TALE OF A TUB is among the most extraordinary works in any literature, and it is something of a standing wonder to me that any of our clichés about Augustanism have survived the simple fact of its existence. The period bracketed by A Tale of a Tub and Tristram Shandy cannot constitute a literary Age of Reason. For all that, the Tale is a thoroughly Augustan work, having important links with both The Rape of the Lock and The Dunciad and with the same body of materials that lies behind them. Its concerns resemble those of Pope’s poems: in its radical disjunction of form and content it links intelligibly with The Rape of the Lock; in its employment of a pervasive materialism as a central metaphor it connects with The Dunciad. The same process of reification that informed Dunciad 4 proceeds also in the Tale:

However, for this Meddly of Humor, he made a Shift to find a very plausible Name, honoring it with the Title of Zeal; which is, perhaps, the most significant Word that hath been ever yet produced in any Language; As, I think, I have fully proved in my excellent Analytical Discourse upon that Subject; wherein I have deduced a Histori-theo-physi-logical Account of Zeal, shewing how it first proceeded from a Notion into a Word, and from thence in a hot Summer, ripned into a tangible Substance. (6.86)

The growth of notions into words in the Tale briefly summarizes the spread of Dulness from Cibber’s leaden works to the great work of the
achieved leaden age: ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. That is the relation of *A Tale of a Tub* to the epic ancestors we have been studying.

I

Swift's manipulation of materialism here both resembles and differs from Pope's use of it. As in *The Dunciad*, it provides a control and a touchstone for the central concerns of the book. Such plot as there is depends entirely upon the "thingness" of the will and the coats — the will as a collection of words, syllables, and letters to be sorted and arranged to produce the desired meanings, the coats as a surface to be filled up to produce the desired appearance. Peter's search through the will *totidem literis* reduces it and its contents *effectively* to manipulable objects; Jack's use of it as an umbrella merely ratifies this. At the extremes, the opposites meet: Peter's total disregard for the literal meaning of the will evacuates it of meaning and makes of it only a piece of paper; Jack's exaggerated respect for its literal meaning makes it no more or no less than that. The real will, like the Scriptures it represents, is a *tertium quid* that responds neither to literalizing nor to allegorizing but provides the nexus of both, just as the coats, for the reader, are transparently coats and Christian faith at one and the same time.

Metaphor — human language — causes all the difficulty. In one sense bread is the staff of life that Peter claims it is; in another sense, it is not "excellent good Mutton" (4). So, too, Jack's "fair Copy of his Father's Will": it both is and is not "Meat, Drink and Cloth, . . . the Philosopher's Stone, and the Universal Medicine" (11). Neither Peter nor Jack nor the narrator of *A Tale of a Tub* seems able to grasp this aspect of language, and as a result, language seems always to be slipping away from them, to become either a series of hieroglyphs to be arranged and interpreted according to the whim of the critic or to become a parchment to be carried, worn, consumed, and so on. Jack's attitude toward the will matches the narrator's toward the "universal System in a small portable Volume" (5), for which he gives a recipe; contradictorily, the narrator's pursuit of the allegory of the ass (3) corresponds to Peter's hunt in the will for those elusive shoulder knots (2). This failure of all
three to recognize the true nature of language derives from the narrator's
more fundamental failure to see the duality of human nature as a linking
of corporeal and spiritual, and leads in turn to the two antithetical
metaphysical systems of the Tale, Sartorism and Aeolism.

Sartorism offers a philosophy of outsides. It glorifies the external, the
surface to be filled and adorned. Sartorism provides the compelling
necessity for altering the three brothers' coats, for overlaying them with
shoulder knots and filigree and silver points, just as it offers the adequate
explanation of the overdecorated and fabulous nature of Grubaean art.

In consequence of these momentous Truths, the Grubaean
Sages have always chosen to convey their Precepts and their
Arts, shut up within the Vehicles of Types and Fables, which
having been perhaps more careful and curious in adorning,
than was altogether necessary, it has fared with these Vehicles
after the usual Fate of Coaches over-finely painted and gilt;
that the transitory Gazers have so dazzled their Eyes, and
fill'd their Imaginations with the outward Lustre, as neither to
regard nor consider, the Person or the Parts of the Owner
within. A Misfortune we undergo with somewhat less Reluc­
tancy, because it has been common to us with Pythagoras,
Aesop, Socrates, and other of our Predecessors. (1.40)

Moreover, Sartorism provides a refuge from reason with its "Tools for
cutting, and opening, and mangling, and piercing," "which enters into
the Depth of Things, and then comes gravely back with Informations and
Discoveries, that in the inside they are good for nothing." Analytical
thinking ends in uncovering the "many unsuspected Faults" of the beau
and the sadly altered carcass of the woman flayed (9), whereas Sartorism
offers to the believer a universe dressed for show, from the "fine Coat
faced with Green," which is land, to the "fine Doublet of white Satin
. . . worn by the Birch" (2).

Swift has fashioned Sartorism as a kind of parody of Hobbism: the
paragraph of rhetorical questions that describes land as a green coat and
sea as a "Wastcoat of Water-Tabby" (2) alludes to, and satirizes, the
rhetorically and logically similar opening of Leviathan.¹
Nature, the art whereby God hath made and governs the world, is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal. For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within; why may we not say, that all *automata* (engines that move themselves by springs and wheels as doth a watch) have an artificial life? For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the artificer? Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of nature, man. For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE, in Latin CIVITAS, which is but an artificial man; though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the magistrates, and other officers of judicature and execution, artificial joints; reward and punishment, by which fastened to the seat of sovereignty every joint and member is moved to perform his duty, are the nerves, that do the same in the body natural; the wealth and riches of all the particular members, are the strength; salus populi, the people's safety, its business, counsellors, by whom all things needful for it to know are suggested unto it, are the memory, equity, and laws, an artificial reason and will; concord, health; sedition, sickness, and civil war, death. Lastly, the pacts and covenants, by which the parts of this body politic were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that fiat, or the let us make man, pronounced by God in the creation.²

Hobbes's argument is reductive in two ways: his mechanical metaphors (which are only half metaphors on their way to being taken literally, like the metaphors of *A Tale of a Tub*) reduce human life and human beings to purely material, physically explicable phenomena; and God's activity, for all its prominence in the first and last sentences, is very strictly paralleled with, if not equated to, man's own devices. Swift incorporates
both points into his parody and makes them the basis of Sartorism. God is clearly a human artificer, and he creates artificial animals — clothes that are souls — which then possess life (if life is defined as "but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within"). Swift carries the process of materialization to its logical conclusion by a strict literalization of all metaphor:

> The Worshippers of this Deity had also a System of their Belief, which seemed to turn upon the following Fundamental. They held the Universe to be a large *Suit of Cloaths*, which *invests* every Thing: That the Earth is *invested* by the Air; The Air is *invested* by the Stars; and the Stars are *invested* by the *Primum Mobile*. Look on this Globe of Earth, you will find it to be a very compleat and fashionable *Dress*. What is that which some call *Land*, but a fine Coat faced with Green? or the Sea, but a Wastcoat of Water-Tabby? Proceed to the particular Works of the Creation, you will find how curious *Journey-man* Nature hath been, to trim up the *vegetable* Beaux: Observe how sparkish a Perewig adorns the *Head of a Beech*, and what a fine Doublet of white Satin is worn by the *Birch*. To conclude from all, what is Man himself but a *Micro-Coat*, or rather a compleat Suit of Cloaths with all its Trimmings? As to his Body, there can be no dispute; but examine even the Acquirements of his Mind, you will find them all contribute in their Order, towards furnishing out an exact Dress: To instance no more; Is not Religion a *Cloak*, Honest 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. (2.46)

What lies behind all this, of course, are the ancient metaphor of the body as the clothing of the soul and its somewhat younger corollary of style as the dress of thought. Swift's narrator and Swift's satire materialize and mechanize both of these, so that "*Embroidery, was Sheer Wit*" (2) and art, in effect, "the Assistance of Artificial *Mediums*, false Lights,
refracted Angles, Varnish, and Tinsel" (9) to cover the otherwise insipid objects of the world and to make men happy. This results in the narrator’s thinking of everything in his world not only as an object, but as an object that exists primarily as a surface to be covered: the body requires clothing, books need long introductions, fables necessitate elaborate allegories. Anything possessing a point, be it reason or satire, may not be allowed to pierce the surface — thus his disclaimer of having “neither a Talent nor an Inclination for Satyr” (The Preface) and his preference for general satire over particular: “Tis but a Ball bandied to and fro, and every Man carries a Racket about Him to strike it from himself among the rest of the Company” (The Preface). His own summation of the consequences of his position says it best:

In the Proportion that Credulity is a more peaceful Possession of the Mind, than Curiosity, so far preferable is that Wisdom, which converses about the Surface, to that pretended Philosophy which enters into the Depth of Things, and then comes gravely back with Informations and Discoveries, that in the inside they are good for nothing. The two Senses, to which all Objects first address themselves, are the Sight and the Touch; These never examine farther than the Colour, the Shape, the Size, and whatever other Qualities dwell, or are drawn by Art upon the Outward of Bodies; and then comes Reason officiously, with Tools for cutting, and opening, and mangling, and piercing, offering to demonstrate, that they are not of the same consistence quite thro’. Now, I take all this to be the last Degree of perverting Nature; one of whose Eternal Laws it is, to put her best Furniture forward. And therefore, in order to save the Charges of all such expensive Anatomy for the Time to come; I do here think fit to inform the Reader, that in such Conclusions as these. Reason is certainly in the Right; and that in most Corporeal Beings, which have fallen under my Cognizance, the Outside hath been infinitely preferable to the In: Whereof I have been farther convinced from some late Experiments. Last Week I saw a Woman flay’d, and you will hardly believe, how much it altered her Person for the worse. Yesterday I ordered the Carcass of a Beau to be stript in my
Presence; when we were all amazed to find so many unsuspected Faults under one Suit of Cloaths; Then I laid open his Brain, his Heart, and his Spleen; But, I plainly perceived at every Operation, that the farther we proceeded, we found the Defects encrease upon us in Number and Bulk: from all which, I justly formed this Conclusion to my self; That 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.) And he, whose Fortunes and Dispositions have placed him in a convenient Station to enjoy the Fruits of this noble Art; 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. (9.109–10)

Directly contradictory to all this is the narrator’s apparent fondness for Jack and for Aeolism, for the doctrine of (somewhat loosely) the inner light and the philosophy of insides. Aeolism depends in its very rudiments upon the contents of its vessels, male and female, for its doctrine and practice.

