Glossary for *A Tale of a Tub*

What follows is a select glossary of neologisms, archaisms, and odd usages to be found in the *Tale*. Although the list pretends to no completeness, it does include all of Swift's coinages that I have been able to discover, plus examples of his various other word games in this work. As a whole the Glossary amply documents Swift's Janus-like parody of, and participation in, the virtual lexical explosion of the previous half century.

course, checked the words recorded here against the two volumes of the supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary* published to date.

**Abortion** (p. 206). The *OED* gives the first use in a figurative sense as 1710, meaning “a failure of aim or promise.” This is Swift’s meaning, although the sexual imagery of the previous section, plus the puns in this very sentence (“Going too short,” “Labors of the Brain”) keep us aware at the same time of the earlier medical meaning of the term.

**Academy** (p. 166). One of Swift’s frequent puns. He means both a university and a brothel, a low sense of the word found in B. E.’s *Dictionary of the Canting Crew*. Thus the “Academy of Modern Bedlam” becomes a very open symbol of corruption of all sorts—simultaneously a madhouse, a university, and a brothel. According to Partridge, “academy” as a colloquialism came to mean “lunatic asylum” ca. 1780–90.

**Adapt** (p. 172). Swift’s adjectival use is cited first in the *OED*, which suggests that the word was developed on the basis of an analogy with others like “content,” “distract,” and “erect,” all of which are “in form identical with verbs, though really adaptations of Latin participles in -tus.” Yet there is no Latin “adaptus”! Cf. “Afflatus” and “Inflatus” (p. 151).

**Aeolist** (p. 150 and elsewhere). Swift’s use is unique. The term is derived from “Aeolus,” the Greek god of winds.

**Amorphy** (p. 124). Swift’s use of the word is cited in the *OED* as the first in English. It is derived from either the French “amorphie” or the Greek word for “shapelessness.” Cf. “amorphous,” the adjective, which apparently did not come into being until sometime in the 1720s or 1730s.

**Annext** (p. 87). An example of the sort of contraction Swift objected to in the *Tatler*, no. 230, and *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue*. On the same page the word is spelled “annexed”; perhaps, despite his theoretical objection to that foolish opinion “that we ought to spell exactly as we speak,” Swift was himself less than consistent. Or was he satirizing the instability of spelling by using both forms on the same page? Cf. “shipwreckt” (p. 107), “farting” (p. 169), and especially “bantering” (p. 19), which appears in the
"Apology," though in an ironic context. It is significant that in his Reflections on Dr. Swift's Letter to Harley (1712) John Oldmixon criticizes the intentionally absurd contractions of Swift's "Humble Petition of Frances Harris" (1701).

**Annihilate** (pp. 35, 43). Although the verb "to annihilate" (p. 32) and the noun "annihilation" were common in the seventeenth century, the adjective seems to have been quite rare. In the eighteenth century "annihilate" was replaced by the past participle "annihilated." Note how Swift heightens the irony in each case by prefixing a humorously redundant intensifier: "wholly annihilate" and "utterly annihilate."

**Astride** (p. 171). The OED lists this as the first figurative use of an older word, and Swift's italics draw attention to it. The word appears in its literal sense in Hudibras: "Does not the Whore of Bab'lon ride / Upon her horned Beast astride?" Swift is fond of riding metaphors: cf. "Man, when he gives the Spur and Bridle to his Thoughts" (p. 157), and "a Person, whose Imaginations are hard-mouth'd" (p. 180).

**Bantering** (p. 19). This instance is cited in the OED as the first use of this form of the word, and Swift's attitude toward it is clear: "Of this Bantring as they call it . . . " The mock—or is it?—etymology of "Banter" immediately above may well suggest that both words were common in speech long before they appeared with any frequency in print. Cf. "Banter" (pp. 13, 19, 207), a word Johnson described as "barbarous." In the Tatler, no. 230, Swift refers to "Banter" as a word "invented by some Pretty Fellows" that is "now struggling for the Vogue." According to Partridge, "banter" was slang in 1688 but during the eighteenth century came gradually to mean "harmless raillery." Cf. Glossary under "annexet."

**Bate** (p. 148). This verb is defined in the OED as "to omit, leave out of count, except," and Swift's use is cited as the last in this particular sense. Cf. Glossary under "flesht."

**Bigotted** (p. 122). The OED defines this word as "blindly attached to some creed, opinion, or party" and gives its first use in the construction "bigotted to [something]" as 1704. In this 1710 footnote Swift is apparently employing a brand new phrase.

**Bombastry** (p. 61). "Bombastry" did not come in until the fifth edition of 1710. True to the first four editions, Guthkelch and
Smith opted for "Bombast" and explained: "evidently a printer's coinage due to assimilation with 'Buffoonry.' No other instance of this form appears to be known." But Swift was clearly behind most of the changes in the fifth edition and probably liked the ironic rhythm of "Bombastry and Buffoonry"; cf. "Clergy, and Gentry, and Yeomantry" (p. 181). Later in the Tale Swift refers to Paracelsus as "Bumbastus" (p. 152), a humorous abbreviation of the alchemist's name, Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim; with "Bumbastus" Swift puns on "bum-baste," which Partridge defines as "to beat hard on the posteriors." Swift is speaking here of flatulation, and thus it is relevant that Partridge further notes that "bum" probably had an echoic origin and cites the Italian "bum," the sound of an explosion.

