct without pedantry and to please without loss of dignity."¹⁰ Personae were devices well suited for their purposes: for example, *The Tatler* employed the "mask" of Isaac Bickerstaff, a sixty-four-year-old astrologer, after Swift's successful campaign as Bickerstaff against the notorious practice of the almanac-maker, Partridge, for Bickerstaff could chastise vice, but Steele could not, because, as the essayist says in the last issue of *The Tatler*, his own life was "at best but pardonable."¹¹

Swift was in good accordance with the contemporary moral view of writers and vigorously took part in the battle of pamphleteering either as a Whig or later a Tory spokesman and he knew through and through the value of personae. He created and manipulated his personae not only to satisfy his artistic drive but also to please and instruct the world.¹² Furthermore, as Swift boasted of himself being the refiner of irony as a satiric weapon,¹³ the personae in his hands became, in a rhetorical sense, suitable tools which enabled him to indulge in a multiplicity of irony without hurting his own person or fortune.¹⁴ Satire is to expose the incongruous in man and in the world. Irony is the meeting place of the two levels of meaning, apparent and implied, in the expression of incongruity: one is based on reason or common sense and the other on deviation from it. Swift's personae are commonly made to represent the deviation explicit in the surface meaning. Through the reader's awareness of the contrast between the two levels of meaning, Swift expects that his real intention in the cre-

ation of the incongruous will be conveyed to the reader's mind.

Swift's personae are, we have seen, his artistic creations as well as his tools for rhetorical, moral, political, and religious purposes. Now, how Swift's personae, particularly the supposed author of *The Tale of a Tub*, serve his purposes remains to be examined.

A Tale of a Tub was written probably during Swift's last stay at Sir William Temple's in 1696-1699 and published in 1704 along with *The Battle of the Books* and *The Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*. In this work Swift, through his persona, dramatizes the corruptions in religion and learning in two ways: the allegory embodies the history of the Christian Church in the career of the triplets, and the prefaces and digressions body forth pretentious follies of the moderns. Swift does not speak in person anywhere, except possibly in "An Apology," referring to Swift himself as "the Author." As for the rest of the book proper, it is demonstrated as the work of several hands. There are perhaps five personae involved in *A Tale of a Tub*: the one who writes "An Apology," "the Author" referred to, "the Bookseller," "the Modern Writer" who speaks in "The Preface," "The Introduction," and the "Digressions," and "the Historian" who records the story of the three brothers, Peter, Martin, and Jack, but who reveals himself as none other than "the Modern Writer" that writes it as one of his treatises. These personae are to fulfill a part designed for each by Swift in the whole context of the work. In "An Apology," which appeared for the first time in the 1710 (fifth) edition of *A Tale of a Tub*, as Swift's answer to contemporary criticisms, its writer explains the theme of the whole book, "the numerous and gross Corruptions in Religion and Learning which *might furnish Matter for a Satyr*."¹⁵ Though the "Apology" writer defends the work as a youthful one, he declares that the manner of writing is "*altogether new*" (p.1), with "*an Irony [running] through the Thread of the whole Book*" (p.4), mixing "useful" wit with "agreeable" humor (p.10). His objective is, he states, for serving "*the Publick by so useful a Discovery*" (p.6). The Bookseller, who brazen-facedly says that his dedication to a Whig leader, "the Right Honourable, John Lord Sommers," is for selling the book better, has been alarmed "*with Intelligence of a surreptitious Copy*" (p.17), showing his close kinship with the profit-first view and moral irresponsibility of the modern spirit. The writer of "The Epistle Dedicatory, to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity" laments over the short duration of modern works, which is, he assures the reader, due to the malicious "*Scythe*" of the Prince's "*Governour*," Time (p.20). He foolishly insists: "What I am going to say is literally true this Minute I am writing" (p.22). He begs the Prince to accept his work as "a faithful Abstract drawn from the Universal Body of all Arts and Sciences" (p.23). Thus he unwittingly exposes in the battle between the ancients and the moderns the truthlessness and worthlessness of modern writings and sets in contrast the timeless and the temporary or the spiritual and the physical, the juxtaposition of which is to thread through all the succeeding sections. After all these preparations, we come to "The Preface," whose writer seems to be the author of *A Tale of a Tub* proper.