At other times were to be seen several Hundreds link’d together in a circular Chain, with every Man a Pair of Bellows applied to his Neighbour’s Breech, by which they blew up each other to the Shape and Size of a Tun; and for that Reason, with great Propriety of Speech, did usually call their Bodies, their Vessels. When, by these and the like Performances, they were grown sufficiently replete, they would immediately depart, and disembogue for the Publick Good, a plentiful Share of their Acquirements into their Disciples
Chaps. . . . At which Junctures, all their Belches were received for Sacred, the Sourer the better, and swallowed with infinite Consolation by their meager Devotes. And to render these yet more compleat, because the Breath of Man’s Life is in his Nostrils, therefore, the choicest, most edifying, and most enlivening Belches, were very wisely conveyed thro’ that Vehicle, to give them a Tincture as they passed. (8.96-97)

This parodic inspiration closely resembles the narrator’s own notions of the development and flowering of that noblest of all human states, madness, which, as he describes it, arises as well from an inward vapor.

For great Turns are not always given by strong Hands, but by lucky Adaptation, and at proper Seasons; and it is of no import, where the Fire was kindled, if the Vapor has once got up into the Brain. For the upper Region of Man, is furnished like the middle Region of the Air; The Materials are formed from Causes of the widest Difference, yet produce at last the same Substance and Effect. Mists arise from the Earth, Steams from Dunghils, Exhalations from the Sea, and Smoak from Fire; yet all Clouds are the same in Composition, as well as Consequences; and the Fumes issuing from a Jakes, will furnish as comely and useful a Vapor, as Incense from an Altar. Thus far, I suppose, will easily be granted me; and then it will follow, that as the Face of Nature never produces Rain, but when it is overcast and disturbed, so Human Understanding, seated in the Brain, must be troubled and overspread by Vapours, ascending from the lower Faculties, to water the Invention, and render it fruitful. Now, altho’ these Vapours (as it hath been already said) are of as various Original, as those of the Skies, yet the Crop they produce, differs both in Kind and Degree, merely according to the Soil. (9.102-3)

And the effects of these vapors are “those two great Blessings, Conquests and Systems” (9.107) — among the latter, of course, Sartorism and Aeolism themselves.
The beliefs of Aeolism are not as distant from Sartorism as they at first sight appear: both are materialist philosophies, equally dependent upon a resolutely corporeal understanding of what is meant by soul. Aeolism literalizes metaphoric language — witness "spirit" and "inspiration" — as insistently as does Sartorism. And if we recall Sartorism's point of origin in Hobbes, the resemblance grows even stronger. The narrator explains inspiration, intuition, vision, and madness in a purely mechanical way, making of human beings comic steam engines churning out, and churned by, vapors. Hobbes claimed that "life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within," and went on to ask "what is the heart but a spring, and the nerves but so many strings, and the joints but so many wheels giving motion to the whole body such as was intended by the artificer?" The narrator of the Tale inquires similarly about a particular instance of madness:

Now is the Reader exceeding curious to learn, from whence this Vapour took its Rise, which had so long set the Nations at a Gaze? What secret Wheel, what hidden Spring could put into Motion so wonderful an Engine? It was afterwards discovered, that the Movement of this whole Machine had been directed by an absent Female, whose Eyes had raised a Protuberancy, and before Emission, she was removed into an Enemy's Country... Having to no purpose used all peaceable Endeavours, the collected part of the Semen, raised and enflamed, became adust, converted to Choler, turned head upon the spinal Duct, and ascended to the Brain. (9.103-4)

Aeolism provides the complement of Sartorism in offering an explanation of the "principle part within" that provides motion to the automata. Both systems work to ensure the happiness of the self-deceived, whether the focal point of the deception be the lucubrations of one's own brain or "the Films and Images... from the Superficies of Things" (9.110). As the narrator assures us, "A strong Delusion always operat[es] from without, as vigorously as from within" (9.108).
Between them, Aeolism and Sartorism generate the metaphors that control the structure and meaning of the *Tale of a Tub*. These can be found in the images and notions of insides and outsides, containers and contained, and the shifting allegiance of the narrator to one or the other. The tub itself and its antitypes, the oratorical machines, are containers to be valued for their contents. Grubaean writings, we are told, contain great arcana, and superficial readers must “be persuaded to inspect beyond the Surface and Rind of Things,” for

*Wisdom* is a *Fox*, who after long hunting, will at last cost you the Pains to dig out: 'Tis a *Cheese*, which by how much the richer, has the thicker, the homelier, and the courser Coat; and whereof to a judicious Palate, the *Maggots* are the best. 'Tis a *Sack-Posset*, wherein the deeper you go, you will find it the sweeter. *Wisdom* is a *Hen*, whose *Cackling* we must value and consider, because it is attended with an *Egg*; But then, lastly, 'tis a *Nut*, which unless you chuse with Judgment, may cost you a Tooth, and pay you with nothing but a *Worm*. (1.40)

The coats themselves are outsides, exterior souls, and the tailor-god who creates them perches emblematically upon what the narrator with uncharacteristic brevity simply calls a superficies, a surface. The critical mirror that the narrator describes (3.63) “cast[s] Reflections from its own Superficies, without any Assistance of Mercury from behind.” Peter's feast retains the outward appearance of brown bread, but “in [this] *Bread is contained, inclusive, the Quintessence of Beef, Mutton, Veal, Venison, Partridge, Plum-pudding, and Custard*” (4.72). The narrator, “with a World of Pains and Art, dissected the Carcass of *Humane Nature*, and read many useful Lectures upon the several Parts, both *Containing and Contained*” (5.77), as a result of which “throughout this Divine Treatise,” he “skilfully kneaded up both together with a *Layer of Utile* and a *Layer of Dulce*” (5.77). The Aeolists, of course, see themselves as vessels and containers of their divine winds and view these contents as of crucial importance; nevertheless, even among them outsides are held in some honor, and the size of
ears were “not only lookt upon as an Ornament of the Outward Man, but as a Type of Grace in the Inward” (11.129). And outwardly, of course, Jack looked very much like Peter, and was often mistaken for him. The narrator reports the opinion of “the famous Troglodyte Philosopher”:

‘Tis certain (said he) some Grains of Folly are of course annexed, as Part of the Composition of Human Nature, only the Choice is left us, whether we please to wear them Inlaid or Embossed; And we need not go very far to seek how that is usually determined, when we remember, it is with Human Faculties as with Liquors, the lightest will be ever at the Top. (10.116)

And beyond all this, the fable of Peter, Martin, and Jack and the digressions of the narrator stand in an unsteady inside-outside relation to each other, one or the other of them being, in theory, the empty container thrown out to the whale to prevent that Leviathan — in a strikingly mixed metaphor — “from laying violent Hands” (Preface, p. 24) on Church and State. The narrator clearly indicates the equivalence of these apparent opposites when he moves blithely from an encomium of madness and the inward generation of delusion (9) to a statement of preference for outward delusion, praising the man who “can with Epicurus content his Ideas with the Films and Images that fly off upon his Senses from the Superficies of Things” (9.110). He demonstrates the same thing structurally by the total conflation of fable and digression at the end of the Tale, so it is indeed merely a matter of choice whether we read our follies “Inlaid or Embossed.”

The interaction of outsides and insides furnishes the essential key to reading the Tale intelligibly. The narrator understands both physically: outsides are bodies, and insides are more bodies, fragments of bodies, or mechanical causes of motion in bodies. The narrator really thinks he is getting inside human beings when he sees a woman flayed or a beau stripped; he believes he is mastering the insides of books when he learns their titles or scans their indexes. For that reason, his own book accumulates a large collection of outsides — title page, epigraphs, lists of other books. “An Apology,” “Postscript,” the bookseller’s dedication, “The
Bookseller to the Reader," "The Epistle Dedicatory to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity," "The Preface" and finally Section I, "The Introduction." Inside all of that is the tale itself, which the narrator constantly goes outside of to give us his theories about criticism, madness, digressions, and so on. All of these he also views physically, as material additions to the magnitude of his work:

. . . having the Modern Inclination to expatiate upon the Beauty of my own Productions, and display the bright Parts of my Discourse; I thought best to do it in the Body of the Work, where, as it now lies, it makes a very considerable Addition to the Bulk of the Volume, a Circumstance by no means to be neglected by a skilful Writer. (5.82)

Despite surface appearances, the narrator of A Tale of a Tub acts in a reasonably consistent manner toward his book. It essentially offers him another surface to be adorned or another tub to be filled up: whether we regard the Tale as an inside or an outside depends entirely upon whether we decide he is adorning a surface or filling a container. He is at least perceptive enough to see that those acts are identical. If Sartorism makes the body an inside and the soul an outside, Peter's actions nevertheless use the coats as surfaces to be adorned — and do so to such a degree that what started as an outside becomes an inside to be uncovered by Martin and Jack in their own diverse fashions. The same paradox is true of human bodies: insides in the tenets of Sartorism, they become for the narrator surfaces to be decorated and at all costs not to be entered. At the extremes, the opposites meet, as Jack and Peter so often do, and the narrator at least sees that "Inlaid or Embossed" is our only choice about anything.