Bonae notae (p. 68). Lois M. Scott-Thomas, "The Vocabulary of Jonathan Swift," Dalhousie Review 25 (1946): 445, points to this as one of the foreign terms that owes its introduction into English to Swift. Cf. Swift, "Introduction" to Polite Conversation: "I did therefore once intend, for the Ease of the Learner, to set down in all Parts of the following Dialogues, certain Marks, Asterisks, or Nota Bene's (in English, Mark-well's) after most Questions, and every Reply or Answer."

Bottom (p. 191). On the surface Swift means simply the "bottom" of the page, but the excremental context ("urgent Juncture," "Way to the Backside," "Make himself clean again") suggests that he is implying also the posteriors, although in the OED 1794 is the earliest citation in this sense. Cf. Glossary under "Occasion," which occurs in the same passage.

Boutade (p. 115). Although the first OED reference is to Bacon's King James (1614), Swift felt the need of an explanatory note: "This Word properly signifies a sudden Jerk, or a Lash of an Horse, when you do not expect it." Wotton's note on the word in his personal copy of the Tale likewise underscores its strangeness: "Any Body but Sr W. Temple would have said Sally" (Guthkelch and Smith, p. 314). And for Swift "Boutade" must have held some novelty even as late as 1734, when in a letter he explained to his friend Mrs. Pendarves: "It is, you know, a French word, and signifies a sudden jerk from a horses hinder feet which you did not expect, because you thought him for some months a sober animal."
BRIGUING (p. 65). The OED gives the substantive "brigue" two meanings: (1) "strife, quarrel, contention," which was adopted from the Italian "briga" in the fourteenth or fifteenth century; and (2) "intrigue, faction," which was adopted from the French "briguer" around 1700 and was much used in the first half of the eighteenth century. This second meaning is Swift's. Guthkelch and Smith note that the word is used by Rabelais and occurs frequently in Bernier's Histoire du grand mogol (1670), which appears in Swift's list of books read in the year 1697. Kersey marks the word as an archaism; neither "brigue" nor "briguing" are found in Johnson.

BULLY (pp. 19, 140, 165). In the Tatler, no. 230, Swift calls this one of "the modern Terms of Art." Etymologically complicated, this word had since the sixteenth century meant "sweetheart," had recently taken on the meaning "swash-buckler," and about this time began to refer to a hired protector of prostitutes. Cf. Swift's use: "The very same Principle that influences a Bully to break the Windows of a Whore, who has jilted him . . . " (p. 165).

CACKLING (p. 66). Another of Swift's obscene puns. He means both the chittering of a hen and farting, a low sense of the word found in B. E.'s New Dictionary. According to Partridge, "cackling fart" was at this time slang for an egg; Swift is clearly toying with this meaning without using it per se.

CHOCOLATE-HOUSES (p. 74). The first references in the OED are to 1694 and 1695, the latter to Congreve's Love for Love.

CLAIMANT (p. 21). A word that does not appear in any seventeenth-century dictionaries, although Phillips defines the root word "claim" in this way: "A Law term, is a challenge of interest in any thing that is out of ones possession, as Claim by Charter, or descent, &c." Johnson gives "claimant" a more general application: "He that demands any thing, as unjustly withheld from him." The first OED citation is 1741. Cf. Glossary under "Innuendo."

CLEANLILY (p. 192). The first OED reference is 1698. In the edition of 1711 this apparently rather rare form was altered to "cleanly." Cf. "cleanly" (p. 93).

CLINAMINA (p. 167). The OED cites this as the first use in English. Guthkelch and Smith observe that the word comes from Lucretius, who used it to mean "the bias or deviation from a
straight line which was supposed to explain the concourse of atoms."

**CLOSE IN WITH** (p. 188). Meaning "to draw near to, or advance into contact with," this use is the first cited in the *OED*. But it is Swift's frequent practice to intensify ironic verbs by the addition of prepositions, as in "spy out" (p. 93), "kneaded up" (p. 124), "twirl over" (p. 131), "hymning out" (p. 156), "falls down plum into" (p. 158), and "fly off upon" (p. 174).

**CONTRIVANCE** (p. 61). Although the word is found in Browne's *Vulgar Errors*, John Woodward's *Natural History of the Earth* (1695) is the first place it appears in the sense of an "adaptation of means to an end"; Swift owned a copy of the *Natural History* in a 1714 Latin edition but may well have read it earlier. Woodward's phraseology seems to be echoed in the *Tale*: "Proofs of Contrivance in the Structure of the Globe," says Woodward; "there is something yet more refined in the Contrivance and Structure of our Modern Theatres," says Swift.