The Teller turns out to be a little out-of-date Grub-Street hack, physically and morally deformed and proud of anything modern, but he embraces an envious antipathy against the arrogant success (not the modern ideas) of the Royal Society at Gresham College and the poets at Will's Coffee-House. He introduces himself: "Four-score and eleven Pamphlets have

I writ under three Reigns, and for the Service of six and thirty Factions." He has "an Understanding and a Conscience, threadbare and ragged with perpetual turning," "a Head broken in a hundred places, by the Malignants of the opposite Factions," and "a body spent with Poxes ill cured, by trusting to Bawds and Surgeons, who...revenged their Party's Quarrel" upon his "Nose and Shins." Finding that the state does not need him any more, he has retired into philosophical speculations and "a long life, with a Conscience void of Offence" (p.42). He writes his useful treatises, half-starved in a garret, thinking it fit to sharpen his "Invention with Hunger (p.27), yet he is "so entirely satisfied with the whole present Procedure of human Things," and he has "neither a Talent nor an Inclination for Satyr," being more interested in writing a "*Panegyric upon the World*" (p.32).

If humour is a mood, eccentricity, singular disposition,¹⁶ or "whimsical Oddity or Foible, *appearing in the Temper or Conduct of a Person in real Life*,"¹⁷ the Teller has a humour, arising from his pride in modernity, and he represents the moderns' attack upon the ancients' achievements, ultimately to be defeated and exposed as ridiculous and impotent by them. As Corbyn Morris says of a man of humour, the Teller is, indeed, "*one, who can happily exhibit a weak and ridiculous Character in real Life, either by assuming it himself, or representing another in it, so naturally, that the whimsical Oddities, and Foibles, of that Character, shall be palpably expos'd*,"¹⁸ and, as a humourist, the Teller is "excessively *proud*, and yet without knowing or suspecting it."¹⁹

The modern spirit which vainly seeks to conquer nature and time, partly revealed by the author of "The Epistle Dedicatory, to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity," is further illustrated by the Teller's boast of the absurd system-building out of trivialities and of the absolute authority of the moderns over the past. The "*Grubaeen Sages*" untwist or unwind nature into new systems: to name instances: to the moderns persuaded by no means to "inspect" beyond the Surface and the Rind of Things; ...[wisdom] is a *Nut*, which unless you chuse with Judgment, may cost you a tooth, and pay you with nothing but a *worm*" (p.40), and, if their imaginations have rendered "some proper mystical Number...Sacred," they force common Reason to such a degree as "to find room for it in every part of Nature" (p.34). The Teller, too, in proving "the Antiquity of the *True Criticks*," in comparison with the modern critics, invents an absurd system of thinking: ancient writers mentioned the true critic under the hieroglyph of an ass: Herodotus was "so bold as to tax the *True Criticks*, of Ignorance and Malice: telling us openly...that *in the Western Part of Lybia, there were Asses with Horns*": therefore, the true critics existed among the ancients (p.60). Furthermore, the Teller asserts, "every *True Critick* is a Hero born, descending in a direct Line from a Celestial Stem, by *Momus* and *Hybris*, who begat *Zoilus*, who begat *Tigellius*, who begat *Etcoetera* the Elder, who begat *Bently*, and *Rymer*, and *Wotton*, and *Perrault*, and *Dennis*, who begat *Etcoetera* the Younger" (p.57). The Teller, himself a devotee of modernity, declares: "I here think fit to lay hold on that great and honourable Privilege of being the *Last Writer*: I claim an absolute Authority in Right, as the *freshest Modern*, which gives me a Despotick Power over all Authors before me" (p.81). His own previous complaints of his being out of fashion contradicts his pride in the excellency of the modern spirit. Swift, thus, through the absurd logic and vain pride of the Teller, is able to satirize contemporary critics by demonstrating

that the "True Critick" in human form is a modern phenomenon and that he is a direct descendant of Momus Hybris (=Night and Pride) and, in truth, an ass. He is also able to analyze the humour of modernity--remarkable lack of judgment based on common reason, self-complacent love of the surface, ridiculous competition for distinction through self-love and self-ignorance.