As readers, we confront that choice at every paragraph of the Tale. The story of Peter, Martin, and Jack is clearly an allegory, a parable, that demands interpretation — demands that we enter into it and examine its contents. How shall we do that? By Peter's method of textual analysis? That method leads the narrator to conclude that critics are asses — which may be true, but is only another metaphoric statement
that itself requires further explanation, and, taken in any sense, is hardly comforting to us. By Jack's method, then, of total literalism? We are then indeed dealing with a tale of a tub: there's nothing in it. And what of the supposed digressions? Most of them are not genuinely digressive at all. Are they the real point of the Tale and the fable only a delusive outside? If that is the case what holds it all together? What structures it and regulates its progress? How are we to get inside the digressions — inside an inside — and uncover their meaning? Or is their meaning, too, all there on the surface?

The answers to all these questions lie in a more precise definition of the kinds of insides and the kinds of outsides we and the narrator are dealing with. Probably the most pertinent place to begin clarifying these matters is with the narrator's use of the traditional metaphor of the mirror of art — a metaphor we have already seen adapted in a similar (I think) manner by Pope in The Rape of the Lock. Here, the narrator speaks of the critical mirror particularly. He stresses the superficial nature of the reflection involved: only surfaces are reproduced; the imitation is confined to the material, to the body alone.

A certain Author, whose Works have many Ages since been entirely lost, does in his fifth Book and eighth Chapter, say of Criticks, that their Writings are the Mirrors of Learning. This I understand in a literal Sense, and suppose our Author must mean, that whoever designs to be a perfect Writer, must inspect into the Books of Criticks, and correct his Invention there as in a Mirror. Now, whoever considers, that the Mirrors of the Ancients were made of Brass, and sine Mercurio, may presently apply the two Principal Qualifications of a True Modern Critick, and consequently, must needs conclude that these have always been, and must be for ever the same. For Brass is an Emblem of Duration, and when it is skilfully burnished, will cast Reflections from its own Superficies, without any Assistance of Mercury from behind. All the other Talents of a Critick will not require a particular Mention, being included, or easily deducible to these. (3.63)
Let us pass over the narrator's interesting literalism and the possible significations of Mercury and Brass to concentrate on the extremely corporeal version of artistic reflection that Swift here describes. The mirror itself is presented as a solid surface that resists penetration: it lacks physical or metaphorical depths. The image is quite physically thrown back from this superficial. The reflexiveness of this process approximates what took place before Belinda's mirror: the kind of criticism Swift here describes literally creates in its own image or simply repeats its own image, just as Shadwell repeated Flecknoe. But I have talked about this particular process enough in other chapters. Swift's lines are illuminating for another reason: his conception and his language are Lucretian. He is in fact employing here Lucretius's description of the behavior of atoms in the formation of reflected images. These are the same "Films and Images that fly off... from the Superficies of Things" that the narrator assured us contented Epicurus and "a Man truly wise" (9.110; see Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, 4.26 ff.).

The narrator behaves as a perfect Lucretian throughout the Tale. His epigraph from the De Rerum Natura sets him a task equivalent to Lucretius's:

'Tis sweet to crop fresh Flow'rs, and get a Crown
For new and rare Inventions of my own:
So noble, great, and gen'rous the Design,
That none of all the mighty Tuneful Nine
Shall grace a Head with Laurels like to mine.
For first, I teach great Things in lofty Strains,
And loose Men from Religion's grievous Chains.

(1.935-41)6

Later he refers to himself as Secretary of the Universe and again quotes lines from the De Rerum Natura that level his undertaking with Lucretius's:

——— Quemvis preferre laborem
Suadet, & inducit noctes vigilare serenas.

(1.141-42)
... I wake all Night,  
Lab'ring fit Numbers, and fit Words to find,  
To make Things plain, and to instruct your Mind,  
And teach her to direct her curious Eye  
Into coy Nature's greatest Privacy.  

(1.172–76; see Tale, 5.77)

And once again — this time with explicit reference to Jack — he quotes from the same Lucretian passage that provided his epigraph:

——— Mellaeo contingens cuncta Lepore.  

(6.89)

Creech somewhat loosely translates as follows (I will give the clauses preceding to make clear the connection between this and what I have already quoted):

For first, I teach great Things in lofty Strains,  
And loose Men from Religion's grievous Chains:  
Next, tho' my Subject's dark, my Verse is clear,  
And sweet, with Fancy flowing ev'ry where.

(1.940–43)

Implicitly, this casts the narrator as the poet-propagandist-disciple Lucretius to Jack's guide-philosopher-exemplar Epicurus; his task, like Lucretius's, is to expound the system of his master. At all events, these explicit parallels and the ubiquity of reference to, and quotation from, De Rerum Natura delineate the narrator's role.

The Lucretian materials are certainly not accidental: they form an integral part of the mind and character of the narrator of the Tale, and at the very least add a piquant irony to "the freshest Modern ['s]" frequent deplorings of the ignorance of the ancients. As we have seen, he conceptualizes vision and the process of mirroring according to the tenets of Lucretian atomic theory. He presents as well an impeccable Lucretian case for the material nature and effects of language, paraphrasing and quoting Lucretius to the effect that air and words are heavy bodies leaving consequently material impressions on implicitly material minds.
The deepest Account, and the most fairly digested of any I have yet met with, is this, That Air being a heavy Body, and therefore (according to the System of Epicurus) continually descending, must needs be more so, when loaden and press'd down by Words; which are also 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.

Corpoream quoque enim vocem constare fatendum est, 
Et sonitum, quoniam possunt impellere Sensus. Lucr. Lib. 4 (1.36)

Creech translates the Latin lines very concisely: "'Tis certain then, that Voice that thus can wound / Is all Material: Body every Sound" (4.545–46). The prose before and after the Latin verse condenses and paraphrases material from the same section of De Rerum Natura, roughly 4.524 ff. and 4.563 ff. respectively. The Aeolists have not failed to grasp at least one implication of these ideas; they argue succinctly that "Words are but Wind; and Learning is nothing but words; Ergo, Learning is nothing but Wind" (8.97). For the Aeolists, of course, that is a compliment.

But wind plays a much more fundamental role in Aeolist cosmology than that quotation indicates. With the kind of literal-mindedness that characterizes the narrator of the Tale, they literalize the forma in forma of man, whether it be called spiritus, animus, afflatus, or anima, into its etymological and imagistic base, wind alone (8.95). This wind we already know to be purely material, and according to Aeolist doctrine it defines the nature of man.

. . . Since Wind had the Master-Share, as well as Operation in every Compound, by Consequence, those Beings must be of chief Excellence, wherein that Primordium appears most prominently to abound; and therefore, Man is in highest Perfection of all created Things, as having by the great
Bounty of Philosophers, been endued with three distinct Animas or Winds, to which the Sage Aeolists, with much Liberality, have added a fourth of equal Necessity, as well as Ornament with the other three; by this quartum Principium, taking in the four Corners of the World; which gave Occasion to that Renowed Cabbalist, Bumbastus, of placing the Body of Man, in due position to the four Cardinal Points.

In Consequence of this, their next Principle was, that Man brings with him into the World a peculiar Portion or Grain of Wind, which may be called a Quinta essentia, extracted from the other four. (7.95–96)

Swift has so managed affairs here that these Aeolist doctrines point by point parallel and parody Lucretius’s explanation of the mortality and materiality of the spirit and the way in which it causes motion in the body — a point with obvious relevance to our earlier discussion of the relation of Aeolism to Hobbes’s “principal part within.” This passage in fact parallels in form and function the parody of Hobbes that preceded the exposition of the tenets of Sartorism. Here is Creech’s translation of part of Lucretius’s argument:

‘Tis Certain then, the Seeds, that frame the Mind,
Are thin, and small, and subtile, and refin’d:
For when the Mind is gone, the former Weight
Each Limb retains, the Bulk remains as great.

And yet ’tis Mixt: for when Life’s Pow’rs decay,
A gentle Breeze with Vapour flies away:
This Vapour likewise shews that Air is there,
All Heat has Air; for Heat, by Nature rare,
Must still be intermixt with Parts of Air.

Well then: we know the Mind and Soul comprise
Three Things; yet from all these no Sense can rise,
No vig’rous Thought from such a Frame as this.
Then we must add a fourth Thing to this Frame;
And yet that Fourth, tho’ Something, has No Name:
Its Parts are smooth, small, subtile, apt to move,
When press'd, or troubl'd by the weakest Shove:
From this comes Sense. (3.220-36)

Next, how these four are mix'd, I would rehearse,
How fitly join'd; but now my flowing Verse
The Poorness of the Latin Tongue does check:
Yet briefly, and as that permits, I'll speak.