**COTEMPORARY** (p. 38). In his *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (1697) Bentley calls this form "a downright barbarism." Under "contemporary" the *OED* gives a discussion of the etymology of the two words and their relationship.

**COURT-CUSTOMERS** (p. 177). Apparently a coinage, this word represents Swift's parodic echo of the virtual flood of new combinations such as "court-favorite" (1647), "court-ladies" (1661), and "court-poet" (1697). Barbara Strang, "Swift's Agent-Noun Formations in -Er," in *Wortbildung, Syntax, und Morphologie: Festschrift Zum 60. Geburtstag von Hans Marchand*, ed. Herbert E. Brekle and Leonhard Lipka (The Hague, 1968), pp. 217-29, points out that although there is only a normal frequency of such formations in Swift, these instances attract attention precisely because they are dispensable, because they have quite obviously been chosen over the constructions "one who" or "those who." See "Answerer" (p. 11), "Opposer" (p. 12), "Arbiter" (p. 31), "Undertaker" (p. 41), "Peruser" (p. 44), "Deliverer" (p. 52), "Smatterers" (p. 130), "Hatcher" (p. 177), "Rectifier" (p. 188), and so forth. In all of these cases Swift creates an ironic class name in order to put someone he dislikes into it.

**CRITICK** (p. 209). First found as a verb in Dryden's *Virgil* (1697): "Those who can Critick his Poetry, can never find a blemish in his Manners."
Defaults (p. 132). A noun meaning a defect, a blemish, or simply a fault. Both Temple and Swift are cited in the OED, although the word appears by the early eighteenth century to have been used rarely in this sense.

In deference to (p. 61). Although “deference” first appeared some forty years earlier, Swift may have been the first writer to employ the phrase “in deference to,” which the OED does not cite before the mid nineteenth century.

Delicatesse (p. 80). A French word not entirely naturalized into English. The first use in an English text was in Vanbrugh’s Provoked Wife (1698). Swift had a special dislike of John Vanbrugh and may be mocking him here: his poems “Vanbrug’s House” (1703), “The History of Vanbrug’s House” (1706), and “V——’s House” (1708-9) all deal with his shortcomings both as an architect and as a dramatist. As elsewhere, Swift seems to have been attracted to the sound of “abundance of Finesse and Delicatesse.” Words of French origin heighten the impact of the story of the effete brothers; cf. Glossary under “Amorphy,” “Boutade,” and “Briguing.”

Deprecatory (p. 92). The OED cites Swift’s use as the first in the sense of “expressing a wish or hope that something feared may be averted.” Typically, the rhythm of “Expostulatory, Supplicatory, or Deprecatory” must have appealed to Swift. Cf. “-tory” in the OED. And cf. Glossary under “Bombastry” and “Yeomantry.”

Dirt-pellets (p. 10). Swift’s use is the single citation in the OED. But various analogous combinations existed before; for example, “dirt-pie”—meaning “mud pie”—dates from 1641 and appears in Congreve’s Love for Love. Cf. Swift’s use of the verb “to dirt” in his Thoughts on Various Subjects (1706): “Ill Company is like a Dog, who dirt those most whom he loves best” (altered to “fouls” in Works, 1735).

Disploding (p. 155). Swift’s use is cited, but the first reference in the OED is to Milton, Paradise Lost: “In posture to displode their second tire/Of thunder.” Perhaps Swift was the first author to use the word in its “-ing” form.

Disposeth (p. 171). One of the intentionally archaic forms used by Swift in the Tale to heighten the formality of the Modern; cf. the proverb (originally from Thomas à Kempis) “Man proposeth but God disposeth.” Henry C. K. Wyld, in A History of Modern

DOZEN (pp. 68, 210). John Oldmixon, in his Reflections on Dr. Swift's Letter to Harley (1712), objects to Swift's imprecise "Affection to the Word Dozen": "I have several good Reasons why, if I were to be of this Academy, I would banish the word Dozen out of our Dictionary, and the Doctor has no doubt his to be fond of it, and fixing it there forever."

DUPE (p. 171). The OED suggests that the use of this word in the substantive sense began with Temple and credits Swift with the first use of the verb, meaning "to make a dupe of; to deceive, delude, befool."

EXANTATION (p. 67). One of Swift's frequent, quite self-conscious hard words in the Tale. In their "Introduction" Guthkelch and Smith say this word was apparently suggested by its use in Browne's Vulgar Errors. Phillips defines the term as "an overcoming with much labour and difficulty"; but according to the OED it was usually employed in the figurative sense of "the action of drawing out, as water from a well." Swift's phrase "to draw up by Exantlation" reminds his reader of the well metaphor.

EX CATHEDRA (p. 90). Another of the foreign terms that owes its introduction into English literature to Swift. It means literally "from the chair" and refers to the Pope's infallible pronouncements on matters of dogma—cf. "infallibly" (p. 110). Cf. Glossary under "bonae notae."