The humour of modern interest in distinction, rather than in truth, evading the just evaluation of Time, is represented in concrete form in "The Introduction" by the "Edifices in the Air" (p.33) out of sight and completely beyond the Lockian empirical test, and also by the "Oratorial Machines" (p.35)--"the *Pulpit*, the *Ladder*, and the *Stage-Itinerant*"--as the fulfillment of the modern desire to achieve "a *superiour Position of Place*" (p.36). The reason for inventing the devices lies in that the words which "*Modern Saints in Great Britain...have spiritualized and refined...from the Dross and Grossness of Sense and Human Reason*" become

Bodies of much Weight and Gravity: as it is manifest from those deep *Impressions* they make and leave upon us: and therefore must be delivered from a due Altitude, or else they will neither carry a good Aim, nor fall down with a sufficient Force. (p.36)

As words are deprived of their meaning, so man's achievements in the modern world soaked in the humour of self-love and competition are reduced to things or illustrated in "Physico-logical" terms (p.37). The writings of the fanatic preacher are compared to the pulpit for two principal reasons: the matter for both is of rotten wood which is to "give *Light* in the Dark," whose "Cavities are full of Worms," and whose fate is either to be burnt or eaten by worms (p.37).

Perhaps the greatest and most persistent single figure used in *A Tale of a Tub* is that of the conflict between rising and falling, between surface and depth, and between the literal and the allegorical. The Teller asserts that the allegorical figures of the "Oratorial Machines" are "a great Mystery, being a Type, a Sign, an Emblem, a Shadow, a Symbol, bearing analogy" (p.37), and yet, after his scrutiny into depth, he goes back to surface as in his interpretation of the "Pulpit." He calls this method of thinking the "Physico-logical Scheme" (p.37). The "Physico-logical" presentation of modern man's thinking, produced by the humour of modernity, "untwists or unwinds" nature to such a degree that human happiness is dragged down to human fashions, "upon which it entirely depends" (p.51). The justification of the analogy lies in the fact that happiness and fashions have one common quality--happiness is of as short a duration as fashions (p.51).

Swift, after establishing the "Physico-logical" method of modern thinking, now in the *Tale* proper safely launches upon tailor-worship to present the modern inversion of humanity further. The Teller is ready to systematize its clothes symbolism into a perverted theology in order to approve and defend the perverted practices in the modern "*Grand Monde*" (p.46), into which the three brothers have entered. The god of the symbolism is the tailor, who daily creates men, by a kind of manufactory operation. Those "Beings which the World calls improperly *Suits of Cloaths*, are in Reality the most refined Species of Animals, or to proceed higher,...Rational Creatures, or Men" (p.47). The soul of man is an outer suit and its faculties are articles of clothes. "The Worshipper of this Deity" asks a rhetorical question:

Is not Religion a *Cloak*, Honesty a *Pair of Shoes*, worn out in the Dirt,
Self-love a *Surtout*, Vanity a *Shirt*, and Conscience a *Pair of Breeches*,
which, tho' a Cover for Lewdness as well as Nastiness, is easily slipt down
for the Service of both. (p.47)

While Swift reduces the activities of the Churches--Roman Catholic, Lutheran or Anglican, and Calvinistic--to the absurdities of the three fops, Peter, Martin, and Jack, the Teller spiritualizes and refines foppery and foibles into a mock religion. In proportion as the folly and pride of the moderns increase in the "Digressions," the three brothers deviate from the original will of their father, the Bible, and the original form of their coats, the Christian faith. They are none other than the victims of the humour of modernity, competitive and thirsty after distinction in the world of fashions.

The incongruities and perversion made in the allegorical history of the Christian Church and the "Digressions" meet in Aeolism, presumably built by Jack. The modern hack adapts to the "physico-logical" way of thinking the doctrine that "the Original Cause of all Things" is "Wind" (p.95). The AEolists value inspiration and take all eccentric "Mysteries and Rites" (p.98) to be divine possession, for their gods are "the four *Winds*, ...from whom alone all *Inspiration* can properly be said to proceed" (p.97). The AEolists' inspiration is literalized to the extent that they "affirm the Gift of Belching, to be the noblest Act of a Rational Creature" (p.96) and that the philosophers among them "deliver to their pupils all their Doctrines and Opinions by Eructation" (p.97). The students receive it as "Sacred, the Sourer the better," and swallow it "with infinite Consolation" (p.97). The Teller further depicts their state of mind:

And, whereas the mind of Man, when he gives the Spur and Bridle to
his Thoughts, doth never stop, but naturally sallies out into both extreams
of High and Low, of Good and Evil: His first Flight of Fancy, commonly
transports Him to Idea's of what is most Perfect, finished, and exalted: till
having spared out of his own Reach and Sight, not well perceiving how
near the Frontiers of Height and Depth, border upon each other: With the
same Course and Wing, he falls down plum into the lowest Bottom of
Things. (p.99)