They all confus'dly move; no different Space
To each allotted, and no proper Place,
Where this divides, from that, and lies alone;
But all their Pow'r's, conjoin'd, arise as one.
So gen'rally, in ev'ry Piece of Meat,
Our Sense discovers Odour, Savour, Heat;
The Flesh the same: So Heat, and Air, and Wind
Make up one Nature mix'd, and closely join'd
With that Quick Force, which makes them move; and whence
Thro' all the Bodies Parts springs vig'rous Sense.
This Nature's deeply hid; this does possess
The inmost Space, and most remote Recess.
As in our Limbs, the Soul's remov'd from View,
Because its Seeds are thin, and small, and few;
So this fourth Nameless Force within the Soul
Lies hid, its chiefest Part, and rules the Whole.
So likewise must the Heat, and Air, and Wind
Be in convenient Place, and Order join'd:
This must be uppermost, that lower fall,
To make it seem One Nature, fram'd of All:
Lest Heat and Air, plac'd seprately, distract
The Pow'r of Sense, and make it cease to act. (3.250-75)

The three animae and the quartum principium tally in both texts; the
Aeolists' "Quinta essentia, extracted from the other four" seems trans­
parently a parodic extension of Lucretius's mysterious blending of his
principles into an inexplicable unity. It is somewhat difficult to deter-
mine, at this point, whether Swift is using the rationalistic system of Lucretius to debunk the obscurantism of the sects, or the obscurantism of the sects to explode the rationalism of Lucretius, or where either stand in relation to the DNA and RNA of modern corpuscular theory. And Swift substantially complicates the parodic element by using Lucretius's description of an epileptic fit as the vehicle for his own description of an Aeolist rite (8.98; compare Lucretius, 3.487 ff. and Creech's translation, 3.469–85).

The Aeolists — and the narrator, apparently — accept the principle of the correspondence of the microcosm and the macrocosm. The narrator describes Aeolist sages delivering their knowledge by adopting

a certain Position of Countenance, which gave undoubted Intelligence to what Degree or Proportion, the Spirit agitated the inward Mass. For, after certain Gripings, the Wind and Vapours issuing forth; having first by their Turbulence and Convulsions within, caused an Earthquake in Man's little World; distorted the Mouth, bloated the Cheeks, and gave the Eyes a terrible kind of Relievo. At which Junctures, all their Belches were received for Sacred, the Sourer the better, and swallowed with infinite Consolation by their meager Devotes. (8.97)

This “Earthquake in Man’s little World” synopsizes Lucretius's description of the process of earthquake in the great world, with no loss of causal relationships and little change of scenery (De Rerum Natura, 6.557 ff.; Creech, 6.540 ff.). And the narrator pursues a similar argument from analogy in tracing the origins and workings of madness:

For the upper Region of Man, is furnished like the middle Region of the Air; The materials are formed from Causes of the widest Difference, yet produce at last the same Substance and Effect. Mists arise from the Earth, Steams from Dung-hils, Exhalations from the Sea, and Smoak from Fire; yet all Clouds are the same in Composition, as well as Consequences: and the Fumes issuing from a Jakes, will furnish as
comely and useful a Vapor, as Incense from an Altar. Thus far, I suppose, will easily be granted me; and then it will follow, that as the Face of Nature never produces Rain, but when it is overcast and disturbed, so Human Understanding, seated in the Brain, must be troubled and overspread by Vapours, ascending from the lower Faculties, to water the Invention, and render it fruitful. Now, altho' these Vapours (as it hath been already said) are of as various Original, as those of the Skies, yet the Crop they produce differs both in Kind and Degree, meerly according to the Soil. (9.102–3)

This argument, too, seems to be a condensation of Lucretius, though the point is not important: see De Rerum Natura, 6.451 ff. In the paragraphs immediately following this, the narrator employs the same process to explain how love becomes madness through the conversion of semen to choler and its ascension to the brain. His language throughout draws explicitly and implicitly on Lucretius's passage on the causes of physical desire (Tale, 9.103–4; De Rerum Natura, 4.103 ff.). In any event, the reversible proposition, as in man so in the universe, seems as firmly established for him and the Aeolists as it earlier was for him and the Sartorists.

In Swift's parodic system, the Lucretian materials obviously provide a philosophic base for Aeolism parallel to Sartorism's roots in Hobbes's works. But Lucretius is more important than that to the narrator, who sees himself as an avatar of the classical poet-scientist-philosopher, like him engaged in clarifying rerum naturam. The Epicurean atomism Lucretius expounds subsumes Hobbes's thinking (which was contemporarily considered a revival of classical atheistic atomism — of Epicurus and Lucretius, in short): Hobbes's materialism and Descartes's vortices (9.105) appear as no more than elaborations of Lucretius's attempt to explain the workings of the universe materially and mechanically. These latter qualities the narrator himself singles out for mention in his brief summation of Epicurus's major tenets:

Epicurus modestly hoped, that one Time or other, a certain Fortuitous Concourse of all Mens Opinions, after
perpetual Justlings, the Sharp with the Smooth, the Light and the Heavy, the Round and the Square, would by certain *Clinamina*, unite in the Notions of *Atoms* and *Void*, as these did in the Originals of all Things. (9.105)

We have already seen the roles of atoms in forming films, images, vapors, the weightiness of speech. The *Clinamina* are, loosely, the angles of incidence, attraction, or attachment of atoms to each other; in classical atomic theory, these and the sizes or qualities of the atoms themselves determine the nature of the body produced. This is also true of the world of the narrator of the *Tale*:

Now, the former *Postulatum* being held, that it is of no Import from what Originals this *Vapour* proceeds, but either in what *Angles* it strikes and spreads over the Understanding, or upon what *Species* of Brain it ascends; It will be a very delicate Point, to cut the Feather, and divide the several Reasons to a Nice and Curious Reader, how this numerical Difference in the Brain, can produce Effects of so vast a Difference from the same *Vapour*, as to be the sole Point of Individuation between *Alexander the Great*, *Jack of Leyden*, and *Monsieur Des Cartes*. (9.107)

And since the microcosm mirrors (in what manner we have already seen) the macrocosm, the behavior of atoms becomes the behavior of men:

But, here the severe Reader may justly tax me as a Writer of short Memory, a Deficiency to which a true *Modern* cannot but of Necessity be a little subject. Because, *Memory* being an employment of the Mind upon things past, is a Faculty, for which the Learned, in our Illustrious Age, have no manner of Occasion, who deal entirely with *Invention*, and strike all Things out of themselves, or at least, by Collision, from each other. . . . (6.84)

And by the same token, the Sartorists argue that what “are vulgarly called *Suits of Clothes*, or *Dresses*, do according to certain Composi-
tions receive different Appellations. . . . If certain Ermins and Furs be placed in a certain Position, we stile them a Judge, and so, an apt Conjunction of Lawn and black Sattin, we intitle a Bishop' (2.47). And Peter's ability to juxtapose an S, an H, an O, and so on, will at length bring forth the desired shoulder knot. Words become bodies, bodies become words, and both are reducible to randomly colliding atoms. This, in its barest form, is the world inhabited by the narrator of A Tale of a Tub.

Swift's latter-day Lucretius has the virtue, for my purposes at least, of making explicit what seems implicit in everyone else. Atomic theory — known to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the "corpuscular theory" — provides the rationale for the insistent process of reification that I have so often remarked on. Hobbes and Descartes do no more than Epicurus and Lucretius in confining human knowledge to the surface of things; Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities — between what is really "in" the object and what human perception puts there — merely reinforces the limitation. Atomism explains those bodies and surfaces. I do not mean this in any loose or haphazard way; I mean precisely that the kind of ideas about language, about body, about society, and about the cosmos that I have been discussing were shaped by the premises and implications of what contemporaries knew as the corpuscular theory and what we glibly pass off as the dawn of Western science. Almost from the Restoration onward, some form of atomic theory dominated scientific investigation, banishing older ideas of the nature of bodies and along with them established notions of the relationships of bodies and souls and spirits of all sorts. 3 What we have seen in literature reflects the substitution of the implications of atomism for Aristotelian genera and species or for the Platonic web of relations between physical existence, the ideal, and the One. Atomism makes transcendence impossible; it lops off a whole, previously inhabited dimension of human life. It calls into being a chaotic, purely material world — and this is the shared accusation that Dryden, Pope, and Swift have leveled at all of their villains. What alarms them is the possibility that bad art can call into being just such a world, that Flecknoe, Shadwell, the Grub Street hack, Belinda, Dulness and her minions, all
can in fact create a cosmos where art is a corpus. Paradoxically, they can only accomplish this because of the shared faith of Dryden, Pope, and Swift in the ability of language to reflect and to affect reality. That is, Dryden's, Pope's, and Swift's fears are based on an acceptance of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy as ontologically true: consequently, the conceptualizations of the human mind and the artistic cosmoses that result from them directly affect the greater world. Atomism eliminates all analogies but one, that of random bodies randomly constellating at all levels of existence. Atomism negates all other modes of relationship and replaces them with a new and terrifying absolute: body totally without access to grace, corporeality that excludes all other forms of existence, all other modes of being. This accounts in large part for the peculiar satiric uses of bodies in Augustan literature, from Shadwell's "Tun of Man" to the Yahoos; this same cosmological revolution radically altered the relationship of language and body for Augustan and all subsequent art.

Looked at on a purely literal level, there is no great gulf between Swift's narrator's account of the origin of madness and Bernardus Silvestris's explanation of the formation of the various humors in the human body (see above, pp. 42–43). From any other point of view, the difference is enormous. Although he does not hesitate to use physical language and mechanical conceptions, Bernardus describes a process that is firmly embedded in a world of analogies and in an analogically intelligible world. What happens chemically in the human body also occurs, mutatis mutandis, morally and intellectually in the human mind or spirit or may be checked, reversed, negated, or redirected by the mind or spirit. Astrological phenomena and terrestrial phenomena may parallel human actions, but they do not control them. Body may explicate spirit for limited intelligences, but it does not dominate spirit. In the world of A Tale of a Tub, body is spirit, as the Aeolists so amply prove, and the point of such analogies as remain is their physical necessity. Steam and vapors ascend to the sky and form clouds; vapors ascend to the human brain and form madness. Both universe and human mind obey physical laws. What for Bernardus gave a spiritual dimension to the physical and made things invisible explicable through things visible, for
Swift's narrator eliminates the spiritual entirely and reduces everything to the more or less predictable (if you know the kind of brain and the angle of incidence of the vapors) action of physical agents. The central fact, metaphor, and analogy of the cosmos of the *Tale of a Tub* is the random motion of an atom.