EXCHANGE-WOMEN (p. 140). The first OED reference is 1697, although "exchange-man" and "exchange-wench" go back further. This is a good illustration of Swift's delight in hyphenated nouns: "Chocolate-Houses," "Dirt-Pellets," "Meal-Tubs," "Shop-lifters," "Snap-Dragon," "State-Arcana," and
such. These words force the reader to pay special attention to their etymologies.

**Expedition** (p. 145). There are two major definitions in the *OED*: (1) “the action of expediting, helping forward, or accomplishing,” which apparently died sometime around the middle of the seventeenth century; and (2) “a sending or setting forth with martial intentions,” which has been current since the Middle Ages. Interestingly, although the context (“Army,” “Martial Discipline,” “Muster”) points to the second meaning, the phrase “abundance of Expedition” makes it clear that the word is really being used in its first, obsolete sense. This is a good example of Swift’s tendency to squeeze every drop of meaning out of a word’s etymology.

**Fashion** (p. 76). An ironic use of an older spelling of “Fashion” that the *OED* suggests had not been common since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; elsewhere (pp. 80, 81, 84, for example) Swift spells the word in its currently acceptable way. Swift was concerned about the cavalier attitude toward spelling in his day, and in the *Tale* he argues ironically for establishing a Spelling School (p. 41). In a *Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, he says: “It is sometimes a difficult Matter to read modern Books and Pamphlets; where the Words are so curtailed, and varied from their original Spelling, that whoever hath been used to plain *English*, will hardly know them by Sight.” Cf. Glossary under “annext” and “tho’.”

**Fastidious** (p. 124). The word means “disdainfulness” as well as “squeamishness.” Guthkelch and Smith say that this is “a humorously pedantic form, not found before Swift.” Of course “fastidious” existed before, and in coining “Fastidiousness” Swift followed the transformation of a word like “curious,” which had led to “curiosity,” or “fastuous,” which had recently given birth to “fastuosity.” “Fastidiousness” even *sounds* like an extreme fastidiousness.

**Flesht** (p. 101). Johnson says “to flesh” means “to initiate: from the sportsman’s practice of feeding his hawks and dogs with the first game that they take, or training them to pursuit by giving them the *flesh* of animals.” The *OED* adds to this meaning—“to render inveterate; harden (in wrong doing)”—and cites the *Tale* as the last example in this sense. Swift may have been intentionally employing a word that was practically out of vogue. Cf. the
probable archaisms "thither" (p. 26), "bequeath" (p. 38), "ye" (pp. 118, 193), and "Arse" (p. 197). But Swift is also playing on another meaning of the word, "to make fleshy, to fatten."

FOOL (p. 174). In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the words "fool" and "knave" were often linked, either as synonyms or as opposites. William Empson, _The Structure of Complex Words_ (1951; rpt. Ann Arbor, 1967), p. 110, suggests that the modern use of "fool" gets its power from an effect of nausea in the presence of a lunatic; Empson points to Swift's use as the first that has this feeling to it, although "the whole horror of his style was required to fix such an emotion to the word here, because in itself the sentence could carry the amiable complex of Erasmus."

GEAR (p. 195). Partridge identifies "gear" as a slang word for the male or female genitalia. Cf. _Troilus and Cressida_: "And Cupid grant all tongue-tied maidens here/Bed, chamber, Pandar to provide this gear!"

GOOD FOR NOTHING (p. 173). The _OED_ cites the _Journal to Stella_ as the first use: "We reckon him here a good-for-nothing fellow." Swift uses the phrase also in _Polite Conversation_: "Fye, Miss, you said that once before; and you know, too much of one Thing is good for nothing." Odd as it may seem, the first use of this cliché in literature may be here in the _Tale_; but its inclusion in _Polite Conversation_ would suggest that it had earlier currency in speech.

GRUBAEAN (p. 66). The _OED_ cites this as the first use of the word in its adjectival form. Grub-street, says Johnson, was "originally the name of a street, near Moorfields in London, much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems." Swift's delight in awful puns leads him here to play on the italicized word "Worm" at the end of the preceding sentence.

HERD (p. 171). The _OED_ points to this as the first use of the verb in the sense "of things: to come together, assemble." But surely this is Swift's figurative use of the word in the older sense of the congregating of animals, here employed derogatorily in reference to ideas. Cf. Wycherley, _The Country Wife_ (1675): "Stand off. ... You herd with the wits, you are obscenity all over." Cf. also Swift's "Ode to the Athenian Society" (1691): "Our good brethren ... /Must e'en all herd us with their kindred fools."

HERMETICALLY (p. 126). Appearing as early as 1605, this word is found in Bentley's _Folly and Unreasonableness of Atheism_ (1692).
"To seal a Glass Hermetically," says Kersey, "is to heat the Neck of it, till it be just ready to melt, and then with a Pair of red-hot Pincers close it together." This is just one of Swift's many ironic uses of mechanical terminology in a nonmechanical context. Cf. Glossary under "Machine."

HISTORI-THEO-PHYSILOGICAL (p. 137). Swift's use is surely a first. He is mocking through exaggeration the new science's penchant for hyphenated terms, as in Boyle's *New Experiments Physico-Mechanical, Touching the Spring of Air and Its Effects* (1661). See Glossary under "Physico-logical."