This discussion sharply exposes modern man's inability to acquire the *via media* based on reason and common sense and to control imagination and pride. But the Teller uses it for explaining how the Aeolists soar up to the idea of God and then fall down to that of the Devil, while Swift deliberately maneuvers his devastating irony so as to reinforce the sense of the ridiculous in the "Physico-logical" argument itself on the AEolist's enthusiasm and at the same time to present the AEolists as humourists moving between the extremes of "High and Low, of Good and Evil." As Samuel Butler describes, the humourists go from one extreme to the other, because their humour prevents them from making the sensible judgment of their situation.²⁰

The Aeolists, after all, does not discard reason completely but distort it, in the same way as the moderns invert religion into the worship of fashion. Moreover, both the moderns and the AEolists somehow manage the extremes of surface and depth, "High and Low," and "Good and Evil" into an ambiguous harmony in the same way as Peter and Jack in the end

appear the same at a distance. Swift, thus by making them humourists, mockingly verifies what Pope's Martinus Scriblerus later argues in linking the proximity of "High and Low" with want of reason and common sense in the modern critics and authors:

We come now to prove, that there is an *Art of Sinking* in Poetry. Is there not an Architecture of Vaults and Cellars, as well as of lofty Domes and Pyramids? Is there not as much Skill and Labour in making *Dykes*, as in raising *Mounts*? Is there not an Art of *Diving* as well as of *Flying*? ...But all that lies between [the *Sublime* of Nature and the *Profound* of Nature]... are of mean price, and so common as not to be greatly esteem'd by the Curious: It being certain that any thing, of which we know the Use, cannot be Invaluable: Which affords a Solution, Why *common Sense* hath either been totally despis'd, or held in small Repute, by the greatest modern Criticks and Authors. 21

Swift brings the two groups together in "*A Digression concerning the Original, the Use and Improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth*." This section is an analysis of madness as the psychological version of evil, exposing the infinite pleasures of self-delusion and pride. To the Modern persona, madness is a "Physico-logical" state of mind when the vapors bred at the lower parts of the body rise up and shake the brain out of its natural position. All the "greatest Actions" of the world (in his praise of madness the Modern Writer more and more sounding like the modern "projector") originate in these vapors--"*the Establishment of New Empires by Conquest: the Advance and Progress of New Schemes in Philosophy: and the contriving, as well as the propagating of New Religions*" (p.102). The progress of madness with vapors or imagination overcoming reason is explained:

But when a Man's Fancy gets *astride* on his Reason, when Imagination is at Cuffs with the Senses, and common Understanding, as well as common Sense, is Kickt out of Doors, the first Proselyte he makes, is Himself. (p.108)

Humour is ready to help imagination shake man's brain out of its natural position. Pope illustrates how the medieval notion of "humour" becomes one with "ruling Passion" or "disposition" and influences imagination:

The Mind's disease, its ruling Passion came:
Each vital humour which should feed the whole,
Soon flows to this, in body and in soul.
Whatever warms the heart, or fills the head,
As the mind opens, and its functions spread,
Imagination plies her dang'rous art,
And pours it all upon the peccant part. 22

To be blinded by humour produces the same state of mind, in reality, as that caused by the triumph of imagination over reason.

However, into that state of mind "comes Reason officiously, with Tools for cutting, and opening, and mangling, and piercing, offering to demonstrate that [things] are not of the same consistence quite thro'," that "in the inside they are good for nothing," and that "the *Outside*

hath been infinitely preferable to the *In*" (p.109). From all these observations, the Teller forms his conclusion, perfectly consistent with his humour of modernity, in surmising things at the surface in "Physico-logical" terms:

whatever Philosopher or Projector can find out an Art to sodder and patch up the Flaws and Imperfections of Nature, will deserve much better of Mankind, and teach us a more useful science, than that so much in present Esteem, of widening and exposing them (like him who held Anatomy to be the ultimate End of *Physick*)... He that can with *Epicurus* content his Ideas with the *Films* and *Images* that fly off upon his Senses from the Superficies of Things: such a Man truly wise, creams off Nature, leaving the Sower and the Dregs, for Philosophy and Reason to lap up. This is the sublime and refined Point of Felicity, called, *the Possession of being well deceived*: the Serene Peaceful State of being a Fool among Knaves. (p.110)