Since individuals also behave like atoms, it follows that any kind of society is impossible save the loose union of those whose madnesses harmonize. Everything else remains fragmentary and haphazard. Exemplary figures are impossible: since conquests and systems are the greatest products of the greatest madnesses, no individual has anything to learn from the career of an Aeneas or a Red Crosse Knight, either literally or metaphorically considered. In that sense, epic too is impossible. Peter's and Jack's interpretations reduce Scripture to chaos; the narrator's emulation and denigration of Homer wreak the same havoc on epic. The really heroic calling, he assures us, is the practice of criticism,

\begin{quote}

...to travel thro' this vast World of Writings: to pursue and hunt those Monstrous Faults bred within them: to drag out the lurking Errors like Cacus from his Den; to multiply them like Hydra's Heads; and rake them together like Augeas's Dung. Or else to drive away a sort of Dangerous Fowl, who have a perverse Inclination to plunder the best Branches of the Tree of Knowledge, like those Stymphalian Birds that eat up the Fruit. (3.58)
\end{quote}

Scripture is destroyed when the will becomes an expression of Peter's will; epic is undone when it becomes the mode of the narrator's — or any individual's — madness. In the world of *A Tale of a Tub*, there are only individuals, and mad ones at that.

The absence of genuine society indicates the disappearance of structures of all sorts. Governments and systems of thought are the projections of individual eccentricity, from Odysseus's reconquest of Ithaca to, I suppose, the *Code Napoleon* and Cambodia and Laos. Literary structures are equally beyond the pale, as *A Tale of a Tub* so graphically shows — materials that belong in the preface find their way into the body of the work, tale and digression confusedly intertwine, writing itself only
furnishes an opportunity for the narrator to empty his commonplace book. Of the characteristic epic structure we examined earlier, there remains this much: at the center of the book, the narrator shifts our attention from Peter to Jack, from the exponent of the outside to the exponent of the inside, and launches forth in praise of digressions and the discovery of "a Nut-shell in an Iliad" (7). In the first half of the book, while Peter was busily adorning the outside of his coat, the narrator was just as busily leading us into the penetralia of books, mysteries, signs, and allegories; in the second half, as soon as Jack begins exploring the inner man, the narrator declares his allegiance to excurses, outsides, and "Those Entertainments and Pleasures . . . such as Dupe and play the Wag with the Senses" (9.108). After this, insides and outsides change places, as they have so often, and fable becomes excursus, digression the matter of the work: "a Nut-shell in an Iliad" is only an outside within an outside. Containers contain containers, digressions "inclose Digressions in one another, like a Nest of Boxes" (5.77; the narrator at this point disapproves of the arrangement). Every step of uncovering merely reveals another surface — which is at least one good reason why outsides are preferable to insides.

There is another. The cosmos of the Tale of a Tub is Lucretian to the core — and the irony of that is that for Lucretius there is no core. Every seemingly solid body contains the void. Everything, everyone, is a superficies covering nothing. The atoms paper over the hollowness, but the hollowness remains — for, as Lucretius argues, if there were no void, there could be no penetration, no displacement, no motion of any sort (De Rerum Natura, 1.329 ff.). So in a Lucretian world, everything is a tale of a tub — everything that exists is a container that contains nothing. All is a series of surfaces, box within box. Sartorist soul and Aeolist spirit are both films flying off the superficies of things, surfaces held forth to divert attention from the void within — so, too, Grub Street fables, so, too, the heroic genealogy of critics. In the same ironic way in which Pope structures chaos, Swift fuses form — or formlessness — and meaning in the Tale of a Tub. The fragmentation of the narrative, the constant asides and digressions, the myriad of images and opinions thrown off, the alternations of discourse and narrative, theoretical pro-
nouncement and practical result, the frenzies of Peter and Jack and the alarums and excursions of the narrator's momentary preoccupations — these are not the vehicles of meaning in the Tale: these are meaning. The Tale itself, like the tub whose precise significance escaped the Grand Committee ("The Preface," p. 24), embodies meaning in a way that neither Peter, Jack, nor the narrator are capable of grasping; it embodies it by giving it form, by using form — body — as a physical language and language as a formal body and thereby, in a final irony, creating the "artificial man" Hobbes spoke of. The success of that artifice is a uniquely Swiftian triumph: to have shaped a repudiation of Hobbesian and Lucretian materialism exclusively out of the materials of the "corpuscular" philosophy, to have invalidated a whole way of life by giving it existence — this runs close to the borders of logic and the limits of language. It is an act of courage, too, to call into being the very world whose possibility one fears, and perhaps the saddest irony of the Tale is its prophetic accuracy. We inhabit the world of A Tale of a Tub. It, too, like all other solid bodies, contains the void.

II

The Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit offers Swift the opportunity for one last fillip: it functions in relation to A Tale of a Tub as does the last squirt of seltzer water in a Marx Brothers movie. It virtually ignores the presence of the Battle of the Books in its explicit linkings with the Tale: imagery, metaphor, subject, treatment, all derive logically from the Tale, and either continue and complete what the Tale has started or make explicit what to this point has been only implied. In any event, the end product of any or all of these is an outrageous intellectual slapstick.

For example, the opening two sentences:

It is now a good while since I have had in my Head something, not only very material, but absolutely necessary to my Health, that the World should be informed in. For, to tell you a Secret, I am able to contain it no longer. (p. 171)
My reaction to the narrator’s inability to “contain” anything so “very material” is a mixed one indeed. Consider also his choice of the epistolary form: “Letters to a Friend” are now in vogue, ergo, “having dispatched what I had to say of Forms, or of Business, let me intreat, you will suffer me to proceed upon my Subject; and to pardon me, if I make no farther use of the Epistolary Stile, till I come to conclude” (p. 172). The discursive correspondent blatantly shares the narrator of the Tale’s disregard for the consonance of subject, genre, and style. He possesses as well the same fondness for beginning with an allegory, and the one he chooses seems particularly charged: certainly the observant reader cannot take the fable of Mahomet and his ass as simply an allegory of the “Fanatick Auditory” and the “Gifted, or enlightened Teacher” (p. 173) without doubling the complications and amusement by recollection of the Ass-Critic and Ass-Jack from the Tale, or Aesop’s escape in Ass’s form in the Battle. The explanation of the mechanical operation of the spirit conforms very neatly with everything we have been told about Aeolist inspiration, from the ascension of vapors to the unfortunate extension of the outer vessel and the system-builder’s sad seduction by his lower parts into a ditch. And the basis of both systems is identical: “I am apt to imagine, that the Seed or Principle, which has ever put Men upon Visions in Things Invisible, is of a Corporeal Nature . . . ” (p. 188).

There does not seem to me anything terribly complex about the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit, at least not as compared to A Tale of a Tub. Its importance seems to me to reside in its final mirroring, across the Battle of the Books, of the concerns and attitudes of the Tale. The Tale concludes diminuendo, as the narrator tries to write about nothing; the Mechanical Operation repeats once again, even more diminished, a by-now familiar refrain. Even more explicit than the Tale, even more fragmented, it still reminds us as the volume dwindles to a close that this is one book, that there are connections among the three works, that, in short, A Tale of a Tub, the Battle of the Books, and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit are to be read as an interconnected and unified work.

To prove that last statement, I will have to show real connections
among the three works and especially between the Battle and the Tale. In an obvious way, of course, the Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit simply separate the twin concerns of the Tale — abuses in learning and religion — and treat each of them individually. But there are more meaningful links than that.

The Battle of the Books continues the major metaphors that Swift generated in A Tale of a Tub. First the simple process of reification, the reduction of intellectual and spiritual concepts to physical bodies, reaches its logical conclusion in the literal battle of the books, and the bookseller's friendly reminder that "when Virgil is mentioned, we are not to understand the Person of a famous Poet, . . . but only certain Sheets of Paper, bound up in Leather" (p. 139) merely reinforces that point, as does the goddess Criticism's later adoption of octavo format. Second, both narrators agree about the inefficacy of satire. I quote here the narrator of the Battle: "Satyr is a sort of Glass, wherein Beholders do generally discover every body'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" ("The Preface of the Author," p. 140). Third, the narrators agree also in their preference of outsides to insides:

THERE is a Brain that will endure but one Scumming: Let the Owner gather it with Discretion, and manage his little Stock with Husbandry; but of all things, let him beware of bringing it under the Lash of his Betters; because, That will make it all bubble up into Impertinence, and he will find no new Supply: Wit, without knowledge, being a Sort of Cream, which gathers in a Night to the Top, and by a skilful Hand, may be soon whipt into Froth; but once scumm'd away, what appears under­neath will be fit for nothing, but to be thrown to the Hogs. 11 ("Preface," p. 140)

And as for containers — the books themselves are containers, holding the "Spirit" or "Brutum hominis" (p. 144) of their authors; the library is a container; the Full and True Account of the Battle is itself a container very much like the Tale of a Tub, filled with episodes and digressions
and, even more like the *Tale*, ultimately composed of several layers of surfaces.

The surfaces I refer to are the several layers of allegory that make up the *Battle of the Books*. In a manner exactly like the beginnings of the *Tale* and the *Discourse*, the *Battle of the Books* opens with an allegory that sets the theme of the narration and/or exposition to follow. In this case, the narrator presents his little fable of the republic of dogs, and proceeds to apply it to affairs in St. James Library, to the advantage of neither group in the dispute. From this point on, the *Battle's* mode of procedure differs from the *Tale's*: the narration progresses in a reasonably straightforward manner, with few of the digressions and interruptions of the *Tale*. Those sections — where the narrator speaks *in propría persona*, offering systems, theories, and interpretations — are now largely confined to the *Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*. That is, the process of confusing fable and digression that we saw at the end of the *Tale of a Tub* has now been carried out to its logical conclusion, and fable and digression have now completely changed places: the fable now treats of abuses of learning (*Battle of the Books*), and the digressive essay (*Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*) now concerns itself with abuses of religion. Both subjects have been reduced to a primarily physical mode of existence, and once again separated into unrelated entities: in effect, the narrator of the *Tale* has fully succeeded in his project of secularizing and materializing religion and learning.