INCLEMENTIES (p. 56). The first *OED* citation is 1699; but the singular form goes back to 1559. Phillips defines "inclementy" as "rigor, sharpness, a being without pity or compassion." The phrase "inclementy of air" was common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

INFLATUS (p. 151). Blount defines "inflation" as "a breeding of wind in the body, a puffing up, or a windy swelling." The *OED*'s single citation is 1861. On the same page Swift uses the Latin words "Spiritus," "Animus," "Afflatus," and "Turgidus."

INNUENDO (pp. 114, 169, 186). Defined in Blount's *Law Dictionary*: "a Law term, most used in Declarations and other pleadings; and the office of this word is onely to declare and design the person or thing which was named uncertain before; as to say, he (innuendo the Plaintiff) is a Thief; when as there was mention of another person." On the status of this and other legal terms in Swift's day, see C. R. Kropf, "Libel and Satire in the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8 (Winter 1974-75): 158-68. The *OED* says "innuendo" means by extension an "interpolated or appended explanation of, or construction put upon a word, expression, or passage" and cites Defoe, 1701, as the first author to use the word in this sense. Swift draws special attention to this meaning of the word in *Gulliver's Travels*, "A Letter from Captain Gulliver": his plain-speaking narrator complains of his cousin's fear of people in power, who "were apt not only to interpret, but to punish every thing which looked like an *Inuendo* (as I think you called it)." In Swift's usage in the *Tale*, the word seems also to suggest sly, perhaps lewd, hints, as in the "Introduction" to *Polite Conversation*: "I can therefore only allow Innuendoes of this kind to be delivered in Whispers, and
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only to young Ladies under Twenty, who being in Honour obliged to blush, it may produce a new Subject for Discourse."

INTERCOURSE (p. 60). The primary meaning here is simply that there is a perpetual conversation among orators in pulpits, on ladders, and on stage itinerants. But the context ("Engine," "erected," "Seminary") suggests that Swift is implying also sexual congress, although in the OED 1798 is the earliest citation in this sense.

INVESTS (p. 77). The OED gives the first use of the verb in this sense—"clothe, cover, adorn"—to Swift. But his intransitive verb is not essentially different from the older transitive one.

JILTED (p. 165). As a verb employed by Wycherley, Congreve, and Locke, this word is described by Blount in the 4th edition of his Glossographia (1674) as "a new canting word, signifying to deceive and defeat ones expectation, more especially in the point of Amours."

LANTHORN (pp. 36, 141, 192, 193). Guthkelch and Smith suggest (p. 192) erroneously that this is Swift's coinage. In the OED it is listed as an alternate spelling of "lantern"; the spelling "lanthorn" appears in Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, and Locke. "It is by mistake often written lanthorn," says Johnson. But Swift may be playing again on the composition of a word, for the OED comments that "the form lanthorn is probably due to popular etymology, lanterns having formerly been almost always made of horn"; after all, the phrases "ocular Conviction" and "Windows of a Bawdy-house, or a sordid Lanthorn" (p. 36) show that Swift, in at least one of these passages, is talking about the transparency of material. Of course, he may simply be using the older spelling in order to heighten the pomposity of the Modern, as with "Rarieties" (p. 110) and "inclose" (p. 24).

LAYINGS OUT (p. 102). Not recorded in the OED or any of the early dictionaries, this noun is apparently Swift's coinage, developed from the verb "to lay out," a common usage in the seventeenth century. Cf. "laid out" (p. 61).

LETTERED (p. 126). Swift's is perhaps a first instance of this word. The first citation in the OED of the verb "to letter" in the sense of "to affix a name or title in letters upon" is 1712; 1707 is the first citation of the participle in the sense of a book "having the title, etc. on back in gilt or coloured letters."

LEVITY (pp. 61, 140). A term from physics that signifies an inherent
property of a body that causes it to rise. Swift apparently uses it here for the first time in a figurative sense. Cf. Glossary under "Machine."

**Liftings** (p. 129). Partridge defines "lifting" as a colloquialism for "theft"; cf. "Shop-lifters" (pp. 140, 177). Perhaps Swift also intends something mock-religious here; cf. the various biblical uses of "lifting," as in "lifting up." And perhaps he intends something sexual; recall the double entendres of section 8, and note the words "Turns and Flowings" immediately above. Cf. "Gripings" (pp. 154, 156) and "Loppings" (p. 201).

**Loppings** (p. 201). Swift must have been aware of the political connotations of this cant term, which had been used, according to the *OED*, by the Rye House conspirators to refer to the killing of the King and the Duke of York.

**Machine** (pp. 56ff., 164). This word was being used in various new senses by the end of the seventeenth century. Swift seems to follow a recent distinction between simple machines such as the ladder (p. 59) and compound machines with two or more moving parts (p. 164). Partridge says that as a low colloquialism "machine" referred to the male or female genitalia, but not until the nineteenth century; Swift in this second instance, however, is clearly making a double entendre: "It was afterward 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." Cf. Glossary under "gear." Here and elsewhere Swift is parodying rationalist philosophers like Descartes, who often compared men with machines.