To the Teller, whose learning has been constantly misapplied and whose reasoning he has put to the service of his love of delusion, proselyting, and distinction, Reason piercing beneath the surface of things is "the last Degree of perverting Nature" (p.109). He admires philosophers and projectors who can delude the senses and loquaciously insists that madness and delusion are superior to sanity, reason and science, the former being a "fool" and the latter "knaves." On the contrary, to his creator, Swift, delusion, madness, proselyting, and pride are placed opposite to reason, respect for the natural, the "Ancient Rules,"²³ and Anglicanism, for he is assured that "every Man is bound to follow the Rules and Directions of the Measure of Reason which God hath given him," and he would not believe the angel even if the angel commanded him to believe at noon that it is midnight.²⁴ Though he can find "so many unsuspected Faults under one Suit of Cloaths" (p.109), he would not conclude that "in the inside things are good for nothing." A credulous reader, like the devotees of AEolism, may accept that happiness consists in some sensory delusion reducing humanity to things, but the words --"deceived," "Fool" (in French, *fou* means madman), and "Knaves" in contrast with "sublime," "refined," "Serene," and "Peaceful"--expose, of their own accord, the disparity in connotation between the two groups which should lead up to the same destination--happiness. If the reader stumbles here, he should go back to the Teller's description of sanity:

the Brain, in its natural Position and State of Serenity, disposeth its Owner to pass his Life in the common Forms, without any Thought of subduing Multitudes to his own Power, his Reasons or his Visions: and the more he shapes his Understanding by the Pattern of Human Learning, the less he is inclined to form Parties after his particular Notions: because that instructs him in his private Infirmities, as well as in the stubborn Ignorance of the People. (p.108)

Swift presents to the reader the misleading logic by the Modern Writer, while making clear his own position through his careful choice of words, situations, and the character of the speaker, who has made "*Invention* the *Master*," giving "*Method* and *Reason*, the Office of its Lacquays" (p.134). The Teller proudly confesses that he has the happiness to be a former Bedlamite (p.111) in his praise and defense of madness. The reader is shocked to face the

either-or choice between surface and depth, credulity and curiosity, imagination and reason, fool and knave, if he is ever interested in happiness, but his tension is "disarmed" by the mechanism of laughter²⁵ when the modern theorist unmask himself as a madman.

Swift is distinct, we may say, then, from the Teller and the other personae in this work, and Queen Anne's displeasure with Swift, confusing the narrator's blasphemy as Swift's,²⁶ may have resulted from the misreading of Swift's true meaning which is evoked through his ironic manipulation of the personae and their speeches. If we keep our common sense on the alert, however, we perceive how deviated the Teller becomes from rationality, driven by his humour arising from his pride in modern man and his achievements. He goes from one extreme to the other: in his enthusiasm in being the despotic authority over nature and time, he tries to soar up beyond his reach and confounds himself down into the reality of ridiculous irrationality. "High" and "Low" become transposed terms in such a world of humour of modernity and inverted rational order, whether it is social, religious, or rhetorical. The "Physico-logical" interpretation of humanity is preferable to the rational. In place of order and the timeless, modern men choose constantly changing fashions and compete endlessly for distinction, self-defense, and power.

The Teller, indeed, is presented as a humourist and the modern world is possessed with the same humour as the Teller's. If the perversion of order, as the Teller himself insists in "The Preface," has come from *The Leviathan*, in which Thomas Hobbes advocates that in his natural state every man, driven by his self-love, is in perpetual war against every man, through competition, diffidence, and glory, disregarding "the notions of right and wrong,"²⁷ we say that the same modern perversion of order is bred by the humour of modernity. The Teller has, however, another humour. Consistent with his poverty-stricken, half-starved situation and inadequate learning, his use of imagery is often of food, vulgar and misapplied. Wisdom becomes a fox, cheese, a hen, and a nut with a worm in it (p.40). His body is as deformed by poxes and venereal diseases as his mind. His observation of the dissection of a beau's brain, heart, and spleen is grotesque and revolting unless the reporter's attitude is objective, amoral,²⁸ gay, and enthusiastic about his discoveries for the public good. The Teller's humour is not only a target of ridicule as the deviation from the normal but it is "odd, grotesque and wild."²⁹

Swift, with his ironic management of his personae as humourists, perceives and depicts the deviation, hence the ridiculousness, of the modern spirit, exemplified by the Teller, and lets him soar up and fall down between surface and depth and between imagination and reason, until in his praise of modernity he unwittingly debases the objects of his panegyric, in the face of the *via media* in religion, represented by Martin, the "common Forms" of life, and the traditional "Pattern of Human Learning." Laughter shakes us when he complacently says that he is a madman, whose "Speculations" none of his friends believe (p.114). Indeed, Swift's is dramatic irony, which G. G. Sedgewick defines as "the sense of contradiction felt by spectators of a drama who see a character acting in ignorance of his condition,"³⁰ and the Teller's humour is "certainly the best Ingredient towards that Kind of Satyr, which is most useful, and gives the least Offence; which, instead of lashing, laughs Men out of their Follies, and Vices."³¹