That digression will, I hope, be pardoned; I am a victim of my environment.

The *Battle of the Books* proceeds episodically to no conclusion: Bentley's and Wotton's ignominious trussing, like "a Brace of Woodcocks" (p. 164), is followed only by a sprinkling of asterisks and a feeble "*Desunt caetera.*" The road thither has led through an explanation of the origins of the quarrel, the steps preliminary to actual hostilities, the encounter of the spider and the bee and its exposition and application by Aesop, the catalogues of the armies, the council in heaven, the visit to, and visit of, the goddess Criticism (a kind of descent to the underworld), the battle itself (a series of individual skirmishes in the Homeric manner), a council of generals with the intrusion of a
Thersites (Bentley), a night expedition and the "deaths" of Bentley and Wotton in a wonderful parody of Virgil's Nisus and Euryalus episode. All of these, except the episode of the spider and the bee, very obviously fit the mock-epic pattern, and it is striking to realize just how much characteristically epic material (at least characteristically Iliadic) Swift has gotten into so short a work. But the exception is what I want to examine.

The fable of the spider and the bee is simple to the point of being transparent, and Aesop's application of it strikes every reader as somewhat spiderishly venomous but perfectly apt. The complications arise from its context. Once again, outsides triumph over insides, and the wide-ranging bee handily humiliates the self-sufficient spider. But after what we have seen of outsides and insides in *A Tale of a Tub*, I for one find it very difficult to take that straightforwardly. And Aesop's allegorization only makes things more confusing; he is, after all, an allegorical figure himself, who provides us, in the middle of an allegory, with another allegory. Then, too, there is the question of genre and decorum, since we are dealing with books in general and epic in particular: what is a beast fable doing in the middle of an epic? Or more generally, what is the relation of the whole spider and bee episode to the rest of the *Battle of the Books*?

The several layers of allegorical surfaces that precede all this provide the answer to that question. The story of the republic of dogs leads the narrator to explain the quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns as centering on possession of the highest peak of Parnassus. In this quarrel, "Ink is the great missive Weapon" (p. 143), and the trophies both sides set up in celebration of a victory are books, which are subsequently stored in libraries. In St. James Library, because of accident or mismanagement or mischief, Ancient and Modern books were jumbled together, and that led to their resuming the quarrel. Allegory (republic of dogs) leads to exposition (quarrel about Parnassus) leads to allegory (ink as weapon, books as trophies) leads to exposition (books are stored in libraries, thus, battle of books). Clearly then, the episode of the spider and bee fits the pattern of allegory and explanation set up by the narrator, and the question then becomes one of why the pattern breaks down after
this episode. But there are other elements to the pattern as well. The republic of dogs has its roots in fact, not parable — only the application of language drawn from the sphere of government makes it in any way metaphorical, and certainly not genuinely allegorical. What the narrator offers as an application of it, however, is most definitely allegorical — the quarrel about possession of the highest peak of Parnassus — but this is presented to us as fact. Then again, ink as weapon and books as trophies: this is barely metaphor at all; it is hyperbole at best. But the narrator presents it as allegory, and the quarrel in the library among physical books is presented as fact. So, too, the actions of the spider and the bee, which would seem like the doings of the republic of dogs to be rooted in fact, are made allegory by Aesop, whose application or explanation becomes the fact that supplants them. Allegory is more real than reality. Like religion and learning, inside and outside have once more changed places: interpretation is now prior to fact, literature is prior to reality. Books replace men, and "real" occurrences are only materials for allegory at best. We have stepped through the looking glass.

And that is the point of it all, of the inconclusiveness of the Battle of the Books and the downbeat ending of the Tale and the final emblematic fall that concludes the Mechanical Operation. It is when we realize fully the implications of the spider and the bee, that in an allegory we are reading another allegory that is being allegorized for us by an allegorical character, that Swift's simple point emerges in devastating clarity. He is talking about the substitution of literature for life, about the deformation of life by literature — literature in the sense of all letters: theology, philosophy, physics, poetry. What he is talking about is the peculiarly modern temperament that substitutes theorizing about life for living it, or that makes life over to fit the theory. His whole point lies in the tenuous connection between art and reality, between word and thing, and the myriad ways in which that connection can be broken. To make everything words is just as bad as to make everything body, and the simple statement of Swift's whole volume is that we do.

The Battle of the Books, in which all that exists becomes literature, stands between A Tale of a Tub and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit, in both of which all that exists becomes body. At the center of the
Battle stands the episode of the spider and the bee, which would appear to be the most digressive element in it, but which in every important sense forms the heart of it, revealing just how flesh is made word. Swift inserts it in a mock epic for the same reason that Pope litters clues about The Rape of the Lock, to demonstrate that same disjunction of epic manner and epic matter. The Battle of the Books has no real connection with epic save through a parody of its surface; the insides of epic are contained, ironically, in A Tale of a Tub. There, as in The Dunciad, art and philosophy, religion and government are presented in the process of being fragmented, materialized, and destroyed. The narrator of the Tale and the sort of mind he embodies are making what later writers would call unity of culture impossible, and with it they are banishing epic, since traditional epic had always been the vehicle for precisely that awareness of the interrelatedness of human life. Aeneas, in Landino’s view, had step by step to learn private morality, the virtues and defects of public or civil life, and finally the lessons of philosophy about the summum bonum. The narrator of the Tale eliminates that tedious process and, like the spider of the Battle, spins everything out of himself, either by inspiration or by sounding the harmonizing chord of his madness. In either case, it marks the destruction of traditional epic by substituting private vision for the wisdom of a culture, by making the individual the paradigm for the whole. It is, simply, the substitution of solipsism for society. Swift’s playing with allegoresis throughout the volume demonstrates that point again and again: what is the real difference, after all, between what Aesop does to the spider and bee and what the narrator of the Tale does to asses, or what the narrator of the Mechanical Operation does to Mahomet and his ass? The universal tendency of all the characters in all these works is to impose private visions from without and to claim that they constitute the real insides of the matter. Swift, like Pope, is describing the breakdown of a whole civilization, the moment at which all the energies and aspirations of a culture turn against themselves and bring forth parodies of their ideal. What Scaliger charges to Bentley in the Battle can stand equally well as an indictment of Swift’s narrators and Pope’s dunces: “Miscreant Prater, said he, Eloquent only in thine own Eyes, Thou railest without Wit, or Truth, or Discretion. The
Malignity of thy Temper perverteth Nature, Thy Learning makes thee more Barbarous, thy Study of Humanity, more Inhuman; Thy Converse amongst Poets more groveling, miry, and dull. All Arts of civilizing others, render thee rude and intractable; Courts have taught thee ill Manners, and polite Conversation has finished thee a Pedant” (p. 161). Bentley, like Peter and Jack and the narrators, is a man deformed by letters, a life warped by literature. He is also the wave of the future, sure proof that art does affect life and alter reality. The narrator of the Mechanical Operation states the proposition succinctly, and his is, after all, the last word on the subject: “. . . There is many an Operation, which in its Original, was purely an Artifice, but through a long Succession of Ages, hath grown to be natural” (p. 175).

III

From the point of view of literature, the volume containing A Tale of a Tub, the Battle of the Books, and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit accomplishes, in prose parody, the overt separation of epic matter from the epic manner. Gulliver’s Travels goes on to exploit epic matter in a prose comic or mock epic without the epic manner. Lemuel Gulliver explores the metaphoric and ontological cosmos the Tale volume has called into being. Gulliver succeeds the narrator of the Tale as mapmaker of this brave new world. Like his predecessor, he straddles painfully the diverging worlds of body and mind. Confounded by the total duality of spirit and matter, he can only offer us the latitude and longitude of his life and ours. Simultaneously failed philosopher and inadvertent guide, he is the Cartesian cartographer of our schizoid, unepic universe.

Gulliver’s Travels presupposes the world of A Tale of a Tub. It is, on the face of it, a perfectly reasonable world. Absent from it are God, religion, human affection, and any firm standards of judgment. Total egocentricity and chance replace them. Gulliver exists as a fragmentary individual, isolated from family and his fellow men both by the illogic of random events and the shallowness of his own feelings. The simple
sequence of events, the variables of his life, become the determinants of it. His own judgments, conditioned and altered by perspective and vanity, are the only norms. At the same time, they are what is most crucial in the book, what Swift resolutely directs our attention toward. Gulliver is a new kind of protagonist in literature, chosen and developed for his paradoxically peculiar averageness — middle son of a middle-class family from the middlemost county in England, attended university but took no degree, and the university “canting Emmanuel” at that. Gulliver is no extraordinary figure chosen because his life offers a pattern for emulation; his role is rather to represent all of us. He is the hero as synecdoche rather than exemplar. This new Everyman represents us all because he is different from us all, just as we are different from each other; his idiosyncratic vanity and eccentricity link him to us and furnish the bond of our common humanity. These factors in themselves put *Gulliver's Travels* on the road to the novel.