**In Mignature** (p. 38). This spelling of "miniature" was common during the seventeenth century. But the phrase "in miniature"—meaning on a small scale—was apparently new; the *OED* cites Swift and gives the first reference as 1700.

**Mobile** (p. 141). An abbreviated form of the Latin *mobile vulgus,*
first so shortened by Shadwell in 1676. "Mobile" was subsequently contracted to "mob," one of those words that Swift hated but that was, according to Guthkelch and Smith, fast gaining currency. In the *Tatler*, no. 230, Swift writes: "I have done my utmost for some Years past, to stop the Progress of Mobb and Banter; but have been plainly born down by Numbers, and betrayed by those who promised to assist me."

**Modernists** (p. 169). Swift is the first authority in the *OED* for this meaning: "A supporter or follower of modern ways or methods; in the 18th century, a maintainer of superiority of modern over ancient literature." Cf. the word "Modern" itself, which may contain a powerful pun on an apparently obsolete sense (frequent in Shakespeare) meaning everyday, ordinary, or commonplace.

**Monster-mongers** (p. 131). Swift's coinage. He has taken an apparently fading sense of "monster," meaning a "prodigy, a marvel" (last *OED* reference, 1710), and combined it with "monger," a very old word meaning "merchant." The construction itself was not new; "fly-monger," "water-monger," "iron-monger," and other such words were available in 1704. The *OED* suggests the tone of these compounds: "In formations dating from the middle of the 16th century onwards '-monger' nearly always implies one who carries on a contemptible or discreditable 'trade' or 'traffic' in what is denoted by the first element of the compound."

**Naturals** (p. 29). "In one's [its] naturals" was a common phrase in the seventeenth century; the *OED* defines it as "in a purely natural condition, not altered or improved in any way." In this sense the word was apparently almost dead by 1704. Swift may be punning again: a "natural" was in his day an old word for a half-witted person; as contemporary slang, Partridge says the word also meant "harlot."

**Nuncupatory** (p. 85). This is a rare word extant only during the seventeenth century; and this use is the last cited in the *OED*. Swift exposes his fascination with etymology by incorporating the Spanish and Portuguese "nuncanatorio"—the source word—into the linguistically scrambled phrase that follows. "Nuncanatorio" means simply "oral" or "verbal," but Swift's footnote explains his special reference to the Catholic Church: "By this is meant *Tradition*, allowed to have equal Authority with the
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'Scripture, or rather greater.' In his *Law Dictionary*, Blount says "a *Will Nuncupative*, is when the Testator makes his will by word of mouth (not by writing) before sufficient witnesses."

**Observanda** (pp. 148, 210). A Latin word meaning "something to be observed or noted." The *OED* cites Swift as the only authority for this term in English.

**Occasion** (p. 191). The word means here simply "situation," although in this excremental context Swift perhaps intends also to suggest "occasions," meaning the necessities of nature, a sense first found in 1698. Cf. Glossary under "Bottom," which occurs in the same passage.

**Opus Magnum** (pp. 127, 187). The *OED* gives Swift credit for the introduction of this Latin term into English. In their "Notes on Dark Authors" Guthkelch and Smith call it "the technical term for the conversion of the baser metals into gold" (p. 356); but the word is used humorously by Swift in reference to the best way to read *A Tale of a Tub*. Cf. Glossary under "bonae notae."

**Oscitation** (p. 124). One of the polysyllables of the sort Swift objected to in the *Tatler*, no. 230. As early as 1656 Blount gives two primary meanings: "yawning or gaping," and "negligence or idleness." Swift's meaning is the second of these. "Oscitation" appears in Bentley's *Dissertations upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (1697). Cf. Oscitancy" (p. 203).

**Paumed** (p. 138). A seventeenth-century spelling of the transitive verb "palm," meaning to impose (a thing) fraudulently upon a person, which had first appeared some twenty years earlier. Originally a low colloquialism, the word is listed in B. E.'s *New Dictionary*; in the *Tatler*, no. 230, Swift refers to it as one of the "modern Terms of Art" and says in *A Letter to a Young Gentleman*: "I suppose the Hearers can be little edified by the Terms of Palming, Shuffling, Biting, Bamboozling, and the like, if they have not been sometimes conversant among Pick-pockets and Sharpers." Cf. Glossary under "upon that Score."

**Pederastick** (p. 41). Although the noun "pederasty"—meaning "sodomy" or "buggery"—goes back to 1613, the *OED* cites this use as the first in the adjectival form.

**Perpensity** (p. 170). The word is defined as "attention" in the *OED*, and Swift's use is the single citation.
PHAEOMENON (pp. 60, 165, 167). Guthkelch and Smith give the word as "Phoenomenon" in two of the three instances, although there is no authority for this spelling; cf. Glossary under "annext" and "Fasion." In his Letter to a Young Gentleman Swift objects to the word "Phaenomenon," as he does to "Atoms" (p. 167) and "Ubiquity" (p. 154). Similarly, "Speculations" (p. 57 and elsewhere) and "Operations" (p. 95 and elsewhere) appear frequently in the Tale, although both are criticized in the Tatler, no. 230. Swift seems to be ironic in most of these instances.