In *A Tale of Tub* irony and humour so well temper satire that Swift is reported to have exclaimed, looking at the book in his old age, "Good God, what a genius I had when I wrote that work!"³² Whether or not the book be meant for a tub wherewith to divert and "prevent [the] *Leviathans* from tossing and sporting with the *Commonwealth*" (pp.24-25), it is great fun to read such a work.

NOTES

1. Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad*, I. 19-20.
2. William Bragg Ewald, Jr., *The Masks of Jonathan Swift* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954), p.62; Martin Price, *Swift's Rhetorical Art : A Study in Structure and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p.62.
3. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, s. v. "person."
4. Swift has left many pieces of character-writing, such as *Mrs. Howard* and *Rev. Thomas Sheridan*. See Jonathan Swift, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Shakespeare Head Press, 1939), V.211-238.
5. Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., *Swift and the Satiric Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p.12.
6. Alexander M. Witherspoon et al., eds. *The College Survey of English Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1951), p.309.
7. See John Dryden, *Mac Flecknoe*, Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* and *The Dunciad*, and Jonathan Swift, *The Battle of the Books*.
8. Witherspoon et al., p.341.
9. M. A. Harris, "The Origin of the Seventeenth Century Idea of Humours," *MLN*, X, No.2 (1895), 89.
10. Witherspoon et al., p.487.
11. Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, No.271.
12. Ewald, pp.188-189.
13. Swift boasts that he himself was "born to introduce,/Refin'd [irony] first, and shew'd its Use," in "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, D. S. P. D.," Jonathan Swift, *Collected Poems of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Joseph Horrell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), II, 721.
14. Jonathan Swift, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. F. Elrington Ball (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1910), III, 276.
15. Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, I, 1.
16. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, "The Man and his Work," in *Ben Jonson*, eds. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1952), I, 340-343; J. E. Spingarn, "Introduction," to *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. J. E. Spingarn (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), I, lviii.
17. Corbyn Morris, *An Essay on Wit, Humour, Raillery, Etc.* The Augustan Reprint Society (New York: Klaus, 1967), p.12.
18. *Ibid.*, p.15.
19. *Ibid.*, p.17.
20. Samuel Butler, *Characters and Passages from Note-Books*, ed. A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), p.138. Here Butler means by the humourist: "a peculiar Fantastic, that has a wonderful natural Affection to some particular Kind of Folly, to which he applies himself, and in Time becomes eminent. 'Tis commonly some out-lying Whimsie of *Bedlam*, that being tame and unhurtful is suffered to go at Liberty. ... He knows no mean: for that is inconsistent with all Humour, which is never found but in some Extreme or other."
21. Alexander Pope, "Peri Bathous, or, Of the Art of Sinking in Poetry," in Alexander Pope, *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*, ed. Aubrey Williams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p.394.
22. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, II, 138-144.
23. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, I, 139. Here Pope says: "Learn hence for Ancient Rules a just Esteem;/To copy *Nature* is to copy *Them*."

24. Jonathan Swift, "On the Trinity," *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, IX, 161.
25. Lee Byron Jennings, *The Ludicrous Demon: Aspects of the Grotesque in German Post-Romantic Prose*, *University of California Publications in Modern Philology*, LXXI (1960), 14.
26. William Makepeace Thackeray, *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Grey Walls Press, 1949), pp.28-29.
27. Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan: or the Matter, Forms and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1959), pp.64-66.
28. Louis Cazamian, *The Development of English Humor* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1952), p.156. Here Cazamian says: "Humor indeed, whatever its object, always works by the apparent and paradoxical abdication of our power or willingness to judge normally of things. The 'judgments' that in the present instance abdicate are the ethical ones: and the seeming disappearance of the sense of right and wrong creates the silent absurdity which is, one way or another, at the source of humor."
29. Jonathan Swift, "An Epistle to Mr. Delany," in *Collected Poems of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Joseph Horrel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), II, 586.
30. G. G. Sedgewick, *Of Irony Especially in Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p.49.
31. Jonathan Swift, *Intelligencer*, No.3, in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, XII, 33.
32. Thackeray, p.30.

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原稿受理 1985年9月6日