Swift's uses of bodies and clothing indicate in themselves the continuities between *Gulliver* and *A Tale of a Tub*. Bodies are both the expression of reality and the determinants of Gulliver's judgments about it — though his judgments usually invert the value so blatantly displayed before him. The tininess of the Lilliputians betrays their pettiness, their smallness of mind and spirit; Gulliver fails to see it but comes to share it, glorying in the title of Nardac and vigorously defending the honor of the Lilliputian lady with whom he is improbably accused of having an affair. Starting from the proposition that “human Creatures are observed to be more Savage and cruel in Proportion to their Bulk” (2.1.87), he fails to see that the size of the Brobdingnagians reflects their magnanimity, and he carefully suppresses all evidence of his own physical pettiness by resolutely avoiding mirrors — though it still breaks out in his ostentatious triumphs over rats and flies, in his near disasters with rats and monkeys, and — in a more important moral dimension — in his vicious offer to the king of the secret of gunpowder. The bodily deformity of the Laputans clearly tokens their deformity of mind. Theirs is a Cartesian world indeed: the husbands keep their heads, deformed by the total domination of mind and the nature of their studies, quite literally in the clouds, while their comely ladies solace their neglected bodies on the
mainland below. The Academy of Lagado derives almost directly from the “Digression on Madness,” and the Struldbrugs descend lineally from the unfortunate flayed woman. As for the Houyhnhnms: Gulliver finds it easier to think of himself as quadruped manqué than as well-dressed Yahoo, and it is the sexual advances of a female Yahoo that definitely determine the point. As corollaries to all this, Gulliver’s clothing in the various adventures sustains the central action and metaphors: his patchwork garment demonstrates his immersion in the smallness of vision of the Lilliputians; his mouse-skin breeches sustain the Brobdignagian King’s indictment of Gulliver-sized people as “little odious Vermin” (2.6.132). His scientifically made and ill-fitting clothes in Laputa show the depth of the disjunction between mind and body. In Houyhnhnmeland, he once again clothes himself in animal skins, including Yahoos’. In a lovely final irony, Swift has Gulliver — the would-be Houyhnhnm who seeks to deny any bond with the Yahoos — make his departure from the Houyhnhnms in a boat made of Yahoo hides, with Yahoo-skin sails, and calked with Yahoo tallow. The body, as Swift would have known from Augustine if from nowhere else, is the ship that transports the soul through the vicissitudes of this life. Deny it as he will, Gulliver must accomplish all his travels in and with a Yahoo body. And ignore it though he does, outsides still embody insides for those with eyes to see.

Swift develops the character of Gulliver with fine consistency from his first adventures to his final misanthropy. Each book, of course, is written as if it were done immediately after the journey described, so that in fact we are dealing with four distinct stages of Gulliver’s character as he responds to, and is altered by, the immediately preceding events. Gulliver among the Lilliputians reveals some of the traits that lead him finally to the tranquillity of an English stable. Although he can be very exact and acute about things external to him, including other people, he is obtuse and vague in his knowledge of himself. For example, in the same chapter (1.6) in which he describes Lilliputian law and custom with brevity and precision, and his own clothing and living arrangements somewhat more verboley, he also protests with deadpan seriousness his innocence of any liaison with a Lilliputian “great Lady.” In Brobding-
nag, too, although he can tell us in great detail about warts and cancers and how many hogsheads a maid of honor pisses, he manages to delude himself about his own size, with explicitly comic results after his rescue. For all the importance of bodies in determining character and even in defining the knowable, Gulliver suppresses this evidence with amazing ease when it is unsettling to his self-esteem. This, of course, is what he ultimately does vis-à-vis Yahoos and Houyhnhnms. In the first two books, where he encounters the human body telescoped and microscoped but essentially undistorted, Gulliver is able to assimilate himself to his surroundings completely and think of himself in the same perspective as the natives. In Laputa and Lagado and among the Struldbrugs, where distortion of body mirrors distortion of mind, he has more difficulty but still manages to internalize the “set,” the Weltanschauung, of his environment: he is unhappy on Laputa because his hosts, busy with airy speculation, pay little attention to him; but in Lagado, he cheerily confesses that “I had myself been a Sort of Projector in my younger days” (3.4.178) and immerses himself in the Academy. The Struldbrugs shock him, because he had been forgetting that the body decays: both the Academy of Lagado and the Flying Island had, in their different ways, been devoted to overcoming or ignoring physical limits, and the Struldbrugs — like Tithonus or the Sybil — are eternal embodiments of exactly that, freed from one great limitation in order to perpetuate all the others. That and the evidence of Glubbdubdrib, where he once more sees the process of decay, from Aristotle to Descartes and from “English Yeomen of the old Stamp” (3.8.201) to contemporary politicians, force him to “melancholy Reflections” on the degeneration of the human race. At this point, he begins to conceive of normal humanity in something of the same light that he saw himself — physically, at least — in Brobdingnag. Houyhnhnmland confronts him with the final distortion of body. Animal rationale has bifurcated into an irrational animal with a human body and a rational animal with a horse’s. Instead of recognizing that he is neither Houyhnhnm nor Yahoo but some third thing between them — animal rationis capax, in Swift’s phrase — Gulliver embraces both erroneous extremes simultaneously. He has never been able to see himself clearly in relation to others but always had, to the best of his
ability, to become others. Here, shocked by the physical proof that he shares at least part of Yahoo nature, he ignores the physical proof that he has no part of Houyhnhnm nature, that the Houyhnhnms are totally alien. Swift has made them horses for the same reason that the Laputans' bodies are distorted: the kind of mind they embody is, simply, not human. The pure rationality of the horses lies as far beyond Gulliver as the pure bestiality of the Yahoos lies beneath him, and it is pointless to argue whether it is an ideal for men or not: human beings, in Swift's view, are simply not capable of it, and that is why he has personified it in totally nonhuman form. Unfortunately, Gulliver does not realize that. Gulliver's self-knowledge breaks down completely when he accepts the logic of "because I am a Yahoo I must be a Houyhnhnm"; from that point, it is a short step to the mad ex-surgeon in the stable talking to horses.

I think we must see *Gulliver's Travels* as a comic *Odyssey*. Not because of particular incidents or analogues, though there are plenty of those — Yahoos and Circe's swine, Glubbdubdrib and the Odyssean descent to hell, and so on — but because of the central importance to the satire of Gulliver's failure to know himself. Odysseus, the man of many turns, always knows who he is, even through he often has to lie about it, as to the Cyclops — but even there the episode closes with his declaration of his identity. His final assumption of his full identity — as Odysseus, son of Laertes, father of Telemachus, husband of Penelope, king of Ithaca — climaxes the poem, and the progression is swift and sure from the seeming beggar's bending of the great bow to Penelope's being convinced by his knowledge of the secret of the bed to his reunion with Telemachus and Laertes. To put it crudely, Odysseus never thinks for a moment that he is a Cyclops; Gulliver does. Gulliver is an obtuse version of the Odysseus of the other tradition, the Ulysses whom Virgil depicted as the arch-liar and whom Dante put in hell for misusing his intellect, for giving false counsel and persuading his followers to leave home again. He has no Athene to guide him and no Penelope to sustain him — only an amorphous wife who seems to go on producing children with or without his presence. But he may be the artificer of Odysseus's greatest trick: the Trojan horse.
Therefore since my Acquaintance were pleased to think my poor Endeavours might not be unacceptable to my Country; I imposed on myself 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 Examples of my noble Master, and the other illustrious Houyhnhnms, of whom I had so long the Honour to be an humble Hearer.

—— Nec si miserum Fortuna Sinonem
Finxit, vanum etiam, mendacemque improba finget.
(4.12.292–93)

Fortune can make Sinon wretched, but it cannot make him a liar; thus speaks Ulysses' catspaw, the man who is about to persuade the hapless and trusting Trojans to welcome the wooden horse into their city, to their ultimate destruction. Thus quotes the man who has just told a whopping great falsehood about a race of rational horses. The Houyhnhnms are Gulliver’s wooden horse, and you accept them to your own destruction. They are the delusive outside that hides the hollow and dangerous core; they are the external form of Gulliver’s own madness.

The literary joke about Guilliver’s veracity is complicated somewhat by the frontispiece that appears in some editions of the Travels (Faulkner’s, 1735) depicting Captain Lemuel Gulliver and with the inscription “Splendide Mendax. Hor.” On the one hand, this literally (particularly when coupled with the Sinon allusion) casts Guilliver as another lying traveler with the usual collection of tall tales; it compounds the point of the travel book format, in effect. On the other hand, the phrase comprises Horace’s praise of Hypermnestra, the one of the fifty Danaids who lied to her father and did not murder her husband. From the interplay between these two possibilities and from the seeming contradiction between the Horatian allusion and the Virgilian, I think we can discern the dimensions of the kind of tension Swift is seeking: not clear-cut distinctions between lie and truth, but a notion also of a kind of lie that reveals the truth, of a fiction that gets closer to the truth than fact does. Gulliver’s Travels is that kind of beneficial lie; the Houyhnhnms
are not, and Gulliver's quotation of Sinon's lines is one last Odyssean warning about what is in store for us if we do not look into the horses carefully. Gulliver is a liar, a mendacious traveler peddling tall tales — but he has been places we have not and seen true things that only fiction can express.

Gulliver's Travels is an inverted Bildungsroman: it is about the limitations of knowledge, empiric and speculative, and particularly about the kinds of limits that body and the mere fact of having one impose on mind. Laputan males attempting to play along with the music of the spheres while their wives play with footmen translates into the grammar and rhetoric of Gulliver's Travels the fable of the "philosopher" of the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit, "who, while his Thoughts and Eyes were fixed upon the Constellations, found himself seduced by his lower Parts into a Ditch" (p. 190). Scatology looms so large in the book for precisely this reason: it embodies the least common denominator of our corporeal, animal nature. Despite the Lagadan projectors' attempts to "denature" it, the fecal bond holds firm throughout the book; in its metaphors, the Yahoos' shitting on Gulliver's head constitutes a claim of kinship with him, just as in Brobdingnag his landing knee-deep in a cake of cow-dung reminds us of his — and our — real physical limitations. A man's reach should not exceed his grasp, unless he is willing to get "filthily bemired" (2.5.124).