PHYSICO-LOGICAL (p. 61). This is the same sort of ironic combination as "Histori-theo-physilogical" (p. 137), only more particular. Swift is here poking fun at the many stock "physico-" adjectives of the seventeenth century: "physico-mechanical" (1661), "physico-theosophical" (1668), "physico-mathematical" (1671), "physico-theological" (1675), "physico-medical" (1689), and so forth. Swift's compound is really no more absurd than most of these, although his irony is clear in "Physico-logical Scheme of Oratorical Receptacles." The Modern's overblown, logical arguments are repeatedly brought down by Swift's heavy, physical imagery.

POINT (pp. 169-70). A good example of Swift's intentional muddling of meaning. The Modern uses the trite "a very delicate Point," then mentions cutting the feather (implying his own quill pen); in the same sentence he refers to "the sole Point of Individuation," suggesting the scholastic process of individuatio (Guthkelch and Smith, p. 170 n. 2); and immediately thereafter he promises to "unravel this knotty Point," using a term meaning some problem difficult to solve (see OED under "knotty"). As these meanings blur in our minds, we come up with something like a quill pen split in two and tied in a knot—not a bad description of the Modern's writing. Swift's sensitivity to such repetition—in his annotation of Gilbert Burnet's History of His Own Times, for example—argues that he repeats himself here in order to create a satiric absurdity. In the allegory of the Tale, "Points" refers simultaneously to items of church dogma and laces for attaching the hose to the doublet. As is clear from the following examples, Swift uses the word inconsistently but never neutrally: "reasoning upon such delicate Points" (p. 39); "have recourse to some Points of Weight" (p. 75); and "a loose, flying, circumstantial Point" (p. 85).
PROTRUSIONS (p. 202). The *OED* lists two meanings: (1) “the action of protruding,” a sense found in Browne and Boyle; and (2) “that which protrudes or juts out,” a sense found first in the *Tale*.

RACE (p. 80). “This is like Sr W. Temple,” wrote Wotton in his copy of the *Tale* (Guthkelch and Smith, p. 314). Johnson defines the term as “a particular strength or taste of wine” and adds that Temple was the first to extend the meaning to “any extraordinary natural force of intellect.” See Temple’s *Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1690): “I think the Epistles of Phalaris to have more Race . . . than any others.”

REINCRUDATION (p. 68). The *OED* cites this as a first use. The word means the reduction of a substance that has reached a higher state back into a lower state of existence; see Guthkelch and Smith, “Notes on Dark Authors,” p. 354. But the Modern’s Latinization of “crud” does not succeed in concealing the corruption at the center of this polysyllable. There may be another irony here: although “Reincarnation” did not appear in English until the nineteenth century, “incarnation” had been extant since the thirteenth, and Swift’s “Reincredation” may be an irreverent allusion to the Incarnation of Christ.


RELIEVO (p. 154). From the Italian “relievo,” meaning “relief”; or as Florio defines it (Swift owned a copy of the *World of Words*), “raised or embossed worke.” The *OED* cites Swift’s use as the first in the transferred sense: when he says that internal winds “gave the Eyes a terrible kind of Relievo,” he means that the Aeolists’ eyes were bugged, that they were thrown into grotesque relief.

REMAINS (p. 70). The word means simply “remainder” here, although in this context (“before I die”) Swift may also be implying a corpse, a sense first found in Dryden in 1700.

ROMAGE (p. 87). An alternate spelling of “rummage.” The *OED* cites this as the first use in the sense of “to scrutinize, examine minutely, investigate”; but Swift’s use of the verb is not markedly different from a couple of earlier instances. “To romage” was sometimes used pejoratively in the sense of “to ransack.”

RUNNING (pp. 111, 126, 184). This is an interesting example of Swift’s varied use of a single word. On p. 111 “Running” could mean, quite literally, too much running, which would indeed
harden a bull's feet; but Swift's phrase "ill Pasture and Running" seems to imply that in this context it means "ranging or pasturage," a sense that the OED says did not appear until 1695. On p. 126 Swift uses "Running" in the specialized sense of "the flow of liquor during the process of wine-making, brewing, or distillation," a common seventeenth-century meaning. On p. 184 "Running" is used in yet a third way, in the sense of "the flowing or discharge of blood or humours from the body"; Swift's use of the word is listed in the OED as the first example of this meaning in a figurative sense. And there may be a pun in any or all of these instances on gonorrhea, which Blount defines as "a disease called the running of the reins, the flux of natural seed of man or woman unwittingly."

Upon That Score (pp. 23, 26, 94). A vulgar gaming phrase that Swift specifically objects to in his annotations to Gilbert Burnet's History of His Own Times. Cf. A Letter to a Young Gentleman: "Others, to shew that their Studies have not been confined to Sciences, or ancient Authors, will talk in the Style of a gaming Ordinary." Cf. Glossary under "paumed."

Scriptory (p. 85). Although the word is used by Browne—"Vallatory, Sagittary, Scriptory, and others"—in a somewhat broader way, Swift is credited by the OED with the first use in the sense of "expressed in writing, written." "Scriptorian" appears in Blount, Coles, and Phillips.

Sedatest (p. 138). The OED records that "sedate" in reference to a person showed up first in Locke and Dryden; "sedate" also appears in the Tale (p. 139). Swift may be the first writer to use the superlative "sedatest." Cf. Glossary under "skilfullest."

Separate Maintenance (p. 121). The term means "support given by a husband to a wife when the parties are separated." The first OED reference is to Defoe's Colonel Jack (1722); but Swift's words —"In copying the Will, they had met another Precept against Whoring, Divorce, and separate Maintenance"—point to an awareness of the legal significance of the term. Of course, the joke here is that the parties involved are not man and wife but three foppish brothers. Cf. "Yokemate" (p. 38)—meaning marriage partner—used to describe Wotton's relation to Bentley, Cf. Glossary under "Innuendo."

Skilfullest (p. 201). This rather awkward form, like "sedatest" (p.
138) and "profoundest" (p. 148), is probably Swift's parody of such difficult-to-pronounce superlatives. Cf. "fruitfullest" in *The Publick Spirit of the Whigs*, "provokingest" in *Polite Conversation*, and the following humorous sentence from a letter to Vanessa: "Well, he is the Courteousest Man, and nothing is so fine in the Quality, as to be courteous."

**Spargefaction** (p. 110). Meaning "the action of sprinkling or scattering," this Latinate hard word occurs only in the *Tale*.

**State-Arcana** (p. 68). "Arcanum" (pp. 114, 127)—which occurs in Browne and Boyle—refers to the great secrets of nature that the alchemists aimed at discovering. Swift's phrase "the Apocalyps of all State-Arcana" exposes his mock reverence for such a thing. This sort of compound was common; cf. "State-Surgeon" (p. 164).

**Subduing . . . to** (p. 171). Swift's phrase is "without any Thought of subduing Multitudes to his own Power, his Reasons or his Visions." In the *OED* the last example of this construction is taken from *Leviathan*: "When a man . . . by Warre subdueh his enemies to his will."

**Superficies** (p. 29). Meaning "a plane or level surface." The *OED* gives only two instances of this apparently rare term, Swift's and one earlier. Cf. the quite different uses of the word on pp. 103 and 174.

**Tagged** (p. 80). Swift is cited in the *OED* as the first authority in the sense "to append as an addition or afterthought; to fasten, tack on, or add as a tag to something." Cf. the different uses on pp. 87, 90, 135, and 136.

**Tho'** (p. 5 and elsewhere). Swift objects to this and other contractions in the *Tatler*, no. 230. It is thus interesting that the form appears in the "Apology," which was published in 1710, the same year as the *Tatler* contribution. Cf. Glossary under "annext."

**Thorough** (p. 6 and elsewhere). "Let this Learned Doctor and his new Academy," says John Oldmixon in his *Reflections on Dr. Swift's Letter to Harley* (1712), "do their utmost to furnish our Language with what the French call Chevilles, with his Thoroughs, Althoughts, and the whole Army of antiquated Words before-mentioned." Oldmixon likewise criticizes Swift's frequent use of "thereon," "therein," and "thereby." The repeated
occurrence of such words in the *Tale* is one of the devices used by Swift to heighten his Modern's pedantic style.

**Transposal** (p. 43). Rare. The first *OED* example is 1695. Johnson mentions Swift and defines the word as "the act of putting things in each other's place"; note the nearly synonymous terms in Swift's phrase "Transposal or Misapplication." Cf. "Disturbance or Transposition" (p. 171).

**Troglodyte** (p. 183). The *OED* cites Swift as the first author to use this word in an adjectival sense. See Phillips: "A people anciently inhabiting the farthest part of Aethiopia, of a fierce salvage nature, dwelling in caves, and feeding on raw flesh." Is Swift referring to one who avoids or ignores sense experience? Or could "Troglodyte Philosopher" be the Modern's crazy malapropism for "Stagyrite Philosopher"?

**Vegetable** (p. 78). Swift's "vegetable Beaux" is a play on the seventeenth-century adjectival use of "vegetable" in the sense of having the living and growing properties of plants, as in "vegetable soul" or other variations such as "vegetable power," "vegetable life," or Marvell's "vegetable love."

**Vittles** (p. 118). An alternate spelling of "victuals." But that Swift uses "Vittles" in Peter's *speech* while elsewhere (e.g., pp. 116, 192) using "Victuals" suggests that he acknowledged a difference between the colloquial and proper forms of the word.

**Yeomantry** (p. 181). Guthkelch and Smith explain: "This spelling occurs in edd. 1-5 (Yeomanry edd. 1711, 1720, etc.); due to assimilation with *Gentry*, or to false analogy with 'infantry' and similar words." But cf. Glossary under "Bombastry."