Since most things, in the Lockean and Berkleyan view, exist as they are perceived, the conditions of our knowing form the determinants and limits of our knowledge. For this reason, the first two books of Gulliver's Travels center primarily on epistemological satire rather than social or political. The Gulliver who generously refuses to destroy Blefuscu is the same Gulliver who offers to teach the king of Brobdingnag how to destroy his subjects: what have changed are the conditions of Gulliver's position — particularly the direction in which his vanity is engaged. So Swift's playing with sizes in books 1 and 2 is not simply a juggling with perspective but a demonstration that how we know determines what we know and that the process of our knowing is ultimately dependent not on a calm, free mind formulating clear and distinct ideas but on a very limited, frail, intimidatable body and a mind open to distortions induced
by fear and pride. It is significant of this that after his return from Lilliput Gulliver does not fear being stepped on, but after returning from Brobdingnag, "I was afraid of trampling on every Traveller I met" (2.8.148). In the same way, Gulliver proudly indulges in a childlike bit of penis display to the Lilliputian soldiers who march between his legs and stare up at his tattered breeches, but in Brobdingnag, where it can have no effect at all, he carefully conceals his genitals when he hides behind a sorrel leaf to urinate. In these terms, the gulf between his mind and the Houyhnhnms' is most succinctly distilled in their inability to understand him when he speaks of "those Parts that Nature taught us to conceal" (4.3.236).

Book 3 turns to examining the limits imposed on speculative and practical knowledge by the interaction of mind and body — speculative most graphically in the Laputans, practical in the Academicians. But the flying island itself is the image that dominates the book. As a heavy body floating in air, it represents the same thing as the Laputans' pretensions to hear the music of the spheres — an attempt to transcend physical limitations, to control nature. But the irony, of course, rests on the fact that the whole power of the island comes from nature, from the inert body of the lodestone, and that its limits are precisely fixed by the effective range of the stone. The famous rebellion episode, which has been so much cited as an instance of political satire, is no more than a demonstration of the impossibility of transcending bodies and physical limitations. Physical laws govern the motion of the island, and physical means control it; and if those four towers mean anything at all specific, it is surely something like the four elements rather than the four Drapier's Letters. The Struldbrugs confirm all this: at the close of the book, they explicitly embody all of the limitations that corporeal existence imposes on the human mind. They are witnesses to the ravages of physical decay and petty passion: weak, ignorant, helpless, envious of living and dead alike.

At the end of book 3, nearing his return to England, Gulliver declines the ceremony of "trampling upon the Crucifix" in a chapter (3.11) that contains the only explicit reference to Christianity in all of the Travels. The crucifix is, of course, the overt sign of the redemption, the symbol of
the fact that man is weak and in need of divine intercession and aid. It is a statement of human limitation, and trampling on it would be a rejection of that notion, a refusal of intercession or aid, and, in the terms of Laputa and Lagado, an implicit statement of human self-sufficiency and non-limitation. At the end of book 3, Gulliver refuses to make that statement; in book 4, he does.

The name Houyhnhnm means "Perfection of Nature" (4.3.235); they are what man would be if he were genuinely definable as animal rationale. They are also what man would be if he were perfectly natural. He is, however, none of these things, as "trampling upon the Crucifix" and Gulliver’s treatment at the hands of his mutineers are designed to remind us. The Houyhnhnms do not even approximate what man could have been if Adam had not fallen: they are too perfectly rational to feel any emotion other than a rather tepid friendship (contrast Adam’s and Eve’s feelings in Paradise Lost), and one of Swift’s master ironies is that it is precisely Gulliver’s ego-involvement that leads him to choose them as ideal. Moved toward misanthropy by his experiences at Glubbdubdrib and with the Struldbrugs, confirmed by the treachery of his own crew, the shock of the Yahoos and his identification of them with the rest of humanity force him to recoil to the antithetical, nonhuman extreme of passionless logic — a position he comes to hold with intense passion and prideful contempt for even the exemplary humanity of Pedro de Mendez. Gulliver employs a consistent double-think by accepting both wrong extremes and identifying himself with Yahoo and Houyhnhnm simultaneously. His final failure is the root failure from which he began, his inability to know himself independent of external references. (It is worth noting that here as in Brobdingnag Gulliver avoids sight of himself whenever possible [4.10.278].) The man who stands in the stable talking to horses is certifiably insane: the dream of reason ends in exactly that kind of nightmare.

IV

Gulliver, within the limits of its comic-parodic form, points the way toward the possible prose epic of our now prosaic world. It inversely
illuminates the possibility of reaching wisdom without divine guides. For Swift and the writers who follow him — for us — Athene and Raphael are no longer available. What future heroes must discover and map, with their merely human equipment, is not the divine plan for them but the existence and dimensions of the human spirit and the possibility of freeing it from the bind of matter or at least giving it direction over matter. They must learn to live with and beyond their bodies — this lies behind the importance of chastity in *Joseph Andrews* and behind the importance of constancy, both as physical direction (as opposed to random movement) and as physical and emotional chastity, in *Tom Jones*. In a world of flux, of bodies in motion, they will have to seek sanity and stability, to assert once again the possibility of order and of the primacy of a mind that has learned to live in and with the weaknesses of its body as well as with its own limitations — as Captain Booth finally does at the end of *Amelia*.

With all that, it is probably not correct to see *Gulliver's Travels* as the direct antecedent of Fielding's novels. Fielding reverts to the thematic pattern of serious verse epic; Swift's work is firmly grounded in the mock-epic pattern. The former always locates its hero, whatever his personal importance, in a much larger cosmic, historical, or social framework that dwarfs him and reduces his merely human claims to greatness or to pity to their relative proportions. Aeneas is important not for himself but as the founder of Rome, and before those as-yet-unborn generations his purely personal feelings, for Dido or for Troy, must bow. The allegory accentuates this even more, evaporating Aeneas as an individual and replacing him with an Everyman who suffers and achieves as surrogate for all of us. So, too, Fielding's heroes in their commonality — Tom Jones — represent us; so, too, do they locate themselves within the framework of family and society, within a web of relations that diminish their personal importance while enhancing their social and historical stature. But the thematics of mock epic, which constitute Swift's peculiar milieu, are something far different from this. In mock epic, as in spiritual autobiography, the hero is central not just to the story but to the cosmos. Things happen for him; everything possesses meaning in relation to him. *Robinson Crusoe*, with its special
providences and intensity of focus on the process of the hero's calling and conversion, probably offers the paradigmatic eighteenth-century example of orthodox spiritual biography. In mock epic, the hero possesses the same centrality and importance as he does in spiritual autobiography; and as in the latter, he must also learn to recognize his calling, his election, and his cosmic significance — "Thy own Importance know," Ariel tells Belinda. But in mock epic the hero goes even beyond this: his task becomes the imposition of his self upon the cosmos. He becomes the creator-god who remakes the world in his own image. This is the essential narrative-thematic burden of all mock epic, from *MacFlecknoe* through *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad* to *A Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*. Gulliver's final vision of the world as exclusively divisible into Yahoos and Houyhnhnms is simply the projection of his own schizophrenia, his version of the Tale's choice between being a fool or a knave. The novels that spring from *Gulliver's Travels* are the great eccentric novels like *Tristram Shandy* and *Finnegans Wake*, which see in the creation and imposition of a self an act that is at once cosmic and comic. They are the novels of doubleness of vision, the bifocals for the split personality of our age. Their heroes continue Gulliver's work, mapping the unknown islands of our lives — nice places to visit, for the most part, but you wouldn't want to live there.

Neither did Fielding.

1. For this particular point and others about Hobbes's place in *A Tale of a Tub*, see Philip Harth's *Swift and Anglican Rationalism* (Chicago, 1961). Edward Rosenheim, in his provocative *Swift and the Satirist's Art* (Chicago, 1963), discusses the passage from a different point of view (pp. 124–26). I have drawn several suggestions and much stimulation from both these books.


3. For the importance of these images to literature, see, of course, Rosamund Tuve's *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago, 1947).

4. Wit, too, is frozen by the narrator into object by his strict and literal observance of the unities of "Time, Place, and Person," which results in a jest "that will not pass out of Covent-Garden; and such a one, that is no where intelligible but at Hide-Park Corner" as well as in his calculating "the Taste of Wit" exactly "for this present Month of August, 1697" ("The Preface," p. 26).


7. Again, for an account of the importance of atomism at this time, see Kargon’s *Atomism in England*.

8. For a fuller discussion of the banishment of spirit from Western thinking, see Kargon, *Atomism in England*, Dijksterhuis’s *Mechanisation of the World Picture*, and Bethell’s *Cultural Revolution*.

9. As a matter of fact, there is great subliminal correspondence of part to part according to the pattern I discussed earlier, but I have no wish to beat a dead horse. Swift no doubt knew what he was doing.

10. This is not to imply that there are not many important areas of the *Discourse* that need clarification: e.g., the “Crowd of little Animals” on page 181.

11. It is important to note, however, that though the preference for outsides remains, outsides here bear different values — as, for instance, the clean surface of the Helicon that flows over “a thick sediment of *Slime and Mud*” (p. 162).

12. In terms of the palindromic structure discussed earlier, the *Battle of the Books* as a whole and the spider and bee episode in particular function as the central mirroring unit.

13. In the same way, Odysseus is always seen in relation to Telemachus and to Laertes (in the Greek text, his patronymic, Laertiades, is ubiquitous); Homer locates him in a web of relationships — father, son, husband, warlord, guest, king, and so on. In an even more explicit manner, Adam and Eve are more important as parents of the human race than in themselves, and many of the heroes of the *Faerie Queene* share the same kind of historical or prototypical significance.